

KOS News

The Newsletter of the Kent Ornithological Society

Number 541 November 2022



Pallas' Warbler by Jamie Partridge

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

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The autumn passes and what an exceptional season it has been. I cannot remember such a mild November, which, following on from a very dry late summer made for a range of difficulties for our bird populations, not least drought and shortages of some foods compounded by the spectre of Avian Influenza. From a purely selfish birders perspective the marked absence of easterly winds was unfortunate, although it did not appear to inhibit the arrival from Eastern China of Kents first Yellow-browed Bunting, shortly followed by a second just across the water in Holland. Nationally there was a bonanza of American vagrants, none of which made it to Kent. We should not lose hope, in October 1976 John van der Dol caught an Olive-backed Thrush at Sandwich Bay. Forty-six years later we await another, although it has undergone a name change in the intervening years to Swainson's Thrush. No matter, it would still be good to see! It has not all been doom and gloom however, with a long staying Crane in the Stour Valley and an absolute gem of a confiding Sabine/s gull in the car park at Port Lympne zoo. It never ceases to amaze me just where lost waifs and strays turn up!!

Good birding

Norman

News and announcements

Roger Norman

We were saddened to hear of the recent passing of Roger Norman. He was born in Kent in 1934, and his birdwatching activities began at his local gravel pits. Although the site has now been developed with luxury flats, one of the buildings is named in his honour - Roger Norman House. He was a Class A ringer for 33 years and instrumental in setting up Dungeness Bird Observatory in 1952, in later years becoming involved with the running of two other observatories, Tory Island in Donegal and Mullet in County Mayo.

Much of Roger's career was spent in the RAF, and, while stationed in Egypt, he became a member of the Fayid Ornithological Club. Back in England, he served at RAF North Cotes between 1958 and 1961. Off duty, his passion for birding was infectious to the point that he recruited sufficient fellow-airmen to form the RAF North Cotes Ornithological Club. After leaving the Services, he settled in Cleethorpes where he started a group for young naturalists and continued his ringing activities and wrote and published an authoritative book, Birds of Cleethorpes.

The last 22 years of Roger's career were spent at Courtaulds, a major textile-producer the South Bank of the Humber, but, following redundancy in 1990, he returned to Kent where he became a BTO steward and member of Ministry of Defence conservation organisations. Almost up to the end of his life, he continued his ornithological research - ever keen to share his enthusiasm with others by leading surveys, one of which focused on Hen Harrier distribution on Romney Marsh. Many of his bird reference books have been contributed to Dungeness Bird Observatory library which, fittingly, will name one of its sections in his honour.

AVIAN INFLUENZA GUIDANCE

Avian Influenza, or 'Bird Flu', is currently a major problem particularly in colonies around the North Sea, with high levels of sickness and mortality seen in many areas, including Kent.

If you find a dead or dying bird, avoid touching it directly if possible. If you have to move a dead bird please use protective gloves or a plastic bag and dispose of the bird by wrapping it and putting it in your general household waste, making sure you wash your hands thoroughly afterwards.

Any dead waterfowl, seabirds, or birds of prey, as well as other wild birds if five or more are found, should be reported to Defra.

You can contact them on 03459 33 55 77, or by email at defra.helpline@defra.gsi.gov.uk. If you have visited any of the reserves or birding sites in Kent, it is recommended that you wash or anti-bac your hands before leaving.

Finally, if you feed the birds in your garden, it is always advisable to keep your feeders clean using a mild (1:20) disinfectant/water solution. Don't leave old food on the feeders, always change water daily, and wash your hands thoroughly when finished. This helps to control other pathogens including Trichomoniasis and Salmonella

Appeal for WeBS Counters!

The estuaries and wetlands of Kent hold internationally important passage and wintering numbers of wildfowl and waders. We only know this because of regular counting, and the most important method of collecting such data is through the Wetland Birds Survey (WeBS) which requires sites to be counted once a month from September to March, and ideally year-round. To ensure adequate cover of all areas in Kent, many volunteers are required, especially for the large estuaries. We are currently struggling to cover all sites and existing volunteers are not getting any younger! New counters are urgently needed, particularly on the Thames and Medway. **One important site that currently has no counter is Cliffe/Cooling Marshes, which includes an exciting new area of managed retreat.**

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

Contacts - Bob Knight, Brian Watmough, Murray Orchard.

Tracking avian flu through waterbird counting



Photograph: Ken Jack/Getty Images

Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) is circulating widely in UK waterbirds. The latest advice and links to relevant government information can be found at www.bto.org/avian-flu. However, if you submit data to WeBS via [WeBS Online](#), we are now also requesting that you include a note if you suspect HPAI at your site due to unusual mortality or symptoms in live birds. These anecdotal reports will be combined with other sources of mortality information to help researchers build up a more detailed picture of mortality, especially to help map where the biggest impacts may be occurring.

WeBS counters form a unique surveillance network of UK waterbirds, and so your reports will be invaluable for understanding the situation countrywide going forward.

HOW YOU CAN HELP

- Keep counting and help us fill any gaps in coverage – the regular monthly counts of live birds collected by WeBS will be the primary way we will be able to identify which species and sites have likely been hardest hit. It is more important to properly count live birds than look for dead ones.
- If you suspect bird flu in a dead bird due to unusual mortality or symptoms in live birds present (e.g. twisting of the head, tremoring, respiratory distress, loss of balance) report to the **Defra (03459 33 55 77) helpline**. This is particularly important if bird flu has not yet been recorded near to your suspected case.
- Add a note of suspected cases to your WeBS count. Add to the relevant species comment by clicking on the comment symbol. Mention flu so we can find the comment. Give the number, age if possible, and if the bird was dead or sick, e.g. “3 sick adults showing flu-like symptoms”, “2 adults and 1 young bird dead, bird flu possible” or “10 birds dead, avian flu suspected as known to be present at site”.
- It is important that only live birds are marked as present when you submit your counts, so if there were no live birds of the relevant species present, instead add your record in the “Extra Details” comments box at the top. Please specify the species if adding to the extra details comment box, e.g. “2 dead Mute Swan, bird flu suspected, no live birds present”.
- Note it is possible to optionally record seabirds and birds of prey in WeBS Online as well as waterbirds, either in the “Other Common Species” tab if they have previously been recorded, or by adding as a new species. You can add avian flu comments to these other species.
- Whilst this is a disease of birds, there is zoonotic potential to cause disease in humans. Do not touch dead birds.
- Report to site managers, landowners or councils as appropriate, who may decide to collect carcasses with appropriate PPE.
- If you can do so safely without touching the dead bird, check for rings and report to www.ring.ac – this too will help enable research into the scale of mortality and which populations are most adversely affected.

COLOUR RINGED REDSHANK-REQUEST FOR SIGHTINGS.

The Swale Wader Group [Swale Wader Group - Home \(swalewaders.co.uk\)](http://Swale Wader Group - Home (swalewaders.co.uk)) have started a five-year project colour ringing project on Redshank. Redshank numbers are declining nationally and the study aims to provide information on the origins of Redshank wintering in north Kent and the dispersion of our local breeding population. Please report any sightings to Brian Watmough brianrwat@yahoo.co.uk

Surveys

Current surveys are usually posted on the KOS website, for further information please contact Murray Orchard at murray.orchard@live.co.uk

KOS Annual Subscription Increase Action Required by you:

Dear Member,

Our Annual Subscription is rising from January 1st 2023.

At the KOS AGM in April this year, members attending the meeting voted to raise the Annual KOS subscription from **£12 per year to £15 per year**. This rise was recommended by the executive committee, as KOS - like many societies - is faced with rising costs. This increase is the first for almost 20 years.

Each member needs to take action to make this change from £12 p/a to £15p/a.

Below is advice on how to do it.

How do you pay your annual KOS Subs?

The majority of members pay their subscription using:-

- 1) a **Standing Order with their Bank or:-**
- 2) an **Annual arrangement with PayPal.**

1) Standing Orders

If you pay using this method please contact your bank and arrange for the SO to be raised to £15 from January 1st 2023 onwards. **Only you can change your Standing Order by instructing your bank. Please do this as soon as possible.**

2) PayPal Annual Arrangement.

If you pay using an annual PayPal arrangement, to change the amount from £12 to £15 **you must let PayPal know of your wish to increase the annual sum charged. Please contact PayPal to do this.**

3) Other Payment Methods

If you pay by **cheque** you can still send the Membership Secretary your subscription - for £15 - to my home address:- **Chris Roome, KOS Membership Secretary, Rowland House, Station Road, Staplehurst, Kent TN12 0PY. (Make cheques out to Kent Ornithological Society please.)**

4) Alternatively, you can pay your subscription via BACS:-

KOS Details are:-

Name of Account : **Kent Ornithological Society**

Sort Code: 30-95-37

Account Number: 01637909

Reference: Please use your surname

An email to me - chris.roome@kentos.org.uk letting me know you have acted on this issue would be really helpful!

Thanks, best wishes and Good Birding,

Chris

KOS Membership Secretary

Can you help KOS to continue to grow and develop?

These are busy times for KOS with a number of exciting projects underway or in the pipeline, * in addition to our target of reaching 1,000 members by 2024.

We are looking to add new members to the executive and other committees to help us in these important tasks as well contributing to the day to day running of the Society. There are currently vacancies on the Executive Committee which we hope to fill at this year's AGM. If you feel that you could contribute then we would like to hear from you.

We are interested in anyone who feels that they can contribute to the work of the committee especially if they have skills or experience in the following areas

- financial or accounting experience to support the work of and deputise for the Treasurer
- database experience to support the work of the archivist to collate and manage our bird records
- communications or website experience to support the membership committee to improve the way we communicate with our members and the public
- organisational skills to develop and run a programme of on line talks on behalf of the Membership Committee

If you don't feel you can help, perhaps you know someone else with the skills or experience that you might like to suggest or recommend?

If you would like more information or would like to discuss these opportunities please contact Andre Farr, Chair andre.farrar57@gmail.com or Chris Roome, Vice Chair chrisroome105@icloud.com

* Current or pipeline projects include

- replacing our master database in which all our bird records are archived
- digitalising our pre 2004 paper records so they can be incorporated into the archive
- creating a new digital Birds of Kent
- developing our website further to develop new features and provide better information to members
- creating a fund to support environmental projects and initiatives around the county
- increasing our influence so we can better represent the interests of bird watchers in the county

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:

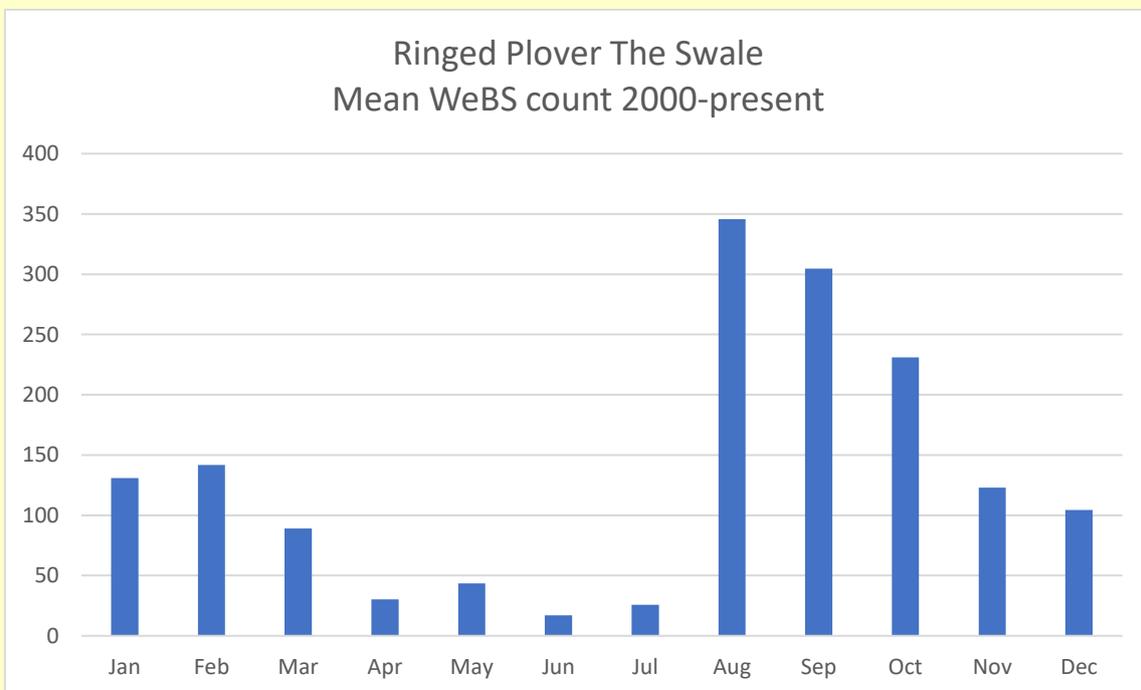
Chris Roome, Rowland House, Station Rd., Staplehurst TN12 0PY
Tel: 01580 891686 e-mail: chrisroome105@icloud.com

EVERY COLOUR RING TELLS A STORY 1: A RINGED PLOVER



This colour ringed Ringed Plover was photographed by Fiona McKinnon from Wellmarsh hide at Elmley on 17th August 2022. She emailed the picture to me and I looked it up on the colour ringing website and contacted the ringer. It was ringed as a chick in Schleswig Holstein in June 2000, fledged on 2nd July and then seen at Shellness on 15th August 2000. It was back in Schleswig Holstein on 3rd April 2021 and then not seen until 6th September 2021 when it was in Holland. It was next seen at Elmley in December 2021. I was back on breeding grounds in Schleswig Holstein in July 2022 and then seen by Fiona at Elmley this August. It has not been reported since, is it still on the Swale? Please check those Ringed Plovers.

