

BIRD RINGING ON LUNDY

Tony Taylor (ammataylor@yahoo.co.uk)

In a major step forward for Lundy bird ringing, Warden Dean Jones attended the annual Bird Observatories Council meeting in Thetford on 1st February 2020 at which he presented the case for Lundy to rejoin the Bird Observatories network. This went very well, but the process will require three probationary years before full recognition is given. Lundy's case will be backed up by two actions currently in progress or being planned.

First, the digitisation of historic ringing data has continued, with over 100,000 Lundy records now in the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) database and available for analysis. As well as the original ringing data, all subsequent recaptures are included. Recaptures are particularly valuable because they allow demographic statistics, such as annual survival, to be calculated. The second development is the planned rebuilding of the Terrace Heligoland trap. This will require permission from Historic England, which the Covid pandemic has delayed.

Another change initiated in 2020 has been the move by Imperial College London and Sheffield University, which carry out the long-term study of House Sparrows on Lundy, from using their own rings to using LFS ones. This will make it easier for LFS ringers to help with the study when researchers are not on the island. It will also make the long-term future of the study more secure, as the research students are not always sufficiently qualified as ringers to order new ring stocks from the BTO (see Jamie Dunning's note on the House Sparrow study in *Birds on Lundy*, p. 81).

Inevitably, the pandemic had a direct impact on bird ringing, with no visiting ringers able to operate on the island until August. This meant that work on the long-term study of Wheatears for the BTO's RAS (Retrapping Adults for Survival) project could not be carried out. However, Dean Jones recorded sightings of 34 Wheatears that had been colour-ringed on Lundy in previous years, filling in what would otherwise be gaps in those birds' life histories. Dean was also able to ring some spring migrants, record the Manx Shearwaters making use of nestboxes through their breeding season, and to mist-net Storm Petrels near North Light in July. We are most grateful to him for all his efforts at a time when he had so many other tasks to tackle.

With Covid restrictions easing in August, the first visiting ringers arrived in time to mist-net Storm Petrels in two more night-time sessions that month, and good numbers of Manx Shearwater chicks were ringed during two weeks in late August and early September. In these same two weeks some autumn migrants were also ringed, though the ringers' need for sleep, after nights spent in the shearwater colonies, limited the numbers caught. Autumn migrants then became the primary targets during a further six weeks of ringing to early November.

In total, 1,975 birds were ringed in 2020. While this was lower than in most other recent years, good autumn coverage resulted in a productive year considering the difficult circumstances. The birds caught were made up of 47 species, which is close to the average for the previous ten years. For the fourth year in a row Blackcap topped the species list, with 511 ringed, followed by Manx Shearwater (319), and Goldcrest, Swallow, Chiffchaff and Willow Warbler also reaching three figures. It was another record year for Storm Petrels, with 79 ringed.

Rarities included the first White's Thrush to be ringed on Lundy, the eighth Little Bunting and the thirty-third Melodious Warbler. Though not unusual nationally, a Cetti's Warbler was only the fifth ringed on the island and a Bullfinch was the thirtieth. The Woodcock total of three was a record, with just 15 ringed in the previous 73 years. A full list of ringing totals is given below.

Recoveries and controls

An interesting selection of ringing recoveries and controls included four warblers ringed and recaptured in successive migration seasons as they moved between Lundy and other locations in South West England, North Wales, Ireland and Western France.

There was also very delayed news of another migrant, a Goldcrest that moved from Devon to Lundy in September 1988. This record came to light during the process of digitising historic ringing data. While the bird's northward movement in autumn may seem odd, it could have been using Lundy as a stepping stone on what was essentially an east-west journey towards the milder winter conditions of Ireland.

Taking the same step but in the opposite direction was a Bullfinch ringed as a one-year-old on Lundy in spring 2015. It was found dead in North Devon in June 2020. Given its age when originally ringed, it would have been exploring in search of a breeding territory and mate at that time. Unlike most passerines, Bullfinch pairs are remarkably faithful and stay together throughout the year, so it probably settled permanently in North Devon soon after ringing.

The Guillemot from Skomer that was seen on Lundy in 2019 returned in 2020. It bred on the same ledge where it had been prospecting the previous year. As noted in the 2019 ringing report, it is unusual for Guillemots to breed away from their natal colony.

Several records of Manx Shearwater and Storm Petrel movements are discussed below, and full details of all 2020 recoveries and controls also follow.

