

## WORK ON NESTING SEA BIRDS

### (1) CENSUS OF THE SOUTH-WEST SAMPLE AREA

The figures of the census were obtained in the following manner :  
 Shag.—A doubling of the number of occupied nests.

Great Black-backed, Lesser Black-backed and Herring Gull.—A doubling of the number of nests counted during May and June.

Kittiwake.—A doubling of the number of occupied nests on June 11th.

Therefore for the above species, non-breeding individuals are not included.

Razorbill.—A count of adults present in area on May 10th, 0600-0730 hrs.

Guillemot.—A count of adults present in area on June 9th, 1100-1130 hrs.

Puffin.—No evidence of breeding but eight on water off the Shutter on July 4th.

More than one count was made of the Auks. The highest figure has been taken.

	1955	1954	1953	1952	1951	1950	1949	1948	1942
Shag	92	106	100	108	26	30	50	32	43
Oystercatcher	2	2	2	4	2	2	4	2	2
Gt Black-backed	24	24	16	18	13	27	27	20	16
Lsr Black-backed	14	16	8	6	12	12	21	14	1
Herring Gull	260	398	446	490	478	332	348	171	464
Kittiwake	122	84	98	84	54	32	0	0	84
Razorbill	195	188	128	228	211	408	415	290	364
Guillemot	50	53	51	83	72	68	137	116	265
Puffin	8	0	1	1	0	0	5	0	0

In addition seventy-three Razorbill nest sites were counted during May and June giving a breeding population of *c.* 146.

### (2) KITTIWAKE

A count of occupied nests was made during June by the Warden and other members of the Society. A total of 1,308 was compiled as compared to 1,858 in 1953 and 2,026 in 1951.

#### *Breeding Success, Kittiwake Gully*

June 5th.—185 occupied nests.

July 15th.—121 young in nests, no young seen on wing.

#### *Breeding Success, Puffin Gully*

June 3rd.—263 occupied nests.

July 20th.—188 young in nests, two of which flew while we were in the area.

#### *Breeding Success, Shutter Gully*

May 11th.—66 occupied sites, no eggs.

May 19th.—3 nests with 1 egg, remainder nests empty.

June 11th.—53 nests with closely brooding adults, 8 nests incomplete or empty.

July 4th.—40 nests with chicks, 3 nests with adults sitting closely, contents not visible.

July 27th.—63 chicks from 46 nests. No young on wing. 2 was the maximum number of chicks from any one nest.

August 2nd.—54 chicks in nests. 5 young on the wing.

It was noticeable in Kittiwake and Puffin Gully colonies that the nests on the fringes of the colonies, particularly near the top of the cliff faces were the least successful. Predation on chicks in the nests by Peregrine Falcons and Great Black-backed Gulls was observed.

The higher success rate of the Shutter Gully colony as compared to the other two is probably due to its comparative inaccessibility from human disturbance, possibly also to its remoteness from the Peregrine eyrie.

### (3) CENSUS OF GUILLEMOTS

The census was taken during the last week in May and throughout June. The compiled total of adults was 3,850. Many areas were counted at the end of May and again in June. In all cases the June figure was the highest. Birds on the ledges and in the water were counted. Comparing with the 1949 count of 3,500, taken between May 23rd and July 19th, it would seem that the population may be fairly static.

### GENERAL DISCUSSION

The good weather probably had an advantageous effect on the breeding success of the sea bird population. It was certainly a much earlier season than 1954. Practically all the auks had left before the last week in July. On July 16th no Guillemots were seen on the Devil's Chimney throughout the afternoon. On May 12th thirty-three Guillemot eggs were counted on Gannets' Rock (excluding the west face) and thirty-nine chicks counted in the same area on June 21st. Several Guillemot eggs were found stuck immovably by dried guano to the ledges, an interesting effect of the very dry weather.

Razorbill numbers were thought to be slightly lower than last year although they are particularly difficult to assess.

Puffins were again probably extremely unsuccessful. Only two individuals were seen carrying fish, one on July 2nd and another on July 13th. The last date when any number were seen off Puffin Slope was July 17th when *c.* fifty were seen on the water at 1845 hrs but they had all left by 2015 hrs.

The mortality among young gull chicks seemed to be as high as usual but no exact work was done. The Great Black-backed seems definitely to be the earliest of the breeding gulls on Lundy.