

HONORARY SECRETARY'S REPORT 2023

Michael Williams

The year opened with the wonderful news that Dr Keith Hiscock, Vice President and former Chair of the LFS, had been appointed an MBE for services to marine conservation. We were able to celebrate Keith's award at the AGM.

Further exciting news came in early February when the Bird Observatories Council re-admitted Lundy to the network of Bird Observatories in Britain and Ireland after an absence of nearly 50 years. This was the culmination of a process initiated by Dean Jones during his tenure as Lundy Warden, which developed into a collaborative effort involving a variety of individuals and organisations, with the LFS providing a key advisory role and pledging to continue support for bird-ringing and other activities under the aegis of the new Observatory. The LFS warmly acknowledges the significant commitment that the Landmark Trust and Lundy Company have made in taking on responsibility for running the Observatory and making critically important contributions to staff time, as well as allocating funding for day-to-day operating costs.



◀ *The Lundy Bird Observatory Logo*

A small Observatory Organising Committee, which includes a representative of LFS, meets virtually several times per year and provides advice to the Bird Observatory Warden on administrative, operational, and technical issues. In addition to providing a £25 per person contribution to the cost of rings used by LFS ringers visiting the island during 2023, the LFS also transferred to the Observatory rings and other ringing equipment previously held by the LFS. The Committee further approved specific additional funding, requested by the Observatory Warden, for the purchase of equipment needed to survey breeding seabirds, especially Manx Shearwaters and Storm Petrels. Through the Rodley family legacy, and with muscle from several Conservation Working Parties, the LFS supported the renovation of the Heligoland Trap on the Terrace, whilst we also contributed from the Rodley legacy to the new Bird Observatory and Biosecurity Hub being established near the Lodge.

The Observatory has taken over responsibility for maintaining the natural history Logbook, which continues to be kept in the Tavern for the use of all visitors and bears the names and logos of both the Bird Observatory and LFS. The Observatory has also taken on the task of compiling the annual Lundy Bird Report, which will be produced as a stand-alone, electronic publication – enabling more technical detail and greater use of graphics and photos than is possible within the LFS Annual Report. The latter will continue to carry a summary of bird highlights, bringing coverage of birds in the Annual Report more into line with that for other taxonomic groups. A further key activity that LFS is delighted to see is the Observatory leading on the progressive digitisation of LFS logbooks from past years. Unfortunately, the logbooks for much of the 1950s and 60s were destroyed by water damage many decades ago, when stored on the island.

As the inaugural year for the Lundy Bird Observatory, 2023 was fittingly full of birding highlights. None more-so than the results of the RSPB-led seabird surveys during the spring and summer. These showed that Lundy now supports a staggering 40,000 breeding seabirds, including 25,000 Manx Shearwaters, nearly 10,000 Guillemots, and over 3,500 Razorbills. Storm Petrels are expanding to new sites and the island's iconic Puffins reached a new post-rat- eradication peak count of 1,335 individuals.

Some 4,741 birds were ringed during the year – just a couple of hundred off the all-time record, which would almost certainly have been broken if the weather in the latter part of the autumn had been less stormy. Record numbers of Common Snipe, Jack Snipe, Golden Plover, and Storm Petrel were ringed, whilst Redshank, Barolo Shearwater, and Waxwing were added to the Lundy ringing list. The long-term ringing studies of Manx Shearwaters and Wheatears continued. Occupation of the Manx Shearwater nest boxes reached a new high, with a record ten chicks produced in them. A total of 518 adults and chicks were newly ringed, and plenty of valuable data on survival was provided by the 142 different individuals recaptured from past years' ringing. These included 32 returning Lundy-bred chicks, the oldest being from 2008. A bird ringed as an adult in 2004 is the oldest ever encountered on the island. The Wheatear colour-ringing project produced more good news, with estimates of 61 pairs in the study area and 163 pairs for the whole island easily surpassing previous records. Adult survival between the 2022 and 2023 breeding seasons was at least 55%.

The daily census – a key requirement for meeting the criteria to remain as part of the national Bird Observatories network – was completed on more than 95% of days, easily exceeding the required threshold. The census route covers much of the island south of Quarter Wall and is generally walked first thing in the morning by the Observatory Warden or one of the Volunteer Assistant Wardens. A Cliff Swallow (native to North America) and a Pallid Harrier (from Eastern Europe) both seen in October, were new for the island's bird list, whilst other notable rarities during the year included Cory's Shearwater, Red-eyed Vireo, Yellow-breasted Bunting and Surf Scoter.

