

KOS News

The Newsletter of the Kent Ornithological Society

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Gull-billed Tern by Steve Ashton

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Editorial

And so, it continues! While the more extreme aspects of lockdown have eased slightly, I still find myself opting to restrict my travels due to a combination of family health concerns and an increasing mobility issue. I have managed a couple of trips out, most notably to Oare where I failed to see any of my target species, but still came away pleased at having seen a few nice birds and added eight species to my 'lockdown list'.

I have been largely confined to garden birding and the immediate surroundings., but still able to enjoy interesting birding in seclusion. I have been able to spend time watching pigeons; Wood Pigeon and Collared Dove both nest in my garden, with Stock Doves breeding this year in a tree close to my boundary. In the past one especially favoured fork in a branch of my old Cherry Plum tree had Woodie, Collared dove and Turtle Dove nest on it sequentially in one summer and I was able to ring all the youngsters. Sadly, the branch came down in a storm and now they all favour other spots close by. Best of all my local Turtle Dove count has increased somewhat, with three males audible from the garden and two others located recently along the lane to the East. Especially entertaining was a trip to the shop the other morning when I encountered a dashing and dynamic party of Swifts, chasing around like lunatics over the rooftops next to the church. In the same area I located at least six and probably eight House Martins, which was a particular delight as the small colony closest to my house seems to have vanished.

I have been struck by the number of people showing up on social media apparently out and about visiting bird sites and taking lots of photos of varying quality. While it is fair to say that this is hardly a scientific sample, it does seem to me that it could represent a trend for more people involved in birds in the county. Is that a good thing?? I suppose if they all respect the needs of the birds and follow the country code then having more voices speaking out for nature is a good thing. However, there seems to be a lack of field skill in some areas and an unwillingness to go the extra mile and learn, even basics of identification,

I wonder how many do actually report their sightings, I recently posted a comment regarding a colour ringed Black-headed gull I had seen at Oare and had reported via the CR register to the North Thames Gull Group, where my friend and long time acquaintance Paul Roper quickly let me know that it had been ringed at Pitsea landfill in 2014 and had been reported once previously from Oare two years earlier. Social media come alive with people claiming to have seen the bird, one even suggesting that he had reported it eight times in the previous few years. However, none of these sightings appear on the database of the group that ringed it, so I do not know where the reports were made. One post even confidently claimed the bird was ringed in Poland, suggesting either a lack of care in reading the ring, or in looking up the scheme on the database!

Many of these newcomers will doubtless find other interests when we come to the less clement weather later in the year and I sincerely hope those who are not even interested in nature but are happy to leave their rubbish behind on nature reserves will also disappear for good!!

Keep safe!

Good birding

Norman

IMPORTANT NOTICE

In view of the increasing concerns over public gatherings & the Coronavirus, it has been decided to cancel this year's AGM. We will seek to conduct the business on line during April & will circulate papers to members by e mail or if necessary, by post in due course. I am sure that members will fully understand the need to take this course of action. For further information please check the society's website and Facebook page.

The British trust for Ornithology has suspended all organised survey work for the current season. However, the details of current and future surveys are shown below in case any members are able to collect relevant data safely during the lockdown. This information would still be welcome for KOS archives and can be submitted through normal channels via Local Area Recorders, details on the KOS website.

Obituary: Royston K Coles BEM.

Many members will be saddened to learn of the recent passing of Roy Coles at the age of 93. He was born in Hastings, Sussex and after National Service went to Regent Street Polytechnic, London to study photography, which became a life-long passion. By profession Roy was an explosives expert working at Fort Halstead and in the 1980's was awarded a British Empire Medal for his contributions. For many birders Roy Coles will always be associated with Bough Beech Reservoir. In 1970 Roy became Hon. Warden of the newly created reserve following construction of the reservoir and continued for 30years and more until ill health forced his retirement.

During that time the reserve was transformed and numerous projects inspired by Roy were carried out to diversify the habitat making it attractive to wildlife and birds in particular. Notable among these was the development of the North lake with extensive works to control water levels by a series of dams, weirs and sluices, the creation of wader pits and the construction of the island This was all carried out under Roy's supervision with the participation of a large number of volunteer workers. Roy had an amazing ability to recruit and involve volunteers in and organise working parties for his projects and conservation work around the reserve. Who but Roy would have got a caravan placed by the North lake with an almost round the clock rota of volunteers to provide surveillance over nesting Little ringed Plovers to deter egg collectors?

Roy was also an accomplished photographer in the days of film before the advent of digital cameras, the results of his expertise frequently appearing in publications of The Kent Trust, the Kent Bird Report and British Birds. From this the lecture circuit naturally followed with illustrated talks not just on Bough Beech but resulting from overseas birding trips, the excellence of the slides matched by Roy's informative and always entertaining commentary.

But for many birders their memory of Roy, often from their younger or less experienced days, rests not just on his connection with Bough Beech but at a more personal level. Roy had extensive knowledge of birds, birdwatching and wildlife conservation which he was always willing to impart, not in any didactic fashion but simply to help encourage and share with others the benefit of his experience. Roy was recognised for his contribution by receiving the RSPB 'Certificate of Merit' in the 1986 Birds and Countryside Awards and 'The Marsh Volunteer Award for Nature Conservation' from the Kent Wildlife Trust in 2000.

Martin Warburton and Norman McCanch

RARE BREEDING BIRDS IN KENT

The Kent Ornithological Society, like other county bird clubs, coordinates records of rare breeding birds and submits them to the national Rare Birds Breeding Panel (RBBP). However, this is not straightforward. At a time when birders are being exhorted to be careful about publishing records of rare breeding birds on social media, we suspect that many observations are not reported. There are several ways in which you can help monitor rare birds and not risk publicising breeding locations.

1. Ensure you follow the bird watchers code, <https://www.bto.org/sites/default/files/u10/downloads/taking-part/health/bwc.pdf> and do not disturb the bird,
2. Always follow the RBBP guidelines for reporting on social media <http://rbbp.org.uk/>
3. Submit to the KOS database, <http://birdgroups.co.uk/kos/default.asp>, there is an automatic filter, which means that the records are not shown on the website but stored in the database,
4. Submit your records to Birdtrack, there is a similar filter and your observations will be secure.
5. You can e mail in confidence the county recorder Barry Wright umbrellabirds66@gmail.com or the county RBBP coordinator Brian Watmough brianrwat@yahoo.co.uk.

The RBBP <http://rbbp.org.uk/> collects data on the rarer species of birds breeding in the United Kingdom. Its records allow the production of annual totals of breeding pairs for each species on its list. It was formed in 1972 by representatives of the RSPB, the BTO, The Nature Conservancy Council and *British Birds*. The present Panel is made up of representatives of the Joint Nature Conservation Committee, RSPB, BTO, three independent members, and a Secretary and a report is published each year in *British Birds* and available on their website. Approximately 160 species are monitored by the RBBP, although the list is reviewed and changing so that in 2019 Cetti's Warbler will no longer be recorded but Turtle Dove is now being considered. Each year details of between twenty and twenty-five species are submitted by the KOS. Records from Kent are collated by the Kent Ornithological Society and submitted to the UK RBBP. These records form the basis for relevant sections in the annual KBR.

For more information refer back to the previous KOS May Newsletter.

Brian Watmough
ianrwat@yahoo.co.uk

BTO BREEDING BIRD SURVEY IN KENT

The BTO/JNCC/RSPB Breeding Bird Survey (BBS) is the main scheme for monitoring the population changes in breeding bird species of the UK. For volunteers in the project BBS is a great way to become familiar with a small area of local countryside whilst contributing valuable data to aid bird research and conservation.

