

A COMPARISON OF THE BIRDS SEEN IN 1948 WITH THOSE OF 1947 AND 1939

The study of changes in the avifauna of an isolated area such as Lundy is essentially a long-term activity, and it might be thought that after only two seasons' work the Society cannot have sufficient material to be of value. However, comparison of the records made in 1947 and 1948 suggests several points, and these are further emphasized by the inclusion of data for 1939. The latter are derived from the Appendix to Richard Perry's Book *Lundy, Isle of Puffins* (2nd ed., 1946), which is based on Mr. Perry's observations in the period March 20th—August 7th, 1939.

Table 1 presents in summary form the relevant numerical data. It should be noted that "species" here includes also those sub-species readily separable in the field.

TABLE 1
ANALYSIS OF SPECIES RECORDED ANNUALLY

	1948	1947	1939
Number of species seen in each year	95	95	96
Number of species breeding : known	24	19	?
probable	8	12	?
} 32		} 31	} 33
Total number seen in the three years	124		
Number seen in all three years	72		
Species seen in one year only	...	11	13

The most striking feature is the apparent stability of both the number of species seen and the number believed to breed in each year. Further study of the figures shows, however, that the steady annual totals of birds seen are probably only coincidental, and that there are quite extensive variations in the composition of the "annual avifauna." The findings of future years will give more and better information on the extent of the differences between successive years; with more intensive observation the annual total may be expected to rise, and the fluctuations be diminished.

The value of the figures relating to breeding birds is unfortunately lessened by the lack of adequate proofs of breeding in many instances (as shown by the high proportion of "probable" records). This is only too well exemplified by the information on the Curlew. Though recording the species throughout the summer Perry did not consider that it bred in 1939. Subsequent work by Mr. T. Fulford proved breeding in 1941 and following years, and led him to express the view that Perry was mistaken. We have recorded the Curlew as present in the summer in both 1947 and 1948 without obtaining proofs of breeding, and thus we are in this instance quite unable to make conclusive comparisons.

It appears probable that the birds breeding in 1948 were the same as those of 1947 except in two instances. The presumptive evidence for the breeding of the Song Thrush in 1948 is strong, but in 1947 it was only recorded in March and is most unlikely to have bred wholly undetected. The second case is that of the Wood Pigeon. In 1947 it was not considered resident, whereas it is probable that it bred in 1948; but there are grounds for suspicion that this discrepancy is an artefact, due to the birds' attachment to an unvisited part of the island.

Comparison of the 1947—8 records with those of 1939 shows several alterations in status. Only one of these relates to a sea-bird: in 1939 the Fulmar Petrel, though present in the breeding season, had not commenced to breed. Among the land-birds there have been four definite losses and one gain. Of the losses that of the House Sparrow, which was thriving in 1939, is the result of artificial extermination during the early years of the war. Only one individual has been seen in the past two years. There were two pairs of Pied Wagtails in 1939, and in 1947 birds were resident about the farm though no nests were found, but there were none in 1948. The colony of Stonechats present in 1939 dwindled thereafter, and none have bred since 1943. The breeding population of the Swallow has never been large: there was only one pair in 1939, and there have been none in the last two years. The solitary addition to the land-birds of 1939 which has been found by us is the Wheatear. Though reported as a summer resident in 1947 it was not proved to breed, but at least one pair did so successfully in 1948.

COUNTS OF NESTING SEA-BIRDS

The study of problems connected with the breeding populations of the sea-birds on the islands offers a major field for investigation by the ornithologist. In this study census work on various samples of the population will provide data of primary importance. Little was achieved in this field in 1948, only two counts being made, and neither being very satisfactory. The results, with some comments and comparisons with the only available figures for earlier years, are reported below rather with the aim of drawing attention to the possibilities inherent in such work than for their intrinsic merits.

1. The SOUTH-WEST corner of the island (from Goat Island to the Rattles, inclusive).

This was the area selected for investigation by Alexander et al (1945) in 1942. Thus there are available counts for 1939, due to Perry (1946), and 1942, as well as the one made this year. The validity of the 1939 count has been questioned by the later workers, to whose paper those interested should refer, as also to a rejoinder by Perry (1945) which itself contains pertinent criticisms of the