

## Letter from Lundy April

The spring season on Lundy has got off to a flying start. The good weather has really helped bringing both visitors and wildlife flocking to our shores. Quite literally, as it is the spring migration for many birds travelling back from their wintering grounds into Europe and some will stop off for a rest at Lundy. Hoopoe, golden oriole and a little owl are just a few of the rare migratory birds which have been spotted on Lundy in recent weeks. However numerous more common species have also been taking advantage of the island to rest and feed *en route*.

This year is a special year as the island is proud to be celebrating 40 years of marine conservation on Lundy. We have come a long way since the 1960's when a small group of divers fought passionately to have Lundy designated the first voluntary marine reserve back then – recognising how special Lundy's marine environment was and *still is*. Since then Lundy has witnessed many 'first achievements' in marine conservation and we now know how valuable marine protected areas to the conservation of our marine environment.

After becoming a voluntary marine reserve in 1973, the marine reserve was granted statutory status in 1986. Later in 2003 a small part of the reserve became the UK's first Not Take Zone, where it is illegal to fish and more recently Lundy became the UK's first Marine Conservation Zone. This designation came about as a result of the Marine Act being passed through parliament last year and is part of an ongoing project to create a network of marine protected areas covering important habitats around the British Isles. From humble beginnings great things have been achieved that could never have been imagined all those years ago and it's great being part of such an important move to safeguard the special marine habitats that we have in the UK.

Nowadays divers are still enjoying diving the wrecks and areas of the marine reserve and share it with a rich variety of marine animals large and small. Only last week I was fortunate to see a marine spectacle out to sea on the west coast. Large groups of Manx shearwater seabirds were congregating about one kilometre from the island. Gannets were diving and gulls feeding at the sea surface. It wasn't long before I saw common dolphin in amongst the feeding seabirds – a pod of around 20 dolphins, breaching and feeding. Suddenly a large slower moving creature emerged from the water – it was a Minke whale!

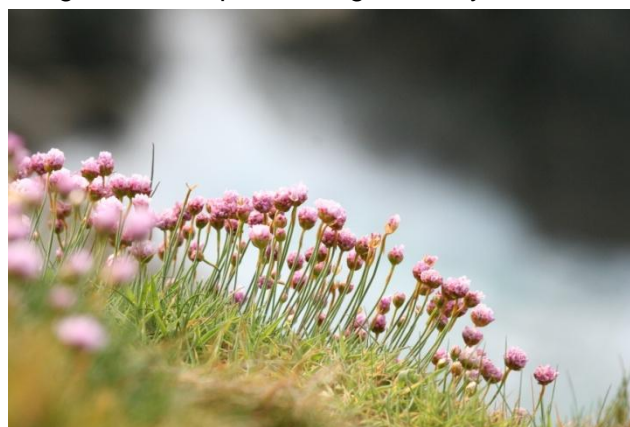
This whale is quite easy to recognise as it has a long front with a small sickle shaped dorsal fin set far back along its body. The whale surfaced several times during the time I was watching and it was brilliant to see such a magnificent creature in its natural environment. Since then a number of sightings of Common dolphin have been reported – mostly from aboard the MS Oldenburg as these dolphins are often attracted to vessels to ride in the boats wake or in the bow wave. The ship's 'First Officer' Brian Slade, records the marine mammal sightings from on board the ship. Brian has a hawk's eye for spotting cetaceans far out to sea and last year well over a thousand porpoise and dolphins were spotted during the season travelling back and forth from the mainland to Lundy.

Fingers crossed we shall see many more of these great animals over the summer season – don't forget to look out for them on the way over if you are planning to a trip to Lundy!

Sophie Wheatley, Assistant warden.

# LETTER FROM LUNDY – AUGUST

True to form the weather on Lundy has played a starring role in the proceedings of the year so far and I think it's fair to say we have seen some pretty changeable weather. Fine days early on in the season brought spring seemingly early to the island and the array of colour from the spring flowers made the island sparkle. However the prolonged dry spells have meant that this year again water shortages have been an ever pressing issue, despite some rain throughout the season – it hasn't been sufficient to maintain the island water level and now we face some severe shortages – fingers crossed for rain this month!



Thrift – Grant Sherman

Disappointingly it was poor weather – in particular strong winds - which played its part in cancelling the annual underwater photographic competition. A success for the past two years it has been organised it was decided that it shall now be rescheduled this month. It's a great event which helps celebrate the wonderful marine life living below the waves at Lundy. The standards of photos are excellent and give non-divers a glimpse of the amazing array of wildlife living around our shores.

The photos from last year's competition were a great addition to the displays at an evening to celebrate 40 years of marine conservation at Lundy, which was hosted on the MS Oldenburg in Bideford at the beginning of July.

This was a rare chance to get people together who have contributed to safeguarding Lundy's special marine habitats throughout the past 40 years. The guests amongst many included previous island agents, the first Lundy warden and marine biologists Keith Hiscock (who organised the event) and Robert Irving, both instrumental in describing many of Lundy's habitats and realising how important they were all those years ago. Also key in their support are the local people of north Devon - the divers, fisherman, charter boats and visitors who care about the island and who have helped make the marine reserve work. It was a great celebration and a reminder of how many people really care about protecting Lundy's marine environment.

There are many reasons why protecting our marine environment is so important. The effects of pollution, dredging and intensive fishing practices are severely detrimental to marine habitats and the creatures that live there. We have a close relationship with the sea in many ways and rely on it economically in terms of fishing and recreation so much that it's important to protect and maintain it so that future generations can continue to enjoy and benefit from the sea like we do.