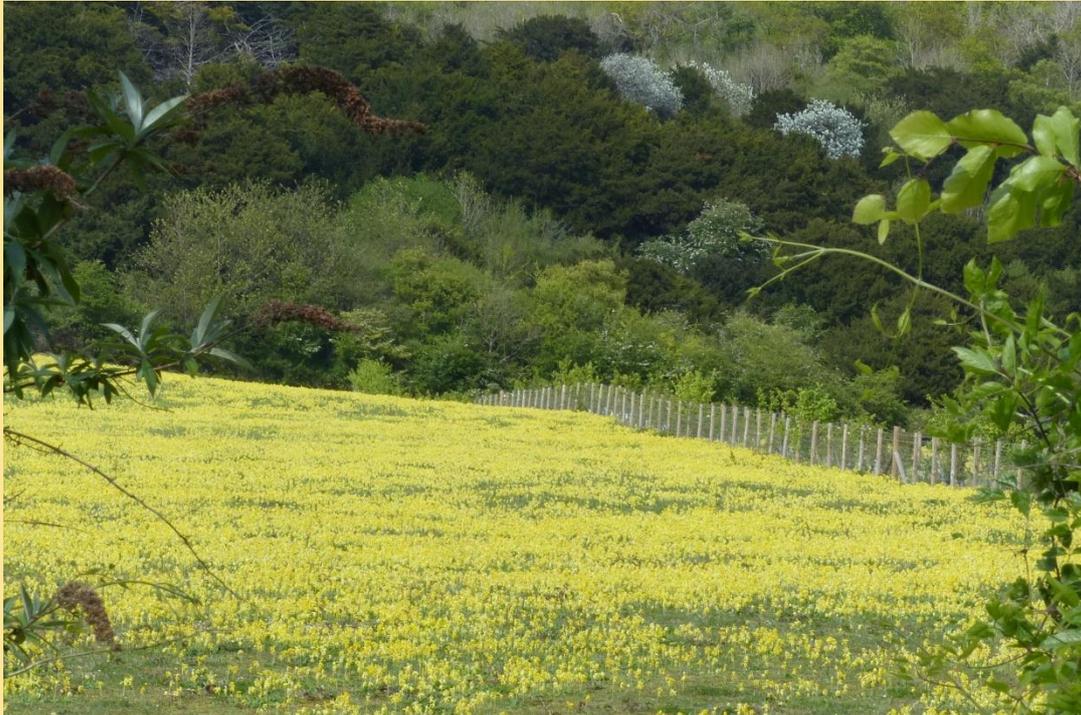
Participation in BBS involves two early-morning visits in the spring to a local 1-km square site, to count all the birds seen and heard whilst walking two 1-km lines across the square. Prior to this there is an initial visit to recce the site and record the habitat of the square, while volunteers also have the option to make later visits in summer to survey for butterflies. Recording forms are sent out to each volunteer or can be downloaded from BBS online, and results of bird counts can also be submitted on the website.

If you can identify common birds by sight and sound then please consider taking on a BBS square – it is very rewarding! There are 135 1-km squares pre-selected for BBS in Kent, the vast majority already mapped with transect lines, though many sites require new volunteers for surveys.

Please take a look at the BBS webpages and use the map to find a square near you: <https://www.bto.org/volunteer-surveys/bbs/taking-part>. Complete the online form that will appear and as regional organiser I will then get in contact to allocate the square to you. Alternatively, just send

me an email (rjknight53@gmail.com) to register your interest in BBS for Kent, and suitable squares in your location can then be discussed.

You might carry out a survey in a location such as Boxley Warren which was a vacant site when I signed up for BBS in 2019, and though not all squares are as beautiful as this area they are of equal importance for monitoring breeding birds. I look forward to hearing from you!



Boxley Warren

Bob Knight

KENT TURTLE DOVE SURVEY 2021

Next year the Kent Ornithological Survey will be running a survey of Turtle Doves in Kent. This species has decreased across the UK in recent times with a particularly marked decline in the last 10 years. Sadly, the Turtle Dove has now been added to the list of species monitored by the Rare Breeding Birds Panel (RBBP). A recent RBBP enquiry has revealed that Kent is now the top county for this species and as such we have a responsibility to try and make an accurate assessment of the Kent population. A lot of important work is being performed by Operation Turtle Dove and there is an active network of RSPB/farmer collaboration in place which involves feeding plots and site monitoring. However, a full and wider survey across Kent is required. This year will involve publicising the survey and the setting up of the survey methods and techniques.

Full details will be available in due course but if you would like to take part in this hugely important survey then please contact either:-

Bob Knight rjknight53@gmail.com
Brian Watmough brianwat@yahoo.co.uk
Murray Orchard murray.orchard@live.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

Kent Breeding Bird Atlas

We still have a modest stock of this useful publication which was well received on its release a couple of years ago. If you do not yet own a copy there will shortly be an opportunity to purchase some of the remainder of the stock at a reduced price. Keep an eye on the KOS web site for further details

Editorial and Records sub-committee

The KOS Editorial & Records Committee would like to hear from any individuals within the membership that would like to join the county rarity panel. Contact Barry Wright or Alan Fossey, (details above)

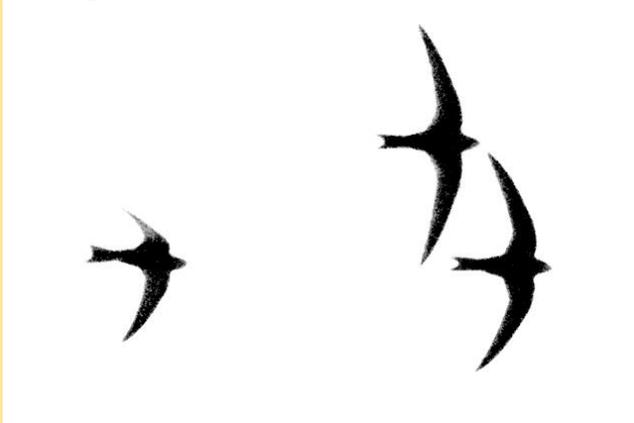
We like to keep in touch with all our members, so if you change address, email address or phone numbers please remember to inform our membership secretary, Chris Roome. He can be contacted at:

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

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

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.

Haunted by a swift



Birding is full of highs and lows, maybe that's what keeps us going. Finding the unexpected gull in a flock on the beach at Dungeness, seeing a Red Kite going over the house this year for the first time, and then another - a garden tick. Then there's the twitch that succeeds and the Turtle Dove, at last, along that field edge that you have watched for years knowing it was an ideal spot. Such are the delights. Then there are the lows, plenty of them - the Spotted Flycatcher that used to nest but hasn't shown up and the twitch that fails. We all know it - "sorry mate, it left 10/20/30/90 minutes ago high to the north/south/west/east." And then there are the seen-but-not-seens, the birds glimpsed but eluding clear ID, the possibles, the could-have-beens - was that really a Pied Flycatcher moving through that West Kent wood that autumn, high in the pines ? These are the ones that nag, that you turn over in your mind, wind back to like a stuck video but can never really resolve. And so it is.

It had been a good morning for them. The first wave was in and settled from the first week in May. In my two nests the cameras showed that pairs had returned and were settling straight in. That's how it is with swifts, the breeders come first and head straight back to where they have nested before. In our road in South Tonbridge it looked like the six pairs had returned to the colony and a new pair, perhaps displaced from another site, had taken up the empty nest box on number 27. The weather in May was set fair with hot sunny days and all looked good for a successful breeding season. A few non-breeders had also fetched up and the skies once more provided the arena for these enigmatic birds to demonstrate their skills.

