

LUNDY BIRD OBSERVATORY REPORT 2025

Tim Jones

Lundy Bird Observatory successfully completed its third and final probationary year as a provisionally accredited member of the British and Irish observatory network. We are delighted to report that as of February 2026, full accreditation has now been approved.

Among the bird highlights of 2025 were:

- 166 species recorded (including some for which formal acceptance by British or Devon rarities committees is still pending)
- 4,865 birds ringed (including 889 **Blackcap**, 753 **Manx Shearwater**, 517 **Willow Warbler**, 493 **Chiffchaff**, 323 **Goldcrest**, 246 **Storm Petrel**, 219 **Swallow** and 217 **Meadow Pipit** as the most ringed species; the totals for both **Manx Shearwater** and **Chiffchaff** being island records)
- An RSPB-led breeding seabird survey, which showed record post rat-eradication populations of **Guillemot**, **Razorbill**, **Puffin**, **Kittiwake** and **Shag**, with Lundy now internationally important for its assemblage of more than 45,000 breeding seabirds
- Continued productivity monitoring of auks, **Kittiwake** and **Fulmar**, data tagging of **Manx Shearwaters** and **Storm Petrels**, colour-ringing of large gulls, and ringing of the first **Shag** and **Oystercatcher** chicks since 2000 and 1976 respectively
- First successful breeding of **Willow Warbler** since 2012
- Lundy and Devon's first **Booted Eagle** (29 and 30 April) – just the fifth for Britain!
- Lundy's first **Dusky Warbler** (10-16 October)
- **White Stork** (11 April – second for Lundy)
- **Western Bonelli's Warbler** (two on 24 August, one staying to 20 September – third and fourth for Lundy)
- **Grey-cheeked Thrush** (29 September – third for Lundy)
- **Goosander** (15 October – third for Lundy)
- **Glossy Ibis** (18 October – third for Lundy)
- A host of other rarities and scarcities, including **Greenland White-fronted Goose**, **Slavonian Grebe**, **Red-necked Grebe**, **Curlew Sandpiper**, **Great White Egret**, **Barn Owl**, **Wryneck**, **Great Spotted Woodpecker**, **Golden Oriole**, **Woodchat Shrike**, **Icterine Warbler**, **Melodious Warbler**, **Pallas's Warbler**, **Eastern Subalpine Warbler**, **Red-breasted Flycatcher**, **Rose-coloured Starling**, **Olive-backed Pipit**, **Common Rosefinch**, **Ortolan Bunting** and **Yellowhammer**.



▲ Great Northern Diver in the Landing Bay (photo: Joe Parker)

Late winter and early spring

A damp New Year's Day trudge around Millcombe and the south of the island was rewarded with two female-type **Black Redstarts** at Benjamin's Chair, a lingering male **Siskin** around the village and a brief glimpse of the overwintering **Merlin** terrorising the resident **House Sparrows** and **Starlings**. An adult **Great Northern Diver** (extending its stay from 2024) continued to frequent the Landing Bay, while **Kittiwake** feeding flocks further offshore started the month at around 140 birds, building to 425 on



▲ Merlin, Jenny's Cove (photo: Angus Croudace)

11th January and 1,196 on 15th. These were accompanied by **Guillemots** and **Razorbills**, peaking at 130 and 223 respectively, and generally small numbers of **Gannets**, though there were 26 feeding south-east of the island on 26th. The Landing Bay was home to two rare grebes towards the end of January, namely a **Red-necked Grebe** from 22nd and a **Slavonian Grebe** from 27th, the Red-necked staying until 19th March, while the Slavonian was last seen on 5th February. The two were seen together on at least four days – a vanishingly rare combination for Lundy! Also notable from the Landing Bay area were sightings of an adult **Mediterranean Gull** on 11th January, a first-winter **Little Gull**, feeding with Kittiwakes on 26th and 30th, 16 **Common Gulls** on 30th (plus three off the West Side at Aztec Bay on the same date) and up to three **Red-throated Divers** in February. Elsewhere around the coastline, a record 34 **Purple Sandpipers** flew west past North Light, close inshore, on 25th January, while the regular **Purple Sandpiper** roost-site at Brazen Ward held 16 birds on 30th.

