

## BIRD RINGING ON LUNDY IN 2022

Tony Taylor

Unlike the previous two years, in 2022 there were no Covid-19 restrictions to affect bird ringing on Lundy. However, ringing restrictions imposed in response to another pandemic, Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI), affected work on Lundy's seabirds. Just one night of Storm Petrel ringing was possible before the restrictions, and autumn Manx Shearwater ringing was also curtailed.

The year's ringing total of 2716 was little more than half that of 2021, but HPAI was not the main cause of this reduction. Numbers of spring migrants and of shearwaters were somewhat lower, but autumn migrants showed the largest drop, falling by about a thousand. Adverse weather conditions played a part in reducing migrant ringing. They caused the low spring numbers, despite an increase in the time for which ringers were operating (up from three weeks to nearly five); then in autumn their effect was combined with a reduction in ringing coverage (down from seven weeks to four) to reduce that season's ringing total very significantly.

As in the previous five years, Blackcaps topped the species totals, with 753 ringed. Numbers of Manx Shearwaters (161), Swallows (202), Chiffchaffs (144), Willow Warblers (387), Sedge Warblers (101), and House Sparrows (140) also reached three figures. The most unusual catches included a Golden Plover, only the fourth to be ringed on Lundy; a Long-eared Owl and a Pallas's Warbler were each the fifth of their species; a Cetti's Warbler was the sixth; and two Hawfinches were the tenth and eleventh. The most notable of the other species were three Yellow-browed Warblers, two Treecreepers and a Common Rosefinch.

Among the regular migrants, Blackcaps have maintained their remarkable long-term increase. Between 1981 and 2000 they made up about 6% of annual catches, in the following decade this figure averaged about 9% and since 2011 it has averaged 21%. Willow Warbler remains the species ringed in the greatest numbers since 1947, but their equivalent percentages, over the same periods as the Blackcap figures above, have been 18%, 12% and 11%. Blackcaps have been able to adapt their relatively short-range migration strategies in response to warmer



▲ Hawfinch, Millcombe (photographer unknown).



▲ Pallas's Warbler, Millcombe (photo: Stuart Cossey).

winters and the increasing amounts of food provided in gardens, while Willow Warblers are long-range migrants finding it harder and harder to cross the Sahara, which is widening as its southern fringes become drier.

The ringing projects on Wheatears, Starlings and House Sparrows have continued. Though some useful work was also achieved on Manx Shearwaters and Storm Petrels, both projects were affected by the restrictions put in place because of HPAI.

Apart from the ringing itself, the rebuilding of the Terrace Heligoland trap has continued, and it should be operational sometime in 2023. Many thanks to all those who have worked on this. The digitisation of all the surviving Lundy ringing records, from 1972 to the present, has been completed, so they are available to anyone wishing to analyse them for research purposes (see 'Digitisation of Lundy Ringing Records', which follows this account). Both achievements strengthened Lundy's case when the Bird Observatories Council considered the island's application for official recognition as a Bird Observatory, in February 2023.

## RECOVERIES AND CONTROLS

Of twenty Storm Petrels caught on the night of 31<sup>st</sup> July, three were controls. They had been ringed as adults in North Wales, Cornwall and on Skokholm Island, five, six and two years ago respectively. Three gulls had also survived well. Two Lesser Black-backed Gulls, ringed as chicks on Lundy, were reported when their ring numbers were read in the field in their winter quarters on the Portuguese coast. They were still thriving, one at twelve and the other at 22 years of age. And a Herring Gull, colour-ringed as a chick on the Isle of Man in 2019, was recorded visiting Lundy in January. In contrast a Shag, ringed as a chick in Pembrokeshire in 2021, was found dead on Lundy just seven months later. Sadly a high proportion of birds die during their first winter, when they are too inexperienced to survive the harsh conditions.

Among the migrant Passerines, a Sedge Warbler ringed on the Atlantic coast of France in 2019 and a Blackcap ringed in Denmark in 2020 were highlights. The Sedge Warbler was ringed as an adult, so had made at least eight crossings of the Sahara. A Wheatear had not moved far when it was re-sighted, but was still of great interest (see the report on the Wheatear RAS project, below).