In early June everything changed, the wind shifted direction and picked up speed and temperatures dropped by ten degrees in 24 hours and stayed low. By now our two nests had eggs in them and whilst the parent birds stayed back, the skies all over Tonbridge were empty, the swifts had gone, assumed hunting better climes elsewhere. For a week there were no screaming parties and nationally, swift groups were reporting the same experience.....no swifts

. Swifts arrive in distinct waves. Wave one is made up of the previous breeders heading back to take up old nest sites; and when holes are blocked by building works they are in trouble. Wave two is made up of one and two year old birds, not mature enough to breed themselves but keen to visit their birthplace and find potential nest sites. They tend to arrive from early June. These are the "bangers", so called because they fly up to and bang on existing nests looking to see if the nest is already occupied and if so, they are met with loud screams from the birds inside. They form tight gangs zooming around the houses early in the morning and of an evening making their presence known before going to roost up high as darkness falls. These roosting flocks seem to draw in birds from a wide area and some evenings over Tonbridge they can consist of as many as forty birds.



Swift by Steve Ashton

After that week of cold and wet and no swifts, a change to warmer conditions provided some hope that things would improve and that wave two would find its way here. And so it was that I joined a neighbour outside our house that sunny morning watching a largish group of swifts swooping noisily down and around the houses in our road. This must be wave two we thought. The group were moving fast, up over the town, away and back again, spinning and turning as only swifts will do. As the group did one of its rapid co-ordinated turns my eye caught sight of a white rump. It was fleeting but clear, so clear that I shouted to my fellow watcher, "Quick there's one with a white rump. I need a witness, you've gotta see it!". But at the next pass the bird split off with a small group and headed away south over the houses. I was there with no bins, no camera and with a non-birding neighbour who failed to see it and thought I was completely mad. Perhaps I was.

I still go over that encounter endlessly, trying to wind back the scene and see it again with more clarity. I know that swifts with white rumps are seriously uncommon in the UK and that aberrant common swifts can show white on their backs. But this one was different, wasn't it? I have seen White-rumped swifts at a well known site in Southern Portugal, an old copper mine near the border with Spain. Could this have been one? And then, in early March I had had the pleasure of watching Little Swifts in Morocco, surely another possible? But then again, surely not, the tail was not right.

That day I watched swifts for hours. I checked out every one but I saw nothing to speed the pulse like that again. I knew that unless someone in the country spotted an odd swift in the next few days no rarity committee would give me the time of day - no photo, no witness and pretty shaky ID. But the whole experience has left me haunted. I go over it again and again and can find no certainty. In my head I know what I saw. But just when I settle into this knowledge, a small inner voice tells me I must have been seeing things. Surely mistaken, an aberration. A White-rumped Swift over Tonbridge? You must be kidding.

And so it isand will remain so.

Martin Garwood

Martin is a KOS member of many years standing, a swift enthusiast and a founder member of The High Weald Swift Group. He has two pairs of swifts nesting on his house and has worked with neighbours to build successfully a colony of nesting swifts in South Tonbridge.

THE WEIRD AND THE WONDERFUL – Escaped birds in Kent

The birding year tends to revolve around the seasonal changes that affect all living things. We look forward to the arrival of Summer visitors in Spring, look out for the passage of waders in Autumn and anticipate the arrivals of wintering Geese and Swans from the high Arctic. Through all this, many of us have an eye open for the more unusual and even downright rare. It is part of human nature to be drawn to the unusual, but it seems to me that for many birders the arrival of something out of the ordinary is the force that drives them on, often to extraordinary lengths, to see the bird in question. Sometimes the euphoria of a successful venture is diminished by the spectre of “ESCAPE”, the suggestion (or evidence) that the creature did not arrive unaided in the county and indeed, may have spent most of its life behind bars. That can be a real downer for many hard-bitten ‘birders’, and the pejorative term “Plastic” is hardly sufficient to convey their contempt for such creatures.

This is a pity, for to my mind there is much to learn from such unfortunates. My primary feeling on a first encounter is generally one of pity; for many years I kept a range of cage and aviary birds and well remember more than one occasion when an escapee spent several hours sitting on the roof of my aviary waiting to be let back in! Birds which have spent most or even all their lives in captivity are often poorly equipped for life in the wild and it amazes me how well some of them do survive, though the fate of the majority must be inevitably death.

Why are they of interest, are they important?

The extent to which escapes are of interest is highly personal and depends on the level of an individual’s involvement with birds. Contact with escapes has often provided me with the opportunity to study the plumage and behaviour of a species I have never seen previously and am unlikely to ever see in the wild. Close study of birds in captivity can be useful, but seeing them out and about, often behaving in characteristic ways in a more natural environment can be informative, not least in being able to separate unfamiliar species from those more normally encountered.

There are a variety of reasons why I think they are important. When an escaped species establishes a population in a new ecosystem there is likely to be some degree of niche encroachment, where the feral species deprives existing native populations of some component of their niche, potentially leading to negative outcomes. As an example, Ring-necked Parakeets have established a substantial population in Kent and elsewhere. There is some evidence that they disrupt the foraging of native species, especially at bird tables and can be serious competitors for nest holes, affecting species such as Little Owls, Starling and Stock Doves. On the plus side, however, they are no fans of Grey Squirrels and vigorously defend favoured trees against the furry bandits, actions which must count in their favour to a small extent.

There is a real issue regarding escapes and feral populations as reservoirs and vectors of disease. Rather few birds are trafficked into the UK from abroad these days, as the consequences of Avian Influenza made governments aware of the potential problems. It should not be forgotten that the majority of cases of Avian Influenza were in captive birds, especially poultry, extraordinary numbers of which are still traded globally. Captivity can sometimes be a source for pathogens which are less frequent in wild populations, while the reduced gene pool available for much amateur captive breeding can result in the increasing incidence of harmful mutations.

It is also clear that there are considerable numbers of hybrids circulating in the feral population, especially amongst wildfowl. These are a potential source of confusion and in extreme cases can act against the viability of a wild population. Recently a female **Cinnamon Teal** *Spatula cyanoptera* appeared at Stodmarsh NNR. How it got there is unclear as it was effectively pinioned, so presumably it arrived in a shopping bag! In any event it settled in happily and in the following spring paired with a local drake Shoveler and has produced at least two broods of hybrid young. Shoveler is not a common breeder in Kent, but the possibility of the female Cinnamon Teal catching the eye of a drake Garganey is a good deal more concerning; Garganey are much rarer, both in Kent and in the wider UK. The population does not need to be adversely affected by an intrusion of alien genes.

Data issues

This rather crude analysis was made by looking at all the records of Escaped birds listed in the Kent Bird report from its inception in 1952 up to the latest available, 2017. In recent years escapes have come under a new designation as Category D or E, which includes foreign species which have established a self-sustaining population. No attempt was made to count up or quantify the numbers of individual birds or even of different records as an early inspection showed this to be a more complex

task than first imagined, rather the aim was to compile a list of species and taxa recorded in the county, as a preliminary source for possible future scrutiny.

