

BIRDS ON LUNDY 2019

Tim Davis & Tim Jones (gen@birdsoflundy.org.uk)

REVIEW OF THE BIRDING YEAR

A total of 158 species were recorded during 2019. Highlights included:

- Overwintering **Great Spotted Woodpecker** (October 2018 to February 2019)
- Record numbers of **Red-throated Divers** and **Kittiwakes** offshore in early February
- Early arrival of **Puffin**, **Sand Martin**, **Swallow** and **Wheatear** – all seen in late February
- Lundy's first **Cattle Egret** in March
- An unprecedented five **Subalpine Warblers** (four Eastern, one Western) in April/May
- A huge passage of 5,000 **Swallows** and 700 **House Martins** on one day in May
- A male **Red-footed Falcon** and Lundy's first **Squacco Heron** in May
- A July count of 468 **Puffins**
- Confirmed breeding by **Whitethroats** (rearing two broods) for the first time since 1978
- An adult male **Black-headed Bunting** in late August and early September
- A record flock of **Grey Herons** in September
- Lundy's first **Isabelline Wheatear** and a **Red-eyed Vireo** in October
- A record count of migrant **Ring Ouzels** in October
- A series of exceptionally late **Manx Shearwaters** in November & December
- A record number of **Mediterranean Gull** sightings through the year

JANUARY – max temp 10.4C, min -0.2C, mean 6.9C. Rainfall 86.1mm

The year started mainly dry and settled but also rather cloudy, and it remained generally dry and often mild during the first half of the month but progressively less settled as high pressure slipped away to the south-west. The rest of January was mostly colder and more changeable with frequent north-westerly winds, though milder air spread in for a time from 25th, and it was extremely windy on 27th with NW gusts approaching 60 mph.

The settled start to the month was emphasised by a singing **Skylark** on New Year's Day. Also on 1st **Fulmars** were already re-occupying the breeding ledges at Long Roost. A late-night walk through the farm fields on 4th produced sightings of three feeding **Woodcock** and eight **Snipe**. Often calm – even glassy – seas off the Landing Bay from 6th to 13th provided ideal seabird-watching conditions, with abundant feeding **auks** (max 800 on 10th) and **Kittiwakes** (max 631 on 10th) together with small numbers of **Shags** and **Gannets**. The same settled weather brought a high mid-winter count of seven **Goldcrests** along the East Side copses and thickets on 13th, either wintering birds revealing themselves more than usual in the quiet conditions, or perhaps passing through the island. Among regular landbirds were a single **Woodpigeon** on six dates, a **Kestrel** on eight dates, up to three **Redwings** in the first half of the month, one or two **Song Thrushes** on scattered dates, a peak of just five **Blackbirds**, up to three **Stonechats** on three dates, single **Pied Wagtails** on 7th & 11th, maxima of five **Robins** and five **Dunnocks**, one or two **Meadow Pipts** on four dates, up to five **Chaffinches**, and a single **Goldfinch** on eight dates.

Less common species and rarities

Red-throated Divers were a real feature of the month, being recorded on 17 dates, with a peak count of 12 on 19th, whilst single **Great Northern Divers** were noted on four dates from 1st to 8th and a lone **Black-throated Diver** was in the Landing Bay on 17th & 18th, making a January diver

Male Wigeon, Pondsburry, 2nd January (photo: Dean Jones).

hat-trick. The overwintering female **Great Spotted Woodpecker**, recorded regularly in Nov & Dec 2018, put in its first appearance of 2019 on 4th, and an overwintering female **Sparrowhawk** managed to find enough passerine prey to sustain herself, being seen with a male Blackbird in her talons on 5th. Among the other more unusual species were a pair of **Wigeon** on Pondsburry on 1st (the drake remaining on 2nd); a **Lapwing** over Ackland's Moor, a female **Reed Bunting** in the *Molinia* tussocks around Pondsburry, and two **Chiffchaffs** in Millcombe on 2nd (with up to four later in the month); a male **Bullfinch** in Millcombe on 5th & 8th; the **Reed Bunting** again on 6th; six **Common Scoters** flying north on 8th; and small numbers of **Common Gulls** on nine dates (max seven on 23rd) and **Mediterranean Gulls** on five dates (max three on 9th). A **Chiffchaff** showing plumage characteristics consistent with 'Siberian' **Chiffchaff** (*P. c. tristis*) was in Millcombe from 9th to 17th, but unfortunately remained silent – the characteristic call being required to clinch identification. Finally, three first-year **Cormorants** were on Great Shutter Rock on 19th.

FEBRUARY – max temp 13.6C, min -0.4C, mean 8.3C. Rainfall 52.6mm

February started off cold, with snow in parts of southern England (though not Lundy). In contrast, the rest of the month was very mild. It was rather changeable from 4th to 12th with westerly winds, including the arrival of Storm Erik on 7th/8th (max gust on Lundy 71.5 mph) before a southerly incursion from North Africa brought unseasonably mild and sunny weather to most parts of the country from 13th to 15th. After another short, changeable spell from 16th to 20th, the southerly flow returned from 21st to 27th bringing record-breaking temperatures and plenty of dry, sunny weather by day, with cold nights. The fine spell broke down from the west on the last day of the month.

A **Redwing** on 1st turned out to be the only record for the month (and there were no **Fieldfares** at all). The imminent arrival of spring was heralded by stick-carrying **Ravens** building (or perhaps renovating) their nest at Halfway Wall Bay on 1st, then bringing in nest-lining material on 3rd. There were record winter counts of **Kittiwakes** feeding around the island during early Feb, peaking at an estimated 3,000 on 4th. Over 3,000 **Guillemots**, about 2,000 **Razorbills** and 225 **Fulmars** were on the breeding ledges on 3rd, whilst 52 **Oystercatchers** were counted during a land-based circumnavigation of the island perimeter on the same day. Oystercatcher pairs were loudly and aggressively defending breeding territories all along the East Side on 6th, and three **Skylarks** singing in Middle Park, also on 6th, added to the spring-like feel of things. **Starlings** were gathering nesting material on 20th, **Teal** peaked at 10 (4 males and 6 females) on 21st, the same day as an influx of nine **Stonechats**, and the first hint of finch passage brought a small arrival of seven **Chaffinches** and four **Linnets** on 22nd. An exceptionally early **Wheatear** (one of the first recorded in the whole of the UK in 2019) was among The Cheeses above Jenny's Cove on 24th, the same day that two equally precocious **Sand Martins** flew north, and the first song-flighting **Meadow Pipit** was seen at the Castle. The following day, the **Meadow Pipit** count reached 41, including a single flock of 30 migrants, and the first **Siskin** of the year was in Millcombe. As February drew to a close, the first two **Puffins** were seen on the water at Jenny's Cove on 27th, the same day that **Shags** were investigating and renovating nest sites in Threequarter Wall Bay, **Chiffchaff** and **Chaffinch** were singing in Millcombe, a small passage of **Pied Wagtails** was noted, and **Blackbird** numbers reached 13, the highest of the year to date.





Lundy's earliest ever Wheatear, a male in Jenny's Cove, 24th February (photo: Dean Jones).

