

LUNDY WARDEN'S REPORT 2011

There were many memorable events throughout 2011, many of which had a marine focus in recognition of 40 years of marine conservation at Lundy. Notable among them was the 40th anniversary party onboard *MS Oldenburg* in Bideford – a chance to bring together those who have contributed in some way to establishing Lundy's marine protected areas and to celebrate Lundy's continuing achievements in the world of marine conservation. It was the perfect venue to launch the new marine guide (diving, snorkelling and rockpooling on Lundy) and also a chance to give people a preview of the new website (www.lundymcz.org.uk) which went live in September. We've had some great feedback from users and hope both will prove to be a valuable resource for years to come.

Helping to give us a glimpse of Lundy's marine environment for a third year running, the Lundy 'Splash-in' was hosted in August again last year, proving itself to be an ongoing success. 2011 saw the highest number of applicants ever enter the competition, despite the original date being cancelled due to bad weather – 26 people re-entered the competition later in the year. The standard was as always very high and press coverage of the winning images appeared in a number of dive magazines.

Despite financial cutbacks at Natural England, some interesting marine monitoring and survey projects continue to be carried out on the island by the island wardens, Natural England and external organisations. Notably in 2011, a series of MarClim surveys by the Marine Biological Association monitored the effect that global warming might be having on coastal biodiversity; the surveys from Lundy feed into a 10-year monitoring project from around the coastline of Britain and Ireland. Surveys of barnacles, limpets and sea-snail species were carried out in Devils Kitchen, Lametry Bay and Brazen Ward. Cumulatively the data continue to contribute to policy advice and have been used in government and international assessments of the state of the marine environment.

Cetacean monitoring on Lundy took a technological leap forward during 2011 as the warden budget paid for the purchase of two C-PODS – fully automated, static, passive acoustic monitoring systems that detect porpoises, dolphins and other toothed whales by recognising the trains of echo-location clicks they make to detect their prey, orientate and interact. The software deciphers data on behaviour and identification of species, which means we can better track which marine mammals are visiting Lundy's shores. We shall, however, continue to rely on visitor sightings to keep us informed. During the period April to October last year, 47 different sightings were reported by visitors and 69 sightings were recorded by Brian Slade, First Mate on the *Oldenburg*, all of which helped to build a better picture of what was out there. In all, just over 1,000 individuals were sighted during the year.

Seal population monitoring by the wardens has provided some interesting finds, with numbers ranging from a high count of 242 seals in July to around 150 in the autumn months to, which illustrates how mobile the seal population is around the South West. A few Lundy individuals, identifiable after being tagged, are known to travel up from Cornwall to spend the summer around Lundy before returning in the autumn.

2011 was an encouraging year in terms of productivity for some of Lundy's seabirds. Kittiwake populations appear stable, despite fluctuations in productivity over recent years at the two survey sites: Table 1 presents a summary of productivity for the years 2007–2011.

Table 1. Kittiwake productivity at St Marks Inlet and Aztec Bay, 2007–2011
(numbers in brackets = nesting attempts)

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
St Mark's Inlet	35%	12% (123)	17% (106)	65% (112)	51% (112)
Aztec Bay	No data	29% (14)	68% (28)	76% (33)	21% (38)

Puffin numbers and burrow occupancy were slightly up on 2010, with maximum counts of around 60 individuals at Jenny's Cove from mid-June. A total of 23 active burrows were recorded at Jenny's Cove, St Phillip's Stone and Long Roost. Encouragingly, burrow distribution appears to be improving. A greater spread of burrows were observed in Jenny's Cove in 2011, and two pairs of Puffins were recorded breeding at Long Roost – the first there for many years.

Manx Shearwater chick monitoring by Tony Taylor and David Price was carried out in late August and early September. While efforts were hampered somewhat by poor weather conditions, a total of 167 chicks were ringed, 121 at the Old Light Colony. Although slightly fewer than in 2010, the signs were that there were actually more chicks present than in the previous year and it was thought that there were more chicks still to emerge from their burrows. Most exciting, however, was the recapture of two adult birds which had been ringed as chicks in 2008; these were the first known returning Lundy-bred Manx Shearwaters since the rat eradication.

On the top of the island, the mammal populations did well in 2011 and appear to be in favourable condition. Estimates of population size in 2011 were 196 Soay sheep, 30 goats and somewhere between 79 and 100 Sika deer. The rabbit population, estimated at 13,000 individuals, is again in decline as the island is currently experiencing an outbreak of myxomatosis.

Rhododendron management continued apace, LFS working parties visiting twice during the year, including felling the last stand in March and revisiting areas previously cleared for treatment of re-growth. Meanwhile a rope-works team concentrated on removing the remaining cliff growth. Burning of brash and seedling management is well underway and will no doubt occupy working party groups for a number of years to come.

Estimates of the number of Lundy cabbage plants showed a considerable increase on 2010, though fewer plants were in flower. Non-flowering plant estimates totalled between 59,000 and 72,000 individual plants, compared to 25,000-28,000 in 2010 – typical of the 'boom and bust' nature of Lundy cabbage.

Education days on Lundy are proving more and more popular. The island continues to provide concessionary rates to encourage schools to visit throughout the summer and many took advantage of this in 2011. We have received some lovely feedback from the 150 or so children who visited and spent time with a warden.

Lundy's conservation team has evolved again and, in wishing Nicola Saunders all the best in her new role in Cornwall, we welcome Derren Fox to the wardening team, joining myself and Steve Pratt, our Ranger, for 2012. Derren has spent time managing RSPB reserves in the Western Isles of Scotland and monitoring seabirds in Antarctica, and will no doubt prove to be a great asset to the conservation team.

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