

KOS News

The Newsletter of the Kent Ornithological Society

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Peregrine by Mark Brookes

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

Editorial

So, we arrive at the onset of winter, with colder temperatures forecast for the coming weeks. It has been a strange autumn, characterised by wet days and unpredictable winds with only the odd scattered sunny days to brighten the spirits. In spite of this there have been some good birds to enjoy, although my own birding has been sadly curtailed to a large degree by family caring and medical issues which has severely limited my opportunities for days out birding. My best bird in the past few weeks was a self-found Firecrest at Stodmarsh, a real delight!

Generally being at home, especially in autumn, allows me to indulge in some gentle garden birding or, if conditions allow, watching vis-mig. I have been a keen migration watcher since my school days and my current garden has proved productive over the last twenty-nine years. This autumn however, has been rather slow. I have only seen about twenty Redwings and five Fieldfare, with hardly any finch passage to speak of. On the other hand this year brought a more marked passage of Jays, a favourite of mine since my early birding days, and also good flocks of passage Wood Pigeons.

I imagine that the relatively mild conditions have a bearing, as in the past week or so I have seen a small group of House Martins hurrying south and even the odd Swallow. I still see the odd passage Buzzard and Sparrowhawk flying over and last evening as I was shutting my hens in their cosy shed, I caught the faint but unmistakable call of a Curlew. Who knows, colder conditions into December might yet bring more wonders to our skies.

Good birding
Norman

News and announcements

Avian Influenza – An Update

This summer saw very few cases of HPAI in wild birds in England, which was a huge relief after the events of the last couple of years. Fortunately, in Kent and East Sussex, the breeding colonies of Gulls and Terns again escaped Avian Flu and, with the weather and spring tides also being kind, managed good breeding seasons and successfully fledged young. In particular, our only colony of Sandwich Terns and Mediterranean Gulls had particularly good seasons and Common Terns and Black-headed Gulls, hit so badly by HPAI elsewhere in the UK last year, also did well.

However, over the last couple of weeks, there have been several cases of Avian Flu confirmed in the UK, mainly in large gulls and Fulmar. These have all been cases of H5N5 virus, which has not traditionally been as devastating as H5N1. However, it is important to keep our eyes open for any signs of unusual mortality in any wild bird species and to **report these to Defra for testing.**

We are only able to track the spread of avian influence with the help of birdwatchers who submit their sightings.

Image credit: BTO

Report dead and sick birds

- Record in the [BirdTrack app](https://www.bto.org/our-science/projects/birdtrack) <https://www.bto.org/our-science/projects/birdtrack>. This allows researchers to follow the disease's geographical spread and rapidly assess potential impacts on populations.



- Report to [Defra](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/report-dead-wild-birds), so that if needed, dead birds can be collected for testing <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/report-dead-wild-birds> or call 03459 33 55 77 (call charges may apply)

Breeding Records for 2024 (and 2023)

Please submit any notable breeding records recorded during the year, to the KOS, BirdTrack or eBird, especially those of RBBP species such as Garganey, Shoveler, Pochard, Turtle Dove, Little Ringed Plover, Marsh Harrier, Long-eared Owl, L/S Woodpecker, Peregrine, Hobby, Bearded Tit, Black Redstart and Hawfinch.

The 2023 RBBP report for Kent will shortly be compiled, so please submit any unreported data asap for inclusion in the report.

RBBP records can be submitted directly, in confidence, to David Smith DavidSmith@epr.uk.com or Murray Orchard murray.orchard@live.co.uk

Thank You.

BTO WinGS - Autumn Gull Survey 2024

Image credit: BTO



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 also covered the Autumn 2024 season. The key date for the **Autumn Gull Count** was **September 29th**, with a week before and after the key date where counts could be conducted. The purpose of the autumn survey was to capture seasonal peaks of

gull species such as Lesser Black-backed and Yellow-legged gulls, which are present in higher abundances on passage, and to capture post breeding aggregations.

The BTO will conduct 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.

Count sites remained the same as for January 2024 and were once again coordinated by the WeBS Local Organisers.

Coverage for the Autumn Gull Count is not fully known at the time of writing, but an account of the survey on the Medway is given below.

WinGS in the Medway - Bob Knight

As part of the BTO Winter Gull Survey (WinGS) counts were carried out in winter (January '24) and recently in autumn in the Medway (plus other regions in Kent such as Thames and Swale). Many thanks to those who participated in this survey.

The autumn survey was mainly carried out in the first week of October to assess gull populations at roost sites in the Medway. Two key coastal sites were counted: the SW North Shore (Upnor-Kingsnorth), and the SW South Shore (Gillingham-Lower Halstow). Six key species were counted: Black-headed Gull, Common Gull, Herring Gull, Great Black-backed Gull, Lesser Black-backed Gull, and Mediterranean Gull, all species of conservation concern.

The results of the autumn survey are shown in the table, and for comparison the totals for species from WinGS in January '24 are included in the last column.

Gull Species	Medway N Shore	Medway S Shore	TOTAL	Total Jan 24
Black-headed Gull	1657	2067	3724	7305
Common Gull	6	54	60	607
Herring Gull	329	175	504	147
Great Black-backed Gull	6	1	7	3
Lesser Black-backed Gull	16	2	18	6
Unidentified small gull	0	25	25	0
Unidentified large gull	1	1	2	0

The most numerous species by far was Black-headed Gull with a total of 3724 being counted. This high number is approx. 50% of those counted in January, the difference being presumably due to individuals that winter in the Medway from colder regions to the north and east, but which have yet to arrive. A good percentage of those present this autumn are perhaps local breeding birds.

The difference between the autumn and January counts was even more marked for Common Gull, with totals of 60 and 607 respectively. The non-arrival of much of the winter population probably accounts for the low autumn count of Common Gull, the difference compared to January being much more marked for this species than for Black-headed Gull since there are no local breeding birds to supplement the autumn population.

Herring Gulls were more numerous this autumn than in January, nevertheless the total of 504 is likely to be on the low side compared to more favoured roost areas such as the Swale, as was the case in January where 5730 were counted in WinGS.

Both Great and Lesser Black-backed gulls were recorded in small numbers in the Medway during the autumn count. However, despite a significant breeding population on islands in the Medway no Mediterranean Gulls were seen in the survey, and birds therefore seem to leave the area to winter elsewhere.

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 - brianrwat1@gmail.com
Pegwell Bay, Steffan Walton – steffan.walton@hotmail.co.uk
Dungeness area, Dave Walker – dungenessobs@vfast.co.uk
All other areas (including East and West Kent), Murray Orchard - murray.orchard@live.co.uk

Turtle Doves in Kent 2024 - Nicole Khan

2024 has been an exceptional year for Turtle Dove conservation in Kent. This year, 99 farmers and landowners across Kent took part in actively delivering habitat for this special bird. This included establishing and managing nesting habitat, the creation and restoration of ponds and other freshwater sources as well as delivering essential feeding areas through supplementary feeding and native wildflower foraging areas.



92 supplementary feeding sites were operational, with a total number of 76 Turtle Doves recorded using this emergency food source which is provided as a means of plugging the hunger gap when birds first arrive back to the UK. Foraging plots consisting of native arable plants were up 88% this year, with a total of 58ha of foraging habitat being delivered across Kent. Some of the highlights this year include 5 juveniles being recorded on single foraging plot as well as good numbers of juveniles being recorded elsewhere. Other core Turtle Dove counties such as Essex and Suffolk have similarly had

a good season and a record amount of habitat being delivered. This, alongside the increase of the Western flyway population, bodes well for the future of Turtle Dove in the UK.

Please report colour-ringed waders - Brian Watmough

There are three projects colour ringing waders in Kent.

At Elmley NNR, the conservation trust is working with the Game and Wildlife Conservation Trust and the Swale Wader Group to colour mark head-started **Curlew** as part of a five-year project. Sightings of these birds give information on the survival of these birds – are they surviving as well as naturally hatched birds? And on their movement - are these birds imprinting on the area they hatched? or will they fly off with other Curlew to Northern Europe?

The Swale Wader Group are also colour ringing **Redshank** and **Black-tailed Godwit**. The Black-tailed Godwit are part of a long-standing international project involving collaboration with universities in UK, Iceland and Portugal.



We are colour ringing Redshank to find out where the birds go in summer? and how they use the Swale? We are already getting interesting results. This summer a bird was seen in South Uist in June and probably nested there, another bird was seen at Cley in Norfolk in July and then seen two weeks later at Oare. Local observations also show how moulting birds disperse along the Kent coast once they have finished moulting.

Image credit: Steve Duffield

The success of these projects is enhanced by reporting colour ringed birds and there is a network of committed observers reporting colour rings. However, often when I meet other birders, they may say “yes, I saw a colour- ringed bird, but I have not reported it”, the excuse being someone else will have done so or “I never receive feedback”. If you see a colour ringed bird, please take the time to read all the rings and report your observations.

Colour ringed birds can be reported at <https://cr-birding.org> and more information at <https://www.bto.org/our-science/projects/bird-ringing-scheme/about-ringing/why-colour-mark-birds>
For colour ringed Redshank email brianrwat1@gmail.com,
For Black-tailed Godwit email blackwits@hotmail.co.uk

Making Space For Nature in Kent and Medway (the Kent Local Nature Recovery Strategy) – Murray Orchard

Many will have heard of Making Space for Nature in Kent and Medway. This is the Kent Local Nature Recovery Strategy; one of 48 being implemented across England. These strategies have been created under the 2021 Environment Act and are a system of spatial strategies for nature and environmental improvement that will underpin England’s Nature Recovery Network. Kent County Council, as Responsible Authority, will be collaboratively developing the Strategy for Kent and Medway. Making Space for Nature has worked with partners and stakeholders to establish shared priorities for the delivery of nature recovery and wider environmental goals, in order to create a network of wildlife-rich places across the county. The aim is to deliver the government’s commitment to ending the decline of nature and supporting its recovery.

Image credit: BTO



The KOS has been on-board with this project from the start as a member of the Technical Advisory Group for Species, and has led on the required action for birds, working with representatives from RSPB, KWT and others.

Meetings and workshops have been held since the end of 2023 to discuss the requirements of the strategy, and to work through a process of identifying priority species and the pressures facing them. This process is now nearing the end, having firstly established a Long List of potential

priority species which has now been reduced to a final Short List, with required actions to halt their decline. The Short List of species has been based around key habitats and the intention now is to ensure that the most important areas for birds, and other taxa, are identified and mapped across Kent, not just established protected areas and reserves, but non-designated areas too. Developers and planning authorities will have to consider these, and associated priority species and habitats, during all future local plans and planning decisions.

The current Short List includes 32 prioritised bird species or groups. These are - Brent Goose, Shoveler, Pochard, Turtle Dove, Swift, Marsh Harrier, Barn Owl, Nightjar, Oystercatcher, Lapwing, Ringed Plover, Redshank, Terns (Little, Common and Sandwich), Bittern, Lesser Spotted Woodpecker, Kingfisher, House and Sand Martin, Bearded Tit, Nightingale, Wheatear, Marsh Tit, Grasshopper Warbler, Yellow Wagtail, Tree Sparrow, Linnets, Corn Bunting and Yellowhammer. In addition, “Waders” and “Wildfowl” are included as species assemblages of international importance in Kent for their wintering and passage populations. A draft Kent Local Nature Recovery Strategy is now being prepared for public consultation in the New Year.

Canterbury District Swift Initiative

As many of you will be aware our swifts are in trouble, red listed in 2021 they have declined massively in number; in England, by approximately 66% since 1995 (BTO Breeding Bird Survey data.)

Our own survey results in East Kent (conducted by Bob Douthwaite and a small team of volunteers) sadly indicate an even steeper rate of decline. We are losing swifts, in our survey area, at an average rate of around 10% per annum.

We have recently established a group in East Kent to connect with others interested in these fascinating but rapidly disappearing birds. Our aim is to highlight their current plight and raise their profile, to campaign for Canterbury City Council to mandate the use of nest boxes and/or swift bricks in new developments (as some councils, such as Brighton and St Albans have already done), to educate house builders about the need for more nesting sites and also to encourage the wider community to get involved.

Please join our Facebook group to keep informed of future events and progress.

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/canterburydistrictswiftinitiative/>

Please also come along to our next meeting:

'Swifts, The Masters of the Sky' a talk by Nik Mitchell of Get Wild.

7pm on Monday 25th November at The Friends Meeting House, 6 The Friars, Canterbury.

Photo credit: Robert Booth

Swifts

The Masters of the Sky

7pm on Monday
25 November

The Friends Meeting House,
6 The Friars, Canterbury



A talk by
Nik Mitchell
Environmentalist &
Social Media
Content Creator
'Get Wild'

Canterbury District Swift Initiative

Kent Bird Report 2022 Addendum

Please note that in the section Aspects of the Year, the January aspects, from page 13, were included in error, and should be omitted from the report.

The text should have read –

JANUARY

The weather at the beginning of January was very mild, with a strong south-westerly flow, but from the 4th it was colder with night frost after which it turned milder again around mid-month. Rainfall during the month was less than a third of average with only 20.5mm of rain falling at Bishopstone. It was also the third sunniest January since 1919.

