

# BIRDS ON LUNDY 2021

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## REVIEW OF THE BIRDING YEAR

A total of 162 species (pending rarity decisions) were recorded during 2019. Highlights included:

- Record post-rat eradication totals of breeding **Guillemots**, **Razorbills**, **Puffins** and **Storm Petrels**
- First **Sulphur-bellied Warbler** for Britain and only the second for the Western Palearctic
- Other national rarities: **Rustic Bunting**, **Red-eyed Vireo** and **Buff-bellied Pipit**
- Lundy's fifth **Little Grebe**

### **JANUARY – Max temp 10.2C, min 0.7C, mean 6.1C. Rainfall 158.0 mm**

*The mean UK temperature was 1.5C below the 30-year long-term average, making it the coldest January since 2010. The month started cold, with wintry showers in eastern areas, although Lundy remained dry to 11<sup>th</sup>. In spite of chilly north-easterly winds, there were some bright winter days and temperatures on the island remained above freezing. Later in the second week it turned milder and wetter as winds shifted to the west, bring much more unsettled conditions. Storm Christoph brought particularly wet and windy weather on 19<sup>th</sup> with gusts on Lundy of 50 mph. Following a brief colder interlude with a crisp, sunny day on 23<sup>rd</sup>, the month ended mild, wet and windy once more with gusts reaching 60 mph on 28<sup>th</sup>. Rainfall of 108.9 mm (just over 4¼ inches) during the second half of the month meant that the island was saturated, with extensive surface water in places, including near the water tanks on the edge of Ackland's Moor.*

Winter sunshine early in the month stimulated **Skylarks** and **Blackbirds** to sing and **House Sparrows** were seen taking nesting material into the farmyard nestboxes. A sunny interlude on 23<sup>rd</sup> saw **Rock Pipits** starting their parachute song-flights at South Light and **Starlings** nest-building in the eaves of the General Stores. Small numbers of **Red-throated Divers** arrived off the east coast early in the month, with a peak of 10 on 7<sup>th</sup>, along with a single **Great Northern Diver** on eight days. Numbers of **Kittiwakes** feeding off the East Side reached 2,300 on 13<sup>th</sup> and there were also a few **Mediterranean** and **Common Gulls**. The cold weather at the start of the month provoked a small hard-weather influx of **Lapwings** and **Golden Plovers**, with up to three and eight respectively on 10<sup>th</sup> with further scattered records later in the month. Some 62 **Fulmars** and 1,320 **Guillemots** were on the ledges from Jenny's Cove to St Mark's Stone on 23<sup>rd</sup>. Up to four **Water Rails** were in various corners of Millcombe, there was a single **Pied Wagtail** on 5<sup>th</sup>, a lone **Woodpigeon** in Quarter Wall Copse on 10<sup>th</sup>, a **Chiffchaff** turned up briefly in Millcombe on 16<sup>th</sup>, the first **Linnet** of the year dropped into Barton Field on 23<sup>rd</sup>, and a **Woodcock** was flushed from the 'Secret Garden' on 29<sup>th</sup>. Also of note were counts of up to 18 **Teal**, 24 **Snipe**, 16 **Blackbirds**, 16 **Song Thrushes** and 11 **Redwings**, as well as an arrival of both territorial and passage **Skylarks** (up to 22 on 23<sup>rd</sup>).

### **Rarities and scarcities**

A sub-adult 'Northern' *argentatus* **Herring Gull** was resting on the Water off Miller's Cake on 23<sup>rd</sup>. A **Jack Snipe** was located by torchlight on Ackland's Moor on the evening of 7<sup>th</sup>. A very confiding male **Snow Bunting** was seen from 7<sup>th</sup> onwards, foraging mainly along the main track or near Old Light, and there was a male **Black Redstart** at Benjamin's Chair on 9<sup>th</sup> & 10<sup>th</sup>, with a female there on 21<sup>st</sup>. Though abundant later in the year, a **Manx Shearwater** off the East Side on 13<sup>th</sup> was very much a seasonal rarity. The *hibernicus*-type **Coal Tit** (ringed in Oct 2021) and **Firecrest** that had both been logged regularly in Dec 2021 held on throughout the month.

## **FEBRUARY – Max temp 11.4C, min -1.0C, mean 6.3C. Rainfall 78.3 mm**

*The first few days were unsettled but mild with south-westerly winds and temperatures rising to a balmy 10C on 3<sup>rd</sup>. After a calm and sunny interlude on 4<sup>th</sup>, it became steadily colder from 6<sup>th</sup> with bitter easterly winds – associated with Storm Darcy in the North Sea – gusting at 48 mph on Lundy on 9<sup>th</sup> along with a wind-chill temperature of -8C. There were intermittent snow flurries, the ground froze solid and all puddles and ponds iced over, including half of Pondsburry. From 14<sup>th</sup> the winds switched to a more southerly direction but remained strong, gusting at 61 mph and bringing in heavy rain. Mild but often wet and windy conditions continued for much of the second half of the month, though high pressure calmed things down from 25<sup>th</sup>, bringing cooler air from the east once more and some banks of sea fog.*

Sunshine and light winds on 4<sup>th</sup> encouraged **Song Thrushes** to start singing in Millcombe and the South End **Raven** pair to get on with the business of nest-building. **Chaffinch** song was heard in Millcombe from 25<sup>th</sup>. Up to nine **Red-throated Divers** and a single **Great Northern Diver** were off the East Side at times, as were a handful of **Mediterranean** and **Common Gulls**. **Guillemots** continued to visit the west coast breeding cliffs, with 1,110 counted at Jenny's Cove on 4<sup>th</sup>, the same day as the first four **Razorbills** were seen on land (rising to 400 ashore here by 27<sup>th</sup>). There were 26 **Teal** on Pondsburry on 19<sup>th</sup>, and one or two **Lapwing** and **Golden Plover** were logged on four dates each, with a single **Woodcock** on two days. A **Pied Wagtail** flew over the farm on 5<sup>th</sup>, a single **Woodpigeon** was in Millcombe on 10<sup>th</sup>, followed by two in 19<sup>th</sup>, and lone **Linnets** were noted on 3<sup>rd</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup>, whilst the overwintering **Coal Tit** and **Firecrest** both lingered on in Millcombe, the latter beginning to sing from 21<sup>st</sup>. The first **Goldcrest** of 2021 was calling in Quarter Wall Copse on 16<sup>th</sup> and two **Reed Buntings** dropped into Quarter Wall on 17<sup>th</sup>, whilst a light south-westerly breeze and a rise in temperatures spurred on the first proper movement of spring migration, bringing influxes of **Meadow Pipits** and **Skylarks**, the first **Grey Wagtail** of the year and a trickle of **Stonechat**, **Pied Wagtail** and **Goldfinch** on 21<sup>st</sup>. By 25<sup>th</sup>, Meadow Pipit and Stonechat counts had reached 88 and 13, respectively. Offshore, there was a small but noticeable passage of **Gannets**, **Herring** and **Lesser Black-backed Gulls**, and the island's breeding **Lesser Black-backs** were seen defending East Side territories towards the end of the month. The month drew to a close with Lundy's second earliest ever record of **Sand Martin** and a calling **Water Rail**, both at Pondsburry on 26<sup>th</sup>.