The first separate listing of Escapes did not appear until the KBR for 1974; prior to that it appears that escapes were incorporated in the systematic list but it is unclear how comprehensive this process might have been. Researching these incorporated records is complex and time consuming, so these records do not appear in this analysis, but might be addressed in any future paper. For some time, a section reporting on activities at Dungeness Bird Observatory was included in the KBR, firstly from 1952-56 (which did not refer to escapes), then again from 1971 -1978 which did include escapes. From 1979 the DBO article changed to be a summary with particular reference to ringing. As far as I can tell, when escapes appeared in the DBO report they were not included in the KBR listings of escapes, but were additional to it. I may be wrong on this as it is devilishly difficult to track down and cross-correlate some of these records. Of course, it is possible that a full listing of escapes appeared in the independent DBO report from 1979, but I did not have access to those journals. Also there has never been a separate listing for Sandwich Bay BO in the KBR and one must assume (as I have done) that Escapes reported by SBBO to the KOS are included in the main listing. I made no attempt to track down old SBBO reports to check on the extent of reporting of Escapes even though I am aware of the existence of some additional records not listed here, , perhaps a job for any putative 'extended lockdown' we might face in the future!

Occasionally names of species listed are those in use in the cage bird trade which can be at odds with accepted taxonomy which can lead to confusion. One such is a bird listed as a 'Cardinal'; this could either be the North American species of **Red Cardinal** *Cardinalis cardinalis* or any one of the African weavers of the genus *Euplectes*, which are also known as 'Bishops'! A 'Black Vulture' reported in 1980 provides no indication as to whether this was the **Black Vulture** *Aegyptius monachus* or the **American Black Vulture** *Coragyps atratus*, we might never know! The listing includes all taxa mentioned, except where there was clearly a case of alternative names being used (such as where the common name was clarified by a scientific one). Paradoxically, an **American Black Vulture** is listed in the systematic list on the basis of a bird first seen at Sandwich Bay in August 1969, then recorded at several sites before being reportedly shot in mid-May!

In total 225 identified species/taxa including hybrids are included in the listings so far.

Identification:

Escapes can provide real headaches of identification. The earliest British record of 'Citril Finch' was taken by bird-catchers in Norfolk in 1904 and recorded as such by James Gurney, the noted ornithologist. Subsequently concerns about the specimen suggested it was a not a Citril Finch and further examination, including comparisons with material at Tring identified it as a **Cape Canary** *Serinus canicollis*, a species which was frequently imported from southern Africa at the end of the nineteenth century for the cage bird trade. It is interesting to note that in his monumental "A History of the Birds of Sussex" Jock Walpole-Bond refers to *Serinus canicollis* being caught in Sussex, with no suggestion it might be anything more interesting! More recently a record of **Godlewski's Bunting** in the Isles of Scilly caused several headaches as it is a little-known species which shares several plumage features with other, variably rare species such as Rock Bunting. This bird carried a red colour ring on one leg which clearly gave an indication of its provenance, but not all cage birds are ringed and even fewer wear rings with identifying numbers. It is apparent from the records that identification of escapes has been a fairly arbitrary affair in the past, with no apparent assessment process for such records. In recent years birders have travelled far more widely and have access to comprehensive and well-illustrated field guides making the identification of puzzling birds somewhat more reliable. Even so, we appear to take such identifications largely on trust. Looking through the lists of species recorded as escapes in the county, we see several species which are recorded in a genuine wild state, such as White-fronted and Pink-footed Geese and Common Rosefinch. Generally, these get flagged as escapes when either the timing of their appearance, or their behaviour or plumage suggests a captive origin.

Wildfowl

Ducks and geese are probably the archetypal 'escapes' we encounter in birding. They can be particularly problematic as several species with the potential for genuine vagrancy are readily available in the avicultural marketplace. Further, they are frequently encountered, because a wide range of species are kept in large numbers, often in a free-winged state either deliberately for aesthetic reasons, or due to incomplete pinioning. As a group they are often quite long-lived birds and

so feral populations can establish and thrive, particularly where they are able to find a vacant niche. This applies to both Canada and Egyptian goose and also to Mandarin Ducks. Feral flocks of wildfowl in the county derived from escapes or deliberate releases include numerous Barnacle Geese and very large numbers of Grey Lag Geese, originally released for sport shooting. One species of undoubted captive origins which does not appear in the lists is **Ruddy Duck** *Oxyura jamaicensis*. The first Kent record appears to be of one at Bough Beech reservoir in 1970, but this is included in the systematic list as presumably the status nationally reflected the established breeding population focused in the west Midlands.



Female Cape Shelduck, Grove Ferry 2006 by Norman McCanch

Andean Duck	Cape Shelduck	Lesser Tree Duck	Ruddy Shelduck
Australian Shoveler	Cape Teal	Lesser White-fronted Goose	Snow Goose
Bahama Pintail	Chestnut Teal	Mandarin	South African Shelduck
Bar-headed Goose	Chiloe Wigeon.	Maned Duck	Speckled Teal
Barnacle Goose	Cinnamon Teal	Marbled Duck	Swan Goose:
Barrow's Goldeneye:	Comb Duck	Peruvian Ruddy Duck	Trumpeter Swan
Black swan	Emperor Goose	Pink-footed Goose	White-faced Tree Duck
Black-necked Swan	Falcated Duck	Puna Teal	White-fronted Goose
Blue Goose:	Fulvous Whistling Duck	Red-billed Duck	White-headed Duck
Brazilian Teal	Hawaiian Goose	Red-breasted Goose	Whooper Swan
Cackling Goose	Hooded Merganser	Red-crested Pochard	Wood Duck
Canada Goose	Hottentot Teal	Ringed Teal	Yellow-billed Pintail
Cape Barren Goose	Lesser Canada Goose	Ross's Goose	Yellow-billed Teal.

Other water birds

A bewildering array of larger water-birds occur in captivity and many are to be found wandering at liberty. This may be because many are kept full-winged in collections as a possible protection against ground predators, or just because it looks nice to have a few flamingos wander around one's stately home. There is a bit of an issue with this, as some have established feral breeding populations on the near continent (Sacred Ibis, Flamingos of a few races) and these birds are easily capable of crossing the Channel or the North Sea. The recent tendency to try to re-introduce former breeding species means that most White Storks seen in Kent can no longer be trusted as genuine vagrants as rings have shown that birds from the schemes in Sussex and even Sweden have been recorded.



Spur-winged Plover, Dungeness 1997?? By Norman McCanch

African Spoonbill	Grey-headed Gull	Sarus Crane.
Black Stork	Lesser Flamingo	Spur-winged Plover
Chilean Flamingo	Marabou	White Ibis
Chinese Pond Heron	Masked Lapwing	White Pelican:
Crowned Crane:	Pink-backed Pelican	White Stork
Demoiselle Crane	Sacred Ibis	

Raptors

Raptors are not infrequent escapes, mostly as a result of losses during falconry. In some respects, these birds are relatively easy to recognise as they often carry visible 'hawk furniture' in the form of jesses. These can ultimately be their undoing: many a lost falconer's bird has been found dead tangled in the branches of a tree. As raptors have become more expensive and valuable there has been a growing tendency for them to carry various transmitters or geo-locators to enable their recovery by an owner. This can sometimes be seen as a 'back-pack' or trailing aerial which makes the bird look either hump-backed, stretched or both. Recent years have seen an increase in hybrid falcons, usually bred by artificial insemination as a response to the shortage of available breeding stock of some species. Hybrids can be highly problematic for identification in the field and at least one

monster of uncertain parentage made a real nuisance of itself by interfering with the breeding pair of Peregrines at a local site a few years ago.



