

REPORT ON THE STATUS OF AUKS ON LUNDY. MAY 1970

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Following the numerous reports of the death of many auks during the winter 1969-70, the writer was asked by David Saunders of the Seabird Group to carry out a count of the species concerned this spring. Unfortunately there was extremely little time from the original request and the scheduled visit to the island.

It was therefore decided to concentrate on the area from Battery Point to North-West Point, where, as was shown by last year's census, there were the major concentrations of auks on Lundy. This was to be a relatively rapid count since it was being carried out single-handed and certain sectors of the coast were difficult to observe properly. Having previously obtained some reliable figures in 1969 this count was for comparison only,

SPECIES	1969	1970
Razorbill (<i>Alca torda</i>)	325 (nests)	367 (birds)
Guillemot (<i>Uria aalge</i>)	1406 (birds)	819 (birds)
Puffin (<i>Fratercula arctica</i>)	41 (nests)	68 (birds)

From these figures it may be seen that Razorbills and Guillemots have suffered considerable losses: viz. 43.5% and 41.7% respectively. It would also appear that Puffins have suffered very little by comparison. The figure of 68 birds is conservative and it is thought the population is similar to that for last year.

General Notes of Ornithological Interest

1. The tattered remains of the quarter Wall trap were dismantled at the end of September by Tony Vickery and myself. The catching-box, which is in reasonably good condition, has been put in the store-room attached to the Laboratory at Old Light.
2. Some interesting tactics employed by a male Peregrine over the Landing Bay. Several 'stoops' were made at a Meadow Pipit. Each time the quarry took successful evasive action whilst flying in the direction of the Lametry Peninsula. The falcon then attacked from below thus keeping the pipit from reaching the ground and forcing it towards Rat Island. In this manner it was finally taken.

BRISTOL UNIVERSITY ANNUAL FIELD COURSE

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Lundy provides a considerable range of interests for zoologists and ethologists. For a number of years, small parties of undergraduates from the Psychology Department of Bristol University have been going to the island for about a week during the easter vacation to study the unusually wide range of birds and mammals which are found there. The field course was started by the late Professor K. R. L. Hall towards the end of the fifties and has continued ever since. The intention of the trips is to provide students of animal behaviour with experience of the techniques and problems of studying animals in the field. Lundy is an especially good place for this as it presents a wide range of easily observed animals, some of which have been well studied and are the subject of a large scientific literature.

As far as the birds of the island are concerned, both Fulmar Petrels and Kittiwakes are excellent examples of colonial nesting birds and are easily watched. Observers of these birds have been fortunate in that both species have been displaying actively at the times the field trips have been held. There is a large literature on the behaviour of these species so that the students are able to compare the behaviour they see in nature with that which is described in the journals and can thereby learn to identify the various components of these often complex chains of behaviour. They can then go on to investigate some of the factors which affect the intensity and duration of the various display movements.