



BIRDS ON THE EDGE

# Birds On The Edge project strategy 2013-2015

1<sup>st</sup> June 2013



Birds On The Edge is a long-term collaboration between the States of Jersey Department of the Environment, National Trust for Jersey and Durrell Wildlife Conservation Trust to protect and restore Jersey's coastland habitats for the island's wildlife and people to enjoy.

[www.birdsontheedge.org](http://www.birdsontheedge.org)



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# BIRDS ON THE EDGE

## I. INTRODUCTION

Birds on the Edge (the Project) is a joint initiative between the National Trust for Jersey, the States of Jersey Department for the Environment and Durrell Wildlife Conservation Trust, which aims to restore degraded areas of the Island's coastal habitats and to enhance populations of locally rare or endangered birds.

Once abundant in Jersey, birds such as the yellowhammer, curlew, stonechat, skylark and the Atlantic puffin have experienced alarming declines in recent decades. This has been highlighted in the publication of Jersey's first bird redlist launched in 2011 to highlight the level of threat and likelihood of local extinction for each species of bird in Jersey<sup>1</sup>.

The declines are likely to be caused by several factors but can be mainly attributed to the following:

- **Loss** of nesting habitat in hedgerows and scrub. Many local hedges have been lost to disease, storm damage and removal and those that remain are in poor condition, providing very limited opportunities for nesting. Hedges also provide shelter from predators, food for invertebrates that the birds feed to their young and berries that the birds feed on in the autumn;
- **Loss** of invertebrates naturally found in areas of wild flowers and grasses, such as buffer strips, headlands, heather, gorse, permanent grasslands and scrub. These coastal and farmland habitats have become degraded with the loss of traditional management, leading to their encroachment by invasive species such as bracken and bramble. The loss of these species-rich habitats has caused a reduction in the number of invertebrates available for the birds to feed to their young during the spring;
- **Lack** of winter food sources in permanent grasslands and arable fields, due to the nature of modern farming techniques, market demand and crop rotation.

Birds on the Edge is a vitally important project for Jersey and has become the catalyst to bringing together the three leading nature conservation organizations in the Island, working towards the common goal of safeguarding threatened bird species and restoring Jersey's coastal and farmland ecosystems (see *Appendix 1: Project in context of present conservation strategies*).

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<sup>1</sup>*Conservation Status of Jersey's Birds: Jersey's Bird Populations in the 21st Century* 2011.

The criteria for inclusion in Jersey's Bird Redlist includes: severe decline of population size (more than 50% over 20 years), rarity (less than 20 birds on breeding population) and international conservation status using IUCN criteria (International Union for Conservation of Nature).



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The main aim of the Project is to increase the area of coastal grassland, in order to reverse the decline of many bird species that are otherwise facing extinction in Jersey and will achieve this through restoration of degraded habitats.

Maritime heath, cliff and slope are listed as valuable habitats In the Biodiversity Strategy for Jersey (2000). Atlantic Dry (Maritime) heathland is currently in an unfavourable condition. This habitat has a global distribution limited to the north Atlantic coasts of Europe, where it once occurred widely, but has now been reduced in extent to such a degree that it has become a rare habitat in Europe and is listed for special attention under Annex 1 of the EC Habitats Directive<sup>2</sup>. This Directive was adopted in 1992 as an EU response to the Berne Convention, to which the States of Jersey are a signatory. Coastal farmland and farmland across the Island has also changed with the loss of mixed farms and the aggregation of land, during which much habitat including hedgerows has been lost in recent times.

The Project's habitat restoration strategy focuses initially on the coastal slopes and cliffs of the Island's north and south-west coasts, clearing bracken and encouraging a conservation grazing project, but also aims to restore farmland habitats and enhance their species-rich features such as hedges, buffer strips and conservation crops.

