



A Guide to the Wildlife of the Glenarm Coast



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Brona Steenson, Director & Designer
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INTRODUCTION

The Glenarm coastline is rich in wildlife. The underlying soils range from alkaline to acidic, resulting in a wonderful diversity of flora, supporting a rich assemblage of invertebrate, bird and mammal species.

The adjacent shores and seas contain a wealth of seaweeds, marine invertebrates and fish. We hope that this guide will encourage visitors to the Glenarm coast, and local communities, to explore the area and the wildlife it supports.

At the interface between land and sea, the intertidal habitats of the Glenarm coast are rich in seaweeds such as serrated wrack, egg wrack, bladder wrack and channelled wrack. On the seashore, brown and edible crabs, beadlet anemones, topshells, flat and edible periwinkles, limpets, and barnacles abound. Nearer to the waterline and in the adjacent seas lie kelp parks, which provide valuable habitat for a diversity of fish and invertebrate species including Atlantic bobtail squid, lesser-spotted dogfish, velvet swimming crab, and sand eels. Below the waters of Glenarm Bay lies a large seagrass bed, a Northern Ireland priority habitat, supporting a wide range of juvenile fish species including cod, plaice and pollock. The seagrass is also home to Nilsson's pipefish, worm pipefish, and a whole range of invertebrate species including masked crabs, hermit crabs, spider crabs, and stalked jellyfish.

Birdlife abounds on this coastline, with house martins, swallows, grey herons, hooded crows and buzzards to be seen in the vicinity of Glenarm Village. The cliffs on the coast road south of Glenarm are a nest site for fulmars, jackdaws and ravens. In winter, migrants such as whimbrel, turnstone and Brent geese forage along the shore at Glenarm and Carnlough, while Great Northern Divers and Red-Throated Divers forage in the Bay. Summer sees eider ducks guide their flotillas of ducklings along the shore, while the walls of Glenarm harbour become a nesting area for black guillemots, which can often be seen diving for shannies and wrasse in Glenarm Marina.

This is a guide to some of the more readily spotted species on the Glenarm Coast and is designed for use by the non-expert. For each species, this guide will tell you a little bit about their natural history and indicate where along this stretch of coastline you are most likely to encounter them. For those wishing to learn more about these species or to improve their identification skills, a list of suggested identification guides is included at the back of this publication.

As with all wildlife watching, observation technique and luck plays a part, and patience will be rewarded!

We thank Omya UK, Steensons Jewellers and the Causeway Coast and Glens Heritage Trust for their generosity in sponsoring this Wildlife Guide.

ULSTER WILDLIFE

Over the last forty years, Ulster Wildlife has been protecting Northern Ireland's threatened wildlife and inspiring the next generation to love nature. Ulster Wildlife manages three nature reserves along the Glenarm coastline:

Glenarm Nature Reserve contains large numbers of ancient and veteran oak trees, as well as riverine and wet woodland habitats, home to an impressive array of wildlife. There are species of fungi, lichens and insects here that are found nowhere else in Ireland. Breeding birds to listen out for include blackcap, willow warbler and chiffchaff, as well as less common species like tree creeper and jay. Mammals recorded here include pine marten, red squirrel, otter, badger and Irish hare.

Straidkilly Nature Reserve is a small secluded hazel woodland, perched above the village of Glenarm, interspersed with several species-rich grassland clearings. During spring, the ground is awash with wildflowers such as bluebells. In the sunny glades, you may spot the delicate cryptic wood white butterfly or the spectacular silver-washed fritillary. Straidkilly boasts a surprising number of mammals including red squirrel, Irish hare, badger, Irish stoat, pine marten and pygmy shrew.

Feystown Nature Reserve is a meadow that is traditionally managed by annual cutting followed by grazing with livestock. This practice ensures the survival of the beautiful but rare wood cranesbill, which is only found at a select number of locations in Northern Ireland, all within the Glens of Antrim. Although small, this is still a good place to see butterflies such as orange-tip, green-veined white and meadow brown.

We couldn't care for our precious wildlife and wild places in Northern Ireland, without your help. Join over 13,000 others who are helping nature thrive by becoming a member today. Visit **www.ulsterwildlife.org** for details of how to join.

GLENARM WILDLIFE GROUP

Glenarm Wildlife Group formed in 2006, in consultation with Ulster Wildlife.

As a group, we had a particular interest in preserving habitats and creating a forum for the enjoyment of local flora and fauna by the public. Initially, we helped Ulster Wildlife with practical conservation work at Straidkilly, Glenarm Estate and Feystown. Following successful applications for grant funding, we obtained tools, monitoring equipment, and training. Mid and East Antrim Borough Council donated equipment for litter picking and beach cleans, and in 2018 we obtained a Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful grant to install a #2minutebeachclean board at Glenarm Beach.

Glenarm Wildlife Group has undertaken training in the identification and survey of cetaceans, ancient trees, mosses and liverworts, wildflowers, moths, birds, mammals, trees and intertidal species. We have completed courses in first aid and leading walks, and conduct monitoring for swifts, butterflies, bumblebees and black guillemots. Today we still assist Ulster Wildlife in running local events such as rock pool rambles, snorkel safaris and beach cleans.

We actively involve the community in our events, regularly organising guided walks, beach cleans and litter picks. Additionally, we have links with local community groups such as the Glens Red Squirrel Group, Ballygally Biodiversity Group, and Seaview Primary School. We have our own Facebook page helping to keep the community informed of news and events.

We are always looking for new members, so please contact us via our Facebook page if you would like to join.

Bottlenose Dolphin

Tursiops truncatus

About:

The most frequently recorded dolphin species in Northern Ireland. Usually sighted in groups of 5 - 30 individuals, but groups of up to 150 animals have been recorded. They produce a range of sounds including clicks, buzzes, and whistles that may be heard if in the water in their vicinity. A single calf is born every 2 to 3 years. They can live for up to 50 years.

Identification:

Large, robust dolphin with a sickle-shaped dorsal fin halfway along the back. Body colour dark to light grey above, with pale grey or white on the lower jaw, throat and belly. Stubby grey beak, often with white tip to lower jaw, which protrudes slightly. Will often approach vessels to bow-ride. Can be very active at the surface, rushing and breaching clear of the water.

Size:

2 - 4 m in length.

Status:

Coastal population of bottlenose dolphins is estimated to number around 400 animals and ranges around the entire coast of Ireland and to west of Scotland and southwest England. Wider population in UK waters numbers 8,000 animals. Protected under the Wildlife (Northern Ireland) Order 1985; EU Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC) Annex II and IV; IUCN Red List – Least Concern.

Threats:

Overfishing; Chemical Pollution; Marine Litter; Noise Pollution; Bycatch; Disturbance.

Where to see:

Anywhere around the Northern Irish coast, but most sightings recorded from the North and Northeast coasts. Regular sightings occur along the Causeway coastal route, and from headlands and bays on all coasts. Locally at Glenarm Bay, Garron Point, Carnlough Bay, Cushendall, and along the Coast Road.

Diet:

Benthic and pelagic fish, but also squid, shrimp and crabs. Have been recorded killing harbour porpoise but not for food.

