

considered to be a very rare creature in Scottish waters. Possibly it is also significant that all the known records are in an eight-week period from July to September, and nearly all within the month of August. Nevertheless, whatever the reasons, there is certainly no doubt that we have had several perfectly authentic records within recent years, some within the immediate waters of Bute itself, so all naturalists should undoubtedly be on the alert and should keep a sharp look-out for other possible occurrences.

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RECORDS OF THE WALRUS IN BUTESHIRE WATERS

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Introduction

There are two records of the Walrus *Odobenus rosmarus* from the Clyde area, and both of these come from the County of Buteshire; the two occurrences are nearly a century apart, one from Bute in 1884 and one from Arran in 1981. The Walrus is an Arctic marine mammal which is extremely rare in British waters, so I was recently surprised to discover that some members of the Buteshire Society were actually quite unaware of these remarkable local events. In view of this, it is clearly important that these two most unusual records should be properly documented in the Society's journal.

The first record is noteworthy for the later zoological eminence of the observer, while the second is noteworthy for the apparent complete lack of any accredited naturalist observers at all!

Island of Bute, 1884

The distinguished zoologist, Sir John Graham Kerr, Regius Professor of Zoology in the University of Glasgow, recorded in the *Glasgow Naturalist* for 1949 that he saw a Walrus in Ettrick Bay, Island of Bute, on 8th August 1884. This is a very remarkable record, so much so that it is worth quoting Sir John's remarks in full (Kerr, 1949):

In the course of overhauling an accumulation of old personal papers I have been so fortunate as to come across the diary in which is recorded my observation of a Walrus in the Firth of Clyde in the year 1884, and in view of the comparative scarcity of records of this Arctic animal on the coasts of Scotland, it seems desirable to have it embodied in the *Glasgow Naturalist*. It is true I was a very young observer at the time, but the wording of my diary leaves no doubt as to the accuracy of my observation. The reference reads as follows:-

"August 8th (1884). In the afternoon we went over to Ettrick Bay. We saw a shoal of Porpoises and also a Walrus. We got rather a surprise when we saw the head of the latter adorned with large tusks rise in the water quite near us. It soon dived, and we lay quite still expecting it to rise again. This it soon did, and we watched it for some time."

A record of this importance, published sixty-five years after the event, would not usually be regarded as acceptable, but this one is different; not because of the later eminence of the observer, who was a very young man at the time, but because we can be certain that Sir John was only too well aware of the extreme importance of accuracy in all local recording, and so would not have permitted any record to be published about which he was not completely certain.

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*.

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THE SEA LAMPREY ON THE ISLAND OF BUTE

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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.