

Isle of May open to the public from this weekend

The Isle of May, a National Nature Reserve, opens to the public on Saturday.

Under the management of NatureScot the island has been closed to help protect seabirds from avian flu. The Scottish Avian Influenza Taskforce led by NatureScot has worked during the last twelve months to understand and learn more about the virus.

As a result of this there will be security measures in place to keep disruption to the birds on the Isle of May to a minimum. This will include disinfecting footwear and restricting access to certain areas. Visitors will be asked to stay on designated paths during their time on the island.

In the spring there are more than 80,000 pairs of birds nesting on the Isle of May including more than 40,000 puffins. The high west cliffs are home to guillemots, razorbills, shags and kittiwakes, while more than 1,200 female eider ducks nest across the reserve.

NatureScot reserve manager David Steel said: "We're really looking forward to welcoming people back to enjoy the Isle of May, which is a really magical place in spring as thousands of seabirds return to this important wildlife reserve.

"It was heart-breaking to see the impact that avian flu had on colonies around our coasts last year and while a difficult decision, closing the island was the right thing to do to protect our seabirds.

“While we don’t yet know what impact the virus has had on the birds that nest here, we hope that this will be a better year for them. We ask that visitors help us to help them by following the biosecurity measures that will be in place, and would like to thank boat operators for their support in implementing this.”

There are boats which travel to the Isle from both the southern and northern coasts of the Firth of Forth:

[May Princess](#) (sails from Anstruther)

[Osprey Anstruther \(rib\)](#) (sails from Anstruther)

[Scottish Seabird Centre \(rib\)](#) (sails from North Berwick)

[Bluewild](#) (sails from Dunbar)



An aerial view of the Isle of May National Nature Reserve in the Firth of Forth.

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Atlantic puffin (*Fratercula arctica*).
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