So what does this history tell us?



Peak counts of Ringed Plover on the Swale are in August and September. This colour ring sighting together with records from the Swale Ringing group suggest that some of these birds in the autumn peak are from Baltic whilst others are from northern England with one recovery from Iceland. Some will stay for the winter, others are passing through. The Swale Wader Group have not ringed many pulli (nestling birds) on Sheppey so we do not know if the

decreasing number of Kent bred birds migrate although studies in Norfolk suggest that the majority are resident. The Migration Atlas [Bird Migration Atlas](#) shows more details of European wide movements.



Typically, Ringed Plover have a life expectancy of 5 years although the oldest recorded bird is 21 years 11 months. So there is reasonable chance that this bird will outlive me.

I hope that this account from one colour ringed bird will encourage you to submit all sightings of colour ringed birds Repeat sighting are just as important as initial encounters. Regular sightings give information on the timing of migration, site fidelity and survival. Report colour ringed sightings

[Euring Web Recoveries \(bto.org\)](http://bto.org)

Brian Watmough

Auks in Kent

Late autumn and winter are the best times to see auks in Kent, if you can tolerate staring out to sea on a cold windy day. Six species have been acceptably recorded in the county; we are still waiting for Brünnich's Guillemot (but see below), Great Auk (it may be a long wait, I'm afraid), and Pacific auks other than Tufted Puffin.

It is with trepidation that I write about auks or other seabirds, since I have little experience of watching them in Kent and I'm conscious of the far greater understanding that other people have of Kentish seabird movements. I hope, though, that by drawing together data submitted by seawatchers over the years, I can at least give you something to criticise (and any constructive comments on these newsletter articles would be welcome). I am greatly indebted to the late David Davenport, whose notes from twenty years ago have been invaluable in preparing this article, and Murray Orchard supplied some interesting reminiscences. As ever, Robin Mace provided the database files for each species.

Little Auk

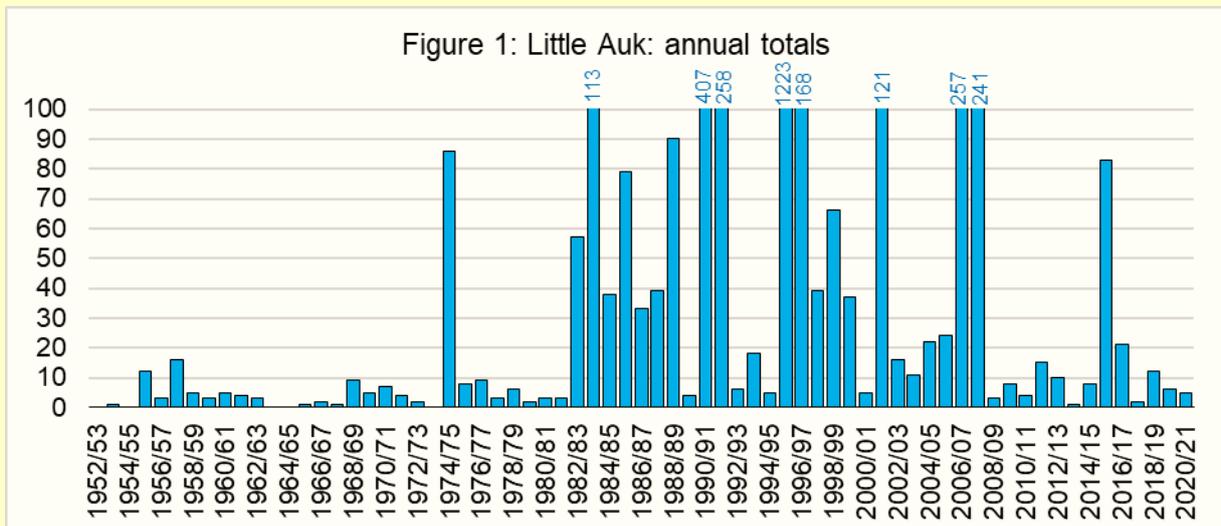


Little Auk by Steve Ashton

In olden times, without optics of the quality we have now, relatively small numbers of Little Auks were seen. However, we can be sure that they occurred since there are records from as early as the eighteenth century, and plenty of inland stranded individuals were found which are often a sign of a large influx to local waters. Prior to the 1950s, rarely were more than five identified in a year, with an exception on 12 off Dungeness on 30th December 1929 (Harrison, *Birds of Kent*, 1953).

Totals remained low, with one further exception, until the 1980s, as shown in Figure 1. That exception involved an influx of at least 85 birds during 28th-31st October 1974, including one inland at Petham. From the 1980s onwards, there have been seven years with totals greater than 100, and you'll see that I've truncated the y-axis at 100 and indicated the larger totals at the top of the bars. Note that totals have been calculated using judgement about whether birds seen at nearby locations on the coast were the same or different.

The increase from the 1970s onwards may have been due partly to more intensive observations, but it could be that, for some reason, more were being regularly carried into the southern North Sea by gales during late October or November. The reason for the decline in frequency of large counts since 2007 is unknown; it's unlikely to be the result of less seawatching being done.



In Table 1, I've listed all site counts of 25 or more. These coincide with big years in Figure 1, but there are a few years, such as 2001/02 and 2007/08, where large totals were made up from widespread smaller counts. It's also worth

mentioning that in the huge auk wreck of February 1983, 26 dead or stranded birds were found around the coast from the Thames to Dungeness and inland.

| | |
|------|---|
| 1974 | 31 at Sandwich Bay on 29th October |
| 1983 | 29 between Allhallows & Cliffe and 49 at Foreness on 29th October |
| 1990 | 30 at Reculver on 3rd November; 41 at Sandwich Bay-Deal and 105 at Dungeness on 28th December |
| 1991 | 26 at Allhallows and 27 at Shellness on 20th October; 29 at Dungeness on 6th November |
| 1995 | 130 at Egypt Bay, 118 at Leysdown, 248 at Foreness, 73 at Sandwich Bay and 174 at Dungeness on 2nd November; 26 at Sandwich Bay and 31 at Dungeness on 3rd November |
| 1996 | 25 at Leysdown on 13th November |
| 2006 | 49 at Reculver and 34 at Foreness on 1st November; 53 at Reculver on 2nd November; 32 at Reculver on 3rd November |
| 2015 | 40 at Shellness on 15th November |

Little Auks can be seen anywhere around the Kent coast but, not surprisingly, most easily (when they are about) where the land sticks out into the sea, such as at Thanet and Dungeness. Table 2 gives the total numbers recorded in various sections of the coast. The large number of 'unknowns' arises because, in some years when lots occurred, the database does not always give full details of smaller numbers, and lumps records from a swathe of sites.

| | Thames | Medway | Swale | Herne Bay-Ramsgate | Pegwell Bay-Folkestone | Hythe-Dungeness | Unknown | Inland |
|-----------|--------|--------|-------|--------------------|------------------------|-----------------|---------|--------|
| 1952-2020 | 357 | 6 | 569 | 1328 | 653 | 730 | 101 | 17 |

Table 2 largely speaks for itself, but I'll expand on a couple of points. First, in most areas there has been little gross change in the proportions being seen, but the Thames estuary is an exception. About 42% of Little Auks seen in Kent during 1952-70 were in that area, but only 10% during 1970-2000 and 4% during 2001-20. I'm not confident of this, but it could be that the change simply reflects the increasing attention in recent years to seawatching along Kent's coast away from the estuaries.

The second point is to comment on the inland records. It's interesting that – despite the far smaller total – more Little Auks have been found inland than Guillemots or Razorbills. Perhaps their small size makes them more prone to be wind-blown, and there is also the possibility that their occasional attachment to Starling flocks is a contributory factor. The largest number inland was six in 1983, of which five occurred during the February wreck. Two found under a hedge at Pembury on 10th February that year had perhaps made the mistake of trying to land on twigs with Starlings.

I have traced just one ringing recovery affecting Kent (and am grateful to Steffan Walton at SBBO for details). Apparently, a storm-wrecked bird was found by a member of the public at Whitfield, near Dover, on 29th October 1983. It was brought to the Sandwich Bay observatory where it was assessed, found to be OK, and ringed and released. It was then again found by a member of the public having flown into a window and damaged its wing at Seaton, Devon, on 1st November. It was taken into care, but we don't know whether it survived.

The largest movements of Little Auks along the English east coast typically occur in late autumn, in clear weather on the day after a north-westerly gale as birds reorientate up the North Sea. In Kent, they are most commonly seen flying west along the north coast in northerly or north-westerly winds. Few Little Auks are seen in Kent in north-easterly winds. Sightings of more than one or two occur on only a few days or even just a single day. The largest movement of all was in 1995, on 2nd November when the wind was NW force 4 and succeeding days. That event did include substantial numbers seen at Dungeness, mostly moving west on the 2nd but smaller numbers in both directions on the 3rd and 4th. The movement of December 1990 – not usually a month with many seen – was more atypical, occurring in strong south-westerly winds on the 28th; that too included birds moving west at Dungeness but relatively few on the north coast.

The peak month for influxes during the recent twenty years has been November (Figure 2). Note that the ten-day averages in this period are fairly low, though, because the run of frequent big influxes beginning in the 1980s largely ended in 2007.