When to see:

Year round, with a strong summer peak in sightings.



Harbour Porpoise

Phocoena phocoena

About:

The smallest and most frequently recorded cetacean (whale, dolphin or porpoise) in Northern Ireland. Usually sighted individually or in small groups of two or three. Where feeding is good, groups of 20 animals or more may occur. Capable of diving to depths of 200m and can stay underwater for up to six minutes. A single calf is born every 1 to 2 years. Average life span is between 12 and 15 years.

Identification:

Small and dolphin-like, with small triangular dorsal fin halfway along back. Less than half the size of adult bottlenose dolphin. Body colour dark grey/black back and a pale belly. There is no visible beak. The blow is short and usually not visible but can be heard at close quarters as a short sharp 'puff', giving rise to the name 'puffing pig'.

Size:

1.4 - 1.7 m in length.

Status:

Total population of harbour porpoise in the seas around the United Kingdom is about 350,000 individuals. Protected under the Wildlife (Northern Ireland) Order 1985; EU Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC) Annex II and IV; IUCN Red List – Least Concern.

Threats:

Bycatch; Overfishing; Chemical Pollution; Marine Litter; Noise Pollution; Disturbance.

Where to find:

Tidal currents around headlands and islands, and found throughout the Irish Sea. Best seen in extremely calm seas of Beaufort sea state 2 or less. Locally at Portmuck (Islandmagee), Torr Head and Garron Point.

Diet:

Small shoaling fish such as herring, mackerel and sand eel, but also squid and octopus.

When to see:

Year round, with a decline in sightings in the early spring, which appears to coincide with the calving period. Sightings pick up again in early summer as females with young calves return to inshore waters. Evidence of a peak in sightings along the Irish Sea coastline in August and September.



Harbour (Common) Seal

Phoca vitulina

About:

Most frequently recorded seal species in Northern Irish waters. May be seen foraging alone at sea or in groups at haul-out sites which are generally located on rocky islands and sandy shores. Haul-outs are used for resting, pupping and moulting. A single pup is born in June or July. The pup is well developed when born with a coat similar in colour to the adult, and can swim and dive within a few hours of birth. Harbour seals moult their fur once the pupping season is over. They can live for up to 30 years.

Identification:

The harbour seal has a streamlined body; the fur is brown-grey with small dark spots giving the coat a mottled appearance. The limbs have been modified into flippers for swimming. The head is rounded with a short muzzle and large eyes, giving it a dog-like appearance. The nostrils meet to form the shape of a 'V'.

Size:

1.35 - 1.9 m in length.

Status:

The UK holds 50% of the European population, around 50,000 animals. An aerial survey carried out in 2002 found 1,248 common seals at haul-out sites around the coastline of Northern Ireland. They are protected under the Wildlife (Northern Ireland) Order 1985; EU Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC) Annex II & V; IUCN Red List – Least Concern.

Threats:

Disturbance; Bycatch; Chemical Pollution; Marine Litter; Noise Pollution.

Where to find:

All around the coast of Northern Ireland. Highest numbers of animals recorded from the Co. Down coast, especially Carlingford Lough, Strangford Lough, and Dundrum Bay. Locally at Maiden Rocks and Waterfoot, or at sea anywhere along the Glenarm coastline.

Diet:

A wide variety of different fish such as plaice, flounder, herring, mackerel and whiting.

When to see:

Year round, but especially during pupping and moulting season in July and August when they spend a lot of time hauled out.



Grey Seal

Halichoerus grypus

About:

The larger of the two seal species found in Northern Ireland, grey seals spend most of their lives at sea and can range over large distances. Males reach sexual maturity at 5-6 years old and females at 3-5 years. Pups are born between September and December and are covered in white fluffy fur for the first 3-4 weeks of their lives. They can live for up to 30 years.

Identification:

Grey seals have grey and brown fur, sometimes with a pattern of blotches. They have a long muzzle with a 'Roman nose' profile and widely separated, parallel nostrils. They are larger and darker in colour than the harbour seal.

Size:

1.6 to 2.6 m in length.

Status:

The grey seal was the first mammal in the UK to have its own Act of Parliament, the Grey Seal Protection Act of 1914. They are protected under the Wildlife (Northern Ireland) Order 1985; EU Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC) Annex II and V; IUCN Red List – Least Concern.

Threats:

Disturbance; Bycatch; Chemical Pollution; Marine Litter; Noise Pollution; Culling.

Where to find:

All around the coast of Northern Ireland, but highest densities occur on the Co. Down coastline. Locally at Maiden Rocks, with individual animals hauling out on rocks in Glenarm Bay. May also be seen at sea anywhere along the Glenarm coastline.

Diet:

Sand eels, cod and sole are their most important foods, but they will take whatever fish are most abundant. Have also been recorded killing and eating seabirds, harbour porpoise and other seals.

When to see:

Year round, but especially during pupping and moulting season from October to December when they spend a lot of time hauled out.



Otter

Lutra lutra

About:

Northern Ireland has just one otter species, which lives in both freshwater and marine habitats. They are mostly shy, solitary animals that are largely nocturnal. Up to four cubs are born during the summer months in an underground den or holt, and stay with their mothers for about a year. Otters can live for up to 10 years in the wild.

Identification:

Mid to dark brown coat and a long streamlined body with short legs. The thick muscular tail makes up about 40% of the body length. The head is broad and flattened, with small eyes and ears, and a broad whiskery muzzle.

Size:

1 - 1.3 m in length.

Status:

Occurs throughout Northern Ireland in freshwater and coastal habitats. The actual number of otters present in Northern Ireland is not known, but the 2010 all-Ireland otter survey recorded signs of otter presence in 89% of sites surveyed. They are protected under the Wildlife (Northern Ireland) Order 1985; EU Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC) Annex II and IV; IUCN Red List – Near threatened.

Threats:

Loss of habitat; Bycatch; Water pollution; Illegal persecution; Roadkill.

Where to find:

All around the Northern Ireland coastline. Locally along the shoreline between Carnlough and Garron Point, and the shoreline south of Glenarm to Ballygally.

Diet:

A wide variety of coastal fish, with crayfish being seasonally important in some areas. Other prey such as water birds are taken, as are frogs in the springtime.

When to see:

Year round. Difficult to see due to nocturnal nature, however spraints (droppings) are deposited in prominent locations e.g. on rocks, logs, trails etc. to mark their territory.



Red Squirrel

Sciurus vulgaris

About:

Smaller than the more common grey squirrel, which is an introduced species that has out-competed the red squirrel over large areas of Northern Ireland. Red squirrels live in both conifer and broadleaved woodland. They do not hibernate and in autumn store surplus food below ground or in the gaps in tree trunks as winter forage. Red squirrels usually give birth twice a year, once in spring and again in summer. They can live for up to 7 years in the wild.

Identification:

Coat colour variable from reddish-brown in summer, to deep brown with grey in winter. Some animals can be almost black to buff, yet their underside is always cream. Red squirrels have a very distinctive bushy tail and ear tufts.

Size:

Head and body 18 – 24 cm in length. Tail 14 – 20 cm in length.

