

BIRD RINGING IN 1979

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There was no qualified ringer resident on Lundy in 1979 but Roy Bircher, Martin Davies, Michael King, Mick Rogers and Tony Taylor visited the island at various times, providing cover for a fortnight in spring, six weeks in autumn and a week at Christmas. Richard Campey helped at all these times and continued his ringing training.

536 birds of 35 species were ringed during the year. Two species—Bar-tailed Godwit and Rüppell's Warbler—were added to the island's ringing list. Other species which had rarely been caught included Dotterel, Woodcock, Melodious and Icterine Warblers, two Yellow-browed Warblers and a Woodchat Shrike. Michael King raised the Firecrest total impressively by eleven and his seventeen Siskins more than doubled the number ringed on the island since 1947.

Nearly half of the birds ringed were caught in the two Heligoland traps. The remainder were caught in mist-nets, almost all in Millcombe. The Terrace trap is still in a good state of repair but it was felt that its effectiveness had been reduced by excessive growth of the bushes at its entrance. These were therefore pruned extensively in late autumn. The Quarter Wall trap had suffered considerable damage in winter gales and most of its wire netting had to be replaced at Easter. The list below gives grand totals for all species ringed since 1947. These figures were last shown in the report for 1973. Since then, the list of most frequently ringed species has changed considerably. Only a handful of cliff-nesting seabirds has been ringed in recent years, largely because of the absence of a full-time warden. However, there has been more ringing activity at night and 105 Manx Shearwaters and 14 Storm Petrels have been caught. In the latter case, only one had ever been ringed on Lundy prior to 1975 when tape-recordings of the birds' song were first used to attract them into the mist-nets. It has been found elsewhere that by using this technique birds can be caught in areas where they do not breed. So we are no closer to establishing whether there is a colony on Lundy.

If seabirds are excluded from the totals, it is found that 17% of all other birds have been ringed since 1973. Ringers do not usually select what species they catch in Heligoland traps or mist-nets—they just ring whatever happens to get caught. So it is reasonable to assume that if significantly more or less than 17% of a species' grand total has been caught since 1973, then that species' population has increased or decreased significantly. Many common species, including Blackbird, Willow Warbler, Chiffchaff, Spotted Flycatcher, Dunnock, Pied Wagtail, Starling, Linnet and Chaffinch show little or no change. Major increases have occurred in Wren, Goldcrest and Firecrest, probably because the succession of mild winters in the 1970's allowed their populations to build up. Robins have been ringed more frequently, perhaps for the same reason. Greenfinches have increased markedly, but the reason for this is less clear. Among the summer visitors, Redstarts, Blackcaps and Garden Warblers have become commoner.

Species showing big decreases include Song Thrush, Wheatear, Whinchat, Grasshopper Warbler and Whitethroat. Cuckoo, Skylark, Sedge Warbler and Pied Flycatcher also appear to have declined. The drastic reduction in numbers of Whitethroats from 1969 onwards is well documented. It coincided with long periods of drought in their African wintering areas. More recently there has also been much evidence of a major decline in Wheatear populations throughout Britain.