### **Rarities and scarcities**

A first-winter **Little Gull** was foraging with Kittiwakes in the Landing Bay on 5<sup>th</sup>. Three **Lapland Buntings** together in High Street Field on 4<sup>th</sup> remained throughout the month, whilst the Old Light **Snow Bunting** lingered until 26<sup>th</sup>. Also of note were a male **Black Redstart** at Benjamin's Chair on 8<sup>th</sup>, an adult **Little Gull** foraging near Rat Island on 15<sup>th</sup>, a second-winter **Yellow-legged Gull** on Ackland's Moor on 20<sup>th</sup>, and a 'Northern' *argentatus* **Herring Gull** in Lower Lighthouse Field on the same date. Finally, a **Woodlark** in Barton Field on 27<sup>th</sup> was only the second February record for the island.

*Lapland Bunting, High Street Field, 28<sup>th</sup> February (photo: Dean Jones).*





*Goldfinch, fresh in off the sea at Benjamin's Chair, 18<sup>th</sup> March (Dean Jones).*

**MARCH – Max temp 17.6C, min 1.2C, mean 7.5C. Rainfall 41.1 mm**

March began mostly settled, but rather cold. From 9<sup>th</sup> onwards it turned unsettled and windy, with heavy rain and south-westerly gales on 10<sup>th</sup>, the winds then veering north and reaching 66 mph later in the day. Hail on 11<sup>th</sup> was followed by further northerly gales, gusting to 68 mph, on 13<sup>th</sup>. Conditions were much more settled from 15<sup>th</sup> to 22<sup>nd</sup>, with often sunny days but rather chilly nights under frequently clear skies and a generally northerly airflow, with light winds. From 23<sup>rd</sup> winds switched back to the south-west, bringing spells of rain or drizzle at times from 25<sup>th</sup> to the morning of 29<sup>th</sup>, accompanied by gales peaking at 53 mph on 28<sup>th</sup>. Later on 29<sup>th</sup> the skies cleared, the winds dropped and the month ended on a more spring-like note, with temperatures reaching 18C on 30<sup>th</sup>.

The first two **Chiffchaffs** of spring were logged on 3<sup>rd</sup>. The last of the long-staying **Lapland Buntings** in High Street Field was seen on 6<sup>th</sup>, the *hibernicus*-type **Coal Tit** remained in Millcombe until 12<sup>th</sup>, and the overwintering **Firecrest** continued to sing regularly until it too moved on mid-month. New for the year were singles of **Stock Dove** and **Siskin** on 6<sup>th</sup>, whilst a **Black Redstart** at Jenny's Cove on the same day was considered the first spring migrant after the overwintering birds logged in January & early February. The first **Wheatears** (both males) were seen on 7<sup>th</sup> and the **Meadow Pipit** count broke three figures, with 105 logged. Migration was largely on pause for a few days due to adverse weather from 10<sup>th</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup>, though the urge to move north towards the breeding grounds is so strong in spring that three **Goldcrests** turned up in Millcombe on 11<sup>th</sup> and a trickle of **Meadow Pipits** battled through the northerly gales on 13<sup>th</sup> & 14<sup>th</sup>. Calmer weather from 15<sup>th</sup> saw a resumption of more general movement, including **wagtails**, **Meadow Pipits** (peaking a few days later at 243 on 20<sup>th</sup>) and small numbers of **Chaffinches**, as well as another **Stock Dove**. The first **Swallow** zipped over the Village on 16<sup>th</sup>, followed by the first two **House Martins** on 17<sup>th</sup> – the same day that the first **Puffin** was seen ashore at Jenny's Cove.

By now, migration was really moving through the gears, the 18<sup>th</sup> bringing a small fall of 22 **Chiffchaffs**, the first **Willow Warbler**, **Blackcap** and **White Wagtail** of the year, and a total of 19 **Goldfinches** – by far the highest count of the year to date. The 20<sup>th</sup> brought an arrival of around 40 **Goldcrests** and three **Firecrests**, whilst a female **Sparrowhawk** and 11 **Fieldfare** were also logged. **Redwings** were seen most days from 16<sup>th</sup> to the end of the month, reaching 26 on 21<sup>st</sup>. There was a further weather-related slow-down in passerine migration, but the next



few days brought the first **Collared Dove** of spring on 22<sup>nd</sup>, the first **Cormorants** on 23<sup>rd</sup>, and the first **Merlin** on 24<sup>th</sup>. At least 11 **Wheatears** scattered along the West Side on 27<sup>th</sup> included a colour-ringed female at Jenny's Cove – the first returning bird from Lundy's colour-ringed breeding population to be seen in 2021. The month concluded with a record-breaking influx of migrants, including 212 **Sand Martins** and 162 **Swallows** on 29<sup>th</sup>, followed on 31<sup>st</sup> by a remarkable fall of warblers, comprising 36 **Willow Warblers**, 23 **Chiffchaffs** and an unprecedented (for March) 144 **Blackcaps**, plus a single reeling **Grasshopper Warbler** (Lundy's earliest ever) and a fly-over **Tree Pipit**.

Apart from **Oystercatchers** noisily defending their breeding territories, waders were thin on the ground, with just a scattering of **Golden Plovers** (maximum four on 8<sup>th</sup>) and **Snipe** (maximum eight on 17<sup>th</sup>). Among the island's breeding seabirds, the first three **Puffins** of the year were on the water at Jenny's Cove on 6<sup>th</sup>, the same date as the first **Manx Shearwaters** of spring were seen in flight off the Battery. Small numbers of **Kittiwakes** were ashore in Jenny's Cove on 20<sup>th</sup>, whilst **Puffin** numbers there had reached 75 by 21<sup>st</sup>, of which 25 were on land. **Shags** were nest-building along the east coast on 23<sup>rd</sup>. Offshore, up to seven **Common Gulls** and a single **Mediterranean Gull** were off the east coast on 5<sup>th</sup>, whilst up to three **Red-throated Divers** and one or two **Great Northern Divers** were seen at times. A **Great Skua** passed South West Point on 20<sup>th</sup>. Finally, a colour-ringed **Lesser Black-backed Gull** photographed in High Street Field on 26<sup>th</sup> (at this stage of the spring potentially still a passage migrant rather than necessarily a Lundy breeder) had been ringed in southern Spain a year previously.

### Rarities and scarcities

The first **Jackdaw** of the year flew over the Village on 1<sup>st</sup>, with perhaps the same long-staying individual logged sporadically to the end of the month. A **Pink-footed Goose** that arrived on 6<sup>th</sup> remained until 18<sup>th</sup>, spending most of its time on Ackland's Moor. Two **Long-tailed Tits** were found in Quarter Wall Copse on 18<sup>th</sup>, with probably a different bird in Millcombe from 21<sup>st</sup> to 31<sup>st</sup> (ringed on 30<sup>th</sup>). Also in Millcombe on 21<sup>st</sup> was a **Treecreeper**, feeding close to the **Long-tailed Tit** at one point. Two **Rooks** were foraging in South West Field on 30<sup>th</sup>.

