

**THE BIRDS OF LUNDY ISLAND FROM 1922 TO 1931  
WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO NUMERICAL  
FLUCTUATION.**

BY

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IN early June, 1930, V. C. Wynne-Edwards, J. H. Comyns and the writer visited Lundy, an island of rather over a thousand acres, lying twelve miles out in the Bristol Channel. Our primary objective was to take a bird census of the whole island,\* but we were able to make a number of other and more general observations. The present notes are based on these, supplemented by unpublished material kindly supplied by others who have visited the island during the last ten years.

A fair amount has already been written on the birds of Lundy, but as the present contribution includes twenty-six species not previously recorded, it is clear that much remains to be done.

L. R. W. Loyd (*B.B.*, Vol. XVI., pp. 148-159) brought all published information up to date in 1922, and supplementary notes—mostly referring only to one or two species—have since been published by E. W. Hendy (Vol. XVI., p. 214), N. H. Joy (Vol. XVI., p. 138), L. R. W. Loyd (Vol. XVII., p. 158) and S. Lewis (Vol. XVIII., p. 78). This article brings all records after 1922 up to date.

The most striking features of the island bird fauna—as shown by the last ten years' observations—are the marked instability of the summer population, and the very considerable migration of autumn and other seasons.

Table I demonstrates the constant flux and change in breeding species. It is especially noticeable that only one, the Landrail, has decreased, while over twenty per cent. are erratic and irregular nesters, and well over half show noticeable annual fluctuations in numbers. Whether such fluctuations are peculiar to Lundy, to isolated islands, to large areas, or are universal, only a close study of many districts on lines far more elaborate than usually undertaken by ornithologists, can show. There can be little doubt that such studies would prove highly profitable.

\*Details of this census will be published in a forthcoming number of the *Journal of Ecology*.

TABLE I.  
FLUCTUATIONS IN BREEDING SPECIES ON LUNDY, 1922-1931.

NO CHANGE.		CHANGE.			
<i>No marked fluctuations.</i>		<i>Common, but considerable fluctuations.</i>	<i>Ervatic breeders.</i>	<i>Increased or recently established.</i>	<i>Decreased.</i>
<i>Over 10 pairs nest.</i>	<i>Under 10 pairs nest.</i>				
Linnet	Raven	Wheatear	Goldfinch	Carrion-	Landrail
Chaffinch	Pied Wagtail	Oyster-Catcher	Yellow Bunting	Crow	(extinct)
Rock-Pipit	Whitethroat	Kittiwake	Yellow Wagtail	House-Sparrow	
Blackbird	Song-Thrush	Razorbill	Puffin	Goldcrest	
Robin	Swift			Hedge-Sparrow	
Wren	Cuckoo			Willow-Warbler	
Manx Shearwater	Peregrine Falcon			Martin	
Herring-Gull	Kestrel			Blackcap	
Lesser Black-backed Gull	Buzzard			Shag	
Guillemot	Cormorant			Sand-Ring-Dove	
				Mallard Lapwing	
				Turtle-Dove	
				Great Black-backed Gull	
				Common Snipe	
				Pheasant (introduced)	
<i>Totals.</i>					
10	11	5	10	10	1
<u>21 species.</u>					<u>26 species.</u>

The ratio of stable to unstable species is thus 21:26. A comparison with work carried out on North Rona in 1931, and shortly to be published elsewhere, provides an interesting comparison. There the ratio was 11:13 (*i.e.*, 22:26). The similarity in this ratio of two islands so far apart can hardly be pure coincidence.

The absence of certain species common on the mainland, notably Jackdaw, Starling, Yellow Bunting and Stock-Dove, is a striking feature; it will be more fully discussed in our census paper.

The data obtained on migrants is chiefly of interest as demonstrating a considerable passage movement of many species across the mouth of the Bristol Channel. Moreover, this movement includes a number of birds seldom noted on the mainland of South Wales, Devon or south-west England. The absence of records for Redstart, Redshank, Golden Plover, and Common Gull is noteworthy.

