

KOS News

The Newsletter of the Kent Ornithological Society

Number 552 September 2024



@moihicksimages

Scarlet Ibis by Moi Hicks

- News & Announcements ●
 - PHALAROPES ●
- Kent Listing; a history ●
- Bird Sightings – JULY-AUGUST ●
 - Fifty Years Ago ●
 - Meet the Member ●

KOS Contacts – Committee Members details are available on the society website

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What was your reaction to our cover photo in this issue? Were you one of the many people who made the trek to the Marsh Hide at Stodmarsh to enjoy this improbable sight? Going by the number of photos posted on Facebook quite a few people did. Alongside the pictures were a range of comments, many showing a marked lack of awareness of the biology of the species. There was even a good deal of speculation as to whether it was a “genuine” vagrant and some concern as to whether it would get back home, ignoring the overwhelming evidence that, as is so often the case for these exotic birds, they either escaped, or were deliberately released, from captivity.

There were comments which suggested that a large-scale operation should be launched to catch the bird before the winter came and put an end to it. This rather ignores the long history of Ibis occurrences in the Stour Valley, which for over twenty years played host to at first one, then a pair of Glossy Ibis who did not seem all that bothered by the cold! That there is a feral population of Scarlet Ibis across the channel in the Low countries which has persisted for many years in rather cold weather seems to point to a likely origin. Nonetheless, I went to see it and sketch it, and marvel at how such a bright bird can disappear in a flash in an otherwise green landscape. Of course, not everyone was pleased by the attention. A core of grumbling dissent kept pointing out that it was “not on the British List” and that as an escape “you cannot tick it” and even “why were people even going to see it?” This does rather get up my nose, since when do I have to see my birding policed by some Ornitho-Farage, pointing out infringements of rules I never knowingly signed up to? I choose not to be in some listing game and reserve the right to visit, study and enjoy birds at liberty in the countryside even if they did not arrive there by wholly natural means. This species is one of many which I have not seen in the wild, and will never get to see, unless behind bars or behaving somewhat more naturally in a field near my home. People can sign up to a more competitive scheme of birding and where there is competition there needs must be rules. I dislike rules, so do not choose to play that game.

On that note, this issue gives an update on the Kent Listers Group, so ably managed by Geoff Burton. County listing is enjoyed by many and the list of names is a catalogue of Kent birders, some sadly no longer with us. I do not appear on the list as I am a little unsure how many species I have seen in Kent acceptable to the rules. Out of curiosity I did go through my sketch and notebooks to try and arrive at a figure of how many species on the Kent list I have drawn from life in the county. At present that list appears to be 348 species, but who really cares??

Good birding

Norman

News and announcements

Avian Influenza and BirdTrack

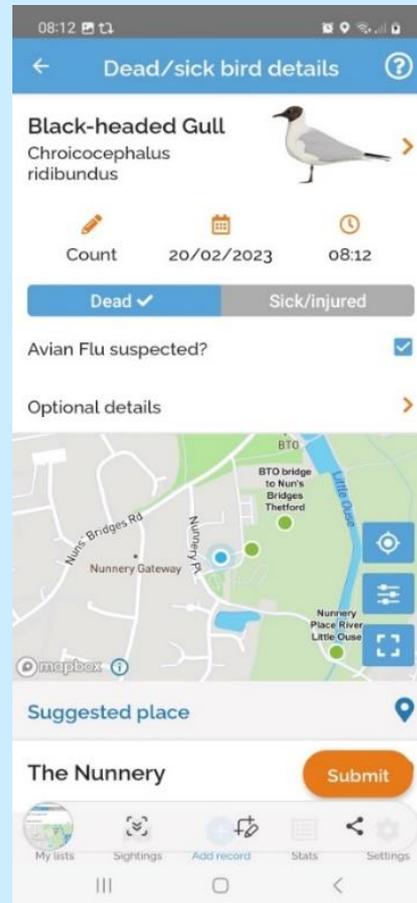
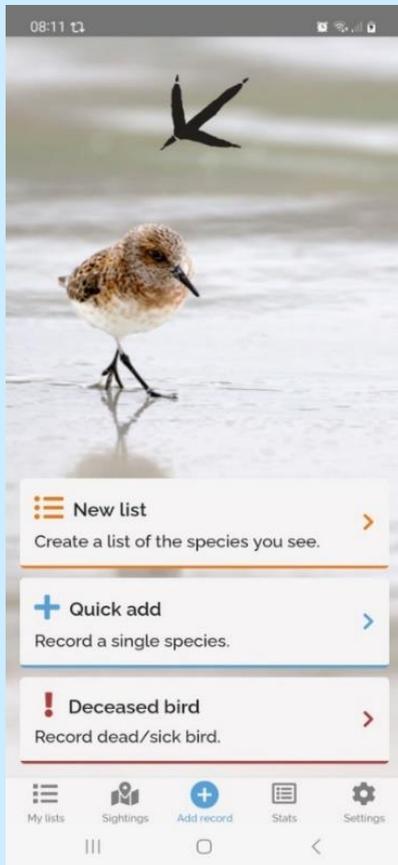
Please continue to be vigilant and look out for sick or dead birds in circumstances where bird flu is suspected, especially around the coast and inland wetlands and water bodies.

Defra guidelines for reporting have recently changed and you should report to Defra if you find:

- **One or more dead bird of prey, gull, swan, goose or duck in the same place**
- **Five or more dead wild birds of any other species in the same place**

Report at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/report-dead-wild-birds>

The BirdTrack 'Deceased bird' tool on the phone app provides a quick and easy way for you to report dead or sick birds which are not on the Defra priority list for reporting. An example could be a single as Grey Heron or Woodpigeon, or if you find fewer than five of the priority species, such as three Black-headed Gulls. The additional data collected through BirdTrack complements information collected through the Defra scheme and the Epicollect system used by site managers working for country agencies. Thank you very much for taking the time to submit these records.



References, links and further reading:

Defra: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/report-dead-wild-birds>
Birdtrack: <https://www.bto.org/our-science/projects/birdtrack>
Defra: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/report-dead-wild-birds> 03459 33 55 77 (call charges may apply)
<https://www.bto.org/understanding-birds/avian-influenza>

<https://www.rspb.org.uk/birds-and-wildlife/avian-influenza-updates>

KOS NEWSLETTER – SEPTEMBER 2024

2024 BREEDING RECORDS

Please search your records for any unreported breeding data for 2024 and submit to the KOS or BirdTrack / eBird (including breeding codes or comments giving breeding evidence), especially for any RBBP species: -

- Quail
- Garganey
- Shoveler
- Wigeon
- Pintail
- Pochard
- Turtle Dove
- Spotted Crake

Black-necked Grebe
Black-winged Stilt
Avocet
Little Ringed Plover
Mediterranean Gull
Little Tern
Eurasian Bittern
Cattle Egret
Little Egret
Honey Buzzard
Goshawk
Marsh Harrier
Long-eared Owl
Short-eared Owl
Lesser Spotted
Woodpecker
Hobby
Peregrine Falcon
Golden Oriole
Bearded Tit
Woodlark
Marsh Warbler
Savi's Warbler
Dartford Warbler
Black Redstart
Hawfinch

RBBP records can be submitted directly, in confidence, to David Smith DavidSmith@epr.uk.com or Murray Orchard murray.orchard@live.co.uk or to the County Recorder - Barry Wright umbrellabirds66@gmail.com
Thank You.

BTO AUTUMN GULL SURVEY 2024

The Winter Gull Survey (WinGS) collects information about our wintering gull populations, through the coordinated effort of volunteer surveyors across the UK.

Last winter (January 2024) volunteer counters helped Kent to achieve excellent coverage for the first WinGS count (see KOS News Number 549 March 2024).

In addition to the Winter survey periods (January 2024 and January 2025), WinGS is also covering the upcoming Autumn 2024 season. The key date for the **Autumn Gull Count** is **September 29th** with a week before and after the key date where counts can be conducted. Supplementary counts may also be submitted to the end of October if you wish to complete repeat counts of your site. The purpose of the autumn survey is to capture seasonal peaks of gull species such as Yellow-legged and Lesser Black-backed gulls which are present in high abundances on passage and can be captured in post breeding aggregations.

We will be conducting comparisons between wintering numbers and autumn counts to assess changes in species peaks and distributions across seasons. This data is useful for effective conservation action where all aspects of the groups temporal movement ecology are considered. All methods remain the same for the Autumn survey period as for the Winter count. Counters are to arrive at their allocated sites 1 - 2 hours before sunset and count gulls as they arrive at the site. If you are covering an inland sample site which includes urban environment, keep a look out for gulls roosting on roofs which is a more commonly observed behaviour in this season! Count sites remain the same as for January 2024 and will once again be coordinated by the WeBS Local Organisers.

Please note that the date of the second Winter count is **January 19th, 2025**. It is hoped to get some repeat counts done for sites that may have experienced difficult count conditions or exceptional/atypical numbers of gulls as a result of the storms in January 2024.

If you would like to participate in this survey, please sign up as before and request a site, or contact your WeBS Local Organiser who will advise on what to do (see below). WeBS Local Organisers in Kent;

Thames, Murray Orchard - murray.orchard@live.co.uk

Medway, Bob Knight - rjknight53@gmail.com

Swale, Brian Watmough - brianwat1@gmail.com

East Kent, Heather Mathieson - HeatherMathieson@outlook.com

Pegwell Bay, Steffan Walton – steffan.walton@hotmail.co.uk

Dungeness area, Dave Walker – dungenessobs@vfast.co.uk

All other areas (including West Kent), Murray Orchard - murray.orchard@live.co.uk

Please Submit 2024 Survey Data Now!

