

# Ramsey Bay Marine Nature Reserve

*Kemmyrk Bea-Varrey Bae Rhumsaa*



## 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 nature reserves we can conserve and restore healthy habitats and provide refuges for spawning and nursery grounds 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, 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>

**Location: Ramsey**  
Type: Breakwater and shore fishing  
Amenities: Ample free parking and shops, pubs, restaurants, cafes and public toilets in the town centre.



**Additional Protected Areas**  
Around the Manx coast there are a number of Areas of Special Scientific Interest (ASSIs) and a National Nature Reserve (NNR). 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.

NNRs are areas protected via specific byelaws to ensure visitors behave responsibly. The nearest protected areas to Ramsey MNR are: **Maughold Cliffs and Broughs ASSI, Ramsey Mooragh Shore ASSI and The Ayres National Nature Reserve.**

**Information For Anglers**  
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 in Manx waters.

**Other Species to Spot**

- Gannets (mostly March - October)
- Bottlenose dolphins (mostly winter)
- Eider ducks (year round)
- Grey seals (year round)

## How to get more involved with your local Marine Nature Reserve



### Spotter Sheets

Download 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](http://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>

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 them online, along with other useful fishing information, at: [www.gov.im/recreationalfishing](http://www.gov.im/recreationalfishing)

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

### Does Your Catch Measure Up?

# 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 the marine environment and commercial and recreational fisheries. Manx MNRs now cover 430km<sup>2</sup>, around 52% of the 0-3 nautical mile area, or 11% of the whole territorial sea.

## Ramsey Bay MNR

Ramsey Bay MNR covers an area of around 97km<sup>2</sup>, half of which is highly protected. Designated in 2011 as the island's first marine nature reserve, it is divided into 5 zones, four are highly protected for important habitats, such as horse mussel reef and eelgrass meadow. The fifth is a Fisheries Management Zone, where a very efficient, lower-impact scallop fishery occurs annually. Working together since 2013; Government, fishermen and scientists have established a sustainable fishery that provides the highest quality product and a guaranteed value under an innovative world-class management system.

# Ramsey Bay

## Marine Nature Reserve

Ramsey Bay MNR was designated in 2011 and extends east from the Point of Ayre, following the three nautical mile boundary, then down to Maughold Head. Grey seals are commonly seen hauled out on the rocks and various seabirds, such as guillemots, nest on the high cliffs at Maughold. Puffins are also seen in the bay over the summer, and pods of bottlenose dolphin are frequent winter visitors.

## Important habitats within Ramsey Bay MNR

**Maerl beds • Eelgrass meadow • Kelp forest • Rocky reef**  
**Horse mussel reef • Sea bass nursery**



**Common sunstar on maerl** © Jim Self

## Eelgrass meadow

Eelgrass (or seagrass) is a marine flowering plant, growing between 5-12 m water depth and forming meadows that provide habitat for crabs, lobster and various fish and molluscs. Eelgrass meadows provide us with a range of benefits including reducing coastal erosion by stabilising sediment, reducing the impact of wave action and acting as a carbon store. Eelgrass (*Zostera marina*) is protected within the Eelgrass Zone and since MNR designation, has spread north and east, from Queen's pier to Stack Moorat.



**Point of Ayre mussel reef**  
© Rohan Holt

## Rocky shore and reefs

Rock surfaces provide attachment sites for various marine animals and algae. The rocky intertidal zone is routinely covered and uncovered by the tides and species that live here have special adaptations to allow them to cope with constantly changing conditions. Much of the Ramsey Bay seabed is sand and gravel, and the rocky shore zone, which includes Maughold Head, is an important, less common habitat in the bay

# MNR General Restrictions

**No mobile fishing gear (dredge or trawl)**

**No seabed extraction or deposit of materials**

**No damage to protected habitats or species**

**No anchoring in eelgrass areas**

## Important species within Ramsey Bay MNR

**Horse mussel • Eelgrass • Maerl • Kelp • Bottlenose dolphin**

**Arctic tern • European eel • Sea bass • Iceland clam**

## Zones for Conservation and Activities

Ramsey Bay MNR is unique in having zones for particular purposes, summarised below;

Zone	Permitted	Not permitted
Conservation Zone	Potting, angling and bait collection.	Trawling, dredging, all extraction methods for king and queen scallops.
Horse Mussel Zone	Angling and bait collection.	Potting, trawling, dredging and removal of king and queen scallops.
Eelgrass Zone	Taking razorshells and lugworms from 1st October to 31st March in the intertidal area. 'Keep pots' are permitted.	Potting, trawling, dredging, angling, or other extraction of living resources. Extraction of lugworms and razorshells prohibited from 1st April to 30th September.
Rocky Shore Zone	Potting, angling and bait collection.	Trawling, dredging, all extraction methods for king and queen scallops.
Fisheries Management Zone	Trawling, dredging and diving for king and queen scallops under a specific licence issued by DEFA.	Trawling, dredging and diving for king and queen scallops, unless otherwise licensed



**Juvenile bass, Ramsey Bay MNR**  
© DEFA

## Bass

European bass (*Dicentrarchus labrax*), also called sea bass, are an important angling fish around the island, and strict conservation measures were introduced in 2016. Scientific surveys have shown that bass use the island as a nursery, with juveniles found close inshore, and in the intertidal river and harbour areas. The MNRs therefore provide important nursery habitat, helping to maintain offshore populations.

## Fisheries Management Zone (FMZ)

Co-managed by the Manx Fish Producers' Organisation and DEFA. The FMZ is scientifically surveyed annually and a sustainable quota for king and queen scallops is agreed. A majority of the zone is left unfished, protecting habitats and species as part of the MNR. Careful management produces valuable, high-quality seafood and supports the maintenance and sustainability of adjacent fisheries, as well as environmental protection in the rest of the MNR.



**King scallop, Ramsey Bay MNR** © DEFA



**Rocky reef** © Chris Wood