

## Weddings on St George's Island



This wonderful island is a beautiful location for weddings, blessings and renewal of vows. The island's old smuggling barn, Jetty Cottage, is licensed for ceremonies for up to 36 people. The island is available during the months of April to September and is exclusively available to you on the day of the ceremony. Due to its unique nature, careful planning is required to hold a wedding on the island and further information is available to help you decide if this is the right location for your special day. Cornwall Wildlife Trust have partnered with Barclay House, a beautiful hotel in Looe, to hold weddings on the island.

The hotel is perfectly placed to arrange your special day, providing an alternative ceremony venue should weather not permit access to the island. For more information about getting married on this wonderful island, please contact the hotel on (01503) 262929 or visit [www.cornwallwildlifetrust.org.uk/stgeorgesland](http://www.cornwallwildlifetrust.org.uk/stgeorgesland)



Barclay House hotel, Looe



## The Looe VMCA

It is because of the richness in wildlife that a Voluntary Marine Conservation Area (VMCA) was established here in 1995 by Caradon District Council. The Looe VMCA embraces almost 5km of coastline from Hore Stone, West of Portnadler Bay, to the Limmicks in Looe Bay and includes St George's Island. The marine environment is in balance, with the pressures put



upon it by the busy harbour and the multitude of summer visitors. It is important that we maintain this balance by encouraging sensible and sustainable use of our sea. As a voluntary designation, the role of the VMCA is not to impose restrictions but to encourage sensible use of the natural resources in the area. In doing so, we will protect and preserve our marine environment for future generations to enjoy.

For more information about the VMCA and how you can get involved in marine related events, activities and volunteering, please email [abby.crosby@cornwallwildlifetrust.org.uk](mailto:abby.crosby@cornwallwildlifetrust.org.uk), call the Trust on (01872) 273939 or visit [cornwallwildlifetrust.org.uk/yourshore](http://cornwallwildlifetrust.org.uk/yourshore)



Photography by Neil Aldridge, JB&S Bottomley, Chris Bunney, Cornwall Wildlife Trust, Sue Daly, Callum Deveney, Highview pictures, Sheila McCann-Downes, Paul Naylor, Christine Spooner, Andrew Starling, John Tremain, Nick Tregenza, Ruth Williams. Illustration: Sarah McCartney. Design: Sheila McCann-Downes.

## St George's Island Marine Nature Reserve



Cornwall

## Enjoy a wonderful day out!



Protecting **Wildlife** for the Future

**A marine nature reserve, St George's Island is one of only a few inhabited islands off the coast of Cornwall. A trip often offers the unexpected where, on occasions, you'll be escorted by a school of dolphins or watched by a grey seal. The islanders have become accustomed to the sea bringing them daily surprises ranging from cannon balls to beached whales.**

### **Island wildlife**

The island is a quiet haven for wildlife with a variety of habitats including woodland, maritime grassland, cliffs, sand and shingle and rocky reef. In spring, the small woodland has a carpet of wild garlic and bluebells and offers a contrast to the rugged coastline dotted with nesting seabirds. Indeed parts of the island are closed to protect such seabirds, which includes the second largest colony of great black-backed gulls in Cornwall. Hebridean sheep graze amongst the birds on the coastal grassland, breaking up the scrub and making a habitat more suitable for invertebrates and wildflowers. In the early summer the cliffs are swathes of pink with thrift and this is also the time of year to see basking sharks feeding along the coast. The waters around the island are teeming with marine creatures and a large rocky reef is covered and exposed with the rise and fall of the tide. Monitoring such marine environments is an important part of the Trust's work - assessing over the years any changes in the presence and abundance of different species. Studies like this may help to target conservation efforts and assess the impact of climate change with warmer water species being more frequently recorded.

### **Being sustainable**

In managing the whole of the island, the Trust's objectives are underpinned by a commitment to sustainability and organic principals and the island is becoming increasingly self-sufficient. The mild climate and ample supply of seaweed to improve the soil provide excellent growing conditions for fruit and vegetables. The woodland is managed to provide fuel for

heating while solar panels are used to heat water and in the future wind power will be harvested for electricity. Compost toilets will provide a green solution to waste issues.

### **Island history**

Early records show that humans have inhabited the islands since the 12th century, with a Benedictine chapel being built in 1139. Evidence of much earlier activity was unearthed by Channel 4's Time Team dig in 2008. A few stones remain on the chapel site, which is at the island's highest point of 45 metres (105 feet). Throughout the ages a small number of people have lived on the island, farming its 9 hectares (22 acres) and at times supplementing their income with a spot of smuggling - on the west of the island there are caves that run deep into the cliffs where it's believed smuggled goods were unloaded and stored. The main island house was built by Customs so a watch could be kept for any such illegal activity. Legend and myth are inextricably interwoven with the history of the island and tales of smuggling, buried treasure and shipwrecks abound.

### **The Atkins sisters**

The most important recent history was how two sisters from Surrey came to own the island in the 1960s. Without their will and vision and love of all that is special about islands, this wildlife haven would not exist. Evelyn Atkins wrote two books which give a great insight to life on the island; *We Bought an Island* and *Tales from our Cornish Island*, both of which can be purchased on the island and from the Trust's online shop: [cornwallwildlifetrust.org.uk/shop](http://cornwallwildlifetrust.org.uk/shop). In 2004, Babs Atkins passed away and the island was bequeathed to Cornwall Wildlife Trust to be managed as a nature reserve and thus conserve its unique character.