On land, things were typically quiet, with one or two notable highlights, the first of these being an astonishing record of a **Barn Owl** flying into the gas store in lower Millcombe on 6th. It was first seen from the housekeeping Land Rover by staff member Tiina Pehkonen during the late afternoon. Bird Observatory volunteer Luke Marriner, who happened to be driving, stopped the vehicle – in his own words – “*very abruptly*” (!) and was able to capture a video of the Barn Owl emerging from the gas store and flying down to the Beach Road turn at ‘Windy Corner’ and up over the flank of Castle Hill. It was not seen again but left a souvenir in the form of a small pellet, found in the gas store. The pellet was dissected by Luke, who identified a Pygmy Shrew jaw-bone among other tiny bones, suggesting that the owl had managed to feed on the island. It seems possible that it had been displaced from the mainland by heavy snow blanketing most of Wales and central/northern England, while south-west England experienced less cold conditions, remaining largely snow free. This was the 11th Lundy record and only the second this century.

Another female-type **Black Redstart** was at North End on 12th January, followed by a male and female at Benjamin's Chair on 11th and 12th February and further singles at Castle Hill and Pilot's Quay sidelands on 15th and 16th; a single **Stock Dove** was over the village and in Millcombe on 16th January; a ‘ringtail’ (female or immature) **Hen Harrier** flew north over High Street Field on 18th January; a **Snow Bunting** was seen regularly along the main track between Pondsbury and Halfway Wall from 5th January to 16th February, being joined by an additional three **Snow Buntings** near the Old Hospital on 1st and 9th February; and single **Reed Buntings** were logged on six dates in January and February.



▲ Skylark, Middle Park (photo: Tim Jones)

Spring migration

Signs of spring migration and the approaching breeding season were in evidence well before the end of February. **Ravens** were already nest-building early in the month, the first **Cormorant** of the year (an adult) flew north on 3rd, and there were an estimated 5,000 **Guillemots** and 500 **Razorbills** on ledges, plus a further 1,000 **Guillemots** on the sea, at Jenny's Cove on 22nd – the same day as 43 **Skylarks** and 25 **Meadow Pipits** were logged, both species into double digits for the first time. Likewise, on 22nd a notable 40 **Rock Pipits** were counted on the plateau and west sidelands at North End. The second half of February also brought a trickle of **Pied/alba Wagtail** and **Linnet** sightings, plus the first **Grey Wagtails** of 2025, with flyover singles of the latter species on 17th and 19th.

As usual, March brought the first real pulses of passerine migration, with **Meadow Pipit** and **Linnet**, **Goldfinch** and **wagtail** movements gathering pace, and new arrivals coming thick and fast, among them: two **Chiffchaff** on 4th (rising to 15 on 27th), three **Wheatear** on 7th (peaking at 17 on 30th), single **Sand Martin** and **Swallow** on 18th (reaching 54 on 31st and nine on 30th, respectively), two **Blackcap** on 20th (rising to 15 on 27th), two **House Martin** on 23rd, and two **Willow Warbler** on 26th (increasing to 29 the next day!). Meanwhile, the first returning **Manx Shearwater** was heard calling at night on 9th March, and the island's iconic **Puffins** made their own 2025 debut with 31 rafting off Jenny's Cove and 16 below the Earthquake on 11th. The first **White Wagtail** of the year was in Barton Field on the same day; one or two **Black Redstarts** were logged on 11 days during the month; and another classic early spring migrant, **Firecrest**, was logged on 10 days, including a notable four in Millcombe on 25th. Scarcities (for Lundy) included single **Rooks** on three dates, a **Stock Dove** on 21st, a male **Bullfinch** on 16th and 18th and a female on 31st, and a **Yellow Wagtail** calling in flight over Tillage Field on 26th.

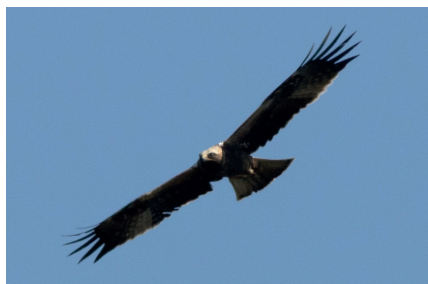


Numbers and variety of migrants continued to build through April, with 'firsts of the year' comprising **Ringed Plover** and **Dunlin** on 1st, **Ring Ouzel** on 2nd, **Redstart** on 4th, **Whitethroat** and **Pied Flycatcher** on 7th, **Tree Pipit** on 8th, **Grasshopper Warbler** on 9th, **Common Sandpiper** and **Sedge Warbler** on 10th, **Reed Warbler** on 13th, **Lesser Whitethroat** on 16th, **Whimbrel** on 17th, **Whinchat** on 20th, **Swift** on 21st, **Garden Warbler** on 27th and **Spotted Flycatcher** on 29th.