Status:

Protected under the Wildlife (Northern Ireland) Order 1985; Listed as a UK priority species; IUCN Red List – Least concern.

Threats:

Invasive species (grey squirrels); disease; roadkill.

Where to find:

Red squirrels can be seen in all counties in Northern Ireland. They are more likely to be seen high up in the trees in coniferous forest. Locally in Glenarm Forest.

Diet:

Spruce and pine seeds; acorns; berries; fungi; bark; sap tissue.

When to see:

Year round, however they are more active in summer and autumn.



Pine Marten

Martes martes

About:

Due to habitat loss and persecution in the 19th and early 20th century, pine marten became rare across large parts of Ireland. In recent years, they have been making a comeback in some of their old strongholds. Their resurgence has seen a decline in the invasive grey squirrel in areas where the two species mix, possibly due to pine marten predation. Pine martens are very agile and can easily climb trees using their long sharp claws. They live for up to 12 years.

Identification:

The size of a small cat with a slim body and relatively long legs. Coat is dark brown, with a creamy yellow bib (throat and belly). The face is pointed with upright ears. Tail is long, bushy and dark brown in colour.

Size:

Head and body 36 - 55 cm in length. Tail 20 - 25 cm in length.

Status:

They are protected under the Wildlife (Northern Ireland) Order 1985; Schedule 3 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010; Annex V of the EC Habitats Directive. Listed as a UK priority species; IUCN Red List – Least concern.

Threats:

Habitat loss; illegal persecution; roadkill.

Where to find:

Pine marten occur in all counties in Northern Ireland. They are secretive, mainly nocturnal and rarely seen during the day. Locally in Glenarm Forest.

Diet:

Carnivores that will eat anything they can catch including squirrels, other rodents and birds. Will also take carrion, eggs, fruit, nuts and fungi.

When to see:

Year round, however they are in the main nocturnal.



Red Fox

Vulpes vulpes

About:

Incredibly successful due to their broad diet and ability to utilise a wide variety of habitats. They breed in earths which are located in burrows in the ground, active or disused badger setts, or beneath buildings and sheds. The fox family group consists of a breeding male and female with cubs, and sometimes non-breeding females from a previous litter, which help rear the cubs. They live to nine years in the wild, but more typically less than four years.

Identification:

The red fox is another instantly recognised mammal. The size of a large cat or small dog. They have a dog-like appearance, with a red coat, white neck and belly, brown/black legs and long bushy tail. Unlike a dog, they are adept climbers and can jump high walls and even climb trees.

Size:

Head and body 56 - 75 cm in length. Tail is roughly half the body length.

Status:

Widespread and abundant. IUCN Red List – Least concern.

Threats:

Roadkill; hunting; disease.

Where to find:

Across Northern Ireland, even in urban areas. Locally in Glenarm Estate.

Diet:

Varied in their diet, and will adapt according to what is available. Includes rabbits, rats, mice, birds, eggs, earthworms and insects, fruit and vegetables, and scavenged human and pet food.

When to see:

Year round. They are more active at night but may be seen during daylight in quiet areas.



Irish Hare

Lepus timidus hibernicus

About:

One of our few truly native mammals, the Irish Hare has been present in Ireland for at least 11,700 years. It is a slightly smaller subspecies of the mountain hare, and generally does not grow a white coat in winter. Females, being larger, dominate the males throughout the year. During the breeding season hares seen 'boxing' are likely to be a female boxing a male. They can live for up to 9 years but live 3 – 4 years on average.

Identification:

Much larger than rabbits. The coat colour can be quite variable but generally it is russet brown, but darker and lighter forms (e.g. the golden hares of Rathlin) have been recorded. The tail and underbelly are white. Their ears, while long, are shorter than the length of the head.

Size:

Grows to 52 – 56 cm in length.

Status:

Widespread and abundant, but densities vary year to year. Ireland Red List – Least concern.

Threats:

Killed during silage cutting; habitat loss; hunting and coursing.

Where to find:

Widespread throughout Northern Ireland and in habitats ranging from coastal dunes to mountain tops. Locally in the fields between Glenarm Castle and the coast.

Diet:

Grasses, heather and a wide variety of other plant species.

When to see:

Year round.



Black Guillemot

Cephus grylle

About:

A striking, black and white sea bird that tends to breed away from the large seabird colonies on high cliffs and prefers small rocky islands and low-lying, indented stretches, of rocky coast. Nests are often hidden in rock crevices and under boulders, and in cavities or pipes in piers and jetties. Black Guillemots are pursuit divers that propel themselves through the water using their wings.

Identification:

Breeding individuals are all black except for a large white wing patch. They have vivid red legs and inside of mouth that can be seen when the bird calls. Non-breeding individuals are barred black and white. Their call is a feeble, high-pitched whistle or whine.

Size:

32 - 38 cm in length, with a 49 - 58 cm wingspan.

Status:

They are amber listed in both UK and Irish Birds of Conservation Concern. IUCN Red List – Least Concern.

Threats:

Overfishing; Climate Change (linked changes to prey distribution); Pollution; Predation (by introduced species); Bycatch; Offshore Energy Installations.

Where to find:

All along the coast of Northern Ireland, particularly associated with harbours but also cliffs and offshore islands. Locally nests in the walls of Glenarm Harbour and in artificial nest boxes at the harbour. May be seen diving for small fish in Glenarm marina.

Diet:

Fish, crustaceans and invertebrates. Favourite food is the butterfish.

When to see:

Year round, but particularly close to shore in the first few hours after sunrise in April, as they claim nest sites.



Oystercatcher

Haematopus ostralegus

About:

A large, stocky, black and white wading bird. Highly sociable, often with other shore birds. They breed on flat sandy or grassy places near the shore, as well as cliff tops, rocky islands and even fields.

Identification:

It has a long, orange-red bill and reddish-pink legs. In flight, it shows a wide white wing-stripe, a black tail, and a white rump that extends as a 'V' between the wings. Very noisy wader with a loud, distinctive "peep-ing call".

Size:

39–50 cm in length with a 72–91 cm wingspan.

Status:

They are amber listed in both UK and Irish Birds of Conservation Concern. IUCN Red List – Near Threatened.

Threats:

Overfishing; Bait Digging; Habitat Loss; Disturbance; Pollution.

Where to find:

All along the Northern Ireland coastline, especially in estuaries, loughs and bays. Locally on the shoreline and rocks of Glenarm Bay.

Diet:

Mussels and cockles on the coast and mainly worms inland.

When to see:

Year round.



Turnstone

Arenaria interpres

About:

A common wader along our rocky shoreline. Mainly a winter visitor, but large numbers visit our shores in spring and autumn while migrating to and from their breeding grounds. Non-breeding birds may overwinter here. Forages in small flocks among seaweed, pebbles and beach debris. Their average lifespan is about 9 years.

Identification:

Turnstones have a mottled appearance with brown or chestnut and black upperparts, white underparts, and a brown and white or black and white head pattern. Their legs are orange. In flight, they show a series of black and white stripes.

Size:

21-24 cm in length with a 54 cm wingspan.

Status:

They are amber listed in the UK Birds of Conservation Concern, and green listed in the Irish Birds of Conservation Concern. IUCN Red List – Least Concern.