Less common species and rarities

The overwintering female **Great Spotted Woodpecker** was seen regularly until 6th, but not thereafter. **Red-throated Divers** continued to be seen on most days, mainly off the Landing Bay, with a record high count of 22 on 18th. Other less common species included good numbers of **Common Gulls** off the East Side early and late in the month, with 20 on 2nd & 3rd and 16 on 20th. A single adult **Mediterranean Gull** was seen in the same area on 19th, and an adult **Black-headed Gull** was in Lighthouse Field on 1st. A female **Black Redstart** was at Benjamin's Chair on 2nd and a **Lapwing** with two **Golden Plovers** on the Airfield and a **Jackdaw** in Lighthouse Field were seen on the same date. Two **Chiffchaffs** (likely two of the individuals recorded in Jan) were in Millcombe on 3rd, with ones and twos seen regularly for the rest of the month. The overwintering female **Sparrowhawk** put in appearances on scattered dates throughout the month, a male **Kestrel** was seen on 5th & 6th, and a displaying pair was over Millcombe on 14th, though not seen subsequently. A female **Reed Bunting** was seen on 14th, a **Mistle Thrush** appeared in Millcombe Wood on 17th, and a **Stock Dove** over the valley and Village area on the morning of 20th was being hotly pursued by two **Peregrines** – but survived the experience, being seen near the Ugly in the afternoon. Eight **Golden Plovers** flew over the Airfield on 21st, whilst 27th saw two **Collared Doves** (the first of the year) in **Millcombe**, a female **Black Redstart** in Jenny's Cove and a female **Reed Bunting** on Tibbetts Hill.

MARCH – max temp 13.4C, min 2.9C, mean 8.3C. Rainfall 129.8mm

From the start of the month right through to 17th, the first half of March was very unsettled, being dominated by westerly and north-westerly winds and frequent rain-bearing fronts moving in off the Atlantic, interspersed with brighter showery weather. Named storms Freya (3rd/4th) and Gareth (12th/13th) brought spells of particularly wet and windy weather, with peak windspeeds on Lundy of 69.7 and 64 mph, respectively. The second half of the month was generally much more settled with high pressure close by. It was largely cloudy until 23rd, but the last week was often very sunny – except for fog on 29th.

A **Goldcrest** was in full song in the 'Secret Garden', Millcombe on 8th and at least six **Puffins** were on land at Jenny's Cove on 10th. The 17th brought a singing **Woodpigeon**, whilst a good passage of **Meadow Pipits** continued throughout the morning of 17th, lasting until early afternoon (a total of 220 logged for the day). The movement continued on 18th, when 208 were counted in an hour-and-a-half. On the same day, **Carion Crows** were gathering nesting material near Government House and a **Grey Wagtail** was in the stream-bed below Millcombe House. The

22nd brought a significant influx of **Chiffchaffs** (64), together with the first **Swallow**, first two **Willow Warblers** and first three **Blackcaps** of the spring, and the first **Manx Shearwaters** were heard calling over Millcombe between 20:00 and 22:00 hrs. The same evening brought a significant but short-lived audible passage of **Redwings** (estimated at 100 to 200 individuals) over the Village and Lighthouse Field at around 22:00 hrs during a 25-minute period of misty low cloud. The following morning a **Curlew** called loudly over the Village and the first two **White Wagtails** of the year were feeding outside the Tavern. **Rock Pipits** were displaying at South West Point, alongside a singing colour-ringed **Wheatear**. The 24th brought more migrants, including a male **Ring Ouzel** near Old Light, the first **House Martin** over St Mark's Stone, and a female **Merlin**. The 26th saw a high March count of 166 **Puffins** at Jenny's Cove, and a **Woodpigeon** was sitting on the cliffs next to **Guillemots** and **Razorbills!** The 26th also saw nine **Cormorants** flying north, a single **Golden Plover**, the highest March count of **Teal** (comprising two males and four females on Pondsbury), and 55 **Sand Martins** moving through. Perhaps the same **Curlew** heard on 24th was feeding in fields in the south of the island from 26th to 30th. A **Ringed Plover** was calling over South End before dropping into Lighthouse Field on 25th, and two **Snipe** were seen on 27th. A **Brambling** called in flight as it headed north over Old Light on 28th. Foggy conditions on 29th grounded three **Redwings** (and the helicopter!), whilst the month ended with a **Ring Ouzel** in Millcombe and St Helen's Field on 30th, counts of 30 **Swallows** and six **House Martins**, also on 30th, and two **Ringed Plovers** in South West Field on 30th and 31st.

Less common species and rarities

The overwintering female **Sparrowhawk** continued to put in regular appearances from 4th to the end of the month. A single **Great Northern Diver** was in the Landing Bay on four dates from 4th to 8th (also on 16th) and there were still 15 **Red-throated Divers** off the East Side on 2nd, decreasing to a single bird by 6th. A female **Reed Bunting** at Quarter Wall Pond on 8th was followed by a male in full breeding plumage in Millcombe on 17th, and further females on 19th (Millcombe), 25th (Paradise Row) and 27th (Pondsbury). A much anticipated 'first' for Lundy came in the form of a **Cattle Egret** sitting on rocks on the south side of Lametor on 24th, which also saw the first **Firecrest** of the year along the Terrace. A **Ringed Plover** was calling over South End before dropping into Lighthouse Field on 25th, the same date that a **Stock Dove** was in St Helen's Field. Two **Red Kites** were circling high over Ackland's Moor in fine, sunny weather on the morning of 26th and – perhaps even more astonishingly – a **Treecreeper** was found feeding amongst the rocks at Jenny's Cove! Finally, two **Black Redstarts** (a female and a 2nd calendar-year male) were logged on 27th.

Grey Wagtail, Millcombe Pond, 19th March (photo: Dean Jones).



FIRST DATES FOR SPRING MIGRANTS

February	16 th	Swallow
	24 th	Sand Martin, Wheatear
	27 th	Puffin
March	22 nd	Manx Shearwater, Willow Warbler, Blackcap
	23 rd	Curlew, White Wagtail
	24 th	Firecrest, House Martin, Ring Ouzel
	25 th	Ringed Plover
April	2 nd	Pied Flycatcher
	3 rd	Sandwich Tern
	8 th	Redstart
	15 th	Grasshopper Warbler, Whimbrel
	17 th	Sedge Warbler, Whitethroat, Tree Pipit
	18 th	Collared Dove
	19 th	Lesser Whitethroat
	20 th	Common Sandpiper, Spotted Flycatcher, Yellow Wagtail
	22 nd	Dunlin, Cuckoo, Garden Warbler
	25 th	Reed Warbler, Whinchat
	28 th	Nightingale
29 th	Swift, Wood Warbler	



NB. For Chiffchaff, Goldcrest and Black Redstart, the first arrivals of spring migrants were masked by the presence of overwintering birds.

LAST DATES FOR 'WINTER' VISITORS

February	8 th	Woodcock
March	6 th	Red-throated Diver
	30 th	Redwing
April	28 th	Brambling
	30 th	Fieldfare
May	17 th	Great Northern Diver
June	2 nd	Merlin

*Cuckoo, Millcombe, 24th April and (below)
Brambling, Millcombe, 22nd April
(photos: Dean Jones).*



BREEDING SPECIES IN 2019

The following species were all confirmed as breeding successfully:

Mallard	Puffin	Blackbird
Fulmar	Woodpigeon	Robin
Shag	Peregrine	Stonechat
Manx Shearwater	Carrion Crow	Wheatear
Water Rail	Raven	House Sparrow
Oystercatcher	Skylark	Dunnock
Kittiwake	Swallow	Pied Wagtail
Great Black-backed Gull	Chiffchaff	Meadow Pipit
Herring Gull	Blackcap	Rock Pipit
Lesser Black-backed Gull	Whitethroat	Chaffinch
Guillemot	Wren	Linnet
Razorbill	Starling	Goldfinch

In addition, the following species may have bred:

Teal – probably attempted to breed in the Pondsbury area, but no young seen

Storm Petrel – probably bred near North Light; possible elsewhere

Kestrel – possibly bred; territorial in spring, but no subsequent evidence

Rock Pipit, Hell's Gates, 10th September (photo: Martin Thorne).





Male (left) and female Redstarts, Millcombe, 8th April (photos: Philip Lymbery).

