Start at Béal Geal/Sandy Bay carpark. Walk northwards along the shore towards Kilshannig. Continue along the cliff top path around Kilshannig Village.
Proceed westwards along the beach at Scraggane Bay. Walk for 100m along the cliff top path before taking a sharp left along Bóthairín na mBó to Fahamore village. Head southwards along the road to the Point Gap where you can access the beach. Continue for 1km until you reach the Maherabeg Cut where you re-join the road and continue southwards back to the Béal Geal carpark.

Time 2 ½ hours approx.

1. Site of the old village of Magherabeg, finally abandoned c. 1916.
2. Scairt beach where the sail ship the Industry, with its cargo of flour and meal, was deliberately beached on 24 December 1847.
3. Imilleach, a wintering site for Brent Geese and other birdlife.
4. Oileán Domhnaill where the East Indiaman, the York, was deliberately wrecked by pirates in October 1758.
5. The site of the Signal Tower, built between 1813 and 1816.
6. 200m north of the graveyard on the rocky shore lies Cloch a' Turais, in the past a place of pilgrimage on Good Fridays.
7. The ruin of the 7th century St. Seanach's Church. Within the walls can be found a Chi-Rho Cross slab. The building acted as a parish church during the 1300's.
8. The Nuestra Senora del Soccorro, a boat attached to the International Armada was wrecked on the east side of Mucklaghbeg in 1588.
9. The 5th century Monastic site on Oileán tSeannaigh founded by St. Seanach contains two small oratories, three beehive huts, a souterrain and wall chamber, three leachts, a stone cross and a burial ground.
10. The Aud, with a consignment of German arms for the Easter Rising, arrived at Inis Tuaisceart during Easter week 1916. Attempts to land the arms failed and the Aud was captured by the British navy.
11. The 3.8 metre Standing Stone or Gallán. Local folklore maintained that there were priests buried under it.
12. On 31 December 1891, the Catherine Richards was wrecked at Tóin na Reanna.
13. On 24 November 1890, the Charger, a 174ft. barque containing 29,000 deal boards, was wrecked on Corralougha Strand.
14. For hundreds of years Corralougha Strand provided the inhabitants of Maharees with food in the form of Duileasc, Limpets and Perriwinkles. The collection of Carrigeen Moss, Agar and seaweed for kelp manufacture provided a valuable source of income for families during the early 20th Century.
15. Tráigh Dhíomhaoin (The Idle Strand) whose name derives from the absence of seaweed.
16. An tSean Abhainn, a source of fresh water for the inhabitants of Maharees and Castlegregory during periods of drought.

Maharees Conservation Association CLG aims to protect the coast line, the sand dune system and the natural habitat of the Maharees. All sand dunes are environmentally sensitive areas which support a variety of wildlife. The marram grass which stabilizes the sand dunes is fragile. Please help us to protect this area: do not light fires or camp on the dunes; do not walk or climb on the dunes – use designated beach access paths only. We encourage all beach users to take their litter home with them. Thank you for your help in preserving this important natural feature of the Maharees.

Maharees Conservation Association CLG has produced this leaflet with support from the Kerry County Council Community Support Fund and Biodiversity Office. We would like to thank the following for their assistance: Kerry County Council Community Department and Biodiversity Office; Dr Therese Higgins and Kilian Kelly (Lecturers, BSc in Wildlife Biology, Institute of Technology, Tralee); Gosia Shaikh-Horajska (Kerry Geo Adventures); Martin Lynch (author of The Land and People of the Maharees and Castlegregory, A History 1560-1960); Michael O'Clery (Wildlife Artist); Sandra Henry (Cherish Project); Idirlinn (Dingle).

If you would like to support the upkeep of the Maharees Heritage Trail or the production of this leaflet, we invite you to make a donation on www.mahareesconservation.com.