I am most grateful to those who have allowed me to use their unpublished notes, and particularly to Dr. T. G. Longstaff and F. W. Gade for collecting data from other observers, and to J. G. Davies—who made special notes on nesting species in 1931 on my behalf. Whenever the records are not those obtained by Messrs. Wynne-Edwards, Comyns and the author, the person responsible is indicated by initials, as follows: J. G. Davies, Charles S. Elton, F. W. Gade, R. Hall, E. W. Hendy, Dr. T. G. Longstaff, Sir S. Renishaw, and H. Revell. Where only a name (no initials) is given the record is a published one, as referred to above. General remarks on the status of the species in England are based on *A Practical Handbook of British Birds*. D. L. Lack kindly corrected the MS. and proofs.

## CLASSIFIED NOTES.

[The total species for Lundy is now 115. Resident species are not mentioned unless there is anything of significance to be noted concerning them. Species previously unrecorded are marked with an asterisk.]

**RAVEN** (*Corvus c. corax*).—Four pairs in 1930, as in 1922 (Loyd). Only two pairs in 1931 (J.G.D.).

**CARRION-CROW** (*Corvus c. corone*).—I estimated about sixteen pairs in 1930. In 1931 there were believed to be nearly forty pairs nesting (F.W.G.), while sixteen were seen on the wing together (J.G.D.). Loyd found only six in 1922.

**\*ROOK** (*Corvus f. frugilegus*).—Some appear to visit the island from the mainland almost daily; the distance is at least twelve miles. T.G.L. notes up to twelve in mid-September, 1926. During my 1930 stay twelve were seen on June 8th; eight on 9th; one on 10th; five on 11th. Twenty on September 2nd, 1930 (E.W.H.). Not mentioned by Loyd.

**JACKDAW** (*Corvus m. spermologus*).—The absence of this as a nesting species is one of the most striking and puzzling features of the island. Two were seen on August 31st, 1926 (S.R.), four with Rooks on June 8th, and one June 10th, 1930; several in June, 1931 (J.G.D.).

**\*MAGPIE** (*Pica p. pica*).—A single bird frequented the quarter-wall copse from May, 1930, onwards, and is still there at the time of writing (September, 1931) (F.W.G.).

**STARLING** (*Sturnus v. vulgaris*).—None breed. Westcote recorded a roost here just three hundred years ago, in 1630. Loyd saw a small party on June 25th, 1923, and T.G.L. one on September 6th, 1927. I found the remains of several dead birds in June, 1930, and several thousands roost in Mill Combe in late winter (F.W.G.).

**GREENFINCH** (*Chloris ch. chloris*).—One. August 31st, 1926 (S.R.).

**GOLDFINCH** (*Carduelis c. britannica*).—No record since 1922, when Loyd noted a nesting pair.

**LINNET** (*Carduelis c. cannabina*).—Nearly forty pairs were nesting in June, 1930. Several parties in late June, 1931 (J.G.D.).

**\*CROSSBILL** (*Loxia c. curvirostra*).—August 30th, 1927, in Gannet's Combe (T.G.L.). One killed at end of August, 1930 (F.W.G.). Male

and female in Mill Combe on September 4th, 1930 (E.W.H.). This is a particularly erratic species in the south-west of England.

HOUSE-SPARROW (*Passer d. domesticus*).—Between 1922 and 1930 has increased from five to twenty-two pairs, all in the village area except one pair in the ruined quarter-wall cottages. During his 1923 visit Loyd remarked "numbers more than doubled" as compared with 1922. One hundred were seen on September 7th, 1926 (T.G.L.).

YELLOW BUNTING (*Emberiza c. citrinella*).—Loyd found six to eight pairs in 1922. None have been noted since!

SNOW-BUNTING (*Plectrophenax n. nivalis*).—January 1st, 1927 (R.H.).

SKY-LARK (*Alauda a. arvensis*).—In addition to movements of breeding birds, there is a good deal of passage migration in September (E.W.H. and T.G.L.).

TREE-PIBIT (*Anthus t. trivialis*).—Probably several in early September, 1926 and 1927 (T.G.L. and C.S.E.). No records by Loyd, but seen on June 11th and 12th, 1914, by Henty.