The Project aims to implement population management techniques to protect the most vulnerable bird species facing local extinction, such as the curlew and the skylark, to halt widescale declines in more common local species such as meadow pipit and linnet and to restore those species that have already died out. The project aims to reintroduce one former resident, the red-billed chough, to Jersey in the coastal areas of grassland that have already been restored and to act as a flagship for the Project, to publicise the restoration work and to highlight the Island's biodiversity.

The Project will, in due time, expand its area of work from coastal to inland habitats and serve as an independent body of assessment offering management advice to specific sites of high wildlife interest. The Project has the potential to turn around the negative trend of many endangered species of birds and other wildlife in these habitats as it promotes habitat restoration essential to their survival.

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<sup>2</sup> Council Directive 92/43/EEC of 21 May 1992 on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora (<http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/legislation/habitatsdirective>)





## II. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

### 1. To improve the ecological condition of coastal habitats and adjacent farmland

The Project aims to produce management plans to restore sites within areas of degraded coastland between Sorel point and L'Étacq (Area 1) in **Year 1** and for the coastal strip between L'Étacq and Noirmont (Area 2) in **Year 2**. The management plans will advise on a variety of techniques aimed at restoring key features of habitats such as grazed land, hedges, buffer strips and bird-conservation crops amongst others, complimenting existing recommended management actions included in the National Park Management Plan<sup>3</sup>.



During **Year 1** the Project aims to restore the two main landscapes in Area 1: the farmland strip next to the coast and the heathland and grassland between the farmland and the coastal cliffs.

1.1 To restore coastal farmland the Project will:

- Gather information on land ownership and land management on 100% of the land at Area 1 in **Year 1** and the same target for Area 2 in **Year 2**;

<sup>3</sup> Coastal National Park Policy Application: NE6 (Draft for consultation May 2012)



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- Increase the number of hedges at coastal areas in a way that their benefit to the local wildlife can be measured in ecological surveys;
- Plant 3km of new hedges in NTJ land in **Year 1**;
- Restore 50% of existing hedges in NTJ land by **Year 2**;
- Plant 5% of the total arable land with bird conservation crops as the second crop after potatoes.

1.2 To restore coastal heath and grassland the Project will:

- Remove bracken on up to 30% of suitable areas in NTJ land by **Year 2**;
- Remove bracken on 20% of suitable areas in privately owned land by **Year 3**;
- Increase the area of the conservation grazing by 10% on suitable **NTJ** and privately owned land by **Year 3**.

## **2. To reverse the negative trends of locally endangered bird species and encourage the return of locally extinct ones.**

The Project aims to halt the decline of many species in the Jersey Bird RedList, to reverse the negative trend into positive population growth, and to facilitate the return of former resident species. By restoring habitats the Project will enhance the value of ecosystems for other wildlife species such as common toad, slow worm, grass snake, field cricket, shrews and Jersey bank vole, all featured in the States of Jersey Biodiversity Strategy (2000)<sup>4</sup> and the various Biodiversity Action Plans<sup>4</sup>

2.1 Locally endangered species:

- To reverse the downward trend of previously common species such as the linnet, stonechat and others, achieving a positive population growth by 2020.

2.2 Locally extinct species:

- To encourage the natural re-colonization of locally extinct species such as the yellowhammer and the curlew with self-sustaining populations of 40 breeding pairs by 2020;
- To re-introduce the red-billed chough, the Project's flagship species, into Jersey's coastal habitats and establish a self-sustaining population (of 40 pairs??) by 2030.

## **3. To involve the local community in the achievements of the project.**

The project aims to raise awareness on conservation issues, offer educational activities and involve the local community in a variety of habitat restoration work which will hopefully result in a sense of achievement and a connection with Jersey's natural environment.

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.gov.je/Environment/ProtectingEnvironment/Land/Endangered/Pages/IslandSpecies.aspx>



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## 3.1 Awareness:

- To organize and carry out two public site visits per year;
- To generate at least two press releases per year on the Project;
- To maintain the Project's website with regular updates and subject-related articles;
- To produce a PowerPoint presentation about the Project that can be updated regularly and used for public presentations when required;
- To investigate the possibility of endorsing farming produce (potatoes, wool, dairy, honey, vegetables, meat etc.) from Project sites, the production of which complies with the management practices promoted by the Project.

