

the Kilbrannan Sound. After the porpoise, this is the cetacean most commonly seen in Clyde waters.

KILLER WHALE *Orcinus orca* (L.)

The killer is well known in the Kilbrannan Sound, and between Arran and Ailsa Craig. There are numerous records from many observers who are familiar with this species, with its conspicuous colouration and huge back-fin. I myself have seen it repeatedly.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Most of the old writers referred to are already well known to naturalists and require no further reference details. Others less often quoted have the full titles given in the text. The full details of the various publications by E. R. Alston and Hugh Boyd Watt are as follows:

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THE REPTILES AND AMPHIBIANS OF THE ISLAND OF ARRAN

By J. A. GIBSON

In the "New Statistical Account" (Volume five, 1840) the Rev. Dr. McNaughton gives an admirable account of the natural history of Kilbride parish, with a separate section on 'Reptiles'. The minister of Kilmorie parish, the Rev. Angus Macmillan or the Rev. A. Macbride, also gives an above-average account of the natural history, and includes a paragraph on snakes. These two accounts together represent the only significant contribution to our knowledge of Arran reptiles and amphibians that has so far been published, so it is worth while quoting them in full, as follows:

Kilbride: "The reptiles most commonly found in the parish are the nimble lizard, the blind dorne, the adder, the warty-eft, the water-eft, the brown-eft or ask, the common frog, the edible frog, and the toad. The writer has not seen any of the venomous toads described by Pennant as natives of Arran; but the people of Lochranza declare that they are often seen in that quarter, and describe them as rough on the back, corpulent in shape, and from six to eight inches in length." [The blind dorne is the slow-worm, and the eft is the newt.]

Kilmorie: "Several species of snakes are found in the woods, glens, and moorlands adjoining the arable ground; but seldom if ever in the heights of the interior. The largest of them is between three and four feet long."

Apart from the "Statistical Account" only a few brief notes have appeared, so this survey of the reptiles and amphibians of the Island of Arran is largely based on my own collecting during the last thirty years. Nomenclature follows "The British Amphibians and Reptiles" (third edition, 1964) by Dr. Malcolm Smith, Collins: London.

REPTILES

SLOW -WORM *Anguis fragilis* L.

Widely distributed and common in suitable localities. Found far up the glens. Often killed by visitors and reported as 'snake'. It occurs on Holy Island, but I have not yet found it on Pladda.

COMMON LIZARD *Lacerta vivipara* Jacquin

Fairly common and widely distributed, particularly in the glens. Common on Holy Island, and I have found it on Pladda.

GRASS SNAKE *Natrix natrix* (L.)

That the grass or ringed snake occurs, or has occurred, on Arran seems quite certain, but its exact status must always be in some doubt. In 1840 the minister of Kilmorie mentioned 'several species of snakes', and even allowing for some probable confusion with the slow-worm this does imply that there was not just the adder to be found, although Dr. McNaughton, a careful observer, mentions only the adder.

Several gamekeepers of very great experience, particularly Dugald McKillop at Kilpatrick, and also Ronald MacDonald at Dippen, have recorded grass snakes, but only very few specimens over a long period of years. Others of comparable experience, such as the late Alex. Fraser at Sannox, and Howard Walker at Brodick, have never seen one. I myself have one record of a grass snake on Arran, and one only, in North Glen Sannox in July 1942. Unfortunately I was not aware at the time of the significance of my find, but I was sufficiently certain of my identification to pick it up without hesitation (I knew the adder well, had seen scores of them on Arran, but always gave them a wide berth) and take it home as a pet. Ultimately, because of feeding difficulties, I took it back to the glen and released it.

Amongst herpetologists it is customary, I understand, to class all Scottish records of grass snakes as 'introductions or escapes'. I have no comment to make on this as regards Arran, apart from the fact that so far I have been unable to discover who is apparently allowing all the snakes to 'escape'. It is very curious.

ADDER *Vipera berus* (L.)

Widely distributed and locally common. I have several times seen adders on high moorland over 1200 feet, but must agree with the minister of Kilmorie when he says it is commoner on the lower slopes. The best time to see adders is in the spring when they emerge from their winter quarters, and the best place on Arran is on the low ground at the foot of the glens. In length Arran adders seldom exceed two feet, and are often much less. I was shown a specimen taken on Holy Island in 1947, but this is regarded locally as unusual. I have not seen or heard of it on Pladda.

LEATHERY TURTLE *Dermochelys coriacea* (L.)

A leathery turtle or luth was caught by the fishing-boat 'Hercules' in the Kilbrannan Sound to the west of Arran on 11th August 1959, and was taken to Calderpark Zoo, Glasgow, where I saw it. It died in the Zoo and the body was taken to Kelvingrove Museum. A detailed report on the specimen appeared in the *Scottish Naturalist* Volume 70, 1961, page 46. This appears to be the only record of the leathery turtle from the Clyde area.

AMPHIBIANS

COMMON TOAD *Bufo bufo* (L.)

Fairly common and widely distributed. Has been found on Holy Island; not on Pladda.

NATTERJACK *Bufo calamita* Laurenti

Mr. A. R. Waterston, Keeper of the Natural History Department in the Royal Scottish Museum, whose family has very long connections with Arran, recalls that his grandfather spoke quite certainly of the occurrence of the natterjack toad, although he does not know of any specimens. Dr. A. C. Stephen, when writing of the need to study the distribution of Scottish reptiles and amphibians (*Scot. Nat.*, 61: 116-117, 1949), says of the natterjack "One hears of its occurrence on Arran, where it has not yet been officially recorded..." When making this statement he may have had in mind a casual conversation with Waterston. Dr. Smith in his *British Amphibians and Reptiles* records the natterjack from Arran and includes it as such in his distribution map; here he is presumably relying on the statement by Stephen. R. H. R. Taylor, in his two papers on the distribution of reptiles and amphibians in Britain (*British Journal of Herpetology*, 1948 and 1963), does not record the natterjack from Arran.