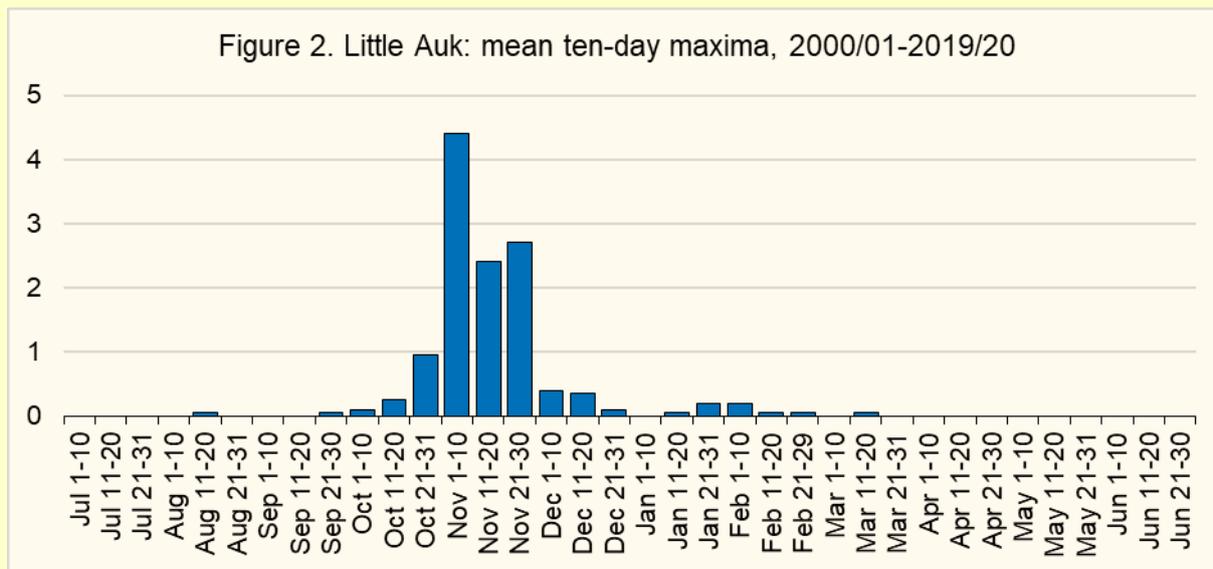


Figure 2 is based on the maximum counts at individual sites. Another way of looking at the seasonal pattern is to calculate the total number occurring in each time period throughout the county. I've done this, presenting results as means for each month, for two thirty-year periods in Table 3. Note that I've excluded the 1950s when few were seen/reported. The table indicates a broadly similar pattern to Figure 2, with most in November, but with relatively greater numbers in October and, in the second period, thanks to the movement of 1990, December. Some of the contributory counts to those higher values, notably in December 1990, are included in Table 1.

| | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec |
|-----------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|------|------|
| 1960/61-1989/90 | 1.2 | 2.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 8.0 | 8.5 | 0.6 |
| 1990/91-2019/20 | 0.6 | 0.5 | 0.1 | 0.1 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.2 | 9.6 | 81.4 | 10.8 |

Over the whole period from 1952 to 2020, 97.3% of Little Auks have been recorded during October-February. Five individuals are recorded for March, three for April and eight for September (the earliest of those on the 11th). There have been three summer records: one found moribund at Hoo on 25th June 1967, one found dead at Sandwich Bay on 27th May 1977 and one seen off Dungeness on 14th August 2016.



Little Auk, summer plumage, 27 May 1977, by Norman McCanch

As an aside, I am writing most of this account of Little Auks on 19th July 2022. Not really Little Auk weather, and I wonder what the species' prospects are if the climate continues to behave like this.

Brünnich's Guillemot



Brünnich's Guillemot , Dorset by Martyn Wilson

This species from the high Arctic is not on the Kent list but it's perhaps worth noting that Harrison (*Birds of Kent*, 1953) reported that W G Jarvis had told him about two stuffed specimens in Kentish pubs, both said to have been killed around 1890. They were at the Woolpack Inn at Iwade and the Pelican Inn at Strood, though both specimens had gone by 1953 and there is no evidence that they were obtained in Kentish waters. There are only about fifty records for Britain, most in northern Scotland, but there was one in Dorset in 2013 and one in Norfolk in 2021: occurrence in Kent is not impossible.

W G Jarvis was a contributor to the Kent Bird Report for many years, with his last record in 1988, I think. I don't know much about him although I understand that he'd fought in the Great War. Tim Sharrock (*Wildlife through the Year*, 2014) says that Mr Jarvis was stone-deaf as a result of gunfire in the trenches and valued companions while birdwatching to point out bird calls to him. Murray Orchard remembers him, too, and in particular his pointing out a Marsh Harrier in the late 1970s and commenting on how they were now wintering. Although rather difficult to understand, presumably as his speech was affected by his deafness, he would always say "birds all gone, birds all gone!". Murray found this somewhat alarmist but was told by another birder at the time that it was probably his conscience speaking as Mr Jarvis had apparently worked for an agrochemical company – but equally it may well have reflected reality as so much of the marshes was being converted from damp pasture to arable use at that time. The Woolpack is still there, by the way, but the Pelican is long gone.

Common Guillemot



Guillemot, winter plumage by Steve Ashton

Guillemots bred on Dover cliffs until about one hundred years ago. In the early nineteenth century, there were “considerable quantities” there, and still an estimated sixty pairs in 1895 (Ticehurst, *History of the Birds of Kent*, 1909). Their headquarters was always the lower half of the cliff below the South Foreland lighthouse. Ticehurst found about 30 pairs there and nearby in 1908. Harrison (*Birds of Kent*, 1953) reported the same number there in 1912 but further declines followed until the last eggs were seen in 1926. These authors’ view was that the decline was driven primarily by cliff falls reducing the extent of suitable ledges, but that persecution including shooting and egg-collecting may have exacerbated it. Since the 1920s, there have been occasional sightings of Guillemots on the sea close to the cliffs, but no better evidence of breeding, though there was a sighting of 40 birds including two well-grown young a mile off Dover in July 1959.

Both Ticehurst and Harrison described the Guillemot as abundant off the coast of Kent during the winter. As typical of the times, few counts were made but Harrison mentions 40 at Dungeness in December 1934 and 100 at Folkestone in December 1936 (many of the latter showing oil contamination). Discussion of Guillemot’s status in the modern era, from 1952 onwards, will follow once I’ve described the historic status of Razorbill.

Razorbill



Razorbill, winter plumage by Phil Smith

Ticehurst, *History of the Birds of Kent*, 1909) described the Razorbill as “a moderately common autumn and winter visitor to the sea-coast of Kent, though it is never so numerous as the Guillemot”. That is, more or less, still the case today though numbers do seem to have been variable. It is not possible to know how abundant it was in Ticehurst’s time, since few counts were made, and we have to make do with references to “small flocks offshore” and similar statements. There has never been any firm evidence of breeding but in 1901 birds were seen flying to and from the cliffs near Dover where the Guillemots were nesting, and one was seen to alight at South Foreland on 27th June 1971.

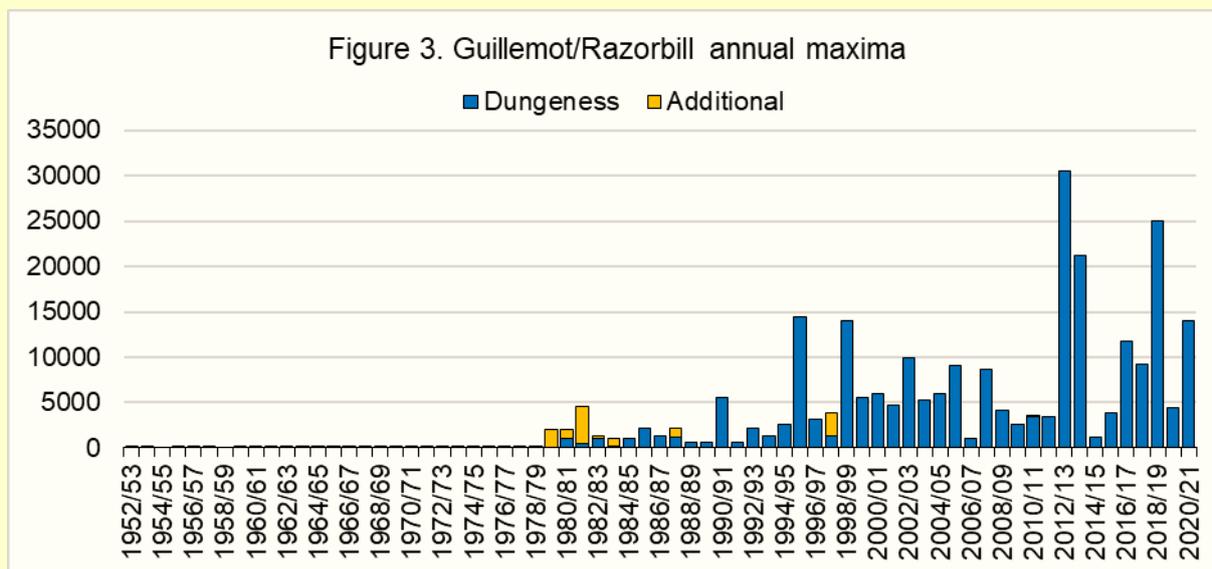
Guillemot/Razorbill

Large auks seen offshore are often too distant to be identified as one or the other and are lumped as Guillemot/Razorbill. The proportion being lumped in Kent has decreased, mainly because better optical equipment has allowed the different shapes and tones to be discerned, but even today some are impossible when seen in poor light or sea spray. In this discussion, most of what I’ll present will involve the lumped species but with some references to specific identifications.

There are not that many ringing recoveries involving Kent, but it seems likely that auks using the Thames estuary and English Channel come from breeding colonies all around Britain and Ireland, from the northern European continent, and perhaps from the Faroes, especially in the case of Guillemot.

Trends

Given Ticehurst’s and Harrison’s descriptions of the species being abundant (Guillemot) or moderately common (Razorbill) in winter, the numbers being seen from the 1950s to 1970s were remarkably small. Since then, things have changed dramatically. Figure 3 shows the annual maxima each year. Most of the highest counts have been made at Dungeness, so Figure 3 is based on those but, where a higher total occurred somewhere else, it shows the difference between the Dungeness and other counts as Additional.



Experience with other species is that the absence of counts in the 1950s can reflect limited recording rather than absence of birds. In this case, with small numbers persisting into the 1970s, it’s not such a simple explanation. Numbers at least in the 1960s and 1970s were genuinely low. Since the y-axis scale makes the low counts scarcely visible in Figure 3, I’ve summarised average peak counts in four sections of coast in Table 4, and also shown the maximum counts in each decade.

| | Mean counts | | | | Maximum counts | |
|-----------------|-------------|-------------------|------------|-----------|----------------|-----------|
| | North Kent | Reculver-Sandwich | Deal-Hythe | Dungeness | Dungeness | Elsewhere |
| 1952/53-1960/61 | 3.3 | 3.6 | 0.0 | 10.2 | 40 | 17 |
| 1961/62-1970/71 | 2.5 | 7.2 | 0.5 | 26.6 | 81 | 30 |
| 1971/72-1980/81 | 44.0 | 411.2 | 6.0 | 147.1 | 1051 | 2038 |
| 1981/82-1990/91 | 54.0 | 1293.5 | 98.2 | 1453.0 | 5560 | 4623 |
| 1991/92-2000/01 | 41.0 | 1179.1 | 897.4 | 5135.1 | 14400 | 3870 |
| 2001/02-2010/11 | 9.9 | 656.8 | 1840.0 | 5484.1 | 9950 | 4060 |
| 2011/12-2020/21 | 41.7 | 435.2 | 2367.3 | 12447.9 | 30440 | 8500 |

The highest counts of all at Dungeness have been in winters 2012/13, 2013/14 and 2018/19, including 12,000 Guillemots and 18,000 Razorbills on 9th January 2013, and 20,000 Guillemots and 5,000 Razorbills on 2nd January 2019. The first two of those winters also saw high numbers elsewhere, including 8,500 Guillemot/Razorbill at Bockhill on 26th January 2014.

Some features of Table 4 may reflect changing observer numbers and behaviour. Ticehurst and Harrison stated that numbers in the Thames estuary were large but with little quantification, and one suspects from the few counts recorded that numbers were far lower than now. In the 1950s and 1960s, relatively few people were seawatching so the average

totals then may be lower than they should be, but some high counts might have been expected. The general trend towards higher numbers is clear. Why has it happened?

The UK breeding population of Guillemots increased by over 100% between 1970 and 2000, and has continued to increase since then, though with less growth in Scotland than elsewhere in Britain (per JNCC website & *Seabird Populations of Britain & Ireland*, 2004). There have also been worrying events such as mass deaths believed to be due to starvation in the North Sea in 2021, and at least localised losses to bird flu in 2022. It is also the case that Icelandic populations – the origin of some wintering in the North Sea – have decreased sharply since 2005 (BirdLife International). In the case of Razorbill, there has also been increase, smaller than for Guillemot, of up to 40% between 1970 and 2000 and continuing strongly since then, though tempered by periods of decline in Wales and Scotland.

