



▲ Sika stag and a pricket on Acklands's Moor, April (photo: Mandy Dee).

REPTILES, LAND MAMMALS AND BATS

Chris Dee

Amphibians

There are no native amphibians on Lundy, so it was a surprise when Stuart Cossey, the Assistant Warden, heard a **Common Toad** calling at Quarry Pond on 7th May. It was reported in the same area until 16th May (J Parker, C & C Baillie, and others), and possibly a second individual was heard below the Terrace on 14th May (P Dean). It is not currently known how this species arrived on the island. This question is addressed by Alan Rowland and Jenny George on page 55.

Introduced Reptiles

There are no native reptiles on Lundy but **Slow-worms** *Anguis fragilis* of uncertain origin are present. Although previously thought to have been accidentally introduced in compost imported from the mainland in November 2010, there are suggestions that they were present as early as 2000.

In 2023, there were records between 30th April and 5th September, from Millcombe, where the initial introduction was thought to have occurred, as far north as Halfway Wall. A dead specimen was found in Millcombe on 13th October and one was active on the East Side as late as 30th December.

To help track the spread of this species across Lundy, members are encouraged to note all sightings in the LFS Logbook kept in the Marisco Tavern.

Native Land Mammals

Lundy has just one native terrestrial mammal, the **Pygmy Shrew** *Sorex minutus* which is widely distributed across the island and can be found throughout the year. It is probably associated with most properties, but there have been fewer reports this year. It has been reported from Castle Cottage, the Tavern, Square Cottage, Old Light Cottage and Tibbetts. The species is also found away from human habitation, and this year, there have been sightings from Millcombe, Southwest Field, Lower East Side Path, and Pilot's Quay.

Bats

Bats are occasionally observed on Lundy and are usually assumed to be one of the native pipistrelle species; **Common Pipistrelle** *Pipistrellus pipistrellus* or **Soprano Pipistrelle** *P. pygmaeus*.

Sightings of pipistrelle species were reported around the village on 28 Apr (S Cossey), at an undisclosed location on 27 Jun, and in Millcombe on 24 Aug (L Tardivel). There were sightings of unknown bat species in the village on 15 Apr, near St Helen's Church on 16 Apr (J Hess), and at the Quarries on 2 Jul (S Evans). On 15 Aug, a bat near Bramble Villa was described as larger than a pipistrelle but smaller than a Noctule (R & R Taylor, T Taylor). There was a late record of an unknown species at Benson's Cave on 18 Oct.

Feral Land Mammals

The populations of feral ungulates continue to be monitored and numbers controlled according to the terrestrial management plan. Scheduled culls were carried out in March, September and October. The early spring surveys normally provide the best estimation of numbers, but extra counts by visitors are useful for the record, particularly if some assessment of completeness of coverage is included.

Sika *Cervus nippon*

The stock count in late March estimated a population of 100 individuals, comprising 82 hinds and 18 stags (P Hamlyn). Other significant counts were 69 across the whole island on 15 May (C Dee), 29 on 7 Jun (anon), 40 in Tillage Field on 20 Aug (C & S Blackmore), and 30 on the East Side on 6 Nov (T, K & L Dobie). A cull in mid-March reduced the population by 9 (7 hinds and 2 stags), and two prickets were culled in October.

Soay Sheep *Ovis aries*

The stock count in mid-March estimated a population of 327 comprising 257 ewes, 66 rams, and 4 early lambs (P Hamlyn). Apart from three reported on the Beach Road on 25 Mar (B Cox) and an island count of 146 on 15 May (C Dee), there were no other counts received. Thirty-one rams and 51 ewes were culled in September, and a further 27 rams and 52 ewes were removed in October.



▲ Soay lamb near Halfway Wall, May (photo: Paul Dean).



▲ Billy Goat near Pondsbury, May (photo: Paul Dean).

Goat *Capra aegagrus*

The mid-March stock count found 43 individuals, comprising 19 nannies, 8 billies, and 16 kids (P Hamlyn). The only other double-figure counts were of 15 in the Quarries on 25 Mar (anon) and 22 on the West Side near Jenny's Cove on 16 Aug (M Williams). Goats continue to be actively discouraged south of Quarter Wall to reduce grazing pressure on the slow-growing woody vegetation in Millcombe and St John's Valley. One nanny was culled in September and 2 billies in October, although it is possible that the main herd was not located by the stock management team.

Rabbit *Oryctolagus cuniculus*

The slow recovery in Rabbit numbers appears to be continuing, with no significant outbreaks of disease (Rabbit Viral Haemorrhagic Disease or Myxomatosis), although a few carcasses were reported. Individuals or small groups were reported from 21 locations across the island; from Castle Hill to the North End and on both the east and west coasts. The highest counts were of 10 in Southwest Field on 25 Apr (K Waterfall) and 14 across the island on 29 Apr (S Cossey). All records of this formerly common species are welcomed to allow its status to be assessed.



▲ Rabbit by the Lower East Side path, May (photo: Paul Dean).

FRESHWATER INVERTEBRATES

Jennifer George

Introduction

In 2023, the freshwater records are, as in previous years, mainly from the research of Alan Rowland, who has been continuing with his detailed study of the Lundy streams and several ponds. The organisms discussed are from St John's Stream, Millcombe Stream and Cascade, Brambles Pond, Quarry Pond, and Pondsbury. 31 different species were identified in these freshwater habitats.

Platyhelminthes (Flat Worms)

The white **Flatworm**, (*Phagocata vitta*) which occurred in St John's and Millcombe streams is typically found in cold fast flowing streams in Europe and the UK. It feeds particularly on small oligochaete worms and Chironomid larvae. The black flatworm, (*Polycelis nigra*) with similar feeding habits, also occurred in St John's Stream.

Oligochaeta (Segmented Worms)

The Millcombe Stream, as in previous years, contained the **Square-tailed Worm**, (*Eiseniella tetrahedral*) and the **Sludge Worm**, (*Tubifex* sp.). The latter species, which was also found in St John's Stream and Brambles Pond, lives in mud tubes from which their posterior ends function as gills when protruded into the water.

Hirudinea (Leeches)

The **Horse Leech**, (*Haemopsis sanguisuga*), which has body length of up to 60mm, was found in Millcombe stream above the confluence. This leech has been found in several areas of Lundy and in October 2023 it was observed in a puddle by Quarter Wall gate by Maggie Bowden where it has been frequently seen in previous years. Despite its name, it does not attack horses but feeds on other invertebrates, both freshwater and terrestrial, which it swallows whole (see photo).

▲ Horse Leech, *Haemopsis sanguisuga* collected from Millcombe stream (photo: Alan Rowland).