*Pink-footed Goose, Ackland's Moor, 15<sup>th</sup> March (photo: Dean Jones).*



## FIRST DATES FOR SPRING MIGRANTS

February	26 <sup>th</sup>	Sand Martin
March	3 <sup>rd</sup>	Chiffchaff
	6 <sup>th</sup>	Puffin, Manx Shearwater
	7 <sup>th</sup>	Wheatear
	16 <sup>th</sup>	Swallow
	17 <sup>th</sup>	House Martin
	18 <sup>th</sup>	Willow Warbler, Blackcap, White Wagtail
	20 <sup>th</sup>	Great Skua
	22 <sup>nd</sup>	Collared Dove
	23 <sup>rd</sup>	Cormorant
	31 <sup>st</sup>	Grasshopper Warbler, Tree Pipit
April	2 <sup>nd</sup>	Ring Ouzel
	4 <sup>th</sup>	redpoll sp.
	9 <sup>th</sup>	Sedge Warbler, Pied Flycatcher
	14 <sup>th</sup>	Redstart
	15 <sup>th</sup>	Whimbrel, Yellow Wagtail
	16 <sup>th</sup>	Whitethroat, Mistle Thrush
	18 <sup>th</sup>	Dunlin
	19 <sup>th</sup>	Reed Warbler
	22 <sup>nd</sup>	Garden Warbler
	23 <sup>rd</sup>	Swift, Ringed Plover, Whinchat
	27 <sup>th</sup>	Black-headed Gull, Spotted Flycatcher
	28 <sup>th</sup>	Common Sandpiper
May	8 <sup>th</sup>	Lesser Whitethroat, Osprey
	11 <sup>th</sup>	Golden Oriole



## LAST DATES FOR 'WINTER' VISITORS

April	3 <sup>rd</sup>	Woodcock
	4 <sup>th</sup>	Red-throated Diver
	20 <sup>th</sup>	Fieldfare
May	2 <sup>nd</sup>	Redwing
	18 <sup>th</sup>	Merlin
	21 <sup>st</sup>	Great Northern Diver

Top: Chiffchaff, Millcombe, 31<sup>st</sup> March.  
 Right: Whinchat, Quarter Wall, 23<sup>rd</sup> April  
 (photos: Dean Jones),.

## BREEDING SPECIES IN 2021

Thirty-seven species were all confirmed as successfully fledging young:

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

In addition, Storm Petrel probably bred successfully at three sites where active burrows were located, whilst a male and female Kestrel were present in suitable habitat during the breeding season, but there was no evidence of a nesting attempt. Singing Willow Warblers were present in late spring and early summer but also with no further indication of breeding.

*Peregrine, 17<sup>th</sup> March (photo: Dean Jones).*



#### **APRIL – Max temp 13.1C, min 2.7C, mean 7.7C. Rainfall 6.9 mm**

*The month began settled but chilly with a stiff wind from the east or north-east – a weather set-up that was to become very familiar as the month wore on. Across England as a whole, it was the second coldest and seventh driest April since the current data series began in the mid-late 1800s, with frosts much more prevalent than usual. Conversely, it was the second sunniest April on record for England, with only April 2020 having been sunnier. Cold, sunny and dry conditions certainly dominated on Lundy, with total precipitation not much more than half a centimetre. Daytime temperatures recovered somewhat from the middle of the month, with long sunny spells and generally lighter winds – though still persistently from an easterly quarter – meaning that April's maximum temperature was significantly below the March peak, whilst the mean temperature during the month was barely higher than that recorded for March.*

After the early arrivals of late March, the first week of April was generally rather quieter than usual for passerine migration amidst often chilly conditions. The 1<sup>st</sup> saw a small but noticeable movement of hirundines and finches hugging the west coast cliffs for shelter from a keen easterly, a **Reed Bunting** in the Laundry Garden, and the first **Ring Ouzel** of the year – a fine male near the Lambing Shed. Two more were along the West Side on 3<sup>rd</sup>, the same day as a **Woodcock** was flushed in Middle Park, a **Redwing** was by the site of the Forgotten Heinkel, and three **Siskins** appeared, marking the start of almost daily records in April and the first half of May. A fly-over **redpoll** (presumably a Lesser Redpoll) on 4<sup>th</sup> was the first of the year, and a very pale **Buzzard** arrived on 7<sup>th</sup>, remaining until 15<sup>th</sup>. A brood of 12 freshly minted **Mallard** ducklings at Quarters Pond on 6<sup>th</sup> were also new for the year. After a spell of early-morning rain, there was a pulse of 232 **Swallows** on 8<sup>th</sup> and **Puffin** numbers at Jenny's Cove had risen to 167 by the same date. The 9<sup>th</sup> brought the first **Pied Flycatcher** and **Sedge Warbler** of spring, plus another **Grasshopper Warbler** – this one on a much more typical date than the exceptionally early bird at the end of March. Also arriving more or less 'on time' were two male **Redstarts** on 14<sup>th</sup> and both **Whimbrel** and **Yellow Wagtail** on 15<sup>th</sup> – by which time **House Sparrow** and **Starling** nests in the Village already contained hungry chicks. The second half of the month saw an improvement in weather, with generally light winds and some warm, sunny days. Migration picked up considerably.

*Skylark, High Street, 14<sup>th</sup> April (photo: Dean Jones).*







*Redstart, Quarter Wall, 17<sup>th</sup> April (photo: Dean Jones).*

Firsts for the year included **Whitethroat** and **Mistle Thrush** on 16<sup>th</sup>, the same date as a Gibraltar-ringed **Blackcap** was trapped in Millcombe, a late(ish) **Fieldfare** was in Barton Field, and a count of 61 **Wheatears**, including several Greenland-race birds, was the highest of the spring to date. Though there were no exceptionally large warbler falls during the month, 150 **Willow Warblers** on both 18<sup>th</sup> & 20<sup>th</sup>, as well as 200 or more **Blackcaps** on both dates, contributed to an impressive total of more than 900 birds ringed in just five days from 17<sup>th</sup> to 21<sup>st</sup>, including 307 on 20<sup>th</sup> alone. The 18<sup>th</sup> also brought a passage of 400 **Swallows**, 100 **Sand Martins** and the first **Dunlin** of the year, whilst the first **Reed Warbler** of spring, trapped in Millcombe on 19<sup>th</sup>, had been ringed in the Isles of Scilly in July 2019. The first **Cuckoo** was energetically shuttling between Millcombe and Quarter Wall Copse to perform his iconic call on 20<sup>th</sup>, a day on which a fine array of other migrants were logged. The last week or so, brought typical later-spring 'firsts', including **Garden Warbler** in Millcombe on 22<sup>nd</sup>, whilst the next day saw a **Whinchat** at Quarter Wall, three **Ringed Plover** in South West Field with five **Dunlin**, and a **Swift** over Jenny's Cove. Nearly 1,500 Swallows and just over 100 House Martins passed north in the lee of the West Side in just one hour on 25<sup>th</sup>. A **Spotted Flycatcher** graced Millcombe on 27<sup>th</sup>, whilst a second calendar-year **Black-headed Gull** in Barton Field was a more surprising 'first' for the year on the same date, and at least four **Tree Pipits** were logged. The 28<sup>th</sup> saw a **Common Sandpiper** by the Jetty and a stonking male **Whinchat** at Quarter Wall for most of the day. The first **Guillemot** egg of the season was seen at Jenny's Cove on 27<sup>th</sup>, followed just two days later by the first **Razorbill** egg.

