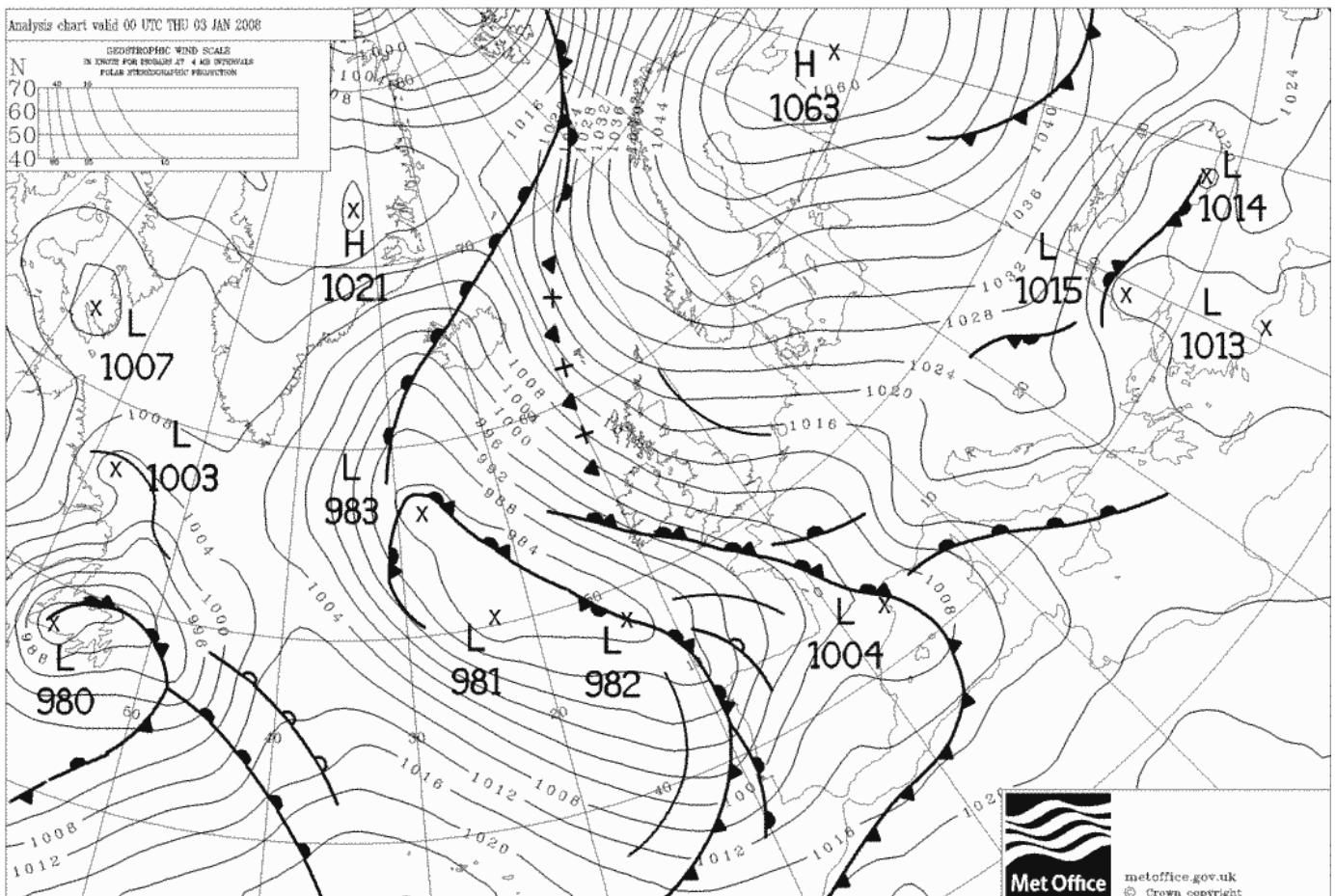


2008 review

January

After a relatively mild first day the wind turned easterly, bringing much colder air and even a few snow showers on the 3rd. Milder air spread from the west later on the 4th and winds turned more southerly or westerly. A series of low pressure areas and associated fronts dominated the rest of the month, with showers or longer periods of rain and occasional strong winds, with severe gales at times. There were some drier days between weather systems however, with lighter winds, when a few night frosts occurred but overall January was fairly mild.



Synoptic chart on 3rd January: a large anticyclone was situated over Russia, with the isobars indicating an easterly airflow. The occluded front brought a few snow showers as it passed over

Due to the mostly wet and often windy weather most of the interest was at sea. A total of 252 Red-throated Divers passed Samphire Hoe, mostly heading west, with a day peak of 114 on the 29th, but numbers of Great Crested Grebes were low, apart from an isolated movement of 37 west there on the 16th. Fulmars were present at Samphire Hoe throughout the month, with a peak of 16 on the 19th, and good numbers of Gannets were feeding offshore on many dates, with a maximum of 130 on the 26th.

A Shag was seen off the western end of Samphire Hoe on the 1st and up to 2 Little Egrets were seen regularly at this site. Brent Geese were recorded at Samphire Hoe on 5 dates, with a total of 53 counted, and a single Greylag Goose flew west there on the 16th, whilst 3 were at Nickoll's Quarry on the 12th. Common Scoters were seen off Samphire Hoe on 13 dates, with 214 logged, and a peak of 80 on the 20th. Other wildfowl recorded at this site in January were 3 Wigeon, 2

Shelduck, and singles of Gadwall and Red-breasted Merganser. The only reports from elsewhere were of 3 Pochards at Nickoll's Quarry and 3 Gadwall and 6 Tufted Ducks at Westenhangar.

At least 2 Peregrines were at Samphire Hoe and up to 4 Water Rails were recorded there. Purple Sandpipers were seen regularly at Hythe, with a good peak of 12 on the 26th, whilst a Common Sandpiper at Botolph's Bridge on 2 dates was the first over-wintering record for the area, and a Green Sandpiper was also seen there on the 12th. 2 Jack Snipe and 23 Snipe were at Nickoll's Quarry on the 12th and singles of Dunlin and Curlew were noted at Samphire Hoe during the month, whilst a Lapwing there on the 2nd appeared to be a cold-weather migrant

A first-winter **Glaucous Gull** was seen at Samphire Hoe on 3 occasions, and seemed to be spending most of its time just outside of the area in Dover Harbour. A total of 367 Kittiwakes were counted flying west past Samphire Hoe during the month, with peaks of 90 on the 16th and 160 on the 20th.