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Pegwell Bay, Steffan Walton – steffan.walton@hotmail.co.uk

Dungeness area, Dave Walker – dungenessobs@vfast.co.uk

All other areas (including West Kent), Murray Orchard - murray.orchard@live.co.uk

Appeal for WeBS Counters!

The estuaries and wetlands of Kent hold internationally important passage and wintering numbers of wildfowl and waders. We only know this because of regular counting, and the most important method of collecting such data is through the Wetland Birds Survey (WeBS) which requires sites to be counted once a month from September to March, and ideally year-round. To ensure adequate cover of all areas in Kent, many volunteers are required, especially for the large estuaries.

We are currently struggling to cover all sites and existing volunteers are not getting any younger, with a few experienced counters no longer able to contribute. New counters are urgently needed, particularly on the **Thames** and **Medway**. **One important site that currently has no counter is Cliffe/Cooling Marshes, which includes an exciting new area of managed retreat.**

If anyone is interested in taking on a WeBS site then please get in touch with one of the Local Organisers below. An introductory visit to a site can be arranged as well as access if on private land, although a commitment to regular counting would be a requisite for such sites.

Thames, Murray Orchard - murray.orchard@live.co.uk

Medway, Bob Knight - rjknight53@gmail.com

Swale, Brian Watmough - brianrwat1@gmail.com

East Kent, Heather Mathieson - HeatherMathieson@outlook.com

Pegwell Bay, Steffan Walton – steffan.walton@hotmail.co.uk

Dungeness area, Dave Walker – dungenessobs@vfast.co.uk

Shellness Beach Nesting Birds Project 2024

by Hayley Taylor, Birdwise North Kent



This summer, Bird Wise North Kent took part in a project on the Isle of Sheppey to monitor beach nesting birds at Shellness with residents of the Hamlet and the Swale Wader Group. Thanks to help from Brian Watmough and Murray Orchard we had secured funding for trail cameras and optics to find out why nests were failing along the shell and shingle beach areas.



Oystercatcher nest

From May to August, 37 nests were monitored with cameras placed at some of them. Nests were located and marked using What3Words and recorded on a spreadsheet with at least one visit per week. Care was taken to minimise disturbance and nests of schedule 1 birds were monitored under license issued by BTO.

In total, 21 Ringed Plover and 15 Oystercatcher nests were monitored with chicks successfully fledged from 6 nests. Perhaps the biggest surprise was discovering a Little Tern nest which successfully fledged 1 chick



The camera footage was fascinating to watch, we saw lots of Hares, a Fox, Mice, Rats, Rabbits, a Cat and a Little Owl, but whilst these did scare parent birds off the nest they did not actively predate them. All observed predation was carried out by Carrion Crows, Hedgehogs and a Magpie. Thankfully, very little human activity was observed in the exclusion areas behind the blue rope, demonstrating that the rope is working but Ringed Plovers had also nested in areas where lots of people walked through.



Next year we will explore options for nest cages to use in high-footfall areas, other ways of marking and recording nests, decoy nests / cameras to stop crow predation and further fencing and signage for the roped off areas.

If you would like to see a video of one of the nests that successfully fledged chicks visit our YouTube channel <https://www.youtube.com/@birdwisenorthkent3336>

We are now busy preparing for our winter season which kicks off on 30th September and we'll have our Big Coastal Birdwatch taking place for 2 weeks from 19 October to 3 November and don't miss the East Kent v North Kent Great Kentish Bird Off taking place on 26 October at KWT Oare Marshes and Pegwell Bay reserves. More details to follow so keep update via our social media pages @birdwisenk or sign up for our newsletter.

The Southern England Curlew Project

The Southern England Curlew Project is a five-year research and conservation project designed to improve our understanding of 'headstarting'; a technique which involves captive-rearing and releasing curlew chicks to increase fledging rates. Although already being used at a handful of sites nationally, we still have a relatively poor understanding of the long-term value of this emerging technique. The project is addressing this by establishing a new research-focussed

headstarting programme based across three sites: the Cranborne Estate, Dorset; the Norfolk Estate, Sussex; and Elmley NNR, Kent.

Eggs are taken from stable curlew populations in North Yorkshire, from nests that are at risk of destruction from agricultural practices or human disturbance. Each year, up to 40 eggs are transported to each of the three sites in Southern England. Here, chicks are raised until approximately 55-70 days of age, then released into suitable breeding habitat at the recipient sites. Around a third of the released fledglings are GPS-tagged so that researchers can follow their post-release movements, survival, and subsequent breeding.

More information regarding the Kent part of this project was included in the KOS Newsletter for September 2023. In Kent, 23 and 26 curlew have been released in 2023 and 2024 respectively. All headstarted birds have been colour-ringed with unique yellow 'flags'. Resightings of both GPS-tagged and non-tagged individuals are valuable to the project, and we request that any sightings are please returned to cheward@gwct.org.uk.

KOS branded clothing.

Just a friendly reminder that our branded clothing is available for purchase through LogoThatPolo. You can find the link on the KOS website or search for Kent Ornithological Society on www.logothatpolo.co.uk. As the weather starts to cool down, it's the perfect time to pick up a hat, fleece or hoodie for yourself or as a Christmas present and don't forget a portion of the proceeds is given back to the society.

Martin Collins

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We would like to encourage members to contribute items or photographs for inclusion in the newsletter, especially regarding birds in Kent. If you are interested, I am always happy to offer advice or assistance to aspiring authors. To facilitate page composition text needs to be presented as a Word document, photos or illustrations as j-peg files.

Norman McCanch (Editor) : nvmccanch@hotmail.com

We like to keep in touch with all our members, so if you change address, email address or phone numbers please remember to inform our membership secretary, Chris Roome. He can be contacted at:

Chris Roome, Rowland House, Station Rd., Staplehurst TN12 0PY

Tel: 01580 891686 e-mail: chrisroome105@icloud.com

PHALAROPES

The phalaropes are waders with a difference: the only ones adapted for swimming. They have lobed feet, and this is the origin of their name. The Greek *φαλαρος* (phalaros) means bald, or white-headed. The standard modern Greek name for Coot, with its white frontal plate and also a lobe-footed bird, is *Φαλαρίδα* (phalarida), sometimes given as *Phalaris* (which as botanists will know is also a genus of grasses which have whitish flowering heads). The suffix *-pus* comes from Greek, meaning 'of the foot' and thus *Phalaropus* means Coot-footed.

Interestingly enough, the phalaropes themselves don't care a jot about all that, in common, I suspect, with most readers of this article, who think that the author is showing off but in fact is merely moderately competent at searching the internet. The three species of phalarope breed around the northern hemisphere, typically in marshy areas with scattered pools and lakes on which they feed, spinning around to pick up insects floating on the surface and stirred up by their motion. They do also sometimes feed like most waders, picking items from the muddy margins of pools or the seashore but the swimming spinning behaviour is characteristic.

In winter, Wilson's Phalarope winters mainly on saline lakes in South America, while the other two spend their time out on the open ocean, and I'll come back to that under Red-necked Phalarope below. Their attractive, delicate appearance and erratic occurrence in Kent makes them birds that most birders will be keen to see when they do turn up. Wilson's is rare in Kent and indeed nationally, while Red-necked and Grey are scarce here, the former being on the list of species considered by the KOS Rarities Panel while the latter was on that list until about twenty years ago. Here I'll be summarising the frequency of occurrence of each species, the times of year when they occur and where they've been found.

I am including records up to 2023 but may not have the complete list of birds in that last year. Also, there have been quite a few records of phalaropes that were not definitely identified to species. In most cases these were probably Grey and, where that was stated in Kent Bird Reports, I've mentioned them in my discussion of that species.