A red-head Smew was reported from Dungeness RSPB from Jan 1st and stayed to the end of February. January 1st also brought a Rough-legged Buzzard at Swale NNR, and the Black Guillemot first seen at Swalecliffe in 2021 was seen intermittently until Jan 25th. A Glaucous Gull was reported flying west at Folkestone on Jan 2nd. A second-winter Iceland Gull was seen at Dungeness from Jan 4th-10th and again during February.

Up to 360 Russian White-fronted Geese were recorded from Swale NNR, a slightly lower count than in 2021, but there were also 327 at South Swale LNR, 118 at Worth Marshes and 120 at Lade, with smaller numbers at numerous other sites. A Pink-footed Goose was seen at Westenhanger from Jan 22nd to 26th and a Tundra Bean Goose was at Sandwich Bay on Jan 4th and 9th, with two there on Jan 6th and one at Dungeness RSPB on Jan 31st.

During January and February up to six Velvet Scoter were seen at Dungeness and several other sites along the coast. For the first time in 22 years no Bitterns were recorded in the Stour Valley during January, but there was a record of one at Dungeness RSPB.

Four Hen Harriers were seen at Grove Ferry/Stodmarsh with one or two at several other sites. In January and February, up to 28 Short-eared Owls were recorded on Sheppey and up to four at sites on the mainland. Single Long-eared Owls were seen at Elmley, Hythe and Reculver Marshes. Merlins were seen at several locations. Up to six Ravens were seen at Bough Beech, Samphire Hoe, Tonbridge, Reculver Marshes, Minnis Bay, Graveney, North Foreland, Bekesbourne, Sene Wood, Seabrook, and Newnham.

During the first two months four Black Redstarts were seen at Dungeness with one or two at Samphire Hoe, North Foreland, Reculver, Palm Bay and Dover Harbour. Up to 13 Water Pipits were recorded from the Grove Ferry/Stodmarsh/Westbere area with smaller numbers at Worth Marshes, Seaton, North Foreland, Swanscombe Marshes, Dungeness RSPB, Minster Marshes, Dartford Marshes and Oare Marshes. In January and February one or two Lapland Buntings were seen at Sandwich Bay, Reculver, Fan Bay and Shellness and up to nine Snow Buntings were recorded at Sandwich Bay and several other sites.

This error is entirely down to the editor, and apologies are due to the Aspects writers, Roger and Liz Ackroyd.

Apologies to all.

Keith Privett
KBR Editor

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.

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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

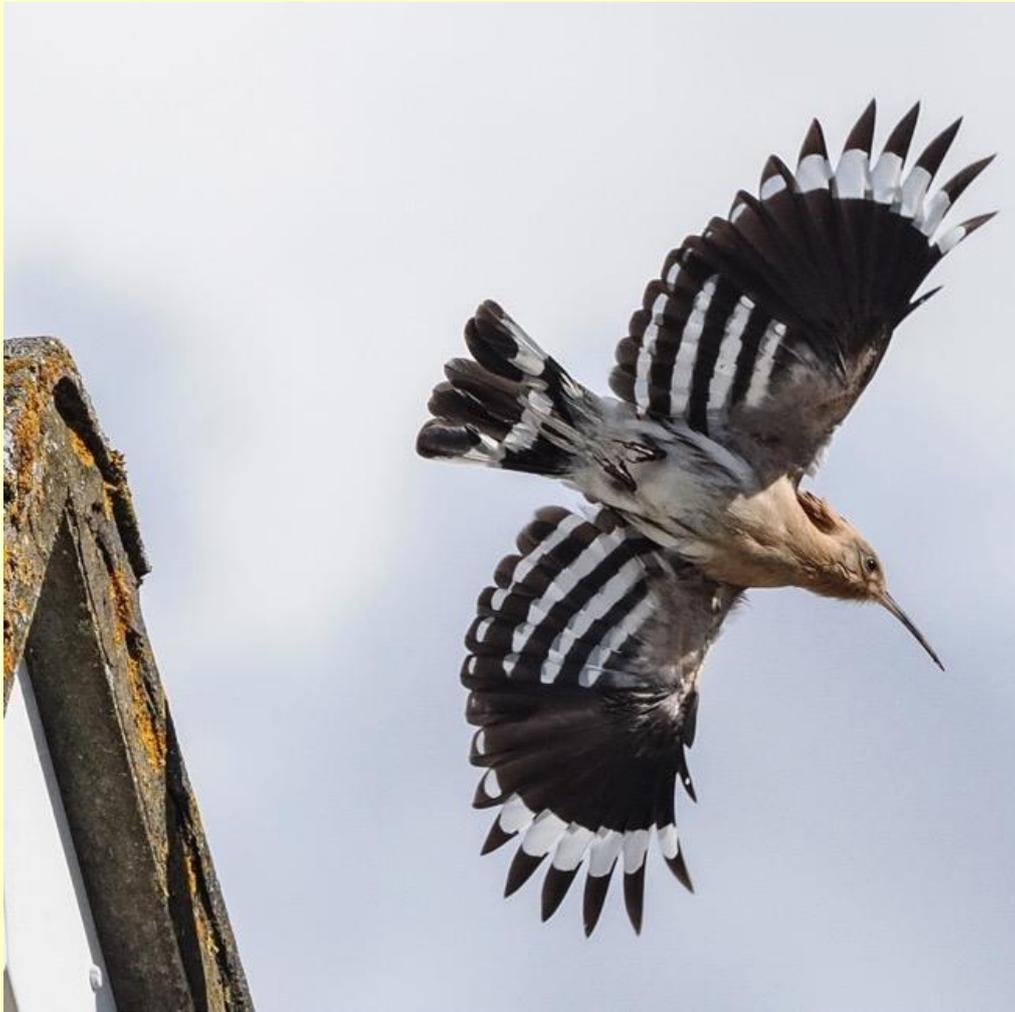
Tel: 01580 891686 e-mail: chrisroome105@icloud.com

Articles

A Tonbridge Hoopoe

There are a few species of European bird that really get my heart racing and the Hoopoe is one of them. They are such fabulously beautiful birds, often just tantalisingly glimpsed flying off on those broad black and white, butterfly-like wings. They are essentially birds of hotter climes than ours and I have been lucky enough to have seen them in many countries, most recently in April this year in Cyprus. They are dazzling in flight although often hard to spot on the ground against dried vegetation even when the bird's wonderful crest is raised in alarm. A distant "poo-poo-poo" is often the best indication that one is around. They are insect eaters, using the long decurved bill to seek out invertebrates and larva. Across Europe they are best looked for in cultivated areas and open woodlands, such as olive groves and parks.

A small number appear in the UK every year and Kent is often a stopping off point for individual birds hopping across the channel. They have been known to breed in this country and last year a pair raised a family in Leicestershire, but breeding records are few and far between. James Harrison, writing in 1942 suggests that breeding was once more common: "*There is very strong presumptive evidence that it may have bred in the district, once near Bexley and again near Green Street Green and near Ryarsh.*" (Harrison. J. *A Handlist of the Birds of Sevenoaks*, Witherby, London, 1942).



Historically the Hoopoe's beauty and relative rarity has been its downfall. The few individuals that made it here across the channel found it a dangerous place in which to settle. In a 1767 letter to Thomas Pennant, Gilbert White wrote of a pair of Hoopoes that attempted to breed close to his home in Selbourne "*....frighted and persecuted by idle boys who would never let them be at rest.*" Boys aside it is likely that men with guns caused the greater harm to the species as few birds would have escaped the attention of taxidermists seeking a specimen and the legions of casual shooters. Thankfully, this "*wanton destruction*" (Harrison J. 1942) is now a thing of the past and a Hoopoe's worst fate these days is likely to be having many a camera pointed at them.

I have seen just two of these enigmatic birds in the UK over many years of birding so hearing of one just 5 minutes away this September was a drop-everything-grab-the-bins -and-go moment.and there it was in a residential close in the south end of Tonbridge. It seems the original report had come from a resident and before long the news had found its way to a few local birders. It was with some relief to find the bird still there thirty minutes later, still pottering around the front gardens and road looking for insects in between the paving slabs. Disturbed by cars and pedestrians from time to time, the Hoopoe would fly up and sit on the roofs and chimney pots of the houses alongside the local Collared Doves, returning to feed when the coast was clear. Against the doves the bird looked surprisingly dainty; they are actually quite small, about the same size as a Mistle Thrush. Every now and then it would raise its crest and show it off to the small band of watchers, unaware of just how incongruous it looked in that setting.



Having enjoyed the bird for many minutes I had to leave, returning later with friends, keen to add a new species to their local list. Thankfully the Hoopoe was still in the same area and enjoyed once more. As we were about to leave the local Jackdaws took exception to the uninvited visitor in their territory and chased our bird away. We last saw it flying off over the houses, heading West. It would be nice to think it went on to delight other birders somewhere else or even decided that Kent was now a safer place with more sensible boys around and could perhaps provide a suitable base for a family life in the future. Perhaps our warming climate will encourage more to hop over the channel in years to come and settle here to nest. Writing 70 years ago, James Harrison set an optimistic tone, "*I think, without doubt, that the persecution of this bird has lessened, and we may perhaps look forward to a time when it may become established as a summer resident, even if only a scarce one.*" (Harrison, J. *The Birds of Kent*, vol. 2, 1953) I really hope he is right.



Martin Garwood

THE BIRDS OF KENT AND A KENTISH BIRD

It's an odd thing, but if you search online for discussion of birds named after places, it's hard to find anything. Yet, there is plenty about places named after birds (Cranbrook, Ulcombe...), lots on places named after people, and too much on birds named after people.

There are quite a few bird species around the world named after the locations where they were discovered. Among the currently accepted nomenclature are American Wigeon, Terek Sandpiper, Caspian Tern, Sardinian Warbler and others – but not many named after places in Britain. And when I started to think about it, apart from Scottish Crossbill (which may or may not deserve specific status) and excluding subspecies such as St Kilda Wren and non-standard names such as Royston Crow and Norfolk Plover, I can think of three, all named after places in Kent (and what's more, all named by one man: John Latham, 1740-1837). To mark his contribution, this newsletter features Kentish Plover, Sandwich Tern and Dartford Warbler.

I won't go much into their naming. The subject is well-covered elsewhere, such as in Ticehurst's 1909 *History of the Birds of Kent* and Harrison's 1953 *Birds of Kent*. I will summarise their historical status and then describe their fortunes over the period during which the KOS has existed, since 1952. Most of my information has come from Kent Bird Reports, augmented for the most recent twenty-five years by records held in the KOS database. Generally, I have been able to cover up to 2022, but for some aspects it's been possible to use provisional data for 2023, and even 2024 for breeding Sandwich Tern. Help with data provision and queries has been provided by Martin Allison, Dave Beadle, Peter Brissenden, Keith Derrett, Martin Garwood, Robin Mace, Norman McCanch, Stephen Message, Murray Orchard, Chris Powell, Martin Sutherland, Charles Trollope and Steffan Walton. But, as ever, it is all the people who have submitted records over the years who deserve most praise and thanks.

Kentish Plover



Kentish Plover by Russ Blackman

Historical

Latham named the Kentish Plover from specimens he obtained from William Boys of Sandwich in 1787 and 1793. The assumption is that it was quite abundant in that area at the time, along the sand dunes and shingle between Pegwell Bay and Deal. They were still nesting there in the 1830s and 1840s. In 1889 or 1890, five nests were found, with clutches taken from at least three and probably all five. After that, there

were no reports of breeding in the Sandwich area, except that Guy Mannering said that pairs nested at Sandwich Bay and at the Stour's mouth each year during 1932-35.

On the Dungeness peninsula, they were more numerous and persisted longer. The headquarters was the coastline running south from Littlestone to the point, but smaller numbers nested west from there to the Sussex border and beyond. The species was perhaps never abundant even there; this corner of England was always at the limit of their European range. However, we have no indication of numbers prior to the 1870s. In the late nineteenth century, Ticehurst believed that there were no more than 15 pairs at Dungeness, though by 1906-1908, with an RSPB watcher affording some protection, there were up to 44 pairs. The birds typically nested among the finer shingle of the beach ridges.

The blame for the decline was placed variously on cool and wet springs, Herring Gulls, reduced control of vermin, specimen and egg collectors, and the development of the light railway and bungalows along the coastal strip. All of those factors may have been contributory, but it seems likely that the combination of development pressure, with associated disturbance, and direct collecting were the major causes of the species' eventual extirpation. Dr Plomley, who recorded birds in the Romney Marsh and Dungeness areas assiduously, had provided information about the Kentish Plover to Yarrell for his *British Birds* (1837-1843), and later said that "to my great regret hundreds have been destroyed ... I shall always regret having made known the locality ... where they abound". Plomley himself had, according to Harrison, collected "a nice series of birds and young of various ages". Motes and beams, perhaps?

Harrison provides an account of the fortunes of the Kentish Plover in the early twentieth century, which it's not necessary to repeat in detail here. It is not always clear which of the birds seen by observers were on passage and which were breeding but it appears that there were still 12-15 pairs in some years during the 1920s, with at least 12 pairs hatching young in 1928, but Harrison knew of no confirmation of breeding during the following few years. There may well have been later unrecorded breeding attempts, and there was (per Harrison, vol. 1, p. 320) one record from Mr R B Burrowes of a pair nesting successfully in 1943. There is some confusion about the end of Kentish Plover breeding, though. The *Kent Bird Report* for 1981 has a summary in the addenda (without giving the source), as follows: "There were still eight pairs around Dungeness in 1930-31, including five successful pairs in 1930, but numbers then declined to only two pairs in 1932-33, including a successful pair in 1933. The last pair was present there in 1934." This aligns more or less with information in H G Alexander (*Seventy Years of Birdwatching*, 1974), except that he adds that a few were present in 1935-36. Neither KBR 1981 nor Alexander mentions the 1943 event.