### **Rarities and scarcities**

Two **Hoopoes** together on the Terrace for much of the afternoon of 27<sup>th</sup> constituted the only nationally scarce species logged, but it was a good month for 'Lundy rarities'. The March **Jackdaw** lingered until the first day of April, being joined by another on 2<sup>nd</sup>. Both left the island to the east on 3<sup>rd</sup> but there were further singles between 14<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup>. A female **Bullfinch** was feeding on Blackthorn in Millcombe on 3<sup>rd</sup>, a **Bar-tailed Godwit** was photographed in the Devil's Kitchen on 15<sup>th</sup>, whilst a **Sanderling** was along the main track on 19<sup>th</sup>. A female **Great Spotted Woodpecker** was trapped and ringed in Millcombe on 24<sup>th</sup>, and a male **Yellowhammer** foraging on the main track by the Lambing Shed on 26<sup>th</sup> was only the fifth record during the last decade. Finally, a **Rook** was in Tillage Field, also on 26<sup>th</sup>, and the month ended with a **Corn Bunting** in St John's Valley on 28<sup>th</sup> & 30<sup>th</sup>.



**MAY – Max temp 20.3C, min 2.2C, mean 10.1C. Rainfall 102.75 mm**

After a quiet, sunny but rather chilly first couple of days, most of May was very unsettled, often windy and unseasonably cold, with showers and spells of heavier rain at times. The first week was particularly cold, northerly winds gusting at Force 11 (Violent Storm) on 3<sup>rd</sup>/4<sup>th</sup>. There was heavy rain on several days mid-month, with further Force 11 winds, this time from the west-south-west, on 20<sup>th</sup>/21<sup>st</sup>, accompanied by another deluge. Daytime temperatures never exceeded 13C – and were often lower – right up to 27<sup>th</sup> when things finally started to settle down and warm up, the weather station thermometer reaching 17C on 29<sup>th</sup> & 30<sup>th</sup> and a tropical 20C on 31<sup>st</sup>! Across England, the mean temperature for May was 1.3C below the long-term average, making it the coldest May for 25 years. It was also a very wet month, the fifth wettest in England since the 1860s, with well over 200% of average rainfall across much of the South West.

The 1<sup>st</sup> saw the biggest surge of hirundine migration of the entire spring with highly conservative estimates of 3,500 **Swallows**, 1,500 **House Martins** and 150 **Sand Martins** piling through, plus a single **Swift**. On the same day, the first **House Sparrow** fledglings appeared in the Village, followed on 2<sup>nd</sup> by the first young **Starlings** to leave their nests. A late **Redwing** was in upper Millcombe on 2<sup>nd</sup>. The winds were so strong on 3<sup>rd</sup> that visitors and staff alike were under instruction to avoid going outside and it was still blowing a gale on 4<sup>th</sup>. Unsurprisingly, there were few notable bird sightings. The 5<sup>th</sup> brought a **Stock Dove** foraging in Barton Field, a **Lesser Whitethroat** along the Lower East Side Path, and a **Firecrest** in Millcombe pines. Another pulse of 700 **Swallows** passed through on 7<sup>th</sup>, along with a variety of other migrants. Further heavy rain and gales grounded hirundines on the Landing Bay beach on 8<sup>th</sup> and a **Swift** was taken into care overnight and released the next day. Sadly, persistently cool and unsettled weather during the following week meant that **Swallows**, in particular, were struggling to find sufficient food, and a number were found dead in the gas store and Casbah on several dates, whilst others were seen perching weakly on bramble stems or sitting in the middle of paths, clearly in a parlous state.

*Garden Warbler, Millcombe, 11<sup>th</sup> May 2021 (photo: Richard Campey).*



A late **Great Northern Diver** was in the Landing Bay on 10<sup>th</sup>, a flock of 23 **Oystercatchers** was roosting in Threequarter Wall Bay, and there were at least 10 **Spotted Flycatchers** scattered across the island that day. The first **Grey Heron** of the year flew along the east coast on 12<sup>th</sup> and a stunningly beautiful northern-race *altifrons* **Golden Plover**, with a solid black face, breast and belly, was foraging in Barton Field. Intriguingly, male and female **Siskins** and **Lesser Redpolls** were seen in potentially suitable breeding habitat mid-month, with song heard from both species. A female **Lesser Redpoll** was carrying what appeared to be nesting



*Pied Flycatcher, St Helen's Field, 6<sup>th</sup> May  
(photo: Richard Campey).*

material on 13<sup>th</sup> but there was no further evidence (for either species) that any actual breeding attempt was made. Single **Wood Warbler** and **Whinchat** put in appearances on 14<sup>th</sup>. **Wrens**, **Blackbirds**, **Robins**, **Dunnocks**, **Chaffinches**, **Goldfinches** and **Linnets** were all nest-building, or already tending eggs and young in Millcombe during the third week, and the first **Kittiwake** of the year egg was recorded at Aztec Bay on 15<sup>th</sup>. **Herring** and **Lesser Black-backed Gulls** were also getting on with breeding, though they seemed to be having quite a protracted season, eggs not far off hatching in some nests whilst other pairs were only just starting to collect nesting material.

A **Short-eared Owl** was flushed from the Rocket Pole area during the evening of 16<sup>th</sup> and the first **Stonechat** fledglings were near Pondsburry on 19<sup>th</sup>. Yet more wind and rain on 20<sup>th</sup> & 21<sup>st</sup> saw **Swallows** and **House Martins** grounded once again on the Beach Road and in Millcombe, and the weather was likely responsible for the appearance of three **Storm Petrels** and a **Black-headed Gull** off Rat Island. Arriving with a clearance to sunnier skies, a count of 50 **Swifts** on 22<sup>nd</sup> was the highest of the spring and coincided with the unusually late fledging of **Ravens** near Benjamin's Chair, where two young took to the air. The weather window was only brief, however, and further rain and wind on 23<sup>rd</sup> & 24<sup>th</sup> did little to boost sightings for the LFS logbook. Sadly, a number of **Guillemot** eggs at the St Mark's Stone study colony were lost to puddling caused by incessant rain, but **Kittiwake** nests appeared to be largely unscathed (unlike in some years when south-westerly gales and swell have washed away nests sited lower down the cliffs). Also on the plus side, the first **Puffins** were delivering fish to young tucked away in burrows on 26<sup>th</sup>, and the first **Guillemot** chicks were spotted on 31<sup>st</sup>.