Manx Shearwaters

The steady uptake of shearwater nestboxes continued in 2020. Eggs were laid in seven of them and five were successful, with the five chicks ringed before fledging. Of the 14 breeding adults involved, 11 were encountered when boxes were being checked. One pair was ringed in 2017 and has used the same box each year since then. Five more birds were ringed in 2018–20 while incubating in boxes, and a further four were ringed when they were perhaps young, prospecting pre-breeders which have since started breeding in boxes. In all cases where birds first bred before 2020, the pairs have stayed together and in the same box. All these records are contributing valuable data for calculating breeding success rates and other variables relevant to shearwater breeding biology and conservation.

Manx Shearwater and egg laid in a nestbox, 14th May (photos: Dean Jones).



In all, 319 shearwaters were ringed in 2020, of which 245 were chicks, 67 were adults and seven were fledglings making their first flights. Most of these fledglings were found in the Village after becoming disorientated. Their instinct is to use residual light close to the horizon to guide them away from land as they fledge, but on exceptionally dark nights they can be confused by artificial light sources.

Recaptured shearwaters included 22 ringed on Lundy in previous years. The oldest of these were from 2008, 2010 and 2011. Three others originally ringed as chicks, two in 2013 and one in 2016, provide particularly valuable data because their ages and origins are known precisely. Also of interest was a bird ringed as a chick below Sunset Buttress, north of the Old Light, in September 2020. It turned up on the Warden's doorstep three nights later, when it was trying to fledge in dark, windy conditions and was presumably attracted to lights in the village.

Two shearwaters, both ringed on the same night in 2013, were found in other colonies in 2020. One was encountered twice on Bardsey Island, North Wales. The other was found dead on Skokholm, after previously being recaptured there in 2018. In both cases they were probably wandering pre-breeders when ringed on Lundy which subsequently settled down to breed on the other islands.

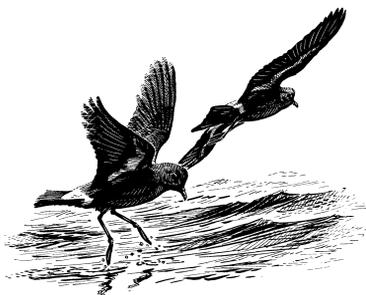
Three further shearwaters have sadly died before reaching breeding age. One was ringed as a chick in 2016 and found dead after returning to Lundy in 2020. As a pre-breeding bird it would have been more vulnerable to predation than breeders, because it would have spent more time exposed on the colony surface than more experienced individuals, which disappear quickly down their familiar burrow when they arrive at night.

The other two recoveries concerned birds ringed on Lundy as chicks and found on the same beach in southern Brazil in October 2020. They had probably died as a result of severe storms offshore. One was a little over one year old, while the other had only taken about a month to migrate nearly 10,000 km since fledging.

Storm Petrels

As in the previous three years, Storm Petrels were targeted by using mist-nets at night near North Light. Birds were initially captured without the use of sound lures in order to select those that were in the area as part of their routine activities, and therefore perhaps breeding locally. Sound lures were sometimes also played to draw in birds from further away and increase the number caught, though these would include a higher proportion of wandering pre-breeders.

A record total of 79 birds were ringed during three nights in July and August, with 29 previously ringed individuals also caught, four of them arriving from elsewhere. These came from north-west Wales after eight years, the west of Ireland after six years, and two from Skokholm, one after one year and the other after 29 days. Further details of these controls are given below.



Nationally there is plenty of evidence that Storm Petrels visit colonies other than their own, particularly as pre-breeders but also sometimes after they have started breeding. However, on Lundy in 2020, 16 of the 25 locally ringed recaptured birds had been caught several times at the same site over the previous three years, and so were very likely to be breeding there. There was further support for this in several cases where birds were clearly carrying very full crops of food, almost certainly being brought in to feed to their chicks.

LUNDY RINGING TOTALS 2020

Manx Shearwater	(245)	319	Redwing	52
Storm Petrel		79	Spotted Flycatcher	2
Water Rail		1	Robin	23
Woodcock		3	Pied Flycatcher	2
Snipe		1	Redstart	2
Kestrel		1	Stonechat	1
Goldcrest		122	Dunnock	17
Firecrest		7	House Sparrow	38
Coal Tit		1	Grey Wagtail	2
Swallow		196	Pied Wagtail	1
House Martin		9	Meadow Pipit	2
Cetti's Warbler		1	Chaffinch	51
Yellow-browed Warbler		9	Bullfinch	1
Chiffchaff		114	Greenfinch	2
Willow Warbler		147	Linnet	2
Blackcap		511	Lesser Redpoll	5
Garden Warbler		5	Goldfinch	47
Lesser Whitethroat		1	Siskin	26
Whitethroat		19	Little Bunting	1
Grasshopper Warbler		1		
Melodious Warbler		1	Total	1,975
Sedge Warbler		27		
Reed Warbler		4	Number of species	47
Wren		18		
Starling		48	Numbers in brackets indicate pulli	
White's Thrush*		1	(included in the main totals)	
Blackbird		42	*Species added to the Lundy ringing list	
Song Thrush		10	in 2020	

Clockwise from top left: Reed Warbler, Little Bunting, Sedge Warbler, Firecrest, Yellow-browed Warbler and a possible 'abietinus' Chiffchaff (photos: Dean Jones and Zoë Barton).