Ticehurst (1909) also mentioned "another locality in the county where a few pairs still breed". He knew of eggs being taken there in 1870-71, so it had lasted for quite a while, but had not seen it himself. According to Harrison, Ticehurst's informant was Mr P F Bunyard, who stated that the birds nested on fallow land (rather atypically) on the north Kent coast but did not reveal the location. Gillham & Homes (*Birds of the North Kent Marshes*, 1950) reported second-hand information that Kentish Plovers had bred at or near "the mouth of the Medway", possibly until about 1920 – could that have been the same place?

1952 onwards

Turning to the modern era, from 1952 onwards, Kentish Plovers were very scarce through the 1950s and 1960s, with no more than five per year (Figure 1). There followed a steep rise in records to the peak of 35 individuals in 1980. The increase is so marked that it seems likely to be genuine, though perhaps it may be exaggerated because the increasing numbers of observers (with better binoculars) at that time were seeing and reporting more. Since 1980 there has been a gradual decline in frequency, culminating in blank years in 2014 and 2021. In 2020, the species joined the list for which documentation was required by the British Birds Rarities Committee (BBRC) for records to be acceptable.

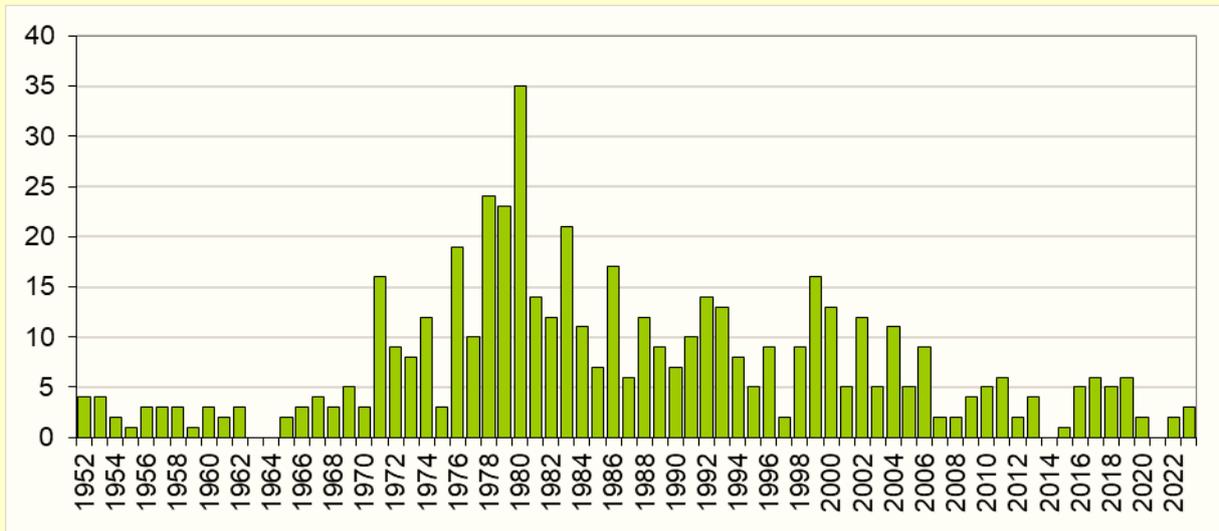


Figure 1. Kentish Plover: annual totals, 1952-2023

The majority of recent records have been of single birds but sightings of two together have been fairly frequent, and three or more have occurred on 21 occasions, though not since three were at Pegwell Bay on 6th August 2011. Groups of five or more occurred on seven occasions, as follows: five at Dungeness RSPB reserve on 25th September 1976, six at Pegwell Bay on 3rd May 1980, six on Lade Sands on 21st September 1980, six on Lade Sands on 22nd September 1992, five in Pegwell Bay on 13th-14th September 1993, five at Shellness (Sheppey) on 20th September 1999, and eight at Pegwell Bay on 24th September 2000. It's worth noting that apart from the one group seen in early May, all of these flocks appeared during 13th-25th September.

The list of the locations of large groups is indicative of where most Kentish Plovers have been seen over the years. Table 1 summarises that information for all records for the first and second halves of the period from 1952 onwards, and the result is striking: over three-quarters have been at Pegwell/Sandwich Bays or in the Dungeness area (including Lade/Romney Sands). What's more, the percentage found at Pegwell/Sandwich has increased from 50% in the first half to over 60% in the second half. The area is significant at a national level, too, with over 10% of those accepted by BBRC during 2020-2023 being at Pegwell Bay. Shall we change its name to the Pegwell Plover?

Table 1. Kentish Plover: locations of sightings, 1952-2023				
Data are presented for two 36 year periods				
	1952-1987	%	1988-2023	%
Pegwell/Sandwich	150	50.7	140	62.5
Dungeness area	78	26.4	39	17.4
Thames	23	7.8	7	3.1
Medway	2	0.7	0	0.0
Swale	24	8.1	34	15.2
North Kent (unspecified)	6	2.0	0	0.0
Thanet (including Reculver)	7	2.4	2	0.9
Inland	6	2.0	2	0.9

The inland records, by the way, were at Stodmarsh/Grove Ferry (three), Bough Beech reservoir (three) and Sevenoaks Wildlife Reserve (two). Most were back in the 1960s and 1970s and the only one since 1999 was at Sevenoaks on 30th July 2004.

Figure 2 shows when Kentish Plovers have been found through the year, over the whole period 1952-2023. As can be seen, it's pretty much a spring and autumn migrant with a few in mid summer and some stragglers in winter. Overall, about 60% have been in the first half of the year, and 40% in the second half. That has changed a little, though, with the proportion appearing in autumn increasing. Thus, during 1952-

1987 the percentages in the first and second halves of the year were 64% and 36%; during 1988-2023 they were 54% and 46%.

That dip, in Figure 2, in the first ten-day period of September is entirely a product of the period 1988-2023. I assume it arose by chance rather than indicating some break in passage.

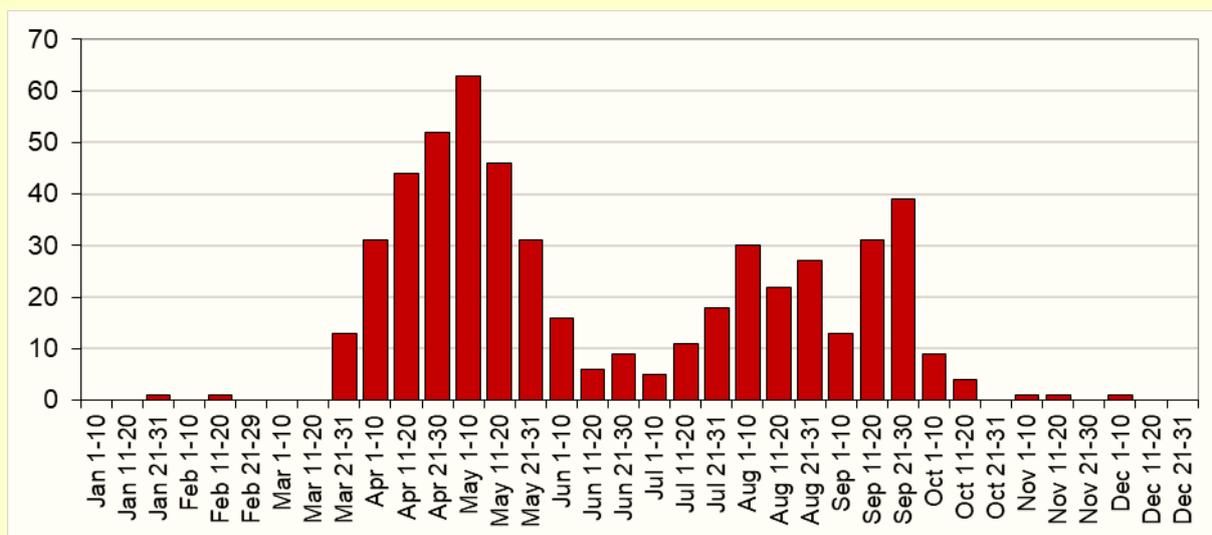


Figure 2. Kentish Plover: seasonal pattern of occurrence, 1952-2023

Winter records and first & last dates

Most Kentish Plovers stay for just a day or two, but a small number have remained for longer. Stays of three weeks or more have taken place on about eleven occasions. Some of those involved wintering birds (note that Figure 2 shows the dates when birds were found, rather than presence, so doesn't portray the presence of wintering birds well). Individuals present in winter (at any time during November-February) are shown in Table 2.

Year	Location	Record
1950	Pegwell Bay	Single(s) on various dates in October and to 12th November
1951	Pegwell Bay	One at Sandwich Bay on 17th November, then one assumed the same at Swalecliffe on 25th December and at Pegwell Bay during 1st January-14th April 1952
1952	Pegwell Bay	One from 20th September to 15th November and, assumed the same, on 11th January 1953
1953	Pegwell Bay	One on 15th November
1967	Margate	One on 18th February
1979	Cliffe Pools	One on 31st January and 1st March, assumed to be the same but not seen between those dates in Kent or Essex
1980	Cliffe Pools	One present from 8th November to 13th December
1982	Cliffe Pools	One present from 8th December to 9th April 1983
1983	Cliffe Pools	One present from 18th October to 7th March 1984

A couple of points about these winter records. First, there hasn't been one since 1983, not surprising as the numbers appearing have declined. Second, it seems quite possible that all those during 1950-1953 related to one individual, and that the same applies to those at Cliffe Pools during 1979-1984.

In the period from 1960 onwards, ignoring the wintering birds, the average first date in the year was 15th April and the average last date was 3rd September, but there is a large amount of variation year-on-year. The earliest record of all was of one at Tankerton on 22nd March 2013 (and there have been a few others during 23rd-25th March). The latest was a male seen at Sandwich Bay on 17th October 1996.

European status

The breeding range of Kentish Plover is enormous, stretching from Japan to western Europe. It has resident populations in more temperate areas, but northern birds migrate to south Asia and Africa. The European population is believed to be declining, especially to the north, in Germany and the Low Countries for example. Recreational pressure is generally perceived as the most significant threat but habitat changes, including abandonment of traditional salt pans, also have been influential.

Birds arriving in Kent are assumed to come from nearby parts of continental Europe, rather than further afield. There are only three ringing recoveries affecting Britain (*BTO online ringing report*), one of which was in Kent. That was one ringed as a second-year male in the Netherlands in May 1986 and seen (ring read in the field) at Dungeness in April 1988. Britain is at the north-western limit of the range, and it seems unlikely, given the pressures on our coastal areas and the declining numbers of potential colonists, that breeding might resume.

Sandwich Tern



Sandwich Terns by Bob Knight

Historical

Sandwich Tern was named by Latham from a specimen provided in 1784 by William Boys. At that time and into the nineteenth century, it bred in large numbers along the coast between Ramsgate and Deal, and also around Dungeness. Boys had drawn attention to the call: “a shorter scream than that of the Common Tern, though more like it than the note of any other”. They were known locally as Screechers, and nesting areas near Dungeness were known as Screechers’ Plats.

The species ceased breeding in numbers in both areas, probably early in the nineteenth century. Certainly, by the time of Ticehurst’s *History of the Birds of Kent* (1909), it was merely a spring and autumn passage migrant in the county, in small numbers. There were occasional breeding attempts near Dungeness (and possibly in north Kent), and these continued in the first half of the twentieth century (Harrison, *Birds of Kent*, 1953). The cause of the loss of colonies at Sandwich is unknown but, at Dungeness, Dr Plomley attributed it to the collection of eggs for consumption. Local families claimed rights to particular plats, and the eggs of terns and gulls were sent to market in London.

Breeding in Kent

During 1952-1977, Sandwich Terns continued to be passage migrants only (Taylor *et al.*, *Birds of Kent*, 1981) but a colony of seven pairs was established at Dungeness in 1978. It quickly grew in succeeding years, reaching 350 pairs in 1985 and 1986. As noted in *Birds of Kent*, the species is prone to sudden shifts of colony location, deserting one site and selecting another between seasons or even in mid-season. The Dungeness population almost disappeared in 1987 and then, probably because of Badger predation and/or increasing numbers of Herring Gulls, abandoned the area completely after 1997. That loss was Rye Harbour's gain, where there have been up to about 800 pairs (though usually fewer) since then (*Birds of Sussex*, 2004, & [SWT website](#)), and there may also be interchange with a breeding colony near Calais in France.

Meanwhile, a colony became established on saltmarsh islands (mainly Burntwick Island) in the Medway from 1996 onwards, this population probably derived from a colony on an artificial island on Maplin Sands in Essex, which was abandoned after 1997 as a result of tidal erosion and disturbance. Figure 3 shows the size of the Dungeness and Medway colonies up to 2024 (note that the chart omits two pairs that nested on the Swale in 2014).

