

SECRETARY'S REPORT

Michael Williams

In some respects, 2022 was a quiet year for the Society but then when you read about the five conservation working holidays during the year, you may appreciate it has been a productive and busy one! But before I get on to that, a summary of some of the committee's business. Frances Stuart stood down from the committee at last year's AGM. Frances continues as our Safeguarding Officer and is supporting the revision of the Society's Health & Safety policy. Our thanks to Frances for her work. John Tyrer is working on preparing a library of contemporary and historical images of Lundy. Richard Breese and André Coutanche are also working up a proposal for a film archive which has the potential to support future research and possible grant making opportunities. Although the purposes may not be fully developed at this time, it presents an opportunity to bring together video content, anticipating that opportunities to use it may arise in the future. It would provide a route to preserve Lundy films digitally in a strategic way for the long term.

Two grant enquiries were made in 2022 but unfortunately did not result in applications. As a result the Committee agreed to raise grant funding from £500 to £1000 and to remove the application deadline. Financial support was given to the Marine Festival and the Society contributed to the provision of new weather station equipment on Lundy. The Rodley legacy funded the restoration of the Heligoland Bird Trap, and the equipment for the WiFi in the church. The WiFi is being well used and is especially valuable to visitors when stranded on the island. A generous donation from the family of the late Charles Ellis was gratefully received. This has been used to fund £200 of new book purchases for the LFS Library and will support a student's attendance at a conference in Scotland where she is presenting the results of her study of Lundy's Manx Shearwaters. Preparations are underway for a LFS Day Trip to Lundy in June 2023 and in 2024 we are planning a Field Studies break to attract new wildlife recorders for Lundy and support succession planning. Chris Pawson is leading on this with support from Trevor Dobie.

As I mentioned, there were five working holidays during 2022. The first in early March was at the request of the Lundy Warden and consisted of just six volunteers. The purpose of this early date was for the transplanting of saplings from nursery areas to their permanent positions. New young trees were imported and used to infill areas in St John's Valley and around Quarters Pond. Old fencing was removed, plus the usual ongoing tasks given to working groups. For the second working party, also in March, fencing, walling, Rhododendron searching, and the usual tasks were offered plus an unusual request to valet the Lundy Land Rover, and all were completed. The third group in May was a full party with a good mixture of experienced and new members. Again, fencing, walling, gully cleaning, Rhododendron seedling searches were all on the menu and the job of shifting several tons of spoil and digging a bypass trench for power cables in the corner of Tent Field, towards Benjamin's Chair, occupied a lot of their time. The log store was repositioned from the farmyard to The Linhay in preparation for a new power generator. The area around the diesel fuel tanks was weeded and upgraded to install some steps for easier access.

There were two conservation breaks in October. Thirteen people participated in the first week with the usual mix of walling, gully clearing, tree maintenance and Rhododendron seedling searching being enjoyed, plus the unusual treat of digging a trench for replacement heating pipes for the staff quarters before the winter cold set in. Work continued on the Terrace Heligoland Trap. Thirteen people also attended the fifth and final trip of the year. Tasks included the installation of a gate near the old incinerator site to replace a stile, clearing some of the vegetation from Millcombe Pond and building nest boxes for Starlings. Our grateful thanks to everyone who joined the working

holidays. We think this is the first time that the LFS has sent as many as five groups to Lundy in a single year and we should record our thanks to Trevor Dobie who works very hard taking bookings and managing the staffing of each trip, which he has been doing for over 15 years!

Members of the LFS committee have assisted the Lundy Conservation Team in developing an application for Lundy to be re-admitted to the UK and Ireland Bird Observatories Network, after an absence of 50 years. It has included transitioning responsibilities for bird recording and negotiating funding arrangements for bird ringing - an aspect of the bird observatory operations for which the LFS will continue to provide some financial support. 2022 saw a record number of Manx Shearwater nest boxes occupied and a record eight chicks fledged from them. The other good news story concerned the Wheatear colour-ringing project, with the results leading to record estimates of 55 pairs in the study area and 129 pairs for the whole island. Adult survival between the 2021 and 2022 breeding seasons was at least 53%. The long-term study of breeding House Sparrows continued as normal, but in the autumn work on Manx Shearwaters and Storm Petrels had to be curtailed because of the risks of Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza spreading.

Numbers of migrants ringed were down compared to the 2021 figures, because of less suitable weather for mist-netting and fewer weeks being covered by visiting ringers, particularly in autumn. In all, 2716 birds were ringed in 2022. The highest species total was for Blackcaps, which topped the list for the sixth year running with 753 birds caught. The task of digitising all available Lundy ringing and recapture records, from 1972 onwards, was completed in October. Details of about 120,000 records are now available for research purposes, via the British Trust for Ornithology's web-based DemOn system.

The very dry conditions left Lundy looking really parched for the duration of the hot sunny spell. The effect this had on the flora was seen later in the season when some species had a second flush of flowering and were seen in full bloom much later than normal. An example of this was the Wood Vetch growing near the bottom of the beach road which was in fine condition in the middle of October when the bracken had already started to turn brown. Our Lundy Cabbage surveyors Alan & Sandra Rowland report a warmer and wetter winter and spring caused a slightly earlier flowering than normal which affected numbers recorded during the regular survey week. Although estimates of flowering plants declined from an unusual high of over 8000 plants in 2021 to under 3000 (down 66%), this represents a typical average annual estimate. This is an example of a natural cycle rather than a sudden decline. John Hedger and Mandy Dee were able to make several visits to study fungi during the year, with the main island-wide survey being carried out in November, aided by several helpers and a group of students from Imperial College. Two fungus forays were held and were well attended.

A memorial service for our late President, Diana Keast, was held in St Helen's church in June. Your Honorary Secretary had the privilege of giving the eulogy. Diana lived a long and full life – her association with Lundy lasted for 96 years – and her obituary was printed in the 2021 Annual Report. We also record the passing of Dave Preece in December. Dave was a long-standing regular attender of LFS working holidays and rarely missed the AGM. He loved everything about Lundy and treasured the certificate we presented to him in 2019 for attending conservation breaks for 25 years. A fuller obituary for Dave written by Trevor Dobie can be found later in the Annual Report. I happened to be on Lundy when the Queen died in September. I was able to help with flag flying protocol and tolling of the bells to mark her passing. For me, it was one of those

moments in life when you remember exactly where you were and what you were doing when the news broke. We also raised the flag for the Proclamation of King Charles III and you can read my full account of an unusual few days in the recent Discovering Lundy bulletin.

Looking forward, we anticipate a new volume of the LFS Journal to be published in 2023 and Chris Webster is preparing a new archaeology book with support from André Coutanche, Mandy Yates and Alan Rowland. John Hedger edited his first Annual Report in 2022 and Belinda Cox continues to produce the engaging Discovering Lundy bulletin. Our thanks to them both.

Finally, at the very end of the year, it was announced that Dr Keith Hiscock had been awarded an MBE for services to marine conservation in the King's New Year Honours. Starting from Lundy, Keith has been a pioneer of using diving for underwater marine biology in the UK and using the knowledge gained to promote marine conservation. His MBE is so richly deserved and I'm sure you'll join me in passing on congratulations to Keith.

I hope you'll now agree that it has been far from a quiet year -with a huge amount achieved for such a small society. Thank you for your continued support and we look forward to a successful 2023.



Dr Keith Hiscock MBE receiving from LFS Chair Alan Rowland a framed illustration of his younger self, drawn by John Dyke (photo: Belinda Cox).