Counts of the commoner species peaked at 153 **Sand Martin** (26th), 1,579 **Swallow** (25th), 172 **House Martin** (26th), 53 **Willow Warbler**,

◀ Grasshopper Warbler (photo: Neil Barnes)

50 **Chiffchaff** (11th), 74 **Blackcap** (11th) and 86 **Wheatear** (27th), 202 **Meadow Pipit** (2nd), 231 **Linnet** (20th) and 34 **Goldfinch** (20th). Warbler numbers were generally low, with no significant 'falls' (mass arrivals), likely reflecting the generally settled weather conditions, which enable most nocturnal migrants to overfly Lundy, with fewer needing to pause their journey in search of food and shelter on a relatively remote and inhospitable lump of granite!



The same anticyclonic weather pattern, with frequent easterly winds, was doubtless responsible for delivering two major rarities, in the form of the island's second-ever **White Stork** on 11th, and, amazingly, first **Booted Eagle** on 29th and 30th. The stork, initially seen in flight over Pondsburry during the late morning, was then logged over Millcombe, the Church and North End in very quick succession, and briefly attempted to depart north before aborting. Last seen tracking south over Gannets' Combe just after midday, the same individual was photographed over Ilfracombe an hour later by regular Lundy visitor Martin Thorne. The stork was unringed and so most likely a fully wild bird rather than one originating from the several UK reintroduction projects underway.



▲ Two views of Lundy's first Booted Eagle (photos: Joe Parker)

At noon on 29th April, an 'interesting raptor' flying over Millcombe and towards the Village, was first seen by Jimmy Hair, who was birding on the south-west coast near Rocket Pole. Jimmy alerted other observers and Joe Parker was able to take a series of photos as the bird flew over Barton Field and the Village a few minutes later. Joe posted back-of-camera images to social media, quickly confirming that they showed a dark-morph **Booted Eagle**! The bird remained in view for much of the rest of the afternoon, and was seen well by many staff and visitors as it thermalled over the Village, Ugly, Tent Field and Rocket Pole areas until last observed over the Village just before 17:00 hrs. With a lengthy flight required for a return to the mainland, and with thermals from the island waning, it looked as if the eagle might roost on Lundy, and this proved to be the case when it reappeared just south of Quarry Pond at 09:35 hrs on 30th, again seen by Jimmy. It flew south towards Millcombe and was seen regularly during the morning moving along the east coast, between Quarter Wall and Castle Hill. With strong thermals and light winds, and the mainland clearly visible (after poor visibility out to sea on 29th), the eagle appears to have left the island in the early afternoon, having last been reported in flight along the East Side at about 13:20 hrs (Teresa Davies). There were no further sightings, to the disappointment of those hoping to come over for it on the following day's *Oldenburg* sailing. This was only the fifth record of **Booted Eagle** in the UK, although the warming climate is thought to be responsible for a big increase in records on the near continent. With large raptors generally eschewing sea-crossings due to the absence of thermals over water, it is even more remarkable that one made it to Lundy!



▲ Wryneck in the hand (photo: Flo Turner)

Other rarities during April, though not quite at the same level of extreme rarity as the stork and eagle, included one or two **Hawfinches** in Millcombe on six dates from 2nd to 12th, a mobile **Hoopoe** from 6th to 11th, a **Wryneck** in upper Millcombe on 8th, a **Hooded Crow** frequenting the farm infields from 16th to 23rd, a female **Golden Oriole** in Millcombe on 29th, **Blue-headed Wagtails** on three dates at the end of the month, including four in Barton Field on 29th, and a **Woodchat Shrike** near the Old Hospital on 30th. Among further notable occurrences in a Lundy context were one or two **Stock Doves** on 12 days, a **Lapwing** on 16th, a **Grey Plover** calling over the Water Tanks and Airfield on 7th, single **Green Sandpipers** in the south of the island on 11th and 28th, a calling **Redshank** at White Beach on 6th, a **Mediterranean Gull** off North West Point on 20th, a **Hobby** over Barton Field on 19th, a **Wood Warbler** in Millcombe on 24th, a smattering of **Greenland Wheatears** and **White Wagtails**, and a female **Greenfinch** (unusual in spring) in Millcombe on 10th.