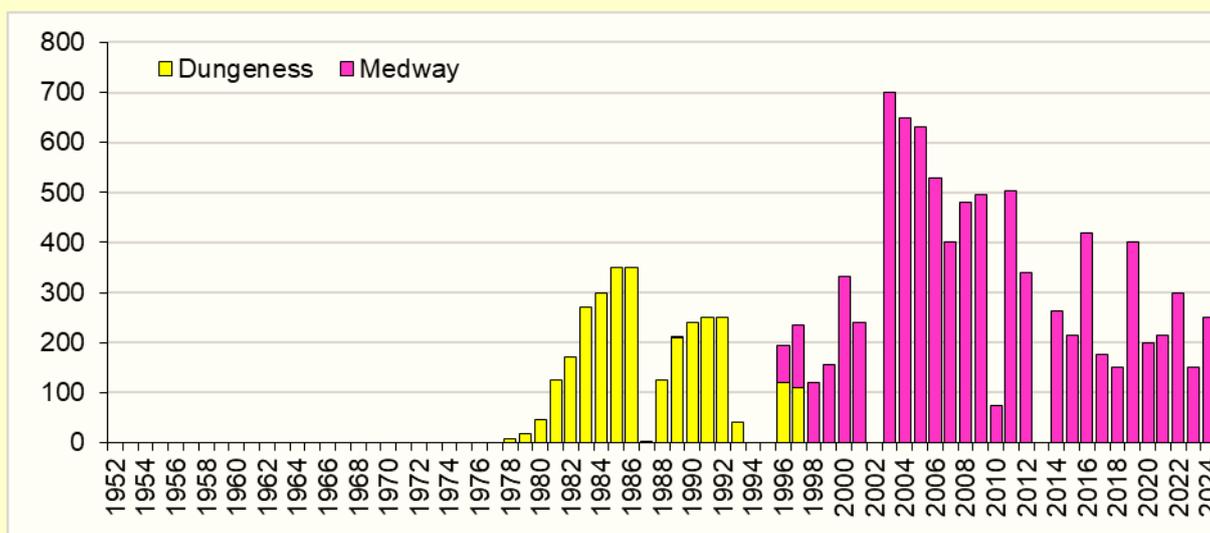


Figure 3. Sandwich Tern: Kent breeding population, 1952-2024

Note that no data are available for 2002 and 2013, and that totals may be incomplete in some other years.

The trend on the Medway has been one of decline since the peak in about 2002, though it should be pointed out that some of the fluctuations between years derives from the difficulties of making accurate counts. In some years, observers have landed but this poses a risk of disturbance; in other years, counts have been made from boats, known to be a less accurate method. Count timing also is important, because early counts may miss late-arriving birds, while late ones may miss those that fail early in the season. The use of drones, as elsewhere in Britain, may enable better counts in future.

Despite the difficulties of making accurate counts, we are fairly sure that the Medway colony has been declining. As mentioned above, Sandwich Terns can be fickle in their site choice, but there are particular factors on the Medway that are adversely affecting the colony. In some years, such as 2017, poor weather and high tides that flood nests may lead to complete failure. In others, such as 2020, human trespass within the colony has led to abandonment.

Passage counts and trends

Peak numbers are seen during spring and autumn passage (Figure 4). The chart shows the average maximum count of Sandwich Terns anywhere in Kent for each ten day period through the year during 2000-2022. It's a simple analysis and may under-state the numbers present in mid summer; the birds present at breeding colonies are not regularly counted, while the big passage events and concentrations of birds off-passage at places like Pegwell Bay receive a lot of attention. Still, the chart does illustrate accurately that birds are present in good numbers from late March to mid October, with spring passage peaking in mid April and autumn passage more extended, from late July to late September.

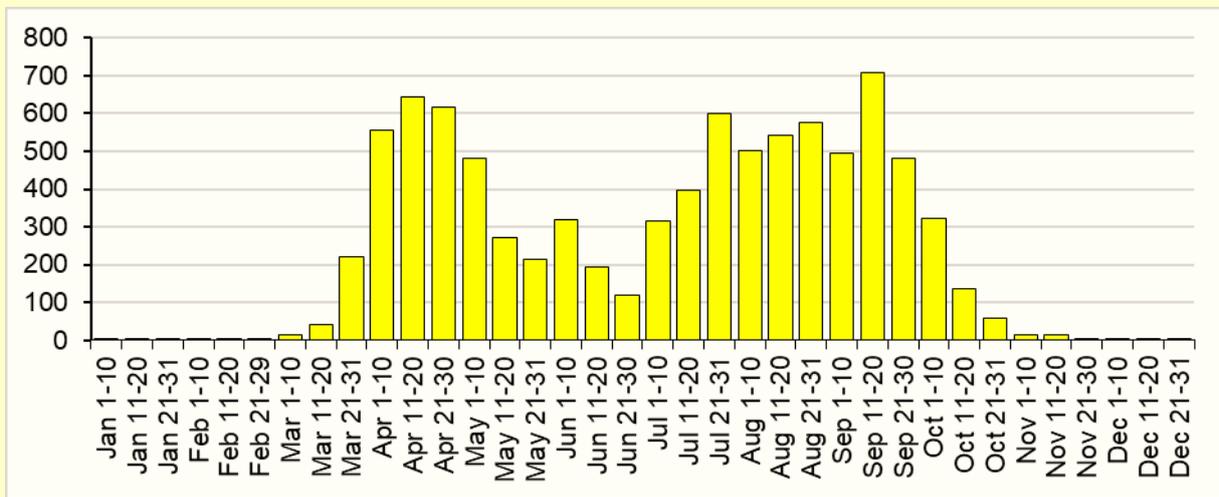


Figure 4. Sandwich Tern: seasonal pattern of counts, 2000-2022

The numbers present during the most recent couple of decades have been larger than previously. Figure 5 illustrates how, while there is a good deal of year-to-year fluctuation, there has been a progressive rise in both spring and autumn passage peaks since the 1950s. As can be seen, in earlier years spring counts tended to be the larger of the two seasons but since around 2000 that has changed, with the two fairly evenly matched. With increased emphasis on seawatching, it is more likely that short-lived offshore passage will be recorded now than in years gone by, but there seems little doubt that numbers have been increasing.

Could the changes reflect the changing sizes of populations that pass through the English Channel? European breeding populations are thought to have fluctuated but with little overall change since 1990, prior to which they experienced a moderate decline (BirdLife International). British populations too have been fairly stable since the 1980s, though with mass movements between colonies, (JNCC). That doesn't match the Kent observations very well, to say the least.

How significant is changing observer behaviour in this increasing trend? The discovery of spring skua passage at Dungeness in the 1960s, and greater emphasis on it from the mid 1970s, can perhaps be linked to the steps up in Sandwich Tern counts at those points. It's tempting to suggest that, as declines in landbird numbers make terrestrial birding less productive, observers have spent more and more time seawatching and have thus coincided with more passage. I doubt it's possible to test whether that's really so (only recently will there be adequate measures of seawatching time and effort), and other factors could be involved, such as the changes in fish populations that have driven other seabird increases (e.g. auks, Gannet, Cormorant), but I suspect that it is at least a contributor to the increases of Sandwich Terns.

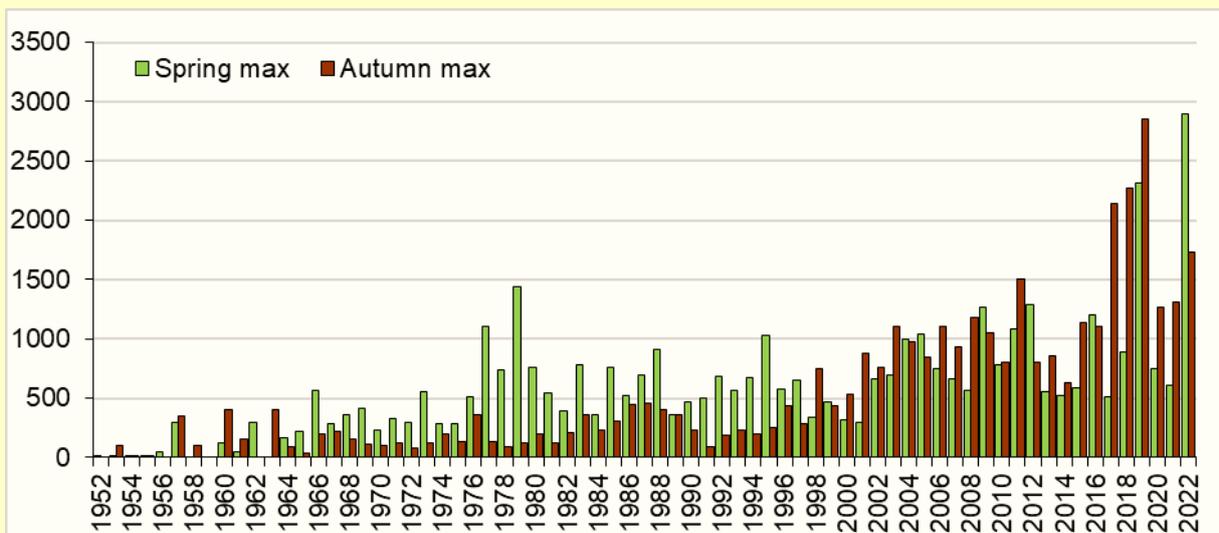


Figure 5. Sandwich Tern: annual maxima, 1952-2022

I noted where the passage peaks had been recorded each year. In the sixty years from 1963 onwards (the information gets a bit patchy before then), no fewer than 54 of the annual spring peaks were at Dungeness and six at Pegwell/Sandwich Bay. You have slightly more choice of where to see the autumn

peak: 20 annual peaks were at Dungeness and 22 at Sandwich/Pegwell Bay, six at each of Foreness and Shellness, and six spread between Lower Hope Point, Sheerness, Murston, Minnis Bay, Margate and South Foreland. Table 3 lists the largest counts of all, with the thresholds increasing over time.

Table 3. Sandwich Tern: peak counts	
Counts are colour-coded by season – spring and autumn .	
	<i>1952-1976 – counts of 400 or more</i>
1960	400 Shellness 29th August.
1963	400 W Lower Hope Point 24th August; 400 Shellness 1st September.
1966	570 Dungeness 9th April.
1969	418 Sandwich Bay 26th April.
1973	560 Dungeness 23rd April.
1976	510 E Dungeness 1st May.
	<i>1977-2000 – counts of 800 or more</i>
1977	1,100 E Dungeness 16th April.
1979	1,435 E Dungeness 11th April
1988	912 E Dungeness 17th April
1995	1,030 E Dungeness 23rd April.
	<i>2001-2022 – counts of 1200 or more</i>
2011	1,410 Sandwich Bay 27th July; 1,500 W Dungeness 26th August.
2016	1,200 E Dungeness 10th April.
2017	2,137 W Dungeness 31st August.
2018	2,265 W Dungeness 20th August
2019	2,318 E Dungeness 5th April; 2,850 incl 2,350 W Dungeness 19th September.
2020	1,272 W Dungeness 12th September
2021	1,306 W Dungeness 1st October
2022	2,898 E Dungeness 11th April; 1,729 W Dungeness 8th September.

Regardless of why it has happened, it is impressive that recorded peak passage Sandwich Tern numbers have increased fourfold since the 1960s (Figure 5, Table 3). It will be interesting to see whether the recent HPAI (bird flu) outbreak has any discernible effect on the trends. Studies in the UK and on continental Europe (e.g. RSPB HPAI seabird counts report, Feb 2024; Journal of General Virology 104 (2023) <https://doi.org/10.1099/jgv.0.001834>) indicate variable mortality between colonies but with an average decrease of 36% in UK colonies in 2023 compared to the pre-HPAI baseline. I don't have a full dataset yet but, at Dungeness at least, the spring peak in 2023 was the lowest for over twenty years while the autumn peak was close to the recent average.

First & last dates

Turning to arrival and departure dates, Sandwich Tern has shown perhaps the most marked changes of any Kent species (Figures 6 and 7). The average first date shifted from 26th March during 1952-1971 to 27th February during 2002-2021, while for the same periods the average last dates were 19th October and 19th November. Those averages omit some records in mid winter (treated here as 20th December-10th February) that could not easily be allocated as late or early ones (see Figure 6). In some winters, there is no longer a clear gap when the species is absent.

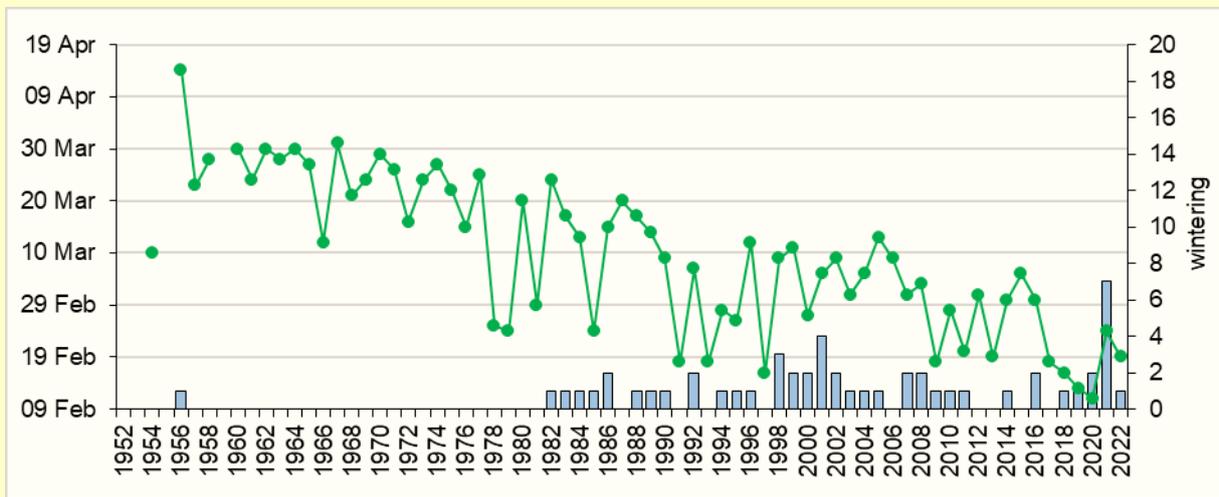


Figure 6. Sandwich Tern: first dates, 1952-2022

Birds seen between 20th December and 10th February inclusive are treated as wintering and shown as blue bars in the above chart, allocated to the latter year (thus for example four individuals were recorded in winter 2000/01).

