

REPORT ON THE STATUS OF AUKS ON LUNDY. MAY 1970

R. W. BRITTON

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

J. D. GOSS-CUSTARD and P. N. MUNTON

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.

Obviously a week is too short a period for a full scale study but a lot can be achieved and some excellent studies have been made. For example studies have been made of the displays of Fulmar Petrels returning to the nest after various periods of absence, of the behavioural correlates of the various calls of the Kittiwake and of the effect of the position of the nest on aggressive and pairing behaviour of both species.

Studies are also made every year on the rich mammalian fauna of Lundy. The feral goats are usually investigated since they are easy to watch and individuals can be easily identified. Individual recognition is a great help for studies of group structure, herd movement and general social behaviour. For example, a regular project is to ascertain the various roles which the various individuals perform within the herd. The soay sheep and sika deer are often chosen as well and their group size and ranging habits studied. There are also the domestic sheep and goats for comparison and some of the domestic sheep have been studied with this in mind.

Apart from these well studied species of animals, a great many others common on the island have been studied from time to time. Projects have been carried out on some of the many land-birds which occur on Lundy in the spring; for example, the territorial behaviour of the lapwings has been studied regularly. Rabbits abound and their social behaviour is of considerable interest to ethologists. Seals too are common and it is sometimes possible to watch their social behaviour for some days at a time. Seals have the advantage of being easily observable on the rocks and in the water at the base of the cliffs and are easily accessible to filming and recording. They therefore offer specialised and valuable experience in those techniques which are becoming an integral part of the study of animal behaviour in the field.

TOTAL BIRD LIST

ALL BIRDS LISTED BELOW WERE SEEN BETWEEN APRIL 10-18th ON LUNDY 1970

Shag	Lesser Black-backed Gull	Willow Warbler
Cormorant	Puffin	Chiffchaff
Manx Shearwater	Wood Pigeon	Goldcrest
Fulmar Petrel	Cuckoo	Dunnock
Gannet	Skylark	Meadow Pipit
Mallard	Swallow	Rock Pipit
Common Scoter	House Martin	Pied Wagtail
Eider	Sand Martin	Starling
Sparrow Hawk F	Raven	Goldfinch
Peregrine Falcon F	Carrion Crow	Greenfinch
Kestrel	Jackdaw	Linnet
Oyster Catcher	Jay	Bullfinch
Lapwing	Great Tit	Chaffinch
Ringed Plover	Blue Tit	Brambling F
Golden Plover	Coal Tit	Yellowhammer
Turnstone	Wren	
Snipe	Mistle Thrush	
Whimbrel	Fieldfare	
Bar Tailed Godwit	Song Thrush	
Green Sandpiper	Redwing	TOTAL 74 SPECIES
Redshank	Ring Ouzel	
Dunlin	Blackbird	
Great Black-backed Gull	Wheatear	
Herring Gull	Stone Chat	
Common/Arctic Terns	Whinchat	
Roseate Tern	Redstart	
Sandwich Tern	Robin	
Razorbill	Sedge Warbler	
Guillemot	Blackcap	
	Whitethroat	