Apart from the birds, surveys of the fauna and flora of Lundy have also been important activities during the year. The numbers of the iconic Lundy Cabbage have increased by 77% from 2,792 in 2022 to 4,959. Surveyors are collaborating with Dr. Steve Bullock, Associate Professor of Aerospace Engineering at the University of Bristol, to investigate the possibility of using remote drones and AI to identify and count cabbage in the future. A scoping exercise will be undertaken in 2024. This already is in use in agriculture where drones are used to calculate the amount of fertiliser required on crops.

Invertebrates continue to be reported in the LFS Logbook with all the most recorded species being the most visible. Rose Chafer beetles, Dor beetles, moths, and butterflies being seen in good numbers. It was a particularly good year for butterflies with the rarely recorded Clouded Yellow and Speckled Wood featuring in the reports. Emperor Dragonflies have been recorded with increasing frequency over the last few years with a first record of ovipositing at Rocket Pole Pond in 2018. This was repeated in 2021 at Quarter Wall Pond confirming attempted breeding. The exciting sighting this year of a nymph in Pondsburry by Alan Rowland confirms successful breeding. Whether nymphs will survive the depredations of the birds that use Pondsburry is another matter which will be resolved in one or two years when skin moults may be found in the spring.

Stuart Cossey carried out the Botanical Society of the British Isles (BSBI) New Year Plant Hunt on January 1st and recorded 14 species in flower. This event takes place nationwide with



► *Stuart Cossey, Assistant Warden (photographer unknown).*

hundreds of observers recording plants actually in flower (not just leaves or buds), but this is the first time we have had records from Lundy. Hopefully, this can become an annual event. The most obvious flowering plant on New Year's Day is always Common Gorse, but Stuart managed to find many less-conspicuous species like Ivy-leaved Toadflax, Petty Spurge, Early Dog-violet, and Tall Ramping Furnitory. The results are added to a national database and help to understand how wild and naturalised plants are responding to a changing climate.

Amongst the highlights for marine life, Atlantic Bluefin Tuna are being recorded off Lundy again; likely not seen for about 40 years. There has been an apparently significant recruitment of the iconic

and nationally rare Sunset Cup corals at the Knoll Pins after a decline in numbers since the mid-1980s but, on the downside, the non-native Red Ripple Bryozoan on shaded intertidal surfaces has spread. Always popular with visitors, seals are doing well.



Our keen mycologists, John Hedger and Mandy Dee, requested some new identification books for the LFS library. These were used repeatedly over four weeks of recording during the autumn, and many of the 40 or so new records for the year were only identified thanks to the species being covered in these new books. With around fifteen thousand species in the UK, no one book will cover them all. We have around 800 records on Lundy – only fourteen thousand two hundred to go! John and Mandy also led two popular Fungi Forays during their visit.

◀ *Mandy Dee and John Hedger with the new fungal identification books purchased by the LFS, November (photo: Chris Dee).*

During 2023 the LFS sent four working parties to Lundy. The March trip and the May week both had to miss the joys of the Oldenburg crossing and suffer with the helicopter trip due to the unexpected delay in the return to service of the ship. Both groups had a good mix of experience and new members with plenty of useful tasks completed including drystone walling with expert tuition from Vince Pipe. Both Autumn parties suffered from withdrawals due mainly to family illness, and our long reserve list was extremely useful in recruiting replacements for the 11 places that were cancelled for these two trips. Again, with several new faces, plenty of essential work was completed. The Lundy Conservation Team has expressed their thanks for the Society's significant contribution to conservation work. If you wish to attend a working party and can step in at short notice to replace late withdrawals, send an enquiry to Trevor Dobie at lundyworkingparty@gmail.com, and your details will be noted and placed on the reserve list. Further details can be found on our website www.lundy.org.uk under 'What We Do'.

The LFS has continued to give small grants to support work on Lundy. These included £200 for working party equipment during the year. Financial support was also provided to renew the island's weather station. You can now monitor current meteorological observations on Lundy through our website. Two research grants were awarded in 2023. Yeng Sen received £312 to present her 2022 Lundy Manx Shearwaters research at a conference in Scotland and in the summer of 2023 Tara McEvoy-Wilding received £289 to develop a new method for sampling seabed invertebrates, using several loofah sponges held in a weighted frame.

