



▲ Robert Irving accepting a Marine Festival commemorative award made from the old Dive Compressor from Derek Green in the St Helen's Centre on 10th September (photo: Rosie Ellis).

CONSERVATION TEAM REPORT

Rosie Ellis (Lundy Warden)

What a year! Our first whole, full, 'new normal' since my arrival on the island in summer 2019. With our usual nesting seabird, seal and rocky shore surveys continuing, we also included a daily morning bird census and were joined by the RSPB for some extensive gull surveys. Added to which there was the no small undertaking of the Marine Festival!

There is lots more to follow about the Marine Festival in this Annual Report so all I will say here is a massive thank you to Robert Irving and everyone else involved; hopefully we have created a few more lifelong Lundyites.

Researcher Meaghan (A.K.A. American Meaghan) is still on Lundy and we have two new LFS members in Tara (who is due back on island in 2023 for some MSc research) and Daisy. It was especially great to see the church a hubbub of activity for research and education with the laboratory set up for the BioBlitz and M.Sc. Students utilising the Wi-Fi to write up their research projects. Many thanks to St Helen's Parochial Church Council, the Heritage National Lottery Fund and indeed the LFS for supporting the St Helen's Centre project which concluded this year. The legacy will continue with the Lundy Company and St Helen's PCC working together to deliver the schools programme and much more.



▲ Checking the biosecurity grid with Jacky Pearson on 1st May following potential rat sighting (photo: Rosie Ellis).

On the practical side of conservation, we finally had all our LFS conservation breaks go ahead! Thanks to all who helped, finally getting the Heligoland Trap stitched together and, of course, a lot of miscellaneous digging, tackling some disappointingly healthy-looking Rhododendron, and braving leeches whilst digging out Millcombe Pond, now the most pondlike I have ever seen it! The Heligoland Trap is now up and running with a Cuckoo ringed in 2023.

We have also had a lot of moving about of the wood store and the ranger store, now referred to as “the old ranger store”, and our new base up at the lambing shed with more space! The old ranger store move was to pave the way for more space to process our wild meat whilst the wood store shift was to accommodate the

shiny new emergency generator, which came in very handy this winter. A few will notice more pedestrian gates replacing stiles where possible to help the island become more accessible, very handy for guided walks!

At the beginning of 2022 we were joined by Steve Smallridge, his assistant Stan and their amazing fencing machine. Many thanks to them for their dedication and determination, auguring through granite in minutes what would have taken us days to dig and drill thorough. After a few weeks, nearly 2000m of fencing was finished with the help of the LFS work parties. A big thankyou to the fantastic Assistant Ranger, Rachel, for her help this season. I am sure those who met her will be pleased to learn she is now enjoying Snowdonia.

During a very hot, dry summer the water was clearly the place to be. We had some fantastic snorkel safaris, with Lightbulb Sea Squirts my new favourite. Volunteers Zach and Laura spent some sweltering days up at Jenny’s Cove, surveying and helping visitors use a telescope to see the Puffins without disturbing them. With news of avian influenza decimating breeding bird colonies elsewhere, we were lucky most of our cliff nesting birds escaped without any signs of it: Kittiwakes, Guillemots, and Manx Shearwaters all had a good season. I am sure LFS members will be pleased to hear that the Manx Shearwater village built using LFS funds had a fantastic take up this year with 12 families moving in. We look forward to the full Manx Shearwater survey in June 2023 to see how our colony is progressing.

Later in the year, however, our fears were confirmed when a Herring Gull tested positive for the virus, and it was very sad to see ill and dead Gannets washing up in the landing bay. We are stepping up monitoring of our large gulls in 2023 and continue monitoring for any signs in the breeding colonies. If you see an ill or dead bird on the island please do not touch it. Inform the conservation team so we can dispose of it safely to reduce the spread of infection and inform authorities tracking the impact of the disease.

On a lighter note, press requests came in thick and fast in 2022. Just when I thought becoming Lundy Warden would be the pinnacle of my career I was proved wrong when I received a Blue Peter badge! We have also had writers from *The Times*, been named one of TIME magazine’s World’s Greatest Places, welcomed the ‘Trees a Crowd’ podcast, been featured in *Breathe*



▲ *Daisy and Sand Eels in the Landing Bay (photo: Rosie Ellis).*

magazine, and we were on BBC Radio Devon twice! Keep an eye out for the BBC's "Wild Isles" series (now on i-player) who filmed footage of conservation success stories on Lundy.

After a spring and summer full of schools, swims, photography walks, and crafting it was time to welcome our autumn visitors. If anyone was watching ship tracker in September they may well have seen an unexpected 'Round the Island and back to Bideford' cruise by the *Oldenburg* which our volunteers Tom and Angus and I were on. Quite the introduction to the island for our guests but we were all rewarded with great views of an Osprey. Tom and Angus surpassed themselves with the twitch of the year, the strikingly beautiful Baltimore Oriole.

Thanks to Stuart Cossey and all our volunteers and ringers over the years, including my predecessor Dean Jones, we were finally re-accredited as an official Bird Observatory by the BTO (British Trust for Ornithology). A huge achievement - and a commitment for the years to come.

It's been a busy 2022 for all the islanders and the conservation team. As ever, many thanks to all our volunteers however you help, whether for a guided walk, a week, or the whole season; we could not do it without you!