



Douglas Bay Marine Nature Reserve

Kemmyrk Bea-Varrey Baie Ghoolish

Why Protect the Marine Environment?

The past 50 years have seen global declines in the health of our seas, which not only reduces species and habitats, but also the economic and social benefits we enjoy.

Threats to the marine environment include habitat loss, pollution, invasive species, over-fishing and climate change.

By protecting areas of the sea as marine reserves we can conserve and restore healthy habitats, providing refuges for spawning and nursery grounds for juveniles to help replenish the areas outside. This helps maintain commercial and recreational fisheries, with Ramsey Bay MNR being a good example of how conservation and careful management can boost stocks of king and queen scallops over time.

Linked with the UNESCO Biosphere Isle of Man status, the designation and careful management of MNRs can lead to the sustainable development of coastal areas; enhancing our experiences, economy and tourist appeal.

The Isle of Man territorial sea is a shared resource used by commercial fishermen, recreational anglers, a wide variety of commercial, leisure and scientific interests, as well as the Manx community.

People who use the sea regularly have a wealth of knowledge which can complement the scientific information collected by DEFA and our partner organisations and we welcome input from anyone with information, ideas and experiences to share.

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For further information about Marine Nature Reserves contact DEFA Fisheries on: 01624 685857
fisheries@gov.im or use the QR Code.

<https://www.gov.im/protectedsites>



The nearest protected area to Douglas Bay MNR is: **Santon Gorge & Port Soldrick ASSI.**

Areas of Special Scientific Interest (ASSIs) and a National Nature Reserve (NMR). These designated areas of land, which include the intertidal zone, have legal protection due to their special fauna, flora, geological or physical features.

ASSIs are areas of private or public land whose owners/occupiers require consent from DEFA before undertaking activities that may damage its special features. **All coastal ASSIs are accessible to the public.**

NMRs are areas protected via specific byelaws to ensure that reserve visitors behave responsibly.

Additional Protected Areas



Spotter Sheets

Print off a 'species spotter sheet' for each MNR from our website and use it when exploring your local Marine Nature Reserve. The QR code on this leaflet will take you there, or use: www.gov.im/MNR



#MyManxMNR

Share your MNR experiences and the wonderful world of everything marine by submitting your images online using the hashtag **#MyManxMNR**



Blueways Trails

The Blueways Trails offer a sense of what goes on around the Isle of Man's seas and shorelines by providing multi-activity exploration of our historic and diverse coast. On land, on and under the water; from snorkel safaris to maritime history, from wildlife watching to geology, there is much to discover on the Blueways.

<https://www.visitisleofman.com/blog/read/2020/07/discover-the-islands-blueways-b98>



Raad ny Foillan

Manx Gaelic for 'The way of the gull'; take a wander along the island's coastal footpath. At almost 160km/100 miles in length it's the perfect way to see our coastline. Details can be found here: <https://www.visitisleofman.com/see-and-do/active-and-adventure/walking-and-hiking/raad-ny-foillan-coastal-path>

Please be considerate to wildlife and other people and take your tackle litter home or put it in a bin.

Fishing Litter

Although you don't need a licence for saltwater angling remember to observe minimum landing sizes for each species. These are displayed on boards at all main harbours or find online, along with other useful fishing information at: www.gov.im/recreationalfishing

Does Your Catch Measure Up?

public toilets, are a few miles away in Douglas.

Amenities: This secluded site offers free parking although nearest amenities, including

Location: Port Soderick

harbour area.

Amenities: Around the island's capital you'll find shops, eateries and public toilets in the town centre. Free car parking is available around the

Location: Douglas Bay and Douglas Head

in Manx waters.

The best time for sea fishing is between April and September with plankton populations blooming in the warmer months. This attracts sand eels, shoals of mackerel, herring, pollack, cod, grey mullet and tope. There is good bass fishing up to the end of October and in winter you're likely to find codling, saithe and dogfish

Information For Anglers

- Various seabirds
- Risso's dolphins (mostly summer)
- Bottlenose dolphins (mostly winter)
- Minke whales (May-October)

Other Species to Spot

Marine Nature Reserves (MNRs)

What is a Marine Nature Reserve?

Marine Nature Reserves (MNRs) are a type of marine protected area, usually established to conserve particular species and habitats, or enable their recovery, and where the most damaging activities and impacts are excluded. Marine Protected Areas are a well-established method for achieving these objectives and have been successfully used worldwide.

