



▲ Roger and Zdena at Bramble's Gabion Baskets (photo: Hilary Winsor)

CONSERVATION TEAM REPORT

Tara McEvoy-Wilding (Assistant Warden)

2025 was another great year for conservation, as a more established team – myself, Joe, Roger and Tom – could really get stuck into a summer of conservation and engagement work. Of course, all our work wouldn't have been possible without our volunteer team.

Volunteers Ezra Sherwell and Flo Turner did an excellent job of our bird observatory duties, conducting morning census and ringing in Millcombe Valley during spring and autumn migration. Kathleen Power worked hard to monitor the productivity of Guillemots, Puffins, Kittiwakes and Fulmars and well as running the seabird station at Jenny's Cove each travel day. A special thank you for Kathleen, Ezra and Flo's efforts on the 'nightshift' to relocate the GPS tagged Manx Shearwaters, which involved many hours sat on the side lands...more about this later on!

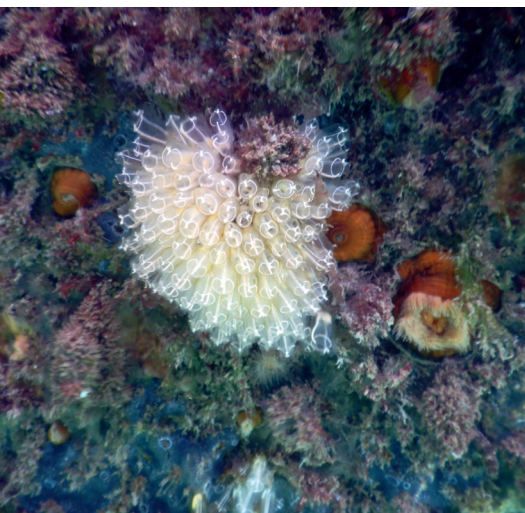
Volunteer Assistant Warden Kirsty Cox was an invaluable help during the peak months, assisting with snorkel safaris and the seabird station as well as conducting seal pup checks, bee and butterfly surveys. Angus Croudace once again joined us for Autumn migration. Mya Tibbs, who joined the team at the last minute to take on the Seal Fieldworker role, threw herself into it and did an excellent job of monitoring this year's seal pups. You can read our summary of all things seal on p62. Finally, a huge thank you to our volunteer assistant rangers. Amber Homersham was with us for the first part of the summer season, before moving onto paid work in July when Zdena Best joined us; already very familiar with Lundy, she hit the ground running and was a great help and up for anything.



▲ Volunteers Kathleen and Ezra surveying the West Coast
(photo: Joe Parker)



▲ One of the biggest Guided Walks of the year!
(photo: John Tyrer)



▲ Lightbulb sea squirts under the jetty (photo: Tara McEvoy-Wilding)

Last but not least, at the start of December we said goodbye to Warden Joe Parker. Having started as Assistant Warden in 2023, he stepped up to the Warden role at the end of that year. He of course did an excellent job of running the Bird Observatory as well as putting a large amount of time into planning the future stewardship scheme, and worked hard to improve communications about feral stock management. I'm sure you'll all agree that he will be missed for the 2026 season, but we wish him all the very best for the future. Our amazing team of Lundy Ambassadors did a fantastic job again this year, delivering guided walks throughout the sailing season to over 1000 visitors. Our Lundy Ambassadors also deliver outreach talks on the mainland, as well as assisting with school group visits. We would like to thank the ambassador team for all their hard work and are looking forward to seeing them all when the MS Oldenburg returns for the 2026 season.

It's been another busy year for Lundy's engagement team, with 16 groups visiting from 11 different schools and colleges, with the children ranging in age from 8-17 years old. Each trip is planned in conjunction with the school and covers a range of themes including island wildlife, history and infrastructure.

Most included a trip up the Old Light and, where time allowed, a walk to The Battery or Jenny's Cove to see the puffins. This year we also ran a competition for primary school children called 'Lundy Seal Champions', to raise awareness of seal disturbance around Lundy. The children were asked to create a piece of work that could be used to promote Lundy's work in this area. The competition was a real success, with over 80 entries from schools across Devon and Somerset covering a wide variety of leaflets, posters and poems. A special thank you to Frances Stuart for visiting all the school groups to deliver a pre-visit presentation, and for her help with the 'Lundy Seal Champions' Competition.

18 Snorkel Safari Sessions took place in 2025, with six additional sessions cancelled due to adverse weather conditions. Highlights this year included witnessing the Spiny Spider Crab mass moult in early July, several species of sea slug