A Willow Warbler and a Reed Warbler were ringed in Southwest England and caught on Lundy in a subsequent season. This is consistent with them moving to and from a breeding area somewhere further north or northwest. A Blackcap ringed on Lundy in spring was recaptured in Devon two months later. Perhaps it had overshot its intended breeding site while migrating at night, then backtracked to reach its target.

A Robin ringed on Lundy in autumn was found in Buckinghamshire in spring. This could have been a continental bird that wintered in Southwest Britain or Ireland and was heading back to breed in Northern Europe, having avoided the harsher winter weather there.

Of two wandering Goldfinches, one came from South Wales to Lundy, the other went from Lundy to Ireland. Two Siskins ringed on Lundy in October 2021 were found early in 2022, one in Surrey and one in Powys. Both species show much variation in their movements, with some individuals hardly moving, some dispersing over short distances and others making more significant migrations or irruptive movements. So with these individuals one cannot be sure of their places of origin or ultimate destinations, and an overall picture can only be gained by looking at many ringing recoveries.

Full details of all ringing recoveries and controls are given on later in this report.

## MANX SHEARWATERS

The shearwater ringing totals for 2022 were 76 adults and 85 chicks. In addition, there were 56 recaptures, involving 51 different individuals, of adults carrying rings from previous years. Early in the breeding season, 37 birds were ringed on several visits to the colonies in the Benjamin's Chair area and north of Old Light. Later there was potential for ringing many more, as shown by the fact that 121 birds were caught over just two nights in late August, but sadly the following day a Herring Gull suffering from HPAI was found on the island, so the rest of the season's planned shearwater ringing was abandoned because of the risks of the disease spreading.

Monitoring of the nestboxes was possible until then, and so spanned almost all the breeding season. The results were very encouraging, with eight chicks ringed and successfully reared. Two of these were in boxes that had not been used previously. Three pairs laid eggs but their breeding attempts failed. One was a new pair in a previously unused box, one pair had been present in 2021 without laying, and in the third case one of the adults was new. So these all involved relatively inexperienced birds. In a twelfth box, a chick was encountered once, but the adults had extended the burrow beyond the back of the box so that activity in the nest could not be monitored.

Among the breeding adults, fourteen out of fifteen of the birds encountered in 2021 returned in 2022, giving a survival rate of at least 93%. Of the eggs laid, 75% produced fledged young. Considering the comparatively young age of the adults involved, both of these figures are very encouraging.

One bird recaptured in 2022 clearly stands out: a bird ringed as a chick in a nestbox in 2021 was re-trapped in late May 2022. Extensive past studies on the Pembrokeshire islands suggest that most young birds do not return to colonies until they are three or more years of age, with a minority returning at two, and one-year-olds remaining in the species' wintering areas in the South Atlantic for their first full summer. So this individual is highly unusual. There are occasional records of Manx Shearwaters seen off British shores in winter, so could this bird have remained in the Northern Hemisphere throughout its first year, or did it migrate north at an exceptionally young age?

Apart from this individual, the other six birds ringed as chicks are the pick of the recaptures, because of their high scientific value as birds of known age. They were ringed in 2013, 2016 (2), 2018 (2) and 2019. The three oldest of these had already been seen in intervening years, but the others were re-encountered for the first time.

The remaining 44 recaptured birds were originally ringed as adults, and included 10 from the years 2011-2015, 22 from 2016-2020 and 12 from 2021. As always, these encounters all contribute towards a greater understanding of the biology of the species.

## STORM PETRELS

As mentioned above, a productive ringing session on the East Side at the end of July produced 17 new birds and three controls. This catch was at a site where ringing has not been tried before, but where there have been indications of breeding. It was made without using sound lures, which tend to draw in passing non-breeders, so the size of the catch was very encouraging. Full details of the three controls are given below.

Sadly the further petrel ringing planned for late August was not possible because of the arrival of HPAI on the island, so the information gained in 2022 on this enigmatic species' status on Lundy was more limited than had been hoped. Even so, it will add to the body of accumulated data on the species, and help to give a clearer picture in the long term.

## WHEATEARS

In contrast to 2021, the weather through the 2022 Wheatear breeding season was generally favourable. Most pairs appear to have laid eggs around the end of April, and gone on to fledge good numbers of young. This meant that fieldwork for the BTO's Recapturing Adults for Survival (RAS) project was very productive.

