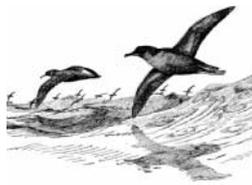


# Manx Shearwater

The Manx Shearwater is one of Ireland's most important breeding seabirds. Many of us know little about them because we hardly ever see them. This is because they spend most of their time at sea and only come ashore to breed, usually on the darkest of nights to avoid attack from large gulls. They gather in large groups, known as colonies, on small, inaccessible islands along the coast. Though silent at sea, in order to locate its mate in the darkness, it makes crowing calls as it returns to the colony. Its mate, which nests in a burrow, responds to the calls and guides the traveller in.

### Summer Visitors

The Manx Shearwater is a summer visitor to Ireland. They arrive in March and leave in September and October to spend winter at sea in the South Atlantic off South America. It is a medium-sized bird, black on top and white underneath. It has a straight bill with a hooked tip and tube-shaped nostrils. Its wings are long and pointed and are stiffly held as it skims over the water. As its name suggests, it uses the wind and the air currents to glide over the waves in search of food. Its diet consists of small fish, plankton, molluscs and crustaceans.



### What's in a name?

The origin of the name Manx Shearwater dates back to a time when there was a huge population of Manx Shearwaters occupying a small island off the Isle of Man. The Isle of Man is an island in the Irish Sea, between Ireland and Britain and the word "manx" relates to something from the Isle of Man or its people, language, or culture. For example, the manx cat is a breed of tail-less cat that originated on the island.



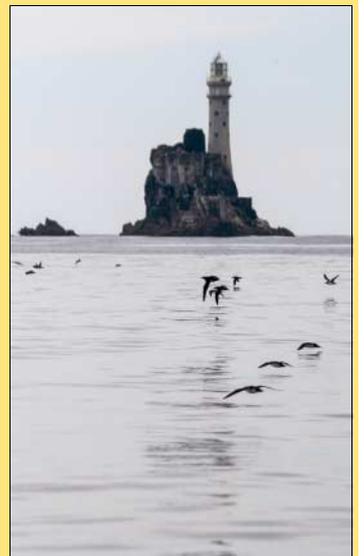
Images courtesy of Robbie Murphy

Manx Shearwaters can live for a very long time. There is a BTO (British Trust for Ornithology) record of an adult bird ringed on Bardsey Island in Wales in 1957 and recorded again on the island in 2008, making it over 50 years old!

### Manx Shearwater in Ireland

Remote islands are good because the birds have fewer predators to worry about. The largest colonies in Ireland are on islands in Kerry, on the Copeland Islands in Co. Down and on the Saltee Islands in Co.

Wexford. 90% of the Ireland's breeding population breed at less than 10 sites around the country. It is for this reason that they are on the Amber list for conservation concern. Birds on the Red List are those of highest conservation concern, Amber List birds are of medium conservation concern and the Green List birds are not considered threatened. For further information on this list, which was produced by BirdWatch Ireland and the Royal Society for the Protection of Bird Northern Ireland, visit: [www.birdwatchireland.ie](http://www.birdwatchireland.ie)



Manx Shearwaters passing Fastnet Rock in West Cork.