## 3.2 Education:

- To generate information from the development of the Project's strategies that can be used in the production of educational material;
- To offer a range of educational opportunities to the Island's community such as talks, school visits and community events;
- To produce a dossier for farmers with information about the Project, advice on wildlife-friendly farming and the funding opportunities the Project can advise on;
- To encourage farmers and landowners to contribute with input on the material produced;

## 3.3 Work:

- To carry out a minimum of two volunteer tasks per year;
- To seek funding and labour in kind for restoration work to be offered to a variety of local parties such as contractors, job seekers, volunteers, the Probation and Aftercare Services, corporate groups etc.





## III. STRATEGIES

### STRATEGY 1: HABITAT RESTORATION

#### 1. BOTE FARMLAND SCHEME

The habitat restoration strategy will achieve its goals by applying the following process:

- a. Area survey and site identification.** The area of work will be surveyed to identify sites of high wildlife value using a variety of parameters such as habitat composition, local wildlife, quality of present features, historical ecological importance, size, connectivity to other sites, and relative importance within the island's ecology;
- b. Engagement of farmers and landowners.** Most sites will fall within different farms so all farmers and landowners which land falls within an identified site will be approached to establish a dialogue in regards of the aims of the project;
- c. Production of a management plan.** A plan will be produced detailing management practices and specific work needed to restore and maintain the features of the site in order to enhance its wildlife value.

The management plan will be produced in close liaison with the farmers involved, integrating each individual farm's Environment Plan<sup>5</sup> to evaluate the most suitable and wildlife-friendly options for the management of the key features. It is hoped that the collaboration with the farmers and landowners will generate a greater understanding of the opportunities that can secure a sustainable management approach in the long term.

The management plan of each site will include a breakdown of costs of the habitat restoration and management work as well as a calendar of work based of the best management guidelines;

- d. Funding.** A variety of funding options to cover the costs of the work will be investigated and put forward to the farmers, contractors or organizations undertaking the work. The project will advise and endorse the applications that fall within the Habitat Restoration Strategy of all BOTE sites. By endorsing applications the project will on effect be offering to the funding bodies an independent indicator of the importance of the site and its habitats for the island's birds and other wildlife, especially within the aims of the BOTE project.
- e. Monitoring.** The sites will be monitored for changes in habitat quality, wildlife composition and work carried out in reference to the management

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<sup>5</sup> <http://www.gov.je/Environment/ProtectingEnvironment/Land/FarmingEnvironment/Pages/FarmEnvironPlan.aspx>





organization undertaking it. This will allow evaluation of the success of the scheme and to review BOTE support to further funding applications (see **Strategy 2. Monitoring** sections X and X).

## 2. SCOPE AND EXPANSION OF THE PROJECT AND ITS RESTORATION WORK

Area	Habitat	Year of start
1 (NW coast)	Heathland, grassland, gorseland	2009
	Coastal farmland	2013 2012 (NTJ land)
2 (W and SW coast)	Heathland, grassland, gorseland	2014
	Coastal farmland, Reedbeds	
Central and East	Inland farmland	2015
	Woodland	-
	Reedbeds and marshes	-

## STRATEGY 2: SPECIES MANAGEMENT

### 1. REINTRODUCTION OF RED-BILLED CHOUGH

The Project aims to reintroduce the red-billed chough into Jersey. The chough is a specialist invertebrate feeder favouring ants, crane fly larvae, and beetles. They prefer to forage amongst short-grazed pastures and along strandlines where seaweed attracts insects. Coastal habitats also provide cliff faces for nesting although choughs will also use artificial sites such as abandoned quarries, mineshafts and old buildings. The chough has quite an extensive global range yet within Britain, Ireland and Brittany it has declined dramatically and become



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fragmented due to changes in agricultural practice and land use. It is estimated that there are now less than 500 breeding pairs of chough in the UK.

