

## Isle of Man

### Europa 2021 Endangered National Species

### The Calf of Man and 70th Anniversary of the Manx National Trust

#### Introduction

On 12 April 2021, the Isle of Man Post Office issued a set of 10 stamps which simultaneously commemorate:

- The Europa 2021 “Endangered National Species” stamp theme, with one stamp (NVI “EU”), illustrating a Manx Shearwater (*Puffinus puffinus*) chick;
- The 70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the founding of the Manx National Trust (MNT); and
- The Calf of Man nature and conservation reserve, which is managed by the MNT.

Five of the stamps have a 1<sup>st</sup> NVI, for use on postage within the Isle of Man and valid for post to the UK; and five stamps with the “EU” NVI.

There is an additional stamp featuring a bird; and this is the EU stamp illustrating the Calf of Man Bird Observatory and the Common Whitethroat: more of which below.

The consultancy EJC Design developed the stamp illustrations, each stamp being available in sheets of 20. The printing is in offset lithography and each stamp measures 40.00 x 31.66mm in portrait format.

The set is available in a presentation pack (limited to 1,500), and the usual First Day Cover (FDC) is available (limited to 2,250). The Europa 2021 stamp also has its own FDC and miniature sheet (see below). Isle of Man Post Office has also issued a set of postcards to accompany the stamp issue, which carry enlarged illustrations of each stamp<sup>1</sup>.

#### The Manx Shearwater stamp



Source: [www.stampworld.com](http://www.stampworld.com)

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<sup>1</sup> [Calf of Man - Isle of Man Post Office \(iompost.com\)](http://Calf of Man - Isle of Man Post Office (iompost.com))

This Europa stamp puts the spotlight on the Manx Sheerwater Recovery Project, run by the Manx National Heritage. The Manx Sheerwater are ground nesters and as such, in a somewhat familiar story, their eggs were (and are) are vulnerable to predation by brown rats.

Manx National Heritage (MNH), the statutory heritage agency for the Isle of Man<sup>2</sup>, has contributed to the Recovery Project by focusing on the eradication of the brown rats. According to the MNH, the brown or Norway rats made it across to the Calf of Man in the late 1700s from a shipwrecked vessel. The Calf used to be home to thousands of Manx Sheerwater birds, but gradually the rats wiped out that population.

Fast forward to modern times and despite attempted control measures, the rats continued to threaten the remaining Manx Sheerwater colonies. In 2012-13, a combined effort by the MNH, the Manx Wildlife Trust, Manx Birdlife and the Government of the Isle of Man, with support from the RSPB, came together in a joint effort to eliminate rats from the Calf of Man.<sup>3</sup>

The commentary accompanying the issue indicates that the Recovery Project has not as yet completely eliminated the brown rat from the Calf of Man; but on the other hand, the Sheerwater population has shown signs of has not responded with a very encouraging increase in breeding numbers<sup>4</sup>.

The Manx Wildlife Trust website<sup>5</sup> provides a rather charming description of the Manx Sheerwater:

*“This mysterious little bird is known for its haunting call and was once mistaken for witches by pirates off the coast of Wales! They travel thousands of miles every year to nest in their hobbit-like burrows to raise one (and only one) super fluffy chick.”*

That “super fluffy chick” is what forms the centre piece of the 2021 stamp.

The MWT website also states that the Sheerwater flies thousands of miles from South America (where it winters) to return to the same burrow every year. Interestingly, MWT also indicates that the chicks become so big in the nests that effectively they have to go on a crash diet to prepare for the long journey back to South America for the winter: migration starting in July.

The National Trust (UK) also reports a similar Manx Sheerwater Recovery Project, based on Lundy Island, which in 2002 also set out to eradicate the brown rats and black rats that were destroying the eggs. By 2013, a decade after the rat removal, the Manx Sheerwater population on Lundy has apparently recovered.<sup>6</sup>

Isle of Man Post has issued a separate miniature sheet comprising 10 of the EU Europa stamps illustrating the Manx Sheerwater chicks. The sheetlet costs £9.40, which puts the price of each EU stamp at £0.94p (<20g), a bargain for sending a postcard or small letter, when compared to the £1.70 that we currently pay Royal Mail for a letter to the EU (though the £1.70 is valid up to 100g).

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<sup>2</sup> The MNH is also the National Trust for the Isle of Man and operates at arms-length from the Isle of Government. It is also part-financed by the Government as well as being a registered charity.

<sup>3</sup> Source: [Calf Manx Shearwater Recovery Project – The story so far \(manxnationalheritage.im\)](#)

<sup>4</sup> Source: [Calf of Man - Isle of Man Post Office \(iompost.com\)](#)

<sup>5</sup> Source: [Manx shearwater | Manx Wildlife Trust \(mwt.im\)](#)

<sup>6</sup> Source: [Recovery of the Manx shearwater on Lundy Island | National Trust](#)

BIRD STAMP SOCIETY

The Europa EU FDC (featuring two stamps) is also illustrated below.



Source: [Calf of Man - Isle of Man Post Office \(iompost.com\)](http://Calf of Man - Isle of Man Post Office (iompost.com)) The sheetlet of 10 stamps.



Source: [Isle of Man Post Office \(iompost.com\)](http://iompost.com) The First Day Cover.

### The Calf of Man Bird Observatory

The technical information for this particular stamp (also with the EU NVI) states:

*The observatory opened in 1959 and was formally accredited in 1962. It now focuses on seabird breeding: numerous gull species. The Calf's population of loaghtan sheep helps to maintain the habitat in a condition that is beneficial for the breeding population of chough on the Calf.<sup>7</sup>*



Source: [www.stampworld.com](http://www.stampworld.com)

The Calf of Man is owned by Manx National Heritage, but the Bird Observatory is staffed by volunteers from the Manx Wildlife Trust. The Wildlife Trust's website is very helpful to the extent that it also includes a Bird List spreadsheet which charts the birds that visit or are resident on the Calf of Man, with interesting commentaries on each bird<sup>8</sup>.

The Bird observatory stamp Above) also includes the image of a Common Whitethroat (*Sylvia communis*), about which the Calf Bird List states: "General status: occasional breeder, passage migrant."

### Other Stamps in the Set

The other stamps in the set illustrate the following:

- 1<sup>st</sup> – Calf of Man Nature Reserve
- 1<sup>st</sup> – Sea Transport
- 1<sup>st</sup> – Crucifixion Stone
- 1<sup>st</sup> (x 2) Calf of Man and Wart Bank Nature Reserve
- EU – Infrastructure (dry stone walling on Calf and Chicken Rock Lighthouse)
- EU – Insect Conservation (Garden Tiger Moth)
- EU – Flora (Pink Thrift)

<sup>7</sup> [Calf of Man - Isle of Man Post Office \(iompost.com\)](http://iompost.com)

<sup>8</sup> Source: [The Calf of Man Bird Observatory | Manx Wildlife Trust \(mwt.im\)](http://mwt.im)