Harris's Hawk, (Wiki commons)

American Kestrel	Lagger Falcon *
Black Kite.	Lanner
Black Vulture:	Peregrine:
Eagle Owl	Red Kite
Golden Eagle	Red-tailed Hawk
Goshawk	Saker
Harris's Hawk	White-backed Vulture

Game birds:

Leaving aside Common Pheasant and Red-legged Partridge which appear in the systematic lists, rather few gamebirds are reported as Escapes. It is important to remember that from the 1970's until quite recently our Red-legged Partridge population was largely made up of hybrids, usually by means of a cross with **Chukar partridge** *Alectoris chukar*, such hybrids known in the trade as "Ogridges".. Occasionally a seemingly pure-bred Chukar can still be encountered in the field, possibly slipped under the radar by a game farm in a consignment bought for release. As many of these game birds are bred on the continent and imported as chicks, there is less scrutiny than might be thought necessary of the genetic makeup of birds released. Even so, among 'Red-legs' apparently breeding in the wild in Kent, some still show hints of their Chukar ancestry, often in the form of double black bars on the flank feathers.

This somewhat *laissez-faire* attitude in the supply of gamebird chicks from the continent can also result in less frequent encounters of pheasant species; I know of a few cases of **Japanese Pheasant** *Phasianus versicolor* and **Reeve's Pheasant** *Syrmaticus reevesi*, turning up in areas controlled by shooting syndicates where there seems to be no admittance of responsibility for their deliberate release. One or two different chicks in a consignment of many thousands are unlikely to be discovered.

Few people consider the origins of **Quail** recorded in the county. A singing Quail calling “wet-my-lips” from a cornfield can be confidently identified as *Coturnix coturnix*. However, a sight only record of a flushed bird cannot be confidently identified, it could easily be a **Japanese Quail** *Coturnix japonica*, escaped from captivity. Very large numbers of these birds are kept for egg production, including by amateur keepers and escapes are not uncommon. They are indistinguishable in the brief contact of a flushing, although the male’s song is quite different. However, the whole Quail problem is seriously exacerbated by hybrids between the two species. These are very common in captivity as they produce more eggs in a season while large numbers of both Japanese Quail and hybrids are released in southern Europe for sport shooting. It is not known to what extent these birds may migrate north in the spring.



Helmeted Guineafowl (Wikicommons)

Finally, some game birds might not be quite as wild as they appear; **Guineafowl** *Numidia meleagris* a frequently kept on a sort of avian day-release, where they are permitted to wander at will out of their owner’s gardens and into adjacent areas. They are not feral in the truest sense of the word and a small flock which can be encountered around Wickhambreux churchyard clearly belong to one of the houses set back off the road. A similar peripatetic tendency amongst captive birds can also be shown by male **Peafowl** *Pavo cristatus*, much to the annoyance of neighbours!

Bobwhite Quail	Indian Peafowl
Californian Quail	Lady Amherst's Pheasant
Chukar	Reeve's Pheasant
Golden Pheasant.	Silver Pheasant
Helmeted Guineafowl	

Parrots

There is very little doubt in any birders mind that a parrot seen in the county is likely to be an escape. A wide range of species of parrot-like birds are kept in captivity, some of which are routinely kept free-winged. The identification of parrots can pose some problems, there are a lot of species and many are rather similar in general plumage tone and features, so it is possible that the list of species recorded is limited by lack of observer familiarity. Even so, a curious point regarding the records is the relative scarcity of reports of **Budgerigar** *Melopsittacus undulatus*. Given that it is probably the most common parrot in captivity and has always shown a talent for escape, I wonder if the lack of records is a result of observers routinely failing to report these sightings. Of course, the group contains a species which has become almost become a poster-bird for colonisation through escape, the **Ring-necked Parakeet** *Psittacula krameri*, to the extent that it has been included in the systematic list in the report since 1982 and no longer appears in the Escapes/Cat E list, reflecting its self-sustaining population.



Peach-faced Lovebird by J Sharp

African Grey Parrot	Budgerigar	Peach-faced Lovebird
Alexandrine Parrakeet:	Cockatlel	Pennant's Parakeet
Argentine Blue-bill	Crimson Rosella	Ring-necked Parrakeet:
Blue and Gold Macaw	Eastern Rosella	Rose-faced Lovebird
Blue-backed Parrot	Fischer's Lovebird	Senegal Parrot
Blue-crowned Conure	Galah	Sulphur-crested Cockatoo:
Blue-crowned Parakeet	Gray Parrot	Western Rosella
Blue-fronted Amazon Parrot	Patagonian Conure	White-eyed Conure
		Yellow-bellied Parrot

Passerines and Near Passerines

A truly bewildering range of passerines have been offered for sale in the pet trade over the years. I have personally seen **Siberian Rubythroat** *Luscinia calliope*, **White-throated Robin** *Irania gutturalis*, **Common Rosefinch** *Carpodacus erythrinus*, **Siberian Thrush** *Geokichla sibirica*, **Pine Grosbeak** *Pinicola enucleator*, **Rose-coloured Starlings** *Pastor roseus* and **Cedar Waxwings** *Bombycilla cedrorum* in bird wholesalers, all of which were imports. Formerly it was fair to say that if it could fit in a cage it could be sourced somewhere, with significant amounts of trade through dedicated bird markets in Belgium. As a consequence of the Avian Influenza proto-pandemic a few years ago, much of this legal trade was closed down, although there is some circumstantial evidence that an illegal trade still exists. It is quite difficult to assess whether any individual in the wild is of captive origin or not. Many, but not all, escaped passerines wear a ring, often simply a plain coloured ring, sometimes one engraved with numbers or specialist society details. I tend to give a wry smile when reports say

of a passerine “showed no signs of captivity” as valuable birds kept under ideal conditions would tend to be in almost perfect feather condition. Likewise, cage birds can be very tame and approachable, but a Snow or Lapland Bunting hatched on the tundra may never have seen as human before its first encounter with an excited birder and show little concern!



Pekin Robin (Wikicommons)

Arabian Golden Sparrow	Golden-backed Weaver	Red-billed Quelea:	Tri-coloured Manakin:
Bank Mynah	Green Singing Finch:	Red-breasted Weaver	Tristram's Starling
Black Bishop	Grey-headed Bullfinch	Red-fronted Serin	Village Weaver
Black-headed Mannikin:	Hill Mynah	Red-headed Bunting	White-headed Mannikin:
Black-headed Munia.	Long-tailed Rosefinch	Ruppell's Weaver.	Yellow-backed Weaver
Black-headed Weaver:	Masked Laughingthrush	Saddleback	Yellow-billed Grosbeak
Black-rumped Waxbill	Pagoda Starling.	Saffron Finch	Yellow-headed Blackbird.
Black-winged Red Bishop	Painted Bunting	Scarlet Rosefinch	Zebra Finch
Cardinal.	Pallas's Rosefinch	Scarlet-chested Sunbird	Diamond Dove
Chestnut Munia	Pekin Robin	Spice Bird	Laughing Dove
Chinese Starling	Pin-tailed Mynah	Spotted Mannikin:	Palm Dove
Common Hill Myna	Purple Glossy Starling	Spotted-back Weaver:	Silvery-cheeked Hornbill
Common Waxbill	Raven	Sudan Golden-Sparrow	
Crimson-rumped Waxbill	Red Bishop	Superb Starling	

Hybrids



Greylag x Canada Goose (Wikicommons)

Arguably the least popular of the “Weird and Wonderful”, most birders find them an irritation given that some are scarily like much rarer species (think of Tufted Duck x Pochard doing a great impression of Lesser Scaup) or just ‘scruffy looking’. The vast majority of hybrids we encounter are wildfowl, largely because in captivity some breeders find it all but impossible to effectively segregate birds in a mixed collection. Some other hybrids are deliberately bred, such as Falcon hybrids or Canary crosses with other finches to produce ‘Mules’. It is fair to assume that most hybrids originate in captivity, but by no means all and cross breeding by fence-jumpers can be a real issue for rarer species which are genetically quite similar as these may produce that real nightmare, the fertile hybrid. It was this potential that drove the campaign to eradicate the **Ruddy duck** *Oxyura jamaicensis* from our shores, for the benefit of the Spanish **White-headed duck** *Oxyura leucocephala* population.