MEADOW-PIBIT (*Anthus pratensis*).—There is a considerable passage migration in September. In summer this species forms over half the total nesting population of all land birds.

YELLOW WAGTAIL (*Motacilla f. rayi*).—One pair in June, 1930. This is a rare nesting species in Devon and Cornwall.

WHITE WAGTAIL (*Motacilla a. alba*).—Several, September 4th to 6th, 1927 (T.G.L.). Three on September 3rd, and several September 7th, 1930 (E.W.H.).

GOLDEN-CRESTED WREN (*Regulus r. anglorum*).—One pair in 1922 (Loyd). Two April 2nd, 1927 (F.W.G.). None in 1930 and 1931.

RED-BACKED SHRIKE (*Lanius collurio*).—September 2nd, 1927 (C.S.E.). The only previous record is for June 1st, 1922 (Loyd). This is a rare bird in Devon.

SPOTTED FLYCATCHER (*Muscicapa s. striata*).—Does not breed, but regular on passage in spring and early September (T.G.L. and E.W.H.). Not present in June, 1930 and 1931.

\*PIED FLYCATCHER (*Muscicapa h. hypoleuca*).—Male, May 4th, 1927 (F.W.G.). Females and immature birds seen September 2nd, 3rd, 6th and 7th, 1930 (E.W.H.). These records are of much significance, for the species is considered particularly scarce in Devon and Cornwall.

\*CHIFFCHAFF (*Phylloscopus collybita*).—September 3rd, 1926 (T.G.L.). A large passage movement of *Phylloscopi*, apparently including this species, on April 30th, 1931 (F.W.G.). No other records except for an unreliable statement by Ross (quoted by Loyd).

WILLOW-WARBLE (*Phylloscopus t. trochilus*).—Though none were nesting in 1922, there were four pairs—all on the east side—in 1930. But in 1931 none were present after April 30th, when there was a big passage movement of *Phylloscopi* until mid-September, when a large influx was observed (F.W.G.).

\*SEDGE-WARBLE (*Acrocephalus schænobænus*).—One seen, but not singing, in St. John's Valley, during early June, 1930. Four on September 8th, 1926; one September 2nd to 4th, 1927 (T.G.L.). Probably one September 2nd, 1930 (E.W.H.). A number in early September, 1931 (F.W.G.). Loyd had no records!

BLACKCAP (*Sylvia a. atricapilla*).—One singing in Mill Combe during June, 1930. Loyd gives three records, and Lewis found two males in June, 1924.

\*LESSER WHITETHROAT (*Sylvia curruca*).—September 2nd, 1927—one (T.G.L.). Records of migratory Lesser Whitethroats in south-west England are not numerous.

MISTLE-THRUSH (*Turdus v. viscivorus*).—A juvenile on September 3rd, 1926 (T.G.L.). The only other record is for June 11th, 1914 (Hendy).

RING-OUZEL (*Turdus t. torquatus*).—Occurs almost annually as an early spring migrant, but none in 1931 (F.W.G.). This passage, and its absence in autumn, corresponds with the migration routes as given in the *Practical Handbook*.

WHEATEAR (*Enanthe a. enanthe*).—There was still some migration of this species in mid-June, 1930. There were more than thrice as many in 1930 as in 1922; in 1923 Loyd found only one pair. In 1931 there were apparently only a few nesting (J.G.D.).

\*GREENLAND WHEATEAR (*Enanthe a. leucorroha*).—September 3rd and 5th, 1926 (T.G.L.) and October 3rd, 1926 (H.R.). August 29th to September 7th, 1927 (T.G.L. and C.S.E.). Probably several in early September, 1930 (E.W.H.).

WHINGCHAT (*Saxicola r. rubetra*).—Does not breed. September 3rd and 9th, 1926; August 27th to September 8th, 1927 (T.G.L.). There are but few records of migrant Whinchats travelling down the west coast route, so perhaps these are Irish birds.

STONECHAT (*Saxicola t. hibernans*).—There has been an increase of about fifty per cent. over Loyd's 1922 figure. In 1931 it was "very common" (J.G.D.).

