

Isle of May outings



There'll be activities galore when Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) hosts a special day for families on the Isle of May national nature reserve on Friday 24 July.

In the crafts tent, children can make puffin masks and paint stones, inspired by the nature of the island. Also in the crafts tent will be the ever-popular face-painting, and in the atmospheric South Horn, a storyteller will entrance with tales of the island.

A treasure trail organised by Fife's Knitted Nature will take families on a walk of discovery. In the visitor centre, a marine tank will be displaying some of the creatures found in the sea around the island and the telescopes and binoculars provided will offer an exciting birdwatching opportunity.

A competition running on the day will give someone the chance to win a paid VIP trip to the island next year.

David Steel, SNH's Isle of May reserve manager, said, "We've got lots of fun activities lined up for families, all inspired by the wonderful nature on this fantastic island. As well as lots of arts and crafts, we're having a competition to name a special visitor we're expecting on the day, so you'll need to get your thinking caps on for that one!"

There is no charge to attend the Family Day or to take part in the activities but you will need to book a place on one of the boats. Children must be accompanied by an adult.

Advance booking is essential.

It's free to visit the nature reserve, but you must take a boat trip to reach the island. Sailings are on the privately-run May Princess or Osprey of Anstruther from the Anstruther

Harbour or through the Scottish Seabird Centre in North Berwick.

- Anstruther – for tickets and details, see www.isleofmayferry.com (May Princess) or www.isleofmayboattrips.co.uk (RIB Osprey).
- North Berwick – For tickets and details, book online on the Scottish Seabird Centre website at www.seabird.org or call 01620 890 202.

Known locally as 'The May', this small island sits on the edge of the Firth of Forth. The island's importance for seabirds has drawn scientists to its shores for many years and the May is home to the oldest continuously running bird observatory in the UK. The May is also a regular haunt for grey seals, often seen lounging on the shoreline rocks. This island is a historical gem and it's been a place of pilgrimage for centuries with an early island monastery. The May was also the site of Scotland's very first lighthouse, built in 1636, while the current, castle-like lighthouse was designed by the engineer Robert Stevenson.

Photo courtesy of Celine Marchbank