In terms of LFS business, the committee has been busy with a range of topics. We considered the role and person specification for a future LFS President by drawing up a role description – we are now seeking the right person to fulfil this role. As a charity, we have a duty as members, committee members, and officers to act in the best interests of the Society, so codes of conduct were drawn up, following good practice in the sector, and ensuring we had appropriate governance mechanisms in place to manage grievances or inappropriate behaviour. A planned LFS Day Trip to Lundy in June was unfortunately cancelled due to poor ticket sales, but on a positive note, plans are progressing for a Field Studies Course in April 2024 to develop the next generation of observers and recorders of Lundy's natural history.

Publications remain a core activity of the Society in delivering its objectives. The eighth volume of the LFS Journal was published during the year with Keith Hiscock editing for the first time. John Hedger edited the 2022 Annual Report and Bee Cox produced the Discovering Lundy bulletin. These are considerable undertakings with many hours invested in their production, so we record our thanks to Keith, John, and Bee. Chris Webster authored our new history and field guide, Lundy's Archaeology, with support from André Coutanche, Alan Rowland, and Mandy Yates. It provides a description of the sites on Lundy, the story of the archaeologists who investigated them, and a modern interpretation of how they fit into Lundy's story and the wider world.

There have been several changes in the Lundy Conservation Team. The Society records its tremendous gratitude to Rosie Ellis and Stuart Cossey, Warden and Assistant Warden respectively, who left Lundy during the course of the year. Our relationship with the team grows stronger every year and we wish both Rosie and Stuart all the very best for their futures. Within the LFS Chris Dee indicated last year that he wished to step down as LFS Treasurer due to his increased involvement in the Lundy Bird Observatory. Chris has been ably managing our finances for four years. Our thanks to Chris and welcome to John Shelley who has agreed to succeed him. Bill Williams has been trying to step back from the role of Honorary Independent Examiner for the past couple of years and he has now been able to do so. Thank you, Bill, for your contribution over the past seven years.

In the autumn, Sandra Rowland told us that she wished to stand down as Membership Secretary for personal reasons. Sandra joined the committee in 2007, taking over the role from Maggie Shaw, and has held the position for 17 years in total. Through Sandra's efforts, diligence, and perseverance the Society membership has grown by more than 50% during her tenure. Our enormous thanks to Sandra for her service. Lucy Lo-Vel is taking on the role, reconnecting her family with the Society's administration as her grandfather, John Dyke, was Honorary Secretary between 1959 and 1965.

My final thank you is to you, our members, for your support.



▲ LFS Field Studies courses will start in 2024 (photo: Michael Williams).



▲ Rosie Ellis, Lundy Warden (photographer unknown).

TREASURER'S REPORT AND ACCOUNTS

Chris W Dee, Honorary Treasurer

The accounts presented here show a deficit for the year of £1,355. This is not a concern in a year when we published the eighth volume of the LFS Journal and are seeking to support activities on the island with the project fund established from the Rodley legacy and donations.

Without increasing subscription rates, membership income has grown by 4.6% and donations have increased, largely as a result of Conservation Break withdrawals. We also continue to benefit from generous monthly donations from the Jennetts Trust, which the donor is happy for us to use to support general running costs, for which we are grateful. To help ensure that our day-to-day operation is covered by subscription income all other donations are added to the project fund, which at the end of the year stood at £10,583. The opportunity was taken to align the Gift Aid claim with our accounting year, so the increase to £2,357 this year is temporary and represents Gift Aid on subscriptions and other qualifying donations from April 2021 to December 2022.

With a further £35,200 from the Rodley legacy set aside for investment, in consultation with our investment advisors, we diversified our portfolio in 2023 and added that sum to our investment. The capital invested is now £79,300 which at the end of the year had a market value of £84,735. After a lean period, this fund is now starting to grow once again.

Sales of *The Harman Family's Lundy* and *Protecting Lundy's Marine Life* in 2023 have been included in Sundry sales, along with sales of past Annual Reports and other donated publications and Lundy ephemera. Sales and auction proceeds from the AGM contributed more than £750, more than offsetting the cost of holding an in-person meeting. We continue to sell *Lundy Fungi* through the website and Lundy General Stores, which is also our primary outlet for the *Colouring Book*. The publication of *Lundy's Archaeology* in July prompted a flurry of sales which have already covered its printing costs. The stock shown as assets includes the value at cost of these three publications at the end of the year.