Purple Sandpiper at Hythe
(Brian Harper)

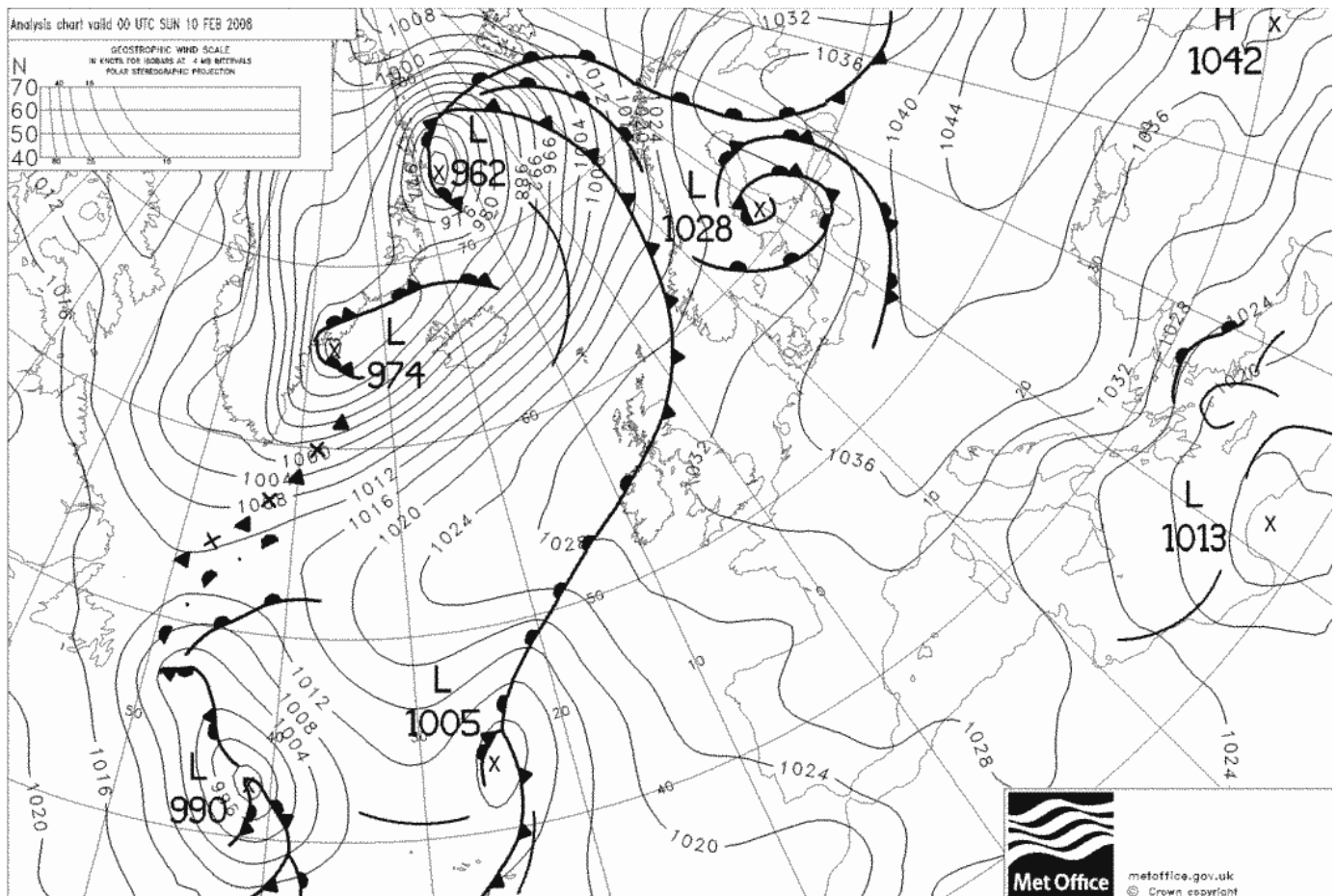
Guillemots were present off Samphire Hoe in good numbers throughout January, with about 3,270 recorded, but the largest counts came in the second half of the month, with 920 west on the 16th, 825 west on the 20th and 700 mostly west on the 29th. Razorbills however were only seen in small numbers, amounting to a total of about 80, apart from an isolated count of 700 mostly west past Samphire Hoe on the 29th.

There was little of real note in terms of passerines or near-passerines. Single Kingfishers were seen near Lympne and at Samphire Hoe, at least 35 Meadow Pipits were at Samphire Hoe, and up to 2 Black Redstarts were seen regularly at the latter site. A Nuthatch was at Brockhill CP on the 1st, a Siskin flew over Samphire Hoe on the 27th and up to 5 Linnets were also seen there.

February

The month began with winds predominately from the westerly quarter and it was generally quiet. 20 Red-throated Divers were seen off Samphire Hoe on the 4th and 250-300 auks (including several Razorbills) were present there for much of the first week. 3 Jack Snipe, 15 Snipe, and a Golden Plover were at Nickoll's Quarry on the 4th and Water Rails were seen there, at Samphire Hoe, and at Seabrook (2). Two **Ravens** were seen at Samphire Hoe on the 4th (and again on the 10th and 17th), whilst a Little Egret was present on the former date and the **Glaucous Gull** made another appearance there on the 7th.

The 9th-10th saw mild spring-like conditions, with a light southerly breeze, which encouraged 3 Red-breasted Mergansers, 4 Teal and 950 Brent Geese to move up-channel past Samphire Hoe whilst a Siskin flew over. A single Red-breasted Merganser flew east there on the 11th and 7 Brent Geese went east the next day.



Synoptic chart on 10th February: high pressure and light southerly winds encouraged some early sea passage

Cooler northerly or easterly winds took hold from the 13th and appeared to displace a small number of birds including a Little Grebe at Samphire Hoe on the 13th-14th, 2 Pochard and a Tufted Duck at Seabrook on the 15th, and 3 Wigeon offshore there the same day, with 4 (and another found dead) at Samphire Hoe on the 16th. Purple Sandpipers increased to 10 at Hythe on the 13th and 135 auks flew east at Samphire Hoe on the 16th, when a Brambling was noted at Saltwood Castle. A first-winter **Iceland Gull** flew east along the cliffs at Samphire Hoe on the 17th.

It became milder, with light south-westerly winds, on the 23rd-24th and 1,140 Brent Geese flew east past Samphire Hoe, whilst a Greylag Goose and 2 Pochard flew west. 2 Common Sandpipers and 1 Green Sandpiper were noted at Botolph's Bridge on the 24th.



Water Rail at Seabrook
(Brian Harper)

The month ended quietly in westerly winds although a Black Redstart at Samphire Hoe on the 29th was probably an early migrant, being in a different area to the wintering bird (which was present all month).



Wigeon at Samphire Hoe
(Ian Roberts)

March

A **Red Kite** flew over Saltwood Castle on the 1st and a Chiffchaff was reported at Copt Point, whilst a Black Redstart and a Redwing at Samphire Hoe were further signs of early passage, but a run of rather cool westerly winds kept the rest of the first week fairly quiet.

The wind became more south-westerly on the 7th which encouraged a little passage at sea, with 2 Red-breasted Mergansers, 16 Gannets and 60 Brent Geese east past Samphire Hoe. A Cetti's Warbler was in song along the canal at Hythe – the first of up to 3 seen there during March. Another **Red Kite** flew inland over Folkestone on the 8th, when 4 **Ravens** lingered for an hour in the Samphire Hoe / Abbotscliffe area. 25 Gannets and 75 Brent Geese flew east past Samphire Hoe, and the following day saw a larger movement of 820 Brent Geese east there, together with a Pintail, 4 Red-throated Divers and 23 Common Scoters, whilst 2 Tufted Ducks went west. The first Firecrest of the year was also at Samphire Hoe on the 9th, when a Little Egret flew over Hythe (1-2 were seen at Samphire Hoe on 6 dates).



