

Isle of May Bird Observatory Trust



Notes for Visitors 2021

Important Updates in relation to covid 19. Please Read

The Observatory is an entirely voluntary enterprise and, unlike some larger observatories, we do not employ a warden. Visitors, therefore, are required to manage for themselves for the week that they stay at the Observatory, both in terms of their domestic needs and in **maintaining the field-work recording which is an essential condition of your stay.**

Covid related advice

Following government restrictions being relaxed, there is no longer a household limit and therefore six people can again occupy the Low Light at any one time. However, social distancing is to be maintained at all times with respect to other island residents, day visitors and boatmen.

For the welfare of visitors from vulnerable groups, we would ask that they take a precautionary approach and refrain from visiting in 2021 for their own safety, when a full refund will be given (please apply to bookings sec. to arrange) .

Within 3 days prior to departure we require that a covid declaration be submitted for each party member. The link to an online form is here: https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/IOMBO_Covid or this can also be completed on paper and scanned/photographed and emailed.

Isle of May Bird Observatory Trust

If the answer to any of the questions is “yes” then you **MUST** refrain from visiting and inform the bookings secretary immediately. Not doing so will be viewed as a contravention of your booking terms and so may risk your chances of a future stay.

- **Boat arrangements:** On arrival at the RIB social distancing to be maintained from the boatman who will be unable to assist with handling luggage. It may not be possible to cover luggage which will be exposed to the elements and will need to be adequately waterproofed. Please ensure luggage is properly boxed or bagged and able to be stowed in the small spaces between the seats.
- **Arrival:** On arrival to the Isle of May, you will be greeted by a member of staff with the ATV. Due to the restrictions in place, you must unload the boat and pack the vehicle without assistance from anyone on the island. Your possessions will be transported to the Low Light but again all unloading will require to be completed personally and not by island residents.
- **Bedding:** all your own bedding should be brought out as there is no provision for cleaning any bed linen between groups. This includes pillows, blankets or sleeping bags, etc. Please do not use any bedding stored in boxes in the Low Light.
- **Buildings:** There will be no access to any buildings with the exception of the Low Light, ringing hut, freezer room (Fluke Street), Bath House (has various material stored for the Arnott Trap) and the Bird Observatory Byres building. Please note the visitor centre and toilets will remain closed as they require specific cleaning at specific points for visitor use.
- **Fluke Street:** There will be **no** access to Fluke Street buildings with the exception of the Freezer room. However social gatherings can take place outside, with 2m social distancing adhered to.
- **Risk Assessment:** full Nature Scot risk assessment for buildings, island living and visitor access are available upon request.
- **Visitors:** If walking the paths while day visitors are ashore, strict adherence to the marked one way systems and out of bounds areas must be maintained. Social distancing must also be maintained from visitors.
- **Hand gel:** please bring appropriate personal hygiene products to ensure hands and surfaces are kept virus free

Exit Plan – for anyone showing signs of Covid19

- A boat (RIB) will be arranged (at the expense of the Observatory) to collect the affected person and observe social distancing rules. There are four potential skippers for the RIB, therefore highly likely to be available weather permitting.
- Failing the above, an agreement with coastguard has been arranged and can be called upon as a medical emergency.

Isle of May Bird Observatory Trust

- Caroline Gallacher (Nature Scot) to be informed of any person showing symptoms and their departure.
- Remaining residents should wear full PPE (mask, gloves and disposable apron or suit these are available at Fluke Street) to clean all living accommodation where the affect person had been living and all surfaces that they may have been in contact with. This will entail the following: all bedding used by infected person removed, toilet cleaned, all crockery washed, all surfaces and handles wiped with disinfectant spray.
- After thorough cleaning the person carrying out the cleaning will dispose of PPE and incinerate. Wash hands immediately after.
- A 'response cleaning box' will be placed in the Fluke St workshop containing all PPE, disinfectant spray, paper towels needed.

Transport

Our transport to the island from Anstruther in Fife is provided by Roy Giles, our contracted boatman. He provides a weekly service under contract on a Saturday in the *Osprey*, a RIB (Rigid Inflatable Boat, as used as inshore rescue boats). The skipper will usually be Roy Giles. The time of sailing depends on tides and weather and will be notified upon receipt of full payment. You should always phone Roy on the Thursday or the Friday before you are due to travel to the island to get a precise departure point and to check whether there will be a sailing (because of the weather). Roy Giles' phone number is 07473 631 671. If you cannot get hold of Roy on that number, phone 07957 585 200. You should be ready to load your gear about 45 minutes before sailing time. The decision on whether travel is possible is entirely at the discretion of the skipper, and we expect Low Lighters to respect his decision.

