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CARNIVORA

Fox (*Vulpes vulpes*). Frequently seen and apparently quite common. Whilst their predation of Rabbits was regarded as beneficial, some losses of young in the Little Tern (*Sterna albifrons*) colony were ascribed to this species.

Stoat (*Mustela erminea*). Seen occasionally, but my impression was of a low level of population over the whole area.

Weasel (*Mustela nivalis*). Apparently relatively scarce. Another contrast between Gibraltar Point and the Spurn Peninsula was the comparative infrequency of mustelid sightings. Whilst this may reflect the difference between a larger, more vegetated area, and a narrow peninsula, it is possible that they may have been generally less common.

Common Seal (*Phoca vitulina*). Fairly numerous on all visits, with over 60 at times on offshore sand banks. This area is a well-known breeding ground of the species.

SUMMARY

This paper summarises the mammal species recorded on the Gibraltar Point Nature Reserve, Skegness, Lincolnshire, during the period 1966-68. Visits were made to the area at the following times: 12th-16th March 1966, 8th-12th May 1966, 9th-12th April 1967 and 10th-15th January 1967 and specimens were received from correspondents in the area up to June 1968. The mammal specimens collected were used as comparative material in wider studies on sand dune mammal faunas. Comparisons are made between Gibraltar Point and the Spurn Peninsula in Yorkshire, some 45 miles to the north.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

During most of this period I was in receipt of a Leverhulme Research Grant, for which grateful acknowledgement is made to the Trustees. On all visits to Gibraltar Point and over the whole period, I received assistance from Mr. A. Lodge and Mr. R. B. Wilkinson. The Lincolnshire Trust for Nature Conservation, and Mr. A. E. Smith in particular, offered every facility during the period. My wife, as usual, assisted with the preparation of mammal skins.

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THE SAND LIZARD IN NORTHWEST BRITAIN

C. SIMMS

INTRODUCTION AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This paper attempts to describe the known distribution and establish the present status of the Sand Lizard *Lacerta agilis* L. in northwestern Britain, based on review of the literature and investigation in the field between 1962 and 1968. Only the more important sources are indicated in the list of references and not all correspondents and others who have helped in the fieldwork from 1962 to 1968 can be individually acknowledged here. The author is grateful to the many naturalists who have contributed verbal or written reports, field-sketches, photographs and specimens. These items and detailed comment which cannot be included here, will be deposited at the Yorkshire Museum, York, or some other institution where their preservation can be assured, when the author himself moves on; until then they are available on application. Preserved specimens, which with data are the most valuable records of all, are already incorporated into the collections at the Yorkshire Museum, except where otherwise stated.

The work was guided by R. Wagstaffe of Liverpool Museums. J. Baker, R. Beel, A. Brown, D. Proctor J. and W. R. Skeels helped with fieldwork. Without exception, the secretaries of the southwest Lancashire chain of "links" golf clubs granted permission to visit their properties, whilst the North Wales and North of England regional officers of the Nature Conservancy (Natural Environment Research Council) also supplied permits to visit and search reserves in their care. Miss A. G. C. Grandison

and R. J. Knowles helped at the British Museum (Natural History); other museum help came especially from Mrs. C. Clarke (*née* Bracegirdle) and Dr. L. S. Garrad at Douglas, Mrs. H. Wood (*née* Forsyth) at Chester, and Mr. J. R. Rimmer at Warrington.

For the purposes of this account "reports" mean unpublished and "records" published references to "Sand Lizards", "sand-lizards", "*Lacerta agilis*", or these synonyms of this species known to have been used in the British literature:

- 1758 *Lacerta agilis* Linnaeus, partim. Syst. Nat., Ed. 10, 203.
- 1768 *Seps caerulescens* Laurentus, Synops. Rept.: Fig. 3.
- 1802 *Lacerta stirpium* Daudin, Hist. nat. Rept.: 3, 155 (*L. sterpium* auct.).
- 1804 *Lacerta anguiformis* Sheppard, Trans. linn. Soc., London, 71, 51.