Wilson's Phalarope

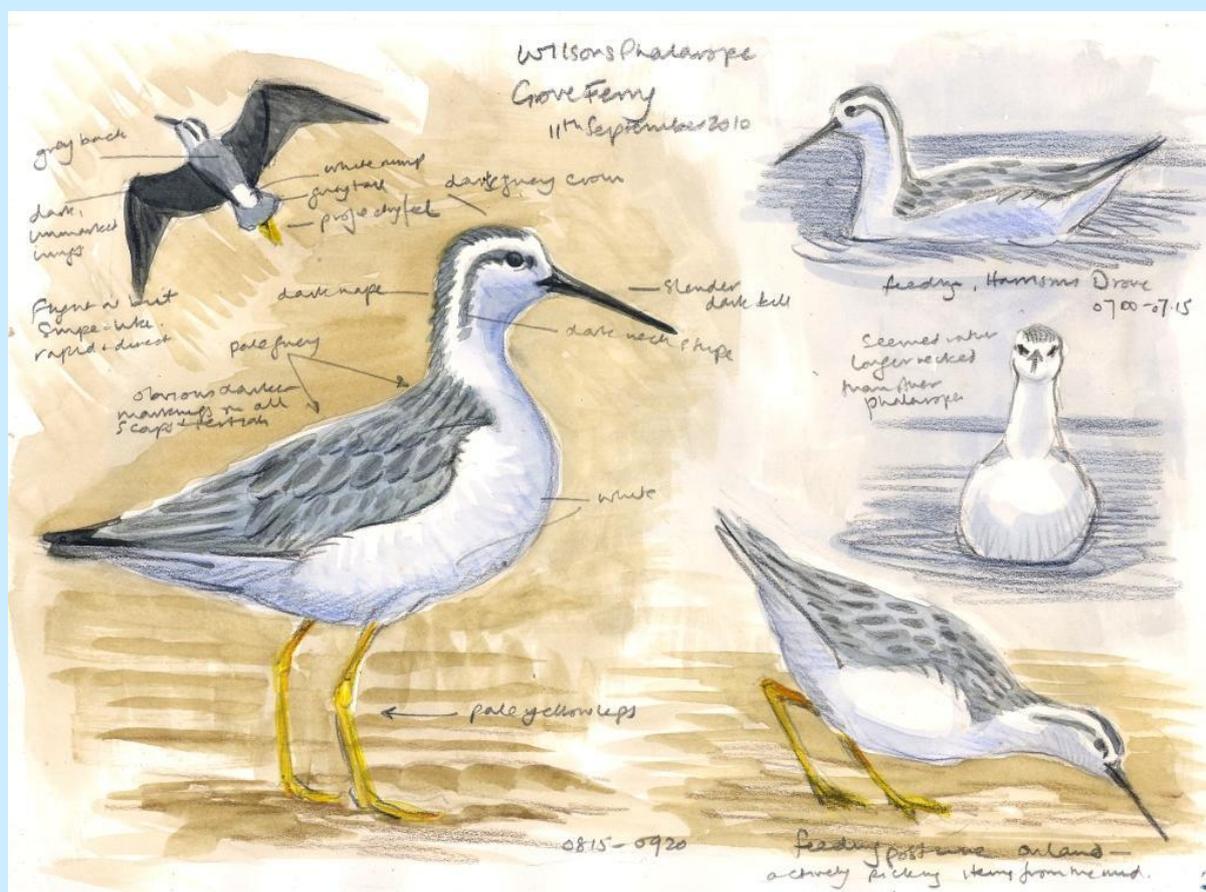


Wilson's Phalarope by Chris Bond

The first Wilson's Phalarope for Kent was seen on Walland Marsh by Bob Scott and others on 21st-25th September 1970. A spring record followed in 1971 and four more autumn birds subsequently. All of the records are listed in Table 1.

Table 1. Records of Wilson's Phalarope in Kent		
Year	Location	Notes
1970	Walland Marsh	One on 21st-25th September.
1971	Egypt Bay	A female in summer plumage on a marsh pool near Egypt Bay on 11th May.
1979	Dungeness	Two together on the RSPB reserve on 27th August.
1988	Elmley	One, of uncertain age, on the RSPB reserve from 27th September to 8th October and again on 13th October.
2010	Grove Ferry	A first-winter bird from 9th September to 19th October, though there were dates when it was not seen.
2017	Oare Marshes	A first-winter bird from 3rd to 22nd October.

This wader breeds only in North America and, as with many such species, British records are biased towards western counties. Kent's total of seven nevertheless contributed 2.8% of the British total of 253 up to the end of 2022.



Wilson's Phalarope, Grove Ferry by Norman McCanch

Red-necked Phalarope



Red-necked Phalarope by Chris Bond

One shot on Romney Marsh some time prior to 1844 was the first to be recorded in Kent. This was in the Plomley collection, lost to wartime bombing at Dover Museum (Harrison, *Birds of Kent*, 1953). Four more followed in the nineteenth century and five more in the twentieth century prior to 1952. I have discounted a record of two said to have been shot at the Open Pits, Dungeness, in May 1906; these were not Hastings Rarities (the species was not rare enough to have been considered in that review) but the information was provided by Michael J Nicoll who was associated, for better or worse, with a lot of the Hastings Rarities. I have also left out two, listed by Harrison, seen at the Midrips in 1949 and 1951; this area is outside the current Kent boundary and while the birds may have visited the Wicks in Kent, this is not stated.

The annual totals of Red-necked Phalaropes seen in Kent from 1952 onwards are shown in Figure 1. Numbers were higher from the 1980s onwards, probably reflecting the larger numbers of active observers, but possibly there is a hint of reduced frequency from 2000 onwards, including several blank years.

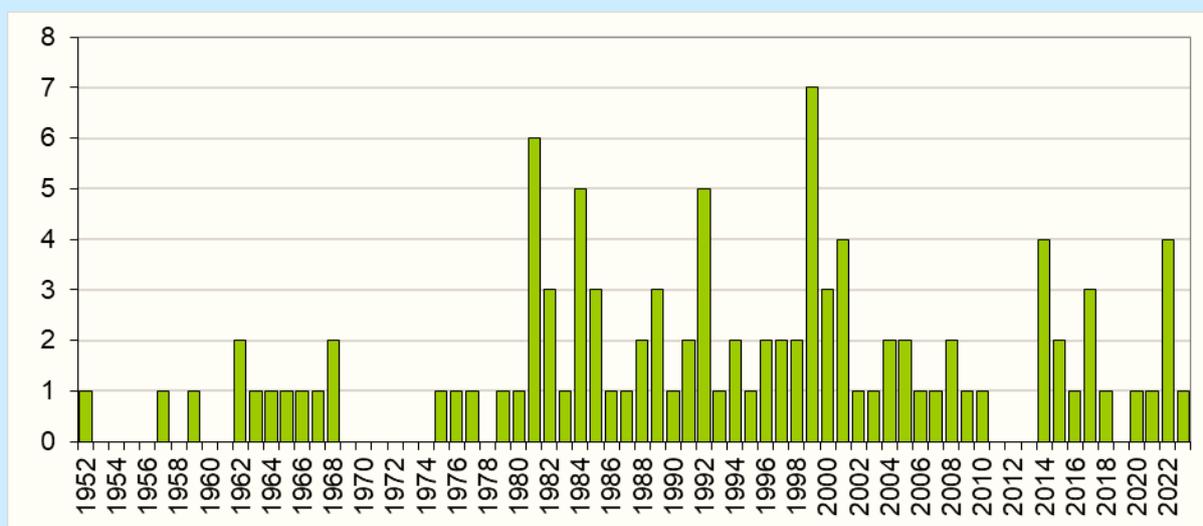


Figure 1. Red-necked Phalarope: annual totals 1952-2023

A total of 114 individuals are recorded, ten up to 1949, 67 in the second half of the twentieth century and 37 from 2000 onwards. The majority of records have been of single birds but there have been two together on three occasions: at Grove on 26th June 1962, at Dungeness RSPB reserve on 30th September 1999 and at Oare Marshes on 20th-22nd September 2000. Also, there were up to three at Elmley RSPB reserve

during 1st-9th August 1984 with a maximum of four on 3rd August. That year, 1984, was one of four years with at least five individuals, including the largest total of seven in 1999.

Red-necked Phalaropes are seen mainly as autumn migrants, and the majority of them are juveniles.

Figure 2 shows the seasonal pattern of occurrence, using only records from 1952 onwards: seventy of the 103 individuals in that period were seen during August-September. There are no records for December-April, a notable contrast with Grey Phalarope.

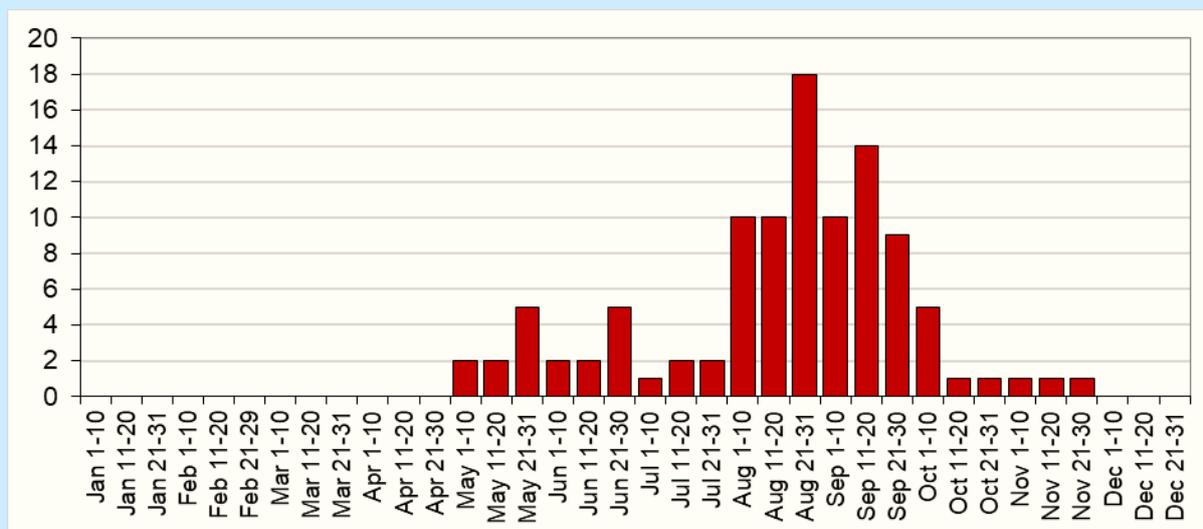


Figure 2. Red-necked Phalarope: seasonal pattern of occurrence, 1952-2023

The earliest of the May records were one at Dungeness on 3rd May 1982 and one at Swale NNR on 4th May 1998. There have been some records throughout the summer, presumably of non-breeders or early failing breeders. After the bulk of passage in August-September, there is a smattering of records through October and November, with the latest being one at Donkey Street near Burmarsh, on Romney Marsh, present from 29th November to 4th December 2020.

Area	number	%
Swale	36	34.6%
Dungeness	22	21.2%
Thames	18	17.3%
Sandwich & Pegwell Bays	15	14.4%
Stour valley	6	5.8%
Bough Beech	3	2.9%
Reculver & Minnis Bay	2	1.9%
Dover	1	1.0%
Medway (Chetney)	1	1.0%

The majority of Red-necked Phalaropes have been found around the coast, as shown in Table 2. Over half were either around the Swale or at Dungeness (including a few on Walland and Romney Marshes), and there were significant numbers also in the Thames area and at Sandwich and Pegwell Bays. In contrast to Grey Phalarope, there is only one Thanet record, at Minnis Bay. Of those at Dungeness, the majority were seen offshore but substantial proportion were on the RSPB reserve or elsewhere inland of the coast. Only nine of the 103 have been further inland, six in the Stour valley and three at Bough Beech.

