

The differing digestibilities of the various food items could not be taken into account in this study, so it is possible that the importance of some more easily digested species, such as aquatic invertebrates, may have been underestimated. However, from a wildfowl wetland management standpoint, there is no doubt that the species mentioned earlier are of prime importance for duck wintering in Ireland.

This study suggested that there were variations in feeding periodicity between the study areas (presumably related to disturbance factors) and progressive seasonal changes in the duck diets. However, the limited amount of data available did not merit more detailed analysis and these aspects of Irish wildfowl feeding ecology remain to be investigated.

I would like to thank the following for their assistance and co-operation in this project:— T. Barrett, B. Butler, J. Clarke, W. Fiske, T. Kingston, O. J. Merne, L. Mitchell, G. O'Gorman, F. O'Hara, P. Sullivan and L. Swann.
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MARINE FAUNA NOTES FROM THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF IRELAND V. — PASSENGERS ON THE NORTH ATLANTIC CURRENTS

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Four reports of the capture of the leathery turtle, *Dermochelys coriacea* (L.) were noted during 1976, and all occurrences took place during the month of July.

On 5 July 1976 a heavy turtle described as being about 5 to 6 feet in length, with a black leathery surface and ridges on its back was taken in the salmon nets of Mr Martin Kilbane while fishing off Erris Head, Co. Mayo. From the description given, it seems reasonable to assume that the specimen was a leathery turtle.

On the same day word was received from Mr Michael Long of Dingle, Co. Kerry, that a live leathery turtle was captured by a local fisherman off Ventry Harbour. It was towed to Ventry pier, and measured and photographed by Mr Bernard Goggin of Dingle. Carapace length was 149 cm and the head and neck measured an additional 44 cm. The maximum width was 107 cm.

Mr Goggin removed one of a number of barnacles from the neck of the turtle and forwarded it to the Museum per Mr Long. Though it was crushed, one of us (J.M.C.H.) thought that the specimen might be assigned to the genus *Stomatolepas*.

Professor William A. Newman of the Scripps Institution of Oceanography, La Jolla, California, kindly identified the specimen for us as *Stomatolepas elegans* (Costa). It has a cosmopolitan distribution and lives on the soft skin and throat of sea turtles (Newman and Ross, 1976). Dr Newman commented that as the host turtles apparently get round the Cape of Good Hope, this barnacle species has little difficulty in remaining cosmopolitan.

In the western Atlantic *S. elegans* has been recorded as far north as Nova Scotia (Zullo and Bleakney, 1966). In the eastern Atlantic six specimens were taken from a male leathery turtle captured off Skarvøy, Norway (60° 30' N; 04° 40' E) in August 1965 (Smaldon and Lyster, 1976). This latter occurrence would appear to be the most northerly on record.

In Great Britain this barnacle was found on leathery turtles captured off Cornwall in July 1971 (Brongersma, 1972), off Fife, Scotland in November 1967 and Kirkcubrightshire, Scotland in September 1975 (Smaldon and Lyster, 1976).

In Ireland, a leathery turtle taken alive off High Island, Co. Cork in July 1971 had a few specimens of *Stomatolepas* on the shoulders and at the base of the hind flippers and also on the palate, (Brongersma, 1972). Examples of this barnacle were also taken from a leathery turtle captured some seven miles off Malin Head, Co. Donegal on 6 July, 1973 and the turtles and barnacles are in the collections of the Ulster Museum (Smaldon, *pers comm.*).

The third leathery turtle was taken off Duncannon, Co. Wexford in the Waterford Estuary on 14 July, 1976 (Parker and Farrel, 1977). The fourth specimen of this species was brought to our attention by Mr John Casey, Main Street, Dungarvan. It was captured by Mr Paddy Morrissey of Ardmore in a salmon net while fishing in Ardmore Bay on 15 July. It was brought ashore and photographed by Mr Casey and its total length was estimated at 8 feet (2.44 m).

Mr Michael Long drew our attention to a report with photograph in the *Kerryman* of December 17, 1976. The photograph depicted Mr Michael Brick of Brandon displaying a turtle which had been found on a beach near Brandon on 13 December by Messrs M. Cleary and M. O'Callaghan. The detail evident in this photograph was sufficient to enable the turtle to be identified as *Caretta caretta* (L.) the loggerhead.

Perhaps the most interesting occurrence of all was the finding of a metal buoy washed up on a beach just east of Dingle Harbour about 11 March, 1977. Attached to its surface were a number of small mussels, which though dead on arrival at the Museum were fairly fresh, a few very small stalked barnacles and some oyster spat. The barnacles proved to be the young of *Lepas anatifera*. However the mussels were most unusual and were sent to Mrs N. F. McMillan of Merseyside County Museums for identification. She kindly identified them as *Brachyodontes* (*Hormomya*) *exustus* (L.), an American species, the distribution range of which extends from North Carolina to Texas and the West Indies. *B. exustus* likes slightly brackish water and adheres to rocks and pilings. The specimens measured 13.0, 13.4, 14.0, 14.6, 15.0, 16.2, 16.3 and 18.2 mm. respectively.

It is presumed that this buoy was moored in shallow water somewhere on the south eastern seaboard of the U.S.A., or the West Indies, and after breaking loose, drifted in a north easterly direction until it reached our shores. *B. exustus* is not native to Ireland, nor has it been previously recorded from the Irish coast.

B. exustus was recently reported from British shores. A drift object was picked up on the shore at Ardivachar, Outer Hebrides in September 1975. Inside the object was found 26 specimens ranging in size from 2 to 15 mm and many young *Lepas anatifera*. (Brockbank, 1976 and 1977).

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Sincere thanks are due to Dr William A. Newman of the Scripps Institution of Oceanography, Mrs Nora F. McMillan of Merseyside County Museums for identifying the barnacle and molluscs for us and Mr G. Smaldon for information on the Donegal *S. elegans*. We also wish to express our appreciation to Messrs Michael Long and Bernard Goggin of Dingle, and Mr John Casey of Dungarvan for drawing our attention to these occurrences and furnishing us with specimens.

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