In addition, it may be possible for visitors to the Observatory who are not travelling on a Saturday in the Observatory RIB to travel to the island on other days of the week if Roy Giles is bringing out day visitors in the *Osprey*. Contact should be made direct with Roy to arrange. Sailings will be subject to numbers and weather and those interested should get in touch with Roy at the number above. Payment for these journeys should be made directly to Roy at the time of travel. It may also be possible to travel on the *May Princess* which, weather permitting, sails to the Isle of May daily (except days of reduced service during May & June and September) with day visitors. Alex Gardner is the skipper of the *May Princess*. It only runs from April to September. These sailings are also subject to numbers and weather. Any such journeys should be arranged direct with Anstruther Pleasure Cruises, and paid for at the time. The phone numbers for checking on sailing times and whether sailings are taking place are on the Anstruther Pleasure Cruises website.

There will be times when the RIB is unable to get out to the island because of bad weather. In that case, the Saturday boat will come to the island on the first available day when the weather is suitable. Visitors to the Low Light should arrange their travel and other arrangements on the basis that they may not get off (or onto) the island on the Saturday and may be on the island for extra days. **In that situation it is open to the visitors to leave the island early (for instance on the Friday) but they would do that at their own expense.** However, in situations where, in the boatman's view, the Low Light visitors would be likely to be stuck on the island for **more** than two days extra, the

Isle of May Bird Observatory Trust

Observatory would pay for an earlier boat (for instance, on the Friday) to get them off the island.

Luggage

The RIB has capacity for a limited amount of baggage alongside the passengers. If you want to take an unusual quantity of gear, you should contact Roy Giles to discuss, otherwise please be as compact and economical as possible. Please do not bring food in carrier bags which break easily and are not ideal when passing to and from the RIB. The Isle of May Nature Scot Wardens have indicated that they are happy to continue to support us where possible with their transport to and from the harbour, but parties can only expect this to amount to a single load per group in each direction. On busy visitor days the Nature Scot wardens may have to bring the luggage to the Low Light once the *May Princess* has left. We are very grateful to the wardens for the support they provide, often at times when they are hard pressed with their own work.

Keeping records

The Observatory is equipped with a regularly updated manual with instructions and advice on completing the daily census, the migration log and the “chatty” log. The Committee has noted that some of the log record keeping has sometimes not been maintained as diligently as we would wish. The bird and other recording systems are important practical and historical records in the life of the Observatory. Indeed keeping comprehensive and accurate records is the key activity of the Observatory. **It is the duty of those at the Observatory to maintain these records and we would urge everyone to keep the records and to do so sensibly and sensitively. It is not the duty of Nature Scot or other island residents to maintain records.**

However, we are aware that at certain times, the Observatory may be manned by ‘non birdwatchers’ who do not feel they have either the experience or expertise to confidently fill in the Daily Census and Migration Log. If this is the case, visitors should liaise with the Nature Scot wardens and make arrangements for these logs to be passed to them for completion. Please note that a failure to keep these records (or make the necessary arrangements to do so) may result in future bookings being refused.

Reporting unusual sightings

Upon finding anything unusual for the isle, all efforts should be made to inform the Nature Scot and UKCEH (UK Centre for Ecology & Hydrology) staff at Fluke Street as they would do should they find anything of interest.

Reporting after the visit

All visitors should e-mail Mark Newell (bookings@isleofmaybirdobs.org) and Alan Lauder (alanlauder@hotmail.co.uk) immediately on their return with a brief summary of the highlights of their visit in terms of birds seen. This should take the form of a daily summary of birds of interest, including numbers and with an indication of the weather conditions (check the website to see the style: <http://www.isleofmaybirdobs.org/birds/news>). Photographs are particularly welcome for inclusion on the website. Ringing parties should also summarise the number of individuals/species ringed in their week, and might note if particular trapping methods were relevant. This information will then be put onto the Observatory’s website.

Isle of May Bird Observatory Trust

Please e-mail Mark Oksien (markoksien@btinternet.com) or text mobile 07775593200 to advise of any actions needed in relation to maintenance of accommodation, traps or ringing equipment, to report on any breakages, shortages or replacements that need rectifying for on-coming parties.

The Low Light Visitors Manual

Immediately on arrival at the Low Light it is important that visitors familiarise themselves with the Low Light Visitors Manual, consult the notice-board, and read the Health and Safety document (this last is something we require the party leader to agree to do, and for them to advise members of their party accordingly). These documents are important, and they do change from year to year; **regular visitors please take note!** The manual provides information on the systems, supplies and other aspects of life at the Observatory.

Booking Fees and Payment Arrangements

The charge for staying at the Observatory is £160 per person for a week, Saturday to Saturday, inclusive of boat fares both ways. School children are charged at £85, and full-time students and people under the age of 25 at £100 per week. People staying for a part-week pay £25 per day, plus a fee of £20 for any journey in the Observatory weekly Saturday RIB run.

