

## NOTES ON SELECTED SPECIES

By C. S. WALLER

1st W♂ **BLACK-BILLED CUCKOO** (*Coccyzus erythrophthalmus*)

**ON LUNDY, N. DEVON**

**19th-20th OCTOBER 1967**

At about 1610 hrs on October 19th 1967, whilst collecting a new calor gas cylinder from outside the Old Light, Lundy, a small cuckoo type bird flew off from the compound wall over towards the edge of the cliff, it was brown above and white below and appeared smaller and slimmer than our own cuckoo with a long slim tail and a flight not unlike that of a Turtle Dove (*Streptopelia turtur*).

Collecting my binoculars I went straight over to the area it was last seen to try and find it again, but without any success, having to give up the search after a short while due to failing light, but realising it was probably one of the American cuckoos resolved to try and find it again the next day.

Most of the morning of 20th was spent looking for the bird again without any luck, but at about 1410 hrs whilst going to empty a dustbin over the cliff assisted by Miss W. S. Hall, we found lying on the ground a dead bird which on closer inspection proved to be one of the American cuckoos. The bird was taken back to the Observatory and the following description compiled from it.

### Plumage

Upper-parts: forehead and crown brown with a slight bronze gloss some of the feathers faintly tipped buff, upper-part of ear coverts similar to crown, cheeks and lower part of ear coverts grey-buff, lores ash-grey tipped brown extending a little way over the eye, nape and the rest of upper parts brown with a greenish-bronze gloss, less glossy on the rump, tail coverts as rump but with faint buff tips.

Under-parts: chin and upper throat buff, lower throat and breast ash-grey washed buff, belly silver-white tinged greyish on flanks and very faintly washed buff in the centre, tail coverts grey-buff, axillaries and well feathered under wing coverts creamy-buff.

Wings: primaries, distal portions similar to upper parts but slightly browner and duller with minute buff-white tips, middle portions just below coverts tinged rufous on outer webs with little or none on outer four, running to creamy-buff on inner webs, secondaries much as upper parts with minute buff-white tips and a faint trace of rufous on edge of outer webs, inner webs running to creamy-buff, primary coverts darker than primaries with a trace of rufous on the edge of outer webs, and rufous-buff tips, secondary coverts similar to secondaries but with more noticeable buff tips, median and lesser coverts much as upper parts, bastard wing brown with a bronzy-rufous gloss to outer webs and whitish tips.

Tail: much as upper parts being fairly uniform in colour but outer pairs less glossy with buff edges to inner webs, all but the centre pair having buff-white tips, most extensive on the outer and penultimate pairs where it extended up to 3 mm. from the tip, under side of tail buff-grey with tips as on the dorsal side.

### Soft Parts

Legs bluish-grey, toes slightly darker, soles brown-grey, bill upper mandible blackish horn faintly lighter along the cutting edge, lower mandible tip blackish the remainder blackish-grey with a very faint wash of yellow at the base, the iris was brown and the eyelids and bare skin round the eye yellow.

### Measurements and Structure

Wings 133 mm., tail 141 mm., tarsus 23 mm., bill from skull 24 mm., from feathers 21 mm., weight 34 gms., wing formulae 3rd primary longest, 1st shorter by 45.5, 2nd shorter by 14 mm., 4th shorter by 1 mm., 5th shorter by 9 mm., 6th shorter by 19 mm., 7th shorter by 27 mm., 8th shorter by 34.5 mm., 10th shorter by 45 mm., outer webs narrowing on distal halves.

Tail: 10 feathers with roundish tips, central pair longest, 2nd pair  $\frac{1}{2}$  mm. shorter, 3rd pair 5 mm. shorter, 4th pair 19.5 and 22 mm. shorter, outer pair 54 mm. shorter.

From this description I concluded that the bird was a 1st winter Black-billed Cuckoo, to which Leicester Museum agreed when they made the body into a skin and sexed it as a male, I would very much liked to have compared my skin with a series of 1st winter Black and Yellow-billed Cuckoos but although I wrote and visited a number of Museums they could not or would not help.

