

BIRD RINGING ON LUNDY

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Visiting ringers were on Lundy for four-and-a-half weeks from mid-April to mid-May, catching spring migrants. Though weather conditions were changeable, more than 1,300 birds were ringed at this stage. These were mainly warblers, with Blackcaps making up over half of them.

Three weeks in late May and early June were spent on the long-term Wheatear study, together with some night-time Manx Shearwater ringing. Then over 16 days in late August and early September there was more shearwater ringing, along with some productive targeting of Storm Petrels by night and autumn migrants by day. Migrants were then ringed during the last two weeks of September and three days in late October.

A total of 3,042 birds were ringed in 2019. This was an increase compared to 2018, with large numbers of migrant passerines more than compensating for a comparatively low number of Manx Shearwaters; and in spite of the disappointing shearwater total, other nocturnal work resulted in a record 61 Storm Petrels being ringed, as part of the effort to understand their breeding population on Lundy.

Blackcap topped the totals list for the third year in a row, with 719 ringed. Swallow (517), Willow Warbler (431), Chiffchaff (224) and Goldcrest (211) were all caught in greater numbers than in 2018, while Sedge Warbler (117) and Whitethroat (77) showed the most notable increases. In both cases these are the highest totals since 2000, with average annual catches over the intervening 18 years of just 38 and 25 respectively.

The headline rarities were the remarkable five Subalpine Warblers ringed in spring, bringing Lundy's all-time total for the species to 13. Also of note was a Cetti's Warbler, just the fourth to be ringed on the island, while a Little Bunting, a Nightingale and an Icterine Warbler brought their respective totals to seven, 11 and 19. Two Common Rosefinches were added to the 30 ringed in previous years.

WHEATEARS

The long-term RAS (Retrapping Adults for Survival) project on Wheatears continued, with three weeks of trapping, ringing and observation of breeding birds in late May and early June, to study their rates of survival on migration and while wintering in West Africa. A record 55 Wheatears were newly colour-ringed, and 46 birds colour-ringed in previous years were re-sighted within the study area. One other bird bred outside the area and so does not contribute to the official data, but he is the oldest known Lundy Wheatear, at eight years.

Thanks as always to all observers who reported colour-ringed birds before and after the main study period, adding to our knowledge of the birds' life histories. Any further records will be much appreciated.

*Male Wheatear, West Side, 24th March
(photo: Dean Jones).*



In all, 49 different species were ringed during 2019, the highest number since 2012. The year's ringing totals are shown opposite. As the equivalent table in the 2018 Annual Report omitted a column from the original list, a corrected version is also included here.

MANX SHEARWATERS

A combination of weather conditions, the timing of the shearwater breeding season and the dates of ringing visits to the breeding slopes all affect the number of adults and chicks ringed. Circumstances in 2019 resulted in fewer birds being caught, even though the colonies were clearly thriving. Totals of 141 chicks and 93 adults were newly ringed, and 62 different ringed adults were recaptured one or more times. These included seven birds originally ringed as chicks. Four were from 2015 and 2016, returning at an age when they would be looking for burrows and mates, but birds from 2008, 2011 and 2013 were old enough to be breeders.

There was increased uptake of the shearwater nestboxes, with five occupied. Nine different adults were found in them, and six of these birds had been ringed in previous years. Two were the returning pair that originally bred in 2017, but unfortunately they failed at the late egg or early chick stage in 2019. Two other pairs laid eggs and reared their chicks successfully.

STORM PETRELS

Like Manx Shearwaters, Storm Petrels breed in burrows which they only enter or leave under cover of darkness. They are also much smaller than shearwaters, and almost entirely black, so finding and monitoring them is a considerable challenge. In an effort to discover more about their breeding population on Lundy, petrels were targeted with mist-nets in late August, at night, on the slope at the North End where they had been heard calling from burrows in 2017 and 2018.

At this site 76 birds were caught in 2019, 29 of them without the use of a sound lure. While sound lures result in bigger catches, they can attract large numbers of wandering birds that are not local breeders. So the strategy at the colony was to start each visit without using lures, then use them later in the night to boost numbers, noting which birds were caught in which phase. Twelve of the birds caught in 2019 had originally been ringed at the same site in 2017 or 2018, and in some cases were caught twice in the same year, so these are likely to be local breeders. Several birds were carrying very full crops of food, suggesting they were visiting burrows with chicks.

Another ten birds were caught in mist-nets on slopes between Old Light and the Battery. Nine of these were caught while sound lures were playing, and one individual was caught again the next night at the North End. As it did not have a well-developed brood patch, it was almost certainly a wandering pre-breeder. However, studies at other sites suggest that the opposite cannot be assumed: some birds develop brood patches before reaching breeding age.