APRIL – max temp 19.7C, min 2.7C, mean 9.5C. Rainfall 58.7mm

April started off with a rather cold and unsettled spell for the first five days or so. Easterly winds then persisted until mid-month, initially bringing warmer weather but it turned colder again from 9th to 16th in the strengthening wind, which made things challenging in Millcombe and elsewhere along the East Side for would-be observers and ringers alike. Things warmed up between 17th and 22nd, coinciding with the Easter weekend, as the wind turned more south-easterly, bringing with it some significant arrivals of migrants. The last week was much more changeable, including a wet and windy spell associated with the passage of Storm Hannah on 26th/27th, when winds peaked on Lundy at 70.7 mph, though things had settled down again by 28th and the month ended quietly.

There was a significant influx of around 50 **Blackcaps** on 1st and a male **Ring Ouzel** was at the Quarries. Single male **Pied Flycatchers**, possibly one and the same bird, were in St Helen's Copse, Barton Field and Millcombe on 2nd to 4th, whilst on 5th 19 **Swallows** headed north, a **redpoll** (unidentified to species) was over the East Side, two female **Sparrowhawks** were at the Terrace and 25 **Wheatears** were counted along the West Side. **Swallow** numbers reached 54 on 7th. The first **Redstarts** of the year (a male and two females) were in Millcombe on 8th, coinciding with a modest arrival of **Chiffchaffs**, **Willow Warblers** and **Blackcaps** along the East Side. Another male **Ring Ouzel** and 68 **Puffins** were seen at Jenny's Cove on 10th, along with three pairs of **Teal** on Pondsbury. Four **Carrion Crows** were watched leaving the island and flying towards Hartland Point until lost from view through binoculars on 11th. A third male **Ring Ouzel** was at Old Light on 12th, and 50 **Willow Warblers**, a strong passage of 1,000 **Swallows** and 58 **Wheatear** were logged, whilst a count of 207 **Puffins** included 134 at Jenny's Cove. **Great Black-backed Gulls** were noted sitting on eggs on the same date and two probable 'Greenland' **Wheatears** were at North End. Three **Blackcaps** were seen among the rocks at Jenny's Cove on the morning of 13th and three **Snipe** were flushed from Ackland's Moor. The first **Whimbrel** of spring was on the West Side north of Threequarter Wall on 15th. On the same day, the first **Grasshopper Warbler** of the year was reeling outside Government House, with the same or another by Blue Bung on 16th, whilst the first **Tree Pipit** was calling loudly over Millcombe on 17th, the same date that the first **Whitethroat** – a female, unusually – was seen by Government House Pond and the first **Sedge Warbler** was trapped and ringed. A **Collared Dove** was in the Village on 18th and there was a notable movement of **Blackcaps** from 19th to 21st, with 69 ringed on 19th, followed by a fall of at least 300 birds on 20th and 150 on 21st. A male **Yellow Wagtail**, the first of the year, was at Pondsbury on 20th, whilst a **Grey Wagtail** was seen at the Devil's Kitchen. A female **Brambling** was feeding with a small group of **Chaffinches** in Barton Field on 21st, the same date as a **Wood Warbler** and a **Merlin** were seen in the vicinity of the Quarries, and four **White Wagtails** delivered the highest total for the month. The first **Dunlin** of the year was at South West Point on 22nd, when other notable records included two **Yellow Wagtails**, the first **Garden Warbler** and the first **Cuckoo** – a calling male in Millcombe.

The **Yellow Wagtail** count increased to three on 23rd, feeding alongside two **White Wagtails** in Barton Field. A **Common Sandpiper** was in the Landing Bay on 25th and there were six **Whimbrel** above the Quarries on 27th. At the end of the month, the female **Brambling** was still in Millcombe on 28th, and the first **Mallard** ducklings appeared. A **Wood Warbler** was singing in Millcombe on 29th, the same morning as the valley was alive with a huge fall of at least 1,000 **Willow Warblers**. Single **Dunlin** and **Ringed Plover** were together in South West Field on 30th, when other notable migrants included a **Spotted Flycatcher**, a female **Pied Flycatcher**, three **Reed Warblers**, two **Tree Pipits**, two **Lesser Redpolls** and a **Siskin** (all in Millcombe), a **Swift** at South West Point, two male **Whinchats** at Quarter Wall/Brick Field and a **Cuckoo** calling from the Rocket Pole area at dusk, and all-island totals reached 500 **Swallows**, 30 **Wheatears**, 15 **Whitethroats**, 15 **Sedge Warblers** and 50 **Willow Warblers**.



Male Pied Flycatcher, Millcombe, 3rd April
(photo: Philip Lymbery).

Less common species and rarities

A female **Marsh Harrier** flew high over the Quarries and south-east towards the mainland on 1st, a **Sandwich Tern** was in the Landing Bay on 3rd, single **Firecrests** were in Millcombe on 4th & 7th, and a non-calling **Chiffchaff** showing characters of 'Siberian' **Chiffchaff** was in Millcombe on 5th. A **Rook**, first reported on 4th, was outside Paradise Row on 6th, whilst other uncommon species on this date included a **Black Redstart** near Old Light, a male **Greenfinch** in Millcombe (others recorded on 21st & 29th), and a **Reed Bunting**. The **Rook** was feeding with **Carrion Crows** in Tent Field on 8th, a female **Black Redstart** was on top of the Black Shed on 10th, and a **Stock Dove** arrived in off the sea at North End on 12th. Coinciding with the arrival of warmer weather, an **Osprey** was photographed along the East Side on 18th. A **Lesser Whitethroat** was trapped and ringed in Millcombe on 19th and the island's first-ever spring **Yellow-browed Warbler** was found in upper Millcombe on 20th. A 2nd calendar-year male **Eastern Subalpine Warbler** was trapped in Millcombe on 22nd. A much-travelled **African Pied Crow** (most likely of captive or ship-assisted origin) paid a brief visit to the island on 23rd, a **Nightingale** was trapped in Millcombe on 28th, and a ring-tail **Hen Harrier** was seen on 30th, the same date that another **Eastern Subalpine Warbler** – this time a 2nd calendar-year female – was seen near Millcombe House and mist-netted shortly afterwards in the Secret Garden.

MAY – max temp 17.2C, min 4.9C, mean 11.3C. Rainfall 25.1mm

May started off generally cool, with an unseasonably cold northerly flow on 3rd/4th, and it was often rather cloudy. The second week began showery, cool and windy at times, but then high pressure slowly built across the country, and between 12th and 24th the weather was often quite settled, dry and sunny, though with a chilly northerly or easterly wind at times. It turned more changeable from 25th onwards, but the month ended on a warm note.

The main spring passage of hirundines occurred during the first half of the month, with 1,000 **Swallows** logged on 1st and 10th and a whopping 5,000 estimated on 12th, the same date that

700 **House Martins** and 50 **Swifts** piled through. Migration of later-moving warbler species also reached its peak, including 31 **Sedge Warblers** and 45 **Whitethroats** on 9th, alongside a notable count of 80 **Spotted Flycatchers**. A **Turtle Dove** was around the farm on 1st where it was seen regularly until 8th (often in company with a **Collared Dove**), followed by further singletons on 14th & 31st. One or two **Cuckoos** were recorded on 10 scattered dates from 6th to the end of the month, and there were single **Black Redstarts** on 1st & 6th, with two on 14th. Other less common migrants included three **Grasshopper Warblers** on 6th, a **Wood Warbler** (trapped and ringed) on 7th, one or two **Reed Warblers** on several dates from 1st to 6th, and single **Lesser Whitethroats** on four dates from 6th to 16th. **Whinchats** were logged on just three days from 7th to 14th, single **Pied Flycatchers** on four well-scattered dates, **Tree Pipits** peaked at four on 1st, whilst **Yellow Wagtails** (ones and twos only) were noted on six dates from 3rd to 24th and the last **White Wagtails** of spring were singles on 1st & 9th. Other migrants included a male **Merlin** over Jenny's Cove on 12th, a **Black-headed Gull** in the Landing Bay on 16th, a **Great Northern Diver** flying north at cliff-top height along the East Side on 17th, single **Common Gulls** on 1st & 22nd, and there was a notable passage of **Ringed Plover** and **Dunlin** mid-month, with peak counts of eight **Ringed Plover** on 14th and 30 **Dunlin** on 15th. The 14th brought added diversity to the wader tally when one or two **Redshanks** were in the south of the island and two **Greenshanks** flew over Middle Park calling, and there were also two **Golden Plovers** on 15th. The long-staying female **Sparrowhawk** finally left the island, being seen on six dates up to and including 14th.