### BALTIMORE ORIOLES ON LUNDY, DEVON

On the morning of 17th October 1967 at about 6.30 a.m. G.M.T. whilst making my way to drive the terrace trap I saw some feathers lying on the ground near to a high stone wall. On going over to investigate, the remains of an unfamiliar bird were found, The body had been completely eaten but quite a few of the body feathers still remained. The skull had been cracked open and the brains removed. Both legs and wings were found and after a long search, twelve rectrices, the blood was still wet and some still warm. Rat droppings were stuck to some of the feathers. The bits were put into a bag and taken back to the observatory where after a thorough examination, proved to be remains of a Baltimore Oriole (*Ictea galbula*) this latter being confirmed by the British Museum.

At about 13.00 hours the same day, while setting up some mist nets along the terrace, a bird that I immediately knew was another Baltimore Oriole flew into a net that had been erected only minutes before.

This bird was taken back to the observatory to be examined and photographed and the following description taken.

#### Plumage

Upper parts: forehead orange-yellow, slightly tipped brown-grey, crown and nape olive yellow with greyer tips, lores grey-white, ear coverts similar to crown but a little yellower, mantle and back olive grey-brown with darker centres and greyish tips, rump orange-yellow, tail covers orange-yellow tipped olive grey.

Tail: twelve feathers slightly rounded outer being 6 mm. shorter than inner, four outer feathers on each side orange-yellow with outer webs tinged brown more so on outer pair than others. Inner webs tipped pale buff-yellow, central feathers slightly darker but more brownish along edge of outer third. Wings: primaries blackish with outer webs fringed white and large buff white margins on inner webs of third to fifth, lower third and tips of remainder edged white. Secondaries, blackish with outer webs edged white, primary-coverts blackish faintly fringed brownish, greater-coverts blackish with large white tips on outer webs forming a conspicuous wing bar, inner webs slightly tipped pale greyish-white, median coverts blackish with large white tips to both inner and outer webs, separated by dark shafts and forming a thicker wing bar than greater coverts. Lesser coverts blackish but slightly paler than the rest fringed pale olive-grey, bastard wing black.

Underparts: throat and upper breast bright orange-yellow with paler yellow tips, chin and lower breast similar but paler, belly creamy, flanks grey-buff washed yellow, tail coverts bright orange-yellow with paler yellow tips, underside of tail olive-brown washed bright yellow, noticeably more yellow than upper surface, under wing white washed pale yellow, the outer edge round the carpal joint bright yellow, auxillaries yellow.

Soft parts: Feet and legs blue-grey, soles flesh grey, upper mandible blue-grey with paler cutting edge, lower mandible paler blueish white, flesh near base, gape flesh pink, iris dark brown.

Measurements and Structure: Wing 93 mm., tail 75 mm., tarsus 23 mm., bill from feathers 17 mm., from skull 18.5 mm., weight 26.5 gms at 1320 hours, wing formula 3rd and 4th primaries equal and longest, 1st minute, 2nd shorter by 3.5 mm., 5th shorter by 2.5 mm., 6th shorter by 6.5 mm., 7th shorter by 11

mm., 8th shorter by 15 mm., 9th shorter by 20 mm., 10th shorter by 22.5 mm.; 3rd, 4th and 5th primaries deeply emarginated, 6th slightly.

During handling the bird raised its crown feathers on a number of occasions and twice raised its ear-covert up the side of the head above the crown, it also gave a short squawk a few times not unlike that sometimes uttered by a Garden Warbler (*Sylvia borin*) or Blackcap (*Sylvia tricapilla*) when being handled, the bill and vent were stained by fruit juice.

In addition to myself, a number of other people saw the bird in the hand. These included Miss W. S. Hall, Mr. and Mrs. A. Strick, Mr. E. Mathews, Mr. J. Stockwell, and Mr. and Mrs. J. Ogilvie who also saw the first Lundy record.

The bird was ringed No. BA 25825 and because of high wind, taken and released along the East side where it flew down into a woody combe and was not seen again.

The following measurements were taken from the remains of the dead bird: Wing: 89 mm., tail 72 mm., tarsus 22 mm., bill from skull 19.5 mm., from feathers 18 mm.

Wing formula: 3rd and 4th primaries equal and longest, 1st minute, 2nd shorter by 1.5 mm., 5th shorter by 1.5 mm., 6th shorter by 6 mm., 7th shorter by 11 mm., 8th shorter by 14.5 mm., 10th shorter by 22 mm., 3rd, 4th and 5th primaries emarginated, 6th very slightly so.

The wings of this bird were slightly darker as well.