Red Kite at Saltwood Castle (Brian Harper)



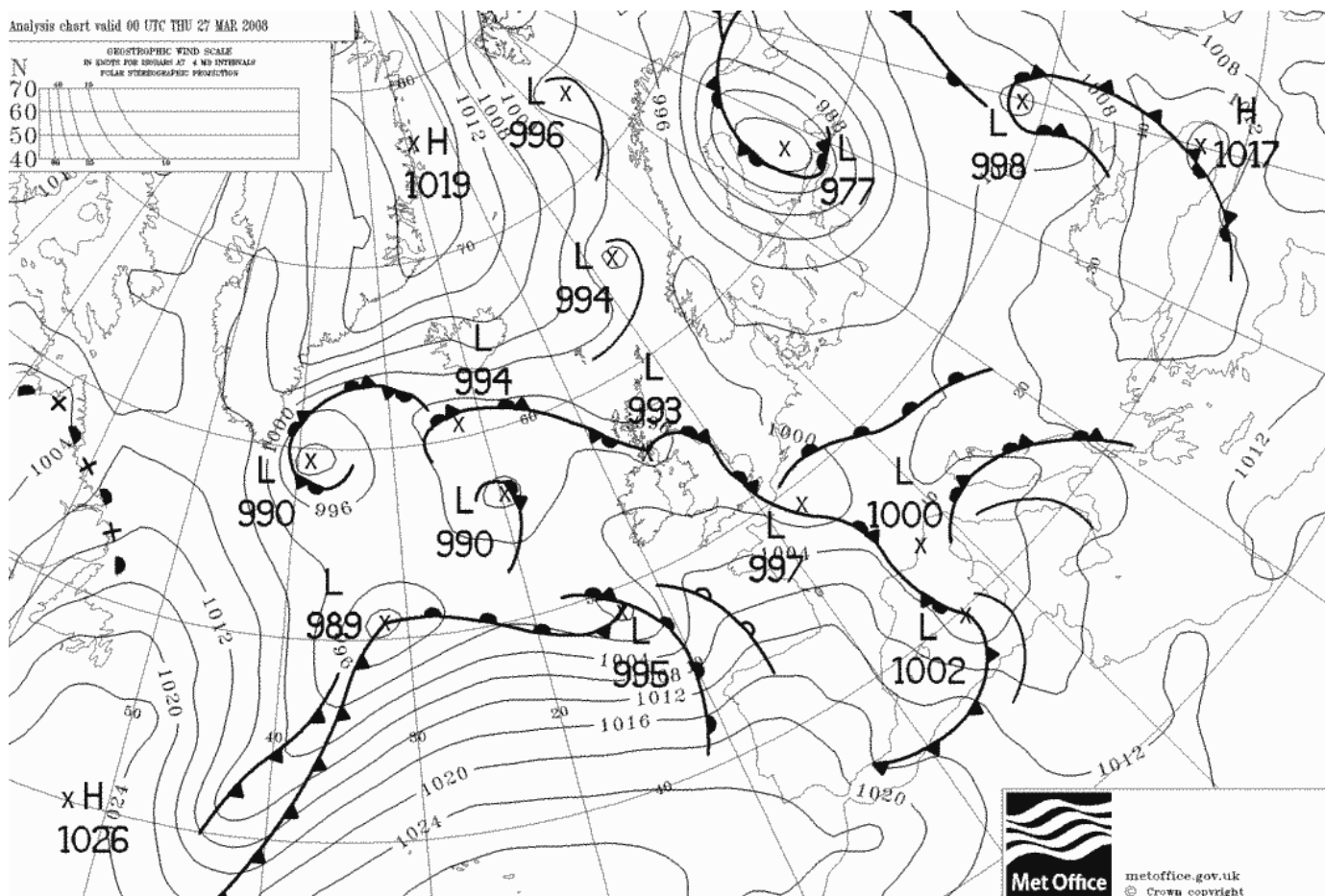
Cetti's Warbler at Hythe Canal (Brian Harper)

Heavy rain on the morning of the 11th grounded 3 Firecrests at Samphire Hoe (with 1-2 seen until the 14th) whilst Black Redstarts increased to 2 (at least 5-6 individuals were seen there in March)

and a Grey Wagtail flew over. A pair of Tufted Ducks arrived on the Canal at Hythe the next day, and remained until the 17th, and a Chiffchaff was seen there on the 13th with another at Samphire Hoe the following day. The 14th also produced a migrant Redwing at the latter site and the first-winter **Glaucous Gull** was seen again offshore there. Remaining winter visitors included 2 Jack Snipe and 14 Snipe at Nickoll's Quarry, Green and Common Sandpipers at Botolph's Bridge, 5 Purple Sandpipers at Hythe, and Water Rails at Samphire Hoe (2) and the Hythe Canal.

The 15th was calm and rather spring-like and 3 Dunlin, 8 Shelducks, 11 Common Scoters, 17 Red-throated Divers, 32 Black-headed Gulls and 520 Brent Geese flew east past Samphire Hoe. A Chiffchaff and 2 Redwings were also seen there and a Buzzard flew east over Saltwood Castle. The first Wheatear arrived at Samphire Hoe on the 16th, as did singles of Firecrest, Goldcrest and Chiffchaff, and a Firecrest was also seen at Hythe. The 17th produced the first Blackcap and c.10 Chiffchaffs at Seabrook.

Cooler, north-westerly winds took hold from the 18th and reduced migration to a trickle, with just a Redwing, 4 Chiffchaffs, 4 Siskins and a few Chaffinches at Samphire Hoe over the following 4 days. Elsewhere a Cetti's Warbler and 2 Chiffchaffs were at West Hythe. It turned colder still on the 22nd and the following day saw moderate snowfall, although a Marsh Harrier struggled in off the sea at Samphire Hoe just before it set in. A **Raven** flew west at Samphire Hoe on the 24th, but there was little else of note.



Synoptic chart at midnight on 26th/27th March: a complex series of fronts and rather calm conditions led to a large overnight movement of thrushes, with some grounded the next day

The last week of March was milder and spring migration gathered pace. The first 2 Sandwich Terns, and 7 Red-throated Divers, 11 Kittiwakes, 17 Fulmars, 66 Gannets, 100 Common Scoters, and 143 Brent Geese flew east past Samphire Hoe on the 26th, whilst a Chiffchaff, a

Firecrest, 3 Goldcrests and another Marsh Harrier were seen on the land. There was a large movement of Redwings on the night of the 26th/27th and 15 were grounded at Samphire Hoe the following morning, along with a Fieldfare. 2 Siskins, 25 Wood Pigeons, 125 Chaffinches and 220 Starlings flew over and 4 Chiffchaffs were counted.

Strong southerlies on the 28th produced an **Avocet**, 4 Red-throated Divers, 8 auks, 30 Fulmars, 56 Brent Geese and 165 Gannets east past Samphire Hoe, whilst 16 Meadow Pipits flew in off the sea. The first Swallow was seen at Seabrook the next day, and there was a Wheatear and 3 Firecrests at Samphire Hoe, a Firecrest at Saltwood Castle, and a Chiffchaff and 2 Redwings at Nickoll's Quarry. 115 Wood Pigeons and a few finches flew west at Samphire Hoe.



March migrants: Chiffchaff, Firecrest, and Swallow – Seabrook and Saltwood (Brian Harper)

The first area record of **Water Pipit** occurred at Samphire Hoe on the 30th, where a pair of **Ravens** were also seen, as were 2 Firecrests, 3 Black Redstarts, 4 Wheatears and c.6 Chiffchaffs. The first Willow Warbler of the year was reported at Brockhill CP and singles of Swallow, Blackcap, and Firecrest were seen at Seabrook. At sea 2 Velvet Scoters, 2 Arctic Skuas, 7 Red-throated Divers, 53 Brent Geese, and 80 Common Scoters flew east. The month ended with another **Raven** sighting, flying west over the Gun Site and Crete Road, and a Black-throated Diver, 6 Red-breasted Mergansers, 30 Black-headed Gulls and 62 Sandwich Terns flew east past Samphire Hoe.



