

REPORT OF THE LUNDY MARINE NATURE RESERVE ADVISORY GROUP (LMNRAG) FOR 2008

The Lundy Field Society provides the secretariat for the LMNRAG. The Group met twice in 2008: on 17 April and 23 October. The Advisory Group usually meets in Bideford (c/o Torridge District Council) and includes representatives from the Island (the Lundy Company), Natural England, the Devon Sea Fisheries Committee, the National Trust, the Marine Biological Association, the Lundy Field Society, Devon Wildlife Trust, Torridge District Council, dive charter boat skippers, divers, anglers and fishermen.

2008 saw a rise in the number of pots being deployed around Lundy (excluding the No Take Zone). Several infringements of the No Take Zone were noted, though none were serious enough to instigate legal proceedings against the culprits. The waters around Lundy continued to attract media interest in 2008, particularly in relation to the success of the No Take Zone, and included visits from the BBC Coast team, BBC Countryfile Magazine, The Times and diving magazine journalists. A new marine DVD was produced by Doug and Rosie Anderson on behalf of Natural England in 2008. The Group were informed of a multibeam sonar survey that had been undertaken for the Maritime and Coastguard Agency of areas near to Lundy. Attention was drawn to the publication of the 'Marine Bill' which, if successful, would mean that the Lundy Marine Nature Reserve would become a 'Marine Conservation Zone'. Should this happen, a review and update of the Management Plan would be required. New Seaflex moorings (which minimise damage to the seabed) were placed in the Landing Bay in June, adding to the one already in place in Gannets' Bay.

Research undertaken or reported during the year included:

- A survey of sediment biota by Ambios consultants which had included 52 grab samples from around the Island recording a total of 478 species (a very high number for sedimentary communities) which could be divided into 19 distinct biotopes.
- A re-survey of Lundy shores, 60 years on from the original surveys undertaken by Leslie and Clare Harvey (of Exeter University), had been undertaken by Dr Keith Hiscock. Ten biologists had taken part and eleven sites were surveyed. Overall, most of the same species reported by Harvey were again recorded in 2008, though some additional species were also found.
- Stephen Westcott had been commissioned by Natural England to survey the seal population around Lundy over a 12-month period from August 2008. By the time of the October meeting, he had censused a total of 30 pups (a surprisingly high number) and identified the most important locations for pupping.
- A genetic study using DNA samples (small tentacle snips) taken from a number of sunset corals (*Leptopsammia pruvoti*) had been undertaken by Dr Phill Watts of the University of Liverpool. The resulting analysis had indicated that individual corals were all 'clones' of each other and were the result of asexual reproduction. This finding suggests only local recruitment taking place to the population. However, results were based on samples

from only a few individuals and more samples are needed to be certain of this hypothesis.

- The potting survey of the No Take Zone had been undertaken again in 2008 by Dr Miles Hoskin, CMER Consultants; the fifth consecutive year of the survey. Initial findings suggest a possible slight increase in the size of lobsters but no significant change from 2007. At the time of writing, results are still being analysed.
- Sarah Clark (Devon Sea Fisheries Committee) gave a presentation on the DSFC's lobster tagging project off the North Devon coast and Lundy. This was the first year the project has been run and there has been an encouraging take-up of the project by local pot fishermen. Results were being received and were ready for collating and reporting.
- An MSc student at Plymouth University, Danielle Gabb, had carried out a project to investigate local fish and crustacean populations using a remote video camera. Twelve species of fish and six Crustacea were attracted to the bait.
- The Wardens (Nicola Saunders and Sophie Wheatley) had continued measurements of the scarlet and gold star coral (*Balanophyllia regia*, a nationally scarce species) at intertidal monitoring sites and had found several new locations for the coral.
- There were significant cetacean sightings but only one basking shark record off the east coast.

ROBERT IRVING
September 2009

Honorary Secretary,
Lundy Marine Nature Reserve Advisory Group