Of course it's not just us humans that rely on the sea to survive – many of the millions of seabirds worldwide spend most of their lives out at sea only to return to land to breed. On Lundy the cliffs have fallen silent again as we near the end of the seabird breeding season.

Many birds have finished rearing their chicks for the year and we won't see many of them again until next year.

A few species extend their breeding season into September and this includes the Manx shearwater on Lundy. These birds have made a spectacular recovery in recent years and are now occupying the majority of the islands coastal slopes. Research is currently taking place on the island to track where Lundy's Manx shearwater are feeding when they leave Lundy in the early hours of the day – not returning until after dark to feed their chicks which wait in underground burrows.



Manx Shearwater

Satellite tagging of the birds means that we can track their movements out at sea. The results will be important in determining which areas of the sea are feeding grounds for these nationally important birds – as 90% of the worlds Manx shearwater breed in the UK. In future these studies might be instrumental in the process of designating marine protected areas to safeguard the fish populations that the birds are feeding on and also help protect the birds themselves when they are out at the sea foraging for food.

I hope you'll agree that marine protected areas are so far reaching in their benefit and crucial in preserving our natural marine environment for future generations of humans and wildlife. So please join us in celebrating 40 years of marine conservation at Lundy this year – we are really proud that Lundy has been a leader in this field for so long and with your support will continue to do so for many years to follow.

Sophie Wheatley, Assistant Lundy Warden

# CHRISTMAS LETTER FROM LUNDY

It has been a few months since our last letter and with Christmas approaching fast it seems a perfect opportunity to give you an update of life here on Lundy.

2011 has been a busy year with lots of achievements and some changes. We've had everything from champagne celebrations, police evacuations to summer bath bans when our water supplies reached critical levels (the Lundy equivalent to a hosepipe ban!)

Our champagne celebration took place in March when we hit a milestone with the ongoing Rhododendron Eradication Program we have in place. Volunteers from the Lundy Field Society (LFS), the National Trust and BTCV have assisted us over the years and after many, many years of hard graft; we finally cleared the last of the sideland Rhododendron on Lundy.

A group of LFS volunteers were over for the occasion and on the last day of work, grubby and muddy from lopping and sawing, we had a ceremonial cut of the last standing "Rhodi" plant and celebrated in true Lundy style with champagne and cream tea outside Felix Gade's Hut on the slopes of the east coast. Whilst this was a major achievement, deserving of a champagne celebration, there is still a long way to go before we achieve our final goal of total eradication, which will take us a further 13 years to clear the last of the seedlings!!

In recent years pigs were introduced to Lundy as a sustainable recycling initiative which has proved successful beyond our expectations and which culminated this year with the first of our Lundy Pork on the menu! This is a great addition to our island sustainable produce which includes Lamb, Venison, Goat, Soay, Rabbit, Goose and of course the latest Lundy Pork! Lundy sausages and Pork loin, are amongst the numerous products that have proven to be hugely popular with both staff and visitors alike.



Lundy Pigs – Nicola Saunders

Most of our mammals are, in fact, primarily used as a management tool to maintain the required grazing levels across the island to ensure that the habitats within the SSSI (Site of Special Scientific Interest) are kept in a favorable condition. It is fantastic to be able to utilize the stock as a food source as well, providing us with a tasty sustainable product from a natural environment.

Next year we are planning to introduce highland cattle to graze some of the islands tougher grass species between quarter and halfway wall, so before too long we may also be able to add Lundy beef to our Tavern menu!

As I started to think about this Christmas update, I was reminded of a letter I wrote in December 2009 and the potential irony it would bring two years down the line.

I told the story of a particularly bad winter back in 1961 when Felix Gade was the then island agent. Lundy was running short of food and the weather prevented the supply ship or helicopter delivering essential supplies, and it was quipped “it looks certain that Christmas dinner will be tinned sausages this year”. I mused at the fact that in this day and age strandings’ are far less frequent and it is a rare occurrence for bad weather to delay vital supplies and cause any kind of hardship to residents and livestock.

Two years on and less than two weeks to Christmas, we are experiencing some of the worst storms we have had for many a year. The last visit from MS Oldenburg, our supply ship, was on 31<sup>st</sup> October and Island supplies are running critically low!

At this time of year our helicopter service flies to Lundy every Monday and Friday, bringing visitors, the post and small supplies of bread, milk and veg. All our other winter supplies have to be stock piled before the end of the sailing season and we usually see MS Oldenburg on a supply run in the lead up to Christmas to deliver all our essentials.

Bideford shore office is full to bursting with all sorts of supplies, but with the weather as it is, there is mounting speculation and an anxious trepidation as we wait to see if the Oldenburg will manage the crossing before Christmas Day.

Whilst it may not cause too much of a hardship, there will definitely have to be some adjustments made for all Lundy residents. Kevin the farmer is low on winter feed for his sheep. In the Tavern, Grant the barman is down to the last few barrels of beer and all our Christmas supplies, including our tree are ready and waiting in Bideford.



St Helena's Church – Russell Yelland

With any luck by the time this reaches you the Bideford store will be empty, our Christmas tree will have arrived and we'll be fully stocked for the next few months ahead. But if is that's not the case, Derek may have to ration the beer, but with the island now producing its own products, we may not have to open the “tinned sausages” after all. With our own Lamb, Pork, Goose and island game on the menu, we are set to have a memorable Christmas in the Marisco Tavern, with lots of fun, merriment and a roaring fire, whatever the weather!

Wishing you all a very merry Christmas and a happy New Year from all the islanders.

“All the very best”

Nicola Saunders

Lundy Warden