Although migratory movements began to ease for most species into May, a few reached peak numbers during the month. A big push of hirundines and **Swifts** heading out to sea from North Light on 9th yielded actual counts (rather than estimates) of 3,096 **Swallows**, 1,440 **House Martins** and 117 **Swifts**. As expected, **Spotted Flycatcher** was also among the species showing a late peak, with 25 on 18th, and one or two **Cuckoos** were logged on nine dates from 1st.



▲ Hobby over Millcombe (photo: Angus Croudace)

Adding to the already stellar roll-call of rarities and scarcities for the spring were a male **Eastern Subalpine Warbler** on the Terrace and in Millcombe on 1st and 2nd, a further male **Eastern Subalpine Warbler** on the Terrace on 17th, a female **subalpine warbler** species on the Terrace on 20th, a **Marsh Harrier** on three dates between 12th and 21st, further records of **Hobby** (ones and twos on three dates 13th to 27th), **Golden Oriole** (a female on 18th; at least one male and one female 22nd to 24th) and **Hooded Crow** (one 'pure' and one hybrid 1st to 12th), single **Cetti's Warbler** and **Dartford Warbler** both on 3rd, and a female **Crossbill** in Millcombe on 18th.

As usual, a trickle of northbound migration continued into June, with modest numbers of **Swifts**, **Swallows**, **House Martins**, and a handful of warblers and **Spotted Flycatchers** in evidence, while single **Curlew** on 9th and 21st were perhaps more likely to be returning failed breeders, marking the turning of the year and the start of southbound passage. Single **Jackdaw** and **Rook** were seen on 8th and 9th/10th June respectively, a subadult **Mediterranean Gull** was off North Light on 8th, and a **Quail** was logged on three dates from 18th to 21st, being heard calling near The Battery just after midnight on 21st.

Breeding season

As migration slowed, focus increasingly turned to the island's breeding birds, especially ongoing monitoring of the internationally important seabird colony, which forms a major part of the Observatory's work from March right through to the midsummer fledging of **Shags**, auks and gulls, and on to the later departure of **Fulmars**, **Manx Shearwaters** and **Storm Petrels**, the last of the Storm Petrel chicks not heading out to sea until the second half of October.

May saw an all-island, RSPB-led survey of cliff-nesting seabirds. This produced some stunning results with the highest post rat-eradication counts yet for: **Guillemot** (12,202 individuals – more than five times the number counted in 2000), **Razorbill** (4,508 individuals – nearly five times the 2000 count), **Puffin** (1,317 individuals – an extraordinary one hundred-fold increase since 2000), **Kittiwake** (448 apparently occupied nests – marking a recovery to pre-1992 levels) and **Shag** (115 apparently occupied nests – double the 2000 count). **Fulmar** showed a further decline from the 2021 peak of 265 apparently occupied nests to 219 nests in 2025, though this remains above pre rat-eradication levels. Lundy now supports an internationally important breeding assemblage of over 45,000 breeding seabirds, when figures from the 2023 **Manx Shearwater** and **Storm Petrel** surveys are included, while the breeding population of **Razorbill** meets the qualifying threshold for international importance in its own right.

Detailed productivity monitoring was conducted for the island's breeding **Guillemots** (at St Mark's Stone), **Puffins** (at Jenny's Cove), **Kittiwakes** (at Aztec Bay and Three-quarter Wall Buttress) and **Fulmars** (at Gannets' Rock). In comparison to 2024, productivity declined in



▲ Manx Shearwater chick (photo: A. Zhang)



▲ Razorbill chick in the hand (photo: Nik Ward)

2025 for both **Guillemot** and **Puffin** but increased for the Aztec Bay **Kittiwake** colony, where there was also an increase in the number of apparently occupied nests. Unfortunately, the Three-quarter Wall Buttress **Kittiwake** colony failed completely, with only 15 apparently occupied nests from which no chicks survived to fledging. The **Fulmar** colony at Gannets' Rock appears to be declining, in line with evidence from the RSPB all-island survey. While overall productivity for the site was low, with an average of just 0.325 chick reared to fledging for each breeding attempt, there was significant variation between different sub-colonies on Gannets' Rock.