Within the Channel Islands the chough was considered a common resident until the turn of the twentieth century, but since 1929 there has only been one bird reported. Breeding pairs were formerly found along the south and east coast of Guernsey, on Sark, and Alderney. On Jersey there were reports of choughs breeding on the cliffs at Fiquet Bay, La Moye and Noirmont. It is assumed that this species inhabited the north coast cliffs and cliff top land until persecution and changes in land use led to its extinction throughout the Channel Islands.

Even with populations in Cornwall and Brittany, natural re-colonisation in Jersey is considered unlikely within the next 10-20 years without direct, managed, reintroduction. Returning the chough to Jersey's coastline will both restore a long absent component of the Island's natural coastal biodiversity and the species' highly charismatic nature will appeal to the public and attract the attention of funding bodies. The chough will, therefore, act as the flagship species for the Project. The released birds' ecological and behavioural preferences will further assist in directing coastal habitat restoration.

Birds for release will be captive-bred and the parents are currently on loan to Durrell from Paradise Park, Hayle, Cornwall. Paradise Park has entered into partnership with Durrell through a signed MOU for this aspect of the project. Two breeding pairs of choughs are held in separate aviaries with one display aviary for accommodating birds reared in the collection. All birds outside of the breeding season have been established at the Durrell Wildlife Park in Trinity.

The first trial release of birds captive-reared at Paradise Park will be undertaken in **Year 1**. Each bird will carry individually identifiable colour rings and numbered metal rings. Each bird will carry a radio transmitter and be followed for the first six months after release. Dedicated staff from Durrell will undertake husbandry and monitoring of released birds.

The reintroduction project will establish a viable, free-ranging population of red-billed choughs within their historical range on Jersey through:

- a. **Hatching** and rearing a minimum of six chicks per year for five years from birds held at Durrell and/or Paradise Park, Cornwall;
- b. **Designing and building** a release aviary on the north coast to accommodate up to 10 choughs for trial release in **Year 1**;
- c. **Provision** of supplementary feed at the release site until optimum habitat conditions have been restored and birds have become self-sufficient;



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d. **Release** of six juvenile birds per year for the next five years. The release cohort size and demographics may increase or decrease for subsequent years depending on the success of the trial;

- e. **Achieving** a survival rate to adulthood of at least 33% for released choughs;
- f. **Achieving**, by **Year 5**, a wild population of at least 15 individuals with at least one established pair;
- g. Birds released in subsequent years will be ringed and radio tracked as for the birds in the **Year 1** trial release.

## 2. POPULATION MANAGEMENT

The Project is monitoring populations of locally endangered bird species, with either small breeding populations (of less than 50 breeding pairs), or in sustained decline.

Parallel to the Habitat Restoration Strategy, the Project is testing and evaluating techniques that might help such populations. Some techniques have been proven to boost numbers in other UK populations in similar circumstances, such as the supplementary feeding of Cirl Buntings with special feeders during the winter months.

Other techniques that the Project might consider testing are: nest protection, camera-trap surveillance, predator control and reintroductions of other locally extinct species.

## STRATEGY 3: MONITORING

The monitoring strategy provides information and feedback on all the work of the Project, past and informs future work. Scientific recording is of paramount importance as resources are limited and need to be utilized in an efficient manner; without a solid monitoring and record-keeping strategy the Project is unlikely to achieve its aims.

### 1. HABITATS AND FEATURES

Surveys in **Year 1** will identify sites as potential candidates for habitat restoration. Most data can be obtained from the existing Jersey Phase 1 Habitat Survey and BIRDS ON THE EDGE preliminary documents (Sellarés de Pedro 2010<sup>6</sup>; Sangan

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<sup>6</sup> Restoration of coastal habitats in Jersey for birds of conservation concern: A working background document (Sellarés de Pedro 2010)



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2011<sup>7</sup>). Site visits and GIS analysis will allow for a more detailed understanding of features or characteristics of high wildlife value.