Aythya x Netta	Shelduck x Ruddy Shelduck	Mallard x Gadwall
Canvasback x Pochard	Shoveler x Mallard	Mallard x Pintail
Ferruginous x Pochard	Tufted Duck x Pochard	Pintail x Mallard
Ferruginous x Tufted Duck	Tufted x Scaup	Pochard x Ferruginous Duck
Green-winged x Eurasian Teal	Wigeon x Chiloe Wigeon	Rosybill x Pochard

Black Brant x Dark-bellied Brent	Emperor x Snow Goose	Dark-bellied Brent x Red-breasted Goose
Brent Goose x Barnacle Goose	Greylag x Canada Goose	Emperor x Bar-headed Goose
Brent x White-fronted Goose	Greylagx Barnacle Goose	Mute x Whooper Swan
Brent x Lesser White-fronted Goose	Greylag x Canada Goose	Snow x Barnacle Goose
Brent x Lesser White-fronted Goose	Greylag x Barnacle Goose	Upland x Ashy-headed Goose
Emperor x Barnacle Goose	Canada x Barnacle Goose	

There can also be some issues where inexperienced observers assume an unusual duck is necessarily a hybrid, failing to recognise the wide range of ‘breeds’ of **Mallard** *Anas platyrhynchos*

produced by selective breeding over the years, such as **Cayuga** types (which might include **Black duck** *A.rubripes* genes), **Aylesbury's**, **Crested Appleyard's** and **Call ducks**. Deciding on the possible parentage of a hybrid in the field is to a large extent a guessing game ,although with experience some trends can be recognised among wildfowl, For anyone really interested in hybrids, there is a useful book “**The Handbook of Avian Hybrids of the World**”, by **Eugene McCartney**, guaranteeing a good night's sleep or nightmares depending on one's point of view.



Gyr x Saker (Wikicommons)

Gyr x Saker	Peregrine x Lanner
Lanner x Saker:	Saker x Peregrine

Domestic Species:

A number of clearly domesticated species were recorded amongst the lists of Escapers. I have no idea why!!

Aylesbury Duck:
Barbary Dove.
Canary
Feral Rock Dove:
Muscovy Duck

Unidentified:

Not surprisingly, when faced with something completely unexpected there are a number of records where the identity was not established with any certainty. A category such as ‘Parrot’ or, ‘Parakeet’, a

'Nectarinia type sunbird', or in many cases a Sp! indicating a Genus at least (Serinus Sp.). There is not much can do with these records other than commiserate, but occasionally as in the case of the Black Vulture referred to earlier, identification might have been incomplete, or complete but inadequately reported, we will never know.

Parakeet sp	Mynah sp.
Amazon Parrot sp.	Pelican sp.
Flamingo sp.	Sunbird sp.
Glossy Starling spp	Waxbill sp.
Macaw sp. Ara sp.:	Weaver sp.
Mannakin Sp.	Whydah sp.
Munia sp.	Yellow Parakeet sp.

Conclusion

The first records of Parakeet sp. appear in the KBR's for 1971 and 1972, while the first record identifying a bird as **Ring-necked Parakeet** *Psittacula krameri* was in 1973. Records were posted annually in the 'Escapes' section, with a regular request for all records to be submitted to the late Brian Hawkes, who was collating them with a view to publication. Subsequent issues of KBR regularly bemoaned the lack of records submitted, leading to editors to suggest that most birders were not interested in Parakeets (although it might have been a degree of antipathy to in escapes in general). From 1982 Ring-necked Parakeet appeared in the systematic list and was no longer automatically treated as an escape, although the total of birds recorded must have included a few absconding from captivity. There seems to have been a general disregard for the birds which persists in some quarters today, but as we have come to realise, a successful species can establish a population in a novel environment and this can have significant, often negative consequences on native species. A good reason to take care in recording Escapes and submitting them for further study.



Red-headed Bunting Sandwich Bay, June 1977 by Norman McCanch

As a contrast, there have only been a handful of records of **Red-headed Buntings** *Emberiza bruniceps* in the county. These records cover nine of the years in the period 1959 -1978 and involve sixteen birds, with the last recorded forty-two years ago! Only one of the records was of a female. This is a species with a long history as a cage bird and in the middle years of the last century many

thousands were imported into Britain and northern Europe for the bird trade, predominantly from India where the species winters in large numbers, even today. The majority of the birds imported were the colourful males and I considered myself fortunate to be given a pair as a teenage bird-keeper, which went on to nest in my outdoor aviary for several years, the male serenading me with his simple song each Spring. Sadly, although they laid eggs and incubated them, no young were ever produced. Because of this significant presence in the cage bird trade, records of male Red-headed Buntings were generally automatically disregarded as undoubted escapes. However, in 1982 the government of India restricted the export of cage birds and the international bird trade was curtailed further in 2007. Since then a few records of male Red-headed Buntings have been made in northern Europe with even three records in the UK, particularly in late spring when there is a bit of a peak for Rare eastern bunting records. It suggests that some, at least, may be genuine vagrants This also represents another good reason to record Escapes (or Cat C/ E if you prefer), the future status of a species may not be reflected its past history.

Good birding!!

Norman McCanch

KENT BIRD SIGHTINGS FOR MAY AND JUNE 2020 - 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 on the KOS website.*

WEATHER

May began with cool weather on the 1st and 2nd but it was then a sunny month with plenty of warm weather although there was a cooler spell from the 10th-15th with a north easterly gale blowing on the 10th. It was the sunniest May since records began in 1929. It was also a very dry month in the south east with rain only falling on the 1st, 2nd and 14th at Bishopstone and making a total of only 7mm.

The very sunny and warm weather of late May continued into **June**, but a cool northerly spell became established from the 3rd to 7th, bringing showers and some longer spells of rain. After a brief settled interlude, it turned wet for a while. Around mid-month there was a spell of warm, humid, showery weather with thunderstorms and from the 23rd to 25th it was hot with 33.4°C recorded at Heathrow on 25th. The last few days were cloudy and windy with showers. The monthly total of rainfall at Bishopstone was 34.25mm.

WILDFOWL

An adult **Whooper Swan** of unknown origin was seen at Oare Marshes on June 13th and three **Black Swans** seen in the Dungeness area on May 14th later flew out to sea the same day whilst the **Pink-footed Goose** seen at Stodmarsh and Seaton in April reappeared occasionally at Stodmarsh/Grove Ferry between May 20th and June 14th.

Up to seven **Egyptian Geese** were recorded from Singleton, Dungeness RSPB, East Peckham, Bough Beech, DBO, Conningbrook, Lade, Cliffe Pools and Sandwich Bay and as many as 10 **Mandarins** were seen at Edenbridge, Penshurst Estate, Godmersham, Plaxtol, Bough Beech, East Peckham and Seaton.

Up to three **Garganey** were recorded at Cliffe Pools, Oare Marshes, Grove Ferry/Stodmarsh, Dungeness RSPB and Sandwich Bay.