Most of the catching and colour-ringing of adult Wheatears, and looking for birds colour-ringed in previous seasons, was carried out between 17 May and 7 June. By the end of this period the great majority of breeding adults in the RAS study area were ringed. Of these, 56 were newly ringed in 2022 and 39 were re-sighted birds, ringed in previous seasons. The re-sightings included one bird originally ringed in 2016 and two from 2017. These are impressive survivors, with the 2016 bird having made at least 14 crossings of the Sahara on its way to and from its wintering grounds. Another notable bird was originally ringed in 2018 as a nestling, then not re-encountered until it was trapped in 2022.

When breeding is over, some colour-ringed adults are known to remain on Lundy in July and August to moult, but the scarcity of such records suggests that others may move away. There is now firm evidence of this, as a male colour-ringed on 28 May 2022 had moved to Skokholm Island, Pembrokeshire, by 1 July, when it was in the early stages of its full annual moult. It was last seen there on 9 August, with its moult almost complete.

In the study area 51 females were ringed or re-sighted and four remained un-ringed in 2022, so the breeding population was estimated at 55 pairs. With the 2020 and 2021 seasons' fieldwork disrupted by Covid, reliable estimates could not be made in those years, but the 2017-19 figures were 53, 53 and 54 pairs. So it seems that the population has more or less reached full capacity in terms of the number of territories the study area can hold, and that breeding and survival rates are sufficient to maintain those numbers at present.

The provisional figure for the survival of adults between the 2021 and '22 breeding seasons is 53%, a little lower than the 57% average for 2013-19.



▲ Colour-ringed Wheatear, Castle Hill, 19<sup>th</sup> May  
(photo: Tony Taylor).

Tim Davis and Tim Jones carried out a survey of all species round Lundy's coast on 19 May 2022. Using their Wheatear counts to extrapolate from the study area data, the whole island population is estimated at 129 pairs. Estimates for 2017-'19 were 121, 114 and 118, and this year's total is the highest ever recorded. While this is extremely encouraging, it cannot be taken as firm evidence of a significant population increase, because of the uncertainties introduced by the extrapolation process.

Many thanks to the Lundy Conservation team, to Tim Jones and Tim Davis, and a number of other visitors, who have contributed photographs and sightings of ringed Wheatears to the study.

## LUNDY RINGING TOTALS, 1947-2022

Species	2022 Full grown	2022 Chicks	2022 Total	1947-2022 Total
Greylag Goose				1
Mallard				41
Quail				1
Fulmar				147
Manx Shearwater	76	85	161	5861
Storm Petrel	17		17	491
Cormorant				46
Shag				1187
Little Grebe				1
Sparrowhawk				19
Buzzard				7
Water Rail				55
Spotted Crake				1
Corncrake				5
Moorhen				1
Oystercatcher				37
Golden Plover	1		1	4
Dotterel				6
Ringed Plover				3
Lapwing				211
Whimbrel				21
Curlew				34
Bar-tailed Godwit				1
Turnstone				3
Knot				4
Curlew Sandpiper				2
Dunlin				82
Little Stint				6
Least Sandpiper				2
Buff-breasted Sandpiper				2
Pectoral Sandpiper				6
Semipalmated Sandpiper				1
Common Sandpiper				1
Green Sandpiper				1
Greenshank				2
Wood Sandpiper				1
Jack Snipe				13
Woodcock				18
Snipe	3		3	49

Species	2022 Full grown	2022 Chicks	2022 Total	1947-2022 Total
Puffin				10
Razorbill				1238
Guillemot				2704
Kittiwake				2535
Lesser Black-backed Gull				457
Herring Gull				2949
Great Black-backed Gull				132
Stock Dove				1
Woodpigeon	2		2	24
Collared Dove				22
Turtle Dove				13
Cuckoo				43
Long-eared Owl	1		1	5
Short-eared Owl				2
Nightjar				2
Swift				14
Hoopoe				1
Wryneck				25
Great Spotted Woodpecker				12
Kestrel				29
Merlin				6
Peregrine				11
Red-eyed Vireo				6
Golden Oriole				7
Red-backed Shrike				10
Great Grey Shrike				1
Woodchat Shrike				11
Jackdaw				2
Carriion Crow		1		23
Raven				47
Goldcrest	87		87	11600
Firecrest	6		6	303
Blue Tit				124
Great Tit				35
Coal Tit				79
Skylark	13		13	635
Short-toed Lark				1
Sand Martin	10		10	256
Swallow	196	6	202	13189
House Martin	4		4	462
Cetti's Warbler	1		1	6