Changes in features and habitats will be monitored throughout the restoration process, especially at times of management work, as well as during seasonal changes such as breeding, flowering, seeding, hibernation etc.

## 2. WILDLIFE

A variety of ongoing bird monitoring schemes exist in Jersey including UK-devised Breeding Bird Surveys and locally led projects such as 'Gardenwatch' counts, wading bird and raptor counts etc.) which are typically organised through The Société Jersiaise and Action For Wildlife. The Project manages the most extensive survey of farmland and woodland birds in the Channel Islands with c. 20 transects visited every two weeks. The Project will gather the data from each of these schemes and will design targeted surveys to fill in the gaps in coverage, habitat type or taxa, to produce a complete picture of the bird species and population trends at selected sites across Jersey.

Bird-monitoring transects at several sites including those at Sorel to Mourier Valley, Crabbé and at Les Landes and the North Coast Breeding Birds Survey (in Area 1) have been established with this purpose in mind and complement existing Breeding Bird Survey squares.

The Project will develop surveys or set up monitoring schemes for invertebrates, reptiles and mammals in project sites, especially relevant to the key features that will be managed in **Year 1**.

## 3. MANAGEMENT AND AGREEMENTS

Each endorsed funding application that is successful will be monitored during the period of time that the Project's management has been advised for. A report will be produced reviewing the timing of the work done, results, and performance of the techniques used.

## 4. PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

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<sup>7</sup> Jersey Coastland Restoration Project: Phase 1 Habitat Survey Report (Sangan 2011)





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The Project will monitor its own achievements throughout the year, keeping records of each event and checking them against the projected calendar.

This will include the undertaking of restoration work, surveys, public events, the production of educational material and any other work detailed in **Section 2. Aims and Objectives**.

For this purpose the Project will produce an annual report summarizing all the work achieved during that calendar year.

## STRATEGY 4: EDUCATION

### 1. AWARENESS

The Project aims to:

- **Organize** and carry out at least two public site visits to the north coast per year in order to highlight the area's flora and fauna, farmland conservation strategies and the chough programme;
- **Generate** at least two press releases per year on the Project;
- **Maintain** the Project's website with regular updates and subject-related articles;
- **Produce** a PowerPoint presentation about the Project that can be updated regularly and used for public presentations when required. A PowerPoint has already been developed for school assemblies;
- **Investigate** the possibility of endorsing farming produce (potatoes, wool, dairy, honey, vegetables, meat etc.) from Project sites, the production of which complies with the management practices promoted by the Project.

### 2. EDUCATION

The Project will generate information from the development of integrated strategies that can be used in the production of educational material;

Durrell's Education and Interpretation Department has produced issues of *Dodo Dispatch* and *Lasting Impressions* (Durrell newsletters for children) themed around choughs. The National Trust for Jersey magazine (Spring 2013) features the chough project.