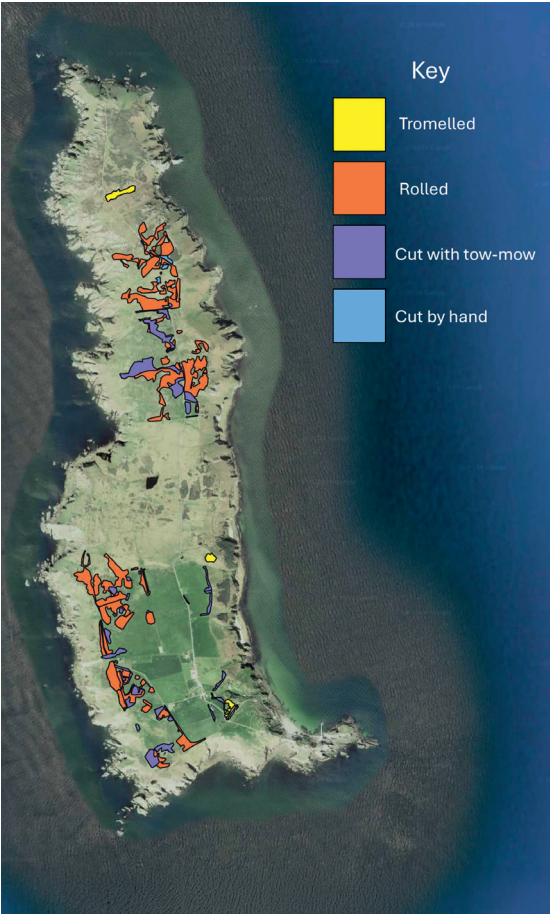
and lots of Spiny Starfish. Rockpool rambles also continued to be popular; however due to snorkel safaris and rockpool rambles both needing a low tide not so many took place. For 2026 we hope to have extra volunteers that may be able to help with running more rockpools. The Warden talk 'Above and Below the Waves' continues to be delivered every travel day and evening 'Bird log' is as popular as ever during the summer months, where at 8pm in the Tavern visitors sit down with a member(s) of the conservation team to record what has been seen on the island that day.



▲ Another rhododendron vanquished! (photographer unknown)

Rhododendron continues to be present on Lundy, but 2025 was a significant milestone, as we had no sightings of flowering rhododendron. As always, many thanks to LFS and the NT who continue to support seedling searches during their conservation breaks. The annual rope access work along the east coast is also making huge gains, removing 136 plants along the cliffs in 2025. The scree and cliffs below the quarries remain the hotspot.

Bracken control continues to follow Higher Level Stewardship (HLS) prescriptions and this year, handheld GPS devices were used to track areas managed. Due to the gains made from rolling in previous years, some areas now grow quite minimally and can be cut with a tow mow rather than rolled which shows the progress that has been made in reducing bracken coverage across the island. Success was also found using the technique of 'tromelling'; this method involves using a plank of wood and your body weight to crush bracken in areas we are unable to go to with a Quad Bike, such as the side lands or scheduled monuments – more about this later on. Looking ahead to 2026, priority areas are being identified to target in partnership



▲ Bracken management 2025



▲ Dexter Cows on the West Coast (photo: Tara McEvoy-Wilding)

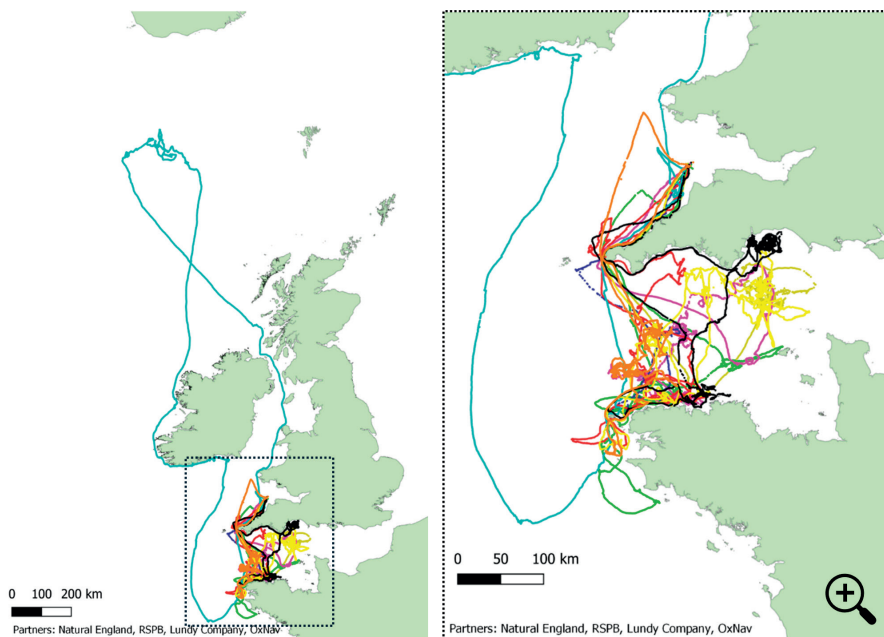
with a National Trust conservation advisor. As ever, this is all thanks to the hard work of our ranger Roger and conservation farmer Tom.

On the farm, we have been reducing our domestic sheep population, which is now sitting at 100 breeding ewes plus followers. In the spring the island welcomed three Dexter cows, who have settled into island life well. We are expecting more Dexters during 2026. In March a thermal drone survey took place to count the feral livestock, and 181 Sika deer, 285 Soay sheep and 22 Goat were recorded. Since the visit, we have had three feral livestock management visits and are looking forward to the 2026 thermal drone census to see what progress has been made in reducing the numbers of feral stock on Lundy.