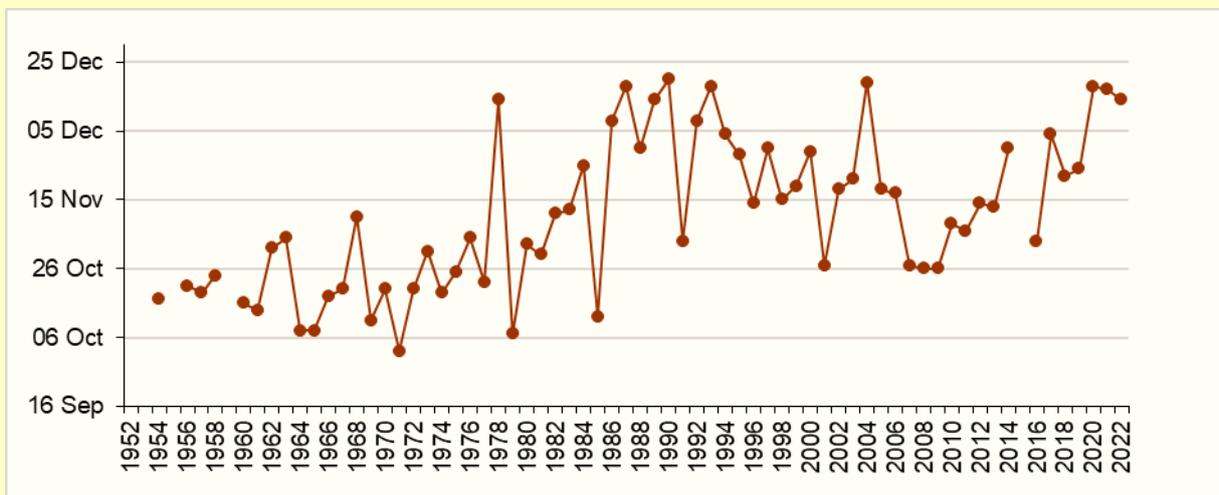


Figure 7. Sandwich Tern: last dates, 1952-2022

Note that this chart excludes birds seen during 20th-31st December (see Figure 6).

The earliest and latest dates known to Harrison (1953) were 22nd March and 19th October, both in 1938. But things changed soon after that and the first winter record was one at Hythe on 27th December 1955. The first one known to stay across New Year was one at Sandwich/Pegwell Bay from 20th December 1982 to 5th March 1983. Similar wintering birds have been present there or occasionally at Dungeness in many subsequent years.

The change in seasonality has not merely affected first and last dates. Significant numbers can now occur on dates when, formerly, Sandwich Terns were unknown. These include 59 seen at Dungeness on 28th February 2019 and, in 2020, 38 seen there on 10th December with eleven on 18th December.

Ringing recoveries and inland records

While it's likely that many Sandwich Terns now winter north of their traditional wintering areas, most still travel to Africa. There have been many recoveries of British-ringed birds all along the west coast of Africa, from Morocco to South Africa, some even going around the Cape of Good Hope into the southern Indian Ocean ([Eurasian African Bird Migration Atlas](#)). A small number enter the western Mediterranean. There are only a few ringing recoveries affecting Kent: 15 or so within Britain (none further than Northumberland) and seven abroad, including one from Senegal and one from Namibia (*BTO online ringing report*).

Those from Northumberland include one found dead at Bedgebury in April 1981, part of an inland wreck of Sandwich Terns that month. Inland records are quite frequent, being reported in most years. Most counts are in low single figures, but occasionally larger numbers are seen, most often in autumn between

mid August and mid September. The largest of all were 20 at Chipstead/Sevenoaks on 18th September 1982, 15 at Bough Beech on 30th August 1985, 40 at Bough Beech on 1st September 1994, and 25 at Stodmarsh on 2nd July 2022, this last one being an atypical midsummer record.

The Namibian bird was found dead at Walmer in June 2022, thirteen years after ringing. It wasn't the oldest Kent recovery; one ringed at Dungeness in 1979 was found dead just across the Channel in 1999 (but that was still ten years short of the record of thirty years for any in the BTO ringing scheme).

Dartford Warbler



Dartford Warbler by Andy Taylor

Historical

This species was first described by Latham from a pair shot, by an unnamed friend of his, on Bexley Heath on 10th April 1773. We will overlook the point that this is outside the modern boundary of Kent employed by KOS (and that perhaps it should be the Bexley Warbler). Ticehurst (*History of the Birds of Kent*, 1909) records that it was also found on Dartford Heath and as far in towards London as Blackheath in the early nineteenth century, and on Hayes Common into the 1870s and perhaps later, but that there was no evidence of continued presence by the turn of that century. Ticehurst ascribed its disappearance to the south-eastward extension of the London suburbs, and to gorse fires and severe winters.

The only other breeding site mentioned by Ticehurst was “in the neighbourhood of Fordwich”, where eggs were collected in 1854 and perhaps other years. It seems likely that this was somewhere along the Thanet Sands ridge running on the south side of the Stour valley, and perhaps in the area known variously as Canterbury Old Park and Scotland Hills.

There were the merest handful of records elsewhere in the county in those early years, but they include one shot at Guston, near Dover, on 16th March 1887, a precursor of the wandering birds that have become a feature of recent years. The three records in the first half of the twentieth century (Harrison, *Birds of Kent*, 1953) were similar: single birds at Dungeness on 28th October 1914 and 4th June 1926, and two at Westwood (now part of Lyminge Forest) in late October 1937.

Harrison concludes his account: “That the species may ever again become re-established seems extremely unlikely”. Predicting the future is seldom advisable. I remember Bill Harvey, many years ago, putting forward the theory that there were a few British bird species (resident with limited migratory tendency, at the edge of their European ranges, and susceptible to cold winters) that may have colonised, or perhaps in some cases re-colonised, Britain through the shortest crossing, at the Dover Strait, but found

the south-east too inhospitable in the longer term and shifted the centre of their British ranges to the milder south-west. The group included Cirl Bunting (still stuck in the West Country), Cetti's Warbler (whose initial colonisation of Kent was terminated by severe winters in the 1980s but which then spread back and northwards with gusto), and Dartford Warbler (which has followed the Cetti's pattern but over a longer timeframe and with less vigour). But the milder conditions that now prevail seem to be accelerating Dartford's return.

An article by Richard Stone (*Kent Bird Report* 1971 pp 109-111) describes Dartford Warbler's status in Kent during the twentieth century to that point. The absence since 1937 was broken by three individuals, two at Dungeness and one inland at East Sutton, in autumn 1957. More followed through to 1962, including a sequence of about six in autumn 1961. The bitter winter of 1962/63 then almost wiped out the British population, but recovery ensued and the next in Kent was in February 1967. With the exception of the one at East Sutton in November-December 1957, all records from 1957 to 1972 came from Dungeness, and autumn occurrence predominated.

Further articles about the Dartford Warbler in Kent appeared in a more recent Kent Bird Report. One, by John van der Dol, summarised the occurrence of the species in the county over the years (*Kent Bird Report* 2002 pp 157-160) and the other, by Norman McCanch, described a survey to find breeding birds in the summer of 2002 (*Kent Bird Report* 2002 pp 154-156). Both have been helpful to my synthesis of information, and I'll now turn to Dartford Warbler's recent status.

Recent status

Dartford Warblers remained decidedly scarce from 1957 until the 1980s, and the first year with ten or more was 1992 (Figure 8). Apart from the East Sutton bird, all were at Dungeness until one was found at Sandwich Bay in 1974. From the mid 1990s onwards, totals of 20 or more each year have been typical, reaching around 60 in 2022.

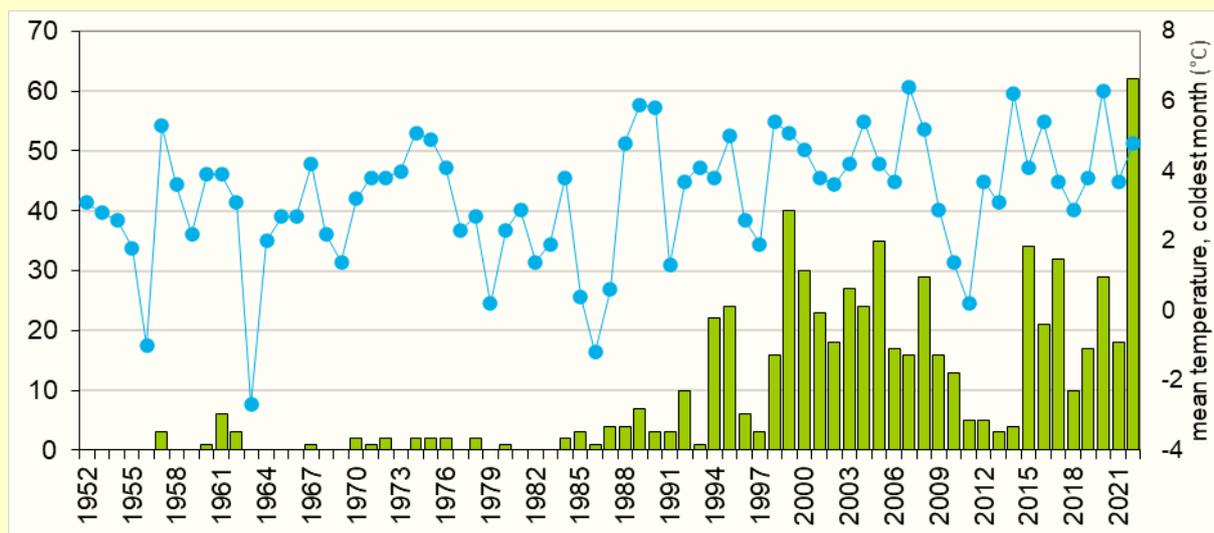


Figure 8. Dartford Warbler: annual totals, 1952-2022

The numbers shown in Figure 8 are estimates. Especially once multiple birds were present for extended periods, it became impossible to be sure how many had occurred. The species, hiding in dense scrub, can be very elusive. There have often been periods when there were several sightings in one place several weeks apart. For many rare species, it would be usual to count those as different birds, but in the case of Dartford Warbler it's more likely that the same individual was involved. Conversely, it is possible for a number of individuals to be present in an area, but sightings are of only one on any single day; that can result in totals being under-estimated. And, of course, it's likely that many birds are simply never found, especially away from places such as Dungeness where many observers may be looking for them.

As well as showing annual estimates, Figure 8 also shows the mean temperature (°C) of the coldest month of the winter (December-February); the value for winter 1951/52 is shown in 1952, and so on. These data use values for south-east and central southern England (downloaded from the Met Office website: [metoffice.gov.uk/research/climate/maps-and-data/uk-and-regional-series](https://www.metoffice.gov.uk/research/climate/maps-and-data/uk-and-regional-series)). There is not a precise correlation, but it can be seen that any winter with a month averaging below 2°C tends to put the brakes on growth of Kent Dartford Warbler numbers.

Typically, a bird is seen on only one day. However, even back in the 1950s and 1960s, some remained for much longer. The percentage staying for ten days or more was about 18% during 1957-1990, rising to 28% for the period from 1991 onwards. It's not possible to say what the longest stays have been; my estimates range up to about eight months but it's likely that a few individuals have been present for more than one year.

Figure 9 shows the dates on which Dartford Warblers have been discovered, from 1952 onwards. With many birds now present for long periods, the chart doesn't show the numbers present, though probably the pattern wouldn't be that different – there would be a less pronounced spike in autumn, and a thicker tail through winter and into early spring. The seasonal pattern has remained much the same throughout the whole period; even in the most recent twenty years when more have been present in summer, autumn finding dates still predominate.