#### ADULT ♀ SCARLET GROSBEEK (*Carpodacus erythrinus*) ON LUNDY, N. DEVON — 22nd OCTOBER 1967

At about 1500 hrs on the afternoon of October 22nd 1967, whilst mist-netting in the gardens of Millcombe House on Lundy, N. Devon, I caught a Scarlet Grosbeak (*Carpodacus erythrinus*) the bird had not been seen prior to its capture. The bird was taken back to the observatory for examination and the following description compiled from it.

##### Plumage

Upper-parts: forehead grey-buff with slightly darker brown centres, crown grey-buff but lighter than forehead with darker brown centres, nape brownish with pale edging, lores greyish-buff, ear coverts pale buff-brown with paler shafts, mantle and back brownish with pale buff edges, rump light brown with pale buff edges, tail coverts light brown edged and tipped pale buff.

Wings: primaries dark-brown with yellowish-buff outer edges, secondaries, dark brown square and slightly notched with yellowish-buff outer edges, slightly greener and brighter than primaries, primary coverts dark brown with yellow-buff outer edge, greater coverts blackish-brown with faint buff edge and creamy-white tips mostly to outer web, median coverts blackish-brown with creamy-buff tips, lesser coverts pale brown, yellow-buff tips, bastard wing dark brown with yellow-buff outer edges, tertials blackish-brown with white outer edge and tips.

Under-parts: chin buff-white with dark brown streaks up the centres of the feathers, throat buff-white with bolder and darker streaks, breast whitish with brown streaking, belly dirty white, flanks buff-white with grey-grown streaks, under-tail coverts whitish-buff, wing linings grey-white washed and tipped buff, axillaries buff washed yellowish-buff.

Tail: twelve feathers slightly forked, dark brown with buffish-green edges.

Soft parts: feet and legs pale brown, bill upper mandible grey-brown with quite a lot of bristle like feathers at the base, lower mandible similar but paler round the base, iris dark brown.

Measurements and structure: Wing 84 mm., tail 57 mm., tarsus 18 mm., bill from feathers 10.5 mm., from skull 12 mm., weight at 1510 hours 19 gms., wing formula 3rd longest, 1st minute, 2nd shorter by .5 mm., 4th shorter by 2 mm., 5th shorter by 5.5 mm., 6th shorter by 10.5 mm., 7th shorter by 14.5 mm., 8th shorter by 17 mm., 10th shorter by 24 mm., 3rd to 5th primaries emarginated,

secondaries falling a fraction short of 9th primary, the bill was 9 mm wide and 8 mm. deep, and the centre tail feathers were 7 mm. shorter than the outer.

I came to the conclusion that this bird was probably an adult female because the greater, lesser and median coverts and also the rump appeared very green, much greener than any of the 1st W birds I had seen before this was very obvious when the bird was held a foot or so away but not at all noticeable on close inspection.

The bird seemed in a very tired condition and this and the low weight pointed to it having recently arrived.

### RINGING REPORT FOR 1967

This has been an exceptionally good year for ringing, one thousand six hundred and seventy-five birds were ringed, the highest total since 1959. A total of seventy-five species were caught a record for the observatory, including no less than eight new to the ringing list.

Ringing covered the period from March 18th to November 7th and the success of the various trapping methods were as follows:-

Terrace Trap 308; Quarter Wall Trap 62; Mist Net 844; Pulli 312; Dazzling 85; Other Methods 64.

### LIST OF SPECIES RINGED IN 1967

	Trapped	Pulli	Total
Manx Shearwater	3		3
Fulmar	3		3
Shag	1	64	65
Mallard	1	1	2
Kestrel	1		1
*Quail	1		1
Water Rail	6		6
*Moorhen	1		1
Oystercatcher	2	1	3
Lapwing	1	4	5
Snipe	3		3
Curlew	7	4	11
Whimbrel	15		15
*Common Sandpiper	1		1
*Knot	3		3
Dunlin	7		7
G.B.B. Gull		7	7
Herring Gull		38	38
Kittiwake	1	151	152
Razorbill	8	7	15
Guillemot	22	13	35
Cuckoo	4		4
Nightjar	1		1
*Hoopoe	1		1
Wryneck	3		3
Skylark	1	4	5
Swallow	158		158
House Martin	5		5
Sand Martin	8		8
Baltimore Oriole	1		1
Raven		5	5
Treecreeper	1		1
Wren	31		31
Song Thrush	10		10
Redwing	2		2