Can it be that Pennant's old record of 'venomous toads', quoted by Dr. McNaughton, refers to the natterjack? From the natterjack's mode of running and not hopping country people have long had 'the greatest horror and even dread of them' (Dr. Smith). From this it is but a short step to supposing venomous qualities.

I have been unable to substantiate the occurrence of the natterjack toad on Arran and, without suggesting that the record is necessarily incorrect, it is obvious that positive evidence would be very desirable.

COMMON FROG *Rana temporaria* L.

Common and widely distributed on Arran and Holy Island. I have no record from Pladda.

EDIBLE FROG *Rana esculenta* L.

It will be noted that Dr. McNaughton in 1840 mentioned the edible frog. Dr. Smith in his *British Amphibians and Reptiles* records that the first known record of its introduction to Britain was to Norfolk in 1837. There have been occasional and apparently unsuccessful attempts to introduce the edible frog to parts of Scotland, but it would be remarkable if the attempt had been made to Arran by 1840. Dr. McNaughton was not given to quoting other people's observations without comment when he had not verified these for himself, so presumably he had some species in mind when he wrote 'edible frog', but it must be unlikely that this was what we now call *Rana esculenta*.

SMOOTH NEWT *Triturus vulgaris* (L.)WARTY NEWT *Triturus cristatus* (Laurenti)

Both the smooth newt and the great crested or warty newt occur but are nothing like so common as the palmate newt, and are markedly local in distribution. I have handled many specimens from Arran but have no records from Holy Island or Pladda.

PALMATE NEWT *Triturus helveticus* (Razoumowski)

This is by far the commonest newt on Arran. It is widely distributed and is found in suitable localities far up the glens. Its

typical habitat on Arran is in drainage ditches and small streams, and I have captured specimens in ditches at well above 1,000 feet. It occurs on Holy Island but I have no Pladda records.

It is extremely interesting that Dr. McNaughton, writing in 1840, mentions three species of newts. The palmate newt was first described by the Swiss naturalist Razoumowski in 1787 and this soon led to its discovery in other parts of Europe, but no description of a British specimen was published until 1848, when John Wolley described in the *Zoologist* a specimen from the Edinburgh district. This gave rise to considerable correspondence, which led to the newt being given an English name for the first time. Can it be that Dr. McNaughton, writing in 1840, had recognised this newt from its original description long before, but had no accepted English name to give it, and had to do his best with some local or contrived name? I feel it is more than likely. Clearly this newt has always been very common on Arran so he would have had ample opportunities for observation, and a glance at his writings will show that Dr. McNaughton was a first-class observer, a skilled naturalist, and a widely-read and scholarly man. Possibly he should be given the credit for being the first to recognise the existence of a third species of newt in Britain.

I have spent considerable time in endeavouring to discover any British observer before Dr. McNaughton who mentions three types of newts, but without success, and if anyone knows of any earlier description I shall be very glad to hear of it.

THE MAMMALS, REPTILES AND AMPHIBIANS OF AILSA CRAIG

By J. A. GIBSON

For the past twenty-five years my main work on Ailsa Craig has been concerned with the seabird populations, but during this time I also made detailed observations on the other vertebrates. My notes on the mammals, reptiles and amphibians, combined with what I have been able to discover from a search of the previous literature, are as follows:

MAMMALS

MOLE *Talpa europæa* L.

Boyd Watt records (*Annals of the Andersonian Naturalists' Society*, Vol. 2: 141, 1900) that Mr. W. A. Tulloch, Head Lightkeeper on Ailsa, saw a dead mole on the Craig in the 1890s, and adds that this was "no doubt carried over by birds as prey from the mainland", the nearest point of which is Ardwell Point, Ayrshire, 8½ miles to the south-east. This seems remarkable.

PYGMY SHREW *Sorex minutus* L.

Shrews have been well known on Ailsa for over a century, but it was only in the early 1900s that the species was identified as *minutus*. It is reasonably common and seems to be fairly well distributed, although nearly all those I have trapped have been on the east near the cottages and lighthouse.

PIPISTRELLE *Pipistrellus pipistrellus* (Schreber)

'Bats' are occasionally seen on Ailsa and have been killed at the light on several occasions. The only one I actually handled was a pipistrelle taken at the light on 18th July 1948.

RACCOON *Procyon lotor* (L.)

Boyd Watt also mentions (*Ann. Andersonian Nat. Soc.* 2: 141) that several raccoons (? species) were put upon Ailsa at the time of the badger experiment in 1876. They seemed to survive better than the badgers, since one was seen as late as 1900. I know of no later record.

BADGER *Meles meles* (L.)

In 1876 the Marquis of Ailsa introduced five badgers to Ailsa (J. A. Harvie-Brown, *Rarer Animals of Scotland*, 1882, p. 39) and the introduction was so far successful that young ones were subsequently seen, but none appears to have been seen after 1890.

OTTER *Lutra lutra* (L.)

In 1920 Mr. Matthew Girvan shot an otter near the entrance to the Water Cave. He had seen it several times near Stranny Point, and one day lay in wait for it. The pelt was preserved. In a century's