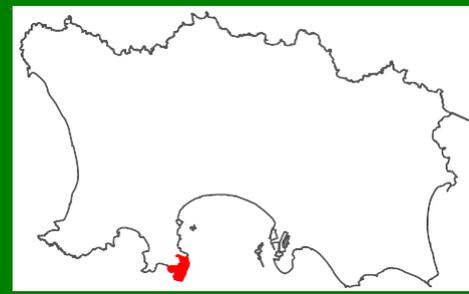


Noirmont

Site of Special (Ecological) Interest



Introduction

Noirmont Headland is the eastern most part of the complex of heathlands which make up the south-west coast of Jersey stretching from Noirmont to Le Corbiere. The headland is vital for migratory birds as it is positioned at the southern end of the main western migration route over the Island, and is the last point of land for many miles. Noirmont was acquired by the States of Jersey in 1950 in memory of those who lost their lives and suffered in World War II.

There are three individually designated SSI's at Noirmont comprising of the headland but also some agricultural fields with their own distinct ecological properties.



Jersey Forget-me-not

Noirmont, the headland

The headland is 37.5 hectares in size and incorporates one of the most popular view points within the south west region of the Jersey National Park, offering views of St Helier and St Clement to the east, Portelet SSI and Portelet bay to the west and the offshore reef of Les Minquiers to the south. The site includes areas of very attractive lichen rich heathland with small, flower rich, grassy clearings.

Noirmont Field 684

Covering an area of 2.5 hectares, field 684 is a dry grassland which, due to its location is very important for migrating birds of many species, offering them a very welcome place to stopover. The Société Jersiaise Bird Section monitor field 684 very closely to gather long term data reflecting numbers of birds passing the Island's shores.



Minotaur Beetle

Noirmont Fields 685 & 683

These two fields which in total measure only 1.4 hectares slope towards a very biologically interesting pond which is an important site for many rare and restricted species of flora and fauna. With the ongoing livestock grazing, the field is gradually reverting to heathland and with appropriate management the reversion, when complete, will add to this important location.

History

Before the war the headland was grazed with livestock, and it is believed that the grassland was extensive, with pockets of dwarf shrub heath and mature gorse.

The monument known as 'La Hougue de Vinde' is an ancient tumulus consisting of a circular setting of stones and has been dated to c.2850-2250BC.

More recently, the black & white tower on the point Tour de Vinde is 1 of 3 Martello type towers built between 1808-1811 as a coastal defence against the threat of French invasion.

Noirmont's commanding vantage point was extremely valuable during World War II. A large number of fortifications remain across the site known as 'Battery Lothringen' which form part of an extensive network of defences constructed in Jersey (and along the western coast of Europe) by the German occupying forces in order to defend against a possible Anglo-American invasion. The site is the only example of a German naval coastal artillery battery in Jersey and the best example of its type surviving in the Channel Islands



Toadflax-leaved St. Johns-wort

Management

Because of the very similar habitat cover and close location to Portelet SSI, the main management tasks are very similar between the two sites.

1. The removal of invasive tree species - Without the ongoing clearance of Holm oak (evergreen oak) the qualities of the open heathland would be lost quickly to a very dark woodland, inhospitable to most ground growing flowers and generally lacking in wildlife.

2. The removal of Hottentot fig - The invading qualities of this plant on coastal cliffs and slopes present a constant challenge for control. Left to its own devices the plant would dominate the

area to the exclusion of the more favourable mix of native plants. Also, due to the plant being largely water, the weight of the mats it forms encourages erosion by causing landslides on the soft cliffs.

3. The removal of gorse - 10% of the site is covered by gorse and without rotational cutting it would lose much of its appeal to wildlife, especially nesting birds.
4. The removal of bracken - Noirmont was grazed in the past by livestock and as with Portelet, the direct result of stopping grazing is that bracken will tend to take over. The reduction of bracken spread is necessary to protect other more fragile habitats and the special flowers and animals that are found there.

Wildlife

The variety of habitats at Noirmont support over 161 different plant species and 36 mosses and liverworts. Amongst these are a number of plants that are rare in Britain or in Jersey including Dwarf Rush, Sand Crocus and Early Sand-grass. Jutting out into the sea, the maritime impact is substantial and Noirmont offers a perfect place to spot dolphins on their travels.

Of the large number of plants recorded from Noirmont, 32 have a limited distribution including the Jersey rarities Heath Speedwell and Toadflax-leaved St John's Wort which are found here.

The pond, thought to be a fishing pond built by the Manor in 1800's, is the last remaining site for another Jersey rarity, the Jersey Forget – me – not. This plant was not seen at the pond between 1994 and 1997 but management since then has been successful in re-establishing a small population which still exists.



Southern Emerald Damselfly

Also the pond has historically being one of only two sites for the endangered Agile Frog and the Common Toad. In 1987 a pesticide spill in the water catchment area, in field 685, killed the majority of living things inhabiting the pond. Since then the water quality has improved significantly and toads and agile frogs have re-colonised



Yellow Wagtail

The site supports a large number of interesting and rare invertebrates. Of the ant species recorded here for example, three are restricted to the south and south-east of mainland Britain. The woodland supports the wood boring larvae of the Small Jewel Beetle and the tri horned Minotaur Beetles can be seen marching across the heathland. Also Southern Emerald Damselfly, Jersey Grasshopper and Heath Grasshopper can be seen across the site. Noirmont provides a suitable habitat for the Bee Fly, which although not considered a conservation priority is of notable interest being a parasitic, pollinating fly with an intriguing egg laying method. Firstly, the females search for the small burrows of their hosts, usually solitary bees. Often they do

not land when laying eggs and instead release their eggs from mid-air by flicking their tail while hovering over the burrow's entrance earning them the colloquial name of Bomber flies. The female flies have an inbuilt sand chamber which is filled with sand grains gathered before egg laying which are used to coat each egg just before their aerial release to improve aim.

Of the 100 species of beetle found at Noirmont, 10% are rare, and nearly half of the 27 annually occurring species of butterfly in Jersey have been seen here. Due to the abundance of insects, Noirmont is good place to see insect feeding mammals and birds such as the Grey Long eared bat and whitethroats, which sing, perched on the highest gorse or hawthorn bush. A couple of the migrant birds which can be seen here include the Wryneck, a cryptically coloured woodpecker which feeds on ants and the Yellow Wagtail, a beautiful bird considered by some to be a representation of the Egyptian Deity Atum.

Visiting

The headland of Noirmont is a promontory with wide ranging views of much of Jersey's south coast. It is a place where the family are able to spend hours exploring both the natural world and the Island's involvement in World War II.

Bus route 12a provides a frequent service to Portelet from where it is a short walk to Noirmont. By car or bicycle the car park at Noirmont has bicycle racks available



Wryneck

Photo credits

Anne Haden: Jersey Forget-me-not,
Toadflax-leaved St. Johns-wort
Tim Ransom: Minotaur Beetle,
Southern Emerald Damselfly
Romano da Costa: Yellow Wagtail,
Wryneck

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Biodiversity