HEDGE-SPARROW (*Prunella m. occidentalis*).—A remarkable increase has occurred. There were apparently none before 1922, when Loyd found two pairs, both near the village. There were over ten times this number along the east side in 1930.

SWALLOW (*Hirundo r. rustica*).—In June, 1930, a pair was building in the ruined quarter-wall cottages, though there were none in the church porch, where Loyd noted it in 1922. Several pairs in mid-June, 1931 (J.G.D.). Numerous on passage.

HOUSE-MARTIN (*Delichon u. urbica*).—About half a dozen pairs in June, 1930, some of which were almost certainly nesting, mostly on the small limestone area opposite Rat Island. A big increase was observed in 1931 (F.W.G.).

SAND-MARTIN (*Riparia r. riparia*).—Three or four pairs were apparently nesting in June, 1930; Lewis suspected breeding in 1924. None stayed throughout the summer of 1931 (J.G.D.).

SWIFT (*Apus a. apus*).—Several pairs in 1930 were probably breeding in the limestone area above the Rattles. One pair was present in June, 1931 (J.G.D.).

NIGHTJAR (*Caprimulgus e. europæus*).—September 2nd, 1927—two in Gannet's Combe (T.G.L.). The migratory routes of this species are still very uncertain.

CUCKOO (*Cuculus c. canorus*).—The presence of only one pair is curious in view of the abundance of Meadow-l'ipits. Apparently there has never been more than one pair.

\*LONG-EARED OWL (*Asio o. otus*).—One caught in a rabbit snare in winter, 1929-30, stayed until early spring (F.W.G.).

BARN-OWL (*Tyto alba* ? subsp.).—One on November 3rd, 1928 (F.W.G.). This date makes one regret that the bird was not carefully examined, for it might well have been of the Dark-breasted race.

The only other record is of a pair present from July, 1922, to July, 1923 (Loyd).

**PEREGRINE FALCON** (*Falco p. peregrinus*).—In 1930 an eyrie near the west end of the quarter-wall, and another on Gannet's rock. In 1931 one eyrie was disturbed by photographers, and the birds deserted; the other pair reared their young (J.G.D.). It seems that Peregrines frequently cross to the mainland for food in autumn when the Kittiwakes (their staple summer diet) have left, and the Starlings not yet arrived.

**KESTREL** (*Falco t. tinnunculus*).—Two pairs in 1922 (Loyd), 1927 (T.G.L.), and 1930. They feed chiefly on dorbeetles, and are thus largely dependent on sheep and cattle (C.S.E.). Pigmy shrews are also taken (R.H.).

**BUZZARD** (*Buteo b. buteo*).—Apparently only one pair in 1926 (T.G.L.). In 1930 there were probably four (two nests located for certain); in 1931 three eyries were found (J.G.D.). Loyd found only two or three in 1922, but there were four in 1923. Only one cast, out of many examined in September, contained mammal remains—the mass of food being beetles (T.G.L. and C.S.E.).

**SPARROW-HAWK** (*Accipiter n. nisus*).—The pair reported from the north end by Loyd is not there now nor have any individuals been noted by other observers. I know few places less suited to a Sparrow-Hawk.

\***KITE** (*Milvus m. milvus*).—Three drifting over the island in April 28th, 1929 (F.W.G.). Mr. Gade has given me full particulars and descriptions of these birds. There can be no doubt as to their identity.

\***HERON** (*Ardea c. cinerea*).—June 28th and August 29th, 1927 (F.W.G. and T.G.L.). No other records!

\***BITTERN** (*Botaurus s. stellaris*).—September 24th, 1930—one, probably a bird of the year, caught and later liberated (F.W.G. and Field, i.xi.30).

**MALLARD** (*Anas p. platyrhyncha*).—Since Loyd's record of pairs believed to be breeding in 1920, 1921 and 1922 there are no records until June, 1931, when a pair was seen on several occasions (J.G.D.).

**CORMORANT** (*Phalacrocorax c. carbo*).—Only a few seen in 1927 (T.G.L.). In 1930 I found only five pairs, all on Gannet's Rock, and in 1931 there were fifteen nests, all at the same place (J.G.D.). Yet in early September, 1930, there were many Cormorants and very few Shags (E.W.H.). There were about twelve pairs in 1922 (Loyd).