Manx Shearwaters reached their highest-observed daytime total for the year to date, with 150 on 17th – just a fraction of those undoubtedly coming ashore under cover of darkness. Eight were ringed and three birds retrapped at the Old Light colony on the night of 26th/27th, while a **Storm Petrel** overflowed the area at dusk. A further 12 new birds and 21 retraps were caught on 29th/30th. The first observation of adult **Puffins** taking food into burrows was made on 20th at Jenny's Cove, whilst the highest count of adults for the month was 120 on 14th. The first **Guillemot** chick of the year was seen on 24th and the first **Razorbill** chick on 31st. The month's peak count of 246 adult **Kittiwakes** was made on 20th.

Among the island's breeding landbirds, a mating pair of **Chaffinches** and **Goldfinches** gathering nesting material were seen in Millcombe on 5th, and adult **Stonechats** were carrying food and faecal sacs near Pondsbury on the same date, with another pair taking food to a nest along the Beach Road on 11th. Successful breeding at both sites was confirmed when fledged young were seen on 23rd and 27th, respectively. Calls heard from the vicinity of Quarters Pond on 6th (and again on 28th & 31st) indicated the presence of **Water Rail** chicks, but none was ever seen! **Carriion Crow** chicks were calling from a nest in Millcombe on 11th, the same date that an adult **Skylark** was carrying food near South West Point. A female **Wheatear** was nest-building at the northern end of the Earthquake on 12th, a male **Blackbird** was carrying food in Millcombe (first fledglings seen on 25th, also in Millcombe), and nesting **Starlings** were seen flying in and out of the old stonemason machine. **Rock Pipits** were feeding young on the West Side on 23rd, **Duncock** and **Robin** pairs were feeding chicks in nests in Millcombe on 27th and 28th, respectively, and an adult **Wren** was carrying food beside the Beach Road on 28th. Three **Wheatear** chicks were emerging from a nest hole at Jenny's Cove to be fed on 30th, and **Linnet** fledglings were along the East Side on 31st, the same day that an adult **Chaffinch** was delivering food to chicks in Millcombe.

Rarities

A male **Western Subalpine Warbler** was trapped in Millcombe on 1st. A singing male **Continental Coal Tit** was seen and heard frequently from 2nd to 5th, and a **Woodlark** was seen briefly near the Church and on Castle Hill on 2nd. A **Hooded Crow** flew north past the Church with **Carriion Crows** early in the morning of 5th, a putative **Swallow x House Martin** hybrid was circling Government House, and the fourth **Subalpine Warbler** of the spring – another second-year male



Lundy's first Squacco Heron in flight and on Rat Island, 31st May (photos: Alex Sydenham).

Eastern – seen initially in sycamores below Brambles, was subsequently trapped and ringed. This was followed just a few days later, on 11th, by a 2nd calendar-year female **Eastern Subalpine Warbler**, bringing the total of **Subalpine Warblers** for the spring to an unprecedented (and highly improbable) five! A female **Dotterel** was at North End on 13th and two were in Middle Park on 14th. A typically elusive **Hawfinch** was in Millcombe during the morning of 15th and a female **Marsh Harrier** ranged widely over the island on the same day. A second-year male **Red-footed Falcon** graced Middle Park for several hours on 18th, where it predated large numbers of Emperor Moths. This exquisite small raptor was followed on 23rd by an equally exquisite small heron, Lundy's first-ever **Squacco Heron**, initially at Gannets' Bay and subsequently seen in flight off the Terrace on 27th and in the vicinity of Rat Island from 28th to 31st.

JUNE – max temp 23.6C, min 8C, mean 13.4C. Rainfall 124.2mm

June began fine but was generally rather unsettled and cool from 3rd to 20th, and particularly cool, cloudy and wet between 10th and 13th. A ridge of high pressure brought dry, sunny weather on 21st and 22nd, then the latter part of the month was mainly warm and humid, with a hot and sunny spell from 27th to 29th.

The month kicked off with calling **Cuckoos** in Millcombe and near Montagu Steps on 1st. The same day brought an unusually late sighting of a **Merlin**, perched on the wire fence dividing the Tent Field and 'helicopter' field, an adult **Skylark** feeding a fledgling at Rocket Pole Pond and a **Tree Pipit** calling in flight over Benjamin's Chair. There were four **Spotted Flycatchers** on 2nd, but only ones and twos thereafter, with no sign of any breeding. The **Merlin** was seen again on 2nd, flying past Old Light and across Ackland's Moor, and a **Turtle Dove** was hotly pursued by a **Peregrine** over the Terrace. A **Cuckoo** was along the West Side just north of Halfway Wall on 3rd and lone **Golden Plover** and **Whimbrel** were the last of the spring. A **Yellow Wagtail** was on the sidings near John O'Groat's on 4th. A trickle of hirundine migration continued during the first ten days or so, with 20 **House Martins** on 4th, a single **Sand Martin** on 5th and 18 **Swallows** on 9th & 10th. Small numbers of **Willow Warblers** and **Whitethroats** were seen throughout the month but there was no evidence of breeding. A confirmed 'Greenland' **Wheatear** was trapped near the West Side Heinkel crash site on 6th, the same date that **Peregrine** chicks from one eyrie



Luke Sutton and Seb Loram place colour-rings on a Lundy Peregrine chick – part of the long-running study of the island's top predator (photos: Dean Jones).

were colour-ringed for the first time ever on Lundy. An adult **Dunnock** feeding recently fledged chicks and a male **Chaffinch** carrying food were seen in Millcombe on 7th, whilst many fledgling **Rock Pipits** were seen north of Halfway Wall, and two adult **Wrens** with calling chicks were at the Earthquake on 9th. Fifty-six active (and very noisy!) **Starling** nests were found in the Village, Church and Old Light on 10th. A male **Chiffchaff** was building a nest along the Terrace on 12th and sightings in Millcombe that day included a **Cuckoo** (also on 14th & 16th) and fledgling **Robins**. A female **Blackcap** was gathering food in lower Millcombe on 15th. The first **Goldfinch** fledglings were in Millcombe on 19th and a late **Swift** flew north along the East Side. Three more **Swifts** were around the Village on 22nd, the same day as the first **Starling** fledglings appeared on the roof of Paradise Row – much later than in 2018. Also on 22nd, a male **Redstart** was at Halfway Wall. Single **Grey Herons** were seen on five dates from 19th to 28th, and there were two on 23rd. Twenty-six **Oystercatchers** were on rocks at Brazen Ward on 26th. Successful breeding by **Blackcaps** was confirmed when two fledglings were seen with an adult female just below Brambles on 29th, whilst on the same date, but in upper Millcombe, a pair of **Whitethroats** were feeding at least two chicks – the first confirmation of breeding on the island since 1978.