Red-necked Phalaropes breed right around the world at northern latitudes, in Europe, Asia and North America. The main wintering areas are at sea in three wide areas. Those breeding in north-east Asia go to the East Indies, those in North America to the Pacific off South America, and those in Europe to the Arabian Sea. Or so it was assumed until recently, when geolocator tagging revealed that, while populations from Scandinavia and points east indeed went to the Arabian Sea, those in Scotland, Iceland and Greenland flew across the Atlantic, down the eastern seaboard of North America and crossed Central

America to join the American wintering birds off Ecuador and Peru. The migration route, there and back, is some 22,000 km. To read more about this, try the paper in *British Birds* (August 2018) vol. 111 pp 428–437. We don't know from which population the birds appearing in Kent come, but it is more likely to be the Arabian Sea winterers than those bound for the Pacific.

In Britain as a whole, excluding Scottish breeding birds, there was an average of about 35 per year during 2000-2022 (*British Birds* Scarce Migrants report). The Kent average in that period was 1.5 birds. Typically, most are found along the east coast of England and, while the absolute totals are smaller, Kent provides a higher proportion of the national total for Red-necked than for Grey Phalarope.



Red-necked Phalarope, Oare Marshes, by Norman McCanch

Grey Phalarope



Grey Phalarope by Peter Maton

Ticehurst (*History of the Birds of Kent*, 1909) considered Grey Phalarope an occasional autumn visitor, occurring especially when there were continuous south or south-west gales. He recorded over 40 individuals, although in some cases exact numbers were not stated. Most were found around the coast but three were well inland, including the first, near Canterbury some time prior to 1845. Three notable influxes were detailed: nine occurred during 20th August-28th September 1866 (a notably early arrival), at least 12 were shot – mainly on Thanet – in mid October 1891, and at least four during 24th September-4th October 1886, when there were five or more at the Midrips, just over the border in Sussex. Harrison recorded almost 20 further birds (plus some dubious ones, see box below), including three in both 1933 and 1935, and four probably of this species at St Mary’s Bay in north Kent on 18th October 1947. The total of pre-1952 individuals that I regard as acceptable is 61.

A total of 310 individuals are recorded, 59 up to 1949, 109 in the second half of the twentieth century and 142 from 2000 onwards. Figure 3 shows the annual totals during 1952-2023, plus 13 individuals that were not conclusively identified but which were believed to be Grey Phalaropes and mentioned in Kent Bird Reports.

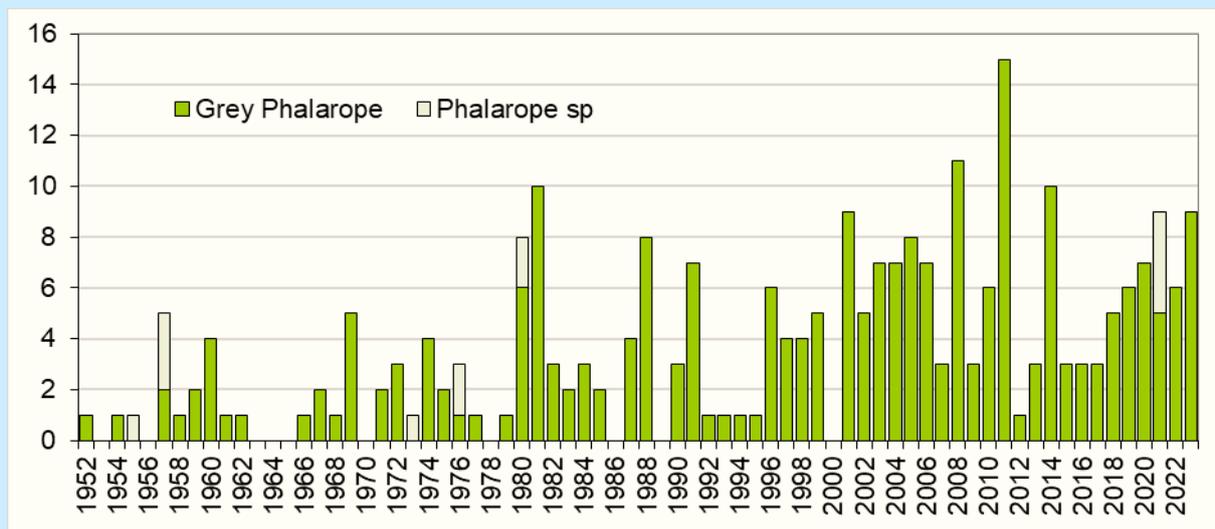


Figure 3. Grey Phalarope: annual totals 1952-2023

The gradual increase in annual totals from the 1950s to the 2000s is perhaps due less to any real change than to increased numbers of observers, better equipment and increased amounts of time staring out to sea. Throughout, there has been quite a lot of year-to-year variation, probably related to weather conditions. Typically, birds appear after gales in the sector between south and west, and presumably involve birds being carried up the English Channel by depressions running in from the Atlantic. They are often accompanied by other oceanic species such as Sabine’s Gull and petrels.

Most individuals have been recorded on single dates, but some have remained for a few days or longer. Five have stayed for more than three weeks, including one at St Mary’s Bay on the Thames from 5th January to 19th February 1949 and one at Ramsgate harbour from 2nd December 1984 to 23rd February 1985.

There have been four years in which at least ten individuals have been recorded, the largest totals being 11 in 2008 and 17 in 2011. The majority of sightings throughout 1952-2023 involved single birds but two or three were seen on a single date and location around twenty times. The 2011 birds included five flying W past Dungeness on 22nd November and two at Foreness on the 24th. In 2008, all were singles apart from two flying W at Reculver on 22nd November.

As well as high single counts, I’ve checked for high totals over periods of a few days. During 1952-2022, there have been several instances of four, including on 16th-17th October 1987 at the time of the great storm, and a few of larger totals, including five during 9th-17th October 1981, five during 1st-2nd November 2006 and eight during 22nd-24th November 2011. Also, it’s worth mentioning a southerly gale in mid

October 1891, after which many were present around Thanet (Ticehurst 1909) though we don't have precise dates. A Ramsgate taxidermist received four, while one in Margate received 'a number' including seven that were shot by one man. At the same time, Ticehurst himself saw one that had been shot at Somerhill Park, Tonbridge.

The seasonal pattern of Grey Phalarope records is shown in Figure 4. It's a similar shape to that of Red-necked Phalarope's but with the peak slightly more prolonged and set later in the year. About 80% of individuals (198 of the total of 249 during 1952-2023) occurred between 10th September and 25th November. There is a long tail of records into the New Year and through to March but, in contrast to Red-necked Phalarope, few (only eight) have been seen during April-August. The one June-July record was of a summer-plumaged adult at Elmley on 13th-15th July 1999.

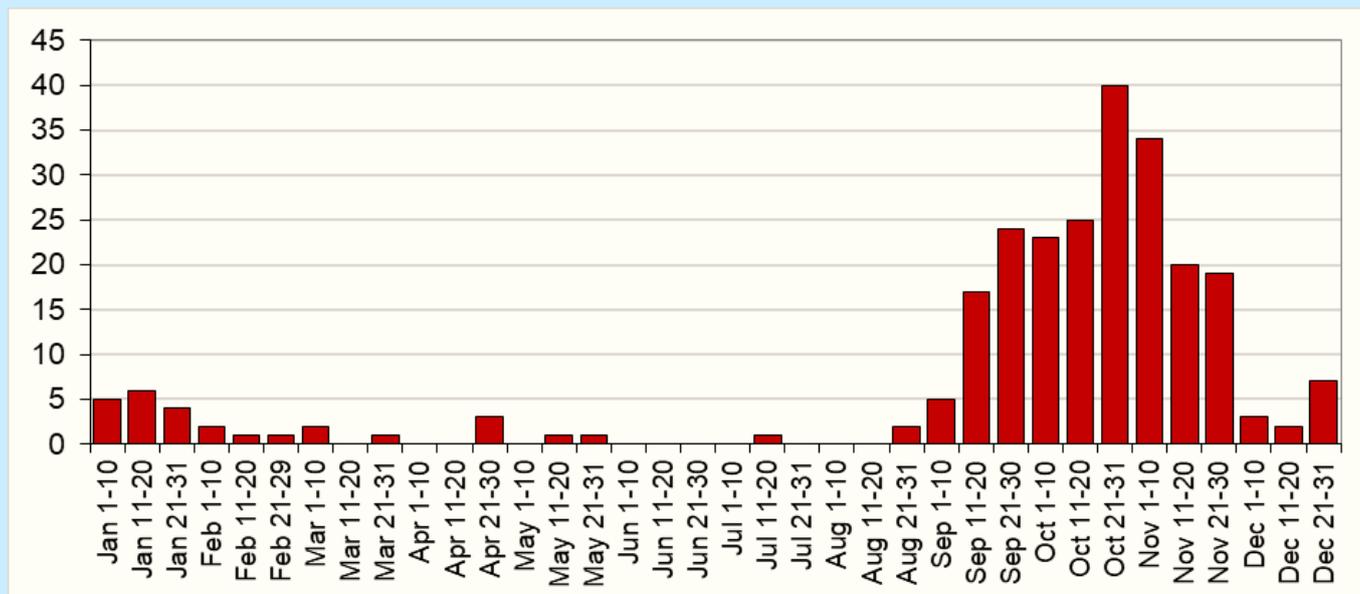


Figure 4. Grey Phalarope: seasonal pattern of occurrence, 1952-2023

Like Red-necked, Grey Phalaropes breed around the northern hemisphere but with their range centred further north and absent from Iceland, Scandinavia and Finland. The different seasonal pattern of occurrence here is presumably linked to that range difference. The main wintering areas are off western South America and western and south-western Africa.