Though population studies of petrel breeding colonies are very challenging, it is hoped that repeat visits to the North End site in future years will gradually shed light on what is happening there.

One bird caught north of Old Light and six at the North End had been ringed elsewhere, showing the extent to which some petrels wander during the breeding season. Two had come from County Cork in south-west Ireland, one from the south-west tip of Cornwall, one from North Devon and the rest from Pembrokeshire. Four of them had been ringed within the previous six weeks.

A remarkable record came from the Channel Islands, where the Storm Petrel ringed as a chick on Lundy in 2014 was mist-netted at a breeding colony, without the use of a sound lure. It will be fascinating to see if it is a settled breeder and is caught there again, or whether it just made a fleeting visit.

Full details of all these Storm Petrel ringing controls are given on p.88.

LUNDY RINGING TOTALS

	2018	2019		2018	2019
Woodpigeon	1	2	Song Thrush	6	3
Storm Petrel	37	61	Spotted Flycatcher	5	24
Manx Shearwater	(361) 521	(141) 234	Robin	34	32
Sparrowhawk	1		Nightingale		1
G S Woodpecker	1		Pied Flycatcher	6	7
Coal Tit		1	Redstart	2	4
Skylark	(3) 4		Stonechat	2	8
Sand Martin	2	15	Wheatear	(9) 41	(4) 60
Swallow	461	517	House Sparrow	36	27
House Martin	7	11	Duncock	21	19
Cetti's Warbler		1	Grey Wagtail	1	
Wood Warbler		1	Pied Wagtail	1	
Pallas's Warbler	1		Meadow Pipit	41	24
Yellow-browed Warbler	5	1	Tree Pipit		4
Willow Warbler	325	431	Rock Pipit	1	1
Chiffchaff	185	224	Brambling	2	2
Sedge Warbler	26	117	Chaffinch	32	32
Reed Warbler	3	8	Bullfinch	1	
Icterine Warbler		1	Common Rosefinch		2
Grasshopper Warbler		6	Greenfinch	1	1
Blackcap	563	719	Linnet	12	10
Garden Warbler	4	8	Lesser Redpoll	11	2
Lesser Whitethroat		3	Goldfinch	161	56
Whitethroat	7	77	Siskin	1	
Subalpine Warbler		5	Little Bunting		1
Firecrest	5	6	Reed Bunting	1	
Goldcrest	96	211			
Wren	11	31	Total	2,724	3,042
Treecreeper		1	Number of species	45	49
Starling		1			
Blackbird	14	22			
Redwing	25	7			

Numbers in brackets indicate pulli (included in the main totals)

Willow Warbler, Millcombe, 29th April (photo: Dean Jones).



RECOVERIES AND CONTROLS

In addition to the Storm Petrels described above, 14 other ringed birds showed movements to or from Lundy in 2019. Most of these birds' movements fit well with expected migration routes involving western Britain, Ireland, western France and, in the case of one Blackcap, on into Spain.

One particularly noteworthy record involves a Goldfinch that was ringed in the extreme south-west of Ireland in late April, when most pairs are settled and have already reached the egg-laying stage. By late August it was on Lundy, where it was caught along with two recently fledged young. That late in the breeding season, they would be from a second or perhaps a third brood of the year. What had prompted this adult to move more than 300 km at some stage between those dates?

Another interesting record is of a Guillemot, ringed as a chick on Skomer Island, Pembrokeshire, in 2013 and seen on Lundy in June 2019. It was not breeding, but had reached an age when it was likely to be looking for a breeding site and mate. It is unusual for Guillemots to breed away from their natal colony.

There is also a Willow Warbler record from 1995 that has recently come to light. It was not flagged up as a control at the time, and has now been discovered during the ongoing process of digitising old ringing records.

Details of all these birds are given below.

Storm Petrel 2473747 – ringed as an adult at Hartland Point, Devon, 3.8.19. Controlled on Lundy, 27.8.19 (24 days; 26 km; **direction** NNW, **bearing** 333°).

Storm Petrel 2580670 – ringed as a pullus on Lundy, 5.10.14. Controlled on Burhou Island, Alderney, CHANNEL ISLANDS, 27.7.19 (1,756 days; 235 km; SE, 134°).

Storm Petrel 2685874 – ringed as an adult on Skokholm Island, Pembrokeshire, 30.7.14. Controlled on Lundy, 28.8.19 (1,855 days; 70 km; SE, 144°).

Storm Petrel 2714564 – ringed as an adult at Hot Point, The Lizard, Cornwall, 22.6.17. Controlled on Lundy, 23.8.19 (792 days; 142 km; NNE, 15°).