Threats:

Predation in some nesting grounds by American mink.

Where to find:

All along the Northern Ireland coastline. Turnstones like to feed on rocks covered with seaweed, and will feed along piers and jetties. Locally at Glenarm strand.

Diet:

Insects, crustaceans and molluscs.

When to see:

Present for most of the year, but particularly in winter.



Fulmar

Fulmarus glacialis

About:

Typically a pelagic species but comes ashore to nest in summer, and periodically during the winter. Both adults and young use foul-smelling projectile vomiting to defend against predators. Charismatic bird that will approach to inspect observers on clifftops.

Identification:

Gull-like bird with white head and underparts, has grey back and upper surface to wings. An all-grey (dark phase) morph exists, particularly in the north of their range. Straight, stout bill with hooked tip and tube shaped nostrils. Flies with stiff wings and performs long glides just above sea surface.

Size:

33-35 cm in length with 80 cm wingspan.

Status:

They are amber listed in the UK Birds of Conservation Concern, and green listed in the Irish Birds of Conservation Concern. IUCN Red List – Least Concern.

Threats:

Marine Litter; Bycatch; Offshore Energy Installations; Disturbance; Predation (by introduced species).

Where to find:

All along the Northern Ireland coastline. Locally nesting at the cliffs above the coast road, south of Glenarm.

Diet:

Fish; plankton/krill; fisheries discards; carrion (whale/dolphin carcasses).

When to see:

Year round both at nesting cliffs and at sea.



Black-headed Gull

Chroicocephalus ridibundus

About:

The black-headed gull is a familiar sight on farmland, wetland and coastal habitats throughout Northern Ireland. It nests on salt marshes and islands in flooded gravel pits and reservoirs, sometimes forming very large, noisy colonies. There are about 140,000 breeding pairs in Britain and about 1.7 million wintering birds each year. They live for around 11 years.

Identification:

Has a chocolate-brown head during the summer, which turns white, with a brown ear spot, for the rest of the year. It is silvery-grey above and white below with red legs and a red bill. The wings are silver with a white leading edge, and black wingtips.

Size:

35-38 cm in length with a 1 m wingspan.

Status:

They are amber listed in the UK Birds of Conservation Concern, and red listed in the Irish Birds of Conservation Concern. IUCN Red List – Least Concern.

Threats:

Disease (Avian Flu); Oil Spills; Chemical Pollutants.

Where to find:

All round the coast, especially ports and harbours but also at many locations inland. Locally around the pier and river mouth in Glenarm Harbour.

Diet:

Worms; insects; fish; carrion.

When to see:

Year round.



Eider Duck

Somateria mollissima

About:

The heaviest and fastest flying duck in Northern Ireland. A true sea duck, rarely found away from the coast. Feeds by diving in waters up to 20 m depth. Nest colonially on offshore islands, along low-lying coast, where the threat of predation by mammals is low. Overwinters in shallow, inshore coastal waters, near estuary mouths.

Identification:

Large and heavy-built, with short neck, large head, and wedge-shaped bill. Males are white with black belly, sides and rump. Male's head is white with a black crown and yellow bill. Female is brown with black markings, and grey bill, similar to females of other duck species.

Size:

50 - 71 cm in length with a wingspan of 80 – 108 cm.

Status:

Amber listed on UK and Irish Birds of Conservation Concern. IUCN Red List: Near Threatened.

Threats:

Oil Spills; Persecution; Overfishing; Disturbance; Bycatch; Disease.

Where to find:

All coasts of Northern Ireland, especially in sea loughs. Locally in Glenarm Bay.

Diet:

Mussels, other molluscs, crustaceans and echinoderms.

When to see:

Year round.



Kingfisher

Alcedo atthis

About:

Small, unmistakable, bright blue and orange bird of slow moving or still water. Despite their vivid colours, kingfishers can be easily overlooked perched motionless on a branch on the lookout for fish. They rarely move from their territories but may move to lakes and coasts during extended spells of bad weather. They hunt food by plunge diving from a perch or while hovering.

Identification:

Underparts are a bright orange-red, while the wings and back of the head are dark blue. The back, rump and tail are a bright, 'electric' blue.

Size:

16 - 17 cm in length with a wingspan of 24 - 26 cm.

Status:

Amber listed in UK and Irish Birds of Conservation Concern. IUCN Red List: Least Concern.

Threats:

Hard Winters; Habitat Loss; Pollution.

Where to find:

Throughout Northern Ireland. Locally found on the Glenarm River.

Diet:

Small fish (e.g. stickleback and minnow) and larger aquatic insects.

When to see:

All year round.



Buzzard

Buteo buteo

About:

The most widespread and abundant bird of prey in the UK. Often seen perched on fences and telegraph posts, or soaring high in the sky.

Identification:

Quite a large bird of prey with broad, rounded wings, and a short neck and tail. It has a short hooked bill suitable for tearing meat. When gliding and soaring it will often hold its wings in a shallow 'V', with the tail fanned. Variable in colour from all dark brown to paler variations, all have dark wingtips and a finely barred tail. Produces a very characteristic loud mewing call.

Size:

51 - 57 cm in length with a wingspan of 113 - 128 cm.

Status:

Green listed in UK and Irish Birds of Conservation Concern. IUCN Red List: Least Concern.

Threats:

Poisoning; Persecution; Wind Farms.

Where to find:

Throughout Northern Ireland. Locally can be seen hovering over Glenarm Village and the adjacent countryside, and over the cliffs on the coast road south of Glenarm.

Diet:

Small mammals; birds; carrion; earthworms; large insects.

When to see:

All year round.



House Martin

Delichon urbicum

About:

A common summer visitor to Northern Ireland, they overwinter in Africa. Usually build their mud nests below the eaves of buildings, but will also nest on cliffs. Forage in areas of mixed agriculture, near water, and in the vicinity of woodland.

Identification:

Between Sand Martin and Swallow in size, but with a distinctive white rump not present in either of the other species. They have a glossy black head, back, wings and tail, with pure white underparts. Has a shallow tail fork like a Sand Martin.

Size:

12 cm in length with a wingspan of 26 - 29 cm.

Status:

Amber listed in UK and Irish Birds of Conservation Concern. IUCN Red List: Least Concern.

Threats:

Nest removal; adverse weather.

Where to find:

Throughout Northern Ireland, especially in urban areas. Locally can be seen nesting and flying around Glenarm Village, with nests visible beneath the eaves on some houses on Spring Hill.

Diet:

Insects caught in flight.

When to see:

Mid-March to late September.



Mute Swan

Cygnus olor

About:

A very large white water bird, with a long S-shaped neck, which it uses for grazing vegetation on the river, lake or sea bed. More than 20% of the European population winter in Ireland.

Identification:

All white body. It has an orange bill with a black base and a prominent black knob. Flies with its neck extended and with regular, slow, and audible wingbeats.

Size:

1.4 – 1.6 m in length with a wingspan of 2.1 – 2.4 m.

Status:

Amber listed in UK and Irish Birds of Conservation Concern. IUCN Red List: Least Concern.