Most Grey Phalaropes seen in Kent are around the coast, with a large proportion offshore. Table 3 summarises the distribution of records from 1952 onwards. This is broadly similar to that for Red-necked but with far more on Thanet and higher proportions along the south coast, reflecting the tendency for birds to be seen on offshore passage.

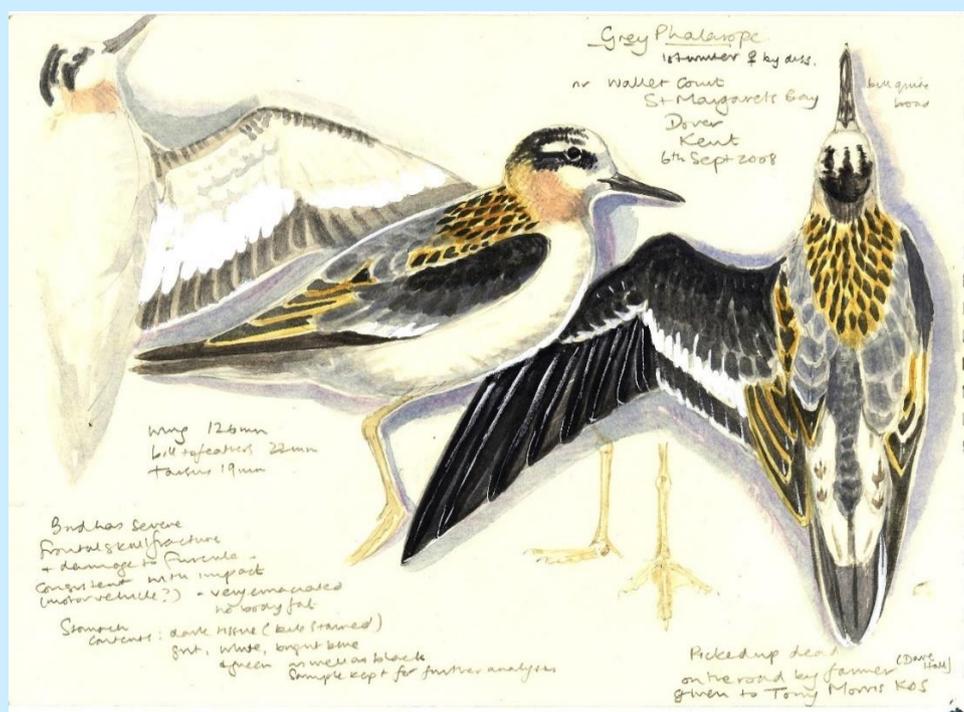
Area	number	%
Dungeness area	81	32.5%
Herne Bay-Thanet	53	21.3%
Swale	44	17.7%
Pegwell-Deal	26	10.4%
Thames	23	9.2%
Walmer-Hythe	12	4.8%
Bough Beech	5	2.0%
Stour valley	3	1.2%
Medway	2	0.8%

One unfortunate bird was seen to be carried ashore and then eaten by a Merlin at Dungeness on 13th November 2001. Another was taken by a Sparrowhawk at Restharrow Scrape, Sandwich Bay, on 7th November 2007. Other unusual sightings were of two birds, one at Minnis Bay on 5th October 1996 and the other at Swalecliffe on 3rd October 1998, seen to fly off inland in a southerly direction.

In Britain as a whole, annual variability is high with totals of up to 1,800 but there was an average of about 400 per year during 2000-2022 (*British Birds Scarce Migrants* report). The Kent average in that period was 5.8 birds. A high proportion are often in the south-west but east coast counties such as Norfolk occasionally record large annual totals.



Grey Phalarope Oare Marshes, by Norman McCanch



Grey Phalarope found dead near St Margarets Bay by Norman McCanch

Missing and altered phalarope records

There are quite a lot of records of Grey Phalarope, and some of Red-necked Phalarope, that have not been published (other than on anonymous online sightings websites) because insufficient details were available, even simply the observer's name. Some of those were doubtless genuine but, without the barest details, they can't be distinguished from reports that are inaccurate (and I can assure you there have been some of those!). If you think your record might be missing, please do submit it.

Also, in compiling this article, I have made some changes to what appeared in Kent Bird Reports and the county's bird books, using my judgement and after consultation where possible with observers. I have excluded some records, mainly those in locations which are not now in Kent, for example at the Midrips, at Bewl Water and at Erith. I've also excluded a few early twentieth century records in which George Bristow was involved, because these carry the taint of the Hastings Rarities even though the species were not rare enough to be included in that review. Those records include three shot out of a 'small flock' of Grey Phalaropes on 5th May 1906; nothing is impossible, but more than a pinch of salt would be needed there. I have included a handful of previously unpublished records with known observers (six records, seven individuals) from 1999-2014, which omissions seem likely to have been errors.

Red-necked Phalarope, September 1968

Across the golf course, in a pool,
a little bird is spinning.
They write down details in their books:
a very good beginning.

The editors who write reports
enjoy too many beers.
The record's published and is true
for over fifty years.

But then a pedant checking through
sees that the dates don't tally
in Bay report and that of Kent.
Our pedant doesn't dally.

The dates are checked, the record changed,
seen by Buckley and Ruck.
A few think these things important.
Most folk don't give a damn.

Andrew Henderson

Kent Listing; a history. Geoff Burton

I first began to pay attention to my Kent list in 1988 when I moved from Tonbridge to Boughton under Blean near Faversham. This was a more central location in the county with Dungeness now only 30 miles away and Sandwich Bay only 20. Bough Beech Reservoir, however, which had been my local patch for 18 years, was now about 44 miles away. My first addition after the move was a Baird's Sandpiper at Dungeness, ironically, the next was a White Stork at Fordcombe near Tonbridge and near the Sussex border, followed by the wader duo of Oriental Pratincole and

Wilson's Phalarope at Elmley! In my first month after moving, I added four species to my Kent list. I reached 300 species with the Desert Warbler at Seasalter in November 1991.

Fast forward six years. Barry Wright had begun to collect Kent lists from several birders. I got involved and then, I don't remember exactly how or why, I took over. The top ten lists at the end of 1996 were:

Dave Gilbert	333
Don Taylor	330
Geoff Burton	327
John Cantelo	324
Mike Buckland	322
Marcus Lawson	322
Chris Abrams	321
Barry Wright	321
Chris Bradshaw	320
Martin Coath	320

I think that only four of these still live in the county and only three remain in the top 10. In the early years, there was much talk about what the 400th species for Kent might be. However, with splits and lumps and re-evaluations, this milestone passed unnoticed. It would be difficult, but not impossible if anyone has the time, to calculate what the 400th species was!

Tale of the century

The last year of the old century had been a particular good one for Kent birding. Pied-billed Grebe and Blyth's Reed Warbler were added to the Kent List and much sought after birds including Greater Yellowlegs, Slender-billed Gull, Canvasback, Little Bittern, Baillon's Crake and Sardinian Warbler, occurred.

And so, to the the 21st century. We chugged along at a steady pace adding, on average, one species to the Kent List each year. There were four blank years: 2000 itself then 2007, 2009 and 2017 and no more than two additions in any one year. Thus, by 2019 (year 20) we had added exactly 20 species to the list. Four of these, Audouin's Gull, Tufted Puffin, Acadian Flycatcher and Brown Booby were new to Britain as well. And then there was 2020! In an 86-day period between 17th October and 10th January 2021, no less than six additions were seen (and photographed). It is telling of the times that half of these were photographed by non-birders and identified later and, also of the times that they could not be twitched!

After the "Six in 86", the Kent List understandably calmed down with no new additions until 26th May 2022 when the now legendary Eleonora's Falcon was photographed over the Restharrow scrape and refound nearby at Worth Marshes the next day. The first twitchable Eleonora's in Britain, it remained until 27th to be seen by anyone who wished to see it. In contrast, the next surge, the "Three in 40" were not so obliging. A Sand Plover, identified straight away from photographs as a Tibetan Sand Plover, at Cliffe Pools was only seen by four people, including only one of our listers during its short stay on 1st September. A Short-toed Eagle appeared over the South Foreland Valley ten days later and was seen, and photographed, by two observers but no listers were present. Later reports of the bird over the Ash Levels and Richborough have yet to be confirmed. Finally, a Yellow-browed Bunting was trapped at Sandwich Bay on 10th October. I understand that ten or more people saw the bird before it was released including at least three listers.

Last year, 2023, had been quiet with just a few listers finally adding Alpine Swift or Black Stork. Or it was until 19th September when a Cliff Swallow was found at North Foreland and then a Solitary Sandpiper appeared at Stodmarsh on 15th October. The Amercanization of the Kent List!

So, what is the Kent List now? The KOS website says that it is 431 but that, quite rightly, does not include the yet to be accepted two recent additions referred to above. However, it also does not include species accepted by the BBRC at the time, and in one case by the BOURC as a new bird for the British List, but which have now been split. The Kentish individuals cannot, or have not yet, been assigned to any of the new split species. This applies to Little Shearwater (now recently accepted as a Barola Shearwater), Soft-plumaged Petrel and, presumably, Isabelline Shrike. Although Daurian and Turkestan Shrike are shown on the KOS's Kent List but not in detail. I think they can't just be dismissed. If we include those, and the two likely additions this year, we have a potential Kent List of 436.

The demise of Dungeness and the rise of the East

In the first 20 years of the century, when 20 new species were added to the Kent List, no less than seven of these (Iberian Chiffchaff, Audouin's Gull, Paddyfield Warbler, Lesser Scaup, White-tailed Plover, Ross's Gull, and Acadian Flycatcher) were found in the Dungeness area. Since the Acadian Flycatcher in 2015, there have been 15 additions to the Kent List but no further contribution from what is, probably, the most watched area in Kent. In contrast, the East of the county (as defined by the KOS), has contributed nine species including the last seven.

