

WARDEN'S REPORT FOR 1986

A warden's role on Lundy has changed through the years. According to the state of the Society's finances the L.F.S. employed wardens from 1947 until 1973, the Landmark Trust taking on the financial burden in the last years. The wardens, in that period, were all bird ringers who between them made a significant contribution to the island's ornithological reputation, and this was recognised by Lundy's continued inclusion as a member of the 'Bird Observatories Council'.

1973 was also the year that Lundy became the first voluntary marine reserve in Britain. The Nature Conservancy Council was closely involved in this initiative, and in 1978, by way of a pilot project, they funded a marine warden. Following the new provisions for statutory control in 1981, the N.C.C. made further funding available in 1983 and 1984 for the employment of a Marine Liaison Officer. As the title implies, he was very much involved with the lengthy consultation process that was central to the new legislation. Subsequently the 'Lundy Marine Consultation Group' was established and by the end of November 1986 Lundy had the considerable distinction of becoming Britain's first statutory marine reserve.

Against this background I took up my employment at the beginning of February as the Landmark Trust Warden, financial assistance coming from the N.C.C. and L.F.S. My job description is somewhat broader than the previous wardens have enjoyed, though marine matters and reporting continue to be important aspects.

I have been fortunate to learn to dive with 'Aquaserve' and this has enabled me to join visiting groups and share in some of the wonders of Lundy's underwater world. After three years Aquaserve sadly withdrew, and in 1987 the Landmark Trust will take on the diving, providing air for experienced groups who will be able to stay in any one of the island's properties. We were fortunate that Mark Deeble and Vicky Stone stayed on the island for much of the summer making a film on 'Lundy's Underwater Life' for Survival Anglia.

The severe Easterly gales in February stripped the Landing Beach down to bare rock, an unusual event. Underwater temperatures fell as low as 5.8°C in early March, while the low August maximum of 15.8°C reflected the poor summer weather. There were just two records of basking sharks this year and their rarity is indicated by the 20 or so observations reported by the 1973 warden.

I have involved myself with two main areas of conservation management, tree planting and the control of rhododendrons. I am grateful to the N.C.C. for their financial assistance with both these projects. The help of voluntary work parties is essential to their successful outcome, and a number have been scheduled for 1987. These include a proposed visit by the L.F.S. and hopefully the weather will be a little better than last November when their trip had to be cancelled at the last minute. Individual volunteers have also made an important contribution. This year Brian Nutley helped with some tree surgery work in Millcombe Valley, while in the same area Pete Clabburn assisted in removing encroaching rhododendrons. We also put up some nest boxes to encourage further breeding by spotted flycatchers.

Interpretation, both marine and terrestrial is an important part of my duties. During the summer months I give regular guided walks on the seashore and around the South of the island, as well as evening slide shows. The Old Shop has become the information centre and there are new displays on the island's resident and migrant birds prepared by Richard Campey. There is also a marine aquarium, a large library, and most recently a pool table! New marine display boards are proposed following the recent declaration. The idea of using an interpretative consultant is currently being explored as a means of transforming the centre into something permanent and professional. I have drafted guides on the marine reserve, and on Lundy's mammals. In the light of recent census work, Lundy's climbing restrictions have been reviewed and an up to date map has been produced.

A National Trust Survey team visited Lundy in May and carried out a vegetation survey. They also added five spider species to the island's list bringing the total to 103. They suggest that a species of micromoth, *Nothris congressariella*, only previously known from Tresco, Isles of Scilly, is present on the Red Data book plant Balm-leaved Figwort (*Scrophularia scorodinia*). An intriguing possibility and an indication of the amount that still remains to be discovered on Lundy. Humming Bird Hawk

moths abounded on the Red Valerian below Millcombe during the summer. Soay sheep numbers seem to have remained fairly static during the year with a maximum of 85. There were 16 goats in one group for much of the year and at least 14 Sika deer (4 stags; 10 hinds). Rabbits were as plentiful as ever and apparently free of myxomatosis. Rats reached such epidemic proportions during the summer that poisoned bait traps were eventually put down.

Lundy has been well covered by experienced bird watchers for much of the year and reporting has only taken up a small part of my time. Nevertheless it was satisfying to locate a Gyr Falcon in spring and a Yellow-billed Cuckoo in autumn.

In 1987 I hope to be able to build on experience gained in 1986. On the one hand it sees Lundy's first year as a statutory marine reserve coinciding with a new venture for island-run diving. Plans are afoot to develop interpretative facilities and encourage school visits. There are 300 trees to be planted and more rhododendron to be cleared. Seabird monitoring is to be undertaken and there are surveys planned. All in all, following a period of grey years there is a feeling of optimism for the future.

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