Threats:

Lead poisoning (fishing gear); ingesting hooks and lures; copper poisoning; collision with overhead power lines; oil spills; bird flu.

Where to find:

Throughout much of Northern Ireland. Locally can be seen on Glenarm River and in the harbour.

Diet:

Water plants, grass; occasionally small amphibians, snails and insects.

When to see:

Year round.



Hooded Crow

Corvus cornix

About:

Closely related to the carrion crow, which until recently was regarded as the same species. In areas where the two species overlap there may be some interbreeding. Their distribution covers Ireland and the west of Scotland but it is largely absent from East Scotland, England and Wales.

Identification:

Slightly larger than a Rook. Head, throat, breast, wings and tail are black, while the rest of the body is a cold grey or buff grey-brown.

Size:

45 – 47 cm in length with a wingspan of 93 – 104 cm.

Status:

Green listed in UK and Irish Birds of Conservation Concern.

Threats:

Hunting.

Where to find:

Throughout Northern Ireland. Locally around Glenarm Village and harbour.

Diet:

Carrion; invertebrates; grain; eggs; young birds; shellfish.

When to see:

Year round.



Swallow

Hirundo rustica

About:

A common summer visitor to Northern Ireland, they overwinter in Africa. Construct bowl-shaped nests out of mud in suitable spots in barns and other buildings. Prefer sites near open pastures with access to water, and quiet farm buildings. Large flocks gather at wetland sites prior to migration in autumn.

Identification:

Small birds with dark, glossy blue-black backs and wings, red throats, pale underparts and long tail streamers. Very agile in flight, spending most of their time on the wing.

Size:

17 - 19 cm in length with a wingspan of 32 - 35 cm.

Status:

They are green listed in the UK Birds of Conservation Concern, and amber listed in the Irish Birds of Conservation Concern. IUCN Red List – Least Concern.

Threats:

Habitat Loss; Pesticides; Loss of nest sites; Hunting in overwintering grounds.

Where to find:

Throughout Northern Ireland. Locally flying around Glenarm Village, Glenarm river and the adjacent fields.

Diet:

Insects caught in flight.

When to see:

Mid-March to late September.



Serrated Wrack (brown algae)

Fucus serratus

About:

Grows in abundance on the lower shore, forming zones on sheltered and semi-exposed shores. Surface cover by this species may reach over 95 percent during the summer months. Density becomes patchy during winter and autumn. The dense cover provided by serrated wrack provides shelter for a wide variety of other intertidal species.

Identification:

Frond is flattened with a distinct midrib and serrated margins, it has no air bladders. Swollen reproductive structures develop at the frond tips in winter.

Size:

Up to around 65 cm in length.

Status:

Widespread and locally abundant.

Threats:

Unsustainable harvesting.

Where to find:

Grows on rocky shores on all coasts. Locally at Glenarm Strand.

When to see:

Year round.



Bladder Wrack (brown algae)

Fucus vesiculosus

About:

A common wrack of the middle shore. Often found in association with egg-wrack. Found in a zone above serrated wrack but below spiralled wrack. The paired air bladders give the fronds buoyancy, which helps keep them in the sunlight of the surface waters.

Identification:

Distinctive greenish-brown seaweed. Frond is broad and flattened with paired air bladders either side of a prominent mid rib. The air bladders can be absent on wave exposed shores.

Size:

Up to around 80 cm in length but has been recorded growing to 2m in length in sheltered conditions.

Status:

Widespread and locally abundant.

Threats:

Unsustainable harvesting.

Where to find:

On all coasts, but most frequently occurring on moderately sheltered rocky shores. Locally at Glenarm Strand.

When to see:

Year round.



Dulse (red algae)

Palmaria palmata

About:

A leafy red algae, Dulse is a perennial species with new growth every year. One of our best known seaweeds as it is widely eaten, and is harvested and sold commercially for that purpose. Most palatable when rapidly dried and consumed with dark ale or stout! The form of Dulse that grows on the upper parts of Cuvie, is considered more palatable than the form found growing on rock substrate.

Identification:

Red algae with a flattened frond that can be leathery or membranous (epiphytic form). Grows directly from a small discoid holdfast gradually widening and subdividing. The stipe is short and inconspicuous.

Size:

Frond usually between 20 and 50 cm in length, but sometimes up to 1m.

Status:

Widespread around Northern Ireland coast.

Threats:

Siltation; Unsustainable Harvesting; Chemical Pollution.

Where to find:

On rock substrate on low intertidal and shallow sub-tidal, but can grow down to 20m depth in exceptionally clear water. Where competition for space and light restricts availability of rock substrate, Dulse often grows on other algae, especially Cuvie, as an epiphyte. Locally in Glenarm Bay.

When to see:

Year round.



Coral Weed (red algae)

Corallina officinalis

About:

A calcified red algae which consists of calcareous, branching, segmented fronds, usually erect. Looks a bit like a red heather, appearing very plant like in structure. Fronds rise from a disk shaped, holdfast about 7 cm in diameter. Reproductive organs are urn shaped, usually at the tips of the fronds. Collected for medical purposes; the fronds are dried and converted to hydroxyapatite and used as bone forming material. Also sold as a powder for use in the cosmetic industry.

Identification:

Fronds consist of a jointed chain of calcareous segments, each becoming wedge shaped higher up the frond. Branches are opposite, resulting in a feather-like appearance. The colour varies; purple, red, pink or yellowish with white knuckles and white extremities.

Size:

Up to 12 cm in height but often much more stunted in growth, with 6 – 7cm more typical.

Status:

Widespread and abundant, especially on exposed coasts.

Threats:

Physical Disturbance; Chemical Pollution; Removal of canopy species; Siltation.

Where to find:

Grows on rock in mid-tidal pools, on the lower intertidal and the shallow subtidal. Locally in Glenarm Bay

When to see:

Year round.



Sea Lettuce (green algae)

Ulva lactuca

About:

Grows on all but the most exposed shores. In very sheltered conditions, plants that have become detached from the substrate can continue to grow, forming floating communities. Tolerates brackish conditions and can be found on suitable substrates in estuaries. An important forage food for wildfowl species such as Pale-bellied Brent geese.

Identification:

A small green alga with a broad, crumpled frond that is delicate, translucent and membranous. It is attached to rock via a small hold-fast.

Size:

Frond grows up to 30cm in length.

Status:

Widespread and abundant.

Threats:

Siltation; Physical Disturbance; Oil Spill.

Where to find:

Sea lettuce is found on the lower intertidal, rock pools on the lower shore and the shallow sub-tidal. Locally at Glenarm strand.

When to see:

Year round.



Seagrass (green algae)

Zostera marina

About:

A grass-like flowering plant, and one of only two seagrass species commonly found in Northern Ireland. Numerous flowers occur on a reproductive shoot, similar to those of terrestrial grasses, from mid to late summer. Seagrass beds are important habitat for many marine invertebrate and algae species, and as a nursery area for fish and shellfish. They also stabilise coastal sediments and promote settling of sediment from the water column. They may live up to 100 years of age. Blades of seagrass are often found washed up on the shore in the late summer and autumn.