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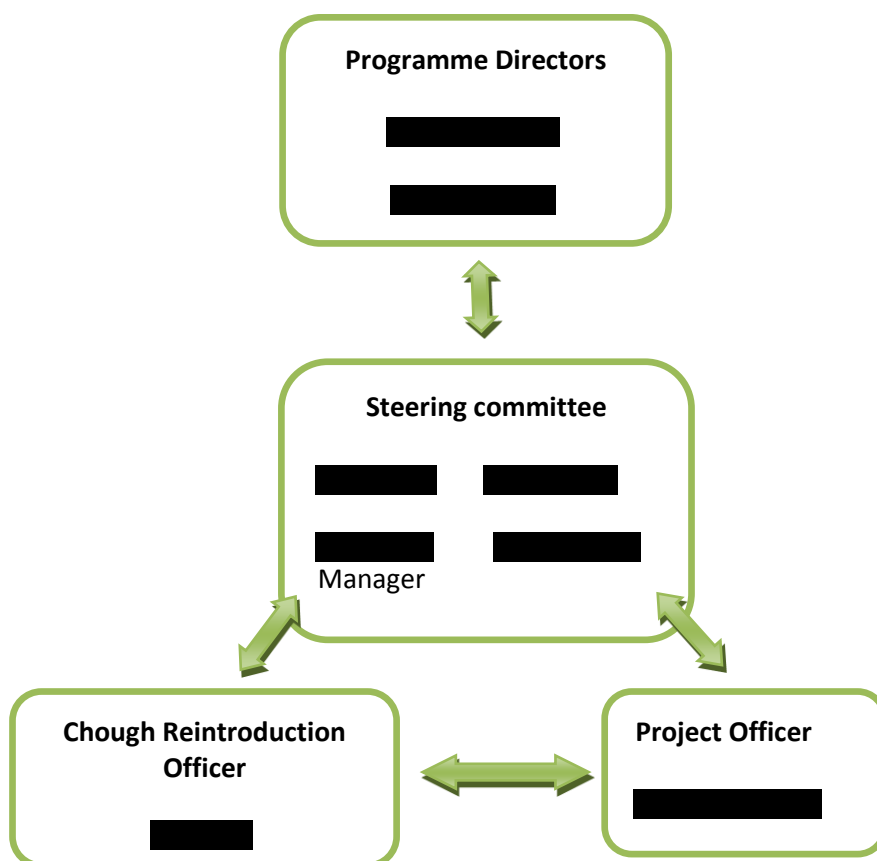
On behalf of the Project, Durrell's Education and Interpretation Department offers a range of educational opportunities to the Island's community such as talks, school visits and community events. They will develop:

- **A School assembly programme** was launched in spring 2013 and taken up by a number of local schools. An activity week workshop at Durrell in August 2013 will be themed around choughs and Jersey birds.
- **A Project song.** Local band Badlabecques produced a song about Jersey's birds, *Ma Bouai'sie*, with members of Le Rocquier School singing in the chorus. Durrell staff visited the school to listen to the recording and teach students about choughs;
- **A chough costume** (Arthur the Chough) has been made for highlighting the project at public events e.g. Itex Walk 2013, Sunset Concerts, Durrell Days and Jersey Live. Arthur has been seen on stage with Badlabecques performing the Project song *Ma Bouai'sie*.
- **A dossier** for farmers with information about the Project, advice on wildlife-friendly farming and the funding opportunities the Project can advise on.



## IV. RESOURCES

### A. ORGANIZATION CHART



### B. SHARED RESOURCES

The Project aims to develop a shared resources list by **Year 2** that will include a pool of professional skills amongst the partner organizations as well as material goods such as reference works, software packages, tools and infrastructures.

### C. FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

The partners aim to work together in raising funds for the various aspects of the Project, as well as submitting joint funding applications. It is expected that a joint fundraising protocol will be developed in **Year 1** in order to streamline the fundraising efforts of the partnership.



## APPENDIX 1. Project in context of present conservation strategies

<p><b>Island Strategies</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Rural Economy Strategy</li> <li>- Biodiversity Strategy</li> <li>- Biodiversity Action Plans (14 species: 6 birds)</li> <li>- Landscape management strategy (proposed)</li> </ul>
<p><b>Jersey Island Plan 2011 Policies</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- SP4: Protecting the natural and historic environment</li> <li>- HE5: Preservation of archaeological resources</li> <li>- NE1: Natural environment protection</li> <li>- NE2: Species protection</li> <li>- NE3: Wildlife corridors</li> <li>- NE4: Trees, woodland and boundary features</li> <li>- NE6: North Coast National Park</li> <li>- NE7: Green Zone</li> </ul>
<p><b>Site designation</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Sites of Special Interest (1 SSI in site 2, potentially 8 SSIs in future sites 3 and 4)</li> <li>- Countryside character appraisal (5 characters)</li> <li>- ESA Environmentally Sensitive Areas (4 ESAs)</li> </ul>
<p><b>States of Jersey Department of the Environment MEAs</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Convention of Biological Diversity (CBD)</li> <li>- Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (Bonn)</li> <li>- African-Eurasian Waterbird Agreement (AEWA)</li> <li>- Memorandum of Migratory Birds of Prey in Africa and Eurasia</li> <li>- Agreement on the Conservation of European Bats (EUROBATS)</li> <li>- Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats (Bern)</li> <li>- International Plant Protection Convention</li> </ul>