Work commenced on a project to colour-ring chicks from Lundy's rapidly dwindling breeding populations of large gulls (**Herring**, **Lesser Black-backed** and **Great Black-backed Gulls**). However, a further decline in numbers attempting to breed, plus poor productivity – attributed, at least in part, to the 2025 marine heatwave – meant few chicks could be ringed.

On the plus side, for the first time in many decades, a concerted effort was made to ring large numbers of **Shag** chicks, focused mainly on nests in the vicinity of Long Roost and North East Point, but with other chicks ringed below the Earthquake, at Brazen Ward, and at St Philip's Stone. A total of 88 individuals (85 chicks and three adults) were ringed, 87 of these between 18th and 27th June, with the final chick following on 18 July – the highest annual ringing total for the island since 1957!

Land-based recording and mapping of **Oystercatchers** during the breeding season yielded 12 confirmed nests and/or broods in May and June. Four chicks were ringed in June from three nests at sites above Victoria Beach and on Lametor – the first birds ringed on the island since 1976. The survey work clearly established that the population of full-grown Oystercatchers present during the breeding season was significantly higher than could be accounted for by the 12 nesting pairs located. It is likely that some nest sites would only be readily visible during boat-based surveys, while some of the adults present may be non-breeding birds. The Observatory is hoping to undertake more detailed census work in future, including boat-based surveys, to shed further light on some of these open questions.

Weekly monitoring of the **Manx Shearwater** nestboxes, originally built and installed within the Old Light shearwater colony by LFS volunteers, revealed 14 breeding attempts, nine of which had successful outcomes, with chicks reared to fledging. Of the remaining five nestbox breeding attempts, three failed at egg stage and two during chick-rearing. The great majority of young had fledged by the end of August, with one chick remaining until mid-September, fledging not confirmed until a nestbox check on 16th.



The Observatory team was joined by Oxford University's Tim Guilford, who visited the island in mid-June to catch known Lundy-breeding adult **Manx Shearwaters** using the nestboxes in the Old Light colony and to fit them with GLS and GPS data-tags. Twelve GLS leg-tags were deployed and will remain in place throughout the birds' migration to South Atlantic wintering grounds and their return migration to Lundy in spring 2026, when it is hoped they will be retrieved – by recapturing

◄ Voluntary Seabird Fieldworker Kathleen Power and Voluntary Bird Observatory Assistant Ezra Sherwell monitoring Manx Shearwater nestboxes, May 2025 (photo: Tim Jones)

as many of the 12 individuals as possible – for data to be downloaded. An additional 10 individuals were fitted with GPS-enabled tags, designed for short-term deployment only, to record detailed tracks of feeding movements of Lundy-nesting birds. With a super-human effort by the Observatory team to monitor the nestboxes across multiple successive nights, all 10 of these individuals were recaptured by the end of the month. Of these, one had unfortunately lost its GPS tag but nine tags were successfully retrieved, with the downloaded data subsequently undergoing processing and detailed analysis prior to writing up.



▲ A Lundy colour-ringed Wheatear in Mauritania, during spring migration on 2nd March 2025 (photo © Sbgiew Kajzer)

An RSPB team arrived on Lundy in late July to tag known Lundy-breeding adult **Storm Petrels** (ensured by tagging only birds from active nests) with data-loggers, the purpose being to identify key foraging areas for the island's breeding Storm Petrels – a key piece of evidence required for responding to plans for proposed new windfarms in the Celtic Sea. Five tags were deployed and three had been retrieved (one from a nest at Brazen Ward and two from North Light) by early August.

Notable among landbirds were the first pair of **Willow Warblers** to breed successfully on the island since 2012, with five chicks ringed at the nest, located in upper Millcombe, on 20th July. Also breeding successfully were **Chiffchaff** and **Whitethroat** alongside all the expected, regularly breeding passerine species. Among these were the island's **Wheatear**, **Starling** and **House Sparrow** populations, which continue to be the subject of targeted colour-ringing projects. A spectacular 'first' for the Wheatear Retrapping Adults for Survival (RAS) project was the photographing of a Lundy colour-ringed Wheatear in Mauritania, during spring migration on 2nd March. The bird was seen back on Lundy at Pilot's Quay on 22 May 2025, in the same area where it was ringed in June 2024.