The rise of photography

In recent years, with innovations in camera technology, it has become an essential element in birding. Eyes, ears, bins, scopes and now the camera. What happened to the notebook? If we look at the last 15 additions to the list, they have all been photographed. Some by non-birders who new only that the bird was unfamiliar to them, and in many cases, photographs have played an important part in the identification of the species and eventual acceptance.

Not on anyone's list

There are 433 species on the KLC version of the Kent List. Of these, only 24 species have not been seen by any lister. A few predate any lister, a few are tainted by stories of supression, and a few fell to non-birders armed with a digital camera. The Chough became extinct in the nineteenth century, the Tengmalm's Owl was shot in Dartford in 1881 and the Cream-coloured Courser was seen by H G Alexander in 1916,

“Suddenly I came on a bird which was so distinctive as to be immediately recognisable: it was a Cream-coloured Courser. It was quite tame. I watched it for some time ...”. That would make a good template for my next description to the BBRC on finding a Gray's Grasshopper Warbler at Swalecliffe!

The next two came in 1951 with an Ivory Gull and Rufous Warbler (that was what it was called then) followed by the last Little Bustard in the county flushed from a field of blackcurrants at Hadlow in 1958 by Jeffery Harrison. Pausing for a moment, I can see that these species are still being seen in the country if not the county. Wild Choughs from Cornwall, via Ireland, are straying closer and those from Wildwood closer still. There are recent records of Tengmalm's Owls from Shetland, as well as the notorious Spurn bird in 1983, a Cream-coloured Courser was in Essex in 1984, an Ivory Gull in Suffolk in 1999 and a Rufous-tailed Scrub Robin (that is what it is called now) in Norfolk in 2020.

More recent times and we begin to know the observers such as Dave Davenport's Pallas's Sandgrouse at Stodmarsh in 1964, and, 50 years later, Dave Walker's Ross's Gull in 2014.

When is it safe to leave the county?

Obviously, you should not! However, if your driven by your world list, chasing the latest incarnation of the Scops Owl perhaps, or your Western Palearctic list catching up with those seen elsewhere Nearctic passerines, or even your British list, when is it best to go to avoid missing a new species for Kent. There have been 33 additions to the Kent List this century. Surprisingly, none have been added in March or June and only one in April. Five have been added in January, although only two of these were twitchable, six in May and 18 of them during the months from August to November. You better wait until next year!

Our next-door-neighbour

That is Sussex! Now the Sussex list is only 408 species so well behind Kent, but we do have an East Coast as well as a South Coast. However, their list includes 27 species not on our list and, with the earlier reference to Americanization, 16 of the species come from that side of the pond. Well, technically, it is nearer than Kent. This includes four wader species (Semi-palmated Plover, Killdeer, Upland Sandpiper and Hudsonian Whimbrel) and six passerines or near-passerines (Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Northern Mockingbird, American Robin, Buff-bellied Pipit, Baltimore Oriole and Black-and-white Warbler).

Other counties

Kent cannot compete with Yorkshire. The current Yorkshire list stands at 469 species. The top lister (Andy Gibson) is on 414 species, there are 12 listers over 400 and 27 with lists higher than the top Kent lister. However, they have only 82 listers over 300, compared with over 100 in Kent. Norfolk would be an interesting county for comparison, but it does seem to be shrouded in mystery and intrigue. Perhaps, one of the many defectors to that county could shed some light on matters?

Inland counties are, of course, a very different matter. I have a particular interest in Berkshire for family reasons. The Berkshire total currently stands at 321 species and the top lister, Chris Heard, has a total of 276 species. My total is only 131 species which, apparently puts me in 73 = place. Much to do there! There are five records of species not on the Kent List, three over 100 years old, and two more recent records of Killdeer in 1984 and Buff-bellied Pipit in 2012.

List within lists

Within the Kent List there are other lists. Patch birding has received a lot of interest in recent years, self-found list, year lists etc. Next time perhaps?

Kent Listers table

30 April 2024

1	Geoff Burton	386
2	Mike Buckland	382
	Nigel Jarman	382
	Brendan Ryan	382
	Jerry Warne	382
6	Andrew Lawson	379
7	Jack Chantler	378
	Martin Warburton	378
	Murray Wright	378
10	Phil Chantler	377
	Marcus Lawson	377
12	Chris Gibbard	376
13	Terry Laws	375
	Barry Wright	375
15	Steve Cross	373

16	Andy Appleton	372
	John Cantelo	372
	Gary Howard	372
	Don Taylor	372
20	Frank Cackett	371
	Steve Clinch	371
	Chris Hindle	371
23	Chris Bond	370
	Lee Evans	370
25	Keith Privett	369
26	Steve Broyd	368
	Mike Puxley	368
28	Matt Hindle	367
	Martin Coath	366
	John Tilbrook	366
31	Chris Abrams	364
	Richard Heading	364
33	Dave Gilbert	363
	Mark Lopez	363
	Chris Powell	363
	Julian Russell	363
	Simon Warry	363
38	Steve Blaskett	361
	Mike Henty	361
	Anne Hindle	361
	Ian Roberts	361
42	Mike Gould	360
	Jeremy Hall	360
	Martyn Wilson	360
45	Murray Orchard	357
	Roger Puxley	357
47	John Brighten	354
48	Andrew Lipczynski	353
	Richard Smith	353
	Miles Wheeler	353
51	Chris Bradshaw	352
52	Bob Bland	350
	Mark Hollingworth	348
54	Ray O'Reilly	347
55	Malcolm Mcvail	346
	Nigel Driver	346
	Tony Morris	346
58	Heather Chantler	345
59	Jan Burt	343
60	Dave Burt	342
	Neil Burt	342
	Mike Roser	342
63	Marc Heath	341
	Brian Summerfield	341
65	Tom Robertson	338
66	Richard Bailey	338

	Kay Robertson	337
68	Martin Collins	336
	Barry Hunt	336
70	Keith Ellis	335
	Brian Short	335
	Malcolm Freeman	334
	John van der Dol	334
74	Craig Sammels	333
75	Roger Lawrence	331
	Phil Lightman	331
	Alan Pavey	331
	Phil Saunders	331
79	Phil Beraet	330
	David Tipling	330
81	Eugene Hood	329
	Jonathan Martin	329
83	Dave Allan	327
	Peter Lloyd	327
	Tim Loseby	327
86	Chris Golson	326
87	Ivan Macey	326
	Phil Simons	325
89	Derek Smith	324
90	Gordon Allison	321
	Derek Houtt	321
92	Ann Bland	319
	Mike McDonell	319
94	Duncan Coates	318
95	Richard Bayldon	317
96	Richard Collins	316
97	Arnie van Orsouw	313
98	Tim Hodge	311
99	Phil Parker	310
	Barry Woolhouse	310
100	Ian Hodgson	308
	Matt May	308
102	Steve Gale	307
104	Simon Mount	305
	Heather Willis	305
106	Andy Vidler	300
107	Geoff Watt	291
108	Dave Carr	286



Listers or Twitchers?? From a drawing by John Hollyer

Geoff Burton

KENT BIRD SIGHTINGS FOR JULY-AUGUST 2024 - Chris Hindle

Species printed in **red** require descriptions or good quality photographs to be accepted by the British Birds Rarities Committee (species in capital letters) or the KOS Rarities Committee (species in lower case). The results of these committees' deliberations are regularly published in this newsletter.

WEATHER

The start of **July** continued June's theme of cooler than average weather, but with the addition of more rain. Temperatures were consistently below average during the first two weeks and low pressure across the UK led to unsettled weather. Temperatures increased in the third week with the upper 20s across the southeast and 30°C recorded in Kent on some days. During the month 30.25mm of rain fell at Bishopstone.

August began on a warm note, with temperatures above average across the country, but cooled in the second half of the month. The winds were often from the west or south-west, bringing moist air from the Atlantic. Overall temperatures were slightly above average with rainfall in southern England only 50% of average.

PARTRIDGE TO WILDFOWL

A **Quail** was heard calling at Brabourne on July 31st.

The adult **LESSER WHITE-FRONTED GOOSE** first seen in December was still present at Swale NNR on July 30th.

As many as 10 **Egyptian Geese** were recorded from Oare Marshes, Sevenoaks WR, Seaton GPs, Peshurst Place, Sandwich Bay, Worth Marshes and Dungeness RSPB and up to five **Mandarins** were seen at Dungeness RSPB, Chislet Marshes, Royal Military Canal, Peshurst Place and Nethergong.

During these two months as many as 13 **Garganey** were seen at Dungeness RSPB with smaller numbers recorded from Worth Marshes, Oare Marshes, Conningbrook Lakes, Marden, Nethergong, Seasalter and Stodmarsh.

A leucistic female **Red-crested Pochard** was seen at Dungeness RSPB on July 20th and four others were seen at Eastwell Lake on Aug 4th. An eclipse pair was also found at Sevenoaks WR on Aug 21st.

A female **Goosander** was an unexpected summer sighting at Coldharbour on July 7th and remained there until the 23rd.

NIGHTJAR TO WADERS

A **Black-necked Grebe** was found on the sea at Seasalter on Aug 14th with another seen at Lade on the 31st whilst a juvenile **Black-winged Stilt** was found at Cliffe Pools on July 30th where it was still present the next day.

The first returning **Curlew Sandpiper** was seen at Oare Marshes on July 20th and subsequently up to six birds were recorded from Oare Marshes, Pegwell Bay, Swale NNR, Lydd Ranges, Cliffe Pools, Elmley NNR, Leysdown-on-Sea and Dungeness RSPB. There were also a high count of 26 adults at Pegwell Bay on Aug 1st.



Temminck's Stint by Terry Laws

A **Temminck's Stint** was seen at Elmley NNR from Aug 11th-15th and during July single **Little Stints** were seen at Dungeness RSPB on 4th and at Pegwell Bay on the 28th with four at Cliffe Pools on the 30th and one at Elmley NNR on the 31st. In August as many as four birds were recorded from Cliffe Pools, Pegwell Bay, Elmley NNR and Oare Marshes.