Two research grants were claimed this year with a small amount being carried over from 2021 for sample analysis. Assistance was provided from the project fund for the publication of a report on the 2022 Marine Festival and awards were also made towards the purchase of additional equipment for terrestrial and seabird monitoring and for fitting out the Bird Observatory shed. The Society provided start-up funding to the Lundy Bird Observatory - which was re-accredited in February - in the form of the donation of bird ring stock to the value of £1,800 and other bird ringing equipment. It is worth noting that the observatory has also received funding from RSPB and Natural England in 2023. Although the administration of the bird ringing on Lundy has transferred to the Lundy Bird Observatory, the LFS continues to subsidise this monitoring effort by donating £25 for each LFS member ringer operating on the island during the year.

Funding of Conservation Breaks has returned to more normal levels, with four breaks being run. However, we continue to see a high number of withdrawals, the result of which was that £720 of forfeited deposits were treated as donations.

The 2023 expenditure shown for our regular publications – Bulletin, Annual Report, and Journal – includes typesetting, printing, and distribution costs.

Although MS Oldenburg was back in service in time for the planned LFS day trip in June, insufficient ticket sales forced us to cancel. We incurred a small loss of £91 in online transaction fees but were grateful to the Lundy Company for fully refunding the booking deposit. Ironically, given the sea conditions on the day, there is a high chance the sailing would have been cancelled, or at best, would have been a very uncomfortable experience.

Income and Expenditure for the year ended 31 December 2023

Income	2023	2022
	£	£
Subscriptions	11,477	10,973
Donations	2,187	1,777
Jennetts Trust	2,040	2,040
Legacies	-	13,974
Gift Aid	2,357	1,445
Conservation break deposits	3,000	820
Day trip ticket sales	2,420	-
Book sales – <i>Lundy Fungi</i>	460	403
Book sales – <i>Colouring Book</i>	161	201
Book sales – <i>Lundy's Archaeology</i>	281	-
Sundry sales	1,277	1,573
Postage	28	17
Bird ringing	-	311
Interest	136	26
Total income	25,824	33,560
Deduct expenditure	27,179	16,770
Surplus/Deficit for the year	-1,355	16,790

Expenditure	2023	2022
	£	£
Bulletin	1,157	946
Report	5,113	3,507
Journal	3,979	-
Books – <i>Lundy's Archaeology</i>	258	-
Website	45	43
Bird ringing	375	164
Grants	599	3,529
Conservation breaks	6,534	4,629
Day trip ticket refunds	2,511	-
Field courses	106	-
Projects	2,637	1,682
AGM expenses	607	490
Committee expenses	114	-
Postage	169	131
Stationery	3	40
LFS Library	217	226
Stock value reduction	2,419	1,293
Sundries	336	90
Total expenditure	27,179	16,770

Balance sheet as at 31 December 2023

	2023	2022
	£	£
Current Assets		
Stock – books	2,181	2,797
Stock – bird rings	-	1,803
2023 day trip charter deposit	-	435
2024 field course accommodation booking	2,054	2,054
2025 field course accommodation booking	712	-
NS&I account	384	384
Current account	25,916	59,846
Reserve account (project fund)	10,583	11,242
Subtotal	41,830	78,561
Less		
Advance subscriptions	625	761
Advance conservation break deposits	2,200	2,240
Net current assets	39,005	75,560
Other assets		
LionTrust Sustainable Fund	-	44,100
7iM Investment Fund	79,300	-
Total assets	118,305	119,660
Reserves		
Brought forward	75,560	58,770
Transfer to specific reserve	-35,200	-
Surplus/Deficit for the year	-1,355	16,790
General Reserves	39,005	75,560
Specific reserve	79,300	44,100
Total reserves	118,305	119,660

Note: In 2019 an Ethical Fund was established as an endowment in which income and capital would be accumulated to meet the costs of future major projects. This is shown above as a specific reserve. At the balance sheet date, the investment had a market value of £84,735.

Lundy Field Society Accounts Examination for 2023

'I have examined the accounts of the Lundy Field Society for the year 1st January to 31st December 2023 as presented to me by the Honorary Treasurer. I have confirmed the accuracy of the accounting statements and that they properly reflect the underlying accounting records. My examination provided me with no evidence that these financial statements do not provide a true and fair view of the Income and Expenditure, and Assets and Liabilities, of the Lundy Field Society for the year ended 31st December 2023.'

Robin O Hall
Honorary Independent Examiner
21 January 2024