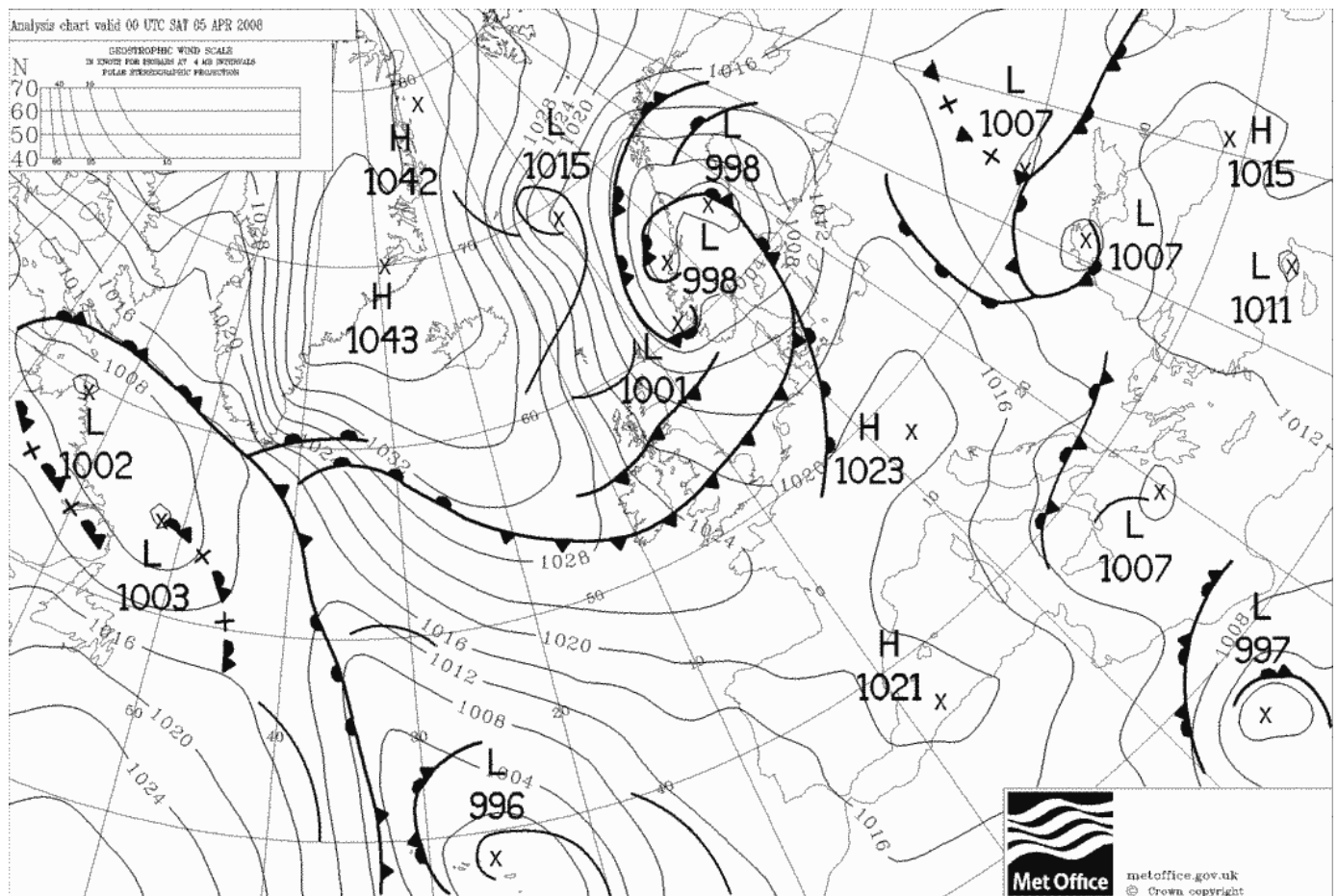
Water Pipit at Samphire Hoe (Geoff Burton)

April

There were only 2 Firecrests at Samphire Hoe of note on the 1st but the next day saw a small arrival of tits there, with 3 continental Coal Tits, 3 Long-tailed Tits, 4 Great Tits and 2 Blue Tits new in, and singles of Firecrest and Corn Bunting were present, whilst 170 Wood Pigeons flew

west. A Cuckoo and 20 Swallows were reported at Nickoll's Quarry and a Swallow flew west at Capel-le-Ferne Café. Another continental Coal Tit was at Samphire Hoe on the 3rd, as were a Firecrest and 2 Willow Warblers, and a Marsh Harrier flew in off the sea whilst 30 Siskins went east. The 4th produced just a single Swallow in off the sea at Samphire Hoe.

North-westerly winds and showers on the 5th led to a small arrival of migrants, with a fine male Redstart at Hythe and a Redwing, a Blackcap, a Goldcrest, 2 Willow Warblers and 9 Chiffchaffs at Samphire Hoe. 210 Siskins flew east at the latter site and 2 Swallows came in off the sea. 3 continental Coal Tits and 2 new Great Tits were at Samphire Hoe on the 6th and 12 Siskins flew east there the following day. There was little movement at sea during the first week of the month, although a Canada Goose past Samphire Hoe on the 3rd and 2 Mute Swans off there on the 4th were locally unusual.



Synoptic chart on 5th Apr: high pressure over Spain and North Africa encouraged migrants to move north, but these met cold fronts moving south which led to them being grounded

A **Raven** flew west at Capel-le-Ferne Café on the 8th, when 1,500 Wood Pigeons flew north over Botolph's Bridge. The first-winter **Glaucous Gull** reappeared off Samphire Hoe on the 9th and a Blackcap, 2 Chiffchaffs and 3 Swallows were seen there, whilst 12 Siskins, 26 Chaffinches and 95 Wood Pigeons flew over, and another 2 Canada Geese went past.

The wind became south-westerly from the 10th and encouraged some up-channel passage past Samphire Hoe, including 60 Gannets and 180 Sandwich Terns on the 10th, 2 Shovelers, 2 Red-breasted Mergansers, 7 Whimbrel, 80 Brent Geese, 146 Sandwich Terns and a large count of 346 Gannets on the 11th, single Manx Shearwater and Great Skua on the 12th, and the first 2 Common Terns and 2 Black-throated Divers on the 13th. Small numbers of Red-throated Divers, Brent Geese and Common Scoters also moved east and 2 Velvet Scoters flew west on the 12th.

On the land a continental Coal Tit at Samphire Hoe on the 12th was notable and a Whitethroat there on the 13th, a Yellow Wagtail at Botolph's Bridge the same day, and a House Martin at Seabrook on the 14th were all new for the year. A few Swallows, Wheatears, Chiffchaffs and Willow Warblers arrived and small numbers of finches and Wood Pigeons moved west. A Buzzard was seen inland of Capel-le-Ferne on the 14th.

Six days of easterly winds followed from the 16th and produced a reasonable up-channel passage off Samphire Hoe, with totals of 7 Red-throated Divers, 1 Black-throated Diver, 55 Fulmars, 12 Shelducks, 12 Teal, 27 Shovelers, 364 Common Scoters, 10 Velvet Scoters, 4 Red-breasted Mergansers, 4 Grey Plovers, 4 Sanderlings, 8 Knot, 52 Bar-tailed Godwits, 34 Whimbrel, 6 Arctic and 5 Great Skuas, 3 Mediterranean Gulls, 40 Kittiwakes, 1,049 Sandwich Terns and 72 'commic' terns (including at least a couple of Arctics).