Forty **Manx Shearwaters** (20 new and 20 retraps) were caught at the Old Light colony on the night of 1st/2nd and three of the shearwater nestboxes were found to be occupied by incubating birds on 3rd. Two **Cormorants** flew south on 6th. Unusually calm conditions, good light and a powerful telescope enabled 21 **Puffins** in Lundy Roads on 10th to be aged as pre-breeding immatures. A **Storm Petrel** was flushed from short heather between the top of North Light steps and John O'Groats on 14th and flew out to sea. It was thought the bird may have been grounded during very windy conditions.

Rarities

A female **Red-backed Shrike** was near St Helen's Combe on 6th and an **Alpine Swift** was feeding along the Terrace and Quarries on the afternoon of 8th. A male **Golden Oriole** was in full song at the top of Millcombe for about 20 minutes during the morning of 21st. One of the more



Herring Gulls harass an unwanted visitor in the form of a Buzzard that arrived from the south-east on 25th July and departed the next day (photo: Alex Sydenham).

astonishing records of the year – though not for the island itself – concerned a **Roller** that perched in the rigging of a yacht en route from Pembrokeshire to Lundy on 30th (see p.80).

JULY – Max temp 25.7C, min 11.2C, mean 16.6C. Rainfall 59.8mm

Things started off rather cool with north-westerly winds, though high pressure remained close to South West England, meaning that the first half of the month was mostly dry and settled but with unremarkable temperatures. The second half of July was much wetter with plenty of thundery showers, but with a hot sunny spell from 22nd to 25th.

A pair of **Pied Wagtails** were gathering food for chicks in the farmyard on 3rd and an adult **Cuckoo** was in Millcombe on the same day. Single **Grey Herons** were recorded on six dates from 2nd to 17th. The first fledgling **Swallows** of the year were in the Church porch on 5th, whilst the first **Fulmar** chick was seen at Jenny's Cove on 7th. On the same day, adult **Chiffchaffs** were gathering food in the Terrace willows and another pair were feeding chicks in the Battlements Sycamores, Millcombe, on 24th. The highest **Puffin** count of the year was also made on 7th when 468 were between South West Point and St James's Stone. A **Buzzard** flew in off the sea from the south-east on 25th and the Church **Swallows** were already incubating a second brood. On 26th, the **Buzzard** was seen leaving the island, an **Oystercatcher** pair were seen with a chick in the Landing Bay, and another pair of **Pied Wagtails** were feeding young, this time in Millcombe. There were records of one each of **Dunlin**, **Curlew** and **Whimbrel** on scattered dates – presumably already on return migration south. Passage of warblers was certainly well underway by the end of the month, with a fall of at least 95 **Willow Warblers** and four **Sedge Warblers** on 27th, though the breeding **Whitethroats** in upper Millcombe had only just fledged a second brood by this date, when at least three chicks were seen. The month drew to a close with two **Sand Martins** and the first **Spotted Flycatcher** of the 'autumn' (the latter in the Terrace willows) on 28th, a **Swift** off South West Point on 30th and two **Cuckoos** and a **Water Rail** (at Quarters Pond) on 31st.

AUGUST – Max temp 25.3C, min 12.3C, mean 16.7C. Rainfall 88.9mm

The first three weeks of the month were dominated mostly by showery conditions. After a relatively quiet start, deep depressions brought wet and windy weather on the 9th/10th (winds of 61 mph on Lundy) 14th and 16th. A hot spell developed from the 21st to 27th, setting new record high temperatures for the Bank Holiday weekend in south-east England, but although very warm, it was not record breaking on Lundy. The weather turned cooler and more unsettled again from 28th.

There was a further fall of 71 **Willow Warblers** on 1st, together with a **Sedge Warbler** in Millcombe. The first returning **Tree Pipit** of autumn was over Millcombe on 2nd, along with a **Spotted Flycatcher** on the Terrace, whilst an evening seawatch produced an estimated 3,000 rafting **Manx Shearwaters**, and a mass emergence of flying ants saw large numbers of gulls taking to the skies to enjoy the ephemeral bounty. Seawatching during gale-force south-westerlies on 9th yielded surprisingly few seabirds apart from 761 **Manx Shearwaters**, but a juvenile **Grey Heron** arrived from the east, battling hard into the gusty headwinds, whilst a notable selection of waders included eight **Curlews**, a **Dunlin** and a **Black-tailed Godwit** flying past Rat Island, and two **Ringed Plovers** off North End. The gales were equally challenging for the **Swallows** nesting in the Church porch, which struggled to catch insects to feed to their chicks. Almost 3,000 **Manx Shearwaters** were counted during a seawatch on 10th amidst continuing gales, two **Turnstones** were sheltering in the short heather at North End, Pondsburry attracted a lone **Redshank**, and the **Grey Heron** was seeking out a meal at Quarry Pond. Further single **Ringed Plovers** were noted on 10th & 11th, whilst 11th also yielded a juvenile **Cuckoo** in Millcombe and **Chiffchaffs** feeding very young chicks in Smelly Gully – almost certainly a second brood on this date. Another **Tree Pipit** passed over on 13th and the first passage **Goldcrest** was logged on 15th. A post-breeding flock of around 200 **Linnets** was near Halfway Wall on 17th and an adult **Mediterranean Gull** was heading west off North Light on 18th. Passerine migration kicked up a gear in the last week or so of August, with daily **Tree Pipit** records of up to four birds from 24th to 28th, an influx of 60 **Swallows** and five **White Wagtails** (the latter feeding in Tent Field) on 25th, single **Reed Warblers** trapped in Millcombe on both 25th & 26th, 11 **Pied Flycatchers** on 25th, a significant fall of 250 **Willow Warblers** – together with 12 **Spotted Flycatchers**, six **Whinchats** and 70 **Wheatears** – on 26th, a **Redstart** on 27th and a **Yellow Wagtail** over St John's Valley on 28th. The business of rearing young was very much still continuing for some of the island's later-breeding seabirds including **Fulmar**, **Manx Shearwater** and **Storm Petrel**. Thirty-seven **Storm Petrels** were trapped near North Light on the night of 23rd/24th and 39 on 27th/28th. A **Grey Heron** flew past the petrel ringers at dusk on 23rd, whilst a flock of six flew in off the sea near Rat Island early in the morning of 25th. The 25th and 26th brought several flocks of up to 12 passage **Curlews** overflying the island, with another **Black-tailed Godwit** loosely associating with one flock on 26th, the same date as single **Redshank** and **Greenshank** were heard calling in flight. More **Ringed Plovers** (all single birds) were logged on five dates from 25th to 30th, and 2,538 **Manx Shearwaters** passed Rat Island in two hours on 30th.

Rarities

An **Icterine Warbler**, first seen in upper Millcombe on 23rd, was trapped and ringed on 26th. Also on 23rd, a **Wryneck** was foraging outside Brambles for a short while before flying up into Millcombe Wood. Presumably the same individual on 25th flew out of Smelly Gully and up to the rocks just behind the Walled Gardens where it hopped around for five minutes or so before disappearing back into the gully. On the same day and in the same area as the **Wryneck**, a very showy **Nightingale** – the second of the year – provided unusually prolonged, close views as it flitted up from Smelly Gully to forage on the ground near Millcombe Pond. The 26th brought one of the 'birds of the year' to the island when an adult male **Black-headed Bunting** was discovered on the roof of Paradise Row. Happily, it remained on the island, though elusive at times, for 11 days altogether, enabling all birders staying on the island, and some day visitors, to catch up



*Lundy's fourth Black-headed Bunting which arrived on 26th August and stayed for 11 days
(photo: Dean Jones).*

with it. Finally, a single **Sooty Shearwater** flew past Rat Island within a loose flock of **Manx Shearwaters** on 30th.