Close observations of **Yellow/Blue-headed Wagtails** in Barton Field in April and May had shown that at least two individuals – a male and a female – were ringed. Although neither bird was trapped, nor could ring numbers be read from photos, the birds' appearance and behaviour strongly suggested that they were returning hybrid '**Channel Wagtails**' fledged from the successful **Yellow Wagtail** x **Blue-headed Wagtail** nest in Barton Field in 2024, the four chicks having been ringed on 7th July 2024. The ringed male **Channel Wagtail** was singing and displaying in Barton Field and on the edge of the Campsite/Lighthouse Field in May, and a female was watched collecting nesting material outside Quarters and taking it over the wall into Lower Lighthouse Field on 6th June. A nest subsequently found in Lower Lighthouse Field contained four warm eggs on 24 Jun, followed by three newly hatched chicks (plus one unhatched egg) on 26th. The three chicks were ringed on 3rd July and the adults continued to be seen in the vicinity of Lower Lighthouse Field and Quarters in the first half of July (last logged on 11th) but only a single bird was seen later in the month, on three dates, in Barton Field. It seems probable that the young did not survive to fledging.

For the second successive year, there was no breeding evidence for **Water Rail**, while **Teal** – though present in the spring – appear to have failed for the first time since 2019.



▲ Sanderling, Castle Hill (photo: Angus Croudace)

Autumn migration

Although still high summer, 'autumn' migration was already underway by mid-July, with early movers including 15 **Black-headed Gulls** seen from the *Oldenburg* about a mile off Lundy on 12th, followed by a scattering of waders later in the month, among them **Ringed Plover**, **Curlew**, **Snipe**, **Common Sandpiper**, **Green Sandpiper** and, unusually, a **Sanderling** on the Landing Beach on 25th. Also on the move were a few hirundines and warblers, the latter including single **Garden Warbler** and **Reed Warbler**, but it was the overnight arrival of 40 **Willow Warblers** on 19th that signalled the start in earnest of the core autumn passage season, which would continue in one form or another for the next four months.

Influxes of **Willow Warblers** followed on an almost daily basis from late July until early September, with higher counts including 91 on 28th July, 132 on 15th August and 109 on 22nd August. Late July brought a **Cuckoo** on 27th and seven **Sedge Warblers** on 28th, while August saw **Grasshopper Warbler** (up to three on five dates) and **Lesser Whitethroat** (one on 23rd) added to the mix, as well as small but growing numbers of **Blackcap** and **Whitethroat** later in the month.

Waders made a decent showing from mid-August, with **Greenshank**, **Whimbrel**, **Dunlin** and **Turnstone** (all in ones and twos), plus a single **Wood Sandpiper** over the Terrace on 28th.

Southbound **Sand Martin** movements peaked in August, with counts of 84 on 13th and 50 on 22nd, while the vanguard of what proved to be an exceptional autumn for **Firecrest** was a single bird on 19th August; followed by records on a further 61 days to mid-November, with counts of 15 on both 25th and 28th September setting a new island record. It was also a good year for passage flycatchers, with frequent easterly winds bringing a steady stream of both **Spotted Flycatcher** and **Pied Flycatcher** to the island from mid-August. There were influxes of 36 and 35 **Spotted Flycatchers** on 20th and 24th August respectively, followed by 46 on 4th September, while **Pied Flycatchers** peaked at nine on 25th August and 8th September. A supporting passerine cast was provided by small numbers of other typical early-autumn migrants such as **Redstart** (max 3 on 25th September), **Whinchat** (max 5 on 21st September), **Tree Pipit** (max 9 on 22nd August) and **Yellow Wagtail** (max 3 on 6th September).

The same easterly airflow that delivered high numbers of **Firecrests** and flycatchers was doubtless also responsible for the arrival of two **Western Bonelli's Warblers** on 24th August – one in Quarter Wall Copse and one (watched simultaneously) in Millcombe, the latter individual prolonging its stay until 20th September. These were only the third and fourth records for Lundy of this denizen of southern European woodlands. Other rarities during August included a **Buzzard** on 20th and 21st, a **Melodious Warbler** at Quarter Wall on 21st, and an **Icterine Warbler** in Millcombe walled gardens on 25th.

Travel and accommodation grants awarded by the British Trust for Ornithology enabled four ringers wishing to increase their knowledge and experience of seabird ringing to participate in a skills development course hosted by the Observatory in late August/early September. This focussed on **Manx Shearwater** and **Storm Petrel** ringing at night, with participants also contributing to ringing of passerine migrants in Millcombe by day.

