

Island of Arran, 1981

The *Western Naturalist* for 1981 described the occurrence of a Walrus off Arran, as follows (Gibson and Walker, 1981):

During summer this year (1981) there were a number of sightings of a single Walrus *Odobenus rosmarus* off the east and south shores of Arran. Although not apparently seen by anyone who could be described as a recognised naturalist, it was reported sufficiently often, with detailed descriptions by responsible people and careful observers, usually fishermen, to put the identification beyond doubt. It was apparently first seen, off Corrie, in the middle of May, and was last reported, off Pladda, on 14th September 1981.

As noted above, it is unfortunate that the Walrus was apparently not seen by any recognised naturalist, despite numerous attempts. I myself tried to see it on several occasions, but failed, as did many other members of the Arran Natural History Society. Nevertheless, the Walrus is such a distinctive creature that the identification is usually immediately obvious, and the number of reported sightings by perfectly responsible people ultimately placed the matter beyond doubt.

Summary

A Walrus was seen off Bute in 1884. Nearly a century then passed before we had another Clyde record, off Arran in 1981. During 1981 a single Walrus was also reported from the south of England, and there were other, less definite, sightings from Western Europe. Changes in climatic conditions have been suggested as a possible reason for these recent unusual occurrences, and if this is true, then we may expect other visits in future.

In the meantime, it is possibly not unduly surprising that the only Clyde records of the Walrus during the past century have come from Buteshire, the island county of Clyde. Nevertheless, these records are of considerable importance in the archives of Buteshire natural history, so even although each occurrence has previously been published elsewhere, it is highly desirable that the details should now be collected together and placed on permanent record in the Buteshire Society's *Transactions*.

References

- GIBSON, J.A. and WALKER, H. (1981). Walrus at Island of Arran. *Western Naturalist*, 10: 23.
 KERR, J.G. (1949). Note on the occurrence of a Walrus in the Firth of Clyde. *Glasgow Naturalist*, 15: 104.

THE SEA LAMPREY ON THE ISLAND OF BUTE

J.A. Gibson

Introduction

Although the Sea Lamprey *Petromyzon marinus* is apparently fairly widely distributed throughout the Clyde area, actual specimens are not caught very often. Along with all the British lampreys, the Sea Lamprey is classed as 'freshwater' by Dr Peter S. Maitland, the accepted British authority on freshwater fishes (Maitland, 1972), but in fact this lamprey spends much of its adult life in a marine environment. It is parasitic in its habits; specimens are usually caught accidentally, and then mostly at sea.

Sight Records

On several occasions during the past thirty-odd years I have seen lampreys attached to fish at various sites around the shores of Bute, and have spoken to anglers who have also seen this, but since lampreys mostly detach themselves from their prey before being landed it is usually extremely difficult to obtain sufficiently good views to make an exact identification.

On 31st May 1985, however, I was present at Ettrick Bay when a local angler hooked a Sea Trout *Salmo trutta* which we could see had a large lamprey attached. Fortunately, through the goodwill and cooperation of the angler concerned, who very kindly slowly played the fish into shallow water and also delayed landing his catch until I had been able to observe the lamprey at close quarters, I was able to identify the specimen as a Sea Lamprey, as anticipated. As is often the case, however, the lamprey then detached itself just before the fish was landed; when examined, the trout bore the characteristic circular sucker mark.

On a number of previous occasions I had seen fish, caught on Bute, bearing the typical circular wounds, so I had long known that lampreys were in the vicinity, but I had not previously been fortunate enough to examine an actual specimen. The other British parasitic lamprey is the much smaller River Lamprey *Lampetra fluviatilis*, but as yet there is no known evidence of the occurrence of this species on the Island of Bute.

Specimen

This 1985 sight record of the Sea Lamprey remained my only genuinely firm evidence until 3rd September 1988, when I found a partly decomposed specimen far out on the shore at Kilchattan Bay. The fish was considerably damaged but still clearly recognisable as a Sea Lamprey, and measured twenty-six inches in length.

Summary

Although classed as freshwater fishes by Dr Maitland, lampreys were excluded from the paper on the Freshwater Fishes of the Island of Bute by myself and the late Mr Alex Stephen (Gibson and Stephen, 1976). As we said at the time, although we had heard of specimens having been taken at sea not far from Bute, we excluded all sea-taken records because of the difficulty in drawing a line.

Since I know of no previously published record of the Sea Lamprey actually on Bute, I feel that these records are worth recording in the Society's *Transactions*. Needless to say, I shall be very grateful to hear of any additional evidence.

References

- GIBSON, J.A. and STEPHEN, A. (1976). The freshwater fishes of the Island of Bute. *Transactions of the Buteshire Natural History Society*, 20: 71-75.
- MAITLAND, P.S. (1972). *A Key to the Freshwater Fishes of the British Isles*. Freshwater Biological Association: Scientific Publication No. 27. Ambleside.

THE OCCURRENCE OF THE LONG-FINNED TUNNY ON THE ISLAND OF BUTE, WITH NOTES ON EARLIER CLYDE RECORDS J.A. Gibson and Ian Hopkins

Introduction

The Long-finned Tunny *Thunnus alalunga* is a distinctly uncommon fish in British waters, although several have been recorded within recent years. Two of these specimens have been found on the Island of Bute, the details of which are as follows:

Ettrick Bay, 1984

On 9th December 1984 an adult specimen was found dead on the shore at Ettrick Bay (NS035665) by Mr James Robertson, of Croc-an-Raer. Mr Robertson contacted Mr Ian Hopkins, who confirmed the identification and then weighed, measured and photographed the fish, which was fairly recently dead and still in very good condition. It weighed 50.75 lbs and measured 40.50 inches from snout to fork of tail, which, according to Wheeler's scale (9), would make it a well-grown specimen at least seven years old.

An excellent photograph, taken by Mr Hopkins and showing the long pectoral fin reaching well beyond the origin of the second dorsal fin, has been deposited in the Scottish Natural History Library as a permanent record. A very brief account of this occurrence was published in 1986 (4).

Garroch Head, 1987

On 27th September 1987 Dr Gibson was attracted to a number of gulls feeding noisily on an object just offshore from Garroch Head (NS097518), and on close approach this was seen to be an apparently unusual fish floating amongst seaweed some ten feet offshore. The fish was retrieved and found to be a specimen of the Long-finned Tunny.

As already noted, this is a relatively rare fish in British waters, but Dr Gibson had been fortunate enough to examine a previous specimen in 1979 (3), and so was immediately sure of the identification. Although fairly fresh, the fish had been considerably damaged by the attentions of the gulls but the identification points were still clear, in particular the pectoral fins, which measured nine inches long and reached well beyond the origin of the second dorsal fin.

This fish was markedly smaller than the 1984 specimen, and measured 23.00 inches from snout to fork of tail, which, according to