### Rarities and scarcities

May is often one of the best months of the year for oddities but, doubtless due to the adverse weather, May 2021 was rather quiet. The **Corn Bunting** from the end of April reappeared in St John's Valley on 2<sup>nd</sup>, and an **Osprey** was an unexpected arrival amidst the atrocious conditions on 8<sup>th</sup>. Two **Golden Orioles** brought a touch of the exotic to Millcombe on 11<sup>th</sup>, the valley filled with their incredibly varied, deceptively ventriloquial but unmistakeable calls. Both remained until 14<sup>th</sup>, with one staying to 15<sup>th</sup> – the same day as a male **subalpine warbler** put in an appearance in Millcombe, but views were unfortunately too brief to assign it definitively to one of the recently 'split' species. Two **Sanderlings** were on the side of Rat Island on 16<sup>th</sup> and a **Turnstone** was in the Landing Bay on 20<sup>th</sup>. At the end of the month, a first-year male **Common Rosefinch** was singing in Millcombe early on 30<sup>th</sup>, then trapped and ringed near the Lodge in the evening, and a **Crossbill** was flying around Millcombe. Sadly now categorised as a rarity, a **Turtle Dove** was found by the Lambing Shed on 31<sup>st</sup>.



*Kittiwakes building nests at Aztec Bay, 6<sup>th</sup> June (photo: Dean Jones).*

**JUNE – Max temp 21.7C, min 9.9C, mean 14.0C. Rainfall 41.6 mm**

*The month was mostly rather settled on Lundy, with plenty of sunshine, light winds and rather warm temperatures. There were some brief duller, damper periods too, particularly on 9<sup>th</sup> & 10<sup>th</sup>, 14<sup>th</sup>, and 19<sup>th</sup> & 20<sup>th</sup> when the island experienced thick mist and drizzle from dawn to dusk. Across England as a whole, rainfall was significantly above the long-term average, but Lundy had a comparatively dry month following the downpours of May.*

Nine **Collared Doves** on 1<sup>st</sup> was the highest count of the year to date. Small numbers of **Swift**, hirundines, warblers, '**Greenland**' **Wheatear** and **Spotted Flycatcher** continued to pass through early in the month, whilst more unusual late migrants included **Cuckoo**, **Tree Pipit** and **Pied Flycatcher** on 2<sup>nd</sup>, a **Yellow Wagtail** on 12<sup>th</sup> and a further **Tree Pipit** on 15<sup>th</sup>. **Swift** numbers rose to 30 on 30<sup>th</sup>. The regular four-yearly census of cliff-nesting seabirds was completed in the first half of the month, revealing that the island's auks continue to go from strength-to-strength as populations recover post rat-eradication. **Guillemot**, **Razorbill** and **Puffin** all showed significant increases since the last survey in 2017, with Guillemot now approaching the 10,000 mark and Puffin clocking in at 848, a 21<sup>st</sup> century record. **Shag**, **Fulmar** and **Kittiwake** all posted increases as well (albeit modest for Kittiwake), but the three large gull species, particularly **Lesser Black-backed Gull**, continue to show declining trends. The first Kittiwake chicks were seen on 11<sup>th</sup> at Aztec Bay, whilst Guillemot 'jumplings' started to leap from the study ledges at St Mark's Stone from 20<sup>th</sup>.



Among the island's other breeding birds, half-a-dozen **Manx Shearwaters** were incubating eggs in the LFS-built and installed nestboxes along the West Side on 1<sup>st</sup> and there was exciting evidence of further expansion of the island's **Storm Petrel** population. The first **Oystercatcher** chicks and **Carrion Crow** fledglings appeared on 2<sup>nd</sup> and **Teal** ducklings were seen at Pondsby on 3<sup>rd</sup>. Additional first fledging dates including **Linnet** and second-brood **Starling** on 15<sup>th</sup>, **Chaffinch** and **Meadow Pipit** on 19<sup>th</sup>, **Pied Wagtail** on 22<sup>nd</sup> and **Wren** on 23<sup>rd</sup>. **Wheatears** appeared to have had a good season, Dean Jones reporting "*noisy gangs of young birds on nearly every buttress and drystone wall around the island*". Intriguingly, up to three **Siskins** were noted on three dates, including a singing male in Millcombe on 16<sup>th</sup>, but no evidence of any breeding attempt was found.

### Rarities and scarcities

A **Rustic Bunting** was found in Barton Field during the afternoon of 1<sup>st</sup>, whilst a *Hippolais* warbler glimpsed in Millcombe on 2<sup>nd</sup> was probably an Icterine, but views were too brief for definitive ID. The 8<sup>th</sup> brought one of those ornithological 'once-in-a-lifetime' events for birders lucky enough to be on the island when the first **Sulphur-bellied Warbler** for the UK (and only the second for the entire Western Palearctic) was found singing near Stonecroft before relocating to Millcombe. Though it unfortunately departed overnight, intensive scouring of the valley on 9<sup>th</sup> revealed a male **subalpine warbler** (not identified to species) and a female **Hawfinch**, and an adult **Rose-coloured Starling** dropped in briefly around the farmyard on 14<sup>th</sup>. Two **Crossbills** were seen and heard in Millcombe on 28<sup>th</sup>.

### JULY – Max temp 26.2C, min 10.7C, mean 16.7C. Rainfall 97.1 mm

*The first two weeks of July were rather unsettled, bringing the island welcome significant rainfall and some strong and chilly south-westerly winds, particularly on 6<sup>th</sup> & 12<sup>th</sup>. Overall, though, Lundy was again drier than other parts of England, where many areas experienced up to double the long-term average precipitation. It became much warmer for a time mid-month, with dry, settled conditions and light winds, temperatures reaching 26C on 18<sup>th</sup>, before the next spell of wind and rain arrived on 24<sup>th</sup>, followed by Storm Evert on 30<sup>th</sup> when wind gusts reached 56 mph.*

Small numbers of **Swift** were logged, along with a few **House Martins**, **Sand Martins** and warblers, particularly towards the end of the month when the first returning **Sedge Warblers** were logged and there was a significant arrival of 230 **Willow Warblers** on 28<sup>th</sup>. Passage waders included scattered ones and twos of **Golden Plover**, **Ringed Plover**, **Curlew**, **Dunlin** and **Green Sandpiper**. Other typical July migrants included **Black-headed Gull**, **Grey Heron** and **Cormorant**, and a juvenile **Cuckoo** stopped over for several days from 25<sup>th</sup>. More unusual was a male **Yellow Wagtail** in St Helen's Field on 21<sup>st</sup>.

Breeding productivity of **Kittiwakes** was poor and whilst **Guillemot** productivity at St Mark's Stone was slightly down on 2020, **Puffins** had a very good season at Jenny's Cove. **Whitethroats** bred successfully for the third year running and breeding was also confirmed again for **Chiffchaff**, **Blackcap** and **Woodpigeon**, whilst six young **Peregrines** fledged from the island's eyries. Post-breeding flocks of **Linnets** and **Goldfinches** started to build up, Linnets especially seeming to have had a productive season. A single **Song Thrush** continued to be logged periodically in Millcombe but the breeding season drew to a close with no evidence of any nesting attempt.