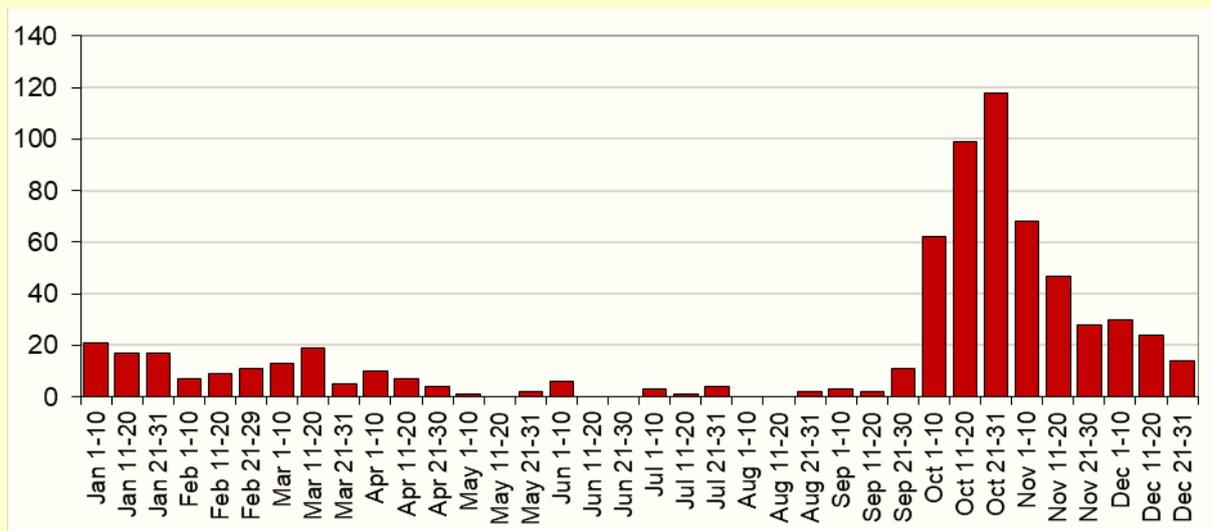


Figure 9. Dartford Warbler: seasonal pattern of occurrence, 1952-2022

Locations

The early predominance of Dungeness (and nearby parts of the Marsh) has been maintained. Table 4 gives the numbers and percentages of individual Dartford Warblers found in distinct parts of Kent. With over 40%, Dungeness is way ahead of the Sandwich Bay area with 16%, but it is probably no coincidence that those leading areas are ones which have had the most intensive coverage over the years. Most of the rest have been around other parts of the coast, and only about 6% have been found inland.

	birds	%
Dungeness & nearby	283	42.6
Sandwich/Pegwell Bay	106	15.9
Deal-Hythe coast	85	12.8
Herne Bay to Thanet	83	12.5
North Kent	67	10.1
Inland, west of Maidstone	22	3.3
Inland, east of Maidstone	19	2.9

It is thought that colonisation of new areas within Britain take place by dispersal from other breeding areas in Britain, rather than immigration from abroad. I am unaware of any birds ringed abroad having been recorded but the BTO *Migration Atlas* (2002) mentions one seen on board a ship north of Cherbourg in November 1974, so it is possible. The one ringing recovery affecting Kent (*BTO online ringing report*) involved one ringed as a nestling in Suffolk on 27th April 2014 and found dead at Borstal, near Rochester, on 5th April 2015.

Breeding

With the growth in numbers of dispersing birds reaching Kent, it was anticipated that eventually breeding might resume in the county. In their strongholds, Dartford Warblers are found on heathland, using tall heather with scattered bushes especially of gorse for cover and nesting. There is precious little habitat of that type in Kent (although there are efforts to create more on the appropriate acidic soils), and it has turned out that most breeding attempts so far in Kent have been in atypical habitats.

Table 4 describes all instances of birds that are indicative of at least possible breeding. I have included all records of birds in suitable habitat during April-June except where the location and habitat made it unlikely that breeding could have been attempted. Most records involve birds being present for at least a week, and often much longer. Note that there is doubt over the number present in some years, especially 2001-2002, and that other aspects of the records also are uncertain. I'll say more about that below.

Table 4. Dartford Warbler: breeding records, 1952-2023		
The numberings (1, 2, 3 etc) indicate discrete locations, but the numbers do not carry over from year to year.		
Year	Observations	
1989	1	A male sang on 1st April and (unconfirmed) for about a week afterwards
1994	1	Two juveniles for a week in July-August, assumed to have been reared locally
1995	1	A pair reared one juvenile
1999	1	A singing male present for at least two weeks in June
	2	A juvenile trapped and ringed on 5th July but not thought locally bred
2001	1	Four or five territorial males, with two fledged juveniles seen in one territory
	2	Unconfirmed report of a pair
	3	Unconfirmed report of a pair
2002	1	A female seen in late April
	2	A male holding territory for two weeks in May
	3	Six singing males present in spring
	4	One pair present and another suspected in spring
	5	A singing male present in spring
2003	1	A singing male on at least one date in late May
	2	Unconfirmed report of one present in spring
2004	1	Unconfirmed report of presence (possible that the report applies to 2005)
2005	1	A male holding territory in spring
2010	1	A pair plus an unpaired male present during April-June
2018	1	A pair present in spring
2019	1	A territorial male present, at least in early spring
	2	A pair present throughout spring/summer but no young seen
2020	1	A pair present in spring and thought to have bred
2021	1	Two pairs present, with one fledged juvenile seen in one territory

A few of the breeding attempts, and some other records, have been in heathland but most have been in other habitats. One category that has been used is young conifer plantations, notably of Corsican Pine. These were used when the stands were still structurally open, with rank herbaceous vegetation between

the growing pines. The other category used more than once consists of open scrub with much bare ground, including much gorse and some other short scrub species but no heather.

I am not listing the locations where Dartford Warblers have bred in Kent. The risk of drawing the attention of egg collectors to the sites remains and, regrettably, the potential for disturbance of the warblers and other birds in the areas by intrusive birdwatchers and photographers makes it desirable to limit spread of the information. In addition, some details of breeding attempts have been supplied in confidence.

In fact, I do not know where some breeding attempts were made. Some of those in 2001 and 2002 were reported in Kent Bird Reports as being in Areas A, B, C and so on. Unfortunately, it has proved impossible to establish where some of those areas were. Paperwork, mine included, summarising coverage in the relevant years has been mislaid or destroyed and I have failed to find people who can link records to sites; it appears that some information (including the locations of lettered sites) did not even reach the Rare Breeding Bird Panel. Confidentiality is a good thing if it protects the birds, but maybe it can go a bit far if no-one knows where the birds that need protecting are. If you know where – especially – B, C and D in KBR 2002 (page 155) are, I would very much like to know!

Dartford Warblers are restricted to south-west Europe and north Africa, with Britain at the northern limit of the range. The global population is declining moderately rapidly (*BirdLife International factsheet*) notably in the core area of Spain. In Britain, the population is thought to be over 3,000 pairs at present (RBBP) having been just ten pairs after the 1962/63 winter. The increase is attributed to the generally less severe winters we now experience. However, the species remains highly susceptible to cold conditions; a couple of moderately cold winters around 2010 reduced the population by two-thirds – but numbers do recover quickly.

The closest large population to Kent from which colonisation may occur is on the Surrey heaths (though even that was eliminated by the winter of 1962/63) but other areas such as Sussex and Suffolk also now have substantial numbers and may be source populations for Kentish immigrants. The most suitable habitat – heathland – is even in those counties of limited extent and faces various threats. The most serious, apart from cold winters, is from built development, from which there is no return. Public pressure, including straightforward disturbance and also predation by pets, can be a problem. Fires, too, most often started by people accidentally, can be devastating – though in the longer term and with appropriate subsequent management, burnt areas can be restored to good condition.

Postscript

With this article, I am taking a break from producing these summaries of the status of birds in Kent. Back in July, in an article on *Acrocephalus* warblers, I included a short summary for Marsh Warbler but promised a fuller account. That is almost finished, and I'll ask the editor to include it in January or March, but I am not starting any more for now.

Over the past four years or so, I have covered about 160 species and, with a county list of about 430, there are still plenty more to do. I hope that other people might be tempted to prepare some. Mine have taken a fair time to produce, mainly in data analysis and fact-checking; the writing is the easy bit. However, they may have been too long and detailed and perhaps shorter ones would serve just as well and be easier to read.

I'd encourage anyone to try something similar. The KOS is currently planning a new section of its website devoted to describing the status of all species recorded in the county. These written summaries can usefully contribute to that. I'd be happy to give a few tips on how I have gone about the articles (though that shouldn't constrain anyone from doing it differently). You can write to me at acb@btinternet.com. And I would like to thank all those who have answered queries, large and small, about ancient and modern records.

But anyway, in the words of Sellar and Yeatman, this series of articles now comes to a.

Andrew Henderson

KENT BIRD SIGHTINGS FOR SEPTEMBER and OCTOBER 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

September saw unsettled weather across the UK with variable temperatures and persistent showers. The month began on a warm note with above average temperatures across the country persisting for the first week as successive plumes of warm and humid air were drawn northwards off continental Europe. However, by the 11th the temperatures dropped as Arctic air moved in. The third week saw temperatures again above average before a return to cooler conditions at the end of the month.

October saw a mix of settled conditions due to high pressure as well as wet and windy weather from a succession of low-pressure systems arriving from the west including the first named storm of the 2024/2025 season. A major Atlantic low-pressure system arrived on the 6th and brought rain to southern England but there was a return to settled weather on the 10th. On the 20th, the first named storm, Storm Ashley, arrived and brought heavy rain and strong winds. High pressure returned to close the month.

PARTRIDGE TO WILDFOWL



Black Brant by Mark Chidwick

A **Black Brant** arrived at Seasalter on Oct 3rd and was seen in the area until the 6th and single **Pale-bellied Brent Geese** were seen in Pegwell Bay on Oct 26th and at Foreness and Tankerton on the 31st.

Six **Pink-footed Geese** flew N at Cliftonville on Sept 11th and there were 12 at Sandwich Bay on Oct 13th with one at Deal the next day whilst the first 12 **Russian White-fronted Geese** arrived at Swale NNR on Oct 25th and flocks of 50 birds were seen at Greatstone, Littlestone, Kenardington, Tankerton and Swalecliffe on the 31st.

The first four **Whooper Swans** were seen at Dungeness RSPB on Oct 11th.

There was a peak count of 257 **Egyptian Geese** at Bough Beech on Sept 12th and during September and October as many as 25 were seen at Hayesden, Hythe, Seasalter, Swalecliffe, West Hythe, Penshurst Place, Sandwich Bay and Worth Marshes.

As many as six **Garganey** were seen at Dungeness RSPB, Oare Marshes, New Hythe and Worth Marshes until the last bird at Dungeness RSPB on Oct 2nd.

A female **Smew** was found at Seaton GPs on Oct 18th and remained there until the 19th after which it was seen at Worth Marshes between the 21st and 29th. This has become a rare species in Kent and has

recently been added to the species to be assessed by the KOS Rarities Panel. As such a photograph or a description is needed for records to be included in the Kent Bird Report.

A red-head **Goosander** was seen flying W at Reculver on Oct 29th and in a dyke near Plumpudding Stables the next day. Three birds also flew S at Cooling on the 30th.

NIGHTJAR TO WADERS

A **PALLID SWIFT** was seen at Foreness Point on Oct 17th.

A **Red-necked Grebe** was seen at Sandwich Bay on Oct 3rd with another reported from North Foreland on the 26th and a **Slavonian Grebe** was reported from Dungeness RSPB on Oct 30th.



Black-necked Grebe by Mark Chidwick

A **Black-necked Grebe** was seen at Lade Pits between Sept 8th and the 23rd and at Dungeness RSPB from the Sept 21st-29th with one or two at Motney Hill from Sept 29th to Oct 1st and one at Deal on Sept 30th. During October one or two birds were recorded at Dungeness RSPB, Nor Marshes, Scotney, Swalecliffe, Worth Marshes and Pegwell Bay.

A moulting adult **American Golden Plover** was found at Dungeness RSPB from Sept 14th-17th and a **Dotterel** flew W over Royal Cinque Ports GC on Sept 22nd whilst four birds flew from Worth Marshes towards Sandwich Bay on the 28th.



American Golden Plover by Peter Maton

As many as seven **Curlew Sandpipers** were seen at Cliffe Pools, Pegwell Bay, Elmley NNR, Lade Pits, Sandwich Bay and Oare Marshes with the last bird seen at Oare Marshes on Oct 8th and a **Temminck's Stint** was identified at Oare Marshes on Sept 6th and seen there until the 11th.

A **Purple Sandpiper** flew W at Reculver on Sept 27th after which one or two were recorded from North Foreland, Plumpudding, Minnis Bay, Hampton, Dover Harbour and Long Rock and as many as three **Little Stints** were seen at Oare Marshes, Elmley NNR, Pegwell Bay, Sandwich Bay, North Foreland and Cliffe Pools with the last two birds at Cliffe Pools on Oct 20th.

A juvenile **Pectoral Sandpiper** was present at Dungeness RSPB between Sept 9th and the 14th whilst another juvenile was also found at Elmley NNR on the 15th and 16th.

The first **Jack Snipe** of the autumn was seen at Elmley NNR on Sept 19th after which one or two birds were seen at Sandwich Bay, DBO, Dungeness RSPB, Cliffe Pools, Capel Fleet and Minster Marshes.

A **Red-necked Phalarope** was recorded at Lade Pits on Sept 6th and a juvenile was reported from Swale NNR on the 21st and 22nd.



Red-necked Phalarope by Adam Buckland

As many as four **Wood Sandpipers** were recorded at Capel Fleet, Oare Marshes, Cliffe Pools and Sandwich Bay with the final bird at Cliffe Pools on Oct 13th.

Up to six **Spotted Redshanks** were seen at Otterham Creek, Lower Murston, Pegwell Bay, Lade, Milton Creek, Dungeness RSPB, Cliffe Pools and Capel Fleet.