Though large, the increases in breeding populations seem insufficient to account for the scale of increase in numbers off Kent. David Davenport (*Kent Bird Report* 1991, pp 108-113) linked the increases of Guillemots and other seabirds from around 1980 with a shift southward in sprat distribution. I am not aware of any studies that have confirmed that correlation as causal (i.e. that increased sprat numbers directly led to the increased seabird numbers) but it's clearly possible that some such change in the marine environment was involved. I suspect that it is more complicated than a simple link to sprats; at the least, other fish species might be involved. In any case, it seems implausible to me that the further almost ten-fold increase in Guillemot numbers since the 1980s can be attributed to continuing sprat increases.

The huge recent increases of wintering waterbirds in the outer Thames estuary and Dover Strait, involving such species as Red-throated Diver, Great Crested Grebe, Cormorant and Guillemot, are remarkable. I'm not aware of studies that have tried to determine the causes of these increases.

Oil pollution

One factor perhaps relevant to the question is the amount of oil contamination of auks (and other seabirds). I haven't traced any long-term synthesis of oiling rates of seabirds in Kent or Britain, but they have certainly fallen dramatically. There is a Belgian study (Stienen *et al.*, 2017, *Marine Pollution Bulletin* 115: 194-200) which concluded that chronic oil pollution in the southern North Sea has almost halted, resulting from effective legislative measures.

The national Beached Bird Survey began in 1971, with five counts each winter, but the numbers of birds being found eventually fell to such a level that from 1991 the number of counts was reduced to just one, in February each year. Occasional mass mortality events do still occur, but they are generally attributed to starvation rather than pollution. Online summaries are available of recent surveys but pulling together the findings of all surveys since 1971 would be interesting – though variations in coverage may affect the comparability of results.

All I've done is to note the mentions of oiled or dead auks in Kent Bird Reports and the KOS database, as shown in Table 5. This is very unscientific, of course, depending on whatever got reported at the time (in some years, none were recorded but it's unlikely none were found), but it does support the idea that the numbers being found dead declined greatly after the 1980s. Bear in mind that – at the same time – the numbers being seen offshore were increasing hugely.

| | Guillemot | Razorbill |
|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| 1952-1960 | 17 | 11 |
| 1961-1970 | 671 | 253 |
| 1971-1980 | 56 | 48 |
| 1981-1990 | 1237 | 1428 |
| 1991-2000 | 37 | 3 |
| 2001-2010 | 6 | 3 |
| 2011-2020 | 5 | 0 |

The numbers found dead varied a lot between years. Over 90% of the Guillemots reported dead were found in six of the 69 years, and 89% of the Razorbills in three of the years. The largest totals of all were in 1969 when 435 Guillemots and 105 Razorbills were found during January-May, many or most of them oiled; in 1981 when 238 auks (4% Razorbills) were found oiled in December; and 1983 when 905 Guillemots and 1,408 Razorbills (plus 38 Puffins and 26 Little Auks) were found in a huge wreck of unoiled birds in February.

Ratio of Guillemots to Razorbills

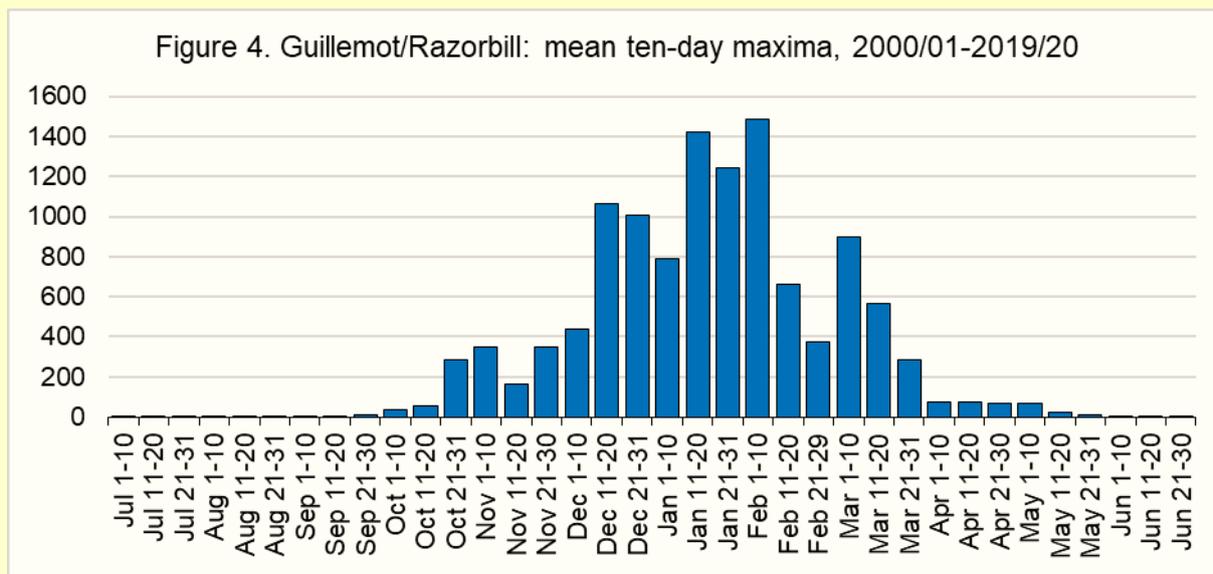
It can be seen from those figures that there's a lot of variation in the Guillemot:Razorbill ratio. Overall, from 1952-2020, 54% of those found dead were Guillemots and 46% Razorbills but the percentage for Guillemots ranged from about

25% to 96%. It is surprising that Razorbills make up such a high proportion of birds found dead, or seen in some years, since they comprise under 25% of the European breeding population of large auks (BirdLife International).

These figures are at variance with former views on the numbers of auks in Kent waters; David Davenport considered that in most years no more than 5% and often only 1% were Razorbills, though there were exceptions such as the wreck of 1983 (see above). The proportion of Razorbills seem to have increased in later years (though still low in some years). In about five of the last twenty years, Razorbills have comprised over 50% of the maxima specifically identified as one or the other species.

Seasonality

Figure 4 shows the mean maxima of large auks (Guillemot and Razorbill) by ten-day period, during the twenty years 2000/01-2019/20. This sums the counts of the two species and any lumped totals for any one site and one date before calculating maxima.



Small numbers can be seen at any time of year, but there is build-up during October-December with high totals maintained through January and then decline through February and March. I have not tried to analyse earlier years in this way but got the impression, when extracting data, that the mid-winter peak has been typical of the period since numbers increased around 1980. Before then, however, when totals were far smaller, the annual maxima of these species seemed to occur most often at passage times, often in April-May or September-November. There have also been some summer influxes, such as 166 off Foreness on 12th June 1998 (when Puffins also were seen, see below).

Sighting of big numbers depends on weather conditions (with onshore winds pushing birds closer to shore), presence of observers and other factors. They may not necessarily accurately reflect the numbers present further offshore, although presumably the two are related.

Inland records

Numbers of large auks reported inland are remarkably small, even or especially these days when thousands are present offshore. It's possible to list them all, including those mentioned by Ticehurst and Harrison.

Guillemot

- 1 obtained near Lydd (perhaps not really inland), Plomley collection (so prior to 1844)
- 1 found dead, Nonington, Hammond collection (so prior to 1903)
- 1 location unknown but probably Medway estuary, Prentis collection (so circa 1894)
- 1 Boxley, date unknown, Maidstone Museum
- 1 R Medway at Cuxton, 12th October 1969
- 1 Aylesford, 2nd March 1986
- 1 Bough Beech reservoir, 11th January 1991

Razorbill

- 1 shot from a flock, Stourmouth, prior to 1889
- 1 found Hartley, near Cranbrook, winter of 1893
- 1 obtained, Knockholt, 1899
- 1 obtained, Knockholt, 1904
- 1 Eastwell Park, 1st February 1958

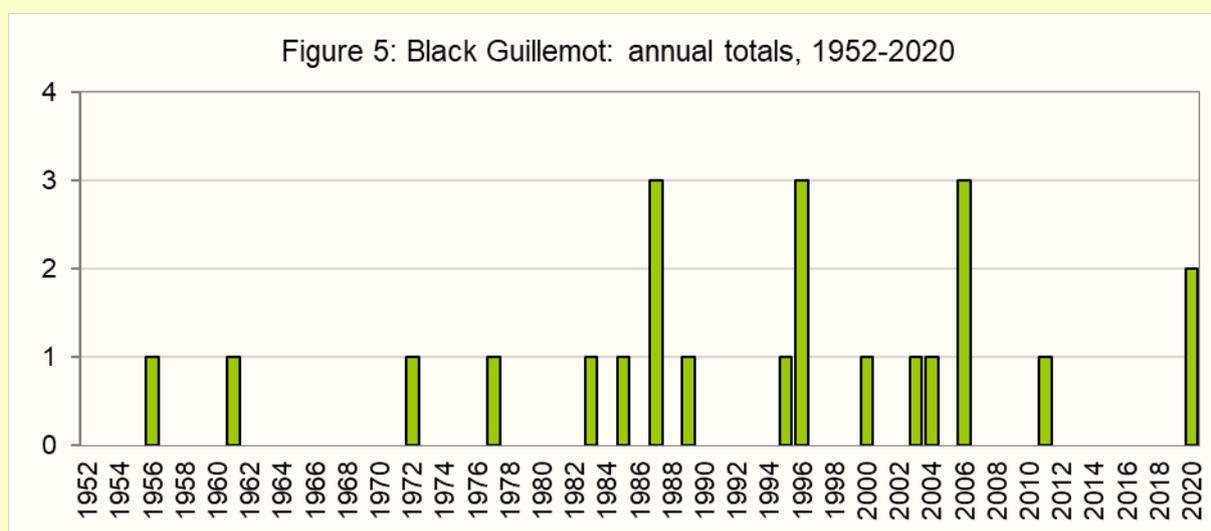
Black Guillemot



Black Guillemot, winter plumage by Andy Taylor

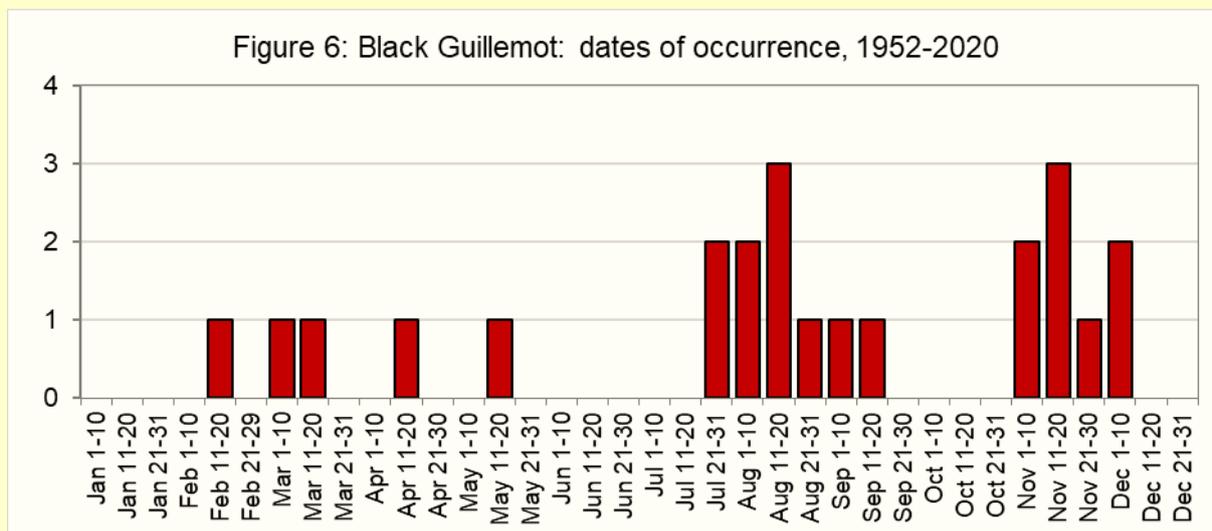
In contrast with other auks, Black Guillemots are very sedentary and, with breeding areas in Britain and Ireland largely in the northern isles, western Scotland and Ireland, occurrence in south-east England is unusual. There were just 28 acceptable records in Kent up to 2020, all single birds. These birds could originate either from British colonies or from Sweden (*Migration Atlas*).

