

1984 REPORT OF NCC's MARINE LIAISON OFFICER

By
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As part of the Nature Conservancy Council's continuing programme to establish a statutory Marine Nature Reserve around Lundy, a Marine Liaison Officer was stationed on the island again during most of 1984's summer months.

While the main aim of this appointment was to help promote the proposed statutory Reserve and to assess the reactions to the proposals of those most concerned with them, a large amount of time was spent in carrying out the duties a marine Warden might be expected to undertake. This involved observing and recording activities which took place within the present voluntary reserve; taking part in scientific projects; informing divers and others of the reserve's Code of Conduct, and helping them with identification of marine life, etc.; taking groups on "seashore explores"; preparing leaflets and display material; giving slide shows, etc. In addition to these activities, the Liaison Officer also gave once-weekly guided walks around the island for those wishing to know more about the island's history and wildlife.

There was an increase in diving activity within the reserve during 1984 when compared to previous years. A total of over 150 divers stayed on the island with Aquaserve (the island's diving concessionaires) from the beginning of June until mid-September, being accommodated in the Quarters. There were also approximately 330 divers who visited the island from the mainland, usually for a single day or a weekend, though some did remain for several days at a time. The most regular visits were by members of the local Ilfracombe and N. Devon BSAC and from a small charter boat operating out of Clovelly, though there were also several by boats from Padstow, Swansea and Newport. In all, a total of over 3020 dives were made at 31 sites around the island. The most popular sites were the wreck of HMS Montagu (526 dives), the MV Robert (404), Jenny's Cove (337), the Knoll Pins (247), Gull Rock (205) and Gannet's Rock (203).

Scientific work during the year included the initiation of shore monitoring studies at various sites in April; further collection and identification or representatives of the sponge fauna; and the establishment of sublittoral photographic monitoring studies at three sites off the east coast. A BBC film crew spent a week at the beginning of August obtaining some underwater footage for a series due to go out early in 1986.

There was relatively little fishing activity within the reserve during 1984. Only one potting boat (from Padstow) visited the island regularly from May until August, setting 150 pots within the reserve boundary, mostly around the Hen and Chickens and Black Rock areas. A few pots were also set by islanders. Some small vessels trawled close in to the island's west coast at the start of the year. Angling took place from time to time by both islanders and visitors; pollack and mackerel were the most common fish caught.

A number of slide shows were given by the Liaison Officer to visitors during the summer, illustrating some of the island's wildlife both above and below water level. A new display on the marine nature reserve was set up in the Old Shop premises during the summer. Initial meetings have been held prior to the establishment of an Advisory Committee for the reserve; Representatives of those parties most involved with the reserve have been invited to sit on this Committee. This will provide the opportunity for full discussion of the reserve's future management policy; proposed scientific research projects; the introduction of new fishing methods and diving projects; and the production of further interpretative material.