Species	2022 Full grown	2022 Chicks	2022 Total	1947-2022 Total
Long-tailed Tit				26
Greenish Warbler				2
Arctic Warbler				2
Pallas's Warbler	1		1	5
Yellow-browed Warbler	3		3	112
Radde's Warbler				1
Western Bonelli's Warbler				2
Bonelli's Warbler sp.				1
Wood Warbler				50
Chiffchaff	144		144	7144
Willow Warbler	387		387	17889
Blackcap	753		753	12490
Garden Warbler	6		6	888
Barred Warbler				11
Lesser Whitethroat	7		7	146
Ruppell's Warbler				1
Sardinian Warbler				1
Subalpine Warbler				13
Whitethroat	37		37	3470
Dartford Warbler				1
Grasshopper Warbler	9		9	490
Booted Warbler				1
Icterine Warbler				19
Melodious Warbler				33
Aquatic Warbler				1
Sedge Warbler	101		101	2882
Paddyfield Warbler				1
Blyth's Reed Warbler				2
Marsh Warbler				3
Reed Warbler	8		8	163
Treecreeper	2		2	34
Wren	42		42	1486
Starling	38	32	70	1454
Rose-coloured Starling				1
White's Thrush				1
Swainson's Thrush				2
Grey-cheeked Thrush				1
Veery				2
Ring Ouzel				43
Blackbird	47		47	4789
Fieldfare				34

Species	2022 Full grown	2022 Chicks	2022 Total	1947-2022 Total
Song Thrush	9		9	1125
Redwing	51		51	1532
Mistle Thrush				7
American Robin				1
Spotted Flycatcher	12		12	1420
Robin	52		52	2281
Thrush Nightingale				1
Nightingale				11
Bluethroat				3
Red-flanked Bluetail				2
Red-breasted Flycatcher				23
Pied Flycatcher	7		7	797
Black Redstart				44
Redstart	2		2	402
Whinchat	1		1	120
Stonechat	13		13	319
Wheatear	70	5	75	1002
Desert Wheatear				1
Dunnock	18		18	1050
House Sparrow	52	88	140	1159
Tree Sparrow				5
Yellow Wagtail				5
Citrine Wagtail				1
Grey Wagtail	1		1	73
Pied Wagtail	1		1	194
Richard's Pipit				1
Olive-backed Pipit				1
Tree Pipit	1		1	86
Meadow Pipit	57		57	5279
Red-throated Pipit				1
Rock Pipit	4		4	32
Brambling	1		1	152
Chaffinch	39		39	9359
Hawfinch	2		2	11
Common Rosefinch	1		1	35
Bullfinch	2		2	33
Greenfinch				575
Linnet	22		22	1744
Lesser Redpoll				96
Common Redpoll				4
Crossbill				38



Species	2022 Full grown	2022 Chicks	2022 Total	1947-2022 Total
Goldfinch	62		62	1544
Siskin	17		17	2051
Snow Bunting				11
Lapland Bunting				8
Rose-breasted Grosbeak				1
Eastern Towhee				1
Ortolan Bunting				6
Yellowhammer				1
Reed Bunting				12
Yellow-breasted Bunting				1
Little Bunting				8
Rustic Bunting				3
Baltimore Oriole				2
Common Yellowthroat				1
Blackpoll Warbler				1
Yellow-rumped Warbler				1
<b>Total</b>	<b>2499</b>	<b>217</b>	<b>2716</b>	<b>131780</b>
Number of species			52	*177
* Western and sp. Bonelli's Warblers treated as one.				



▲ Mist-net in Lower Millcombe, 17<sup>th</sup> April (photo: Mandy Dee).