This year we hosted five LFS working parties as well as a working party from the National Trust. Lots of fantastic work was done with many hours spent bracken tromelling around scheduled monuments and the side lands as well as the inevitable rhododendron searching. The LFS helped out the staff in the spring by clearing the overgrown allotments – we are all very grateful and all the beds are now in use! Other jobs included tree guard maintenance, putting up three new fences (by the Black Shed, in the Campsite and between upper and lower aero-generator fields) and scrub clearance around larger trees in Millcombe Valley. The National Trust working parties weren't so blessed with the weather, so more time was spent doing maintenance work on some of our benches. Thank you to all our working party volunteers from 2025, and we look forward to seeing you all again in 2026!

◀ Lunch break for the LFS (photo: Hilary Winsor)



▲ GPS Tracks of nine Manx Shearwaters

In February 2026, after a three year probationary period, the Bird Observatories Council formally accredited us with Bird Observatory Status. In 2025 the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) awarded the Lundy Bird Observatory a Seabird Group Research Grant, funding the booking of Brambles Villa East between 30 August and 6 September. This opened the opportunity for four young ringers to gain valuable experience at a Manx Shearwater colony.

Tim Guilford (OxNav) led a pilot tracking study to address the foraging and migratory knowledge gap in English Manx Shearwater breeding colonies, a subject area of particularly important focus with the proposed rapid expansion of offshore floating wind in the Celtic Sea. Nine GPS tags were successfully retrieved after short-term deployment in mid-June. Initial results identify foraging hotspots off Brittany and the Channel Islands. Long-term deployment of GPS tags will study the migration routes and wintering grounds this winter.

Early in 2025, the conservation team installed new Storm Petrel nest boxes with help from the RSPB. The new artificial nest boxes enjoyed an early success by supporting several breeding attempts and one successful fledgling in their first season. The ongoing RSPB-led GPS tracking project also resolved several foraging movements, addressing a much-needed 'stormie' knowledge gap across the Celtic and Irish Seas.

Biosecurity is an ongoing priority to protect our breeding seabirds. We continued to retain our rodent free status during 2025, despite a worry during May when a cabin cruiser sank in the Landing Bay. Biosecurity surveillance was increased in case a rodent was onboard and swam ashore. Thankfully no suspicious signs were detected. Many thanks to Tessa Coledale, Karen Varnham and Paul St Pierre (Biosecurity for England and RSPB) for their response support.

We enjoyed a visit in October when Tessa Coledale (Biosecurity Officer England) and Scotland's conservation detection dog team came to the island for a routine biosecurity visit. No rodent signs were detected and Reid the dog worked wonders as a 'poster dog' for biosecurity awareness during two biosecurity talks.



▲ Reid the rat detection dog with Rachel (photo: Joe Parker)

Fortunately, bird flu (HPAI) was not detected on the island this season. We are grateful for the ongoing support from Natural England and the Animal & Plant Health Agency.

This year, we noticed a drop in the number of seals around Lundy during the breeding season. The highest count on the east coast survey route was 183 seals compared to a maximum count of 207 in 2024. A total of 64 seal pups were born on Lundy Island in the 2025 pupping season. This was seven individuals fewer than 2024 and two fewer than 2023, but higher than any record before 2022. After a trial during 2024, we decided to continue with the disturbance surveys at Gannets Bay: across nine surveys, 46% of seals were recorded to have been disturbed to some extent.



▲ Seal pup 4 and mother (photo: Tara McEvoy-Wilding)

Seabird numbers continue to increase each year, sadly with the exception of Fulmar. This year, the RSPB conducted a census of the cliff nesting seabirds, and these updated figures took us over the milestone for having over 45,000 breeding seabirds on Lundy! The table right shows the totals for each species.

Guillemot	12202
Razorbill	4508
Puffin	1317
Kittiwake	448
Fulmar	219

The Lundy Cabbage count was undertaken during the first week of June, this year by me with some help from Joe and volunteer Kirsty. 4127 plants were recorded, an 82% increase from 2024, but more in line with figures from previous years. Bronze Lundy Cabbage Flea Beetles were surveyed by Buglife (awaiting report), who also trained me on how to survey them. The conservation team hope in future to run fortnightly surveys to learn more about their life cycle.



▲ Lundy Cabbage Flea Beetle (photo: Tara McEvoy-Wilding)

It was a busy year for Lundy on TV. Sailing the Shipping Forecast with Rev. Richard Coles, aired on the 20th October, featuring Joe Parker who took Rev. Richard to check the Manx Shearwater nestboxes. Island farmer Tom featured on Eòrpa (Series 33:8) discussing Soay sheep, which aired on BBC Alba, 29 September. Filming also took place for features on 'Our Tiny Islands' and 'Weird Britain' which are set to air in 2026.

So what's planned for 2026? Well, we have an exciting year ahead of us with lots of tree planting, thanks to grant money from the National Trust and the LFS, as well as two new regular surveys for reptiles and Lundy Cabbage Flea Beetles. That's it for now, but we look forward to seeing you all on the island during 2026!



► Joe Parker and Rev. Richard Coles (unknown photographer)