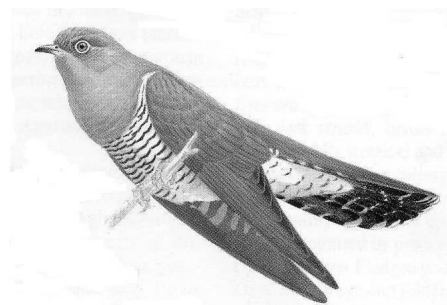


## Peninsular Cuckoos

I am writing this in late May but you will be reading it in early July – by which time the cuckoos will be on their way back south again. The rhyme is quite correct though the changing tune bit is slightly dubious:

In April I open my bill  
In May I sing night and day  
In June I change my tune  
In July away I fly  
In August away I must



In fact many Cuckoos leave in June, spending only a couple of months here, and those Cuckoos still here in August will be juveniles, who migrate later than their parents.

The BTO have been tracking cuckoos over the last three years and this study has provided huge amounts of information about when they migrate, where they go to, which routes they take there and back and where they are most vulnerable. The answer to the latter is interesting – the journey back from Africa is when the largest number of them perish, often in Europe after they have crossed the Sahara. They are migrating fast in order to get back as soon as possible and maybe they take risks – we don't know yet – but it seems that the Sahara crossing is not the death trap it was once assumed to be.

I have written about Cuckoos before but the reason for mentioning them again is that many people have heard a Cuckoo calling on the Peninsula this spring. This is the first time Cuckoos have called for any length of time for the first time in many years (excluding a few “cook-oos” on the way through on migration). On May 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> they were heard at St Brides and Monk Haven and a pair were seen at Marloes Mere. The St Brides Cuckoo was also heard on other dates. I expect there were more - please let me know if you heard a Cuckoo other than at the above locations and dates.

If you want to read about the BTO Cuckoo tracking project then just Google “BTO Cuckoos” and you will find it.