As is typically the case, September brought the main autumn movements of species such as **Swallow**, **Chiffchaff** and **Blackcap**, though there was something of a hiatus until a spell of very cool and unsettled weather mid-month gave way to calmer conditions. This opened the door to arrivals of 114 **Chiffchaffs** and 225 **Blackcaps** on 22nd, accompanied by 6,200 **Swallows**, 286 **Sand Martins** and 139 **House Martins**.

September was a bumper month for rarities and scarcities, including **Shoveler** (one over the Landing Bay on 7th), **Turtle Dove** (one at North End on 9th), **Ruff** (one at Pondsburry 13th and 14th), **Sanderling** (two off The Battery on 15th), **Curlew Sandpiper** (one in the south of the island on 28th), **Common** and **Arctic Tern** (46 Arctic and 22 Common off North Light on 7th), **Pomarine Skua** (one on 25th), **Balearic Shearwater** (at least one off North Light on 7th and one off the Terrace on 16th), **Osprey** (a first-year bird flying south over the Landing Bay on 26th), **Hobby** (singles on 6th and 22nd), **Wryneck** (singles on five dates 19th to 25th, with two on 22nd), **Great Spotted Woodpecker** (up to two, 14th to 20th), **Melodious Warbler** (singles in Millcombe 2nd and 4th), **Treecreeper** (one in Millcombe 28th and 29th), **Red-breasted Flycatcher** (one in willows south of the Terrace on 26th), **Common Rosefinch** (a juvenile trapped in Millcombe on 6th), **Ortolan Bunting** (in flight south of Terrace on 19th; identified from a sound recording) and **Lapland Bunting** (one along the main track above Gannets' Combe on 1st and one over the Airfield on 26th). Also notable were good numbers of **Greenfinch** towards the end of the month, peaking at 11 on 26th, 27th and 30th. Pride of place, however, goes to the juvenile **Buff-breasted Sandpiper** that arrived at North End on 17th, relocating to the south of the island and remaining to 21st, and a first-winter **Grey-cheeked Thrush** trapped and ringed in Millcombe on 29th – only the third for Lundy, the previous record dating back to 1986.

October brought the expected transition from the final departures of most summer visitors to the arrival of winter migrants from northern and eastern Europe. Last dates included **Yellow Wagtail** on 2nd, **Spotted Flycatcher** on 8th, **Whitethroat** and **Pied Flycatcher** on 10th, **House Martin** on 18th, **Garden Warbler** and **Lesser Whitethroat** on 20th, **Redstart** on 21st and **Sand Martin** on 23rd. Apart from **Chiffchaff** and **Blackcap** (both of which occasionally overwinter), only **Swallow** and (very unusually) **Willow Warbler** lingered in November, both making their final appearances in the 2025 log on 8th.



▲ Common Rosefinch being aged by Ezra Sherwell, Millcombe (photo: Tim Jones)



▲ Grey-cheeked Thrush in the hand (photo: Angus Croudace)



▲ Fieldfare, Millcombe (photo: Angus Croudace)



▲ Dusky Warbler in the hand (photo: Angus Croudace)



▲ Goosander (photo: Angus Croudace)

The arrival of winter thrushes was announced by a single **Redwing** in Millcombe on 12th October, followed by 135 the next day and 564 on 14th. **Fieldfares** also arrived suddenly *en masse*, with 70 on 13th, while **Ring Ouzels** put in a decent showing, recorded on nine days during the month and reaching a maximum of 14 on 14th. After the initial influxes, numbers of both **Redwing** and **Fieldfare** fell away, though there were further modest arrivals of 254 **Redwing** on 23rd October and 120 on 6th November. **Song Thrush** peaked at 53 on 14th October, and **Blackbird** a lowly 38 on 16th.

Easterly winds in mid-October, which doubtless assisted the arrival of thrushes, also brought exceptional numbers of **Jack Snipe** to the island. Two (at Pondsburry) on 14th, increased to 12 on 15th (including nine at Pondsburry), and a record Lundy total of 20 on 16th (11 at Pondsburry, three in Barton/St Helen's Fields, two at Quarters Pond, and singles in South West Field, Brick Field, at the head of Gannets' Combe and along the main track). Numbers fell to a still notable seven on 17th but none could be found on 18th.

The autumn **Chaffinch** migration, so often one of the highlights of the ornithological year on Lundy, was less spectacular than in some years, with weather conditions unsuitable on many days. A happy exception was a window on 17th and 18th October which saw 1,463 and 5,064 logged by dedicated (some would say uninged!) counters standing in upper Millcombe and on Castle Hill.