### Rarities and scarcities

A **Turtle Dove** was around Quarter Wall on 3<sup>rd</sup>, a **Hobby** was hunting over Barton Field on 23<sup>rd</sup>, and a **Marsh Harrier** was seen regularly from 24<sup>th</sup>, the same day that a **Crossbill** landed briefly in Millcombe. Star bird of the month, however, was a **Little Grebe** in the Landing Bay on 30<sup>th</sup> – only the fifth record for Lundy.





*One of the last Puffins of the season (photo: Philip Lymbery).*

**AUGUST– Max temp 20.6C, min 11.7C, mean 15.4C. Rainfall 40.2 mm**

*Following a briefly warm and settled start to the month, the first three weeks of August were mostly rather unsettled and dull, with frequent spells of rain, drizzle and mist, and lower than normal daytime temperatures. Westerly wind gusts approached gale force on 15<sup>th</sup>. Things dried up from 22<sup>nd</sup> as high pressure built, bringing clearer skies, higher temperatures and easterly winds for the remainder of the month.*

As expected, southbound migration gathered pace significantly during August. The last **Puffin** of the season was at Jenny's Cove on 1<sup>st</sup>, 16 departing **Swifts** on 4<sup>th</sup> proved to be the highest 'autumn' count, and the final **Cuckoo** of the year (another passage juvenile) was logged on 24<sup>th</sup>. Small numbers of waders continued to pass through, with additions to the range of species logged in July comprising **Whimbrel**, **Redshank**, **Greenshank**, **Common Sandpiper** and **Turnstone**, and, on 30<sup>th</sup>, the island's first **Knot** since 2018. Warblers included the first returning **Garden Warbler** on 2<sup>nd</sup>, a fall of 210 **Willow Warblers** and 17 **Sedge Warblers** on 9<sup>th</sup>, a single **Grasshopper Warbler** on 20<sup>th</sup>, and five **Whitethroats** and the autumn's first **Reed Warbler** on 26<sup>th</sup>. **Sand Martin** reached a lowly autumn-passage maximum of 32 on 4<sup>th</sup>. Flycatchers started moving through during the last week of August, including a notable arrival of 35 **Spotted Flycatchers** and 20 **Pied Flycatchers** on 27<sup>th</sup>. The first **Whinchat** appeared on 25<sup>th</sup> and the first **Firecrest** of autumn was in Millcombe pines on 28<sup>th</sup>, the same day as six calling fly-over **Tree Pipits** were logged (following the first on 16<sup>th</sup>). An early **Merlin** put in an appearance below the Terrace on 28<sup>th</sup>. Finally, successful breeding was confirmed for **Water Rail** when young were heard calling near Quarter Wall on 25<sup>th</sup>.

**Rarities and scarcities**

The **Marsh Harrier** from July remained until 9<sup>th</sup>. Two **Balearic Shearwaters** flew past Rat Island on 7<sup>th</sup>, a lone **Black-tailed Godwit** did likewise on 8<sup>th</sup>, and single **Wood Sandpipers** were logged on 9<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup>. Two **Little Egrets** were in the Devil's Kitchen on 29<sup>th</sup>, the same day that a **Wryneck** found its way into a mist-net in Millcombe. An exotically colourful visitor that arrived on 24<sup>th</sup> and remained to the end of the month proved to be an escaped **Yellow-crowned Bishop**, native to sub-Saharan Africa, but often kept as a cagebird.

**SEPTEMBER – Max temp 24.9C, min 10.3C, mean 15.5C. Rainfall 109 mm**

*September began settled and reasonably warm with plenty of sunshine, but strong east or south-east winds for a time presented challenging conditions for both observation and ringing. With light winds and blue skies, temperatures reached a tropical 24C on 7<sup>th</sup>, ahead of a change to more typical autumn weather from 8<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup> with spells of wind and rain arriving from the west. There was a good deal of quiet, rather settled weather in the second half of the month, though the last few days saw the return of wind and rain.*

Hirundines, warblers, flycatchers, chats and pipits continued to pass through, with higher counts during the first half of the month including 10 **Pied Flycatchers** on 3<sup>rd</sup>, 12 **Whinchats** on 4<sup>th</sup>, 83 **Willow Warblers** on 5<sup>th</sup>, 16 **Whitethroats**, 60 **Spotted Flycatchers** and 110 **Wheatears** on 7<sup>th</sup>, 40 **House Martins**, four **Redstarts** and nine **Tree Pipits** on 8<sup>th</sup>, 30 **Blackcaps** on 11<sup>th</sup>, 145 **Swallows** on 12<sup>th</sup> and 15 **Yellow Wagtails** on 15<sup>th</sup>. Further variety was provided by scattered singles of **Reed Warbler**, **Grasshopper Warbler**, **Garden Warbler** and **Firecrest**, and the last **Swift** of the year on 12<sup>th</sup>. The second half of the month saw **Swallow** numbers reach their autumn peak at 1,500 on 16<sup>th</sup>, whilst 18<sup>th</sup> brought arrivals of 100 **Chiffchaffs** and 145 **Blackcaps**, along with a further 800 **Swallows** and 22 **Spotted Flycatchers**. **Meadow Pipit** and **Goldcrest** numbers were lower than might be expected, with maxima of 178 on 20<sup>th</sup> and 16 on 29<sup>th</sup>, respectively.

Regular migrant waders were represented by small numbers of **Golden Plover**, **Ringed Plover**, **Whimbrel**, **Curlew**, **Dunlin**, **Snipe** and **Common Sandpiper**, mostly in ones and twos, but there were 20 **Golden Plovers** on 13<sup>th</sup>. Other passage species included **Merlin** (singles on three days), **Cormorant** (maximum 13) and **Grey Heron** (maximum 3). A night-time ringing expedition to North End yielded six **Storm Petrels** on 8<sup>th</sup>.

**Rarities and scarcities**

A **Wood Warbler** was in the more sheltered parts of a very blowy Millcombe on 1<sup>st</sup>. Scarce waders – by Lundy standards – included single **Knot** on 3<sup>rd</sup> & 13<sup>th</sup> and a **Green Sandpiper** on 3<sup>rd</sup>. A **Common Rosefinch** was mist-netted in Millcombe on 5<sup>th</sup> (remaining to 12<sup>th</sup>) and a **Wryneck** was perched on the Heligoland Trap on the same date. A juvenile **Great Spotted Woodpecker** showed up at the Terrace/Quarries on 7<sup>th</sup>, with a further **Wood Warbler** close by. A **Pale-bellied Brent Goose** in the Landing Bay and a **Great Tit** in Millcombe both turned up on 10<sup>th</sup>. Six **Common Scoters** and six **Great Skuas** were off North Light on 11<sup>th</sup>; whilst 20<sup>th</sup> brought a ringtail **Hen Harrier** over Tent Field and an **Ortolan Bunting** flushed from Barton Field. The escaped **Yellow-crowned Bishop** remained until 7<sup>th</sup>.