If any person goes to or leaves the island other than on the weekly Saturday Observatory RIB run, they should pay the skipper of the *Osprey* or the *May Princess* directly for that trip. Thus, if a person leaves (or goes to) the island mid week on the *Osprey* or the *May Princess* they should pay the skipper directly at the time the appropriate fare. If they make an arrangement for a special journey in the RIB they should also pay Roy Giles directly at the time paying the full charter fee of approximately £245.

If you choose to travel back to the mainland on a RIB chartered by someone else during the course of the week, you should pay the boatman direct for that journey if required.

A refund of £10 is payable for each day someone is unable to land, and there is no extra charge for days marooned on the island; there is no refund for those who choose to go on later or leave earlier than their booking date.

Booking forms must be returned to Mark Newell. **Bookings will not be regarded as confirmed unless both form and full payment are provided.** Payment may be made

by Bank Transfer or cheque. The Account name is "Isle of May Bird Observatory and Field Station Trust" The Sort Code is 83-19-08. The Account Number is 00115739.

When paying by Bank Transfer please quote the name of the Account (Isle of May Bird Observatory), the name of the person paying and date of visit. It would be helpful if you also sent an e mail to the Treasurer (nandacampbell@waitrose.com) to say that you had made the payment. Cheques should be made out to: Isle of May Bird Observatory Trust. Payments of deposits and full amounts should be made to the Treasurer, Niall Campbell, 15 Warriston Crescent, Edinburgh EH3 5LA. Any enquiries about payment can be made to him by e mail: nandacampbell@waitrose.com or phone 0131 556 2895.

Visitors should note that the boat places on the RIB will be booked on their behalf by the Bookings Secretary, on the basis of a Saturday to Saturday trip. As mentioned above, it is possible to travel to or from the island on days other than Saturdays to stay for a shorter period during the period when the *May Princess* is running, but you should be aware that priority is given to those wishing to book for a full week.

Isle of May Bird Observatory Trust

Children: Safeguarding Policy

The Isle of May Bird Observatory has a safeguarding policy which can be found on its website. If any party is bringing children, the leader of the party should at the time of booking submit a letter of parental consent in respect of any children who are not accompanied by their parent.

Food

There will be no opportunity to re-provision, so take enough food for your stay. There is an emergency food shelf should you get stuck on the isle due to poor weather for an extra day – you might want to contribute spare food if you get off on time. We have two fridges with freezer compartments. There is currently a freezer available for a small amount of food in the freezer shed in Fluke Street (see SNH warden for details)

Electricity

The Bird Observatory is now equipped with solar panels providing electricity. The primary use is for powering the UV water treatment unit, the fridges and the lights but there should be sufficient extra power for charging batteries, mobile phones, etc. However, there may be times in the season or during periods of dull/foggy weather when there is reduced supply. It is vital that this resource is carefully managed and its provision should not be relied upon. Under no circumstance should the UV be turned off and electricity use should be managed to ensure that the UV system continues to run even when battery levels are low. This can be achieved by turning the fridges to gas and turning off non-essential lights. If the power is failing contact the SNH staff who may be able to advise.

Full instructions on how to change the fridges from electricity to gas are posted on or adjacent to the fridges. Due to diminishing daylight hours, the fridges are to be switched to gas operation from mid- September for the remainder of the year.

Water

We are now well supplied with tanks providing a reasonable reserve of water. Nonetheless, there may occasionally be shortages resulting from dry periods and it is therefore essential that visitors monitor water availability and not be wasteful of this valuable resource.

There are two separate sources of water and two separate plumbing systems. The water for the toilet flush is collected from the Main Light roof and stored in tank Nos.1 and 2. The potable water is siphoned from St Andrews (seep) well and stored in the lower tanks Nos.3, 4 and 5 this supplies the toilet basin, kitchen sink and shower.

On arrival visitors should check the Well and tank water levels and record the levels in the Tank Water Levels Log (white folder). It is important to do this as it will provide you with a guide to the water availability and your water usage during the week.

On the day before departure, visitors should check and record the water levels in the log provided and either e-mail Mark Oksien (markoksien@btinternet.com) or text mobile 07775593200 with the levels. This will allow us to inform on-going parties in advance if there is likely to be any problem. Tank levels and syphon operation should be regularly checked throughout the week. No changes should be made to the tank valve

Isle of May Bird Observatory Trust

configurations without consultation with Mark Oksien. Please read the instructions on use of water on arrival.

IT IS VITAL THAT YOU BOIL ALL WATER THAT IS GOING TO BE CONSUMED OR BRING YOUR OWN SUPPLY OF WATER FOR DRINKING.

The UV system should be checked daily. Checking that the UV filter is working is a core function of providing a clean water supply and must be undertaken every day. This can be done either by looking through the low level Perspex port hole in the box section beside the hand basin in the WC or, if done after dark, with the bathroom light off, a greenish glow through the port hole will show that the light is on.