**SHAG** (*Phalacrocorax a. aristotelis*).—Noted as common in 1927 (T.G.L.). I counted thirty pairs, scattered all round the island, in 1930, and in 1931 J.G.D. found groups of up to twelve pairs all round the cliffs. In 1922 there were only about twelve (Loyd) (and cf., Cormorant).

**GANNET** (*Sula bassana*).—After nearly twenty years' absence, a pair attempted to breed in 1922 (Loyd). R.H. believes that a pair may have nested in 1927, and while on the island in September of that year T.G.L. was informed that two pairs had bred! Unfortunately there is no more direct evidence. A few are present in September every year, and adults frequented the north end during June, 1930 and 1931.

**STORM-PETREL** (*Hydrobates pelagicus*).—In the *Practical Handbook* the possibility of nesting at Lundy is suggested. Since 1924 no one has even noted this bird at sea, far less on the island itself.

MANX SHEARWATER (*Puffinus p. puffinus*).—Three nocturnal attempts to find a breeding-site in June, 1930, failed, and no one on the island could direct us. In June, 1931, J.G.D. heard the call of birds flying round the south end at night, but was unable to find any nesting colony. It is difficult to believe that there can be a very large number breeding at the present time.

\*RED-THROATED DIVER (*Colymbus stellatus*).—September 1st, 1926 (S.R.).

RING-DOVE (*Columba p. palumbus*).—September 3rd, 1926, and September 2nd, 1927 (T.G.L.). Two pairs bred for the first time in 1930, and in 1931 J.G.D. found several.

\*STOCK-DOVE (*Columba œnas*).—The only record for the island is of a bird on September 4th, 1926 (T.G.L.). The absence of this as a nesting species is curious.

\*ROCK-DOVE (*Columba l. livia*).—T.G.L. informs me that he identified a Rock-Dove at the North Light on August 31st, 1927.

TURTLE-DOVE (*Streptopelia t. turtur*).—One on passage in Mill Combe on June 9th, 1930. During June, 1931, several pairs were to be seen feeding on the arable area at the south end, but apparently none bred (J.G.D.).

OYSTER-CATCHER (*Hæmatopus o. ostralegus*).—Only a few birds stay into September—two in September, 1927 (T.G.L.), and one in September, 1930 (E.W.H.). There was apparently an increase of breeding pairs in 1931 (J.G.D.), and a decrease in 1927 (T.G.L.). In 1930 there were rather more than in 1922. For several days in succession in early September, 1931, one fed among the tame geese of the village (F.W.G.).

RINGED PLOVER (*Charadrius h. hiaticula*).—September 2nd, 1926 (S.R.) and September 1st, 1927 (T.G.L.).

LAPWING (*Vanellus vanellus*).—Commenced to breed—at Pondsburry—in 1927 (F.W.G.). Three pairs in 1930 and 1931. Several were seen in September, 1927 (T.G.L.), and Loyd noted a single bird in May and early June, 1922.

\*TURNSTONE (*Arenaria i. interpres*).—September 4th, 1926 (S.R.).

\*SANDERLING (*Crocethia alba*).—September 3rd, 1926 (T.G.L.).

DUNLIN (*Calidris alpina*).—A small party frequented the tiny pool by the church in September, 1930; there were four from the 2nd to 6th, three on the 7th, and two on the 8th (E.W.H.). A considerable number appeared early in the second week of September, 1931 (F.W.G.).

\*PURPLE SANDPIPER (*Calidris m. maritima*).—One picked up dead on January 6th, 1931 (F.W.G.).

COMMON SANDPIPER (*Tringa hypoleucos*).—Remarkably scarce. There is no record since the single one given by Loyd for May 12th, 1922.

\*WOOD-SANDPIPER (*Tringa glareola*).—One haunted two small pools by the Church all day on June 8th, 1930 (as already recorded, *B.B.*, Vol. XXIV., p. 83). F.W.G. informs me that in mid-September, 1930, he saw another wader which he believes to have been of this species, though he was unable to obtain full identification details.

