

COMMON FROG *Rana temporaria* L.

Commonly and widely distributed all over Bute. Many frogs breed on Inchmarnock and I have seen an occasional one on the Burnt Islands, although I have no record from the Burnt Islands since 1947.

SMOOTH NEWT *Triturus vulgaris* (L.)

Not so common as the palmate newt, but fairly well distributed throughout Bute. I have no records from Inchmarnock.

WARTY NEWT *Triturus cristatus* (Laurenti)

It is as well to state that I have no record of the great crested or warty newt for Bute, although I have searched for it repeatedly in all the likely places.

PALMATE NEWT *Triturus helveticus* (Razoumowski)

This is the commonest newt on Bute, and is well distributed in suitable places all over the island, not just on the hills. It is fairly common on Inchmarnock.

THE REPTILES AND AMPHIBIANS OF SANDA,
SHEEP ISLAND AND GLUNIMORE

By J. A. GIBSON

For the past thirty years I have been regularly visiting the Sanda group of islands off the south-east coast of Kintyre, and the following notes represent the information I have collected on the reptiles and amphibians. It is interesting that none of the previous general natural history accounts of Sanda makes any reference to reptiles or amphibians (Paterson and Renwick 1898, Paterson 1901, Borland and Walls 1951). I am grateful to Mr. James Russell, whose family have been owners of Sanda for the past half-century, for help in many ways. I have no record of the adder for the Sanda islands, although adders are plentiful on the neighbouring Kintyre shore, neither have I any records of reptiles or amphibians for Glunimore.

REPTILES

SLOW-WORM *Anguis fragilis* L.

Common on Sanda. A few records from Sheep Island.

COMMON LIZARD *Lacerta vivipara* Jacquin

Common on Sanda and fairly common on Sheep Island.

TURTLE *Species indeterminate*

An unidentified turtle was seen swimming in the sea some five miles south-east of Sanda by a Campbeltown fishing boat in August 1947 (*Fishing News*, 23rd August 1947, page 8).

AMPHIBIANS

TOAD *Bufo bufo* (L.)

Through the courtesy of Mr. Duncan Colville I have been informed that Mr. John Bain, formerly head lightkeeper on Sanda, found two or three specimens of toads on Sanda in the mid-1940s. I have no personal records.

COMMON FROG *Rana temporaria* L.

Abundant on Sanda. In some years after the spawn has hatched it is almost impossible to walk across parts of Sanda without treading on a carpet of small frogs. Not found on Sheep Island.

PALMATE NEWT *Triturus helveticus* (Razoumowski)

Fairly common on Sanda, where it has been recognised since at least 1920 (*Scot. Nat.*, 1921, page 21) when J. B. Henderson, the lightkeeper, sent three specimens to William Evans. I have found no other species of newt on Sanda, and to the best of my knowledge there are no newts on Sheep Island.

REFERENCES

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- Paterson, J. (1901). Notes on a cruise in Clyde waters in June, 1900. *Trans. Nat. Hist. Soc. Glas.*, 6NS: 154-158.
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CLYDE SEABIRD DISASTERS — A HISTORICAL
SURVEY

By J. A. GIBSON

During the last week of September 1969 there was a considerable wreck of seabirds (mainly auks) on the Ayrshire coast of the Clyde, and shortly afterwards reports were received of other sizeable wrecks from the coasts of east Ireland and north Wales. From the accounts which appeared in the popular press the average bird-watcher could be forgiven for assuming that this was an unusual, or even a unique, event. This is not so. A knowledge of the history of Clyde seabirds shows that similar disasters have occurred several times during the past hundred years, so it seems desirable to examine these disasters in some detail, and if possible to correlate them with the steady decline in the seabird population of the Firth of Clyde.

Almost the entire Clyde breeding population of seabirds, apart from gulls, stems from Ailsa Craig, a justly famous colony, but as I have shown elsewhere (*Scot. Nat.*, 63: 73-100, 159-157) the present population is a mere fraction of what it was a hundred years ago. The great reduction in population appears to have affected mainly the auks—the puffin, the guillemot and the razorbill, and there is no real indication that the populations of the other seabirds have ever fluctuated very much. No accurate contemporary account exists of the seabird population a century ago, but by various means we can get some approximate indication of previous numbers. The original puffin colony appears to have been enormous. Even a modest estimate, based on the acreage which historical evidence shows to have been occupied, gives in the region of a quarter of a million birds in the 1860s, whereas the colony is now virtually extinct, with at best only a few dozen birds left. The eggs of guillemots and, to a lesser extent, razorbills were formerly systematically collected for sale, and fortunately the records of these collections have been kept. Comparing these records with the present known populations on the same cliffs shows that the guillemot population alone has decreased from some fifty thousand pairs about 1900 to less than five thousand pairs at the present day.

Man formerly collected the puffins for food, the guillemots and razorbills for feathers, and the eggs of the guillemot for sale—indeed one hundred years ago it was