## RINGING RECOVERIES AND CONTROLS, 2022

**Storm Petrel** 2569909 – ringed as an adult at Porth Ysgaden, Gwynedd, 10.7.17. Controlled on Lundy, 31.7.22 (duration: 1847 days; distance: 191 km; direction: S, 181°).

**Storm Petrel** 2714440 – ringed as an adult at Hot Point, The Lizard, Cornwall, 5.6.16. Controlled on Lundy, 31.7.22 (2247 days; 141 km; NNE, 16°).

**Storm Petrel** 2746631 – ringed as an adult on Skokholm Island, Pembrokeshire, 11.7.20. Controlled on Lundy, 31.7.22 (750 days; 72 km; SE, 144°).

**Shag** 1484736 – ringed as a chick on Midland Island, Pembrokeshire, 7.6.21. Found freshly dead on Lundy, 1.1.22 (208 days; 77 km; SE, 146°).

**Herring Gull** GY06303, with black colour-ring, engraved in yellow T2YZ – ringed as a chick on the Calf of Man, Isle of Man, 3.7.19. Re-sighted on Lundy, 4.1.22 (916 days; 321 km; S, 179°). Previously re-sighted on the Isle of Man, 27.10.19 and 10.10.21.

**Lesser Black-backed Gull** GP95670 – ringed as a chick on Lundy, 23.6.1996. Seen (metal ring read in field), at Praia de Mira, Aveiro, Coimbra, **Portugal**, 1.11.22 (9627 days; 1233 km; SSW, 195°).

**Lesser Black-backed Gull** GN29633 – ringed as a chick on Lundy, 18.6.10. Seen (metal ring read in field), at Praia de Mira, Aveiro, Coimbra, **Portugal**, 31.10.22 (4518 days; 1233 km; SSW, 195°).

**Willow Warbler** NNY071 – ringed as a juvenile at Nanjizal, Land's End, Cornwall, 21.7.21. Controlled on Lundy, 10.4.22 (263 days; 143 km; NNE, 31°).

**Sedge Warbler** Paris 8702105 – ringed as an adult at Bahine, Guerande, Loire-Atlantique, FRANCE, 2.8.19. Controlled on Lundy, 8.5.22 (1010 days; 460 km; NNW, 340°).

**Reed Warbler** AVF4870 – ringed as a first-year bird at Porth Hellick, St Mary's, Isles of Scilly, 11.8.20. Controlled on Lundy, 4.5.22 (631 days; 180 km; NE, 40°).

**Blackcap** Copenhagen CX37116 – ringed as a first-year male at Blavand Fuglestation, Blavand, Ribe, DENMARK, 7.10.20. Controlled on Lundy, 14.4.22 (554 days; 975 km; WSW, 241°).

**Blackcap** AHX2038 – ringed as a second-year female on Lundy, 2.5.22. Controlled at Challacombe Farm, Postbridge, Devon, 9.7.22 (68 days; 86 km; SE, 138°).

**Robin** ANL4054 – ringed as a first-year bird on Lundy, 5.9.21. Found dead (killed by cat) at Flackwell Heath, Buckinghamshire, 14.3.22 (190 days; 278 km; E, 81°).

**Wheatear** AXH2316 – ringed as an adult male on Lundy, 28.5.22. Seen (identified by colour-rings) on Skokholm Island, Pembrokeshire, 1, 7 and 17.7.22, and 9.8.22 (34, 40, 50 and 73 days; 74 km; NW, 325°).

**Goldfinch** ADY4106 – ringed as a second-year male at Oxwich Marsh, Swansea, 2.4.22. Controlled on Lundy, 15.4.22 (13 days; 57 km; SW, 218°).

**Goldfinch** ANL3184 – ringed as a second-year male on Lundy, 18.4.21. Controlled at Mount St Joseph, Offaly, IRELAND, 9.4.22 (356 days; 297 km; NW, 313°).

**Siskin** APR5251 – ringed as a first-year male on Lundy, 24.10.21. Found dead at Byfleet, Surrey, 16.3.22 (143 days; 292 km; E, 87°).

**Siskin** APR5390 – ringed as a first-year female on Lundy, 27.10.21. Controlled at Hill Farm, Abermule, Powys, 30.1.22 (95 days; 184 km; NNE, 32°).