

WARDENS REPORT FOR 1988

All the displays in the Linhay, along with displays on the Oldenburg and on the mainland have been installed. Exhibits on flint finds and a granite core have been prepared for the Linhay and it is hoped that a display case will house further artifacts, for instance finds from the castle.

The complete clearance of rhododendron, roots and all, from Threequarter Wall Bay has been a very encouraging achievement. This has only been possible through the efforts of work parties who, at the risk of repeating myself, play an invaluable role in habitat management on the island. In 1988 we had two LFS work parties, two NT Acorn Camps, the East Devon Conservation Volunteers and a group from North Devon College; almost 500 man days of work and what is most surprising, given the nature of the job, is that all these groups have booked to come back next year! Many individual volunteers also help and a special word of thanks is due to Brian Nutley who expertly felled the dead Monterey pine above the hotel. Ironically the disturbance caused in removing rhododendron provides the ideal conditions for seed germination and it is already apparent that there are enormous numbers of seedlings in Threequarter Wall Bay. Therefore, for the clearance work to be of lasting benefit, it is absolutely essential that regular checks are made for seedlings. Fortunately the viability of seedlings decreases quickly in the soil. It is worrying to note that seedlings have been discovered on two occasions this year in Gannet's Combe.

Attention is also being given to the removal of rhododendron from areas of 'historical' interest in order to ensure that interesting features are not obscured and damaged by invading rhododendron. For instance VC quarry has been tidied up and returned to its 1954 condition; a series of photographs taken when the memorial stone was installed graphically illustrate the insidious manner in which rhododendron has spread. The next project of this type is to clear the inclined plane which took quarried granite down to Quarry Beach.

Fewer trees have been planted with the emphasis on replacing failures (particularly below the Ugly and in St. Helens) and consolidating recent plantings (in Quarter Wall Cope and in Millcombe). In Quarter Wall Cope a further 35 trees were planted bringing the total to 212 trees. Generally speaking the condition of the young trees is good with a total failure rate for all those trees planted north of the Ugly of 6.6%; these were marked and replanted in the autumn. In the after care of the trees a balance has to be struck between affording them protection from herbivores, principally deer, and leaving them too long in their tubes, where they develop without hardening to the Lundy climate and with poor stem strength. In the autumn the tubes around some of the best trees were shortened and it will be interesting to follow their progress. The future care of the trees can to some extent only be learnt through trial and error.

The presence of a five year management plan, which was reported on in 1987, is essential in ensuring that there is some stability and continuity of management. Without such a plan a site such as Lundy could easily be vulnerable to inconsistent management which might result in not only a waste of resources and effort but perhaps even a decrease in interest. This plan is only of any value if there is a resolve to carry out its recommendations. It remains in a draft form and requires further work in order to make it comprehensive.

Work has continued on the study of seabirds (see elsewhere for a report on kittiwakes). A kittiwake with red legs was observed in Puffin Gully, which is a rare colour variation of the usual black legs. The monitoring results for both guillemots and razorbills indicated a reversal in fortunes since last year's large increases, with overall numbers returning to those experienced in the early 1980's. However the situation is worthy of closer analysis for the larger part of the decrease in guillemot numbers is attributable to those colonies in Jenny's Cove. Why should this be? It is tempting, if not very objective, to speculate that the close presence of a helicopter in Jenny's Cove in May (at a time when the guillemots are at their most vulnerable to disturbance) was

responsible. Incidents such as this can cause disturbance on a huge scale and make a mockery of climbing restrictions; the latter are now well known and respected. Disturbance caused by boats venturing too close to the sea bird cliffs (particularly in Jenny's Cove) may also become a problem as the numbers of dive boats, pleasure boats and fishing boats that visit Lundy increase.

Though it seems hardly possible, even fewer puffins were recorded from the monitoring sites in 1988 than in 1987. For the first time ever no puffins were recorded in Jenny's Cove and my impression is that during the last three years they have become much less numerous there. In the 1987 report I remarked on the large decrease that had occurred in the number of fulmars on the north side of Gannets Rock (from 67 in 1986 to 46 in 1987). This site was counted on June 16th and there were found to be 59 apparently occupied nests. This result emphasises the difficulties in seabird monitoring; large annual changes can make the interpretation of results difficult and single infrequent censuses may give a misleading impression of seabird population changes.

The poor summer weather led to fewer 'weekend' divers, though island based diving was very successful. A total of 173 divers were resident on the island and this was made up of 18 different clubs coming from as far afield as Holland and Yorkshire. Potting activity also reached new peaks in 1988. Pots were laid between Mar 7th and Oct 25th with three boats regularly visiting from Padstow on five day stretches and two boats visiting from North Devon on a day by day basis. Detailed counts were kept of pots around the island. Potting intensity peaked in April/May, with a staggering 35 strings (c.50 pots per string) counted on May 10th. A questionnaire for divers revealed that the intensity of potting around the island caused them some concern. Typical comments were "Pot fishing should be banned outright in order to provide a complete MNR" and "I am concerned about the level of potting which seems no different from non reserve areas". There is no evidence to suggest that potting is having an adverse effect on marine life through damaging delicate seabed structures and to some extent potting should be self regulating as catches decline. An oft quoted argument is that potters are making a living, whilst divers are enjoying a holiday. However potting around the island is only partly traditional, with just 1 of the 5 boats that regularly visited Lundy in 1988 having a history of potting here.

It is difficult to detect infringements of the Marine Nature Reserve byelaws and code of conduct, enforcement mainly relying upon liaison and communication. In this respect two recent NCC publications should help. The first is an informative colour guide to the MNR and the second is a board that indicates the byelaws and code of conduct. Boards are displayed not just on the island but in Bideford and Ilfracombe harbours.

For the second year running no basking sharks were seen from the island and there was just one sighting of 6 dolphins. There were innumerable 'by the wind sailors', *Vellela vellela* in the Landing Bay on Aug 2nd. No red band fish were seen during 1988, not even at the site at which they were located in 1987; it would seem unlikely that all the fish die from year to year, which suggests that they must undergo some sort of migration. There has been no sign of the seal virus, which has been so much in the news. It would, at any rate, be far from simple to detect given the nature of Lundy's coastline.

This will be my last warden's report and Pippa and I would like to thank all those people who have helped to make our stay so enjoyable.

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Spring 1988