White-rumped Sandpiper by Russ Blackman

An adult **White-rumped Sandpiper** was identified at Dungeness RSPB on July 27th and an adult **Pectoral Sandpiper** was seen at Dungeness RSPB on Aug 18th.

Up to 11 **Wood Sandpipers** were recorded from Dungeness RSPB, DBO, Cliffe Pools, Oare Marshes, Swalecliffe, Sandwich Bay, Pegwell Bay, Monks' Wall, Forness, Worth Marshes, Capel Fleet, Grove Ferry/Stodmarsh, Reculver Marshes and Elmley NNR but there were higher counts of 13 at Worth Marshes on July 9th following overnight rain and 29 there on the Aug 12th.

As many as eight **Spotted Redshanks** were seen at Oare Marshes, Cliffe Pools, Capel Fleet, Marden, Otterham Creek and Elmley NNR.

GULLS TO SHEARWATERS

In July, single **Little Gulls** were seen at North Foreland on the 23rd and 25th and in August one or two birds were recorded from Oare Marshes, DBO, Sandwich Bay, Pegwell Bay and North Foreland.

The regular moulting, adult **BONAPARTE'S GULL** first seen on June 21st remained at Oare Marshes until Aug 21st.

In July juvenile **Caspian Gulls** were seen at DBO on the 21st, 22nd and 29th and in August single birds were seen at DBO, Foreness, Capel Fleet, Pegwell Bay and Herne Bay. During July and August up to 11 **Yellow-legged Gulls** were seen at DBO with smaller numbers at Dungeness RSPB, Dartford Marshes, Langdon Cliffs, Stodmarsh, Lower Hope Point, Reculver, Pegwell Bay, Greenhithe, Higham, Abbotscliffe, Deal and Foreness.



Caspian Gull by Jamie Partridge

Single **Roseate Terns** were seen at Dungeness RSPB on July 5th, DBO on July 16th, at Pegwell Bay on Aug 14th and at **North Foreland** and Pegwell Bay on the 24th.
A juvenile **White-winged Black Tern** was seen at Dungeness RSPB on Aug 30th and 31st.



White-winged Black Tern by David Todd

The first **Black Tern** of the autumn was seen at Pegwell Bay on July 26th after which as many as 20 birds were recorded from Riverside CP, North Foreland, Dungeness RSPB, DBO, Oare Marshes, Lade, Stodmarsh, Tankerton, St Mary's Bay, Cliffe, Shellness, Collard's Lake, Reculver, Grenham Bay, Allhallows and Pegwell Bay.

The first **Pomarine Skuas** of the autumn were seen during fresh to strong easterly winds on Aug 31st when there were two at Reculver and St Mary's Bay with single birds at Herne Bay and Shellness. The first **Great Skuas** were also seen on this day with five at Shellness, four at Reculver and single birds at North Foreland and Warden Point.

During these two months many as 21 **Arctic Skua** were seen at DBO, Foreness, Tankerton, Shellness, St Mary's Bay, Cliffe, Reculver, Deal, Oare Marshes, Coldharbour and North Foreland.

Single **Sooty Shearwaters** flew S at North Foreland on Aug 21st, 22nd and 24th. During the strong wind on Aug 22nd four birds flew past DBO with one at North Foreland with another at DBO on the 26th and 11 at DBO on the 27th. One was also seen at North Foreland on Aug 30th with another reported from Allhallows on the 31st.

A **Manx Shearwater** flew E at DBO on July 8th whilst 18 were counted there on Aug 22nd. One was also seen at Deal on the 24th with others at North Foreland on the 25th and 29th and one at DBO on the 26th.

The first **Balearic Shearwaters** of the autumn were single birds seen at DBO and Foreness on Aug 1st after which one was seen flying E at DBO on the 15th. With strong SW winds on Aug 22nd, 73 flew past DBO and two were seen at St Margarets-at-Cliffe whilst on the 23rd there were 21 at DBO and one at Sandwich Bay. Single birds were also seen at DBO and Deal on Aug 24th with two at North Foreland on the 25th and single birds there on the 27th and 28th and also one at DBO on the 26th with 36 there on the 27th.

WHITE STORK TO WOODPECKERS

A large flock of at least 74 **White Storks** from the Knepp reintroduction scheme flew around East Kent on Aug 13th finally settling down for the night at Chillenden. They dispersed the next morning and birds were seen at various locations during the rest of the month with 32 still present at St Margarets-at-Cliffe on the 26th and 44 at Lydd and 35 at Folkestone the next day.

A **BROWN BOOBY** was seen at North Foreland and Kingsdown on the evening of Aug 1st. During these two months up to three **Shags** were recorded at Foreness and Swalecliffe.

A **Glossy Ibis** was recorded at Worth Marshes from July 3rd-30th and single birds were reported from Oare Marshes on July 4th and Monk's Wall on the 9th. One was also seen at Dungeness RSPB on Aug 21st and remained there until the end of the month. As many as 12 **Spoonbills** were seen at Oare Marshes, Pegwell Bay, Dartford Marshes, Elmley NNR, Conyer, Cliffe Pools, Cooling Marshes, Pegwell Bay, Capel Fleet and Worth Marshes.

During these two months single **Bitterns** were seen at Grove Ferry/Stodmarsh and Dungeness RSPB whilst a juvenile **Night Heron** was photographed at Oare Marshes on Aug 12th and was seen there until the end of the month



Night Heron by Joshua Tompsett

Up to 23 **Cattle Egrets** were seen at Seasalter, Grove Ferry/Stodmarsh, Worth Marshes, Sandwich Bay, Hythe, Ramsgate, Swalecliffe, Elmley NNR, Swanscombe, Dartford Marshes and Dungeness RSPB and as many as 10 **Great White Egrets** were recorded from Grove Ferry/Stodmarsh, Reculver Marshes, Shuart, High Halstow, Capel Fleet, Harty Marshes, Cooling Marshes, Sandwich Bay, DBO and Worth Marshes.

After an **Osprey** was seen at Stodmarsh on July 4th one or two birds were recorded from Bough Beech, Pegwell Bay, Sandwich Bay, DBO, Dungeness RSPB, Stodmarsh, Bockhill, Harbledown, Oare Marshes, Riverside CP, Conyer, Sevenoaks WR, Lower Halstow, Motney Hill and Elmley NNR.

Coastal reports of up to three **Honey Buzzards** came from Sandwich Bay, Dungeness, Kingsdown, Samphire Hoe, Langdon, Foreness, Dover and Walmer.



Honey Buzzard by Jamie Partridge

A male **Hen Harrier** was reported from Sandwich Bay on July 13th and from Elmley on the 16th and Aug 2nd. A ring tail was also seen at Elmley on July 18th and 25th. A grey harrier, probably Hen, flew N at Sandwich Bay on Aug 3rd and a ring-tail was reported from Funton on Aug 8th.

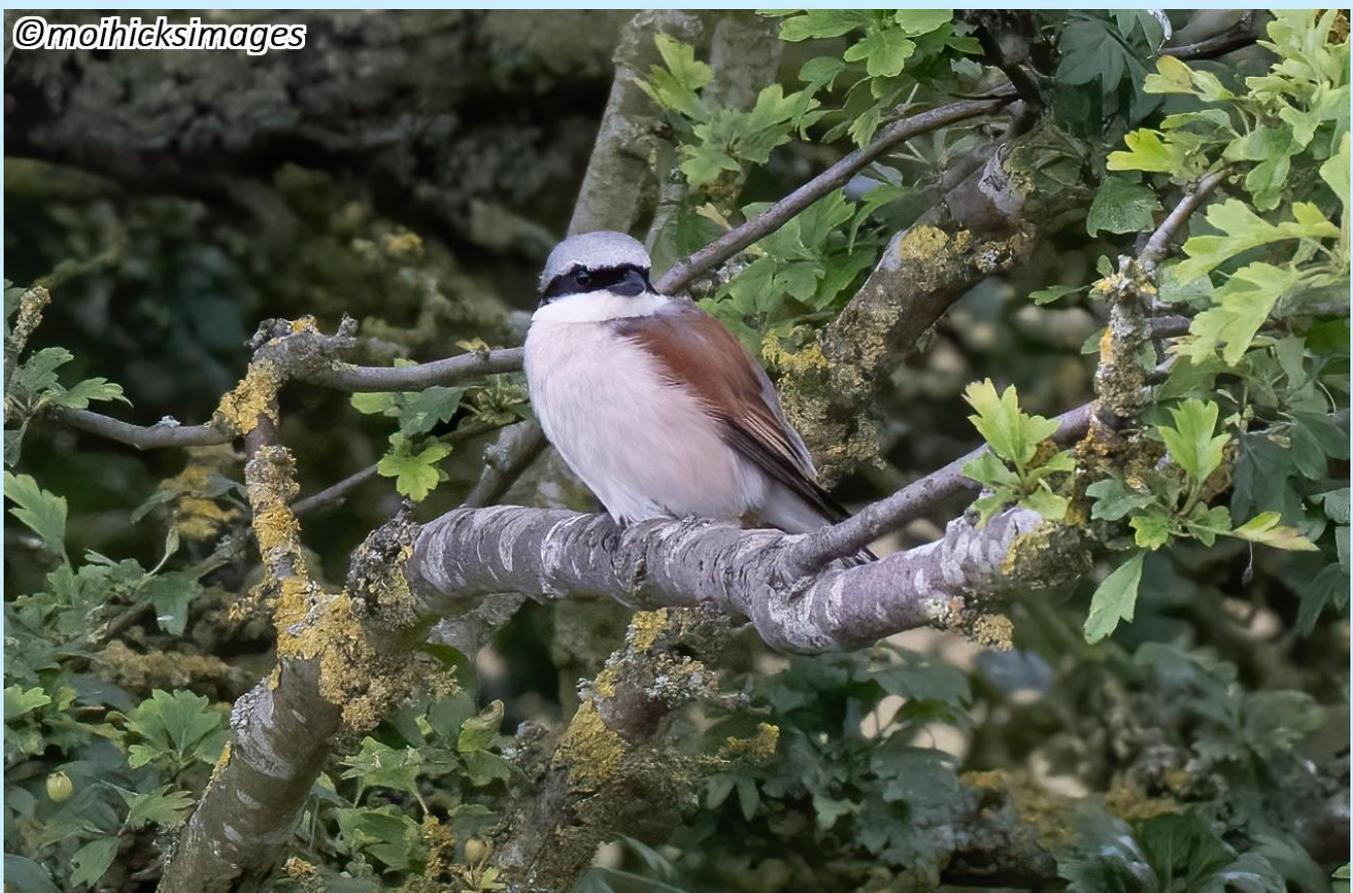
A moulting **ring-tailed harrier** flew out to sea at Kingsdown on July 3rd.

