

SURTSEY RESEARCH

11



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SURTSEY RESEARCH

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Introduction

The first report on the scientific work on the island of Surtsey was published in February 1965, one year and three months after the beginning of the submarine eruption off the southern coast of Iceland which created the island. The tenth report was published in 1992. In those reports scientists from Iceland and from abroad representing most disciplines of natural sciences of importance in this connection have carefully covered the development of Surtsey from its birth. The reports were published as "Surtsey Research Progress Reports". Due to the somewhat changed characteristics of the publication it was decided to change its name to "Surtsey Research".

During its early years, the development of Surtsey was rapid. In later years changes have become slower. Yet, the scientific work has continued to create great interest. It continues to produce new information about the geology of a new piece of land and its settlement by various forms of life.

The creation of Surtsey by a submarine eruption is not unique on Earth. Several new islands have been formed. On the other hand, Surtsey is, we believe, unique in that it was right in the beginning, declared as a nature reserve for the purpose of scientific research. The island has been protected from human influence and is closed to visitors without a special permit. This has made Surtsey unique for a long term study

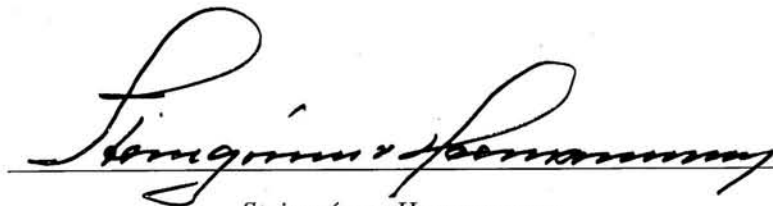
of the formation of an island and its gradual settlement by life.

The Surtsey Research Society is responsible for control and management of Surtsey. The Society was formed soon after the eruption. Its objectives are to encourage scientific work on Surtsey, assist scientists, manage the island and to publish the results of the scientific work. This would not have been possible without assistance from several sources. The Icelandic Parliament, Althing, has for several years appropriated funds for the Society's operation, the Icelandic Coastguard has from the beginning transported scientists to and from Surtsey without charge and scientific institutions and several individuals have supported the work in various ways. This is much appreciated.

The following three scientists have been in charge of the editing and publication of this volume: Karl Gunnarsson, marine biology, Eythor Einarsson, botany and Sveinn P. Jakobsson, geology. Without their voluntary work this volume would not have been published.

For nearly 40 years dedicated scientists have done research on Surtsey often under difficult conditions. The objective has been to further man's knowledge of nature and thus contribute to life on Earth being handled in a more sustainable way. Hopefully this work will continue as long as it serves that purpose.

For the Surtsey Research Society,



Steingrímur Hermannsson
chairman