

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.

LADY ISLE:

There are still a few rabbits after myxomatosis. 'Bats' have occasionally been seen at the beacon.

HORSE ISLAND:

'Bats' used to roost in the tower, but I was never able to catch any for identification. I have seen no rabbits since myxomatosis. I have never seen any brown rats here, but I was told locally that 'there used to be some'.

PLADDA:

The water-shrew used to occur here in the 1920s (*Scot. Nat.*, 1934: 99-100) but I have no recent records. Pipistrelles have occasionally been taken at the light.

HOLY ISLAND:

The pygmy shrew occurs. The pipistrelle is fairly common, and the long-eared bat has been identified. The rabbit and the brown rat are common.

INCHMARNOCK:

The pygmy shrew is fairly common. 'Bats' are fairly often seen. The rabbit is common. There are some house mice, but the brown rat seems to have been recently exterminated.

LITTLE CUMBRAE:

The pygmy shrew occurs. 'Bats, presumably the common ones' are occasionally seen at the light, and have been killed there. The rabbit and the brown rat are common.

BURNT ISLANDS:

The brown rat is fairly common.

EILEAN DEARG:

I found a partly decomposed brown rat here, but have no other evidence.

SGAT MOR:

The brown rat is fairly common.

EILEAN BUIDHE:

No record.

GLAS EILEAN:

No record.

EILEAN AOGHAINN:

Rabbits have been known to occur here since the end of the last century, but I have seen none in the last ten years; in 1958 I saw one.

I have no evidence of the occurrence of the hedgehog, mole, common shrew, stoat, weasel, wood-mouse, or voles on any of the small islands, although these all occur to some extent (sometimes after known introduction) on the three large Clyde islands of Arran, Bute and Cumbrae.

POPULATION STUDIES OF CLYDE SEABIRDS

By J. A. GIBSON

The Firth of Clyde, with its magnificent seabird rock of Ailsa Craig, its clusters of islands large and small, and the great sea-lochs stretching into the heart of the Argyll hill country, is a wonderful area for seabirds. Twenty-one species nest, or have nested, in the area—indeed, all the British-breeding seabirds except Leach's petrel and the skuas. Despite this wealth of seabird fauna, however, detailed knowledge of their exact status has always been marginal, largely owing to their inaccessibility on the islands and in south Argyll. McWilliam, in his 'Birds of the Firth of Clyde' emphasised that this was by far the most outstanding gap in our knowledge of Clyde birds, a fact to which he drew attention on several subsequent occasions. The area around Glasgow has always been well-known, but the Clyde islands and large areas of south Argyll were in parts almost entirely unworked.

In the mid-1940s McWilliam suggested to me that the time had come to fill this gap, and that I should undertake the task. Since I had been interested in seabirds above all other groups for as long as I could remember, and had been visiting Ailsa Craig since I was a small child, I at once accepted his offer and challenge, and this group of studies sets out the results I have achieved in the last twenty-five years.

From the outset my aims were simple; to locate and chart all the nesting colonies of Clyde seabirds and, having done so, to make a detailed census of their total population by as accurate methods as I could devise. When I started this work the breeding-distribution of our Clyde seabirds was most imperfectly known, and our knowledge of their populations, apart from some pioneer work being done by James Fisher on the Ailsa gannets, was almost precisely nil, so it was almost entirely new ground that had to be covered.

The scope of the work over the twenty-five years