### **How to get to the island**

You can visit the island from Easter to September on board the 'Islander' passenger boat which leaves from the Lifeboat Station slipway in East Looe. The days and times the boat runs depend on the tide; it can only operate three hours either side of high

tide during daylight hours, and the boat will not operate in bad weather. To find out when the boat is running please contact the Trust on (01872) 273939 or check the information board by the Lifeboat Station in East Looe. There is a charge for the boat trip and a small landing fee will also be collected when you arrive on the island. For current charges please see the Trust's website, [cornwallwildlifetrust.org.uk/stgeorgesisland](http://cornwallwildlifetrust.org.uk/stgeorgesisland), or call us on the number above.

### **Your visit to the island**

Allow yourself about 2 ½ hours to visit the island. The boat crossing takes 15 minutes each way leaving you two hours to explore the island when you get there, ample time to meet the locals and learn about the island's wildlife, history and charm. The 'Islander' passenger boat lands on the main beach, where you will be greeted and taken to the Tractor Shed which is the start of the Island Trail. After a short introduction to the island, you will then be free to enjoy the Trail and immerse yourself in the island's wild and secluded beauty.

### **A bit of small print**

Some of the footpaths are steep, uneven and can be slippery in places so we advise you to wear suitable footwear. During your visit please keep to the marked paths and note that in order to avoid disturbing wildlife such as nesting birds, some areas of the island are out of bounds to visitors, these areas will be clearly signed. Regrettably visitors are not allowed to bring their dogs onto the island. You are welcome to bring your own refreshments but please take any litter home for recycling. The island is home to a small number of people, so please respect their privacy. Thank you.

### **Volunteering on the island**

Many hundreds of volunteers have helped on the island over the years and the work continues. If you would like to volunteer, please contact the Trust's main office on (01872) 273939 or visit our website, [cornwallwildlifetrust.org.uk/volunteer](http://cornwallwildlifetrust.org.uk/volunteer).



# St George's Island Marine Nature Reserve



**Grey seals** are often seen around the Island. Although they are called “grey” seals their colour varies from silver to black, with the males often darker and larger than the females. Volunteers carry out monthly seal surveys and the information

collected can be used to identify each seal by the unique pattern of blotches around its head - a bit like using fingerprints.



Male **cuckoo wrasse** have brilliant blue markings interspersed with orange or yellow down the flanks. Females are a duller red colour with a distinctive row of black and white spots at the base of the dorsal fin. All cuckoo wrasse start life as females but they can change sex. When the dominant male of the group dies, one of the females in the harem will change into a male. Cuckoo wrasse are territorial and live amongst the kelp on rocky reefs.



The **common dolphin** is one of the fastest and most acrobatic of all dolphins and is well known to sailors and fishermen who often see them bow-riding. Bow-riding means riding on the waves made by the front end (or bow) of a ship or boat as it sails - it's a bit like surfing and the dolphins seem to get a lot of fun out of it. This species has a low, pointed forehead with a long, slender, black beak. It has an off-white hourglass pattern on each of its sides and is pale grey behind the fin on its back.



The **cormorant** is easily recognisable by its brown-black plumage, white face and white chin. They stand upright on land often holding their wings out to dry and are a familiar sight on buoys and low off-shore rocks.

The **beadlet anemone** is usually seen on rocky shores or in shallow water. Underwater, its dense mass of tapering tentacles can be fully appreciated, but when exposed to air between the tide marks it retracts to avoid dehydration and then resembles a dark red blob of jelly.



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The **shag** is considerably smaller and more slender and both sexes have a crest during the breeding season.



The **basking shark** is the second-largest fish in the world but is harmless to man. It can often be seen in fine weather during the summer months swimming slowly near the surface with only its dorsal and tail fins showing. Like baleen whales, it swallows huge amounts of sea water from which it filters out its food. In the case of the basking shark, "gill rakers" are used as the plankton sieve.



The **velvet swimming crab** is often found hiding in rockpools or under stones on the shore, but can be quite aggressive. It has bright red eyes and a velvet-like covering to its shell. Its back legs are edged with blue and flattened to act as paddles and help the crab to swim.



The **great black-backed gull** is the largest gull nesting in Great Britain and Ireland. An opportunistic feeder, it will often be seen around fishing boats looking for offal and the species is kleptoparasitic, meaning it will rob other birds of their catch.

**Thrift** or sea-pink is a familiar coastal plant. It forms compact cushions, and has attractive deep pink or occasionally white flowers. The flowers have five petals, and occur in groups at the top of a flower spike, which is surrounded by the narrow leaves. The leaves have just a single vein, and often have hairs along the edges; they arise from a visible woody rootstock, which forms the cushions. The name 'thrift' is thought to refer to the leaves, which are tightly packed together and conserve water in the salty air.



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## Protect wildlife forever



## Leave a legacy for the future

So much of the Trust's conservation work is made possible through legacies left to us by our supporters, no matter how big or small they really do make a difference. St George's Island was left to the Trust by Babs Atkins, to be managed as a nature reserve. When you write or update your Will, once you have made sure that the people you care about are provided for, please consider including a legacy gift to Cornwall Wildlife Trust to ensure future generations can enjoy the natural beauty of Cornwall and its wildlife.

### Legacies have already helped us to:

- Provide protection for endangered species
- Buy and manage nature reserves
- Educate and inspire children
- Encourage volunteers to protect their local area
- Campaign on behalf of wildlife.

What's more, legacies to a registered charity are tax-free, which helps to reduce inheritance tax liability. If you would like to know more about leaving a legacy to the Trust please contact us for your free Make a Will for Wildlife booklet:

- (01872) 273939
- Visit our website: [cornwallwildlifetrust.org.uk/legacy](http://cornwallwildlifetrust.org.uk/legacy)

Registered charity name: Cornwall Trust for Nature Conservation  
Registered charity number: 214929



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