*Willow Warbler, ruffled by easterlies, 7<sup>th</sup> September (photo: Dean Jones).*



## LAST DATES FOR SUMMER MIGRANTS

August	1 <sup>st</sup>	Puffin
	24 <sup>th</sup>	Cuckoo
September	3 <sup>rd</sup>	Grasshopper Warbler
	12 <sup>th</sup>	Swift
	26 <sup>th</sup>	Yellow Wagtail
	28 <sup>th</sup>	Sedge Warbler
October	1 <sup>st</sup>	White Wagtail
	10 <sup>th</sup>	Sand Martin
	13 <sup>th</sup>	Willow Warbler
	14 <sup>th</sup>	Reed Warbler, Pied Flycatcher, Whinchat
	15 <sup>th</sup>	Tree Pipit
	17 <sup>th</sup>	Garden Warbler, Whitethroat, Redstart
	20 <sup>th</sup>	Wheatear
	26 <sup>th</sup>	House Martin
	27 <sup>th</sup>	Spotted Flycatcher
November	2 <sup>nd</sup>	Ring Ouzel
	6 <sup>th</sup>	Swallow
	8 <sup>th</sup>	Manx Shearwater
	26 <sup>th</sup>	Blackcap – the last autumn migrant but followed by a winter visitor 20-22 Dec
December	26 <sup>th</sup>	Chiffchaff – after five on 23 Nov, ones & twos remained through Dec and into Jan 2022

## FIRST DATES FOR AUTUMN MIGRANTS/WINTER VISITORS

July	2 <sup>nd</sup>	Ringed Plover
	8 <sup>th</sup>	Common Sandpiper
	16 <sup>th</sup>	Golden Plover
	21 <sup>st</sup>	Black-headed Gull
August	24 <sup>th</sup>	Dunlin
	3 <sup>rd</sup>	Snipe
	7 <sup>th</sup>	Balearic Shearwater
	28 <sup>th</sup>	Merlin, Firecrest
October	5 <sup>th</sup>	Snow Bunting
	9 <sup>th</sup>	Siskin
	11 <sup>th</sup>	Yellow-browed Warbler, Redwing, Black Redstart, Brambling, Lapland Bunting
	12 <sup>th</sup>	Lesser Redpoll
	13 <sup>th</sup>	Jack Snipe
	22 <sup>nd</sup>	Fieldfare
	26 <sup>th</sup>	Woodcock
	28 <sup>th</sup>	Great Northern Diver

*Below: Merlin, High Street, 5<sup>th</sup> April  
(photo: Dean Jones).*



## **OCTOBER – Max temp 18.3C, min 8.7C, mean 13.3C. Rainfall 129 mm**

*The month started with an unsettled, wet and windy spell, but it became much quieter, drier and sunnier for a time between 6<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup>, with generally light winds from varying directions and it was often unseasonably mild. Mild, murky and damp weather with strong south and south-westerly winds set in on 18<sup>th</sup>, clearing to showers behind a thundery cold front on 20<sup>th</sup>. The last ten days were dominated by much colder conditions in a blustery and showery westerly flow, gusts reaching 58 mph on 31<sup>st</sup>.*

The rough weather at the start of October brought disruption to island transport but nothing of note seabird-wise. The most notable occurrence was an arrival of 46 **Goldcrests** during a relative lull in the weather on 5<sup>th</sup> – it's always amazing how these tiny birds manage to battle through such conditions. There were also eight **Greenfinches** on 2<sup>nd</sup> – a fairly good count for Lundy these days. The first half of the month saw the tailing away of significant hirundine passage, with 203 **Swallows** on 9<sup>th</sup> and 65 **House Martins** on 11<sup>th</sup> eclipsing all subsequent counts. **Chiffchaff**, **Blackcap** and **Goldcrest** movements were steady but generally unremarkable, with no sign of the big falls that occur in some years.

Passage of 'winter thrushes' started quietly with a handful of **Song Thrush** between 6<sup>th</sup> & 12<sup>th</sup> and a single **Redwing** on 11<sup>th</sup>, but exploded into action with the mass arrival on 13<sup>th</sup> of 1,000 **Redwings** and 65 **Song Thrushes**. Smaller influxes of **Redwing** occurred throughout the rest of the month and **Song Thrush** peaked at 80 on 14<sup>th</sup>. Conversely, both **Fieldfare** and migrant **Blackbird** (as opposed to the resident breeding Blackbird population) were both notable by their near absence. **Fieldfare** was logged on just three dates, with a maximum of 11 on 23<sup>rd</sup>. There was a flurry of **Black Redstarts** mid-month, peaking at nine on 15<sup>th</sup>, and up to a dozen **Bramblings** were logged on 17 dates from 11<sup>th</sup>. Several summer migrants posted later-than-average 'last dates', including **Spotted Flycatcher** on 27<sup>th</sup> – ringed during the same session as a male Brambling!

Finch migration was dominated by exceptional numbers of **Siskin**, with over 500 ringed during a three-week stint to 29<sup>th</sup>. A conservative estimate of 1,170 was logged on 20<sup>th</sup> alone. In contrast, **Chaffinch** passage, such a feature of many Octobers past, never really got going, with 400 on 17<sup>th</sup> by far the highest day total. Among non-passerines were the first **Jack Snipe** and **Woodcock** of the season, a lone **Lapwing**, and up to six **Water Rails** heard on most days.

### **Rarities and scarcities**

A **Twite** was seen at Old Light on 6<sup>th</sup>; an eastern-race **Lesser Whitethroat** was trapped in Millcombe on 11<sup>th</sup> (remaining to 14<sup>th</sup>); Lundy's tenth **Red-eyed Vireo** was in Millcombe on 16<sup>th</sup>; a **Great White Egret** flew south along the East Side on 17<sup>th</sup>; a **Red-breasted Flycatcher** graced Millcombe Wood on 20<sup>th</sup>; two **Choughs** were over the Landing Bay on 23<sup>rd</sup>, whilst a **Little Bunting** was feeding outside Little St John's on the same date. At the end of the month, Lundy's second **Glossy Ibis** was a very unexpected arrival over the Landing Bay. The first **Snow Bunting** and **Lapland Bunting** of the autumn were logged on 5<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup>, respectively. A feature of autumn 2021 across the UK was the relative dearth of **Yellow-browed Warbler**, a species that has become so regular in recent decades as to barely warrant scarcity status and which is no longer categorised as a Devon rarity. There were Lundy records this year on only seven days, from 11<sup>th</sup>. On the other hand, there were regular sightings of presumed 'Siberian' **Chiffchaff**, several of which were trapped, allowing shed body feathers to be retained for DNA analysis (results pending). Unusual for Lundy were a raft of 30 **Common Scoters** on 9<sup>th</sup>, a **Marsh Harrier** on 15<sup>th</sup>, a **Dartford Warbler** at Quarter Wall and 12 **Crossbills** over Millcombe on 17<sup>th</sup>, 13 **Mediterranean Gulls**, a **Pomarine Skua** and four **Arctic Skuas** on 18<sup>th</sup>, a female **Bullfinch** in Millcombe on 21<sup>st</sup>, and a **Purple Sandpiper** on the side of Rat Island on 30<sup>th</sup>.