SEPTEMBER – Max temp 25.7C, min 11.7C, mean 15.3C. Rainfall 139mm

The first six days were dominated by changeable westerlies, after which things started to settle down slowly. A mainly dry and often sunny period lasted from 13th to 20th, with some warm days and cool nights, but the weather turned very wet at times during the last third of September, which raised rainfall totals above the long-term average in most parts of England and Wales.

The first week was relatively quiet, with single **Sparrowhawk**, **Golden Plover**, **Whimbrel**, **Green Sandpiper** and the first **Merlin** of the season being among the more notable non-passerine sightings. As usual, there were further scattered records of waders during the month, including **Golden Plover** (maximum 2), **Ringed Plover** (2), **Dunlin** (3), **Turnstone** (1), **Snipe** (2) and **Jack Snipe** (1). **Grey Herons** were a real feature, with single birds logged on a dozen days from 1st to 30th, sadly including one found dead at Quarter Wall Pond on 11th, but there was an exceptional flock of 19 flying south on 14th. With most focus on migration, it's easy to forget that young **Manx Shearwaters** continue to fledge from their burrows during September, and a further 31 chicks were ringed on the nights of 5th & 7th. More surprising was a late landbird breeding record when two **Woodpigeon** chicks fledged from a nest in Millcombe on 12th. Warbler and hirundine passage got off to a modest start in terms of numbers, but a **Reed Warbler** on 1st and single **Sedge Warbler**, **Lesser Whitethroat** and **Tree Pipit** on 2nd added variety. The second week or so brought more sustained hirundine movements, with the logged totals for **Swallow** exceeding 500 on four dates from 8th to 15th, including 1,195 on 8th, the same day that 408 **Sand Martins** were counted. Warbler numbers remained generally rather low throughout September, with no more than 20 **Willow Warblers** and six **Whitethroats** on any one date, though an influx of **Blackcaps** and **Chiffchaffs** on 18th gave totals of 70 and 50, respectively – by some margin the highest counts for either species during the month. The same day also saw by far the autumn's biggest southbound push of **Swallows** with some 3,200 logged, along with 500 **House**



Autumn migration in full swing during September, with Sand Martins and Swallows on wires in Lighthouse Field and (inset l-r) Spotted Flycatcher, Grasshopper Warbler and Snow Bunting (photos: Dean Jones and Martin Thorne).

Martins. There were one or two **Garden Warblers** on five dates from 8th to 19th, another lone **Sedge Warbler** on 8th (which proved to be the last of the year) and a single **Grasshopper Warbler** on 18th. **Goldcrests** passed through in quite good numbers all month, with 20 or more on ten dates and a fall of 180 on 23rd. The first **Firecrest** of autumn appeared on 16th, with one to five birds seen on most days to the end of the month. Among thrushes and chats, there were single **Ring Ouzels** on three dates from 18th, and single **Whinchats** on just four dates from 9th, whilst **Wheatear** numbers were also unremarkable, with a maximum of 36 on 9th. Unusually, for what was once a reliable September bird on Lundy, there were no **Redstarts** at all. Flycatchers were represented by one to three **Pied Flycatchers** on six dates and **Spotted Flycatchers** on 13 dates, with 10 on 14th and 20 on 18th easily the highest totals. Alongside modest numbers of **Pied Wagtails** and un-raced **alba wagtails** (combined maximum of 13 on 8th) were single **White Wagtails** on 7th & 22nd, a single **Yellow Wagtail** on 18th followed by four on 22nd, and one or two **Grey Wagtails** on 13 dates. The first Arctic-breeding buntings of the autumn were logged from mid-month onwards, with single calling **Lapland Buntings** on 15th & 20th and one or two **Snow Buntings** along the main track from 27th to 30th. The 30th also brought the biggest movement of **Meadow Pipits** of the autumn so far, with a total of 476.

Rarities

The **Black-headed Bunting** was seen again on 4th & 5th, generally in the vicinity of Tillage and Brick Fields. A **Barred Warbler** was briefly in Millcombe on 10th, whilst even scarcer in Lundy terms were two female **Tufted Ducks** on Pondsbury on 15th, the same day that a male **Crossbill** dropped into Millcombe. Two **Common Rosefinches** – a first-year bird and, unusually for autumn, an adult male – were in Millcombe towards the end of the month (first seen on 21st and

22nd, respectively); both were trapped and ringed. A **Wryneck** was just south of the Terrace on 22nd, a **Treecreeper** was found in Millcombe on 24th (staying until the next day), a young **Red-breasted Merganser** turned up in the Landing Bay on 27th, and a seawatch on 29th yielded a first-winter **Little Gull**, three adult **Arctic Terns** and an adult **Pomarine Skua** among an excellent variety of more typical Lundy seabirds.

OCTOBER – Max temp 17.1C, min 5.7C, mean 12.3C. Rainfall 200.8mm

The jet stream tracked right over southern Britain for much of October, resulting in a cloudy, wet and sometimes very windy month for most of the country, with flooding affecting many areas. The weather briefly turned more settled under a ridge of high pressure from 21st to 23rd, but cloud and rain soon returned to the South West. Winds reached force 9 or 10 on the island on 4th, 18th & 25th.

The month opened with single **Spotted** and **Pied Flycatchers** still to be found on 1st, in Millcombe and at Quarry Pond respectively, whilst a **Willow Warbler** also put in an appearance. The **Pied Flycatcher** remained until 3rd, and the last **Spotted Flycatchers** were logged on 6th and 15th, but one or two **Willow Warblers** continued to be seen until 23rd. The extremely unsettled conditions, with a succession of low-pressure systems arriving off the Atlantic, did little in general to encourage most summer migrants to linger, or to favour the arrival of birds from continental Europe and Scandinavia. Nevertheless, brief 'weather windows' opened up on a few occasions, particularly from mid-month, resulting in some really excellent days of migration watching. A drop in the wind overnight on 11th/12th, for example, brought a fall of at least 150 **Blackcaps** and 50 **Goldcrests** on 12th. However, it was the 15th – predominantly dry with patchy cloud, long sunny spells and a light WSW wind – that was truly migrant-filled from first light. Logged totals included 450 **Redwings**, 60 **Song Thrushes**, 25 **Ring Ouzels**, 4 **Mistle Thrushes**, 4 **Fieldfares**, 100 **S Skylarks**, 250 **Swallows**, 400 **Starlings**, 130 **Siskins** and a wide variety of other species both common and scarce. **Swallow** counts reached treble digits for the last time in 2019 on 15th (250), 16th (200) and 17th (100), whilst a fall of 150 **Goldcrests** occurred on 19th, alongside a further influx of 150 **Redwings**. A slightly longer weather window from 21st to 23rd brought an additional 107 **Fieldfares** and 250 **Redwings**, as well as the arrival of the first **Woodcock** and **Black Redstart** of the autumn, whilst a very late female **Redstart** was trapped and ringed in Millcombe and a **Lesser Whitethroat** was near the Timekeeper's Hut. Although it was not a 'named' storm, the 25th saw the island battered by severe gales from midday, leading to a 'splash & dash' early departure for MS *Odenburg* on its last passenger-carrying service of the season, whilst a day of continuous heavy rain followed on 26th, turning the island's water courses into raging torrents and making it all the more remarkable that eight **Swallows** graced a contrastingly clear and sunny day on 27th. **Chaffinch** migration was once again a feature of late October, though numbers did not reach the extraordinary heights of some years past; 1,000 on 23rd and 1,700 on 28th were the maximum totals logged. **Snow Buntings** continued to be seen regularly throughout the month, with records on 19 days and a maximum of 14 on 15th. There were further single **Lapland Buntings** on four dates in the second half of the month. There was not the build-up of feeding seabirds off the East Side that has occurred in many recent Octobers, though there were scattered records of up to three **Bonxies** and **Arctic Skuas**, a handful of **Black-headed**, **Common** and **Mediterranean Gulls**, up to five **Manx Shearwaters** recorded on eight dates, and a brief concentration of storm-driven **Kittiwakes** feeding in Lundy Roads on 27th.