It was quiet on the land, although a Grasshopper Warbler was reeling at Samphire Hoe on the 16th, the first Reed Warblers were in the Botolph's Bridge on the 20th and there were small numbers of Swallows, Yellow Wagtails, Wheatears, Blackcaps, Whitethroats and Willow Warblers scattered across the area.

The 22nd was a day of northerly winds, which induced a little visual migration at Samphire Hoe, including a Sand Martin, 7 Swallows, 27 Chaffinches and 30 Siskins in/east. 10 Little Gulls and 10 Whimbrel flew east at sea there.

The last week of the month was dominated by south-westerly winds and attention again turned to the sea, where totals of 12 Red-throated Divers, 5 Black-throated Divers, 2 Manx Shearwaters, 230 Gannets, 17 Cormorants, a Shag, 7 Barnacle and 40 Brent Geese, 11 Shelducks, 191 Common Scoters, 2 Velvet Scoters, a Red-breasted Merganser, 80 Bar-tailed Godwits, 28 Whimbrel, 16 Pomarine Skuas (15 on 27th), 29 Arctic Skuas (22 on the 30th), 5 Great Skuas, 30 Mediterranean Gulls, 11 Little Gulls, at least 1,000 Sandwich Terns, several hundred 'commic terns' and 3 Little Terns, mostly heading east.

It was again rather slow on the land, but the first Hobbies were at Samphire Hoe on the 25th and 30th, the first Swift was at the Gun Site also on the 25th (with another the next day and 15 at Hythe on the 27th), and the first Lesser Whitethroat was at Samphire Hoe on the 27th, with the first Sedge Warbler at Botolph's Bridge the same day. A few Wheatears and Willow Warblers were noted and Whitethroat numbers steadily increased, whilst overhead Yellow Wagtails (peak 7 on the 24th), Swallows (peak 22 on the 25th) and a few House Martins were moving. 2 **Ravens** were seen again at Samphire Hoe on the 25th and a Lesser Redpoll on the 24th and a Jay there on the 27th were notable.

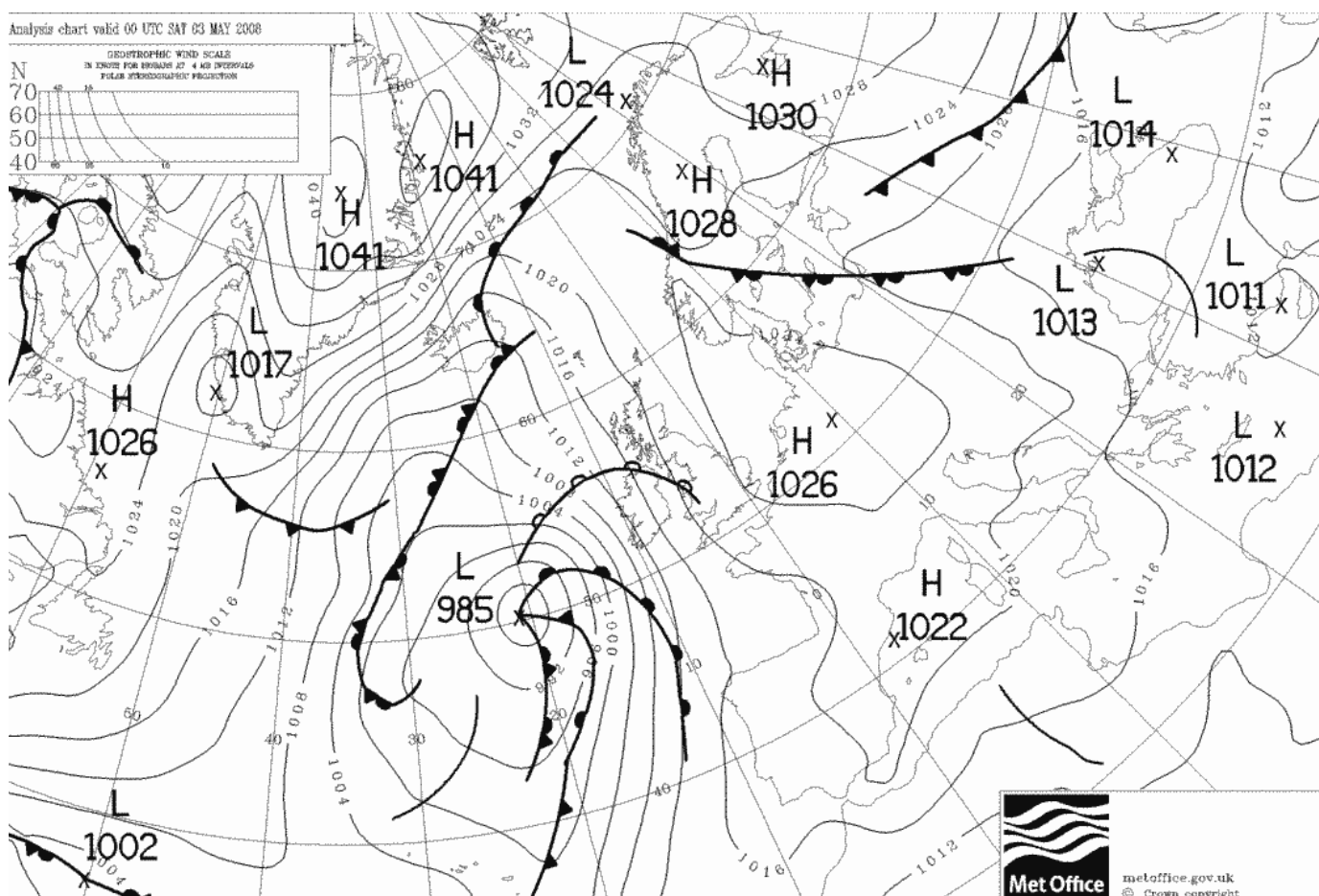


Yellow Wagtail at Botolph's Bridge
(Brian Harper)

May

The month began with a moderate south-westerly blowing on the 1st, which produced singles of Black-throated Diver, Manx Shearwater and Arctic Skua off Samphire Hoe, and lighter winds the next day saw sea passage pick up a little with a Great Skua, 2 Arctic Skuas, 2 Black-throated Divers, 4 Red-throated Divers, 5 Whimbrel, 11 Little Terns, 55 Common Scoters, 125 Sandwich Terns, 260 Bar-tailed Godwits and 330 'commic' terns flying east there. It was quiet on the land, although a Hobby, a Yellow Wagtail and 8 Swallows flew in off the sea at Samphire Hoe on the 2nd, when 3 Wheatears were present there and a Buzzard flew over Folkestone.

The wind switched round to the east to south-east from the 3rd to the 8th, which proved favourable for Pomarine Skuas, with a total of 23 moving east past Samphire Hoe over the six day period. Smaller numbers of Great (1) and Arctic (4) Skuas were also logged as were a few wildfowl (2 late Brent Geese, 2 Shovelers, 7 Shelducks and 100 Common Scoters), waders (a Grey Plover, 2 Sanderlings, 3 Greenshanks, 4 Dunlin, 5 Whimbrel, 7 Bar-tailed Godwits and 12 Oystercatchers), gulls (a Little Gull, 22 Kittiwakes, 125 Black-headed Gulls and small numbers of Mediterranean and Common Gulls) and terns (2 Little Terns, 200 'commic' Terns and 230 Sandwich Terns). 3 Common Sandpipers were also seen on the beach or rocks there.