Single **Red Kites** were reported regularly from all areas of the County and a **Black Kite** flew over Snodland on July 15th whilst a **White-tailed Eagle** was seen at Stonar on Aug 25th and at Worth Marshes the next day.

A **Hoopoe** was seen briefly at Sandwich Bay on Aug 18th when a **Bee-eater** was also recorded from Kingsdown and a **Wryneck** was seen at Northward Hill on Aug 25th.

FALCONS TO HIRUNDINES

A **Red-footed Falcon** was reported from Seasalter on July 25th and one was seen at Elmley NNR on Aug 28th whilst a **Merlin** was reported from Elmley NNR on Aug 6th.



Red-backed Shrike by Moi Hicks

A male **Red-backed Shrike** was found at Oare Marshes on July 10th and there was a juvenile at Cliffe Pools on the 28th. In August a first winter bird was seen at Marden from the 25th-28th.

WARBLERS TO WHEATEARS

A **Wood Warbler** was trapped and ringed at Shingleton on July 20th and others were ringed or seen at Sandwich Bay on July 28th and Aug 7th, 8th, 10th, 11th, 12th and 21st. One was also reported from Blean Woods on Aug 18th.

A juvenile **Marsh Warbler** was reported from Cliffe Pools on Aug 17th.

The first **Grasshopper Warbler** of the autumn was trapped and ringed at Sandwich Bay on July 26th whilst another was seen there on July 30th. During August as many as three birds were seen at Sandwich Bay, South Foreland, DBO, Farthingloe and Shuart.

The first **Pied Flycatchers** of the autumn were 12 in the Sandwich Bay area on Aug 12th with single birds also seen at Reculver, Cliftonville and Swalecliffe. After this, as many as five birds were seen at Cliftonville, North Foreland, Langdon, South Foreland, Sandwich Bay, Warden Point, Swalecliffe, Leysdown-on-Sea, Pegwell Bay, Bockhill and Dungeness.

As many as six **Black Redstarts** were seen at South Foreland, Samphire Hoe, Aycliff, Seasalter, Finberry and Abbotscliffe.

SPARROWS TO BUNTINGS

A **TAWNY PIPIT** flew W at Abbotscliffe on August 18th.

During these two months only single **Crossbills** were recorded from Seabrook and DBO with five at Lympe on the 27th.

An **Ortolan Bunting** was sound recorded flying over Stonar on the night of Aug 18th.

DBO = Dungeness Bird Observatory **BBRC** = British Birds Rarities Committee
RSPB = Royal Society for the Protection of Birds **BOU** = British Ornithological Union
"The Patch" = the warm water outflow from Dungeness Nuclear Power Station
NNR=National Nature Reserve **NR**=Nature Reserve **LNR**=Local Nature Reserve
FC = Field Centre **WR** = Wildlife Reserve **GP** = Gravel Pits **CP** = Country Park

CONTRIBUTORS

This summary owes much to the contributors to the various sites in "Latest Sightings" on the KOS Website at www.kentos.org.uk, KOSForum, Twitter and the RBA Hotline and BirdGuides.

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Send any records for this review to Chris Hindle at christopherhindle@hotmail.com

Records sent to me may not all be used for this report as I try to extract the more interesting sightings, however all records are equally important and I forward them to the appropriate Area Recorders and they are then entered onto the KOS database.

Please also send to me any descriptions or photos of rare birds so that they may be assessed by the relevant committee.

Fifty Years Ago

Corncrake



Corncrake by Archibald Thorburn

The only record was of one at Dungeness on Sept. 17th (DBO). This is the first record for three years of a species that is now extremely scarce in Kent.

KBR 1974

MEET THE MEMBER – Bob Knight



1. Tell us about the role you play in the KOS and describe what it involves.

I take part in surveys for the society, such as that for Nightingales recently, and have been a member of the KOS Conservation and Surveys committee.

I'm a species writer for the annual Kent Bird Report, for which I volunteered after an appeal for new writers in a KOS newsletter five years ago. My species are from a number of passerine families, ranging from corvids to sparrows.

2. What first drew you into the world of birds?

I was interested in natural history from an early age and being brought up in Cliffe was fortunate in helping to foster this interest considering the range of habitats to explore near the village. Like many from my generation my first bird book was the Observers Book of Birds, and armed with this I as soon being able to identify new species, such as the Swallows, House Martins and Swifts flying over the garden. It didn't seem to matter too much that half the illustrations were in black and white!

I acquired a proper pair of binoculars (made by Swift) when I was 15, and these proved a revelation with other birds following onto my list of new species around the Hoo peninsula. Very memorable was the sight of six Waxwings in the top of a walnut tree in Cliffe during one of the invasion years for the species in the early '70s.

I left the village in 1973 when I got married and was soon living in Ashford. Ham Street woods and Dungeness were now within relatively easy striking range, and I was hooked.

3. How are you involved with birds in Kent?

I've been involved in BTO WeBS counts for about 10 years, my patch for much of this time being Otterham Creek in the Medway. WeBS is a great way to get to know individual sites really well, while at the same time contributing to the valuable monitoring of waterbirds throughout Kent and the UK. More recently I became local organiser for WeBS in the Medway and am grateful for the efforts of volunteers in the team. After retirement in 2020 I took on the role of regional organiser for the BTO Breeding Bird Survey (BBS) in Kent. The survey is of great importance to monitor the fortunes of our breeding species, and only requires two visits per year to individual sites. There are vacant BBS sites throughout the county for anyone interested to participate.

4. What has been your biggest birding blunder?

Having been a birder for 50 years or so there have inevitably been too many for my liking, mostly involving failed twitches!

However, a particular episode that comes to mind happened nearly 40 years ago, in the mid-80s, when I was working near Seville in southern Spain. I was obviously aware of the famous migration site at Gibraltar and wanted to experience this myself. It also happened to be mid-September, a prime time for migration, so on my day off headed in a hire car towards Gibraltar, together with a (non-birder) colleague.

West of Gibraltar we approached Tarifa, the southern point of Spain, where the sky was literally full of raptors, hundreds of them, soaring on thermals as they drifted south to the coast. Bizarrely I decided to carry on, confidently telling my companion that it would be the same at Gibraltar!

You can guess the rest, Gibraltar was another 50 km away, and wind conditions on the rock can affect migration in a quite different way. Needless to say by the time we got there I saw relatively few raptors, not quite the experience I had in mind, and an embarrassing lesson.

5. What's your top tip for people who are interested in learning more about birds or getting more involved?

Join the local RSPB group or other bird club, to meet other birders in the area. Participate in organised field trips and listen to talks held by these groups/clubs. Join the KOS!

Endeavour to learn bird songs and calls to help locate and identify the various species when out and about in the field. There are some very good online videos to help in this respect, especially those from the BTO. Record what you see, either in a notebook or using apps such as BTO Birdtrack.

6. What is the bit of kit that you take with you when out and about birding?

Like many birders my standard kit in the field has been binoculars (10 x 42), and 'scope. For a long time I resisted the addition of a camera when birding, as the bulk of the equipment including telephoto lens was off-putting. In more recent years I changed my mind about carrying photographic gear, and now think the benefits of a camera in the field exceed any other perceptions, especially as the advent of some mirrorless systems has produced more compact kit, in particular the lenses, plus there are also some excellent bridge cameras.

Taking photographs has proved of benefit on certain surveys such as WeBS, while for birding in general it can sometimes help to confirm the identification of a bird that is otherwise proving tricky as I recently experienced with a distant shearwater on a seawatch in north Kent.

7. How do you feel we can improve the future for birds in Kent and birdlife on a larger scale?

Unfortunately, many young folk are disconnected from nature as it's generally viewed as uncool. It's very important therefore to engage with younger people and encourage their interest in birds/nature because they are the future.

Bird surveys are vital as without the data generated by these studies it is very difficult to campaign for conservation of habitats, and to help identify trends and patterns in bird populations.

Support the RSPB/BTO/KOS and other birdlife organisations as we need a strong collective voice to help resist the challenges facing birds and other wildlife when there are so many pressures on the countryside.

8. Tell us about a species, place or project that interests you.

My birding passion has always been for passerine species, especially those with a fine song. Inevitably therefore, I've been drawn towards birds such as finches and warblers, and I'm sure many other people are the same.

However, while not the finest singer by any means my favourite species is the Bullfinch, whose fortunes in the UK have been of particular interest. The dazzling plumage of a male Bullfinch is second to none in my opinion, though sadly harder to see these days as numbers of the species have declined. The usual view is of a pair flashing their white rumps as they fly along a hedgerow, nevertheless still a lovely sight.