The Secretariat is pleased to announce that the United Kingdom has designated Alderney West Coast and the Burhou Islands (15,629 hectares, 49°43'N 002°15'W) as its 163rd Ramsar site. As summarized by Dorothea August from the RIS, the site comprises the western coast of Alderney and adjacent shallow waters and islets in the strongly tidal, high-energy system of the northern Channel Islands. It includes diverse and inter-related ecosystems, such as sandy beaches with shingle banks, marine subtidal aquatic beds, rockpools, sandbars, and pebble beach and rocky marine shores, including sea cliff and rocky offshore islands. The rocky islets are a very important bird breeding place. A large nesting population of northern gannets are established on the Garden Rocks and Ortac with about 11,900 individuals. It also provides habitat for a seal colony to the north of Burhou Island and some fish and shellfish species such as e.g. lobsters, bass and plaice. The site hosts about 100 species of seaweeds, which play a very important role in supporting all the marine fauna and thus the large nesting bird population. A Land Use Plan protects the terrestrial part of the area within the site, including intertidal rock formations. Besides commercial and non-commercial fishing, tourism is the main activity: there is a visitor centre which provides both educational measures for children and information materials for the general public. Common visitor activities are birdwatching, walking and rockpooling over the summer months. [01/11/05]

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