Storm Petrel 2742211 – ringed as an adult at Wootack Point, Marloes, Pembrokeshire, 16.7.19. Controlled on Lundy, 23.8.19 (38 days; 72 km; SE, 147°).

Storm Petrel 2735527 – ringed as an adult at Old Head of Kinsale, Cork, IRELAND, 22.7.18. Controlled on Lundy, 27.8.19 (401 days; 273 km; ESE, 101°).

Storm Petrel 2745285 – ringed as an adult on Cape Clear Island, Cork, IRELAND, 17.8.19. Controlled on Lundy, 27.8.19 (10 days; 337 km; E, 95°).

Storm Petrel 2746457 – ringed as an adult on Skokholm Island, Pembrokeshire, 2.8.19. Controlled on Lundy, 26.8.19 (24 days; 72 km; SE, 144°).

Guillemot N05511, with red colour-ring, engraved 0114 – ringed as a pullus on Skomer Island, Pembrokeshire, 8.7.13. Re-sighted on Lundy, 26.6.19 (2,179 days; 76 km; SE, 145°).

Goldcrest LRV011 – ringed as a first-year female on Lundy, 23.9.19. Controlled at Keyhaven Marshes, Hampshire, 17.11.19 (55 days; 223 km; ESE, 103°).

Willow Warbler KYN356 – ringed as a first-year bird on Skokholm Island, Pembrokeshire, 30.8.18. Controlled on Lundy, 29.4.19 (242 days; 74 km; SE, 145°).

Blackcap AYD2111 – ringed as a first-year female at Beachy Head, East Sussex, 22.9.18. Controlled on Lundy, 5.5.19 (225 days; 348 km; W, 278°).

Blackcap ABB7781 – ringed as a first-year female on Lundy, 13.9.18. Found dead (not fresh; hit wires) at Socuéllamos, Ciudad Real, SPAIN, 22.11.19 (435 days; 1329 km; S, 174°).

Lesser Whitethroat AAC9100 – ringed as a first-year bird at Kilpaison Marsh, Rhoscrowther, Pembrokeshire, 30.8.18. Controlled on Lundy, 23.4.19 (236 days; 62 km; SSE, 155°).

Sedge Warbler Paris 7447202 – ringed as an adult female at Le Bonhomme, St-Philbert-de-Grand-Lieu, Loire-Atlantique, FRANCE, 5.8.15. Controlled on Lundy, 30.4.19 (1364 days; 505 km; NNW, 335°).

Sedge Warbler ADB7438 – ringed as a first-year bird at South Milton Ley, Devon, 9.8.18. Controlled on Lundy, 7.5.19 (271 days; 116 km; NNW, 331°).

Sedge Warbler 8372245 – ringed as a first-year bird at Tour aux Moutons, Donges, Loire-Atlantique, FRANCE, 15.9.18. Controlled on Lundy, 7.5.19 (234 days; 468 km; NNW, 337°).

Sedge Warbler S730803 – ringed as a first-year bird at Lough Beg, Ringaskiddy, Cork, IRELAND, 3.9.18. Controlled on Lundy, 10.5.19 (249 days; 263 km; ESE, 106°).

Sedge Warbler 8298291 – ringed as a first-year bird at Mars-Ouest, Saint-Philbert-de-Grand-Lieu, Loire-Atlantique, FRANCE, 6.8.18. Controlled on Lundy, 14.5.19 (281 days; 500 km; NNW, 335°).

Sedge Warbler 8752046 – ringed as a first-year bird at Sandouville, Seine-Maritime, FRANCE, 30.8.18. Controlled on Lundy, 7.5.19 (250 days; 400 km; WNW, 298°).

Reed Warbler S498854 – ringed as a first-year bird at Blackers Rock, Lough Neagh, Tyrone, N. IRELAND, 13.8.17. Controlled on Lundy, 6.5.19 (631 days; 404 km; SSE, 162°).

Goldfinch AVA4847 – ringed as an adult male on Cape Clear Island, Cork, IRELAND, 22.4.19. Controlled on Lundy, 24.8.19 (124 days; 338 km; E, 96°).

Lundy ringing control 1995 (details received in 2019)

Willow Warbler 3L5103 – ringed as an adult bird at South Walney, Barrow-in-Furness, Cumbria, 17.8.1994. Controlled on Lundy, 9.4.1995 (235 days; 334 km; SSW, 198°).



Four autumn captures:
Little Bunting (above – photo:
Justin Zantboer) and (top to
bottom) Whitethroat, Icterine
Warbler and Cetti's Warbler
(photos: Dean Jones).