*Everyone's friend, the Ugly Robin, 8<sup>th</sup> November (photo: Eleanor Grover).*

#### **NOVEMBER – Max temp 13.7C, min 3.3C, mean 10.1C. Rainfall 47.4 mm**

*Much of November was on the mild side, becoming significantly colder towards the end of the month. There was plenty of settled weather, with only limited amounts of rainfall. It turned much more unsettled during the last week, a period which included the first named low-pressure system of the season, 'Storm Arwen', which brought gusts of 57 mph on 26<sup>th</sup>/27<sup>th</sup>.*

Late migrants included ones and twos of **Great Northern Diver** and **Merlin** on multiple dates, plus the last **Sparrowhawk** and **Grey Heron** of the year. Among passerines, the last **Swallow** of the year winged its way south on 6<sup>th</sup>. **Chiffchaff**, **Blackcap** and **Goldcrest** continued to trickle through, with single-digit counts of all three species on many dates, following a 'last hurrah' of 12 **Chiffchaffs** and 13 **Goldcrests** on 2<sup>nd</sup>. In addition, one or two **Firecrests** were logged regularly to 18<sup>th</sup>. Thrushes were very much a feature throughout the month, with three-figure counts of **Redwing** on seven days, whilst **Blackbirds** posted a later-than-usual autumn maximum of 73 on 22<sup>nd</sup>. **Fieldfares** also made up for their poor October showing with almost daily records, reaching a peak of 97 on 8<sup>th</sup>, and the last **Ring Ouzel** of the year was seen on 2<sup>nd</sup>. **Chaffinch** movements carried on throughout November, but counts were low, not breaking double figures. In contrast, **Bramblings** were both more frequent and more numerous than in most autumns, with a notable 41 on 10<sup>th</sup>. **Siskins** also featured on most days but numbers were considerably lower than in October, 117 on 2<sup>nd</sup> being by far the highest total. Finally, the 14<sup>th</sup> saw a massive influx of at least 1,500 **Starlings** – not only the highest count of the month but also for the year as a whole.

#### **Rarities and scarcities**

Rarity highlights were provided by a **Red-breasted Flycatcher** around Millcombe walled gardens on 2<sup>nd</sup> and the island's latest-ever **Barred Warbler**, in the same general area, on 14<sup>th</sup>. In addition, 30 **Common Scoters** were rafting off the Landing Bay on 8<sup>th</sup> & 10<sup>th</sup>; the thrush movements included single **Mistle Thrush** on ten dates; three **Lapwings** flew over the Airfield on 22<sup>nd</sup>; up to

five **Jack Snipes** were found in Lower Lighthouse Field on the night of 27<sup>th</sup>; a **Whooper Swan** travelled the length of the island on 29<sup>th</sup>; and ones and twos of both **Reed Bunting** and **Snow Bunting** were logged on scattered dates.

#### **DECEMBER – Max temp 12.2C, min 4.1C, mean 8.6C. Rainfall 99.1 mm**

*The first ten days were unsettled, rather chilly, and often windy with gusts reaching 40-60 mph on several dates. Higher pressure built from 11<sup>th</sup> onwards, ushering in calmer, milder weather but also periods of fog and low cloud, though there were a few clear and quite sunny days too. It turned briefly colder for a time, with strong easterlies affecting the island from 17<sup>th</sup> to 21<sup>st</sup>, but by 22<sup>nd</sup> it was back to a mild Atlantic airstream with spells of rain, strong west or south-west winds and often poor visibility – conditions that persisted to the end of the year. Rainfall across the year totalled just over 950 mm, equivalent to about 98% of the 1971–2021 average.*

In line with the trend for extended autumns and shorter, milder winters in these times of rapid climate change, several shorter-distance migrants, such as **Woodpigeon**, **Stonechat**, **Meadow Pipit**, **Pied Wagtail**, **Linnet** and **Goldfinch**, were seen later and/or in greater numbers than would have been the norm in most Decembers past. Unusually, **Chaffinch** movements also continued at a low level throughout the month (e.g. 65 on 12<sup>th</sup> and 26 on 24<sup>th</sup>) and there were nine **Brambling** on 9<sup>th</sup>. A **Black Redstart** put in an appearance on 13<sup>th</sup> and one or two **Chiffchaffs** were noted on eight dates, plus a male **Blackcap** on 20<sup>th</sup> & 22<sup>nd</sup>. Up to six **Goldcrests** were recorded almost daily. November's thrush theme continued, with moderate numbers (for Lundy) of **Redwing**, **Song Thrush** and **Blackbird**, along with a few **Fieldfares**, logged on most days. Single **Merlin** and one or two **Kestrels** were seen regularly and there were 13 **Golden Plovers** in Tent Field on 19<sup>th</sup>. Following a period of rough weather, some 3,000 **Kittiwakes** were off the Landing Bay on 4<sup>th</sup>, along with four **Great Northern Divers**. Later, there was a flurry of **Common Gulls**, 19<sup>th</sup>-22<sup>nd</sup>. **Teal** peaked at 12 in the second half of the month.

#### **Rarities and scarcities**

A **Stock Dove** was logged daily 2<sup>nd</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup>; a **Corn Bunting** was briefly near Tillage Field on 5<sup>th</sup>; single **Redshank** and **Little Egret** were at North End on 12<sup>th</sup>; three **Purple Sandpipers** in the Devil's Kitchen on 13<sup>th</sup>; and a **Short-eared Owl** was near Montagu Steps on 15<sup>th</sup> – the same date that a **Sooty Shearwater** was off South West Point and a **Yellow-legged Gull** was off the East Side. A flock of 12 **Turnstones** was in the Devil's Kitchen on 16<sup>th</sup>; a **Jackdaw** was above the Landing Bay on 17<sup>th</sup>; another **Purple Sandpiper** was on the main track pools near Quarter Wall on 20<sup>th</sup>; and a **Hawfinch** was near Brambles on 22<sup>nd</sup>. There were further scattered records of a single **Snow Bunting**, whilst one or two **Reed Buntings** were in the Pondsburry area on several dates, and a single **Mistle Thrush** was noted on four dates. Wildfowl took centre stage as the year drew to a close: 10 **Wigeon** on Pondsburry on 19<sup>th</sup>, a female **Pintail** near Rocket Pole on 20<sup>th</sup> and at Pondsburry on 28<sup>th</sup>, and single **Pink-footed Goose** and **White-fronted Goose** arriving on 21<sup>st</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> respectively, both remaining until the first day of January 2022, mainly in the farm fields along the East Side.

*Turnstones, Devil's Kitchen, 16<sup>th</sup> December (photo: Martin Thorne).*