Two **Red-crested Pochard** were seen at Grove Ferry from May 8th-June 9th and a female **Goosander** was seen on the river at Wouldham on May 8th.

PARTRIDGE TO CORMORANT

A **Quail** was flushed at Pegwell Bay on May 24th, two were flushed by Conyer on May 29th, one was reported from Westerham on June 2nd and another was heard calling on Reculver Marshes on June 12th.

Single **Black-throated Divers** flew past DBO on May 15th and 16th.

A **Cory's Shearwater** flew E past Foreness Point during the NE gale on May 10th. This was only the 44th record of this species in Kent. Eight **Manx Shearwater** flew E at Foreness Point and one was seen off DBO on May 10th whilst nine flew N at Walmer Beach on June 6th. At DBO nine flew past on June 8th with singles on the 9th, 20th and 30th, three on the 10th and two on the 29th and with nine off Foreness on the June 11th.

A **Black-necked Grebe** was seen at Bough Beech on June 26th and there was also one on the sea at Sandwich Bay on June 28th.

During May and June single **White Storks** were seen at Shadoxhurst, Eastry, East Malling, Adisham, Bough Beech and Biddenden. It is highly likely that most, if not all, of these originate from the Knepp reintroduction scheme in Sussex.

A **Glossy Ibis** was seen at Dungeness RSPB between May 11th and 13th and one was seen briefly at dawn at Grove Ferry on May 31st.



Spoonbills by Martyn Wilson

During May and June up to three **Spoonbills** were recorded from Dungeness RSPB, Foreness, Grove Ferry/Stodmarsh, Pegwell Bay, Worth Marshes, Dartford, Cliffe Pools, Kingsdown, Walmer Beach and Oare Marshes and up to three **Bitterns** were seen or heard at Dungeness RSPB and Stodmarsh/Grove Ferry.

During these two months as many as three **Cattle Egrets** were seen at Dungeness RSPB, Cliffe Pools, Hope Point, Oare Marshes, Luddenham Marshes, High Halstow, Northward Hill, Elmley and Conyer.



Night Heron by Russell Blackman

A **Night-heron** was identified and photographed at Hythe on June 3rd and a **SQUACCO HERON** was seen by two lucky observers at Grove Ferry on May 29th. If submitted and accepted by BBRC this will be the 11th record of Squacco Heron for Kent.

A first summer **Purple Heron** was seen at Dungeness RSPB between May 7th and 13th and another bird was identified from a photograph taken at Langdon Hole on May 24th. A third bird was seen at Worth Marshes on June 1st.

As many as three **Great White Egrets** were seen at Stodmarsh, Oare Marshes, Walmer, Dungeness RSPB, DBO, Swale NNR, Riverside CP and Sandwich Bay.

Single **Shags** were seen at Sandwich Bay on May 4th, DBO on May 7th and 25th, at Seabrook on the 17th with one or two at Foreness on June 5th, 6th and 29th.

BIRDS OF PREY

During May and June there were coastal reports of one or two **Honey Buzzards** at Dungeness, Whitstable, Lade, Sandwich Bay, Walmer Beach, Deal, South Foreland, Foreness, Whitfield, Samphire Hoe, Tankerton, Sittingbourne, Lympne, Dover, Cliffe, Pegwell Bay, Ramsgate, Walderslade, Folkestone, St Margarets-at-Cliffe, Langdon Cliffs and Worth Marshes.



Honey Buzzard by Alex Perry

An **Osprey** was seen at Boughton Monchelsea on May 1st and 2nd with others at Foreness Point on the 6th, Worth Marshes on the 9th, Langdon Cliffs on the 16th and Bockhill on the 26th. In June, a bird was seen at Bough Beech between the 4th and 8th and one flew N at Dungeness on the 19th with one at Tunbridge Wells on the 21st.



Osprey by Brendan Ryan

A female **Hen Harrier** was seen frequently between Conyer and Seasalter from May 8th to the 16th, a male flew N at DBO on May 20th and a ring-tail was seen at Bockhill on May 24th.

A second year male **PALLID or Montagu's Harrier** was seen and photographed at Stodmarsh on May 7th whilst other birds that could not be specifically identified flew N along the cliffs at Kingsdown on May 16th and E at Coxheath on May 29th.

A female **Montagu's Harrier** was seen at Worth Marshes on May 22nd, a female flew out to sea at DBO on May 28th whilst females were identified at Lydd Ranges on June 5th and at South Foreland on June 23rd.

During May, **Red Kites** were seen almost daily throughout the County with peak counts of 24 flying N at Pegwell Bay on May 7th, 19 at Sandwich Bay on the 8th, 40 at Whitstable on the 9th, 18 at Sandwich Bay on the 20th and 37 at Sandwich Bay and 17 at Kingsdown Lees on the 22nd. On May 27th, there were 22 at Deal, 46 at Sandwich Bay, 34 at Pegwell Bay and 32 at Conyer. All these numbers were eclipsed on June 2nd when birds were recorded across the County with a peak of **139** passing through at Sandwich Bay. On the next day there were still 21 at South Foreland.

A **Black Kite** was seen widely in the Dungeness area on May 9th and others were seen at DBO on May 10th and 12th, Selling and Capel Fleet on May 13th, Oare Marshes on May 16th and 17th, Boughton Street on May 22nd and Seasalter on June 17th.

RAILS TO WADERS

A **Spotted Crake** was reported "singing recently" at Swanscombe Marshes on June 6th.

Two **Black-winged Stilts** were reported from Oare Marshes between May 9th and 14th and others were seen at Stodmarsh on June 1st and at Dungeness RSPB from June 21st-30th

Two **Curlew Sandpipers** were recorded at Dungeness RSPB on May 26th and a **Temminck's Stint** found at Lydden Valley on May 7th remained there until the 12th and another one was seen there from the 24th-26th.

A late **Purple Sandpiper** was seen at Foreness on May 4th and a **Little Stint** was discovered at Dungeness RSPB on May 21st with two there on the 31st.

A **Pectoral Sandpiper** was seen at Dungeness RSPB on May 29th.

During May single **Wood Sandpipers** were seen at Cliffe Pools on the 7th, Reculver Marshes on the 14th, Dungeness RSPB on the 16th and Nickoll's Quarry on the 22nd and in June one flew over Sandwich Bay on the 1st and another was seen at Cliffe Pools on the 16th and 17th.

During May single **Spotted Redshank** were seen at Cliffe Pools and Hythe with four at Pegwell Bay on the 18th and in June there were two at Cliffe Pools on the 17th and one at Oare Marshes from the 21st-30th with four there on the 24th and one at Otterham Creek on the 30th.

AUKS TO GULLS

The regularly returning adult **BONAPARTE'S GULL** returned to Oare Marshes on June 5th for the eighth year running but only remained there until the 10th. It was also seen on June 5th the other side of the Swale at Harty.

Two **Little Gulls** were found at Dungeness RSPB on May 7th with one at DBO on June 13th and one at Oare Marshes from June 22nd-30th and two at Lade on June 30th.

Up to three **Yellow-legged Gulls** were seen at Sandwich Bay and DBO and there were two **Caspian Gulls** at DBO and one at Dartford on May 9th and one at Pegwell Bay on May 24th.



Gull-billed Tern by Chris Bond

A **GULL-BILLED TERN** was found at Dungeness RSPB on June 23rd and was still there on the 30th.

A **Roseate Tern** flew past DBO on May 3rd and another spent some time at the “Patch” on June 12th before it flew east.

A **WHISKERED TERN** spent three days at Dungeness RSPB from May 23rd-25th and another was seen there on June 21st. If accepted these will be the 13th and 14th records for this species in Kent.

