



Lundy - a wild and rugged island

April 2024

Lundy is owned by the National Trust and managed by the Landmark Trust, working together to restore and protect all that is cherished and special



about it. Daily visitors and overnight stays help to secure the future of the island and its landscape, buildings and wildlife. At three miles long and half a mile wide, it is steep and rocky and often shrouded by fog; the scene of many shipwrecks. The original lighthouse (now accommodation) was often obscured by clouds so a fog signal station with two cannons was installed at the battery. A cannon was fired every 15 minutes and this could go on for a very long time so there is now a lighthouse at both the south and north of the island.

Lundy is rich in bird life as it lies on major migration routes and can attract many vagrant species. On our visit we were fortunate to see a male golden oriole, a woodchat shrike and a night heron. Our week coincided with the Lundy Bird Observatory ringing group and surveyors together with a group from The Field Studies Council who were studying the seal population among other things. They were very happy to share their knowledge and we all spent time with the birdringers who were kept extremely busy with the 'right' wind; one day, 150 willow warblers were ringed!



The west coast faces the Atlantic and this is where seabirds gather to breed - guillemots, razorbills and the delightful puffins were a joy to see. Gannets could be seen flying past and we were pleased to see porpoises one day whilst the seals were never far from shore. On the sheltered east side carpets of bluebells and primroses, especially near the quarry, were together with celandine, tormentil, milkwort and lousewort. A lot of work has been done to try and

eradicate *Rhododendron ponticum* to allow the famous Lundy cabbage to thrive (but sadly it wasn't quite in flower for us).

Mammals introduced by a previous owner included the sturdy Lundy pony, Sika deer, Soay sheep, Highland cattle and feral goats. Walking along the tracks, serenaded by skylarks, it was lovely to see these animals so at home. The rather elusive pygmy shrew in our accommodation was a delight for those that saw it and I'm sure crumbs and cheese will have caused weight gain.

We were blessed with sunshine and time to spend a week far from the hubbub of the modern world. Lundy is a place apart, peaceful and unspoilt.

Sheila Jones

Indoor Meetings 2024-5

Lyttelton Rooms, Great Malvern at 7.30pm. £3. All welcome.

5 Sep

Dr Kate Ashbrook, University of Worcester

Sustainable Food Production

3 Oct

Jean Young, local naturalist

Discoveries on the Doorstep - Unseen, Unloved and Underappreciated

7 Nov

Chantal Lyons, naturalist and author Ground-breakers—the return of Britain's wild boar

5 Dec

Helen Mugridge, wildlife photographer

Wildlife of Finland

www.worcswildlifetrust.oc.uk/whats-on

Warwickshire nature reserves

May 2024

It was a dull day when the group visited four nature reserves in Warwickshire but at least the rains stayed off until we returned to Worcestershire.

Harbury Spoil Bank was created during the construction of the Leamington to Oxford railway in the 1840s. The resulting spoil banks of lias clay now



Twayblade

host a grassland rich with wildflowers. Star of the show was a veritable host of twayblade orchids, which flourish there, together with emerging common spotted orchids, hoary plantain, salad burnet and two hawkbit species .

No sun meant no butterflies but a single female azure damselfly and a small hoverfly *Melanostoma scalare* braved the cold temperature. Two beautiful iridescent leaf beetles graced a yellow buttercup to cheer the day.



Next we visited Bishop's Hill, formed from waste lime from the old quarry. The dominant flower here is kidney vetch, sole foodplant of the small blue butterfly. We found numerous roosts of both small and common blues waiting for the sun to shine. One four-spotted chaser dragonfly was seen low in the foliage. Our first cucumber spider was seen together with a bishop's mitre shieldbug. On leaving a large thistle gave us a thistle tortoise beetle and a tiny lace bug. A hairy shield bug had laid its clutch of eggs on the same plant.

After lunch we visited Radway Meadows where a glorious field of buttercups, bugle, pignut and other wildflowers hid some grass rivulet moths, many micro moths and a black sawfly.

Lastly we visited Grove Hill and saw the common marble micro moth together with a straw dot moth and a different species of sawfly. The star was the tiny 24-spot ladybird with the unpronounceable name of *Subcoccinella vigintiquattuor punctata*.

A swallow on the wires overhead watched our departure from this interesting area.

Gail Hampshire

Broad Down with Gerry Davis

May 2024

We stood by the gate looking up the hill leading from the British Camp car park. The comment that 'the first bit is the worst' was supposed to be an encouragement. We wandered up the path through the wood and soon, as promised, the path opened up, giving a view of the reservoir below. There were flowers to enjoy there beside the path but there were worryingly few insects and birds.

We strolled on, enjoying the sunshine, passing Clutters Cave, a Victorian folly excavated into the volcanic lava, and reached the Broad Down. The grass was very short. Gerry was delighted to find annual knawel, an endangered species, and the conversation turned to land management. We

talked about the need for grazing to keep grass short, so that specialist plants can flourish, and the importance of felling trees to enlarge this space.

Back at the car park we recalled some of the things we had seen and were very grateful for a super morning in the sunshine. We also saw: meadow and tree pipits, swallows, linnets, stonechats and ravens. Looking down we saw: heath bedstraw, upright chickweed, spring cinquefoil, changing forget-me-not, sheep's sorrel and thyme-leaved speedwell. The insects included a bloody-nosed beetle and a spotted crane fly.

Nigel Dunn

Hipton Hill Meadows with Gary Farmer

June 2024

Gary welcomed us into a large shed where he talked about the 70 acre plum orchard we were about to explore. It is a fragment of what it used to be; plum canning was a big industry in the area and plums provided an important source of vitamin c.

The trees we walked amongst are mostly plum with a few apples and pears that have been planted recently for diversity. Plum trees rot early in their life and so provide habitat for wildlife that need rotten wood, including noble chafer beetles.

We followed a mown strip that weaved its way across the orchard through common spotted orchids. Gary said that orchid seeds are tiny and windblown so they can spread easily but orchids do not like competition and need a mycorrhizal fungus to support them so the chance of survival is small. Despite this, orchids appear in surprising places, always where competition is low.

We heard a whitethroat and passed pyramidal orchids and a bee orchid, which the Wildlife Trust calls a 'sneaky mimic' because it pretends to offer sex to a bee. A little corner of the site used to be one of the last holds of turtle doves but they have not been seen or heard this year.

The next field yielded more orchids amongst the meadow flowers and grasses. Common spotted and pyramidal were too numerous to count but there were 350 greater butterfly orchids

We also saw yellow wort, crested dog's-tail and Yorkshire fog. It was not a day for butterflies but a ringlet and a small heath showed and yellowhammers, skylarks, swifts and swallows pleased the birders. A surprised barn owl flying out of a tree made everybody stop and wonder.

Nigel Dunn