CURLEW (*Numenius a. arquata*).—Present on passage every September; twenty-two on September 4th, 1930. Not in early June, 1930, but J.G.D. noted several in late June, 1931. These birds frequent the top of the island beyond the Half-way wall (E.W.H. and F.W.G.).

WHIMBREL (*Numenius ph. phaeopus*).—September 8th, 1926 (T.G.L.). Loyd gives only May records.

COMMON SNIPE (*Capella g. gallinago*).—One pair probably bred in 1930. Single birds seen in June, 1930, and one heard drumming in May by Commander Pidcock, R.N. Also one seen on September 3rd and 4th, 1927 (C.S.E.). The only other record is for April, 1906 (Joy).

\*JACK SNIPE (*Lymnocyptes minimus*).—September 4th, 1927 (C.S.E. and T.G.L.). The date is an interesting one.

\*WOODCOCK (*Scolopax v. rusticola*).—September 7th, 1927 (T.G.L.). In 1931 J.G.D. found only twenty pairs, but some may have been missed. The success of this species on Lundy is largely due to the utilization of the Puffin as a staple item in its summer diet (*cf.* Loyd, *B.B.*, Vol. XVI., p. 157, and Vol. XVII., p. 159).

BLACK-HEADED GULL (*Larus v. ridibundus*).—Very scarce. No records since those of Hendy (June 19th, 1914) and Loyd (June 9th, 1922).

GREAT BLACK-BACKED GULL (*Larus marinus*).—I estimated fifty pairs breeding in 1930—a remarkable increase on Loyd's 1922 figure of about seven pairs. In September, 1930, E.W.H. wrote me "has increased since I was here in 1924, and now occurs all round cliffs". In 1931 J.G.D. found only twenty pairs, but some may have been missed. The success of this species on Lundy is largely due to the utilization of the Puffin as a staple item in its summer diet (*cf.* Loyd, *B.B.*, Vol. XVI., p. 157, and Vol. XVII., p. 159).

KITTIWAKE (*Rissa t. tridactyla*).—Very abundant in summer, but entirely absent in September (T.G.L. and E.W.H.). They usually leave about August 25th (R.H.). Loyd noted a very marked increase in 1923, and F.W.G. a decrease in 1931. The first young in 1931 were seen on June 27th (J.G.D.).

\*ARCTIC SKUA (*Stercorarius parasiticus*).—September 8th, 1926 (T.G.L.). There is a record of one seen out at sea between Barnstaple and Lundy in August, 1925 (Joy).

RAZORBILL (*Alca torda*).—A very few stay until September—September 3rd, 1927 (T.G.L.), and September 4th, 1930 (E.W.H.). Loyd noted a remarkable increase in 1923, and F.W.G. a decrease in 1931. J.G.D. writes "probably the commonest bird on the island".

GUILLEMOT (*Uria a. albionis*).—The only record of one remaining into September is for 1926, when T.G.L. saw a juvenile on the 6th.

\*LITTLE AUK (*Alle alle*).—September 7th, 1926 (S.R. and T.G.L.). This is a very early date.

PUFFIN (*Fyatercula a. grabæ*).—A remarkable increase occurred in 1923 (Loyd), but in 1930 it was limited to two large colonies at the north end (*cf.* Loyd's notes). There was a considerable decrease in 1931 (F.W.G.).

LAND-RAIL (*Crex crex*).—Prior to 1924 several pairs were noted, and one was still present in 1929, but by 1930 it had become extinct. On migration September 3rd and 8th, 1926 (T.G.L.), and May 8th, 1927 (R.H.).

\*WATER-RAIL (*Rallus a. aquaticus*).—One stayed the winter 1927–1928. It became so tame that it would enter the house for food (F.W.G.).

MOORHEN (*Gallinula chloropus*).—None for some years.

\*COOT (*Fulica a. atra*).—One stayed from December 23rd, 1927, to January 8th, 1928 (F.W.G.).

PHEASANT (*Phasianus colchicus*).—A number were introduced a few years ago. There were five pairs in 1930, but in 1931 only two or three (J.G.D.).