CHERISH
Newid Hinsawdd a Threftadaeth yr Afordir
Climate Change and Coastal Heritage
Athrú Aeráide agus Oidhreacht Chultúrtha

INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY TRALEE
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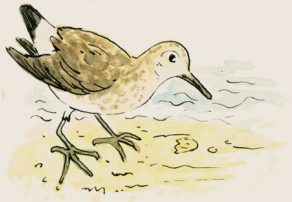
Kerry County Council

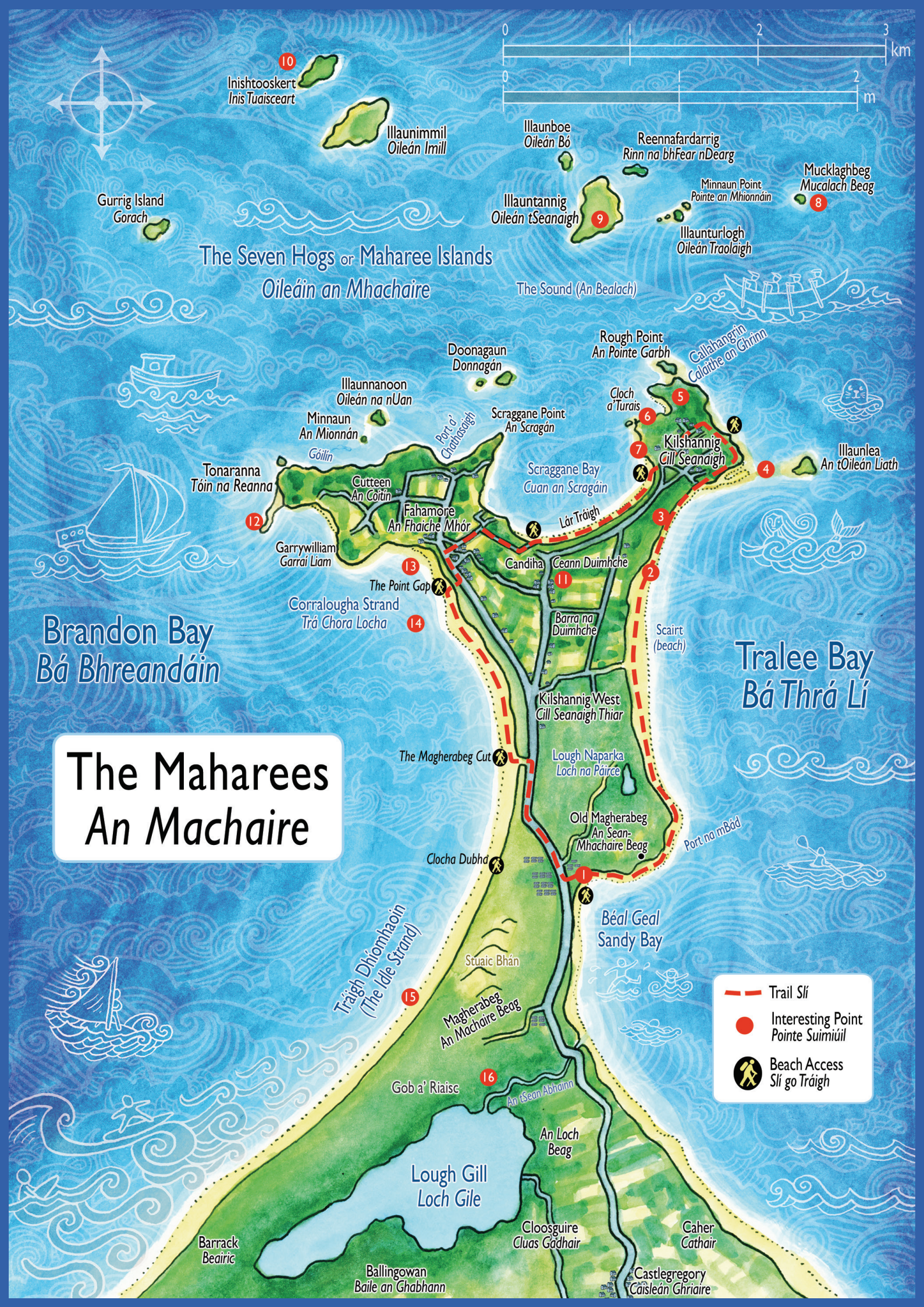
Maharees Conservation Association
Protecting | Enhancing | Preserving

