

PUFFIN NUMBERS ON LUNDY DURING JUNE 1995

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This report contains the results of a simple Puffin survey carried out in June 1995, and sets out a methodology which can hopefully be repeated in future years.

INTRODUCTION

In 1989 Puffin numbers were systematically surveyed and a short paper was written (Campey 1989) recommending an outline for repeat surveys which would hopefully shed some light on the status of the Lundy Puffin. During June 1995 a simple survey was made of the Puffin numbers present on and around the island following as closely as possible the original methodology.

METHOD

Counts were made on 19th, 21st and 23rd June from the land with an additional survey made by boat on the 22nd, primarily to get some idea of the birds' behaviour and assess the use of a boat as an additional survey method. The land surveys were carried out at approximately the same time on each occasion and counts were made of all birds within the observation range of a telescope. The route walked began at Rocket Pole and followed the west coast round to the North Light, continuing around the north coast and then down the east coast as far as Brazen Ward. Counts were made from the best vantage points of each bay or stretch of sea; this could be on the cliff top or lower down. Puffins were counted on the water and the cliff using both binoculars and a telescope.

The survey by boat was conducted on just one occasion from the Islander on a round island trip. The conditions on the day only allowed the boat to travel up the west coast at a distance of between approximately 300 - 600m from the base of the cliffs. Puffins were spotted by observers using binoculars in all directions around the boat to a distance of up to 200m.

Due to the smaller number of samples I did not consider it appropriate to divide the survey area into sections as had been done by Campey.

RESULTS

<i>Date</i>	<i>on water</i>	<i>Total seen</i>	
		<i>on land</i>	<i>Total</i>
19 June	27	2	29
21 June	12	7	19
22 June (boat)	19	3	22
23 June	25	6	31
Average over period (exc. boat survey)			26.33

DISCUSSION

The survey, simple as it was, seemed to be quite effective in returning a reasonably repeatable count of birds which no doubt in some way reflects the number of Puffins on and around Lundy during the period. The number of breeding birds will always be hard to determine but there seem to be at least six different burrow sites that were observed being used. The current focus of the Lundy Puffins seems to have changed from the Jenny's Cove area which was well populated during previous surveys. I found in this area that birds are present only occasionally, a fact which has also been commented on by other observers. In contrast, the Puffins in St Marks Bay and off Long Roost were habitually in these areas during the breeding season.

The boat survey was of limited use in assessing the numbers of birds because of the boat's distance from the shore and the decreased visibility of birds on the water from the low vantage point given on the boat. The majority of birds seen from the boat were at a distance too great to have been seen from the cliff and would have been missed in the land surveys. The presence of these birds is encouraging but not strictly relevant to this survey as we cannot be sure whether these are Lundy birds or not.

In summary, the status of Puffins seems to be fairly stable and the birds still appear to be breeding on the island. A direct comparison with the survey conducted by Campey would show a slight decrease in numbers although as suggested there are several problems in comparing the two surveys particularly the timing of the surveys and the methodologies.

REFERENCE

Campey, R.J. 1989. Puffin numbers on Lundy during June 1989. *Annual Report of the Lundy Field Society* 40, 28-30.