Manx Marine Nature Reserves

There are 10 MNRs around the Isle of Man, forming a network that has been developing since 1989. Some areas, such as the first protected site, at Port Erin, and Ramsey Bay Marine Nature Reserve, have been well-studied and are examples of how conservation can benefit commercial and recreational fisheries and the marine environment. Manx MNRs now cover 430km², around 52% of the 0-3 nautical mile area, or 11% of the whole territorial sea.

Douglas Bay MNR

Douglas Bay MNR is only 4.6km², but surprisingly full of interesting wildlife, despite being so close to our largest town and busy port. Closed to scallop fishing in 2008 to act as a source for scallop larvae, the bay continues to provide pot fishing for crab and lobster and recreational angling. The mixed seabed of rock, gravel, maerl and sand also supports delicate stalked hydroids and the rare nudibranchs that feed on them. Seasonal shoals of herring also bring feeding seabirds, such as gannets, along with tope, spiny dogfish and marine mammals, like minke whales and bottlenose dolphins.



Douglas Bay

Marine Nature Reserve

Despite being a busy commercial port, the area is regularly used by bottlenose dolphins, minke whale, cormorants and black guillemots. Douglas Bay is the only site known to contain Beaumont's nudibranch and so far more than 180 different species have been recorded from here.

Important habitats within Douglas Bay MNR

- Rocky reefs • Kelp forests • Maerl beds
- Spawning ground

Maerl bed

Maerl is a coralline red 'seaweed' which creates a colourful, fine-branching layer upon the seabed. This habitat has high species diversity, with shellfish, anemones, urchins, crabs, shrimp, worms and fish found here. It also provides a nursery ground and refuge for juvenile queen scallop and whelks - two of the commercially important species fished in Manx waters. Maerl also plays a part in slowing the effects of climate change, by depositing calcium carbonate and acting as a 'blue carbon store'.



Brown crab on maerl bed © Jim Self

Rocky reefs

Rocky reefs provide an attachment site for various marine animal and algae species. Over time, wave action creates crevices that increase the available habitat. The rocky intertidal zone is routinely covered and uncovered by the tides and species that live here have special adaptations that allow them to cope with a constantly changing environment. Rocks that occur below the waterline often host a wide range of different species providing protection and a good feeding location.



Rocky reef © Chris Wood

Kelp forests

Kelp seaweeds grow close to shore creating the equivalent of underwater forests. They have similar structures to terrestrial plants; the holdfast (like a root), stipe (like a stem) and blades (like leaves), and establish on hard rock surfaces which they anchor to with the holdfast. Kelp provide a 3D habitat for a diverse range of species; worms, molluscs and crustaceans hide in the holdfast and the blades host bryzoans, juvenile fish and other species that colonise the surface. Kelp also plays an important role in marine foodwebs, providing a food source for fish, urchins and the beautiful blue-rayed limpet.



Larval fish and mixed seaweeds © Tony Glen

MNR General Restrictions

- No mobile fishing gear (dredge or trawl)
- No seabed extraction or deposit of materials
- No damage to protected habitats or species

Important species within Douglas Bay MNR

- Great cormorant • Common shag
- Beaumont's nudibranch • Harbour porpoise
- European eel • Bottlenose dolphin

Great cormorant

Cormorants are large birds with a wing span of ~1.5m, shiny black feathers and a white patch on their thigh during the summer breeding season. They are gregarious and gather in large flocks around the coasts and at large inland waters, including reservoirs. They eat fish, and hunt by diving to depths of up to 10m, so the absence of a water resistant coat on their feathers is an adaptation to reduce buoyancy.



A 'gulp' of cormorants © DEFA

Beaumont's nudibranch

This beautiful, rare nudibranch has long projections (cerata) which it uses to breathe. It's a marine gastropod mollusc, commonly known as sea slugs, which are largely shell-less. They are not common animals, only being recorded from the British Isles and Norway, so it is of particular importance to conserve this species here. Typically they are found in close proximity to their main food source, the translucent nodding hydroid (*Corymorpha nutans*) which is abundant on the sandy seabeds of Douglas Bay.



Beaumont's nudibranch and nodding hydroid © Bangor University

Common, or European shag

Smaller than cormorants, shags have dark green, shiny plumage, a crest and a narrow, yellow hook-tipped bill. They feed on fish, especially sand eels caught while swimming underwater at depths of up to 50m. They nest on coastal cliffs and, like cormorants, are often seen with their wings held out to dry, since they lack waterproof feathers. Unlike the cormorant, shags are a much more specialised marine species, and are rarely seen inland.



Common shag © James Cubbon