GULLS TO SHEARWATERS

Bird numbers during strong NNW wind on the North Kent Coast on 27th Sept

(Many of these birds will have been seen at more than one site and at sites in between)

	Shellness/ Swale	Tankerton	Reculver	Foreness	North Foreland	Walmer
Kittiwake	114		124 W	507 E	1	63 S
Sabine's Gull	3	2 juv W	1 juv W	2 (1E 1W)		
Little Gull	11		33 W	39 E		22 S
Black Tern	16					
Sandwich Tern	37		69 W	145E		98 S
Little Tern	5					
Common Tern	117		43 W	2 W		5 S
Arctic Tern	2		6 W			
Great Skua	33		12	26	28	2 S
Pomarine Skua	18	3 adults W	2 adults	2 E		1 S
Arctic Skua	142	125 W	87	136 E	58	13 S
Long-tailed Skua	6	3 juv W	1 juv W	2 E	3	2 juv S
Leach's Petrel			1 W		1	
Sooty Shearwater	2 SW	1		1 E		1 S
Manx Shearwater	1 SW	6W		1 E	1	
Balearic Shearwater	2	10	26 W	22 E	1	
Gannet	238		480+	5,861	2,506	1,866

A juvenile **Sabine's Gull** flew past Shellness on Sept 11th with other juveniles at Cliftonville on the 12th and 13th, at St Margaret's-at-Cliffe on the 13th, North Foreland on the 15th, Cliftonville and Shellness on the 16th, North Foreland on the 18th with two at Tankerton on the 28th. On Oct 2nd, single birds flew past Oare Marshes, Tankerton, Long Rock and North Foreland and the next day one was seen at Walmer.



Sabines Gull by Andy Taylor

Up to 82 **Little Gulls** were seen at DBO, Dungeness RSPB, Hythe, Deal, Reculver, Minnis Bay, Shellness, North Foreland, Tankerton and Sandwich Bay with the largest count of 198 flying W at DBO on the Sept 29th.

Up to six **Caspian Gulls** were seen at DBO, Dungeness RSPB, Foreness, Cliftonville, Sandwich Bay, Worth Marshes, Walmer and Deal and one or two **Yellow-legged Gulls** were seen at DBO, Folkestone Harbour, River Darent, Cliffe Pools and Greenhithe.



White-winged Black Tern by David Todd

The **White-winged Black Tern** first seen at Dungeness RSPB on Aug 30th was still there on Sept 5th and another juvenile was found there on Sept 9th and remained there until the 13th and up to 16 **Black Terns** were recorded from DBO, Dungeness RSPB, Bough Beech, Stodmarsh, Shellness, Reculver, Grenham Bay, Greenhithe, Walmer, Deal, Swalecliffe, Lower Hope Point, North Foreland, Sandwich Bay, Pegwell Bay and Lade.

As many as seven **Great Skuas** were seen at Reculver, DBO, Plumpudding, Seasalter, Grenham Bay, Herne Bay, North Foreland and Lower Hope Point.

Up to three **Pomarine Skua** were also seen at DBO, Reculver, Allhallows, Grenham Bay, Minnis Bay, Walmer, Foreness, Tankerton and North Foreland whilst as many as 25 **Arctic Skuas** were recorded from DBO, North Foreland, Shellness, Walmer, Foreness, Samphire Hoe, Swalecliffe, Tankerton, Folkestone, Coombe Bay, Sandwich Bay and Reculver.

Single **Long-tailed Skuas** were seen at Allhallows on Sept 5th, at North Foreland on the 15th and 26th, Cliftonville on the 19th, Shellness and Tankerton on the 28th and Walmer and Deal on the 30th. Two juveniles flew E at Reculver on Oct 2nd and one was also reported from Seasalter with another seen at Deal on Oct 6th.

Two **Puffins** were reported flying E past Seasalter and Swalecliffe on Oct 2nd and one flew S at North Foreland on the 15th.

On Sept 5th a **Cory's Shearwater** flew E and then W at Reculver before being seen later in the morning at Shellness and Grain.

The first **Black-throated Diver** of the autumn flew E past Cliftonville on Sept 16th after which one or two were recorded from North Foreland, Dungeness RSPB and Grenham Bay and a **Great Northern Diver** flew S at North Foreland on Oct 2nd and there was one at Sandwich Bay on the 29th.

A **Leach's Petrel** was reported from North Foreland on Sept 20th whilst another flew W at DBO on Oct 20th.

As many as four **Sooty Shearwaters** were reported from Herne Bay, Walmer and Shellness on Sept 5th, whilst single birds were reported from North Foreland on the 18th and 20th with two on the 26th. There

was a single bird at DBO on the 27th and seven on the 29th with three at Deal and one at DBO on the 30th. During October single birds flew past DBO on the 8th, 15th and 20th.

Balearic Shearwater counts at Dungeness and North Foreland in September

Sept	Dungeness	North Foreland
1 st	-	-
2 nd	-	-
3 rd	-	-
4 th	-	-
5 th	2	-
6 th	-	-
7 th	-	1
8 th	1	-
9 th	100+	8
10 th	1	-
11 th	-	-
12 th	-	-
13 th	-	-
14 th	-	-
15 th	73	89
16 th	17	104
17 th	5	5
18 th	-	-
19 th	-	-
20 th	-	-
21 st	3	-
22 nd	1	-
23 rd	24	-
24 th	-	4
25 th	40	1
26 th	2	2
27 th	-	-
28 th	-	-
29 th	5	2
30 th	21	-

Away from these two sites seven **Balearic Shearwaters** flew past Walmer on Sept 9th with one there on the 13th, single at Cliftonville on the 9th and 16th, eight past St Margarets-at-Cliffe on the 16th, one at Westgate-on-Sea on the 20th, one at Tankerton on the 24th, two at Sandwich Bay on the 25th and three on the 30th with eight at Tankerton on the 28th. During October, a single bird was seen at North Foreland on the 5th with two at DBO on the 7th, nine on the 8th, three on the 9th, one on the 12th, seven on the 20th, one on the 21st and two on the 24th and 25th. Two birds also flew past North Foreland on the 26th.

Five **Manx Shearwaters** flew past North Foreland on Sept 9th with two at DBO on the 10th, nine at North Foreland on the 15th and singles at Reculver on the 17th, North Foreland on the 18th, Oare Marshes on the 19th and North Foreland and DBO on the 29th. In October one flew past Oare Marshes and Herne Bay on the 2nd and one was seen at Deal on the 14th with another at DBO on the 21st.

WHITE STORK TO WOODPECKERS

As many as 26 **White Storks** were seen at Dungeness and Worth on Sept 4th.

A **BROWN BOOBY** flew N at Sandwich Bay on Sept 8th, N at St Margaret's on the 10th and S at Foreness and North Foreland on the 17th.

As many as nine **Shags** were seen at North Foreland, Foreness, Aycliff, Samphire Hoe, Bockhill and Oare Marshes.

The **Glossy Ibis** seen at Dungeness RSPB in August remained there until Oct 19th and was sometimes joined by another bird from Sept 28th onwards.

Up to seven **Bitterns** were recorded from Stodmarsh/Grove Ferry with single birds seen at Sandwich Bay, Elmley NNR and Swale NNR.

As many as 11 **Spoonbills** were seen at Oare Marshes, Pegwell Bay, Sandwich Bay, Lade, Reculver, Sevenoaks WR, Motney Hill, North Foreland, Scotney, Elmley NNR and Cliffe Pools.

The **Night Heron** first seen at Oare Marshes in August was still there on Sept 14th.

As many as 27 **Cattle Egrets** were recorded from Iwade, Bough Beech, Elmley NNR, Ham Marshes, Lower Stoke, Dungeness RSPB, Swale NNR, Oare Marshes, Faversham Creek, Chislet Marshes and Stodmarsh/Grove Ferry and up to six **Great White Egrets** were seen at Dungeness RSPB, DBO, Oare Marshes, Bough Beech, Worth Marshes, Grain, Pegwell Bay, Lade, North Foreland, Chislet Marshes, Chamber's Wall, Stodmarsh/Grove Ferry and Sandwich Bay.



Osprey by Alan Pavey

One or two **Ospreys** were recorded from Elmley NNR, Dungeness, Lade, Hothfield, Stodmarsh, Sandwich Bay, Deal, Riverside CP, Stilebridge, Aldergate Bridge, West Hythe, Burntwick Island, The Swale, Royal Military Canal, Appledore and Oare Marshes.

Coastal reports of one or two **Honey Buzzards** came from Dungeness, Cliftonville, Hythe, Lade, Foreness, Samphire Hoe and Elmley NNR.

A second winter male **Hen Harrier** was seen at Elmley NNR during September and at Shellness on the 6th whilst there was also a ring-tail at Shellness on the 29th and at Capel Fleet on the 30th. During October one or two birds were recorded from Stodmarsh/Grove Ferry, Sandwich Bay, Elmley, Langdon, DBO, High Halstow and Oare Marshes.

A juvenile **PALLID HARRIER** was reported from Cooling Marshes on Sept 18th whilst a **Pallid/Montagu's Harrier** flew W over Lenham on Sept 18th and a **Black Kite** was seen at Bockhill on Sept 3rd and at South Foreland the next day.

A fourth calendar year **White-tailed Eagle**, number G542, from the Isle of Wight reintroduction scheme, was seen at Scotney on Oct 19th.

During October **Short-eared Owls** were seen at Reculver Marshes, Swalecliffe, Oare Marshes, Foreness, Cliffe, Langdon Cliffs and Dungeness.

FALCONS TO HIRUNDINES

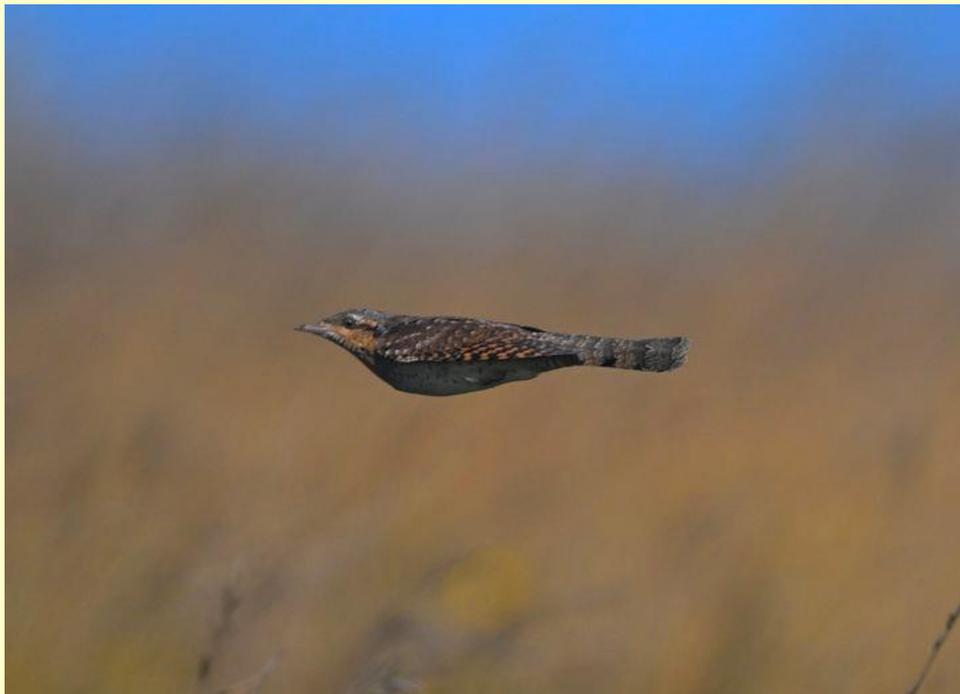
A **Hoopoe** was seen at Tonbridge on Sept 12th and others were reported from a garden in Broadstairs on the Sept 17th and 29th and a garden in Sevenoaks on Oct 12th.

@moihicksimages



Hoopoe by Moi Hicks

During September one or two **Wrynecks** were seen at Sandwich Bay, Elmley NNR, Swalecliffe, Plum pudding Stables, South Foreland, Reculver, Stodmarsh, Cliftonville and DBO.



Wryneck by Russ Blackman

A **Red-footed Falcon** was seen at Seasalter on Sept 8th and a juvenile was seen at Elmley NNR between the 15th and 26th.

Single **Merlins** were recorded from DBO, Shuart, Walmer, Elmley NNR, Walland Marsh, North Forleand, Reculver, Nethergong, Cliffe, Oare Marshes, Burntwick Island, Conyer, Swanley, Chetney Marshes, Shuart, Northward Hill and Dungeness RSPB.

There was a juvenile **Red-backed Shrike** at Worth Marshes from Sept 7th-9th and others were seen at Elmley NNR on Sept 19th, Oare Marshes on Sept 22nd and at Hope Point on Oct 12th and 13th.

An **ISABELLINE SHRIKE** was found at Sandwich Bay on October 18th. As Steffan Walton writes "the Isabelline Shrike complex is currently split into two, Daurian and Turkestan Shrike, with the former usually warmer and sandier in colouration, and slightly more common in the UK. It seems likely our bird is a Daurian Shrike based on the warmth of the plumage but currently the identification of immature birds in the field is not thought to be possible with 100% certainty."

Single **Woodlarks** were seen at Hope Point and Elmley NNR on Oct 11th with two seen at DBO on the 18th and one there on the 22nd. On Oct 27th single birds were recorded from Bockhill and Langdon Cliffs with one at Bockhill on the 31st.

