

ALDERNEY - WEST COAST AND THE BURHOU ISLANDS

Area: 15,629 hectares

Designation Date: 24.08.2005

Location: 49°43'N 02°15'W

Why was this area designated as a Ramsar site?

The most northerly of the Channel Island Ramsar sites comprises the western coast of Alderney and nearby shallow waters and islets. This strongly tidal, high-energy area includes a diverse array of marine ecosystems, from sandy beaches with pebble and shingle banks, to rocky marine shores with intertidal pools, and coastal cliffs.

The rocky islands are an important breeding sites for birds. A large nesting population of northern gannets are established on the Garden Rocks and Ortac with about with about 8,737 pairs. They also provide an ideal habitat for grey seals to haul out, such as at the seal colony to the north of Burhou Island, and for fish and shellfish species such as lobsters, bass and plaice. In addition to the wild animals the site hosts about 100 species of seaweeds, which play a very important role in supporting all the marine wildlife.

There is a visitor center which provides both information and educational materials for children and the general public. Common visitor activities are birdwatching, walking and rockpooling over the summer months.

Code of Conduct:

1. **Puffins.** Avoid walking in areas marked out as puffin breeding sites. If visiting Burhou by private boat, avoid disturbing the rafting puffins (sitting on the water) by approaching slowly and keeping a good distance away from them. Take binoculars if you would like a closer view. A 'Puffin Friendly Zone' off the south-east coast of Burhou is in place between March and August. Marine users are requested not to enter this zone, to reduce their speed to below 10 knots and minimise noise when nearby. Please do not force the puffins to fly.
2. **Stones.** Do not remove any pebbles from the beaches or stones from the walls of Burhou.
3. **Research.** Do not remove any marker pegs or wooden stakes from the ground as these are part of ongoing research. Please do not interfere with any other research equipment such as cameras and traps; these will often be marked.
4. **Litter.** Please take all litter home with you. It is illegal to litter.
5. **Fire.** Fires, barbecues and fireworks are not permitted at this site without the prior approval of the Harbour Office.
6. **Staying on Burhou.** Burhou is closed to visitors between 15th March and 1st August in order to protect breeding birds. If you wish to stay on Burhou during the open season you can book the hut for a small charge at the Harbour Office. Please leave the huts clean, tidy and locked on your departure. Avoid walking in sensitive areas as outlined by the map within the hut.

7. **Rockpools.** Do not trample through rockpools, and if you turn over rocks, return them to their original position to preserve the environment beneath. Studies show it can take 5 to 10 years for the species hosted on the rock to recover if left upturned. Try to refrain from handling the marine life you find – it can be sensitive to rough handling. If you do, handle them with care and put them back where you found them.
8. **Wildlife.** Leave animals and plants as you find them – take photos, use your binoculars or take some paper and a pencil to draw them instead. If you do touch any wildlife take care when touching those with soft bodies – they are very delicate. It is an offence to disturb breeding birds or to handle birds of any type unless licenced – please refer to government regulations.
9. **Nesting Birds.** Please be aware of beach nesting birds as these are often difficult to see and subject to trampling or disturbance by dogs. Signs are in place during the breeding season to remind visitors; please be cautious when you see these.
10. **Drones.** Drone use is not permitted over any islets immediately North West of Burhou to avoid disturbance to the seal population. In other sites, prior permission must be sought from the Alderney Harbour Master, with consideration of the Alderney Airport 'Drone Code' prior to flying