Maharees Heritage Trail

Slí Oidhreachta an Mhachaire

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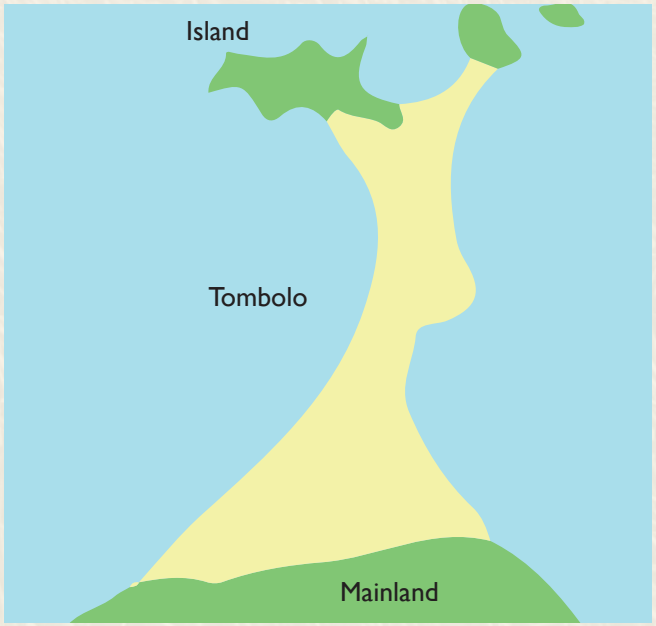
Rinn na bhFear nDearg
Mucklaghbeg
Mucalach Beag
8
Minnaun Point
Pointe an Mhionnáin
Illauntannig
Oileán tSeanaigh
9
Illaunturlogh
Oileán Traolaigh
Gurrig Island
Gorach
The Seven Hogs or Maharee Islands
Oileáin an Mhachaire
The Sound (An Bealach)
Rough Point
An Pointe Garbh
Callahangrin
Calaithe an Ghrinn
Doonagaun
Donnagán
Illaunnanoon
Oileán na nUan
Minnaun
An Mionnán
Port a' Chathasaigh
Scraggane Point
An Scragán
Cloch
a'Turais
5
6
7
Kilshannig
Cill Seanaigh
Illaunlea
An tOileán Liath
4
Góilín
Tonaranna
Tóin na Reanna
Cutteen
An Coitín
Scraggane Bay
Cuan an Scragáin
12
Fahamore
An Fhaiche Mhór
Lár Tráigh
3
Garrywilliam
Garraí Liam
13
Candiha
Ceann Duimhche
11
2
The Point Gap
Corralougha Strand
Trá Chora Locha
14
Barra na
Duimhche
Scairt
(beach)
Brandon Bay
Bá Bhreandáin
Tralee Bay
Bá Thrá Lí
Kilshannig West
Cill Seanaigh Thiar
The Magherabeg Cut
Lough Naparka
Loch na Páirce
Old Magherabeg
An Sean-
Mhachaire Beag
Port na mBád
Clocha Dubha
1
Béal Geal
Sandy Bay
Tráigh Dhíomhaoin
(The Idle Strand)
Stuaic Bhán
15
Magherabeg
An Machaire Beag
Gob a' Riaisc
16
An tSean Abhainn
An Loch
Beag
Lough Gill
Loch Gile
Cloosguire
Cluas Gadhair
Caher
Cathair
Barrack
Beairic
Ballingowan
Baile an Ghabhann
Castlegregory
Caisleán Ghriaire
Trail Slí
Interesting Point
Pointe Suimiúil
Beach Access
Slí go Tráigh

How the Maharees was formed

The Maharees is a special type of coastal area. It consists of what were once small, offshore islands connected to the mainland by a bar or 'spit' of sand called a tombolo. Tombolos have developed in several areas around the Irish coastline over the last 10,000 years. They can be made of sand or shingle or both with often well-developed sand dunes systems. The Maharees Peninsula has one of the best examples of a tombolo in Ireland and is assigned as a County Geological Site.

