

GREEN WARBLER – A NEW SPECIES FOR LUNDY (AND DEVON)

By

TIM DAVIS AND TIM JONES
gen@birdsoflundy.org.uk



Lundy's first Green Warbler in Millcombe Wood on 7 October 2018.

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At around 09.10 on 7 October 2018, we were walking along the north side of Millcombe, when TimJ glimpsed a warbler with a prominent supercilium (eyebrow) and single wing-bar.

We also noted an orangey bill and generally bright plumage. We were particularly struck by the yellowish tones, but with no field experience of Green Warbler and only a little of Greenish, were unsure how yellow was 'too yellow'. We did mention to each other at this stage the possibility of Green Warbler, but were clearly too quick to dismiss the notion of something so preposterously rare!

On our return to Millcombe at midday and after about 25 minutes' searching, we found the bird feeding in Turkey oaks and sycamores on the opposite side of the valley, alongside Chiffchaffs and Goldcrests. We again watched it moving through the canopy at some speed, often against

the light, which made snatching record shots with a bridge camera quite a challenge (though we did manage a few of the bird's upperparts).

The bird was constantly moving ahead of us and dropped out of sight after about ten minutes. It was not until 14.30 that we caught up with it once more, but again it was moving away. At 15.25 it was in trees further down the valley, when it rested in the semi-open for a minute or two, enabling some better record shots to be taken, albeit of the head and underparts only. We last saw it at 15.45. Altogether we estimate that we watched it for about 40 minutes.

Posting two photos on the Lundy birding blog as 'Greenish Warbler' shortly afterwards quickly unleashed a Twitter storm that we were only partly able to keep up with from the island. It soon emerged that we had stumbled on the UK's fifth Green Warbler and a first for both Lundy and Devon! Unusually for any point in October, we were the only birders on the island; Warden Dean Jones was unfortunately away on holiday. The following morning, 34 'twitchers' in three Ilfracombe-based boats endured unpleasant trips across in blustery winds and drizzle. However, despite thorough searching, it soon became clear that the bird had flown overnight.

We would like to thank everyone, especially Devon birders Mike Langman and Chris Townend, who contributed to pinning down the bird's identification from afar – it was great having such support from the online birding community.

Main descriptive points: *Phylloscopus* warbler approximately the size of a Chiffchaff, with a notably prominent, orangey-looking bill held at a slightly upturned angle. Long yellowish-white supercilium. Single quite prominent whitish-yellow wing-bar. Yellow body feathering making a striking yellow mark near the carpal (elbow) joint. Upperparts rather bright greenish. Tertiaries narrowly tipped paler. Throat and face suffused with lemon yellow, very much like Wood Warbler. Rest of underparts more whitish but washed with yellow. Legs brownish when in decent light.

For a fuller account of the finding of the Green Warbler, see 'Discovering Lundy', No. 48, January 2019, pp. 37–39.