Synoptic chart on 3rd May: pleasant conditions with light south-easterly winds led to a passage of Pomarine Skuas up the English Channel. The less pleasant conditions in the Atlantic may have persuaded birds to avoid the route up the western side of Britain/Ireland

There was a trickle of visible migration into the easterly wind, comprising 2 Hobbies, a Tree Pipit, 4 Yellow Wagtails, 35 Swallows, a few Swifts and House Martins, 14 Siskins and 30 Goldfinches. A **Red Kite** flew west along the cliffs at Samphire Hoe on the 7th and a Short-eared Owl was seen from the 5th-7th. The first Turtle Dove was at Capel-le-Ferne on the 4th, but otherwise

grounded migrants amounted to no more than just a few Wheatears, Blackcaps and Lesser Whitethroats.

Three very warm and calm days followed from the 9th, which encouraged raptors to move, with a **Montagu's Harrier** and a **Honey Buzzard** over Samphire Hoe on the 9th and another **Honey Buzzard** in off the sea at Abbotscliffe on the 11th. It was quiet at sea, although a **Great Northern Diver** flew west past Samphire Hoe on the 9th, and visual migration involved 3 Lapwings, 2 Turtle Doves and 250 Wood Pigeons.

The 12th saw the wind increase from the north-east and it stayed in this general direction over the next 10 days or so, bringing with it cooler conditions and occasional showers. The highlight of this period was a **Bee-eater**, which flew north at Church Hougham on the 14th, and there was also a small passage of waders, which included a **Wood Sandpiper** at Botolph's Bridge on the 18th. Totals of the more regular species were 37 Dunlin, 16 Oystercatchers, 8 Grey Plovers, 7 Turnstones, 5 Common Sandpipers, 3 Sanderlings, 2 Whimbrel and singles of Ringed Plover and Redshank, with the majority moving east at sea.

The sea also produced an Arctic Skua, 3 Black-throated Divers, 10 Manx Shearwaters, 84 Sandwich Terns, 122 Gannets and 189 Common Terns. On the land a female Ring Ouzel arrived at Samphire Hoe on the 18th and remained until the 29th, but a Wheatear there on the 20th was the only other grounded migrant of note. Overhead a Grey Wagtail, 10 Siskins and a few Swifts moved east.



Ring Ouzel at Samphire Hoe (Pete Coleman)

The 23rd eventually saw a change in the weather, but few birds of note, although there were 2 Ring Ouzels at the Gun Site the next day and at least 40 Swifts flew east along the cliffs. Overnight rain dropped 3 Spotted Flycatchers into Samphire Hoe on the 25th and a Buzzard and a Hobby flew over Folkestone.

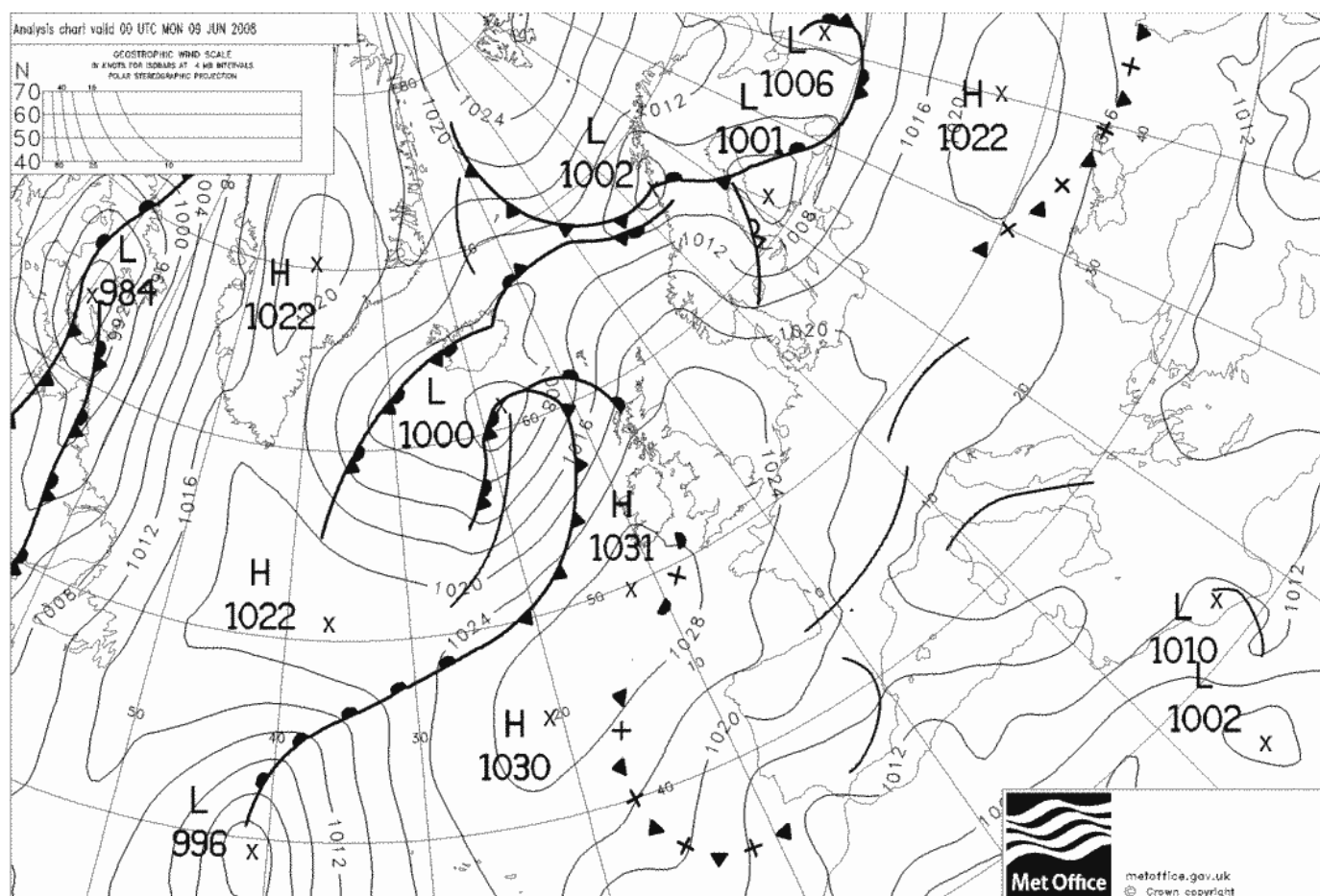
The month ended with rather calm and humid conditions and it was relatively quiet, although a Red-throated Diver at Samphire Hoe on the 27th, and an Arctic Skua, 2 Razorbills and 2 Barnacle Geese there on the 31st were all fairly late records, as were singles of Grey Wagtail (27th) and Siskin (29th). An increase in Swifts (including 50 at Samphire Hoe on the 27th) was more usual.

June

The first week of June was unsettled, with a changeable mix of sunshine and showers, and variable winds. A ridge of high pressure from the 8th brought a few days of easterly winds and it was mainly dry and fine before a spell of rain arrived late on the 11th. It turned cool and showery in brisk north to north-westerly winds from the 12th, before becoming calmer and drier from the 15th. A deep depression tracked in from the Atlantic on the 21st and brought westerly winds which were unusually strong for the time of year. The 23rd-24th were rather calm, before moderate west to south-westerly winds set in for the last week of the month but it was mainly dry and pleasant.

Large raptors tend to be a feature in June and this was again the case in 2008, with a **Red Kite** flying north over Hythe on the 1st and a **Honey Buzzard** flying east over Folkestone on the 4th.