The islands of the Maharees are composed of Limestone. This is a type of sedimentary rock which was laid down more than 300 million years ago. At that time, Ireland was covered by shallow warm seas which had a rich variety of plants and animals, many of which had hard calcareous shells. Today's limestone bedrock is made largely



Schematic illustration of the tombolo at the Maharees Peninsula – Gosia Shaikh-Horajska

of those shells, and also contains many fossils of life from the time (e.g. brachiopods, crinoids (sea lilies), corals, sea snails). Most of the sand on the beaches of the Maharees is composed of limestone and shells that have been broken down by the action of the sea and the wind over time.

The Maharees as an Important Wildlife Habitat

The Maharees, together with Tralee Bay to the east and Brandon Bay to the west, make up an extensive complex of coastal habitats and support a rich variety of wildlife. The peninsula is part of the 'Tralee Bay and Maharees Peninsula, West to Cloghane Special Area of Conservation (SAC)' and is designated as such under the EU Habitats Directive for a variety of habitats that it supports, such as Tidal Mudflats, Atlantic Salt Meadows and Estuaries. The SAC is over 11,000 hectares, stretching from Tralee town to Brandon Point, spanning over 25 km of coastline.

Specific to the Maharees peninsula are habitats such as Fixed Coastal Dunes, Dune Slacks and Coastal Lagoons, which are 'Annex I' habitats under the EU Habitats Directive and are deemed to be of particular conservation value due to the species that they support. The shorelines of the Maharees vary in type from sheltered sandy shores to exposed and rocky shores. Such coastal habitats play an

Sea Rocket - Jessica Hamilton

Marram Grass – Therese Higgins

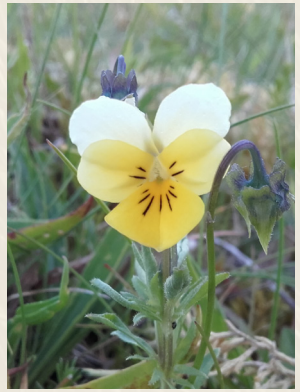
Sea Holly – Martha Farrell

important role in protecting the habitats further inland from the power of the sea. They tend to be dynamic, shifting and moving position over relatively short timeframes (decades).

The sand dune complex supports a continuum, or 'succession' of habitats, beginning at the high-tide line, where embryonic dunes are formed by a process known as 'saltation' (bouncing sand grains). Embryonic dunes support pioneer plant species that are the first to colonise new ground, such as Sea Rocket (Cakile maritima) and Sand Couch grass (Elymus farctus).

Moving back from the shoreline, 'yellow dunes' are formed and are characterised by Marram grass (Ammophila arenaria). This spiky grass is the most distinctive dune species and is adapted for living on mobile, dry sand. The narrow leaves curl inward to conserve

Bee Orchid (Orphys apifera) has evolved to look like a resting bee to entice others to land and unwittingly transfer pollen from flower to flower – .



Dune Pansy (Viola tricolor subsp. curtsii). These support ant colonies as their seeds are dispersed by the ants who are rewarded with a nutrient packed 'oil body' attached. – Therese Higgins

The cowslip *The cowslip (Primula veris) and and the birds foot trefoil (Lotus spp) are examples of many species that were formerly more widespread, before agriculture became so intensive. These can still be found abundantly in places like the Maharees. Wild species like these in turn support invertebrate species such as the common blue butterfly (Polyommatus Icarus). – Therese Higgins*

water and the root systems are very far-reaching. Its scientific name 'Ammophila' comes from Greek: 'ammos', referring to sand, and 'philos' to friend. Marram grass is important for sand dunes because the extensive root systems help to stabilise the whole system, allowing other species to take hold and survive the harsh conditions. These dunes are very important in protecting the land behind them from high tides and winter storms.

