

during the last ten days at least I ended up working the Millcombe area: there seemed always to be a much better concentration of birds of all types there. It some 30 Swallows and these all within an hour or so. Each day, as mentioned earlier, I set out early for the terraces to assess the situation, and on every day on the terraces for a few days, but only once did they yield anything significant, was of interest that once when I did work some nets on the terraces for a while, I retrapped a Ring Ousel which I had already ringed in Millcombe a short while before. I was lucky in that on only one day was the weather so bad that I was barely able to get out, though there were several days when the wind was too high for setting nets: that one day was remarkable in that I went out in a lull (as I thought!) in the heavy rain and in passing the terrace heligoland trap saw a movement which turned out to be a deluded Swallow: it was the only bird ringed that day, and had to be carried back in a bag inside my anorak through the rain which shortly started to descend again: I cannot say it flew off happily when I released it, but it made for shelter fast!

I found the island fascinating quite apart from my actual trapping and ringing. There were relatively few other visitors during my stay so late in the year but those who were there were convivial and gravitated to the tavern in the evening so that a good social atmosphere was always present: I was even pressed into playing darts, which I have not handled for many years, once for the visitors and once as an honorary islander; I managed to get my fair share of bulls which was remarkable! We did find it necessary to write up the bird log early in the evening so as to avoid any exaggeration of records. Even so some light hearted entries crept into the back page, one entered under protest by its perpetrator —“Is the Great Auk still extinct?”

On those days when trapping was quite impossible I covered most of the rest of the island, obviously bird watching but also admiring and photographing the impressive rock formations and the island in general. I even got over to Rat Island in search of Purple Sandpipers (which were not there!)

The total number of birds which I ringed during the three weeks (included of course in the main ringing totals) was 322 of 22 species; the most notable items in this were 37 Swallows, 21 Garden Warblers, 63 Blackcaps, 26 Chiffchaffs, 2 Yellow-browed Warblers, 11 Firecrests and 17 Siskins.

## LUNDY ISLAND, 29th SEPTEMBER—2nd OCTOBER, 1979

R. K. BIRCHER

Six members of the Severn Vale Ringing Group made a short visit to the Island hoping to repeat our exciting stay in September 1970.

We landed at 5.00 p.m. and a Redstart and Pied Flycatcher in Millcombe with an easterly wind blowing raised out hopes of some good birds; but on reaching the ledges on the east side, where we had ringed so successfully in 1970, we sensed a complete lack of migrants.

Sunday dawned overcast, still with a stiff easterly blowing, and netting was just about impossible. A search of the Island around Pondsburry revealed a different pipit among the many Meadows showing almost enough features to make it a Red throated but it was very elusive and denied us a positive identification. Observation was difficult in the strong wind but three Lapland buntings were distinctive with their chestnut wing coverts and rattling call.

During the evening the wind veered south west and a warm sunny morning greeted us. Swallow passage was spectacular all day with hundreds of birds moving south under the shelter of the east facing slopes. Among the Swallows were at least two Swifts, many House martins and the occasional Sand Martin. A Whitethroat and five Chiffchaff were the days warbler total. The sight of some four hundred hirundines in one flock leaving the Island at dusk was a bonus for those fascinated by migration.

The wind was back to east/south east by Tuesday and thick banks of rolling mist from the mainland were soon creeping across the higher parts of the Island, reducing visibility rapidly and dramatically. We were at the north end and watched small parties of Meadow pipits, totalling at least one hundred and fifty, coming in off the sea. A Ring ousel attracted our attention with its harsh call. Birds were obviously being grounded by the mist and six Whinchats were found by the Quarter Wall. A Garden warbler was caught in the Quarter Wall Heligoland—a most efficient trap—and just as it was released another warbler appeared, low, through a gap in the wall and perched on a barbed wire fence. It was obviously a Hippolais and better views as it was coaxed towards the trap suggested Icterine. This was confirmed when it was safely in the hand.

No account of a visit to Lundy would be complete without mention of the many Ravens that amazed and amused us by their continual aerobatics—particularly appreciated during the quieter periods on the ledges.

## SOME FIELD SOCIETY ACTIVITIES ON LUNDY 1979

R. W. BRITTON

The unfortunate subsidence of the Beach Road in December 1978 meant that the proposed Easter Working Party and the spring Course had to be cancelled. However other fruitful activities were carried out successfully.

First the "Gull watch" in spring. This is your Society's continuing programme to control the numbers of Herring and Great Black-backed Gulls on Lundy—I emphasise control and not elimination. As most people are aware the great population explosion of *Larus argentatus* occurred in the 1950's and early 1960's. It was certainly one contributory factor in the remarkable decrease in the auk population. For some nine years now the writer has been trying to limit the hatching success of the gulls by the most humane method. His task these past two seasons has been easier by the able presence of John High who has given great support at the end of a rope. His help has been a great time-saver. It has meant that in spite of increasing age and rather limited mobility many of the big West side and North End colonies were visited. I would report to you that the gull numbers are much reduced in these areas and, consequently, the auk populations are not continuing to decrease. In the case of Razorbills there is reason to think their numbers have actually increased. I would particularly like to thank Colonel Gilliat for his help and support in this direction.

Despite only modest support in previous years our Committee decided to proceed with our course in the Barn in 1979. This proved to be a sound decision since we were fully booked for our two weeks in September. It was pleasant indeed to welcome old friends who had been on our courses before. These included Peter Bellers, Tony Blackmore, Sheila Darling, John High, David Leigh, and Terry Shannon. Our hospitality was also extended to "first-timers" particularly Jim Somerfield whose mobility on crutches and adventurous spirit gave the writer even more grey hairs.

The occurrence of birds during our stay was rich indeed. To start with there was a beautiful Bar-tailed Godwit feeding for several days in the valley N.W. of the Cattle Shelter; it proved to be quite interested in photography. The Quarter Wall area near the main path and the trap was productive throughout the fortnight. Here we saw Melodious Warbler, Willow Warbler, Whinchat, Spotted and Pied Flycatcher, Woodchat and Red-backed Shrike, and Kestrel.

Migrating waders certainly gave us variety if not large numbers. These included:—Curlew, Whimbrel, Green Sandpiper, Spotted Redshank, Snipe, Little Stint, Turnstone, Ringed Plover, Golden Plover, Dotterel, and Dunlin.

There was a peak period in the Swallow/Martin migration when it was very impressive to see large numbers of these birds passing low over the top of the island and along the East Sidelands. Many were seen feeding and bathing on