

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

tenancy of the Craig this is the only record known to the Girvan family.

GREY SEAL *Halichoerus grypus* (Fabricus)

A single adult grey seal was seen on several occasions in 1949, and what was probably the same individual was present most of summer 1950. For thirty-four consecutive days I saw it near the same place on the west shore, and I flattered myself that we got to know each other pretty well! This is my only record.

COMMON SEAL *Phoca vitulina* L.

Fairly common along the reef off Stranny and Loutin' Stone Points. I see pups most years.

FERAL GOAT *Capra hircus* L.

Goats were introduced to Ailsa a long time ago; there was certainly a herd present in the 1850s. The herd numbered about fifty animals in 1902 and steadily increased until the early 1930s. By that time the wild herd was interfering with the domestic goats recently introduced and kept by the Girvan family for a milk supply, and steps were taken to shoot the wild goats, which were ultimately exterminated by the mid-1940s. When the Girvan family gave up permanent residence on Ailsa in the late 1950s a few goats got free on the hill. One or two were still present in 1968, but I can see no evidence of feral breeding now. They may soon die out.

SOAY SHEEP *Ovis aries* L.

After the evacuation of St. Kilda in 1930 Soay sheep were introduced to Ailsa. They did extremely well and soon established a thriving herd. This herd was cropped regularly by the Girvans, as tenants of Ailsa, and most years during the 1940s and 1950s there was an annual shoot by landowners and farmers from the Ayrshire mainland. The herd continued to increase and in 1952 my count was 170 animals, which was far too large for the island. Attempts were then made to reduce the stock by shooting, but this was overdone, and the Soay sheep were reduced to a handful of animals by 1960. There has, however, been a slow increase since then. I counted a mixed herd of twenty-one in 1968, with four old rams at another part of the island, and there may have been others I missed.

HARE *Lepus capensis* L.

Boyd Watt records (*Ann. Andersonian Nat. Soc.* 2: 141) that Mr W. A. Tulloch, Head Lightkeeper, had found a dead young hare on Ailsa, and suggests that this, as with the mole, had been carried to Ailsa "by birds as prey from the mainland". The likelihood of a bird carrying a hare some ten miles over the sea to an island over-run with rabbits seems to me to be pretty remote, and I suspect this was a mistake in identification.

RABBIT *Oryctolagus cuniculus* (L.)

Has long been abundant on Ailsa. Written records certainly go back to 1597, and rabbit trapping has been a source of recognised revenue for at least 150 years. Myxomatosis reached Ailsa eventually,

and many rabbits died, but they are still very common.

BROWN RAT *Rattus norvegicus* (Berkenhout)

Rats got ashore from a ship in 1889 (*Ann. Scot. Nat. Hist.*, 1892: 132-4) and rapidly multiplied. They made havoc amongst the seabirds and undoubtedly played a major part in the near-extirmination of the puffin. In 1925 the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds attempted to have the rats exterminated, but this was only partly successful. Although the brown rat is still extremely common on the Craig, I have no doubts from personal observation that their numbers have significantly declined during the past twenty-five years, and I hope this trend continues.

WHALES

Sightings of 'whales' are common in the Clyde and I have numerous personal records from Ailsa. I have restricted this list, however, to the following cetaceans which have actually been stranded on the Craig.

BOTTLE-NOSSED WHALE *Hyperoodon ampullatus* (Forster)

Many sightings off the Craig. A bottle-nosed whale was washed ashore under the Cairn in 1950. It was considerably decomposed when I found it on 20th March but its identity was still clear.

PORPOISE *Phocaena phocaena* (L.)

Common in the surrounding seas at all seasons of the year. One was stranded on the west shore on 22nd May 1959.

WHITE-BEAKED DOLPHIN *Lagenorhynchus albirostris* Gray

Often seen jumping in the surrounding seas. After the porpoise, this is the cetacean most commonly seen in Clyde waters. One was stranded below the Mare on 18th May 1955.

KILLER WHALE *Orcinus orca* (L.)

Frequently seen in surrounding seas, often in twos and threes. On 12th August 1949 I saw a killer get partly stranded on the reef beyond Stranny. I saw it first from the top of the Loutin' Stone, about 400 feet up, and its conspicuous colouring was very noticeable. The tide was rising, however, and by the time I had made my way down and round the shore, about ninety minutes later, it had released itself.

REPTILES

SLOW-WORM *Anguis fragilis* L.