Sea Holly is a pretty, blue-flowered member of the thistle family that grows in the shelter of the marram. It is becoming rarer in some parts of Europe because of the pressures facing coastal areas (trampling and development).

In former times the young shoots and roots were eaten as an asparagus-like vegetable.

Farthest away from the seashore are Fixed or Grey dunes. These areas take on a darker colour because of humus accumulation on the surface (organic material). These areas can be very species rich, as the earlier pioneer and dune-building species help to create a variety of niches in which other species can survive. Grey dunes are characterised by White Clover (Trifolium repens), Common Centaury (Centaurium erythraea), Lady's Bedstraw (Galium verum) and grasses such as Red Fescue (Festuca rubra) and Meadow Grass (Poa trivialis). They often have orchids, pansies and other plants important for bees, moths and butterflies.

The depressions that form within the grey dunes are known as 'dune slacks' and represent an important wetland component of these systems, as they are often damper than the other dune areas, supporting species such as Creeping Willow (Salix repens) and the rare Petalwort (Petalophyllym ralfsii). This is the key habitat for Natterjack toads (Epidalea calamita), as they use pools which accumulate here during the breeding season. The Maharees contains the largest Irish breeding population of this amphibian species, Ireland's only native toad.

Bird Life on the Maharees

The wider area of the Maharees and Tralee Bay is an internationally important wetland for wintering birds. It is designated for protection under the EU Birds Directive as it regularly holds over 20,000 birds. The site is of particular importance to wildfowl species such as Whooper Swan, internationally important numbers

Little Tern – Michael O'Clery

Brent Geese – Michael O'Clery

of Light-bellied Brent Goose, and nationally important numbers of Shelduck, Wigeon, Teal, Mallard, Pintail and Scaup. Shoreline and wading species of importance include Oystercatcher, Ringed Plover, Golden Plover, Grey Plover, Lapwing, Sanderling, Dunlin, Black-tailed Godwit, Bar-tailed Godwit, Curlew, Redshank and Turnstone. Visitors should be aware that many of these birds must forage all available hours to achieve breeding condition, and regular disturbance by walkers or dogs puts them at risk. This is especially true for migratory species like geese that overwinter on Irish coasts.

To the west of the Maharees in Brandon Bay, birds of more exposed coasts and the open sea can be seen, including Gannets, Kittiwakes, Manx Shearwaters and Great-northern divers. Thousands of Common Scoter regularly spend the winter in the Bay. The Maharee islands to the north of the peninsula support many breeding seabird species such as Little Terns (the last remaining breeding site in Kerry) and European Storm Petrels.

History of Settlement on the Maharees

There is a long history of human settlement on the Maharees. A Bronze Age cooking site or Fualacht Fia, dating from 1,500 B.C, is located in the dunes at Magherabeg. A shell midden at Fahamore dates from 1185 A.D. and an Early Christian monastic site can be found on Oileán tSeannaigh. During William Petty's Survey, taken about 1659, the population of Fahamore, Cutteen and Garrywilliam was recorded as 18 while the population of Kilshannig was 24. As the population increased greatly during the early 1800's, Oileán tSeanaigh was re-settled for the first time since being abandoned by the monks in the middle ages. The 1841 Census records 608 people and 107 inhabited houses in the five townlands of the Maharees. Population peaked at 646 in 1881 before declining steadily so that by 1971 it had fallen to 306. The following decade witnessed a temporary increase with 345 individuals recorded in 1979. The present day full-time population is estimated at 294.

Monastic Site at Oileán tSeannaigh – The Cherish Project