There has been much confusion, in the field and in the literature, over the diagnostic characters of the Sand Lizard; a situation which is reflected in the fact that there are at present at least two major provincial museums showing specimens of the Viviparous or Common Lizard *Lacerta vivipara* Jacquin labelled 'Sand Lizard'. There can be little wonder that many naturalists, including some with a great deal of experience of vertebrates, have repeatedly made mistakes. When features diagnostic for specimens in the hand are not agreed by various authorities in the available literature how can so-called "field characters" be expected to be reliable? So often our reptiles give only a fleeting glimpse, and so it is hardly surprising that so few amateur or professional zoologists in this country are sufficiently familiar with them to name them at a glance with any confidence. Our unfamiliarity with them works against their conservation. The informed public at large, and the nature conservation bodies in particular, are not aware of the increasingly critical status of some of our few species of herpetofauna and of the Sand Lizard in particular. The species is known to occur in only a very few dune and lowland heath localities; and all of these are habitats threatened with destruction today.

The satisfactory determination of the species of Lacertid lizards is, even in this country, not straightforward. There are introductions, attempted introductions, escapes and hoaxes involving several continental species; and so the whole genus must be considered when a given lizard is examined. The best, comprehensive key to *Lacerta* is that of Mertens and Wermuth (1960); a partly-plagiarised and simplified version in English is in the press and it is not proposed to repeat it or reduce it here. The accurate naming of lizards depends, not on habitat or on coloration or on markings, but on structure and particularly on details of scale pattern. Only examined, preserved or living specimens from trusted sources support the records accepted here; nearly all these have been seen by the author. The presence or absence of lizards in a given area is not difficult to establish if there are opportunities for repeated visits in the most favourable months — usually May and September. Finding lizards is one thing, watching or catching them to discover which species are represented is another.

SOUTHWEST SCOTLAND

Leighton (1903, 57) mentions a report from Ayrshire which he did not accept. No reports have come to the author's notice.

NORTHWEST ENGLAND

Coward (1901) reviewed the known status of the species in the North of England in a masterly paper which first brought Northern populations of the Sand Lizard to general notice.

CUMBERLAND

No reports have reached the author, and none were known to Coward, Leighton, or Taylor (1963). On South Solwayside, the Drigg Peninsula, and elsewhere there is terrain similar to that used by the species elsewhere in Britain; and the present author has worked those localities rather little. R. F. Mash (*in litt.*, 1962) had not seen or heard of Sand Lizards on the Drigg Peninsula.

WESTMORLAND

No reports are known to the author.

LANCASHIRE

There are two districts with suitable terrain, each with records. These are dunes and dune heath; at Walney Island and neighbouring localities in the north, and

between Southport and Liverpool (Crosby) in the south. Possible former occurrence in the north rests on the authority of Johnstone (1906); no specimens are known. The present author has seen only *L. vivipara* there. Further unconfirmed reports from near Lytham early in 1965 (J. Baker, *pers. comm.*) were satisfactorily referred to *L. vivipara* when the author visited him.

In the south the coastal system of sand dunes, up to two-and-a-half miles wide, still constitutes the best-known Northern station for the species. Verifiable records go back to about 1856, and perhaps earlier. Destruction of the habitat has restricted the species to several rather insecure stations near Southport and Formby, some of them within built-up areas. The total dune population was estimated in 1964 at some 400 individuals (Simms, 1966). Inland there are other sandy localities in South Lancashire and R. Beel caught one of two Sand Lizards seen in 1962 on mossland at Simonswood, now being built over. Subsequent search by the author revealed another in 1966, and this was a juvenile individual indicating successful breeding in that year.

The isolation of some of the Lancashire stations from one another, and some of this must be upwards of a hundred year's antiquity, argues against the recent introduction of the species into Lancashire.

