

Planet Boost

Planet Boost is an initiative from *New Scientist* highlighting charitable organisations working to conserve biodiversity and protect the natural environment. Today, a message from **Alderney Bird Observatory**



Awareness of the importance of the natural environment for both our physical and mental well-being has increased due to the restrictions imposed during the pandemic. Sadly, there has never been a time when our natural world has been more under threat and in need of research led conservation.

The work of our small charity, the Alderney Bird Observatory, on Alderney in the English Channel has established that our tiny island is one of Europe's busiest bird migration flyways. We are the most southerly and the newest accredited bird observatory in the British Isles and our spring and autumn migration research is now a significant contributor to European ornithological databases. These annual records help to establish important bird population dynamics and changes in the seasonal movement of species, some of which appear to be strongly linked to climate change.

Last year our Bird Warden was the first in the British Isles to see an immature Bearded Vulture when she flew over Alderney. That is only the second record of this species in the British Isles. Bearded Vultures are one of Europe's largest and rarest raptors and she became quite a celebrity in England, where she spent time subsequently. The Vulture Conservation Foundation confirmed later that she was a wild hatched bird and her mother was raised in a zoo in Switzerland and released as a fledgling as part of a captive breeding programme. We were delighted to help provide evidence of a reintroduction success story.

When interviewed by local television our Bird Warden said "this is big news of a big bird" and

that "if someone strapped an ironing board onto each arm and held them extended it still wouldn't quite match her wingspan!"

The Observatory also provides accommodation for ornithologists and researchers within a Roman Signal Fort and we are very grateful to the States of Alderney (the island's government) for the use of this historic building. However, the collapse of our income stream from visitors during the pandemic now jeopardises our census work for the 2021 spring and autumn migrations. The greatest value from our census work comes from seeing trends that become apparent over years. We need your help so we can gather the 2021 data.

Want to help?

Get in touch today through our website alderneybirdobservatory.org and follow the links to donate. Thank you.