

BIRD RINGING IN 2015

by

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2015 saw the continuation of long-term studies of Manx Shearwaters and breeding Wheatears, along with the mist-netting of spring and autumn migrants. In all, 2,823 birds were ringed, a significant increase on the 2014 total.

Spring migrants were targeted during two and a half weeks in April and early May. Another two and a half weeks in late May and early June were spent working on Wheatears and shearwaters, with a further four days of shearwater work in July. For the first 19 days of September, the main focus was on shearwater chicks, with some migrant ringing also achieved. Then the next two and a half weeks, and four days at the end of October, were spent catching autumn migrants.

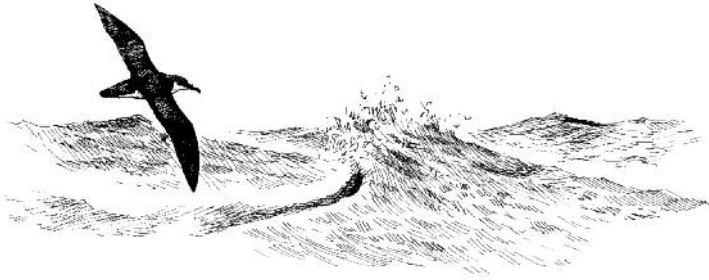
The year's ringing totals are shown in the table below. Swallows were ringed in the greatest numbers, with 678 caught, most of them on three days of strong passage in autumn. Blackcaps continue to do very well, and totalled 619. Other species with three-figure totals include Manx Shearwater (381), Goldcrest (233), Chiffchaff (211) and Willow Warbler (199). The most unusual species caught were Wryneck, Hawfinch and Lundy's third Rustic Bunting. Common in Britain but rarely ringed on Lundy were three Bullfinches caught in April, three Kestrels in autumn, a Woodcock and a Great Spotted Woodpecker.

Firecrest numbers were impressive, 17 being the highest total since 1990. In contrast, the Goldcrest total was unexceptional, with higher numbers caught as recently as 2013. In autumn 2015 some sites on the south coast of England recorded a big influx of continental Goldcrests, as well as Firecrests, but there was no indication that any of these greyer-looking Goldcrests got as far as Lundy. This backs up the evidence from previous ringing recoveries, which suggest that Goldcrests visiting Lundy have relatively local origins compared to Firecrests.

Manx Shearwaters

Shearwater ringing is strongly influenced by weather and the phase of the moon, with very dark, cloudy nights being most productive. The timing of colony visits in relation to different stages of the breeding season is also critical. These considerations explain the lower number of adults (126) and higher number of chicks (255) ringed compared with 2014, when the totals were 235 and 121. In 2015 a further 44 of the adults caught had rings from previous years, and eight of these had originally been ringed as chicks, adding to our knowledge of recruitment to the breeding population.

Three of the chicks ringed in September 2015 were found dead in southern Brazil two months later, along with hundreds of unringed birds. They appear to have been victims of particularly severe weather associated with a strong El Niño event. By combining Lundy data with the equivalent figures from Skomer, Skokholm, Ramsey and Bardsey, the numbers involved confirm two points: this was an exceptional event, with a combined total of 11 ringing recoveries from South America in 2015, compared with none in 2014 and two in 2013; and the majority of the birds affected were in their first year, suggesting that their inexperience was a contributing factor. Long-term studies in the Pembrokeshire colonies suggest that although most adults survive such



winters, they tend to return to their colonies in poor condition and have lower breeding success in the following summer, so it will be interesting to see how Lundy birds are affected in 2016.

Wheatears

The Wheatear Retrapping Adults for Survival (RAS) project continued with a very successful season. Extending the ringing work to two and a half weeks meant that 37 breeding birds were newly colour-ringed, and 32 birds colour-ringed in 2013 and 2014 were re-sighted.

Males tend to be more obvious while the females are incubating or brooding small young, whereas females become more obvious when they have older chicks. So, because of the restricted timing of previous visits, in 2013 more males were trapped or seen, and in 2014 more females. The longer period of intensive work in 2015 meant that roughly equal numbers were recorded, and several males ringed in 2013 but not seen in 2014 were re-sighted. Since these males must have been alive in 2014, the adult survival rate between the 2013 and 2014 seasons needs to be revised upwards to 59%. The provisional rate for 2014 to 2015 is 52%, but a similar upward revision may be necessary next year.

Many thanks to the various observers who reported colour-ringed birds before and after the main study period in 2015, adding to our knowledge of the birds' life histories. Any 2016 records will be extremely welcome.

