

'Exotic' species of British vertebrates on Lundy

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Introduction

A major find occurred in late spring of 2023, when a Common Toad, *Bufo bufo*, was heard calling around Quarry Pond. Many people heard and recorded the calls but despite much time spent no-one managed to see the toad. 'Amphibia' by Jennifer George in this Annual Report details the reports made of toad presence, by call but without sightings.

Finding past records of 'exotic' vertebrates

The find was mentioned at the Lundy Management Forum (LMF), which I attend, in September of that year. After much discussion, centred around this event and the previous discovery of the Slow-worm on the island I investigated other possible sightings of which the LFS and Lundy Conservation team were unaware. I visited the National Biodiversity Network (NBN) web site and used their facility to search based on location – "Explore by address, postcode or location". I selected SS14 then selected Reptiles from the ALL species list to produce the distribution map shown in Figure 1.

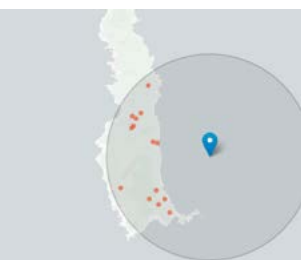
The result shows records of three species of Reptile; 44 of Slow-worm *Anguis fragilis*, three of Common Lizard *Zootoca vivipara* and two of Adder *Viper berus*. Repeating the exercise for Amphibia produced a similar result with four records of Common Toad. I do not

have the specialist knowledge to check all the species listed, but I did check the 18 species of mammals to be found in the UK. Surprisingly amongst those recorded from Lundy were Stoat *Mustela ermine* and Red Fox *Vulpes vulpes*. This last result is very hard to believe and, had it not for previous

experience with Slow-worms it would be easy to dismiss all of these records as mistaken sightings

The story of how Slow-worms were added to the Lundy species list has been recounted before (Rowland 2012) but essentially a verified photographic record was made on Discover Lundy 2012. Subsequently unconfirmed sightings from 2010 were added to our records. When it was queried the Amphibian and Reptile Conservation Trust (ARC) pointed out even earlier records from April 2000. The more recent records reveal a general spread of sightings from Millcombe Gardens, along the eastern sidelands and the length of the central path to the north of Pondsburry

Looking at the NBN records for Common Toad, apart from the 9 May 2023 sighting, which has been submitted by ARC, there were three earlier records. The first was on 16 June 2000, followed by another on 3rd May 2001 and one on 3rd July 2003 when two were recorded as being 'in a pond'. All three were made by National Trust visitors. As was found when investigating the early Slow-worm records, National Trust sightings are always recorded at the centre point of the property, which in the case of Lundy, is not helpful. The map in Figure 1 shows a cluster around Pondsburry – the centre of Lundy. Later sightings reported in the LFS Annual Report which made their way to NBN give more accurate, and useful locations. Again, as with the Slow-worm records, there is no further information. No named surveyor, no description no pictures. It can be assumed that all these common species did not arouse any surprise when recorded. Certainly, they are common on the mainland and if they were seen by people unaware of Lundy's unique flora and fauna they would not be seen to be unique sightings. None were reported to the LFS none were reported to the Lundy Warden. Despite best efforts National Trust are unable to give any more information than that which exists on the NBN website.



▲ Figure 1. Distribution of NBN records of 'exotic' animals on Lundy.

Turning to reptiles, two records exist for the Adder, one from 4th July 2003 when two were reported followed by one on the 12th February 2008. Three reports of Common Lizard were made. The first dates from 1958 but no further details, not even of the person who reported it, were given. The remaining two sightings were on 30th April 2000 when two were reported and 11th September 2000, all originating from the National Trust. Both of these reptile records are located at the centre point of Lundy.

Turning to the two previously unreported mammals, the Stoat was recorded on 27th July 2008 in "Lundy Car Park" by National Trust and the Red Fox on 9th June 2001 when two were seen! Given that the Stoat was seen in a car park it is possible that some or all of these exotic Lundy species were seen by a party on the mainland prior to embarking for Lundy and were included in their visit list in error.

Conclusions

Either the National Trust visitors, who do visit every year, are extraordinarily good at finding unusual species or they were mistaken. Table 1 shows that during the years 2000, 2001 and to some extent 2003, they were able to find four species that, although common on the mainland, are extremely rare on Lundy. Give that the Slow-worm, and probably the Common Toad, have now been recorded, some of the other sightings might be genuine. The solution must be to deploy amphibian and reptile refugia in suitable habitats such as Quarry Pond and Pondsburry to enable accurate and verifiable records to be made.

References

Rowland A (2012) *Slow-worm, a new species for Lundy* in 'Discovering Lundy', Lundy Field Society Bulletin 42.

Citation of Records

● NBN Atlas occurrence download at <https://nbnatlas.org> accessed on 23 January 2024. Data provided by the following providers: Records provided by Amphibian and Reptile Conservation, accessed through NBN Atlas website. (2024). For more information: email enquiries@arc-trust.org, or <https://registry.nbnatlas.org/public/show/dp58>

- National Trust (2024) National Trust Species Records. Occurrence dataset on the NBN Atlas (Creative Commons Zero v1.0 (CC0) CC0). For more information: <https://registry.nbnatlas.org/public/show/dr1236>
- Records provided by Biological Records Centre, accessed through NBN Atlas website. (2024). For more information: email brc@ceh.ac.uk, or <https://registry.nbnatlas.org/public/show/dp77>
- Amphibian and Reptile Conservation and Biological Records Centre. [Date of download] Records verified via iRecord. (Creative Commons with Attribution 4.0 (CC-BY) CC BY Creative Commons Attribution). For more information: <https://registry.nbnatlas.org/public/show/dr2769>
- Records provided by National Trust, accessed through NBN Atlas website. (2024). For more information: <https://registry.nbnatlas.org/public/show/dp116>
- Biological Records Centre ([Insert download year]). Reptiles and Amphibians Dataset. Occurrence dataset on the NBN Atlas (Creative Commons with Attribution 4.0 (CC-BY) CC-BY). For more information: email brc@ceh.ac.uk, or <https://registry.nbnatlas.org/public/show/dr1385>

Date	Species	Recorder
1958	Common Lizard	anon
30 April 2000	Slow-worm	NT
11 May 2000	Slow-worm	NT
13 May 2000	Slow-worm	NT
30 May 2000	Common Lizard	NT
16 June 2000	Common Toad	NT
11 September 2000	Common Lizard	NT
20 September 2000	Slow-worm	NT
05 April 2001	Slow-worm	NT
03 May 2001	Common Toad	NT
03 July 2003	Common Toad	NT
04 July 2003	Adder	NT
12 February 2008	Adder	NT

▲ Table 1 Unusual terrestrial vertebrate species reported by National Trust (NT) visiting teams