RECOVERIES AND CONTROLS

Storm Petrel 2602962 – ringed as an adult at Porth Iago, Llyn Peninsula, Gwynedd, North Wales, 28.7.12. Controlled on Lundy, 17.7.20 (2,911 days; 184 km; **direction S, bearing 179°**).

Storm Petrel 2702714 – ringed as an adult at Annagh Head, Mayo, IRELAND, 16.8.14. Controlled on Lundy, 27.8.20 (2,203 days; 498 km; SE, 133°).

Storm Petrel 2746154 – ringed as an adult on Skokholm, Pembrokeshire, South Wales, 17.7.19. Controlled on Lundy, 26.8.20 (406 days; 70 km; SE, 144°).

Storm Petrel 2746790 – ringed as an adult on Skokholm, Pembrokeshire, South Wales, 13.7.20. Controlled on Lundy, 11.8.20 and 27.8.20 (29 and 45 days; 70 km; SE, 144°).

Manx Shearwater EX74442 – Ringed as an adult on Lundy, 6.6.13. Controlled on Bardsey Island, Gwynedd, North Wales, 19.6.20 and 14.8.20 (2,570 and 2,626 days; 178 km; N, 358°).

Manx Shearwater EX74428 – Ringed as an adult on Lundy, 6.6.13. Controlled on Skokholm, Pembrokeshire, 19.6.18 and found dead there (killed by predatory bird) on 28.5.20 (2,548 days; 73 km; NW, 325°).

Manx Shearwater EZ06366 – Ringed as a chick on Lundy, 7.9.16. Found dead (killed by predatory bird) on Lundy, 25.7.20 (1,417 days; 3 km; NNW, 328°).

Manx Shearwater EA41405 – Ringed as a chick on Lundy, 26.8.19. Found dead (not fresh) at Praia de Ipanema, Pontal do Parana, BRAZIL, 17.10.20 (418 days; 9,567 km; SSW, 207°).

Manx Shearwater EA41446 – Ringed as a chick on Lundy, 24.8.20. Found dead (not fresh) at Praia de Ipanema, Pontal do Parana, BRAZIL, 9.10.20 (46 days; 9,567 km; SSW, 207°).

Guillemot N05511, with red colour-ring, engraved 0114 – ringed as a chick on Skomer, Pembrokeshire, 8.7.13. Re-sighted on Lundy, 13.6.20 (2,777 days; 76 km; SE, 145°).

Chiffchaff LEH396 – ringed as a first-year bird on Lundy, 17.9.19. Controlled on Bardsey Island, Gwynedd, North Wales, 27.3.20 (192 days; 178 km; N, 358°).

Sedge Warbler Z246781 – ringed as an adult female at Blackditch, Wicklow, IRELAND, 17.7.16. Controlled on Lundy, 8.5.20 (1,391 days; 232 km; SSE, 156°).

Sedge Warbler ABH2037 – ringed as an adult on Lundy, 26.4.20. Controlled at Tour aux Moutons, Donges, Loire-Atlantique, FRANCE, 3.8.20 (99 days; 468 km; SSE, 157°).

Reed Warbler AVH4186 – ringed as an adult male at Nanjizal, Lands End, Cornwall, 8.7.19. Controlled on Lundy, 19.4.20 (286 days; 144 km; NNE, 31°).

Starling LK69656 – ringed as a first-year bird on Lundy, 5.7.20. Found dead (not fresh, inside building) on Lundy 1.12.20 (149 days, 0 km).

Bullfinch Z391313 – ringed as a second-year male on Lundy, 8.4.15. Found freshly dead (road casualty) at Redmonsford, North Devon, 2.6.20 (1,882 days; 36 km; SSE, 151°).

LUNDY RINGING CONTROL 1988

Ringing details received in 2020:

Goldcrest 9N9264 – ringed as an adult male at Hartland Point, Devon, 4.9.1988. Controlled on Lundy, 21.9.1988 (17 days; 20 km; NNW, 328°).