Recoveries and Controls

Details of the ringed birds found on Lundy or moving elsewhere in 2015 are listed overleaf. Among the most notable are the three Manx Shearwaters found in Brazil, discussed above. These were the first Lundy shearwaters ever found outside Europe. A 20-year-old Lesser Black-backed Gull was seen again at its usual wintering site in the Landes region of France, while another was less than six months old when it died on Lundy, having moved south from Anglesey.

Among the passerine migrants, a Chaffinch was nearly seven years old when it was recaptured by a ringer in Norway for the second time. It had probably travelled to Britain or beyond for each of its six winters, before returning to Scandinavia each summer to breed. Another autumn migrant, ringed on Lundy in 2007, was not so lucky: a Blackbird was killed by a Peregrine on a subsequent journey across the Welsh uplands, though it is not known how long ago, since only the ring was found.

A Willow Warbler, ringed on Lundy on its way north in spring and recaptured on a Dorset headland on its way south the following year had probably taken similar routes each time. In contrast, a Chiffchaff ringed in The Netherlands in autumn was nearly 900 km further west when it passed though Lundy in spring.

LUNDY RINGING TOTALS 2015

Manx Shearwater	(255)	381	Wren	34
Storm Petrel		1	Ring Ouzel	1
Woodcock		1	Blackbird	28
Woodpigeon		3	Song Thrush	5
Wryneck		1	Redwing	2
Great Spotted Woodpecker		1	Spotted Flycatcher	7
Kestrel		3	Robin	31
Carrion Crow		1	Pied Flycatcher	3
Goldcrest		233	Black Redstart	1
Firecrest		17	Redstart	1
Blue Tit		1	Stonechat	9
Coal Tit		3	Wheatear	40
Sand Martin		8	Dunnock	5
Swallow		678	Tree Pipit	5
House Martin		24	Meadow Pipit	91
Chiffchaff		211	Chaffinch	91
Willow Warbler		199	Hawfinch	1
Blackcap		619	Bullfinch	3
Garden Warbler		2	Lesser Redpoll	1
Lesser Whitethroat		1	Goldfinch	27
Whitethroat		12	Siskin	9
Grasshopper Warbler		3	Linnet	5
Sedge Warbler		16	Rustic Bunting	1
Reed Warbler		2		
Treecreeper		1	Total	2,823

Numbers in brackets indicate pulli ringed in 2014 (included in the main totals).
Number of species: 48



Goldfinch by Mike Langman, from 'The Birds of Lundy'

LUNDY RECOVERIES AND CONTROLS 2015

Manx Shearwater EY74131 – ringed as a pullus on Lundy, 4.9.15. Found freshly dead, after days of storms, at Mongagua, São Paulo, BRAZIL, 30.10.15. (56 days; 9,338 km; bearing: 207°).

Manx Shearwater EZ06320 – ringed as a pullus on Lundy, 9.9.15. Found freshly dead, after days of storms, at Praia do Cassino, Rio Grande do Sul, BRAZIL, 6.11.15. (58 days; 10,493 km; 207°).

Manx Shearwater EY74178 – ringed as a pullus on Lundy, 6.9.15. Found dead at Parque Nacional da Lagoa do Peixe, Rio Grande do Sul, BRAZIL, 6.11.15. (61 days; 10,228 km; 207°).

Lesser Black-backed Gull FH67947 – ringed as a pullus on Puffin Island, Anglesey, 12.7.14. Found dead (not fresh) on Lundy, 25.1.15. (197 days; 243 km; 190°).

Lesser Black-backed Gull colour-ring: blue, with white L, on left leg; metal on right – ringed as a pullus on Lundy, 25-29.6.95. Seen at Courant de Mimizan, Landes, FRANCE, 24.2.15. (c.7,182 days; 814 km; 162°).

Chiffchaff ACX038 – ringed as a full-grown bird at Schiermonnikoog, West Frisian Islands, The Netherlands, 9.9.14. Controlled on Lundy, 14.4.15. (217 days; 780 km; 251°).

Willow Warbler HBP721 – ringed as an adult on Lundy, 15.4.14. Controlled at Durlston Country Park, Dorset, 11.8.15. (483 days; 202 km; 109°).

Blackbird LA36779 – ringed as an adult female on Lundy, 25.10.07. Ring found by metal detector, in Raven nest used by Peregrine at Cwar yr Hendre, Powys, 18.12.15. (2,976 days; 119 km; 53°).

Chaffinch L026586 – ringed as a first-year female on Lundy, 14.10.09. Controlled at Bomyra, Randaberg, Rogaland, NORWAY, 6.4.15. (2,000 days; 1,086 km; 37°). This bird was previously controlled at the same site on 23.4.12.

Goldfinch D184888 – ringed as a first-year bird on Lundy, 23.9.14. Found (road casualty with damaged wing; later released) at Kilkhampton, Cornwall, 29.10.15. (401 days; 36 km; 159°).