Ticehurst (*History of the Birds of Kent*, 1909) includes three undated individuals in the nineteenth century: two probably shot off Dungeness and one at an unknown location. The earliest was obtained some time prior to 1844. Ticehurst also included one shot “below Mucking Light” on 28th August 1885, but that is closer to the Essex shore and indeed is included in the *Birds of Essex* (Wood, 2007). Harrison (*Birds of Kent*, 1953) includes two more: a male shot off Dungeness on 25th May 1911 and, the first sight record, one at Dungeness on 10th February 1951. Records during 1952-2020 are shown in Figure 4.



There hasn't been any obvious change in the frequency of occurrence over the years. A few more were seen during 1991-2020 than in the previous 30 years, but that reflects the increased numbers of people staring out to sea nowadays. Almost half (13) of the 28 birds were seen (or shot) at Dungeness, and most of the rest between Deal and Reculver – with five at Reculver itself.

The seasonal pattern of occurrence is unusual. It doesn't show the autumn and spring peaks typical of many migrants and scarce species, nor the winter peaks of the larger auks. Instead, the most common time to appear is during July-September, presumably during post-breeding dispersal (43% of records during 1952-2020), with another bunch of records during November and early December (35%) and the rest scattered from February to May.



This article covers the period up to 2020. Records for the subsequent period aren't fully collated yet, but I am aware of three in 2021 and 2022 so far. One flew E past Samphire Hoe on 18th September 2021, then one was in the Swalecliffe area intermittently from 11th October 2021 to 7th May 2022, and one was off Dungeness on 2nd August 2022. The Swalecliffe bird, assuming it was the same throughout (and could it have been the same as at Samphire Hoe?), was the longest stayer in Kent by far; the previous longest stays were of just seven days, in 1995 and 1996. All others have been one day wonders.



Black guillemot, Summer plumage, Sandwich Bay by Norman McCanch

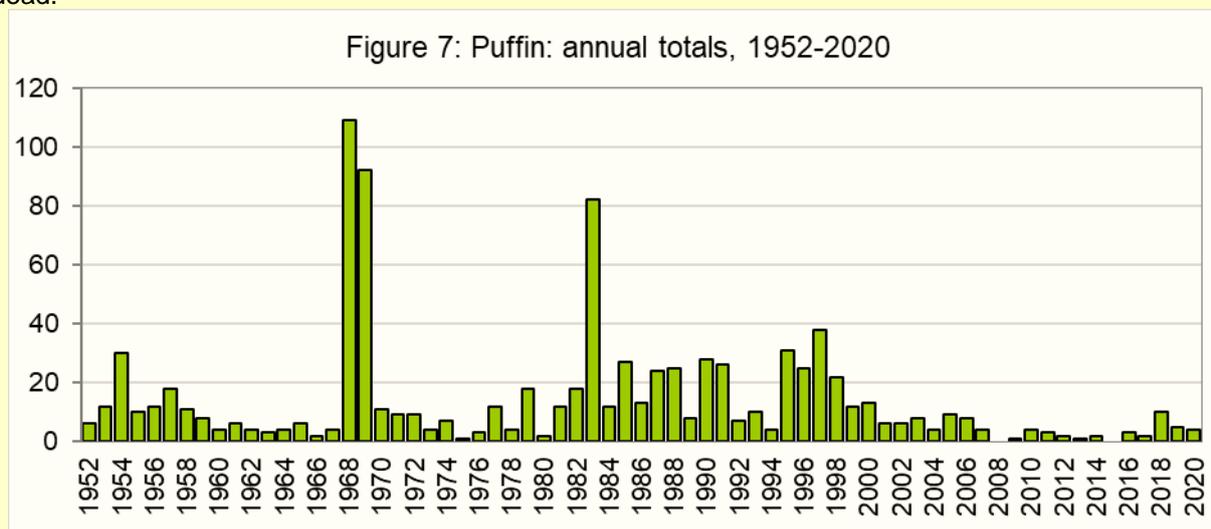
Puffin



Puffin , summer plumage by Martyn Wilson.

I've been dreading reaching Puffin, because I'm aware that many people don't believe some of the high counts from years gone by, while the observers of those birds have firmly stood by them. I've decided to base this account what was published in Kent Bird Reports and leave it to someone else to review the whole lot if they want to. It may seem surprising to people who have only ever seen Puffins in illustrations, or close up at a breeding colony, that they can be a 'difficult' species. But when they've lost the vivid bill of summer and are flying past half a mile away obscured by sea spray ... you know it ain't easy, you know how hard it can be.

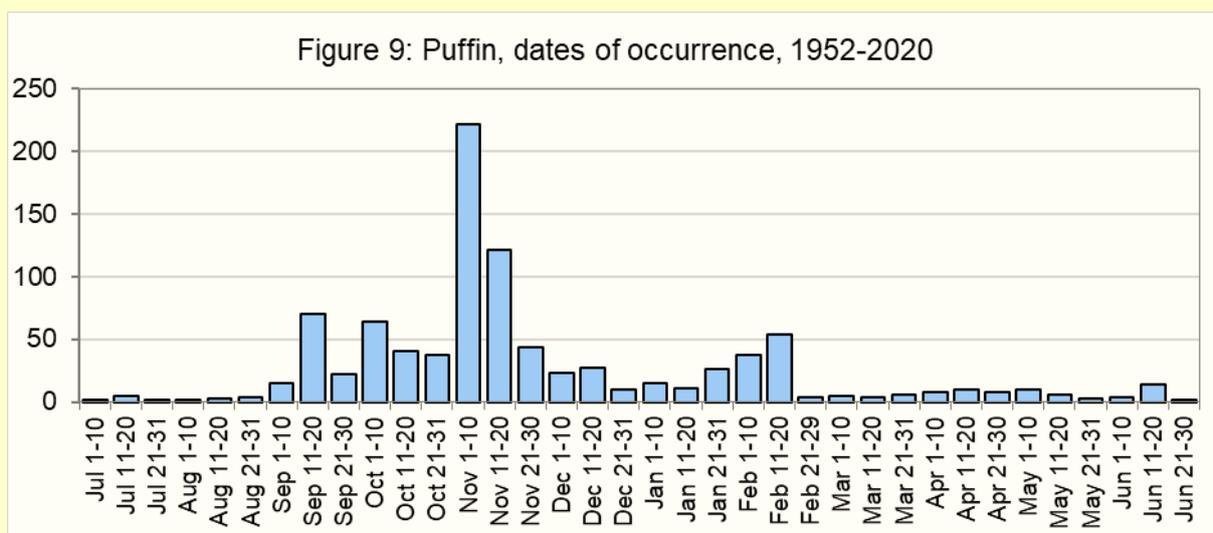
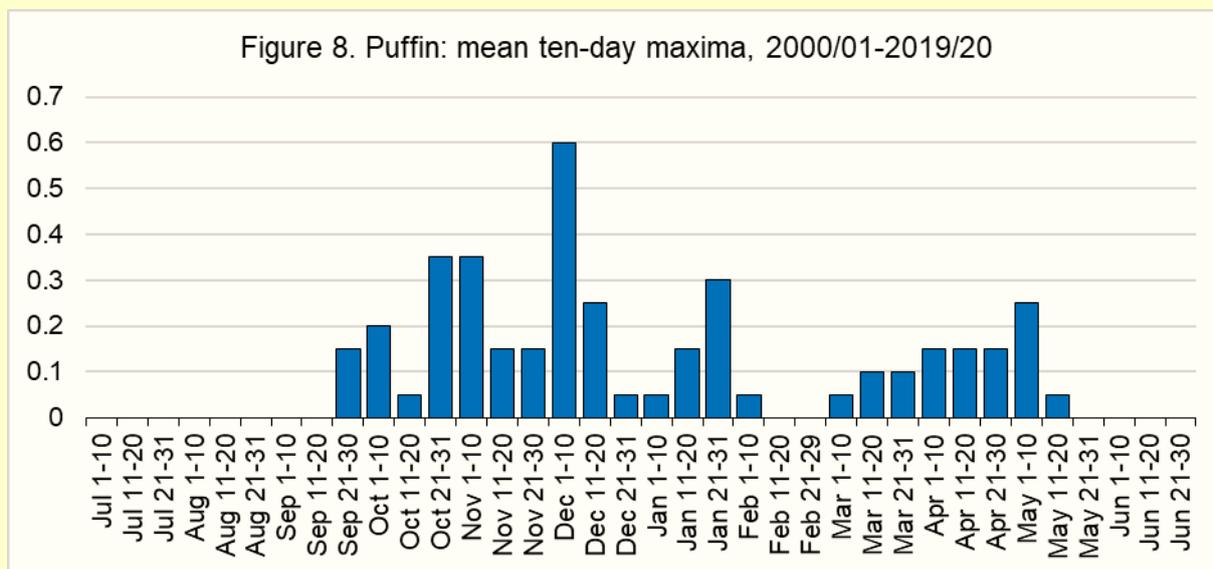
We'll begin with my calculations of the annual totals for each year (using July-June years since this is a non-breeding species in Kent), shown in Figure 7. There's a certain amount of approximation in the totals because KBRs don't always give precise details (location/number/date) of records, and I should mention that, for this species, I've included birds found dead.



In Table 6, I have listed all counts of ten or more on single dates (plus the total from the wreck of February 1983).

| | |
|------|---|
| 1968 | 105 W at Allhallows on 3rd November (included in <i>Birds of Kent</i> 1981) |
| 1969 | 67 off Shellness on 17th November (not included in <i>Birds of Kent</i> 1981 but described as "all thought to be Puffins" in the KBR) |
| 1983 | 38 found dead & 13 live birds seen offshore around Kent coast in February |
| 1983 | 13 off Allhallows on 12th September |
| 1995 | 21 W & 1 E at Minnis Bay on 2nd November |
| 1998 | 13 off Foreness on 12th June |

Figure 8 shows the seasonal pattern of occurrence from the recent twenty years. This is not very clear but perhaps shows that they are mainly a passage species in October-December and April-May, with an additional peak in late January. The longer-term pattern (Figure 9, which includes the high counts) is not that different, though the spring peak here is small, but it does show that birds can appear at any time of year – as the Foreness record of mid June 1998 in Table 6 illustrates (that was a miserable wet and windy month).



The status of the Puffin in Kent probably hasn't changed much over the past 150 years, though with fewer observers and poorer optical equipment, not many were seen in earlier years. The highest count before 1952 was nine near Dungeness (possibly in Sussex) on 9th April 1940. However, there has been speculation that the species bred on the Dover cliffs until some point in the nineteenth century, as described by Ticehurst (*History of the Birds of Kent*, 1909) and, less cautiously, by Harrison (*Birds of Kent*, 1953).

The lack of a recent increase is in contrast to the trends for the large auks in Kent. The British breeding populations are believed to have been increasing over much of the period (though difficulties of counting the breeding numbers of a burrow-nesting bird are considerable) but northern European populations have experienced rapid declines (BirdLife International). From the limited sample of three ringing recoveries affecting Kent (two from the Isle of May in Scotland and one from Skomer in Wales, per BTO Ringing Report) it seems that birds seen here may be of British origin, so the decline or at least lack of increase is hard to explain. Puffins are more pelagic than other auks, however, and perhaps less likely to exploit inshore fish concentrations as do the other species.

There have been a few inland records, though none for the past sixty years! It's possible to list them all:

- 1 Shoreham, late nineteenth century
- 1 Bluebell Hill, near Aylesford, October 1905
- 1 Sevenoaks, November 1908
- 1 Shoreham, 11th January 1945
- 1 Knockholt, 21st September 1954
- 1 near Sevenoaks, 8th October 1957

There have also been a few in the Medway downstream of Rochester, most recently one at Kingsnorth on 23rd October 1989, or well up the Thames, such as two flying west at Swanscombe on 9th February 1983.

As Harrison pointed out, the inland records of this species and Razorbill show a cluster in the Darent valley: two out of five Razorbills and five out of six Puffins were in the Shoreham-Knockholt-Sevenoaks area.