Identification:

Grass like plant with dark green, long, narrow, ribbon shaped leaves, with 5-11 veins and rounded leaf tips, sometimes with a sharp point.

Size:

Leaves usually 20-50 cm but up to 2 m in length and 4-10 mm wide.

Status:

Protected in the UK by the Habitat Action Plan and listed on the Northern Ireland list of priority habitats. Also listed on OSPAR List of Threatened and/or Declining Species and Habitats.

Threats:

Bottom Trawling and Dredging; Boat anchoring; Pollution; Eutrophication; Sedimentation; Water Turbidity; Disease.

Where to find:

Seagrass beds can occur on low intertidal and subtidal sand and mud habitats, down to 5 m. Typically occurs in sheltered waters such as shallow inlets, bays, estuaries and saline lagoons. Locally in Glenarm Bay and Red Bay (Waterfoot Marine Conservation Zone).

When to see:

Year round, but beds are at their peak extent in mid-to late summer.



Pedunculate Oak

Quercus robur

About:

The pedunculate oak is one of our most familiar and best loved trees. Found everywhere from woodlands to gardens, its large size, distinctive leaves and conspicuous acorns (nuts) make it easy to identify. This species has long been used for building material as it produces strong, durable timber. It serves as an important species for biodiversity, as it supports a greater variety of species than any other tree in Northern Ireland. Acorns are not produced until the tree is at least 40 years old and are a rich food source for a variety of animals.

Identification:

The oak is a large tree, with a broad, irregular crown. Its bark is light brown or grey and fissured. Its large boughs tend to develop low on the trunk, becoming gnarled as the tree grows. The leaves have four to seven pairs of lobes, forming a typical 'wavy-edged' outline, measuring approximately 7-14 cm. The flowers are long yellow hanging catkins. The acorns are found in clusters on long stalks known as peduncles. They are egg-shaped and whitish-green in colour, becoming dark brown as they mature. They sit in scaly cups measuring up to 1.8 cm in diameter.

Size:

Grows up to 45 m in height.

Status:

Widespread and locally abundant.

Threats:

Oak processionary moth; acute oak decline; land conversion; over grazing; poor woodland management.

Where to find:

Found throughout Northern Ireland in deciduous woodlands, parks, gardens, high forest, ancient wood pastureland, and hedgerows. Locally at Glenarm estate.

When to see:

Year round, with leaves spring to late autumn and acorns in the autumn.



Common Dog Violet

Viola riviniana

About:

The Common Dog-violet is a very common flowering plant species of shady places such as hedgerows and woodland, and is by far the most common of the wild violets. Its flowers are not scented like those of its relative, the Sweet Violet.

Identification:

A mat-forming perennial with ovate, heart-shaped leaves and violet flowers. The bright green leaves grow in a basal rosette on long stalks. The unscented flowers are borne on single stems. The lower petal (spur) fades to white at its base with dark veins or guide lines leading to the centre of the flower.

Size:

Grows to 5 to 20 cm in height.

Status:

Widespread and locally abundant.

Threats:

None identified.

Where to find:

Found throughout Northern Ireland. Locally at Straidkilly Nature Reserve.

When to see:

Summer months, flowers April to June.



Bird's Nest Orchid

Neottia nidus-avis

About:

Both the English and Latin names for this plant refer to its root system, which resembles a tangled bird's nest. These roots are heavily infected with a symbiotic fungus from which the plant gets all its nutrition, as above ground the plant has no leaves. Bird's Nest Orchid is most often associated with beech trees, but also occurs in oak woods.

Identification:

A tall, upright stem with dozens of small, yellowish-brown flowers arranged in a cylindrical spike. Honey-scented.

Size:

Grows up to 50 cm in height.

Status:

Protected from intentional picking, removal or destruction, and from selling (in whole or part), and from advertising for sale, by the Wildlife (Northern Ireland) Order 1985 - Schedule 8 Part 1. Suffered considerable decline in Britain between 1930 and 1970 due to habitat loss, but decline in Ireland was not to the same extent. Can be abundant locally.

Threats:

Habitat loss.

Where to find:

Scattered distribution throughout Northern Ireland. Locally at Straidkilly Nature Reserve and the base of the Cliffs on the coast road south of Glenarm.

When to see:

Summer months, flowers May to July.



Bluebell

Hyacinthoides non-scripta

About:

Bluebells flower early, taking advantage of the sunlight that reaches the forest floor before the trees are in full leaf. When growing en masse in woodlands they create a dazzling display of brilliant blue in the springtime.

Identification:

The fragrant bell-shaped flowers stand upright when they are in bud, but hang downwards, nodding in the breeze when fully open; they may be violet-blue, white or even pink on rare occasions, and have cream-coloured anthers. They are arranged in clusters of 4-16 on flower spikes.

Size:

Grows up to 30 cm in height.

Status:

Widespread and abundant.

Threats:

Commercial scale picking; Habitat loss.

Where to find:

Found throughout Northern Ireland wherever suitable habitat exists. Locally at Straidkilly Nature Reserve.

When to see:

Springtime, flowers mid-April to late May.



Common Spotted-Orchid

Dactylorhiza fuchsii

About:

Our most common orchid species. Grows in many different habitats including damp grassland, open woods, scrub and fens (usually on chalky soil) as well as spoil-tips, railway embankments and old quarries.

Identification:

Their leaves are green, usually with purple oval spots, forming a rosette at ground level. The flowers range from white and pale pink through to purple, but have distinctive darker pink spots and stripes on their three-lobed lips. The flowers are densely packed in short, cone-shaped clusters.

Size:

Grows up to 60 cm in height.

Status:

Widespread and locally abundant. IUCN Red List – Least Concern.

Threats:

Habitat loss.

Where to find:

Found throughout Northern Ireland. Locally at the old limestone quarry on the coast road south of Glenarm.

When to see:

Summer months, flowers June, July and August.



Early Purple Orchid

Orchis mascula

About:

The Early Purple Orchid is one of our earliest flowering orchids. They are often found in habitats with non-acidic soils such as hedgerows, banks, ancient woodland and open grassland.

Identification:

They have up to 50 flowers arranged in a cone-shaped cluster on a tall spike. Flower colour can vary from deep purple, through pink to white. The lower lip of each flower has three lobes with dark purple spots running down the pale upper part of the central, notched lobe. The upper petals form a hood. One feature, which distinguishes this orchid, is its long, stout, upturned cylindrical spur. The leaves are glossy, dark green with dark spots, and form a rosette on the ground.

Size:

Grows up to 40 cm in height.

Status:

Widespread and locally abundant. Vascular Plant Red Data List for Great Britain – Least Concern.

Threats:

Habitat loss.

Where to find:

Scattered distribution across Northern Ireland. Locally at the old limestone quarry, and at the base of the cliffs on the coast road south of Glenarm.

When to see:

Springtime, the plants appear from January onwards. Flowers April, May and June.



Sea Pink

Armeria maritima

About:

A familiar flower of our coastlines, Sea Pink is found on coastal cliffs, shingle beaches and sand dunes, as well as on inland marshes. It has a high salt tolerance.

Identification:

Forms compact cushions of narrow evergreen leaves, and has attractive deep pink or occasionally white flowers. The flowers have five petals, and occur in groups at the top of a flower spike.