Rarities

As usual, October proved to be one of the most productive months of the year for rare and scarce birds on the island. Heading the cast were a transatlantic vagrant in the form of a **Red-eyed Vireo** in Quarter Wall Copse on 13th and Lundy's first **Isabelline Wheatear** (also the first for Devon) above the Beach Road on 18th. A juvenile **Rose-coloured Starling** stayed around the farm from 6th to 21st, a **Richard's Pipit** flew south over the Airfield on 15th, the second **Barred Warbler** of

LAST DATES FOR SUMMER MIGRANTS

July	29 th	Puffin
August	11 th	Cuckoo
September	1 st	Reed Warbler
	8 th	Sedge Warbler
	14 th	Swift
	18 th	Grasshopper Warbler
	19 th	Garden Warbler
	21 st	Whinchat
	23 rd	Tree Pipit
October	25 th	Whitethroat
	3 rd	Pied Flycatcher
	15 th	Spotted Flycatcher Yellow Wagtail
	20 th	Wheatear
	22 nd	Sand Martin
	23 rd	Willow Warbler, Lesser Whitethroat, Ring Ouzel, Redstart
	24 th	House Martin
November	24 th	Swallow
	27 th	Chiffchaff
December	1 st	Blackcap
	31 st	Manx Shearwater

FIRST DATES FOR AUTUMN MIGRANTS/WINTER VISITORS

August	27 th	Merlin
September	15 th	Lapland Bunting
	16 th	Firecrest
	19 th	Lesser Redpoll
	21 st	Jack Snipe
October	4 th	Redwing
	10 th	Yellow-browed Warbler
	11 th	Great Northern Diver Reed Bunting
	12 th	Siskin
	15 th	Fieldfare
	18 th	Brambling
	23 rd	Woodcock
November	27 th	Black Redstart Snow Bunting
	28 th	Red-throated Diver

*Below: Merlin, Main Track, 30th November
(photo: Dean Jones).*





This juvenile Dotterel graced the Lundy plateau from 6th to 13th October (photo: Dean Jones).

the autumn was along the Terrace on 17th, and a first-winter **Little Bunting** was trapped and ringed in Millcombe on 23rd. Though nowadays seen annually in small numbers, **Yellow-browed Warblers** continue to be a much-anticipated autumn highlight on Lundy and this year there were sightings on eight dates from 10th to 23rd, with a maximum of five on 15th. Also in the category of 'regular in small numbers' were a juvenile **Dotterel** on the plateau from 6th to 13th, a **Treecreeper** in Millcombe almost daily from 8th to 25th, four **Balearic Shearwaters** on 11th, a ringtail **Hen Harrier** plus a non-calling **Chiffchaff** showing plumage characteristics of '**Siberian**' **Chiffchaff** on 15th, the year's second **Short-eared Owl** that briefly flew out over the Landing Bay from the Beach Road before turning and dropping back into vegetation on 18th, and a **Hawfinch** in Millcombe on 24th. Altogether scarcer for Lundy were a **Kingfisher** whizzing through the Devil's Kitchen on 7th, a juvenile **Whooper Swan** flying past the Castle on 12th, a **Cetti's Warbler** at Millcombe Pond on 14th (presumably the same individual that was ringed on 23rd and remained on the island into November), a **Pomarine Skua** off the Terrace on 17th, a **Quail** flushed along the Lower East Side Path on 19th, and a **Long-tailed Tit** in Millcombe on 21st.

NOVEMBER – Max temp 14.2C, min 4.2C, mean 9C. Rainfall 146mm

The jet stream continued to track further south than usual, bringing further spells of cloudy, wet and windy weather, although there were a few more settled interludes. Across England, rainfall was 132% of the long-term average and sunshine amounts were well below average. Temperatures were often also lower than normal with chilly winds, though it was briefly milder early and late in the month.



A Redwing in the Farmyard and (inset) a female Stonechat (photos: Dean Jones).

A calmer day on 1st saw the plateau wreathed in fog, but there was some early visible migration of **Chaffinches**, **Fieldfares** and **Redwings** heading off into the mist, and a significant movement of seabirds passing Rat Island on a NE-to-SW heading. These comprised over 1,000 auks (of which at least 70% were **Guillemots**), 750 **Kittiwakes** and 40 **Gannets** of all age classes. Other birds noted during the day included two **Firecrests**, a **Chiffchaff** and at least six **Blackcaps**. Severe gales returned on 2nd, with observations over the next few days consequently limited, though two **Swallows** were seen on both 2nd & 3rd and a lone **Chiffchaff** remained in Millcombe. The 6th brought new influxes of **Chaffinches** (216), **Starlings** (425), small numbers of thrushes and three **Snow Buntings**, along with single **Woodcock**, **Snipe** and **Merlin**. The often-challenging weather conditions during the middle two weeks of the month are captured in the Warden's description of 14th as, "a truly miserable day with strong and chilly north-easterlies coinciding with a constant deluge of rain throughout". This period saw a continued mixture of pulses of migration – weather permitting – by typical late-autumn species, with **Chaffinches**, thrushes and **Starlings** making up the bulk of numbers. Of these, only **Starlings** staged any significant arrival, with at least 1,000 logged on 17th. A wide range of other species included single **Golden Plovers** on 7th & 10th, one or two **Woodcocks** and **Merlins** on scattered dates, a lone **Woodpigeon** on two days, a handful of **Chiffchaffs**, **Blackcaps** and crests, one or two **Mistle Thrushes** on three days, up to 12 **Bramblings** (this, the highest count, on 15th), single-digit records of **Goldfinch**, **Linnet** and **Siskin**, a **Greenfinch** on three dates, further sightings of one or two **Snow Buntings**, and five **Reed Buntings** on 17th. Out at sea there were still up to

six **Manx Shearwaters** to be found between 12th and 24th. During the second half of November there were also two late **Bonxie** records, a smattering of **Common, Mediterranean** and **Black-headed Gulls** among the more numerous **Kittiwakes** and **Herring Gulls** off the East Side, and a notable 327 **Gannets** on 24th. As usual, landbird migration slowed substantially towards the end of the month, but a very late **Swallow** was seen in the Village on 24th, the same day as a respectable 184 **Chaffinches** were still moving south. As November drew to a close, the first two **Red-throated Divers** of the winter flew past the Landing Bay on 28th.

Rarities

Two adult **Whooper Swans** were on Pondsbury and later in Lighthouse Field on 6th. What seems likely to be the same elusive **Cetti's Warbler** that arrived in October popped up again at Millcombe Pond on 1st, then in brambles at the head of St Helen's Combe on 16th and finally back in Millcombe on 17th. A female **Wigeon** was on Pondsbury on 12th & 13th.

DECEMBER – Max temp 11.7C, min 3.2C, mean 8.4C. Rainfall 148.5mm

December started with a cold, settled, sunny spell under the influence of a transient ridge of high pressure, but it quickly turned mild, wet and windy again, and this westerly regime persisted until Christmas. The last few days of the year were generally drier but often remaining rather cloudy.