During May single **Black Terns** were occasionally recorded at DBO and Dungeness RSPB with a flock of 54 flying past DBO on the 15th.

In May up to four **Great Skuas** were seen at DBO, whilst in June a bird was seen pursuing Herring Gulls off Tankerton on the 12th and at nearby Swalecliffe from 13th-27th.



Great Skua by Andy Taylor

Single **Pomarine Skuas** flew past DBO on May 3rd and 5th with two on the 6th whilst another was seen flying N at Deal on the 4th. In addition, 13 flew past DBO on May 7th and one was seen there on the 9th and another flew past Dengemarsh Gully on the 16th.

In May up to eight **Arctic Skuas** were seen at DBO with one or two at Foreness Point, Folkestone, Tankerton and Sandwich Bay. During June singles were seen at DBO on the 1st and 11th with three on the 10th and two on the 20th.

DOVES TO RING-NECKED PARAKEET

A **Long-eared Owl** was seen at DBO on May 29th with another at Oare Marshes on June 20th.

Single **Short-eared Owls** were recorded from Elmley on May 1st, 2nd and 6th, Dungeness RSPB on May 4th, Cliffe Pools on the 8th and 19th, Faversham Creek on the 8th, Oare Marshes on the 13th and Bockhill on the 23rd. In June there was one at Seasalter on the 12th and one at Oare Marshes on the 20th.

A **Bee-eater** spent thirty minutes at DBO on May 4th and it or another was seen there on the 7th whilst there were two at Bockhill on May 23rd and one at South Foreland on the 25th and it or another there on the 27th with one at Dungeness on the 28th. In June single birds were seen at DBO and South Foreland on the 2nd, Faversham on the 10th and at Sandwich Bay on the 13th.

A **Wryneck** was found at Abbotscliff on May 8th.



Red-footed Falcon by Malcolm Freeman

It was a remarkable spring for **Red-footed Falcons** with a double figure count of individuals recorded in Kent although there may be some duplication in the sightings that follow.

An adult male was seen at Stodmarsh/Grove Ferry between May 1st and the 6th and there were two males there on May 7th. A female was seen between Collard's Lake and Grove Ferry from May 17th-June 2nd, a first year male was recorded at Worth Marshes between May 19th and the June 3rd with a female there from May 24th-June 2nd and an adult male on June 1st and 6th. In addition, there was a

female at Oare Marshes on the 20th. On May 24th, an adult male was reported at Pegwell Bay whilst single first year males were seen at Oare Marshes and Conyer on June 3rd and at Stodmarsh from the June 3rd-7th. A female was also found at Lydd Ranges on June 5th with a male at Dengemarsh on the 9th and a female at Sandwich Bay on the 11th. A first summer male was identified at Worth Marshes on the 13th with one seen at Dungeness RSPB from June 14th-20th and there was a male at Walland Marsh on June 23rd.

A **Merlin** was recorded at Grove Ferry on May 3rd with another at Grove Ferry on the 8th.

SHRIKES TO HIRUNDINES

A female **Red-backed Shrike** was seen at Longfield on May 22nd and 26th and a female was found at Bockhill on the 23rd whilst another bird was reported from Stodmarsh on the 24th. A male was discovered at Hythe on May 30th.



Red-backed Shrike by Brendan Ryan

A female or first summer male **Golden Oriole** was seen at Foreness on May 1st and an adult male flew W there on the 8th and others were heard there on the 17th and at Stodmarsh on the 26th.

As many as six **Ravens** were recorded from Dungeness RSPB, Sandwich Bay, Cliffe, Wouldham, Ashford, Grove Ferry/Stodmarsh, Lympne, South Foreland and Reculver Marshes.

A **Red-rumped Swallow** was seen at North Foreland on May 2nd and another was reported from Bough Beech on May 6th.

CETTI'S WARBLER TO WHEATEARS

A singing male **WESTERN BONELLI'S WARBLER** was seen at Reculver on June 24th. If accepted by BBRC this will be the 11th record for Kent.

A **Wood Warbler** was identified at Foreness on May 3rd and one was seen at North Foreland the next day.

A **GREAT REED WARBLER** was found at Stodmarsh on May 16th. This will be the 40th record of this species for Kent if it is accepted by BBRC.

During May one or two **Grasshopper Warblers** were reported from Reculver Marshes, Harty Ferry and Grove Ferry whilst one was heard and seen at Sandwich Bay on June 22nd and during May and June

one or two **Firecrests** were recorded at Petham, North Foreland, Faversham, Denge Wood and Canterbury.

A female **WESTERN SUBALPINE WARBLER** was seen briefly at St Margarets-at-Cliffe on June 23rd.



Rose-coloured Starling by Steve Reynaert

Kent joined in the national influx of **Rose-coloured Starlings** with adults found at Folkestone on June 5th and 6th, Dengemarsh on June 6th, at Lydd on June 8th and in the Walmer/Deal area also on the 8th. On June 14th, a bird was seen at Richborough Fort and on the 14th and 15th there was one at Deal with others reported from Tunbridge Wells on June 21st and Rochester on the 29th.

The final spring **Ring Ouzels** were seen at Kingsdown and Walmer on May 1st and there was an unexpected record of a **Fieldfare** at Kingsdown on June 10th.

The first **Spotted Flycatcher** of the year was seen at DBO on May 2nd, two days later than the mean arrival for Kent since 2002 whilst a **Pied Flycatcher** was seen at Bockhill on May 23rd.

During May and June one or two **Black Redstarts** were seen at Dungeness, Sandwich Bay, Reculver, Ramsgate, Bockhill, South Foreland, Hope Point and Walmer. At the end of June there were three at Chatham including a juvenile being fed by a female.

DUNNOCK TO BUNTINGS

Male **Blue-headed Wagtails** were identified at Foreness Point and Dungeness NNR on May 10th and at Oare Marshes on June 7th.

A **TAWNY PIPIT** was seen at South Foreland between May 21st and 28th.

A **Hawfinch** flew over Nethergong on May 20th.

During May and June up to 26 **Crossbills** were recorded from Clowes Wood, Lympe, Lydden, DBO, Foreness, North Foreland, South Foreland, Oare Marshes, Newnham, Hope Point, Riverhead, Peckham Hurst, Boughton Monchelsea, Hythe, Crundale, Worth Marshes, Westgate-on-Sea, Knole Park, Covert Wood, Abbotscliffe, Stodmarsh/Grove Ferry, Walmer Beach and Reculver.

A **Serin** flew over DBO on May 9th and others sung briefly in gardens at Bishopstone on May 26th and Greatstone on the 30th and were seen at South Foreland on the 31st and Hope Point on June 13th.



Snow Bunting by Richard Hanman

A very tame summer plumaged **Snow Bunting** was discovered at Deal on June 10th and remained there until the 12th. This bird had previously been recorded along the south coast from Cornwall to Sussex.

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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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 who enter them all onto the KOS database.

Letters and Notes

Fifty Years Ago

“Following a quite unprecedented spring influx of Little Egrets into Britain, some 40 individuals were probably involved, one as seen in the Swale area from 6th to 13th.”

32. Little Egret



Little Egret by Archibald Thorburn (PDI)

One, first seen on June 6th at Windmill Creek, was subsequently observed at Murston on 10th – 11th and at Stoke on the 13th (DLD, PJO, CEW et al).

This is only the third authenticated record for the county, the previous two being at Murston in September 1957 and on Chetney in May 1966.

KBR 1970
Norman McCanch

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