Size:

Grows up to 20 cm in height.

Status:

Widespread and abundant in coastal areas.

Threats:

None identified.

Where to find:

Distributed right around the coastline of Northern Ireland. Locally along the coastal path south of Glenarm, and around the 'Madman's Window'.

When to see:

Year round. An evergreen perennial which flowers from April to July, and sometimes on into early autumn.



Wood Cranesbill

Geranium sylvaticum

About:

This wild geranium is one of Northern Ireland's rarest plants, confined to hazel scrub, lightly shaded woodland or woodland margins.

Identification:

A downy perennial geranium with deeply lobed leaves on long stalks; the flowers are purple-pink to mauve in colour with a white base. Similar to meadow crane's-bill, but with smaller flowers of a less intense blue.

Size:

Grows up to 70 cm in height.

Status:

Rare in Ireland. They are protected under the Wildlife (Northern Ireland) Order 1985 which makes it an offence to pick, uproot, or destroy this plant. Irish Red List for vascular plants: listed as vulnerable.

Threats:

Habitat Loss; illegal collection; grazing; climate change.

Where to find:

Found at only a few sites in Northern Ireland, all located in the Glens of Antrim. Locally at Ulster Wildlife's Feystown Nature Reserve, Feystown Road, Glenarm. The reserve is very small and is not open to the public but can be viewed from the road.

When to see:

Year round. Flowers in June and July.



Shanny (Common Blenny)

Lipophrys pholis

About:

Our most widespread and abundant blenny species. Found in pools and under rocks on the lower shore and down to 10 m water depth. Can remain out of water under rocks or seaweeds for extended periods. Most active during daytime at high tide. Move around in short bursts, seldom swimming far. Typically props itself up on pectoral fins. Lives for up to 10 years.

Identification:

Elongated, smooth and scale-less, with a large head and large eyes. Has single long dorsal fin with a dip in the middle. Very small tentacles on the head but not noticeable as in Yarrel's or Tompot blenny. Colouration varies with surrounding habitat from dark brown or blotched to blackish, with a dark spot behind the first dorsal fin.

Size:

Grows up to 16 cm in length.

Status:

Widespread and abundant.

Threats:

None identified.

Where to find:

All coasts of Northern Ireland where suitable rocky substrate exists. Locally at Glenarm Strand.

Diet:

Gastropods; barnacles; amphipods; algae; crabs; polychaetes; isopods; copepods; limpets; mussels.

When to see:

Year round.



Beadlet Anemone

Actinia equina

About:

Beadlet anemones live attached to rocks, catching prey and carrion from the water with their stinging tentacles. They can be found in rock pools on the lower shore, sometimes in clustered groups, and subtidally to 20 m depth. Often nicknamed bloodsuckers for the way their tentacles attach if touched. Beadlet anemones will aggressively fight each other should their tentacles come into contact.

Identification:

The Beadlet Anemone has a squat, jelly-like 'body' with thick short tentacles, which are retracted when disturbed or uncovered by the falling tide. Bright blue wart like spots, are often found round the inside of the top margin of the column. Although typically blood red in colour, they can vary from red to green or brown. The strawberry anemone, *Actinia fragacea*, is similar in appearance to the Beadlet Anemone but is plumper and red to reddish brown in colour with greenish spots.

Size:

The base is broad, growing up to 5 cm in diameter.

Status:

Widespread and abundant.

Threats:

None identified.

Where to find:

On all coasts of Northern Ireland where suitable rocky shore exists. Locally at Glenarm Strand.

Diet:

Will eat almost anything it can catch and fit into its mouth, preying mainly on molluscs and other marine invertebrates.

When to see:

Year round.



Brown Crab

Cancer pagurus

About:

Also known as the edible crab. A robust looking crab, with large claws and a thick, broad, orange carapace (shell). They are the primary crab species eaten in the UK and Ireland. The female carries the fertilised eggs for seven to eight months before they hatch in spring or summer. A large female can carry a staggering 20 million eggs at one time. They live for up to 20 years. Found on the low intertidal to depths of 100m on bedrock, boulders, mixed coarse ground, and offshore in muddy sand.

Identification:

Easily identified by its large black-tipped toothed claws and characteristic 'pie-crust' edging to the oval shaped carapace. Underside and legs tend to be covered in stiff, 'bristle-like' hairs. Easily recognised by the combination of its large size and colour.

Size:

15 cm in width but specimens measuring up to 28.5 cm in width have been landed in European waters.

Status:

Widespread and abundant.

Threats:

Chemical pollution (oil dispersant).

Where to find:

All coasts of Northern Ireland. Locally at Glenarm Strand.

Diet:

Will eat almost anything but specialise in predating shellfish.

When to see:

Year round.



Common Shore Crab

Carcinus maenas

About:

Our most familiar crab, found in a wide range of habitats and salinities. Females carry a yellow egg mass on underside of abdomen for several weeks or months. Some individuals are infected with a parasitic barnacle, which appears as an orange ball on the underside of the abdomen, which is often mistaken for an egg mass. Males have a triangular shaped abdomen, while in females the abdomen is rounded. Found on all types of shore, from mid intertidal to depths of 60 m. Lives for 5 – 10 years.

Identification:

Adult has an angular-oval carapace with 5 teeth on each side of the eyes, and 3 equal lobes between the eyes. Carapace colour is variable, typically marbled green, but may be brown or reddish. Juveniles can vary widely in colour but have same shaped carapace.

Size:

8-10 cm in width.

Status:

Widespread and abundant.

Threats:

Oil spills.

Where to find:

All coasts of Northern Ireland. Locally at Glenarm Strand.

Diet:

Will eat a wide variety of plant and animal matter but specialise in predating shellfish.

When to see:

Year round.



Edible Periwinkle

Littorina littorea

About:

Our most common and largest periwinkle species. It is found, sometimes in great abundance, on rocks and amongst seaweeds on the middle to lower shore. In sheltered areas they can also occur on sandy or muddy habitats. Their average lifespan is 5 years.

Identification:

Has a rounded, whorled shell, ranging in colour from grey, to black, to brown and red, but generally black or dark grey-brown. It has concentric ridges, dark lines and a pointed apex.

Size:

Grows up to 5.2 cm.

Status:

Widespread and abundant.

Threats:

None identified.

Where to find:

All coasts of Northern Ireland where there are rocky shores, except for the most exposed shores. Locally at Glenarm Strand.

Diet:

Seaweeds and other marine algae.

When to see:

Year round.



Flat Periwinkle

Littorina obtusata

About:

Found amongst the seaweeds on which it feeds, this species inhabits the lower parts of the shore. It is most commonly associated with egg wrack, bladder wrack and serrated wrack. It can live for up to 3 years.

Identification:

The Flat Periwinkle has a flattened whorled shell, which is variable in colour including bright yellow, orange, red, patterned or green.

Size:

1 cm.

Status:

Widespread and abundant.

Threats:

None identified.

Where to find:

All coasts of Northern Ireland where there are rocky shores and suitable seaweed cover. Locally at Glenarm Strand.

Diet:

Seaweeds and other marine algae.