Tufted Puffin



Tufted Puffin by Murray Wight

One of the most astonishing and unexpected bird records for Kent was the Tufted Puffin seen in the Swale off Oare Marshes on 16th September 2009, by Murray Wright and others (Kent Bird Report 2009 pp 161-163; British Birds 104: 261-265). An adult, it was seen in flight before it landed on the water about 75m offshore, but soon took off again and disappeared to the west.

It was the first and remains the only accepted British record of the species, which breeds in the north Pacific. Three others have been documented in Europe: in southern Sweden in June 1994, Svalbard in July 2019 and May 2020, and the Faroe Islands in January 2020.

Andrew Henderson

Identifying Winter Auks - simple or tricky?

Here in Kent we mostly see auks as winter birds, usually flying rapidly by offshore or occasionally as slightly bemused individuals paddling around in harbours and docks and sadly, all too frequently moribund or dead on the shoreline, victims of pollution or bad weather.

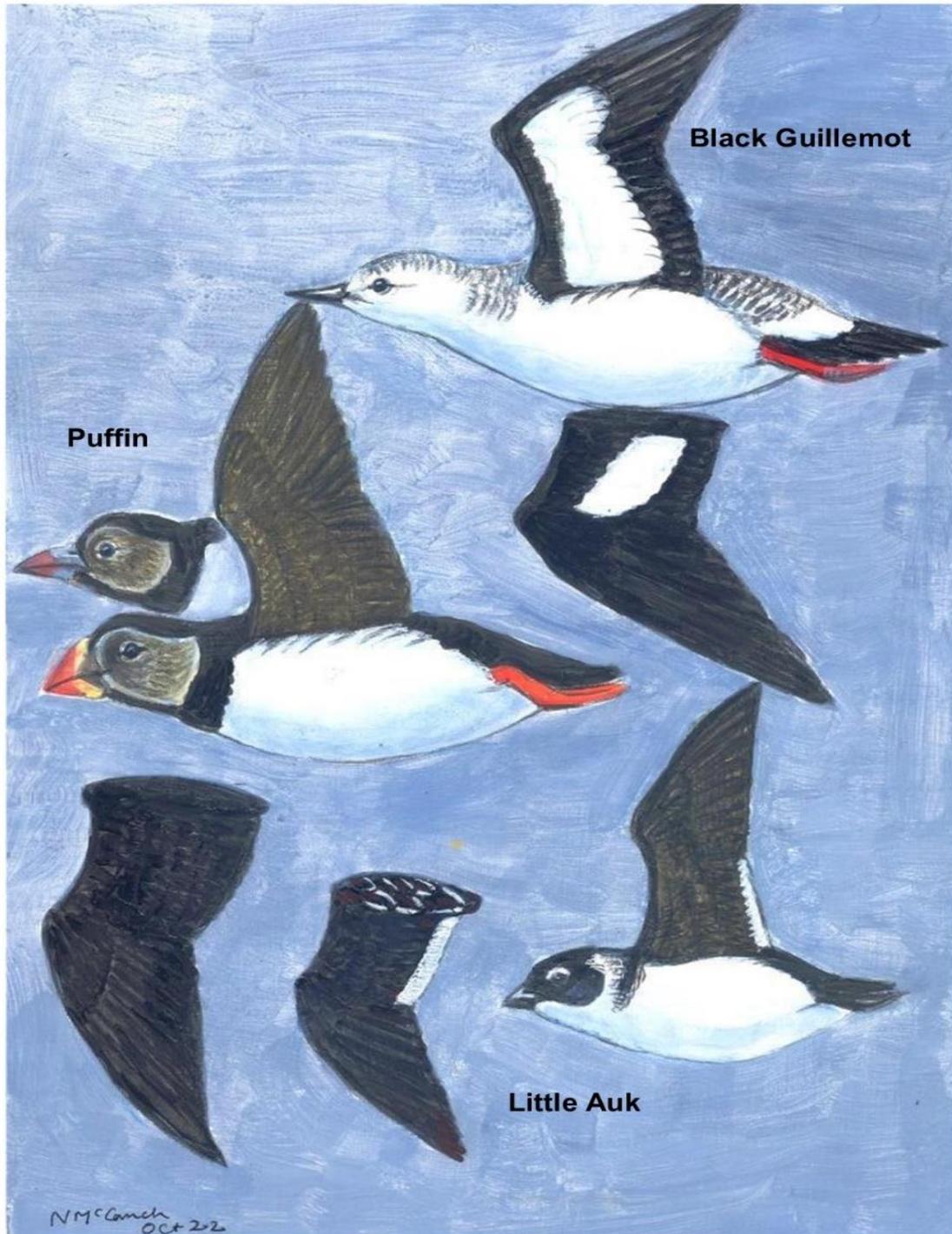
The most frequently encountered are Guillemot and Razorbills, with the smaller species, Puffin, Black Guillemot and Little Auk much rarer. The problems of identification are often exacerbated by flight views over the sea and variable light conditions at long range, hence the preponderance of "Auk spp" in any reliable notebook.



Large Auks by Norman McCanch

However, it is possible to make a more considered identification in many cases given good optics and a pragmatic approach to what is possible. There are a number of key factors to consider which in combination can inform an opinion. These are itemised below and are best used in conjunction with the simple sketches included and to examine photographs. This can help to build familiarity.

- 1) **Flight** - Typical auk flight is fast with rapid wing beats, Black Guillemots often fly low over the water, while other auks tend to travel rather higher above the surface. Little Auks are very rapid fliers, often in small groups whizzing past above the wave crests or hiding in the deep troughs. A solitary Little Auk may well join up with groups of other similar sized birds in small flocks, particularly Starlings. This may be why they often turn up stranded inland.
- 2) **White underwings** – Razorbill, Guillemot and Black Guillemot.
- 3) **Dark underwings** – Puffin and Little Auk.
- 4) **White trailing edge to inner wing** – Razorbill, Guillemot and Little Auk.
- 5) **Front end** - Pointed = Guillemot, Black Guillemot - Blunt = Puffin, Razorbill and Little Auk.

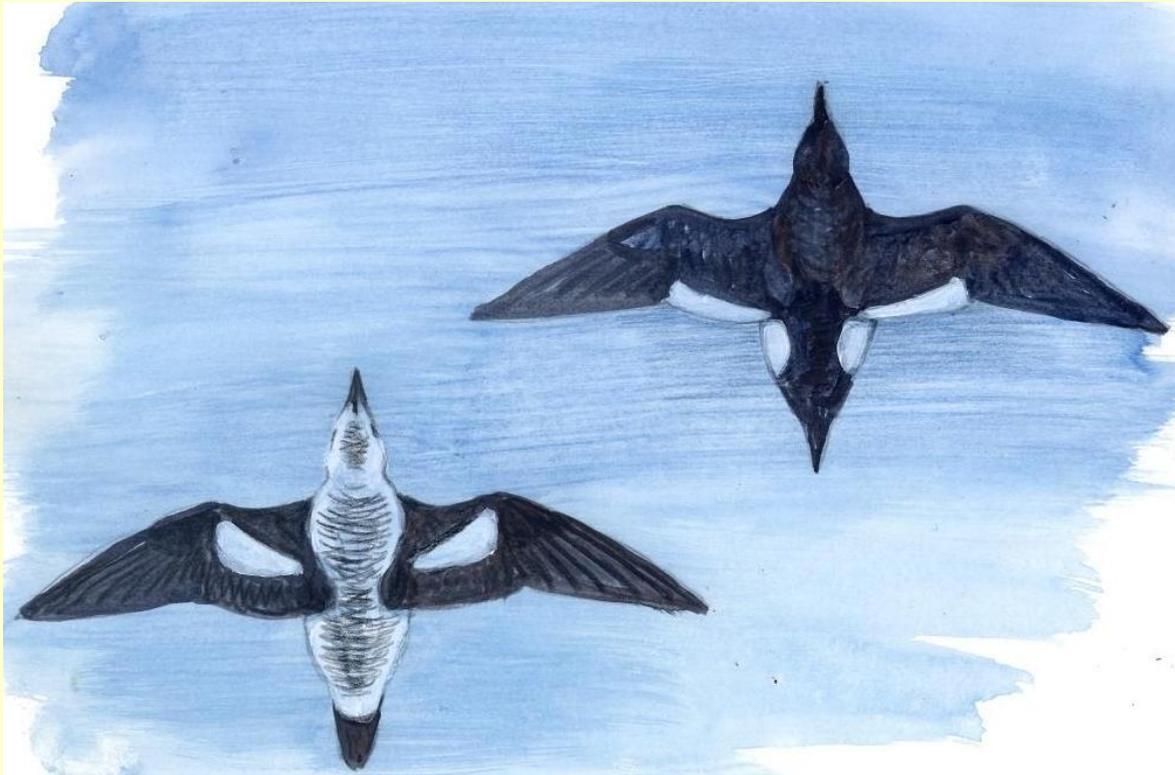


Smaller Auks by Norman McCanch

- 6) Upper-parts colours** – Variable grey-brown = Guillemot
 Blue-black = Razorbill, Little auk
 Very white/grey = Black Guillemot
 Dull Black = Puffin

These six features, carefully observed, should allow the identification of any auk seen reasonably well. However there are a few other supporting features worthy of note, some of which can cause confusion.

Most Guillemots we see in winter appear dull greyish-brown, but some individuals can appear to be darker, blacker and more contrasting. These are most likely to be Guillemots of the Northern race *Uria aalge aalge*. Typical Southern birds of the race *U.a.albionis* are paler and browner especially in spring as they acquire breeding plumage.



Black Guillemot (left) and Razorbill(right) seen from above by Norman McCanch

In flight viewed from above both Black Guillemot and Razorbill show characteristic white patches. In Razorbill these are typically white 'kidney patches' just behind the point where the trailing edge of the wing joins the body. This is most visible when birds leave nest sites on cliffs below the observer, but I have occasionally seen them on passage birds seen from a high vantage point. The situation with Black Guillemot is less easy as the feature, a noticeable white patch on the lower rump and upper-tail coverts is diagnostic in winter adults, but first winter birds are sometimes more uniformly grey above and the rump patch is less visible. If it is there it is a good field mark!

Puffin faces. We are all familiar with the typical summer Puffin "clown face". However, in winter adults lose some of the coloured parts of their bills, especially the golden yellow frame around the bill base. In addition, the remaining coloured parts, blue grey at the base and reddish towards the tip are much duller giving a less obvious bill pattern. At the same time the nice creamy white puffin-face is replaced by a variable darker, greyer suffusion. The result is that winter Puffins show a dark face, rather than the pale one typical of summer birds. A further complication is that first winter Puffins have a dark face and a smaller, narrower dull bill which can confuse an observer if it is unfamiliar.



Puffin: Adult winter bill



Puffin: First winter bill

KENT BIRD SIGHTINGS FOR SEPTEMBER-OCTOBER 2022 - Chris Hindle

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

WEATHER

The first part of **September** was warm although it soon became unsettled. After the 12th it was cooler and more autumnal with the last few days being particularly cool. It was generally drier around mid-month, but more showery again later and the last few days of the month were quite wet. A total of 64.6 mm of rain fell at Bishopstone during the month. Most of **October** was warmer than average although the second week was rather cooler. The last ten days were particularly mild with 22.9°C being the hottest October 29th on record. Rainfall was below average with 37.75 mm of rain at Bishopstone.

PARTRIDGE TO WILDFOWL

One or two adult **Black Brants** were reported from Seasalter between Oct 19th and 31st with one also seen at Reculver/Minnis Bay area on the 29th and 30th. A **Pale-bellied Brent Goose** was seen at Seasalter on the Oct 23rd, 30th and 31st with two there on the 25th.



Black Brants by Mark Chidwick

A **Pink-footed Goose** was present at Oare Marshes from Sept 15th to Oct 16th with 11 at Reculver on Sept 16th and five there on the 17th. Up to 12 birds were seen at Grove Ferry between Sept 22nd and Oct 21st and on Oct 11th there were 17 flying W at Foreness with seven there on the 20th. Two were also seen at Worth Marshes on the 31st.

There were six **White-fronted Geese** at Minnis Bay, seven at Beltinge and one at Tankerton on Oct 20th whilst one was seen at Pegwell Bay on the 21st.

