

# LUNDY WARDEN'S REPORT

Conor Wilmott joined the Conservation Team as the Voluntary Seasonal Assistant Warden during March to assist with the Easter Egg Hunt and Luke Knowles joined the team late in the season as the Voluntary Seasonal Assistant Ranger. Both Conor and Luke did an amazing job and we wished them both all the best for the future before they departed the island on the last boat of the sailing season on 28 October.

## Marine – general and monitoring

Natural England was unable to provide funding for marine monitoring at Lundy for the 2016/17 period. This meant that the seal population, cup coral and rockpool community surveys were not supported in 2016. Despite the lack of funding, ad hoc seal population surveys were carried out during 'round the island' trips on board MS *Oldenburg*.

We are very grateful to the local boat skippers who have adopted the Lundy and North Devon Biosphere Accreditation Scheme, and also to all who have adopted the seal code of conduct. There were no reports of disturbance to seals by boats at Lundy during the year.

A number of volunteers joined the Conservation Team throughout the summer to assist with productivity monitoring of Puffins at two sites: Jenny's Cove and St Phillip's Stone. Initial analysis of the data suggests that both sites were very successful. A full island survey was carried out with the assistance of *Obsession II*, providing valuable information on the areas that have now been recolonised by Puffins. These now extend from just north of The Battery to north of Long Roost. No Puffins were observed on land elsewhere on the island; however, rafts of up to 20 birds were seen off South West Point and off the East Side, particularly at Gannets' Bay and at North East Point, raising the possibility that Puffins may come ashore in these areas in time.

Monitoring of the Guillemot site at St Mark's Stone is becoming increasingly difficult as the number of birds there has increased, making it difficult to observe eggs/chicks. Strong southerly winds also conspired against us, so we can only guesstimate the number of fledged young at 3-12 chicks from 28 active sites.

The location of the Kittiwake colony allowed for more regular monitoring than for Guillemots. Ninety-eight nests were occupied during the season, but 24 nests were abandoned between the end of June and mid-July. Overall, 27 chicks fledged, giving a rate of 0.27, down from 0.38 in 2015.

In June, 30 artificial nestboxes (renamed 'Manxie villas') for Manx Shearwaters were made with the assistance of RSPB and LFS volunteers. The boxes have been placed in five separate 'villages' across the Old Light colony to boost the ongoing research into the life histories of these nocturnal seabirds. Some of the nestboxes were taken up but used in an unexpected way, with tunnels being dug further into the sideland, making them into elaborate porches.

A MARINElife surveyor course, held on the island in June, was well attended, the spaces quickly filled after details were released. Another course is planned for the summer of 2017.

At the time of writing, the final touches were being made to the Marine Management Plan [*which is now available to download from the Lundy Island website. Ed.*] We are very grateful to all the stakeholders for their contributions and support for the plan. The hope is that it will be adopted by all users of the Lundy Marine Protected Area and will support sustainable use of Lundy's waters for many years to come.

## **Terrestrial – general and monitoring**

By the end of the year, rabbit numbers were still relatively low despite an increase earlier in the year.

LFS working parties joined the Ranger team twice, once in June to assist with the implementation of the new Bracken Management Plan, and then again in October when they rebuilt the 'Steps of Doom' alongside the Ugly. A National Trust working party also visited the island to assist with Rhododendron seedling searches, drystone walling and fencing.

Additional funding allowed the Ropeworks team to visit the island on a couple of occasions to successfully treat smaller Rhododendron plants on the East Side cliffs. The number of seedlings has declined considerably since 2015, suggesting that the plan is on target for the island to be 'rhody free' by 2025.

A new Lundy cabbage leaflet was nearing completion by the year's end, for which thanks go to the LFS who assisted with funding the design and printing costs. [*Copies can now be obtained from the island and/or the shore office. Ed.*]

A new Biosecurity Plan, drafted by Beccy MacDonald and Helen Booker of RSPB, was also nearing completion for implementation in 2017 and beyond. The purpose of this plan is to provide clear context and guidance to Lundy management to help maintain the island's rat-free status, which is vital for its important seabird populations and visitor experience.

Specific areas around some of the island's Scheduled Monuments were the focus of bracken management, the effects of which have been positive, thus reducing the need for further treatment.

## **Education, interpretation and events**

The demand for guided walks has increased considerably in recent years, arising particularly from the media attention the island has had in relation to increasing Puffin numbers. With the support of the LFS, over 70 guided walks took place, and further engagement with visitors was achieved with the productivity monitoring volunteers who positioned themselves at Jenny's Cove at busy times. Other events included 56 talks, over 30 Snorkel Safaris and four Rockpool Rambles. Nine school groups also joined in warden-led guided walks around the island.

Splash In! 2016 was held online. Unfortunately, despite a good number of people joining the group, few participated in the competition, so it has been decided to give the competition a rest for the time being.

As for myself, after nearly four years on the island I am moving on to a position as Coastal Survey Officer with Somerset Wildlife Trust. I am incredibly grateful to everyone who has supported me during my time on Lundy. It has been a wonderful experience.

All the very best.

BECCY MACDONALD  
March 2017