	Ringed		Recovered			Ringed		Recovered	
	1947 to 1978	1979	1947 to 1978	1979		1947 to 1978	1979	1947 to 1978	1979
Dabchick	1				Coal Tit	13			
Fulmar	141		1		Treecreeper	2			
Manx				1	Wren	341	14		
Shearwater	350		9		Mistle Thrush	1			
Storm Petrel	15				Fieldfare	12			
Cormorant	46		10		Song Thrush	306	7	7	
Shag	1163		162	1	Redwing	135	8	2	
Mallard	39		6		Ring Ousel	18	2		
Greylag Goose	1				Blackbird	1605	88	17	
Buzzard	7				American Robin	1			
Sparrowhawk	8				Wheatear	117			
Peregrine	8	2	1		Stonechat	70	1		
Kestrel	12				Whinchat	50			
Quail	1				Redstart	128	10		
Water Rail	27				Black Redstart	29			
Corncrake	4				Nightingale	3			
Moorhen	1				Bluthroat	2			
Oystercatcher	37		2		Robin	485	28		
Lapwing	162				Grasshopper				
Ringed Plover	2				Warbler	104			
Golden Plover	2				Reed Warbler	16			
Dotterel	2	1			Marsh Warbler	2			
Turnstone	2				Sedge Warbler	642	1	1	
Snipe	24				Aquatic Warbler	1			
Jack Snipe	11				Melodious				
Woodcock	4	1	1		Warbler	14	1		
Curlew	32		3		Icterine Warbler	8	1		
Whimbrel	21				Blackcap	300	66	1	
*Bar-tailed					Barred Warbler	5			
Godwit		1			Garden Warbler	162	24		
Wood Sandpiper	1				Whitethroat	1994	4	7	
Common					Lesser				
Sandpiper	1				Whitethroat	18			
Greenshank	2				*Ruppell's				
Knot	3				Warbler		1		
Little Stint	4				Sardinian				
Least Sandpiper	2				Warbler	1			
Pectoral					Willow				
Sandpiper	3				Warbler	3471	43	8	
Dunlin	63	1	1		Greenish Warbler	2			
Sempalmated					Chiffchaff	1043	38	1	
Sandpiper	1				Bonelli's Warbler	1			
Buff-breasted					Wood Warbler	10			
Sandpiper	2				Arctic Warbler	1			
Great Black-					Yellow-browed				
backed Gull	98		3		Warbler	5	2		
Lesser Black-					Goldcrest	721	27	1	
backed Gull	57				Firecrest	40	11		
Herring Gull	2754		48		Spotted				
Kittiwake	2514		27		Flycatcher	588	10	2	
Razorbill	1216		49		Pied Flycatcher	373	12	3	
Guillemot	2700		93		Red-breasted				
Puffin	8				Flycatcher	3			
Stock Dove	1				Dunnock	194	13		
Woodpigeon	8		1	1	Meadow Pipit	538	3	2	
Turtle Dove	4								
Collared Dove	7				Tree Pipit	18			
Cuckoo	35		1		Red-throated				
Long-eared Owl	2				Pipit	1			
Short-eared Owl	2				Rock Pipit	5		1	
Nightjar	2				Pied Wagtail	91			
Hoopoe	1				Grey Wagtail	4			
Swift	3				Yellow Wagtail	3			
Great Spotted					Woodchat Shrike	6	1		
Woodpecker	2				Red-backed				
Wryneck	11				Shrike	7			
Short-toed Lark	1				Great Grey				
Skylark	113				Shrike	1			
Swallow	699	51			Starling	863		12	
House Martin	21				Myrtle Warbler	1			
Sand Martin	49				Yellowthroat	1			
Raven	36		2		Northern Oriole	2			
Carrion Crow	17				Greenfinch	71	1		
Jackdaw	1				Goldfinch	38			
Great Tit	18				Siskin	16	17		
Blue Tit	98				Linnet	367	5	2	

	Ringed 1947 to 1978	Recovered 1947 to 1978		Ringed 1947 to 1978	Recovered 1947 to 1978	
Redpoll	5			Reed Bunting	1	
Bullfinch	6			Lapland Bunting	4	
Scarlet				Snow Bunting	1	
Rosefinch	5			Rufous-sided		
Crossbill	19			Towhee	1	
Chaffinch	693	40	1	House Sparrow	56	
Brambling	15			Tree Sparrow	5	
Yellowhammer	1			Totals	28570	536
Ortolan Bunting	4				488	4
Little Bunting	1					

*Added to the list in 1979

RECOVERIES OF RINGED BIRDS, 1979

EF 98168 Manx Shearwater. Ringed as full grown 3.7.75. Found freshly dead at Morwenstow, Cornwall 28.7.79 (36 km S).

SS36460 Fulmar. Ringed as pullus 31.7.72. Found dead at Perranporth, Cornwall 25.6.79 (95 km SSW).

1052114 Shag. Ringed as pullus 28.6.72. Ring only found on beach at West Lizard, Cornwall 18.7.79 (135 km SSW).

SS65910 Woodpigeon. Ringed as full grown 21.5.78. Shot Woolsery, Devon 11.1.79 (31 km SSE).

CONTROLS ON LUNDY, 1979

KV64033 Redstart. Ringed as adult male, The Calf, Isle of Man 7.5.78. controlled on Lundy 16.4.79 (315 km S).

094551 Willow Warbler. Ringed as first year bird at Higher Metcombe, Devon 10.9.77 controlled on Lundy 8.4.79 (102 km WNW).