Migration usually peters out in June but late migrants can be of high-class. Following the addition of Squacco Heron to the Folkestone and Hythe list in June 2007, this June produced another first for the area – a **Thrush Nightingale** at Saltwood Castle on the 9th. The bird was heard singing by one fortunate observer and, whilst it wasn't seen, it was tape-recorded.



Synoptic chart on 9th June: the conditions which produced the area's first Thrush Nightingale. High pressure stretched across from Asia, with easterly winds encouraging birds to wander west

Further quality was provided by a **Bee-eater**, which flew east over Samphire Hoe on the 3rd, and was the second area record this year.

Also of note were 2 Hobbies at the Gun Site on the 4th and 15 Crossbills, which flew north there on the 8th. The first returning waders were noted from the 9th, when 4 Lapwings were at Samphire Hoe, and also included a Green Sandpiper at Botolph's Bridge on the 12th. Wandering Grey Herons are often a characteristic of mid-summer, and migrants were noted on the 14th, 15th and 16th (2).

Another Hobby was at Samphire Hoe on the 16th and a Little Grebe on the main pond there the same day was an unseasonable record.

Late in the month the first return passage of Sand Martins was observed, with 15 flying west at Samphire Hoe on the 29th.

July

There was a fairly pleasant start to the month before a week of moderate south-west to westerly winds took hold from the 5th, with some stronger gusts (approaching gale force even on the 7th) and occasional heavy showers or longer spells of rain. A ridge of high pressure gave generally warm and fair weather from the 13th and this remained until the 19th, when a cool north-westerly airflow introduced bright and breezy conditions, with a mix of sunshine and scattered showers. From the 22nd it became more settled as an increasingly hot and humid southerly flow took hold, and temperatures climbed into the mid to high 20s Celsius – it was mostly dry apart from a few thundery showers.

The start of July was characteristically quiet, before an influx of Common Crossbills generated some interest from mid-month: 11 flew south-west over Hythe on the 16th, with 22 seen flying east over Cheriton (Cherry Garden) on the 20th, and another 4 heading east over the Gun Site the next day.

Large numbers of Swifts and smaller numbers of Sand Martins were logged moving west along the cliffs from the 12th, with a peak on the 19th-20th. A Hobby was noted at Saltwood Castle on the 12th.

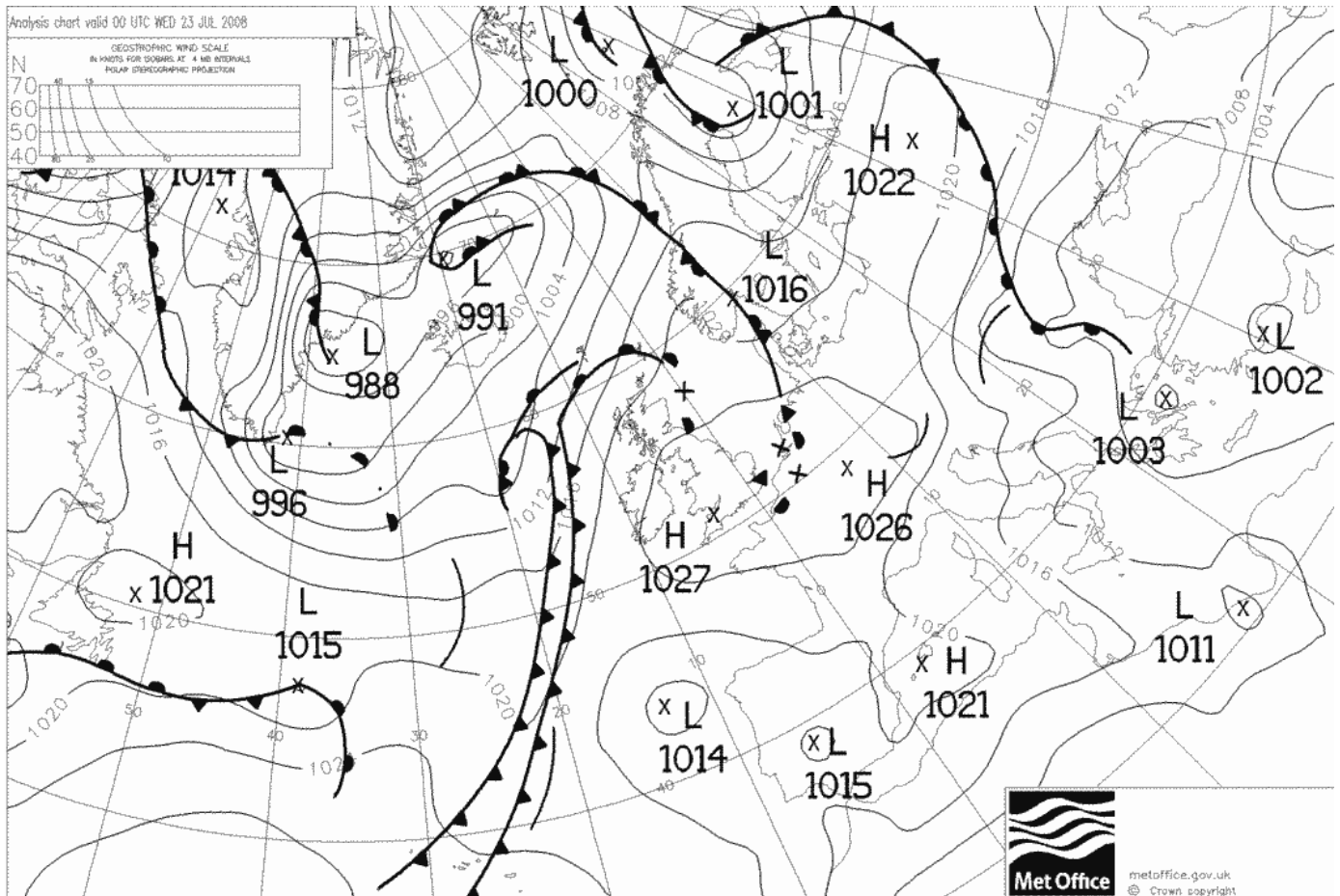
As usual, passage waders featured in July, but there was no coverage at Nickoll's Quarry so both numbers and variety were low. Single Whimbrels flew west past Samphire Hoe on 2 dates, with single Common Sandpipers there on several dates, a Dunlin on the 21st, and a Lapwing flew east on the 30th.



Hobby at Saltwood Castle (Brian Harper)

A Balearic Shearwater lingered off Samphire Hoe on the 23rd and an adult Yellow-legged Gull was a new species for the site the next day. An Arctic Skua flew east past Samphire Hoe on the 24th and good numbers of Gannets were present offshore throughout, with a peak of 175 west on the 12th.