Writing for the Lundy Birds blog on 23rd, Dean Jones reflected on conditions during the first three weeks of December: *"The darkest day of the year has come and gone, and Lundy is now very much enveloped in a mid-winter embrace. Weather wise, it has been another mixed bag but mostly wet and windy, give or take a few settled, milder afternoons. In fact, so much rain has fallen on the island this month that we have already surpassed the mean total rainfall for December (1971–2018)*, which has resulted in the island's shallow soils – particularly on the plateau – becoming absolutely saturated, creating small pools and ponds all over the island and miniature flowing burns along coastal paths. Ackland's Moor Marsh too has continued to swell, spreading out to areas on both sides of the High Street Field wall (to the delight of the gulls), so much so that it is now contending for the title of largest body of freshwater on the island (look out Pondsbury)! But despite the frequent squalls creating less than perfect conditions for birding (it is hard to sneak up on the wary gulls in Brick Field due to the noisy squelches from leaky welly boots), the rain clouds and the afternoon light have provided some beautiful wintery skylscapes at times, complete with breathtaking, technicoloured rainbows on one or two special days."*

*Overall, 2019 ended up the third wettest year since 1971, with total rainfall of just over one-and-a-quarter metres or 1,259mm, compared with the record 1330.8mm set in 2012.



Rudolf the red-breasted Robin carolling away in Millcombe (photo: Dean Jones).

Unsurprisingly, a combination of the onset of the winter lull in migratory movements, combined with the frequently awful weather, meant that the pages of the LFS logbook took on their sparser winter appearance. Up to 19 **Teal** and 11 **Mallards** no doubt enjoyed the wide choice of wetland areas in which to feed, whilst up to three **Great Northern** and two **Red-throated Divers** were off the East Side, and a lone **Cormorant** was seen on 1st. **Gannets** were present in unusually high numbers around the turn of the year, with 79 on 28th, whilst 550 **Kittiwakes** were logged on 30th, and there was a high count for Lundy of 20 **Common Gulls** on 4th accompanied by an adult **Mediterranean Gull**. Among the more remarkable sightings of the month must be records of single **Manx Shearwaters** on four dates from 5th to 31st, whilst more typical of the season was the presence of 184 **Fulmars** at breeding ledges on 21st. Waders were represented by small numbers of **Oystercatchers**, single **Golden Plovers** on 22nd & 31st, two **Woodcocks** on 1st and 17 **Snipe** on 26th. A **Kestrel** seen early and late in the month was perhaps a long-staying individual, but a female **Merlin** on 1st & 2nd was most likely a late passage migrant, as were single **Snow** and **Lapland Buntings** and a male **Blackcap** on 1st. Among other passerines, small numbers of **Skylark**, **Goldcrest**, **Blackbird**, **Song Thrush**, **Redwing**, **Fieldfare**, **Robin**, **Stonechat**, **Dunnock** and **Goldfinch** were recorded on many days – all in single digits with the exception of 10 **Skylarks** on 30th. Relatively unusual records for December were single male **Pied Wagtails** on 4th & 11th and six **Linnets** on Christmas Day.

Rarities

Five **Whooper Swans** flew east on 3rd and first-winter **Iceland Gulls** (whether a single bird or two or three different individuals is unclear) were in Brick Field on 23rd, on floodwater between Old Light and the water tanks on 26th and in flight past North Light on 31st.

The December sun sets on another exceptional year of Lundy birds (photo: Dean Jones).



BIRDS IN 2019 – NOMENCLATURE AND SEQUENCE

The Systematic List follows The British List (9th edition, summarised version dated January 2020) maintained by the British Ornithologists' Union (BOU). Where different from the species name in common usage (e.g. Robin), the international English name applied by the BOU (in this case European Robin) is given in square brackets after the scientific name.

The numbers of birds given in the tables, where included, are primarily taken from the LFS logbook and give the monthly maxima and, in most cases, the number of days on which the species was reported. It should be noted that some of these counts may not be truly representative of the numbers of birds present and are perhaps at least partly reflective of variations in observer coverage.

ASSESSMENT OF RECORDS OF RARE BIRDS

Records of species and sub-species that are vagrants to Britain (e.g. Squacco Heron, Isabelline Wheatear) are assessed by the British Birds Rarities Committee (BBRC). Records of species classified as 'nationally scarce migrants' or which are otherwise rare in Devon (e.g. Alpine Swift, Barred Warbler) are considered by the Devon Birds Records Committee (DBRC). In addition, records of 'Lundy rarities', species that are regularly encountered on the mainland but rare on the island (e.g. Mediterranean Gull, Treecreeper), are assessed by the Lundy Bird Recorders.

In all cases, records of species that are rare – whether at national, county or island level – must be accepted by the relevant committee or recorder as being adequately documented. This helps to ensure that the ornithological records kept by different bodies, including the LFS, form a coherent whole, and that high standards of assessment are shared and applied. The unpredictable nature of birdwatching means that even the most experienced and knowledgeable observers are sometimes unable to clinch the identity of a suspected rarity; perhaps it was not seen for long enough, was too far away, or the weather was too bad for crucial plumage details to be picked out. In other cases, the distinguishing features are so subtle that photographs and/or examination of the bird in the hand may be required. The assessment of a rarity record as 'not proven' should be seen in this context; it does not necessarily mean that those assessing the record think the observer was mistaken.

Observers are asked to enter supporting notes for all records of rare species in the LFS logbook (which contains guidelines on what information to provide) as soon as possible after the sighting has been made. Please take care to ensure that your name(s) and contact details are included – and legible! Photos and video-clips are especially welcome; these can be emailed to the Lundy Bird Recorders at gen@birdsoflundy.org.uk.

Keeping in touch with Lundy bird news and information

The website www.birdsoflundy.org.uk linked to the 2007 publication *The Birds of Lundy* includes updates to the species accounts up to the end of 2019. Further updates will be added as new observations continue build on the knowledge gained from almost 75 years of intensive study by the LFS.

Complementing this long-term archive is an online blog www.lundybirds.blogspot.co.uk through which visiting birdwatchers and ringers may contribute news of the latest sightings. This relies completely on voluntary contributions (text and/or captioned photos), which can be emailed to gen@birdsoflundy.org.uk.

Observers' names are included in the Systematic List for all accepted records of species that are national rarities, nationally scarce migrants and/or Lundy vagrants, as well as for some other reports of particular interest.

BIRDS SEEN DURING BOAT CROSSINGS

Sightings during boat crossings are generally only included in the main list when it is clear that the birds in question were close to the island. There is a separate listing at the end of the report for other crossing records of interest. Observers are strongly encouraged to submit records for the coastal waters of the North Devon mainland, including the Taw & Torridge Estuary, to the Devon Bird Recorder (recorder@devonbirds.org).

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We are grateful to the island residents and visitors, whether or not they class themselves as birdwatchers, who contribute sightings to the LFS logbook. This 2019 Lundy bird report (as well as other wildlife reports) is a distillation of thousands of hours of observation by many dozens of individuals.

We note once again the outstanding contribution made by Dean Woodfin Jones, the resident Lundy Warden, together with his colleagues from the island Conservation Team, both staff and volunteers.

Special thanks to Devon Birds, particularly County Bird Recorder Kevin Rylands and Data Manager Karen Sims, for providing copies of BirdTrack data and other Lundy records submitted to Devon Birds, and for working closely with us on the assessment of rarity records, which help to ensure consistency between the respective bird reports published by Devon Birds and LFS.

Others who have helped us in various ways include Chris & Carol Baillie, Zoë Barton, Sam Bosanquet, Richard Campey, Chris & Mandy Dee, James Diamond, Rob Duncan, Martin Elcoate, Chas Holt, Andy Jayne, Ivan Lakin, Pete Lambden, Philip & Helen Lymbery, Alan & Sandra Rowland, Grant Sherman, Richard & Rebecca Taylor, Tony & Ann Taylor, Martin Thorne, Andy Trout, Nik Ward, Mark & Julia Webber, Lucy Winder and Justin Zantboer.

Great Northern Diver, Landing Bay, 29th December (photo: Dean Jones).