On September 22nd, there was a mass exodus of hirundines at DBO with counts of 126,000 **Swallows**, 84,000 **House Martins** and 500 **Sand Martins**.

WARBLERS TO WHEATEARS

A first winter **WESTERN BONELLI'S WARBLER** was found in a garden at Dungeness on Sept 22nd. This is the eleventh Kent record of this species.



Western Bonelli's Warbler by Shaun Ferguson

A **Wood Warbler** was recorded from Seine Wood on Sept 11th.

It was a good autumn for **Yellow-browed Warblers** with the first birds seen on Sept 21st at Tankerton, Cliftonville and Northdown Park. After this up to three were recorded from Reculver, Plumpudding, Dungeness, Shuart, Swalecliffe, Leysdown-on-Sea, Sandwich Bay, Chartham, Whitfield, Foreness, Stodmarsh, Broadstairs, Northdown Park, Bockhill, Deal, Canterbury, Wainscott, South Foreland, Weddington, Murston, Ramsgate, Palmarsh, Margate Cemetery, Grain, North Foreland, Bishopstone Glen, Elmley NNR, Walmer, Warden Point and Tankerton.

A **Siberian Chiffchaff** was trapped and ringed at DBO on Oct 15th.

Single **Grasshopper Warblers** were recorded from DBO, Sandwich Bay, Bockhill, Plumpudding and North Foreland with the final report of one at DBO on Oct 4th.

A **Barred Warbler** was reported from Cliftonville on Sept 9th whilst another was seen at Langdon Cliffs on the 16th with another at the same site on the 22nd.



Barred Warbler by Jamie Partridge

As many as 11 **Dartford Warblers** were seen in the Dungeness area with up to three at Leysdown-on-Sea, Sandwich Bay, Plumpudding, Stodmarsh, Swalecliffe, South Foreland, Langdon, Bockhill, Faversham Creek, Kingsdown, Walmer, Bockhill, Reculver, Pegwell Bay and Abbotscliffe.

As many as 16 **Firecrests** were seen at Dungeness with up to seven at Reculver Marshes, Stuart, Margate Cemetery, Grain, Bockhill, Sandwich Bay, Church Woods, Clowes Wood, Lade, Hope Point, Kingston, Enbrook Park, Sandgate, Port Lympne, Folkestone, Oare Marshes, St Margarets-at-Cliffe and Sevenoaks.

A juvenile **Rose-coloured Starling** flew N with Starlings at Bockhill on Oct 27th.



Rose-coloured Starling by Russ Blackman

After a very early male **Ring Ouzel** was seen on Reculver Marshes on Sept 7th up to eight birds were seen at Dungeness, Sandwich Bay, Snodland, Bockhill, Samphire Hoe, Abbotscliffe, South Foreland, Langdon Point, Pegwell Bay, Marden, Cliffe, High Halstow, Capel Fleet, Foreness and Margate Cemetery.

A first year **Red-breasted Flycatcher** was trapped and ringed at Sandwich Bay on Sept 17th where it was reported the next day. One was also found at Kingsdown on Oct 5th.



Red-breasted Flycatcher by Russ Blackman

During September one or two **Pied Flycatchers** were seen at Dungeness, Sandwich Bay, Reculver, Elmley NNR, Abbotscliffe, Foreness, North Foreland, South Foreland, Tankerton, Ramsgate, Swanscombe, Maidstone, Frogholt, Cliftonville and Chamber's Wall.

Up to six **Black Redstarts** were seen at DBO, Sandwich Bay, Samphire Hoe, Langdon Bay, Abbotscliffe, Aycliff, Bockhill, Foreness, Reculver, East Malling, Marden, Finberry, Horsmonden, Lymne, Samphire Hoe, Tankerton, Bishopstone, Ramsgate and North Foreland.

An impressive total of 64 **Whinchats** arrived at North Foreland on the afternoon of Sept 6th.

SPARROWS TO BUNTINGS

During October as many as nine **Water Pipits** were seen at Stodmarsh/Grove Ferry, Worth Marshes, Cliffe, Samphire Hoe, Elmley NNR and Oare Marshes.

There was a significant movement of **Hawfinches** during October starting with three birds flying over Hope Point on the 12th and Bockhill on the 13th after which up to four birds were counted at Reculver, Bockhill, Foreness, Dartford, Sevenoaks, Swalecliffe, Sandwich Bay, Aycliffe, Shuart, Orlestone Forest, South Foreland, Stonelees, Riverhead, Chiddingstone, Shingleton, Chartham, Stodmarsh and Margate Cemetery. This coincides with a large movement over nearby northern France where hundreds had been recorded.

The first **Lapland Bunting** of the autumn/winter period was seen at Westgate-on-Sea on Sept 22nd after which a birds was recorded from Foreness.

The first **Snow Bunting** of the autumn was seen at Cliftonville on Sept 14th after which up to five birds were recorded in October from Foreness, Sandwich Bay, Swalecliffe and Epple Bay.

An **Ortolan Bunting** was seen at Sandwich Bay on Sept 1st and a **Little Bunting** was found on Reculver Marshes on Sept 6th and was still present the next day with yet another adult male bird at Plumpudding Stables on Oct 29th.

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, KOS Forum, Twitter and the RBA Hotline and BirdGuides.

Records have also been contributed by A. Appleton, Bockhill Birders, R. Bonsor, Bough Beech (per A. Ford), E. Brown, D. Bunday, N. Burt, G. Burton, F. Cackett, J. Cantelo, J. Carnell, P. Carr, R. Carr, M. Casemore, J. Chantler, P. Chantler, M. Chidwick, R. Collins, G. Coultrip, K. Cutting, DBO (per D. Walker), B. East, A. Edwards, D. Ellingworth, A. Farrar, D. Faulkener, Folkestone and Hythe Birds (per I. Roberts), C. Gibbard, M. Gould, R. Heading, J. Headley, A. Hindle, C. Hindle, M. Hindle, G. Hollamby, M. Hollingworth, P. Holt, M. Kennett, S. Kennett, J. King, R. Knight, G. Lee, O. Leyshon, A. Lipczynski, K. Lord, A. Malone, J. Massey, N. McCanch, S. McMinn, S. Message, A. Millar, S. Mills, S. Mount, R. O'Reilly, M. Orchard, J. Partridge, K. Privett, C. Powell, M. Puxley, R. Rackliffe, B. Ring, M. Roser, K. Ross, B. Ryan, Samphire Hoe (per P. Holt and P. Smith), SBBO (per A. Lipczynski and S. Walton), Sevenoaks WR, I. Shepherd, D. Smith, P. Smith, R. Smith, W. Stoneham, B. Summerfield, M. Sutherland, Swale NNR (per D. Faulkner, B. Whatmore, T. Hilsden), A. Swandale, D. Taylor, P. Trodd, C. Turley, J. Turner-Moss, D. Tutt, M. Watts, A. Wells, C. White, M. Wilson, T. Wilson, J. Woolgar, B. Woolhouse, B. Wright, M. Wright and J. Young.

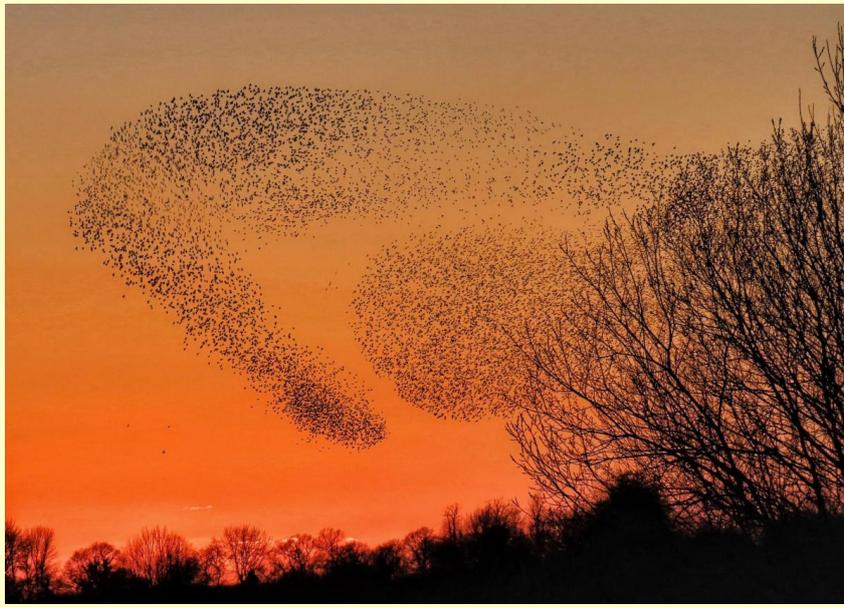
Send any records for this review to Chris Hindle at christopherhindle@hotmail.com

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

Starling



The build-up of numbers in the county is well shown by an estimate of 600,000 going to roost at Wenderton Manor, near Stodmarsh, on Oct. 21st. Movements continued as usual in November and by the 19th the Stodmarsh roost was estimated at 1,650,000 (MD) and one at Dungeness Reserve at 100,000.

KBR1974

Meet the Member – Brendan Ryan



Tell us about your role in the KOS

I was on the Executive Committee for 15 years serving as Vice Chairman and then as Honorary Secretary, organising meetings and generally ensuring that the Society adhered to good governance principles. In the last few years I have been travelling for about four months of each year and it was becoming difficult to schedule KOS business around my travelling commitments so I stepped down from the committee at the last AGM. While I am no longer serving on the committee I am involved in a number of behind the scenes activities for the society including fielding enquiries sent to KOS, which often involves diplomatically informing people that their eagle sighting was most likely a buzzard! I am also involved as one of the writers of the Kent Bird Report and am involved in a project to develop the next Birds of Kent as an online publication. I am a member of the engagement sub-committee.

What first drew you into the world of birds?

I have been fascinated by birds since I was very young. Growing up in Leeds, I remember seeing Tawny Owls roosting on chimney pots in the arctic winter of 1963 and recall watching swallows hunt over the playing fields at school wondering if they were swallows or swifts. We moved to Hildenborough in west Kent when I was about eight. The traditional Easter holiday pastime amongst my peers was egg collecting. While this is undoubtedly a bad thing, it did help develop my interest in birds which was further enhanced by a teacher at our primary school who took a few of us bird watching in the holidays. At secondary school, bird watching was definitely not cool and my interest was dormant until on a family holiday in Norfolk, a Bittern flew over us reawakening my interest in birds. I worked through the summer picking runner beans and saved enough to buy my first pair of binoculars.

How are you involved with birds in Kent?

Armed with my new Swift 10x50 binoculars, I visited the newly flooded reservoir at Bough Beech. The first bird I saw was a Pochard, a new bird for me and I have not looked back. I birded Bough Beech regularly until I left for university. 14 years later I returned to the county and settled in east Kent. I set about finding myself a new patch and happened upon Bockhill Farm at St Margaret's which at the time was barely watched. Around the same time a group of the South Foreland Valley group, relocated their focus to the northern side of St Margaret's and so Bockhill Birders were established. A core of about seven birders have been watching the site for over 30 years. Will we never learn! I live about 10 minutes drive from Stodmarsh and while I was an occasional visitor to the site, it wasn't until the restoration of Grove Ferry in 1998/99 that this became my other patch. I tend to spend the winters and spring in the Stour Valley

(Fordwich to Grove Ferry) and Bockhill in the autumn. My patchwork has suffered in recent years as my ornithological interests have developed a more global dimension.

When I returned to live in Kent in 1990, I was aware that a few birders like Don Taylor, Barry Wright and Geoff Burton were working on developing their Kent lists. This seemed like fun and as a result I narrowed my twitching horizons from a national to a Kent focus. My Kent list stands at 380 species having just lost two with the lumping of Redpolls.

What is your biggest birding blunder?

Going to see a Spotless Startling on the Isles of Scilly. Not only did this involve a day's leave from work, 700 miles driving, two nights sleep missed and an expensive helicopter crossing on the islands but the bird turned out to be a common starling. The upside was my first realisation that twitching might be stupid.

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

Learn the calls of birds. It's a wonderful short cut to identifying birds. I think that 70% of the birds I record, I locate and identify by sound. Now days there is the wonderful Merlin app to help beginners in this process.

My other tip to any new birder and indeed to experienced birders is to start using eBird. I started using eBird just before the pandemic and it has transformed the way that I watch and record the birds I see and hear. It has also made me a more diligent birder recording common birds and not just unusual ones. If you use eBird then your records automatically go to the KOS database. Both eBird and Merlin are free and come from the same Cornell University stable.

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

I would be lost without my phone to record my sightings on eBird but I guess people don't go anywhere without their phones these days. I also use my phone to record bird calls, which can be useful if you are lucky enough to find a rare warbler.

I always have my camera with me (a Canon R5 with 100-500mm lens). Not only has photography added a new dimension to my birding but it can be a great aid to identification. There are things that are easier to see in a photo than they are in the field.

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

When I started serious birding, the Peterson field guide was the go to reference book that I always carried with me. The last plate in the book was extreme rarities and included an illustration of Pallas's Leaf Warbler. Such was its rarity at the time that I never dreamed of ever seeing one. Things have changed and although I have now seen 49 of these gems in the UK including 31 in Kent I can never get enough of them and it motivates me to get out birding in late October and November each year. 2024 is not looking good for Pallas's but there is still time!

