

## WILD AND FERAL MAMMALS

### *Oryctolagus cuniculus*. **Rabbit.**

There appears to be a slight decrease in numbers. No signs of myxomatosis have been observed.

### *Rattus rattus*. **Black Rat.**

Two have been killed in the vicinity of the Hotel.

### *Rattus norvegicus*. **Brown Rat.**

Possibly a slight decrease in numbers. A full grown rat was seen in the talons of a Buzzard in December.

### *Dama dama*. **Fallow Deer.**

Now believed to be extinct on the Island.

### *Sika nippon*. **Japanese Deer.**

The most recorded was sixty-seven on April 22nd. By the end of the year the population was probably at least ninety. The challenge wail of the bucks was first heard September 1st, but not heard frequently until October; it continued intermittently throughout November and was heard only occasionally at night in December.

### *Cervus elaphus*. **Red Deer.**

A herd of nine seen frequently during October and November is probably the entire population. The herd consisted of one stag, one immature male, five hinds (one probably immature), and two fawns.

### *Capra hircus*. **Feral Goat.**

The largest number seen was forty-five on July 22nd. On September 23rd out of a herd of forty, there were six kids. During the year fourteen billy goats and one young nannie goat were shot.

### **Soay Sheep.**

The greatest number seen was eighty-five on July 2nd. This flock consisted of sixty-one adults and twenty-four young of the year.

### *Halichoerus grypus*. **Grey Seal.**

Regular visits have been made to Seals' Hole, the only known breeding cave on the Island. The results of these visits are tabulated below:

<i>Date</i>	<i>Number of Seals in Cave</i>
February 25th	2 +, 1 Adult male
March 9th	1 Adult female
March 25th	0
April 9th	2 Adult female, 1 Adult male, 2 Immatures
April 24th	1 Adult female, 1 Immature
May 22nd	1 Immature
June 20th	2 Adult female, 1 Adult male, 1 Immature
July 19th	0
August 5th	1 Adult female
August 23rd	1 Immature
September 2nd	1 Adult male, 1 Calf or Yearling
September 7th	1 female Calf
September 17th	2 Adult female, 4 Immatures
October 16th	0
October 31st	0

[*Note*.—The immatures are two or three year olds.]

The calf found on September 7th was swimming in the pool at the entrance of the cave. It was thought to be about twenty-four hours old. As it was not present on September 17th it may have been older than this or it may have died. It was marked with a ring under the scheme organized by the London Zoo.

It is possible that the small seal near the entrance to the cave on September 2nd may have been a calf ; it was not examined at all closely and the light was dim. It went into the sea. The lack of attention was due to the supposition that a calf would be in the chamber at the back of the cave as was the case in 1954.

Exploration for further suitable breeding beaches or caves was continued in 1955 but nothing was found.

The only other evidence of breeding activity was a bull seen mating with a cow for twenty minutes in the water off Surf Point on October 2nd.

#### CENSUS.

With the co-operation of members and the ornithological assistant, fairly comprehensive counts have been made at least for the latter half of the season. These counts were made at spring low water when the animals were lying out on the rocks. During the very fine weather of light easterly winds from July 8th until August 24th, no seals were seen lying out on the east side, so after this had been established in the count of July 8th the east coast was not examined, until a change of weather occurred. The results of the counts are tabulated below :

<i>Date</i>	<i>No. of Seals</i>	<i>Area Covered</i>	<i>Wind</i>
April 13th	19	East side only	NE/1-3
April 26th	26	East side only	WSW-W/2
May 12th	26	Gannets' Combe only	SW/4
July 8th	66	Whole Island. All seals on West side	E/1-N/2
July 10th	76	West coast only	E/3-NNE/1
July 22nd	112	West coast only	E/1-2
August 8th	88	West coast only	NE-N/1-2
August 24th	56	West coast only	E/2-0
September 4th	36	Whole Island	W/2
September 10th	42	Whole Island from sea	NW/2-W/3
September 19th	59	Whole Island	S/1-W/1
October 3rd	50	Whole Island	NNW/2-N/2
October 17th	21	Whole Island	NW/4
November 3rd	22	Whole Island	SW/2-SSE/5
December 1st	41	Whole Island	S/1-2

The counts indicate that the Island is a summering area rather than a breeding station. On October 3rd, which should be the middle of the breeding season, of twenty animals which were seen sufficiently clearly for ages to be assessed, there were two adults, fourteen two or three year olds and four yearlings. Again on October 17th, out of eleven seals the age groups were as follows : two adults, two three year olds, four two year olds, two yearlings ; one calf of the year.