Clothing

Ensure you have plenty of waterproof clothing for the RIB and also that all your gear is well covered in plastic bags or other waterproof material. Stout footwear is advisable.

Sleeping

We have beds with good firm mattresses. It is now **necessary to bring all bed linen**, a pillow and blankets or a sleeping bag. The bedding stored at the Low Light must not be used under current circumstances.

Sundries

There are a number of items normally available as a result of previous parties leaving spares, but this cannot be relied upon, and it is sensible to take your own: toilet paper, kitchen roll and dish towels; washing-up liquid and scourers; matches, and fly-papers (July/August in particular). The living room has a wood burning stove as has the kitchen. In recent years the supply of driftwood for the stove has been variable, and in the latter part of the year because of restrictions on access to seal breeding areas it can be very difficult to replenish stock. Visitors throughout the year are requested to take every opportunity to restock the wood shed, and the 'good neighbour' approach of always gathering more than you use is a sound rule of thumb. Early and late visitors may wish to bring a small bag of coal to help eke out limited wood supplies.

Communications

On the Thursday or Friday before you are sailing, whether going on or coming off, you should confirm with Roy Giles that sailing is possible on the Saturday. All parties should ensure they have a mobile phone with them. Most mobile phones seem to work well, on most parts of the island; but not all, all of the time! Our Nature Scot warden colleagues have at times allowed access to their phone if a party has none of their own; we would not wish to see this generosity abused, and it should only be asked for in a real emergency.

Ringling Equipment

The Observatory supplies all rings, and is well equipped with pliers, pesolas, electronic scales, rulers and identification guides. We have a supply of bird bags, but welcome the fact that many ringers bring their own. Mist net poles are available, but visitors need to bring their own nets, guys, spring-traps, tape-luring gear and torches. **A ringling kit is now set up at the Low Light. However, this is only to be used when using nets at the Low Light.** Birds caught in the Heligoland traps should be processed at the ringling hut.

Photography

Isle of May Bird Observatory Trust

Those whose principal interest in visiting the island is photography should make arrangements in advance to get the required permit from SNH, Cupar, Fife office (phone 01334 654038). This is not needed for those taking more casual photos, or those relating to birds in the hand whilst ringing. Photographers should make contact with the SNH wardens on arrival to be given guidance, particularly over keeping to paths.

Paths and access around the island.

Observers staying in the Low Light should on arrival discuss their plans for monitoring migration with the Nature Scot wardens. Low Lighters should stay on the paths for all the time that day visitors are on the island and follow the one way system. Any off the path activity during the seabird breeding season (April to end July), particularly by photographers, should be discussed with the Nature Scot wardens. Ringing activities should not be taking place when the *May Princess* is at the island unless by prior arrangement with the Nature Scot wardens.

Mobile phone numbers

It is essential that you provide the Bookings Secretary with a mobile phone number when booking. This number is passed on to Roy Giles and it enables him to alter arrangements if this is necessary for reasons of weather.

Leaving the Island

You should check with Roy Giles on the Friday to see if he is anticipating sailing to schedule on the Saturday. Before you leave the departing party is to clear and clean the Low Light ready for the new incumbents to take over as soon as they arrive. Leave the Low Light as you would expect to find it. You will want to arrange with the Nature Scot Wardens to transport your gear to the harbour prior to the boat arriving.

The manuals in the Observatory detail the full procedures for departure. Please remember to bag what rubbish you don't burn, and take off; it can be left in a skip at Anstruther Harbour. Please leave the Low Light as you would wish to find it.

Enjoy your stay.

Key Points:

- Phone Roy Giles ahead of sailing to ensure no delays due to weather.
- Package all luggage sensibly
- No candles or deep fat frying
- Complete all the logs
- Familiarise yourself with the Low Light Visitor Manual
- Complete battery readings
- Check water tank levels and inform Mark Oksien
- Inform Fluke Street of any notable sightings

Isle of May Bird Observatory Trust

- Protect the Septic Tank
 - ◆ Only flush urine, excrement and toilet paper
 - ◆ Do not flush wet wipes and washlets down the toilet. If used they should be taken off the island with other rubbish.
 - ◆ **Do not** use anti bacterial soaps – use of anti bacterial gels/sanitiser are okay as long as you don't rinse down the sinks
 - ◆ Cleaning and disinfectant solutions are **not** to be disposed of down the kitchen sink or toilet hand basin
 - ◆ **Do not** flush fats and oils down the kitchen sink or toilet hand basin, dispose of them in the composter
- Take off all non-compostable rubbish & recycling. Do not burn plastic in the stoves.
- Send details of sightings to Mark Newell and Alan Lauder
- Report any problems to Mark Oksien