When to see:

Year round.



Painted Topshell

Calliostoma zizyphinum

About:

Found on seaweed covered rocky shores from extreme lower shore to 300 m water depth. The painted topshell is our largest, and most striking, topshell species.

Identification:

A cone-shaped, straight sided shell, up to 3 cm high and 3 cm broad, with a sharp apex and a flat base. The shell has regular spiral grooves and ridges and up to 12-13 whorls. The shell is smooth and clean and can be cream, pale pink or violet with streaks and blotches of brown, red or purple. Occasionally, individuals are completely white.

Size:

Can grow up to 3 cm in height.

Status:

Widespread and abundant.

Threats:

None identified.

Where to find:

All coasts of Northern Ireland where there are rocky shores. Locally at Glenarm Strand at extreme low tide.

Diet:

Feeds on a variety of sessile invertebrates, especially hydroids.

When to see:

Year round.



Common Blue

Polyommatus icarus

About:

The Common Blue, as its name suggests, is the most widespread blue butterfly in the UK and Ireland. It can be found in a wide range of grassy habitats. The chrysalis secretes pheromones which ants find attractive, causing them to bury the chrysalis to protect it from predators.

Identification:

The adult male has bright blue wings with a dark brown border, fringed with white. The female's wings are predominantly brown but have a blue tone closer to the body. She has a line of orange spots towards the edge of her wings, which are fringed with white. Females in populations further north and west tend to have more blue than those found to the south and east.

Size:

Wingspan of up to 2.5 cm, but the *Polyommatus icarus mariscolore* subspecies may achieve a wingspan of up to 3.8 cm.

Status:

Widespread and locally abundant.

Threats:

Habitat Loss; Pesticides.

Where to find:

Adults can be found in almost all areas where larval food plants are plentiful, from grasslands to roadside verges and waste ground. Caterpillars, pupae and eggs can all be found on or around food plants. Locally at Straidkilly Nature Reserve and the Old Quarry on the coast road south of Glenarm.

Diet:

The main larval food plant is Common Bird's-foot-trefoil, but may also be found on Greater Bird's-foot-trefoil, Black Medick, Common Restharrow, White Clover and Lesser Trefoil. Adults feed on the nectar from a wide variety of flowering plants.

When to see:

May to September. They are most active in warm, sunny weather.



Silver-washed Fritillary

Argynnis paphia

About:

The largest fritillary butterfly found in the UK and Ireland. Named for the silver colour of its underwings. Courtship occurs on the wing; females fly in a straight line while the male flies loops around her, showering her in pheromone-bearing 'scent scales'. Males can be attracted by anything that is bright orange, including clothes.

Identification:

Adults are large and are a distinctive deep orange-brown with black spots. Males have four distinctive black lines on their forewings. The underwings have silver streaks.

Size:

Wingspan of up to 7.2 to 7.6 cm.

Status:

Locally common in favoured habitats.

Threats:

Habitat Loss; Pesticides.

Where to find:

Broadleaved woodlands where the larval food plants are found. They are most active in sunny rides and glades within the forest. Locally at Glenarm Nature Reserve.

Diet:

The main larval food plant is common dog violet. Adults feed on aphid honeydew in the tree canopy or on bramble and thistle flowers.

When to see:

Late June to late August.



Six-spot Burnet moth

Zygaena filipendulae

About:

Medium sized moth found flying during the day. The most common of the day-flying burnet moths found in the UK and Ireland. Flies in a distinctive lazy, buzzing fashion. The bright red colours warn predators that it is poisonous; the moth produces hydrogen cyanide for protection.

Identification:

Distinctive black flying moth with six red spots on the forewings and red hindwings. Easy to confuse with other burnet species but the six-spot burnet is the only one with six spots!

Size:

Wingspan of up to 3 to 4 cm.

Status:

Widely distributed in coastal localities.

Threats:

Habitat Loss; Pesticides.

Where to find:

Grassland and dune habitats on sunny days. Locally on the Glenarm Coastal path to the south of Glenarm, near to the 'Madman's Window'.

Diet:

The main larval food plant is common Bird's-foot-trefoil. Adults feed on nectar from a variety of flowers but knapweed and thistle are favourites.

When to see:

June to August.



Glossary

Apex: The top or highest point.

Basal rosette: A circular arrangement of leaves at the base of the plant.

Beak (Cetacean): The mouth structure of a whale or dolphin.

Beaufort Sea State: Scale, which describes the observed state of the sea surface.

Benthic: Ecological region on, in, or near the seabed.

Birds of Conservation Concern (BoCC): Lists split into three categories of conservation importance – red, amber and green – with red being the highest conservation priority, and green the lowest.

Blow (cetacean): Exhaled air from the blowhole of a whale, dolphin or porpoise.

Bycatch: Unwanted fish and other marine creatures trapped during commercial fishing for a different species.

Catkin: A downy, hanging flowering spike of a tree.

Calcareous: containing calcium carbonate (chalk).

Carapace: The hard upper shell of a crab.

Conifer: A tree which bears cones and needle-like leaves that are typically evergreen.

Coursing: Pursuit of game animals, such as hares, with dogs.

EU Habitats Directive: Legal act of the European Union dealing with the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora.

Eutrophication: excessive richness of nutrients in a body of water.

Foraging: Searching for wild food resources.

Habitat: The natural home or environment of an animal, plant, or other organism.

Holdfast: Stalked organ by which an alga is attached to a substrate (e.g. rock).

Hydroxyapatite: A mineral, which is the main inorganic constituent of tooth enamel and bone.

IUCN Red List: Global evaluation of the conservation status of plant and animal species.

Morph: Physically different type, within a population of a species.

Nocturnal: Species that is active at night.

Noise pollution: Human-generated noise, e.g. in the marine environment.

Ovate: Having an oval outline or ovoid shape

Parasitic: Organism living in or on another organism.

Pelagic: Ecological region neither close to the seabed nor near the shore.

Rump: The hind part of the body of a mammal or the lower back of a bird.

Russet: Reddish brown in colour.

Sessile: Fixed in one place, immobile.

Spur: Outgrowth or spike of tissue on flower.

Stipe: Stem of a seaweed.

Symbiotic: Close and long-term biological interaction between two different organisms.

Suggested Identification Guides

Whales, dolphins and seals: a field guide to the marine mammals of the world. A & C Black – Publishers.

Britain's Mammals: A Field Guide to the Mammals of Britain and Ireland (WILDGuides). Princeton University Press – Publishers.

Collins Bird Guide: The Most Complete Guide to the Birds of Britain and Europe. Harper Collins -Publishers.

Photographic Guide to Sea and Shore Life of Britain and North-west Europe. Oxford Natural History – Publishers.

Marine Fish & Invertebrates of Northern Europe. AquaPress – Publishers.

Seaweeds of Britain and Ireland. SeaSearch Guide. Wild Nature Press – Publishers.

The Wildflowers of Ireland: A Field Guide. The Collins Press – Publishers.

Collins Flower Guide (Britain and Ireland). Harper Collins - Publishers.

British Insects: A photographic guide to every common species (Collins Complete Guide). Harper Collins -Publishers.

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