Among other late-autumn arrivals were **Woodcock** (first on 14th October, maximum six on 10th November), **Merlin** (first on 18th September, maximum seven on 22nd October), **Black Redstart** (first on 5th October, maximum four on 14th), **Brambling** (first on 8th October, maximum 10 on 17th October) and **Snow Bunting** (first on 8th October, maximum five on 22nd October).

October and November saw a continuation of an outstanding run of rarities, with highlights including the island's first **Dusky Warbler** (which breeds no closer than eastern Kazakhstan, wintering in south and south-east Asia) initially seen in lower Millcombe early on 10th October and trapped and ringed shortly afterwards. It resurfaced on the densely vegetated bramble and bracken slope below the Ugly on 15th and was seen again (though extremely skulking and difficult to see well) just north of the 'Steps of Doom' (between the Ugly and St Helen's Combe) on 16th. Lundy's third **Glossy Ibis** was seen flying low over the sea, distantly off the East Side, during a seawatch from the Ugly on 18th October. The third-ever **Goosander** for the island was a female or immature flying high to the south, just off the Terrace, on 15th October. A first-year **Greenland White-fronted Goose** arrived on strong north-westerlies on 26th October and, though clearly exhausted to begin with, thrived on the

food and shelter available to it in Barton Field, remaining there until 3rd November (just the fifth Lundy record for this endangered subspecies).

Other notable species in October and November were **Whooper Swan** (two on 8th October), **Lapwing** (up to four on six dates), **Sanderling** (one on Castle Hill on 7th October), **Great White Egret** (one over the Airfield on 9th October), **Little Egret** (one at North East Point and in the Landing Bay on 29th October), **Marsh Harrier** (singles on three dates 14th to 18th October), **Hen Harrier** (one over the east sidelands on 19th October), **Short-eared Owl** (one, 16th to 21st October, mainly in the Ponsbury area), **Hobby** (one over Ackland's Moor on 19th and briefly on 20th October), **Great Spotted Woodpecker** (a female in Millcombe on 13th October, with remains of a predated individual in Gannets' Combe on 14th October), **Yellow-browed Warbler** (singles on six dates from 29th September to 21st October), **Pallas's Warbler** (one trapped in Millcombe on 6th November), **Treecreeper** (ones and twos in Millcombe, St Helen's Copse and Quarter Wall Copse on 20 dates from 9th October to 13th November, with ringing proving the presence of at least three different individuals), **Rose-coloured Starling** (a juvenile in Brick Field on 10th October and around the farm and village the next day), **Mistle Thrush** (singles on 22nd and 26th October), **Red-breasted Flycatcher** (one in Millcombe Pines and St Helen's Copse, 8th to 10th October), **Olive-backed Pipit** (one on western sidelands above Jenny's Cove between Punchbowl Valley and Halfway Wall, 14th to 16th October) and **Lapland Bunting** (singles along the main track near Ponsbury on 10th October and one in flight over Brick Field on 22nd October).



▲ Greenland White-fronted Goose (photo: Tim Jones)



▲ Red-breasted Flycatcher, Terrace (photo: Paul Holt)

Early winter

With the end of autumn migration, the departure of the seasonal Observatory volunteers, fewer visiting birders, and decreasing daylight hours, the island logbook took on its familiarly sparse winter plumage, this year exacerbated by the departure in early December of Joe Parker as Lundy Warden.

There were still a few late ornithological highlights to come, though, including two **Barnacle Geese** that arrived on Boxing Day, frequenting Brick and Lower Lighthouse Fields until 2nd January 2026, one or two **Lapwing** in late December, a female-type **Black Redstart** on the fenceline running down from the shop gate on 29th December, and a **Little Egret** at Ponsbury on New Year's Eve.

So drew to a close an exceptionally rich and varied year. The Bird Observatory Organising Committee would like to thank the LFS for its continuing support, all visiting birdwatchers and ringers for their invaluable records, the Voluntary Observatory Assistants for 2025 – Ezra Sherwell and Flo Turner and Voluntary Seabird Fieldworker Kathleen Power – for their tireless work at all times of the day and night, and last but not least, Joe Parker, who played a key role in successfully steering the Observatory through its probationary period. We look forward to our first year as a fully reaccredited member of the network!