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## APPENDIX 2. Bird species of particular concern in Jersey

Red and amber listed species from *Conservation Status of Jersey's Birds: Jersey's Bird Populations in the 21st Century* 2011. Species marked in black are those most likely to benefit from Birds On The Edge project

	IUCN Global conservation status	SPEC Species of European Conservation Concern	HD Historical decline	BDp <sup>1</sup> Severe breeding decline 25 year	WDp <sup>1</sup> Severe non-breeding decline 25 year	BR Rarity	WR Rarity	BL and WL Localisation
Mute swan						■		
Light-bellied brent goose							■	■
Northern shoveler						■		■
Common pochard						■		■
Great northern diver		■			■		■	
Balearic shearwater	■	■						■
Great cormorant				■		■	■	■
European shag		■		■				■
Great bittern		■				■		■
Ringed plover				■	■	■		■
Eurasian dotterel		■				■		■
Northern lapwing				■		■		■
Common tern						■		■
Razorbill				■		■		■
Atlantic puffin				■		■		■
Turtle dove				■		■		■
Common cuckoo				■		■		
Firecrest						■		■
Bearded tit						■		■
Skylark				■	■	■		■
Willow warbler				■		■		
Dartford warbler	■							■

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Garden warbler				■					
Aquatic warbler	■								
Sedge warbler									
Common starling						■	■	■	■
Mistle thrush						■	■	■	■
Spotted flycatcher						■		■	■
Common stonechat						■	■	■	■
Northern wheatear								■	■
European serin						■	■	■	■
Bullfinch						■	■	■	
Yellowhammer						■	■	■	■
Girl bunting						■	■	■	■
Reed bunting						■	■	■	■

	IUCN Global conservation status	SPEC Species of European Conservation Concern	HD Historical decline	BDMp Moderate breeding decline	WDMp Moderate non-breeding decline	BR Rarity	WR Rarity	BL and WL Localisation	Data Deficient (Redlist Committee)
Eurasian wigeon							■	■	
Gadwall						■	■	■	
Eurasian teal								■	
Tufted duck				■	■	■		■	
Common scoter					■				
Red-breasted merganser							■	■	
Goosander							■	■	
European storm-petrel		■	■			■	■	■	
Little egret		■				■		■	
Little grebe						■	■	■	
Slavonian grebe							■	■	
Black-necked grebe							■	■	
Eurasian marsh harrier		■				■	■	■	
Common buzzard						■		■	

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Common kestrel			■	■			
Merlin		■				■	
Peregrine falcon					■		■
Water rail					■		■
European golden plover		■				■	■
Grey plover				■			■
Sanderling							■
Purple sandpiper						■	■
Dunlin				■		■	■
Jack snipe						■	■
Common snipe				■			■
Eurasian woodcock						■	■
Bar-tailed godwit		■		■			■
Eurasian curlew	■			■		■	■
Green sandpiper						■	■
Common redshank				■			■
Turnstone				■			■
Herring gull			■				■
Sandwich tern		■				■	■
Common guillemot					■		■
Long-eared owl					■		■
Common swift					■	■	■
Common kingfisher		■			■		■
Eurasian wryneck						■	■
Common raven					■	■	■
Goldcrest			■	■			
Sand martin					■		■
House martin			■				
Cetti's warbler					■		■
Short-toed treecreeper			■	■			■
Ring ouzel						■	■
Song thrush			■	■			
House sparrow			■	■			
White wagtail					■		■
Meadow pipit			■	■			■
Water pipit						■	■
Linnet			■	■			■

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