A **Whooper Swan** was seen on Walland Marsh on Oct 1st.

A **Mandarin** was recorded at Swalecliffe on Oct 17th with as many as six **Egyptian Geese** seen at Reculver, Sevenoaks WR, Dunorlan Park, Bough Beech, Sandwich Bay, DBO, Cliffe Pools, Swalecliffe and Seaton.

Up to three **Garganey** were seen at Grove Ferry, Worth Marshes and Dungeness RSPB with the last bird recorded at Worth Marshes on Oct 1st.

A **Scaup** flew past DBO on Oct 20th and a **Velvet Scoter** flew N at Walmer on Sept 24th whilst in October as many as six birds were reported from North Foreland, Swalecliffe, Tankerton, Seasalter, Samphire Hoe and DBO.

A juvenile **Long-tailed Duck** flew E at Foreness on Sept 24th whilst one was found at Lade Pits on Sept 30th. During October there was one at Dungeness RSPB from the 7th-26th and another bird was seen at Scotney from the 23rd-31st.

The first **Goosander** of the autumn was seen at Reculver Marshes on Oct 17th after which as many as three birds were recorded from Reculver, Swalecliffe, Cliffe and Sandgate.

NIGHTJAR TO WADERS

A migrant **Nightjar** was photographed in a garden at Bishopstone on about Sept 25th.

A **PALLID SWIFT** was reported from Grenham Bay on Oct 23rd and single birds were also seen at Foreness on Oct 25th and 27th and at Seasalter on the 27th. Two were reported between Foreness and Botany Bay on the 30th.

Unidentified **swifts** were seen at North Foreland on Oct 22nd and 28th, at Maidstone, Sandwich Bay and Worth Marshes on the 23rd, at Foreness and Uplees on the 24th, at Sandwich Bay on the 28th and Barming on the 30th.

A **Common Crane** seen on Chislet Marshes roosted at nearby Grove overnight between Oct 2nd and the end of the month



Common Crane by Steve Ashton

A **Red-necked Grebe** was reported off DBO on Sept 27th and a juvenile drifted E at Coldharbour on Oct 11th and was seen there again on the 13th whilst single **Black-necked Grebes** were recorded from Dungeness RSPB on Sept 5th and Reculver on Sept 16th and 18th with one or two seen during October at Scotney and North Foreland.

A **Stone-curlew** was heard flying over Snodland at 0520 on Sept 6th and another was recorded at DBO on the 11th.



Stone Curlew by Barry Wright

An adult **LESSER SAND PLOVER** was seen briefly and videoed at Cliffe Pools on Sept 1st. If accepted by BBRC this will be a new species for Kent.

Single **Dotterel** flew over Dungeness on Sept 2nd, 6th, 7th, 10th and 12th and Oct 2nd with others seen in the Minnis Bay/Chamber's Wall area on Sept 4th and 6th with six at South Foreland on Sept 5th. Single birds were also recorded from Foreness on the Sept 7th and from Bockhill on the 18th.

During September and October as many as 50 **Curlew Sandpipers** were seen at Cliffe Pools with smaller counts at Dungeness RSPB, DBO, Stodmarsh, Bough Beech, Gravesend, Romney Marsh, Swalecliffe, Oare Marshes, Sandwich Bay and Pegwell Bay.



Temminck's Stint by Martyn Wilson

A **Temminck's Stint** was recorded at Dungeness RSPB between Sept 4th and 10th with the first **Purple Sandpiper** of the autumn seen at Seasalter on Sept 16th after which up to six birds were seen at Reculver, Minnis Bay, Ramsgate, North Foreland, Foreness and Seasalter

During September and October up to 12 **Little Stints** were recorded at Dungeness RSPB, DBO, Oare Marshes, Pegwell Bay, Elmley, Capel Fleet, Gravesend and Cliffe Pools.

A **Buff-breasted Sandpiper** was found on the beach at Sandwich Bay on Sept 17th whilst the **Pectoral Sandpipers** seen at Dungeness RSPB and Cliffe Pools at the end of August were still present at both locations until Sept 3rd. Another bird was recorded at Elmley from Sept 4th to the 6th.



Buff-breasted Sandpiper by Ian Nash

The first **Jack Snipe** of the autumn was found at Sandwich Bay on Sept 30th after which single birds were seen at Cliffe, Sandwich Bay, Elmley, Ham Road and Worth Marshes.

A juvenile **Red-necked Phalarope** was found at Dungeness RSPB on Sept 2nd and others were seen at Worth Marshes on the 14th and Scotney on the 15th. Another was seen on the sea off DBO on Sept 20th and 21st and was only the second record of this species for the Observatory.

A **Grey Phalarope** was seen on the sea off Walmer Beach and Kingsdown on Oct 9th and others were seen inland at Stodmarsh from Oct 10th-13th and on the sea at DBO on the 27th.

During September up to six **Wood Sandpipers** were recorded from Dungeness RSPB, Stodmarsh and Foreness whilst one or two **Spotted Redshanks** were seen at Cliffe Pools, Oare Marshes, Dungeness RSPB, Pegwell Bay and Sandwich Bay.

GULLS TO SHEARWATERS

The only record of a **Sabine's Gull** was a juvenile seen at DBO on Oct 9th.

During September up to nine **Little Gulls** were recorded from DBO, Stodmarsh and Reculver and in October as many as 17 birds were recorded from Dungeness RSPB, North Foreland, Foreness, Shellness, Reculver, Cliffe, Tankerton and DBO. From Oct 19th there was a major movement with peak counts of 1,125 at DBO, 656 at North Foreland, 436 at Foreness, 300 at Grenham Bay, 267 at Cliftonville, 256 at Sandwich Bay, 220 at Deal, 89 at St Margarets-at-Cliffe, 120 at Tankerton, 49 at Swalecliffe and 40 at Oare Marshes with smaller counts at various other sites. Also during this period there was also an unusual record of 65 flying inland S over Church Woods, Blean on Oct 24th.

There was an impressive count of 1,159 **Mediterranean Gulls** at Sandgate on Oct 31st.

The long-staying **BONAPARTE'S GULL** was last reported from Oare Marshes on Sept 14th.

During these two months up to six **Caspian Gulls** were seen at DBO, Dungeness RSPB, Pegwell Bay, Sandwich Bay, Sandwich, Dover, Walmer, North Foreland, Foreness, Folkestone, Bockhill, St Margarets-at-Cliffe and Deal with up to eight **Yellow-legged Gulls** seen at DBO, Sandwich Bay, Pegwell Bay, Swalecliffe, Seasalter, Botany Bay, Lower Hope Point, Walmer, North Foreland and Reculver.

A juvenile **White-winged Black Tern** was identified at Dungeness RSPB on Sept 2nd whilst during September as many as 10 **Black Terns** were recorded at DBO, Dungeness RSPB, Reculver, Lade, Cliffe Pools, North Foreland and Foreness.

Up to 14 **Great Skuas** were recorded from DBO, Reculver, Shellness, Swalecliffe and North Foreland.

Two **Pomarine Skuas** flew E at DBO on Sept 10th and 11th and one flew S at North Foreland on Sept 23rd. One or two were also reported from North Foreland and Shellness on Sept 27th, Swalecliffe between Oct 2nd and 10th, Tankerton on the 4th and North Foreland on the 5th and 13th. On Oct 19th, there were four at Seasalter, one at North Foreland and 12 reported from Shellness whilst on the 20th there were single birds at North Foreland, Swalecliffe, Walmer Beach and Sandwich Bay with two at North Foreland on the 21st and 23rd. One was recorded at DBO on the 22nd and 23rd and one or two reported from North Foreland on the 23rd, 27th, 30th and 31st and at Swalecliffe on the 29th.

As many as 37 **Arctic Skuas** were seen at DBO with up to 25 at Foreness, Reculver, Sandwich Bay, Warden Point, Samphire Hoe, Shellness, Folkestone, Hythe, Swalecliffe, Tankerton, Sandgate, Lade Bay and North Foreland.

Single juvenile **Long-tailed Skuas** flew past DBO on Sept 7th, 9th and 27th and were seen at Foreness on the 11th and North Foreland on the 15th and 17th.

A juvenile **Puffin** was reported offshore at Leysdown on Sept 17th and a juvenile was seen on the Swale off Oare Marshes on Oct 14th whilst one was reported from Grenham Bay on the 19th. Two were also seen at DBO on Oct 23rd with one flying W there on the 28th.

After two **Black-throated Divers** were reported from Minnis Bay on Sept 16th single birds were seen at Reculver, Bockhill, Sandwich Bay and Shellness and the first **Great Northern Diver** was reported from Foreness on Oct 5th after which single birds were recorded from Reculver, DBO, Sheerness and North Foreland.

The only report of a **Leach's Petrel** concerned one that flew W at DBO on Oct 23rd.

On Sept 16th, three **Sooty Shearwaters** were reported from Minnis Bay with two reported from Grenham Bay. Five flew past DBO on the 17th and there were 18 there on the 18th and eight on the 19th. During October five flew past DBO on the 7th with two on the 9th and one on the 11th, two were reported from North Foreland on the 19th with single birds at DBO on the 21st and 27th.

A **Manx Shearwater** was seen at DBO on Sept 5th with three there on the 7th and one at North Foreland on the 11th. On Sept 16th there were six at North Foreland, two at Foreness and one at Reculver and on the 17th there were three at

DBO. Three were also seen at DBO on the 18th with two at Swalecliffe the next day. Others were reported at North Foreland on the Oct 9th and at DBO on the 24th.

Balearic Shearwater counts at DBO during September

| | |
|------------------|-----|
| 1 st | - |
| 2 nd | - |
| 3 rd | - |
| 4 th | 15 |
| 5 th | 7 |
| 6 th | 17 |
| 7 th | 106 |
| 8 th | 51 |
| 9 th | 4 |
| 10 th | 2 |
| 11 th | - |
| 12 th | - |
| 13 th | - |
| 14 th | - |
| 15 th | - |
| 16 th | - |
| 17 th | 5 |
| 18 th | 18 |
| 19 th | 8 |
| 20 th | 4 |
| 21 st | - |

In addition, one **Balearic Shearwater** was reported flying past North Foreland on Sept 6th whilst on the 7th one or two birds seen at Hythe, Samphire Hoe, Seabrook and Lade Bay. Another bird was reported flying past North Foreland on the Sept 16th and there were two at DBO on the 26th. During October two flew past DBO on the 4th with three on the 5th, five on the 7th, two on the 24th and singles on the 6th, 23rd and 26th.

WHITE STORK TO WOODPECKERS

50 **White Storks** flew over Dungeness on Sept 16th.



Glossy Ibis by Tim Gutsell

During these two months up to six **Glossy Ibises** were seen at Dungeness RSPB with up to 11 at Stodmarsh and one or two birds at Romney Marsh, Sandwich Bay, Sholden, Sandgate and Worth Marshes.

Up to four **Spoonbills** were seen at Dungeness RSPB, Halstow Marshes, Scotney, Swanscombe, Foreness, Conyer, Bough Beech, Shellness, Graveney Marshes, Swalecliffe, Seasalter, Lade, Oare Marshes, Pegwell Bay and Cliffe Pools.

Single **Bitterns** were seen at Dungeness RSPB, Grove Ferry/Stodmarsh, Oare Marshes and Elmley and a juvenile **Night-heron** was seen at Lade Pits between Sept 21st and 23rd.

As many as 20 **Cattle Egrets** were seen at Elmley, Dungeness RSPB, Lydd, Hunton, South Swale LNR, Swale NNR, Shellness, Swanscombe, Seaton and Grove Ferry/Stodmarsh.



Purple Heron by Garr Rigden

One of the juvenile **Purple Herons** seen at Grove Ferry/Stodmarsh during July and August was still there until Sept 10th. One was reported from Hythe on the 10th whilst at Seasalter the long staying juvenile remained to at least Oct 31st.