Fairly common and widely distributed on the scree and bracken slopes. Records go back well over a century. As McWilliam pointed out (*Scot. Nat.*, 1925: 159) "its presence on so isolated an islet indicates a long history there". Some years after the arrival of the brown rat on Ailsa doubts were expressed about the future of the slow-worm, but I am glad to say these doubts were not realised, and the slow-worm remains relatively common. J. M. Campbell (in Leighton's *British Lizards*, 1903) said of the slow-worm on Ailsa that he had "frequently found them eighteen inches long". In thirty years

the largest Ailsa specimen I have seen measured fourteen inches, so there may have been a reduction in size.

COMMON LIZARD *Lacerta vivipara* Jacquin

Fairly common and well distributed, mostly on the scree and bracken slopes, although I have seen one fifty feet from the summit. This lizard was well known to J. A. Harvie-Brown, who wrote "common even on the isolated rock of Ailsa Craig" (Leighton's *British Lizards*, 1903). Oddly enough, it appears to have been overlooked by Hugh Boyd Watt.

ADDER *Vipera berus* (L.)

The Rev. R. Lawson in his *Ailsa Craig* (second edition, 1895) records the following passage: "Some writers have said that the poisonous adder is found on Ailsa; but this seems to be a mistake, as no specimen of it has been seen in recent times." I seriously question whether a specimen of the adder has been seen on Ailsa at any time, quite apart from the 'recent times' recorded by Lawson. Neither I nor any member of the Girvan family have ever seen or heard of an adder on Ailsa. I can trace no reference to its occurrence anywhere in the literature, and despite extensive bibliographical research I have been unable to find the 'some writers' quoted by Lawson as having mentioned adders on Ailsa. I am quite certain that the adder has never at any time occurred on Ailsa.

AMPHIBIANS

COMMON FROG *Rana temporaria* L.

In 1948 some frog-spawn was taken across from the Ayrshire mainland and placed in Garry Loch, where it hatched successfully. Three frogs were seen there in 1949, and one was taken back to Ayrshire from the Craig! This is my only record.

PALMATE NEWT *Triturus helveticus* (Razoumowski)

I have two records of newts on Ailsa Craig — one at the well on the Castle Well flat in 1949, and another near the same place in 1952. I found each of these by sheer accident. I picked them up and examined them carefully, and then released them; both were palmate newts. Since then at every opportunity I have searched diligently for newts at the Castle Well, and also at Clashwaun, Garryloo and Garry Loch (all the likely places), but entirely without success. Indeed were it not for this accidental discovery I should not even have suspected the existence of what I suppose must be a small yet viable population. I know of no other record, and shall be grateful if anyone can add to this slender evidence.

SMALL MAMMALS ON THE SMALL CLYDE ISLANDS

By J. A. GIBSON

During the past fifteen years I have been studying the distribution of the smaller mammals on the small Clyde islands. The island groups covered have been as follows:

Kintyre: Sanda, Sheep Island, Glunimore and Davaar.

Ayrshire: Ailsa Craig, Lady Isle, and Horse Island.

Buteshire: Pladda, Holy Island, Inchmarnock, and Little Cumbrae.

Kyles of Bute: Burnt Islands.

Loch Riddon: Eilean Dearg.

Loch Fyne: Sgat Mor, Eilean Buidhe, Glas Eilean (near Otter Ferry), and Eilean Aoghainn (off Minard).

The method used was usually to set Longworth traps and live rat traps, examine any captures, and then release them unharmed. A negative result simply means I captured no specimens; some may occur, and I shall be grateful if anyone can add to this list.

SANDA:

The pygmy shrew is fairly common. There are a few 'bats', presumably pipistrelles, although one can not be certain. The rabbit 'used to be found', but is long extinct. There are a few house mice, and the brown rat is fairly common. I was told that a 'field vole' was caught some years ago, and was identified at the Campbeltown Museum, but I was unable to confirm this, and my traps caught none.

SHEEP ISLAND:

There are still a few rabbits. I have seen brown rats, but they do not seem to be common.

GLUNIMORE:

No record. Boyd Watt (1905) said the brown rat occurred, and from contemporary reports it seems to have been common at one time, but I have never seen it here.

DAVAAR:

'Bats' have occasionally been seen at the light. Hares have been shot on the hill, and there are brown rats along the shore; these have presumably come across the dhorlin at low water.

AILSA CRAIG:

The pygmy shrew is fairly common. Bats have been killed at the light, and a pipistrelle was identified on 18th July 1948. The rabbit and the brown rat are both common.