CHESHIRE

That the Sand Lizard used to occur on the Wallasey-Hoylake Wirral dunes is on the authority of several reliable naturalists including H. O. Forbes, L. Greening and R. K. Perry. Specimens critically examined by other herpetologists are attributed to Greening and C. S. Gregson, but these cannot be traced today. The most recent record, acceptable to N. F. Ellison (1959) and R. Wagstaffe (*pers. comm.*) is from c. 1933. The present author examined suitable terrain on the Wirral Peninsula in 1964, 1965 and 1966 with no success.

NORTHWEST WALES

The former presence of the Sand Lizard here rests upon the authority of H. E. Forrest (1907) or his correspondents. The validity of those reports cannot be proved today.

ANGLESEY

In 1961 A. J. Mercer (*pers. comm.*) described "Sand Lizards" seen at Newborough Warren. His drawings suggested *L. vivipara*, greenish individuals of which were found to be frequent there during the author's visits in 1963 and 1965.

MERIONETH

Forrest (1941) records the species from Llwyngwrl in 1934 and near Aberdovey in 1935, but these reports remain unsubstantiated. In 1965 and 1966 came reports from the Morfa Harlech and Morfa Dyffryn dunes by D. Proctor (*in litt.* and *pers. comm.*). His drawings did not show any diagnostic *L. agilis* features. A specimen taken by another naturalist in 1965 proved to be *L. vivipara* (*fide* Mrs. H. Wood), a species found to be abundant in both localities by the author.

DENBIGH (and part of CAERNARVON)

Forrest (1907) accepted P. Inchbald's report (1860), which pre-dates the time when the diagnostic characters of British lizards became well-known. Forrest (*op. cit.*) considered it doubtful that the species still existed there. No further reports are known to the author.

FLINT

Prestatyn and the Point of Air, 1914, are Forrest (*Handbook of the Vertebrate fauna of North Wales*, n.d.) records which cannot be assessed today. Sand Lizards cannot be found there now, but there has been destruction of potential habitat.

ISLE OF MAN

No report of the presence of Sand Lizards in the Isle of Man is authenticated. Reports prior to about 1953 were reviewed by D. E. Allen and W. S. Cowin (1954) who were inclined to accept them despite R. Wagstaffe's note of caution in an editorial footnote to their paper. Early reports seem to originate with J. Train (no date, but prior to 1842) and were fostered by E. Forbes (1839). Since 1954 there have been further reports which have not been critically examined until now. Miss M. Quayle and E. Howarth separately reported the species from different localities, but without supporting evidence. In September 1962 the author showed Miss Quayle a rather green *L. vivipara* taken in her "Sand Lizard" locality (York Museum, 1966z99) and she declared it to be 'identical' to the specimen she had decided was a Sand Lizard after consulting M. Smith's work (1954). Another Ramsey school-teacher showed a preserved 'Manx Sand Lizard' which was also *L. vivipara*. The author searched lizard ground on Man on several occasions in 1962-4 but found only the Viviparous species. Enquiries at the Manx Museum revealed other erroneous recent records from Man. Although specimens labelled "Sand Lizard" have been lost (Mrs. C. Clarke, *in litt.*), photographs by H. Rogers labelled "Sand Lizard" were of *L. vivipara*. In 1959 Miss A. G. C. Grandison of the British Museum (Nat. Hist.) determined a presumed Sand Lizard as *L. vivipara*, for Miss Quayle (L. S. Garrad, *in litt.*).

SUMMARY

Records of the Sand Lizard *Lacerta agilis* L. substantiated by known specimens extant today have been received only from Southwest Lancashire, in Northwest Britain. Work is at present proceeding on the status of the species in Northeast England (Lincolnshire to Northumberland) and the author would be grateful for reports, references and information on the present whereabouts of any specimens.

The present author considers that the species has occurred in Cheshire (Wirral Peninsula) and may still be there, but he considers the reports from other districts referable to the Common or Viviparous Lizard *Lacerta vivipara* Jacquin wherever these have been critically examined.

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