Three **Great White Egrets** were seen at Worth Marshes on Sept 13th, one flew W at Swalecliffe on the 15th, two flew E at Abbotscliffe on the 18th and another flew in off the sea at Copt Point on the 26th. During October up to 18 birds were seen at Dungeness RSPB and one or two at DBO, Chamber's Wall, Bough Beech, Chislet Marshes, Oare Marshes, Penshurst Place, Waterham, Stodmarsh, Tankerton and Cliffe.

A **SHORT-TOED EAGLE** was seen and photographed flying E at South Foreland and later at Ash Levels on Sept 11th. If accepted by BBRC it will be another new species for Kent and only the sixth for the UK.

One or two **Ospreys** were seen at Dungeness, Little Farthingloe, Oare Marshes, Elmley, Riverside CP, St Margarets-at-Cliffe, Warehorne, Appledore, Yantlet Creek, Kingsdown and Cliffe Pools.



Honey Buzzard by Jamie Partridge

In September **Honey Buzzards** were reported from Dungeness, South Foreland, Herne Bay, Whitstable and Knockholt and a juvenile **Goshawk** was reported flying over Fordwich on Oct 31st.

A ring-tailed **Hen Harrier** flew W at Chamber's Wall on Sept 22nd and during the last ten days of October single birds were seen at Cliffe Pools, Bishopstone, Tankerton, Seasalter, Reculver Marshes, North Foreland, Pegwell Bay, DBO and Shuart.

A juvenile **PALLID HARRIER** was seen on Worth Marshes on Sept 27th. If accepted by the BBRC this will be the eighth record of this species for Kent.

Up to four **Red Kites** were recorded from Bough Beech, Chevening and Penshurst Place.

As many as three **Long-eared Owls** were seen at Elmley, Reculver Marshes, Walmer and Sandwich Bay and up to three **Short-eared Owls** were seen at Graveney, Seasalter, Plumpudding, Reculver, North Foreland, Cliffe, Sandwich Bay, DBO, Cliftonville, Bockhill and Foreness with up to six on Sheppey during this period.

A **Hoopoe** was found by the Old Lighthouse at Dungeness on Sept 3rd with another at Cliffe Pools on Sept 10th whilst a **Bee-eater** flew N over Worth Marshes on Sept 3rd.



Wryneck by Steve Reynaert

Two **Wrynecks** were found at Worth Marshes on Sept 3rd with two at Langdon Bay from the 4th-6th. One was also seen at Little Farthingloe on Sept 6th with others at DBO on the 9th, Horsmonden on the 11th, Langdon Bay from the 12th-17th, Sandwich Bay from the 13th-16th, at Reculver on the 16th, Bough Beech on the 17th and at Penshurst Place on the 18th.

FALCONS TO HIRUNDINES

A dark morph **ELEONORA'S FALCON** was seen at Worth Marshes on Sept 11th. This is only the second record of this species for Kent, the second at this site and the second this year.

A juvenile **Red-footed Falcon** was found on Graveney Marshes on Sept 14th and was still there on the 15th and another juvenile was seen at Elmley between Oct 3rd and 9th.

After single **Merlins** were seen at Reculver and Downe on Sept 26th one or two birds were recorded from DBO, Chislet Marshes, Reculver Marshes, Elmley, Shuart, Botany Bay, North Foreland and Seaton.

A **Red-backed Shrike** first recorded at Sandwich Bay at the end of August was still there on Sept 3rd and another was seen at Hythe Ranges on the 3rd with a first winter bird at Worth Marshes on the 14th and 15th.

One or two **Ravens** were recorded at Dungeness RSPB, Mill Point, Sandgate, Penshurst Place, Canterbury, Pegwell Bay, Chislet Marshes, Nethergong, Minster Marshes and Reculver.

A "**Continental**" **Coal Tit** was photographed on feeders in a garden at Seasalter on Oct 27th and two were seen at Tankerton on the 31st.

The first **Woodlark** of the autumn flew N at Sandwich Bay on Sept 19th followed by one flying W at Foreness on the 29th. In October two flew past Langdon Bay on the 9th and there was one at DBO on the 14th with six flying W at the Long Pits on the 16th and single birds at North Foreland and South Foreland on the 19th. On Oct 22nd there were single birds at Hythe and Bockhill, on the 29th one flew W at Plumpudding on the 31st and there were two reported from Dunkirk with another at Bockhill.

A **Shore Lark** was reported flying over North Foreland on Oct 31st.

WARBLERS TO WHEATEARS

A **Wood Warbler** was identified at Nethercourt Park on Sept 1st and was still there on the 5th.

The first **Yellow-browed Warbler** of the autumn was seen at DBO on Sept 20th after which one or two birds were recorded from Sandwich Bay, DBO, South Foreland, Ramsgate, Stodmarsh, Warden Point, Bockhill, Kingsdown, Pegwell Bay, Langdon Cliffs, Margate Cemetery, North Foreland, Reculver, Hildenborough, Cliftonville, Tankerton, Marden and Foreness



Yellow-browed Warbler by .Chris Hindle

A **Siberian Chiffchaff** was trapped and ringed at DBO on Oct 3rd.

During September up to three **Grasshopper Warblers** were seen at Reculver Marshes, Bockhill, DBO, Sandwich Bay and Little Farthingloe with the last sighting at Shuart on Sept 20th.

A **Barred Warbler** was found at North Foreland on Sept 1st with another there on Oct 12th.

The first **Dartford Warbler** of the autumn was seen at Sandwich Bay on Sept 18th. After this there was a significant influx with up to four birds recorded in the Dungeness area and at Reculver, Chamber's Wall, Coldharbour, Aycliffe, Abbotscliffe, Samphire Hoe, Bockhill, Dover, Cliffe Pools, Oare Marshes, Grenham Bay, Cliftonville, Shellness, North Foreland and Foreness.



Dartford Warbler by Chris Hindle

As many as eight **Firecrests** were recorded from DBO, South Foreland, Warden Point, Botany Bay, Shuart, Langdon Bay, Seabrook, Sandwich Bay, Reculver, New Romney, Samphire Hoe, Copt Point, Sandgate, Swalecliffe, Aycliffe, Mill Point, Bockhill, Folkestone and Enbrook Park. In addition, 18 arrived at Dungeness Point on Oct 19th.

The first **Ring Ouzel** of the autumn was seen at Langdon Bay on Sept 13th after which up to five birds were recorded from Dungeness RSPB, South Foreland, Lade, Swalecliffe, Tankerton, Bockhill, Fan Bay, DBO, Samphire Hoe, Marden, Cliffe, Aycliffe, Bockhill, Chamber's Wall, Sandwich Bay, Pegwell Bay and Langdon Bay.

A **Red-breasted Flycatcher** was reported from Dungeness NNR on Sept 21st whilst another was seen at Leysdown-on-Sea on Sept 25th whilst a third bird was found in the moat at DBO on Oct 6th.

During September as many as seven **Pied Flycatchers** were seen at Sandwich Bay, Worth Marshes, DBO, Reculver, Chamber's Wall, Shuart, Swalecliffe, Walmer, Seasalter, Foreness, Botany Bay, Minnis Bay, Ramsgate, Bockhill, Warden Point, St Margarets-at-Cliffe, Langdon Bay and Nethercourt Park. The final bird was seen at Dungeness on Sept 30th.

Up to six **Black Redstarts** were seen at Dungeness with smaller counts at Samphire Hoe, Walpole Bay, Penshurst, Reculver, St Mary's Island, Cliftonville, Foreness, North Foreland, Sandwich Bay, Abbotscliffe, Ramsgate Harbour, Hythe, Scotney, Seasalter and South Foreland.

SPARROWS TO BUNTINGS

After October 16th, up to 12 **Water Pipits** were seen at Stodmarsh/Grove with as many as three at Dartford Marshes, DBO, Sandwich Bay and Worth Marshes.

A **Hawfinch** flew W at Cliffe Pools on Sept 28th and Oct 7th whilst one was seen at Kingsdown on Oct 19th and a **Crossbill** flew over North Foreland on Sept 17th whilst a **Serin** flew over South Foreland on Sept 3rd and one flew W along Langdon Cliffs on Oct 21st.



Common Rosefinch by Russ Blackman

A **Common Rosefinch** was found at Langdon Cliffs on Sept 13th and was still there on the 15th.



Yellow-browed Bunting by Steve Reynaert

A **YELLOW-BROWED BUNTING** trapped and ringed at Sandwich Bay on Oct 10th will be another new species for Kent and the sixth for the UK if accepted by the BBRC. Unfortunately, it was not seen again after its release.

The first **Lapland Bunting** of the autumn was seen at Sandwich Bay on Sept 20th after which birds were seen at Walmer Beach, Cliffe, Foreness and Sandwich Bay.

The first **Snow Bunting** of the autumn was seen at Bockhill on Sept 23rd after which as many as three birds were recorded from Langdon Cliffs, Seasalter, Bockhill, Coldharbour, Hampton, North Foreland, Sandwich Bay, Swalecliffe, Whitstable and Foreness.

DBO = Dungeness Bird Observatory **BBRC** = British Birds Rarities Committee

RSPB = Royal Society for the Protection of Birds **BOU** = British Ornithological Union

“The Patch” = the warm water outflow from Dungeness Nuclear Power Station

NNR=National Nature Reserve **NR**=Nature Reserve **LNR**=Local Nature Reserve

FC = Field Centre **WR** = Wildlife Reserve **GP** = Gravel Pits **CP** = Country Park

CONTRIBUTORS

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

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Please send 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.

The following 2021 and 2022 KOS Rarities have recently been accepted by the KOS Rarities Panel based on published photos or from descriptions submitted.

2021

| | | |
|----------------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------|
| Black Kite | Samphire Hoe | April 14th |
| Black Brant | Funton Creek | 11th to 13th December |
| 2 Pectoral Sandpipers | Worth Marshes | September 17th-21st |
| Black Guillemot (flying E) | Samphire Hoe | September 18th |
| Siberian Chiffchaff | Worth Marshes Great Wood | February 26th |
| Siberian Chiffchaff | South Foreland | November 16th |
| Siberian Chiffchaff | Higham | Nov 14th to Dec 28th |
| Icterine Warbler | Penshurst | June 16th |
| Red-breasted Flycatcher (ringed) | DBO | November 20th |

2022

| | | |
|---------------------------------------|---------------------|--------------------|
| Stone-curlew (recorded overnight) | Chamber's Wall | April 14th |
| Stone-curlew (recorded overnight) | Stonar | April 15th |
| Stone-curlew (recorded overnight) | Stonar | May 2nd&3rd |
| Stone-curlew | Cliffe Pools | July 16th-27th |
| Stone-curlew | Cliffe Pools | August 10th-17th |
| 3 Stone-curlew | Cliffe Pools | August 25th-30th |
| 2 Black-winged Stilts | Stodmarsh | June 3rd |
| Pectoral Sandpiper | Dungeness RSPB | July 15th-18th |
| Pectoral Sandpiper (adult) | Cliffe Pools | Aug 22nd-Sept 2nd |
| Pectoral Sandpiper | Dungeness RSPB | Aug 29th-Sept 3rd |
| Pectoral Sandpiper | Elmley | Sept 4th-6th |
| Red-necked Phalarope (juvenile) | Dungeness RSPB | September 2nd |
| Goshawk | Worth Marshes | April 9th |
| Montagu's Harrier (male) | Oare Marshes | July 23rd |
| Black Kite | Worth Marshes | May 16th |
| White-winged Black Tern (juvenile) | Dungeness RSPB | September 2nd |
| Night-heron (first summer) | Oare Marshes | July 6th-Aug 19th |
| Purple Heron | Dungeness RSPB | May 15th-25th |
| Purple Heron - 2 birds from 27/7 | Stodmarsh | July 23rd-Sept 4th |
| Hooded Crow | Swalecliffe | April 9th-10th |
| Grey-headed Wagtail (1st s.male) | Plumpudding Stables | May 14th |
| Common Rosefinch (trapped and ringed) | Sandwich Bay | August 30th |

Fifty Years Ago

Greater Yellowlegs

One was identified in the Medway Estuary on Nov. 22nd (JGH). There is only one previous record for the county and that in the autumn of 1943, again in the Medway Estuary (Harrison J. M. 1953)



Greater Yellowlegs by JJ Audubon (PDI)

KBR 1972