

## LUNDY WARDEN'S REPORT FOR 1998

With a year as Warden on Lundy under my belt and the steepest part of my learning curve over, I went into my second year with renewed confidence and vigour. Which was lucky as 1998 turned out to be packed with new experiences and challenges.

Quite a lot of construction work took place within the Marine Nature Reserve throughout the year. The reparation work to the road round to the Dive Beach took much longer than expected and carried right on until November. This not only caused disruption to various activities in the Landing Bay but also resulted in a lot of movement of shale and periodic sediment plumes in the bay which caused short term damage to some of the shore life. However, it soon started to recover once the works had finished. In April, Robert Irving brought a team of marine biologists over to carry out an Environmental Impact Assessment for the proposed jetty. This raised no major environmental concerns with the scheme but did put forward some constraints on the pile drilling process to limit the amount of sediment entering Devil's Kitchen. However, in amongst all this change in the MNR the usual things were going on too. Potting activity did not appear to be as high as last year, with the maximum number of strings at one time being 27 compared to 32 in 1997. On many occasions through the season the weather was too bad for the potting boats to get out to the Island at all. There also seemed to be fewer pots shot off the east side where there are large numbers of the delicate species that can get damaged by this activity. This is a slightly grey area within the reserve as there is no bye law preventing potting, but it is "not encouraged". I am hoping that the decrease in potting in this area was due to the discussion that took place in an Advisory Group meeting.

Diving was sporadically effected by the weather but even so plenty of divers still managed to enjoy the generally good visibility off the Island. Lundy is certainly getting better known in the dive community with three articles appearing in dive magazines this year. Increased numbers of divers may well lead to more damage so I have been working on ways to increase divers' awareness of the ecological value of the reserve in the hope that educated divers will cause less damage. I have put together a diving information book which is placed in the Tavern and the dive huts, all divers are pointed towards our web site and I speak to as many of them as possible.

Other developments on the interpretation front included the addition of a touch table and some feelie boxes to the displays in the Church. These interactive displays seemed to prove popular with adults and children alike. The walks, talks and snorkelling sessions continued to be well attended even though the shore based events were somewhat disrupted by the road works. I also have a portable display board on the beach that has a map and a whiteboard area where I write up what is currently going on with the wildlife. Either myself or my assistant met every sailing of the Oldenburg with this and were on hand to answer questions and give advice. This proved very popular with first time visitors, especially day trippers.

With the sighting of a shoal of 500 basking sharks off the Lizard in the spring I had expectations of large numbers of sightings around the Island this year, only to be disappointed. We actually only had a total of 60 sightings (half the number we had last year). However, they

were certainly around in large numbers as the Oldenburg had several sightings of shoals of up to 30 individuals. As usual we had one or two cetacean sightings: a pod of common dolphins off Brazen Ward in August and an unidentified dolphin off the Battery in September. The seabirds had a good breeding season and although the puffin census seemed to show no change in numbers there were many more birds seen by people around the Island, including birds regularly going in and out of burrows in Jenny's Cove. Unusual marine sightings included three sunfish, an octopus, two john dories and a single red band fish. As usual, the LFS log book was an excellent source of this kind of information and I encourage visitors to record all wildlife sightings in there. This year I also provided an underwater wildlife log for divers to record marine sightings. In addition to this marine monitoring was carried out by myself, an English Nature monitoring team and a group of volunteers from the Marine Conservation Society.

Volunteers also provided invaluable assistance on land. This year I had groups from the Prince's Trust, the National Trust, the British Mountaineering Council, and various individuals as well as the LFS. In total they put in 567 volunteer days carrying out the usual footpath maintenance, dry stone walling, rhododendron bashing, tree planting and maintenance and ragwort pulling. Also this year, the LFS financed and provided all the labour and expertise for a complete overhaul on the heligoland trap at the Quarries. They did a wonderful job and the trap now not only looks very smart but is fully functional again. Special thanks go to John Barber for organising sponsorship, in the form of tools and stepladders, from Greenham Trading, for whom he works, as well as taking unpaid leave to come and join the team; and to Roger Chapple who organised all the materials and got one of his carpenters to construct the catching box and even persuaded him to come over and fit it! In addition to all these volunteers I also had help for 3 months from Joanna Ramsay who was studying for an MSc in Coastal Zone Management and came to do her placement on the Island and act as my voluntary Assistant Warden.

The group of volunteers from the British Mountaineering Council were helping in the war between the Lundy Cabbage and the rhododendrons. They abseiled over the cliffs and cut back the rhododendron that were out of reach of normal volunteers. In addition to this small group we also had professionals over to do more of this hair raising work and to treat all the cut stumps with herbicide, so things progressed well. As if in appreciation of all this hard work the Lundy Cabbage had its best ever flowering year with over 10,000 plants in flower (the highest count up until 1998 had been 4,000), the east side was carpeted in yellow. However, it was not only the cabbage that had such a good year, all the wild flowers were out in abundance. As it was such a good growing year the Island was actually slightly under grazed in some areas and the fields had to be topped by the farmer.

So, 1998 was an action packed year and 1999 looks like it is going to be just as busy. Things should be helped along by the fact that I have now received funding to employ an Assistant Warden from May until October so conservation work on the Island should move on apace.

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