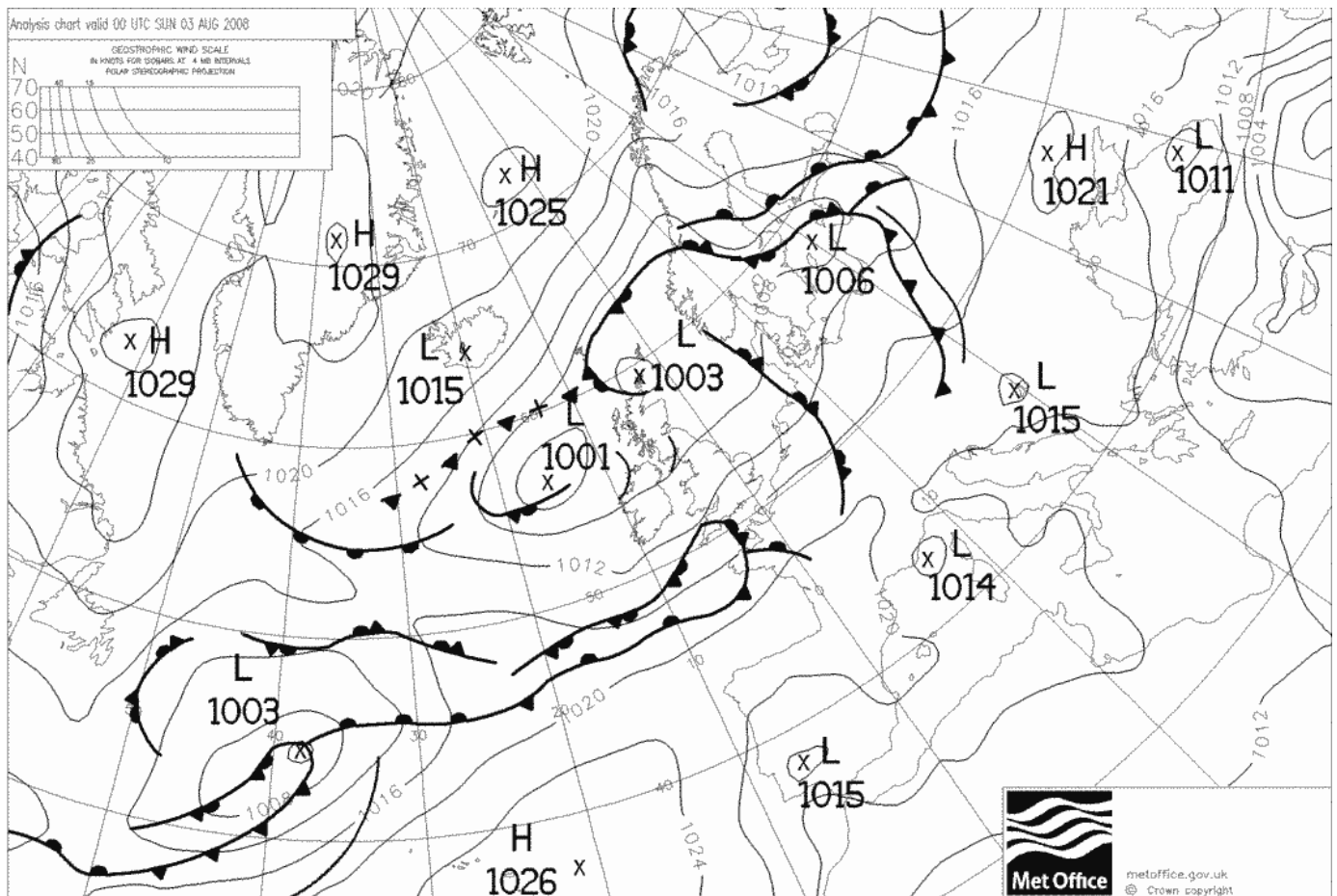
A kite sp., presumably Red, flew east over Folkestone on the 26th and there was an apparent increase of Common Whitethroats at Samphire Hoe on the 28th, suggesting the start of warbler return passage.



Synoptic chart on 23rd July: high pressure produced warm, flat calm weather – Balearic Shearwaters have also occurred in similar conditions in other years

August

Fairly strong south-westerly winds dominated the first days of the month and most movement of note was at sea, where an Arctic Skua, 2 Balearic Shearwaters, 30 Gannets and 50 Kittiwakes passed Samphire Hoe on the 1st. The same site saw at least one Arctic Tern, amongst 70 'commic' terns, and 80 Sandwich Terns feeding offshore the next day. On the 3rd seawatching from Samphire Hoe and Copt Point produced totals of 1 Balearic Shearwater, 1 Little Gull, 9 Black Terns, 10 Arctic Skuas, 150 Gannets, 500 Sandwich Terns and 1,030 'Commic' Terns flying west, also 2 Knot and singles of Dunlin, Ringed Plover and Turnstone. 45 Swifts also flew west on the 3rd but otherwise it was very quiet on the land.



Synoptic chart on 3rd August: a series of depressions and fronts combined to induce a reasonable sea passage

The wind slackened and became more westerly from the 4th, and a Marsh Harrier flew west at Samphire Hoe, whilst there was an arrival of 9 Willow Warblers there. Singles of Garden Warbler, Sedge Warbler and Lesser Whitethroat were at Samphire Hoe on the 5th, and a Wheatear was noted there the next day, with a Razorbill offshore. The 7th produced a Whinchat, a Garden Warbler and a Common Sandpiper at Samphire Hoe.

South-westerly winds returned from the 8th but it was quiet both on land and sea over the next week or so, with just single Whimbrel and Curlew, and a few Gannets offshore, and ones and twos of Willow Warbler and a Lesser Whitethroat in the bushes. A change to more west to north-west winds on the 14th saw a little more on the land, with a Sedge Warbler at Samphire Hoe, and a Reed Warbler, a Garden Warbler and 3 Sedge Warblers there the next day, whilst a couple of Yellow Wagtails passed overhead.

A southerly breeze on the 16th encouraged some passage at sea past Samphire Hoe, including a Great Crested Grebe, 2 Teal, 3 Arctic Skuas, 8 Fulmars, 30 Sandwich Terns, 50 Common Terns, 70 Gannets, 120 Bar-tailed Godwits and 200 Common Scoters, mostly heading west. A Marsh Harrier flew out to sea there and 16 Swifts flew west. A Sedge Warbler, 2 Blackcaps, 3 Wheatears and 3 Little Egrets were also noted. The wind became south-westerly on the 17th, with showers, and 250 Swifts flew west at Samphire Hoe, but a very quiet couple of days ensued in similar conditions thereafter.

It remained quite unsettled, but there was a little more of note from the 20th, when a Garden Warbler and 13 Crossbills were at the Gun Site and 8 Wheatears were logged at Samphire Hoe. A Spotted Flycatcher, a Reed Warbler and 6 Willow Warblers were at the latter site the next day,

whilst 2 Crossbills and 3 Wheatears were present on the 23rd. A Little Egret took up residence in Folkestone Harbour from the 20th (for at least a week) and a juvenile Osprey arrived at Sandling Park on the afternoon of the 23rd, having been satellite-tracked from its nest at Loch Garten. (It remained in the area until the 26th September, when it flew 2,000 miles WSW and met a sad demise in the midst of the North Atlantic). A Shoveler and 8 Mandarins were also recorded at Sandling Park in late August.



Osprey at Sandling Park (Ian Roberts)

The 24th brought more brisk south-westerlies so attention again turned to the sea, where a Whimbrel, 4 Teal, 5 Turnstone, 5 Sanderling, 10 Arctic Skuas, 40 Gannets and 45 Common Terns passed offshore of Samphire Hoe. The 25th was calmer, but quieter, though a Common Sandpiper, 2 Wheatears and 5 Willow Warblers were at Samphire Hoe, and Grey Herons flew over there (1) and Folkestone (4).

The last week of August was mostly calm and cloudy, and migration picked up a little on the land. 7 Wheatears were at Samphire Hoe on the 26th, and a Spotted Flycatcher, a Whinchat, a Lesser Whitethroat, 3 Wheatears, 6 Yellow Wagtails, an increase to 6 Robins and 8 Willow Warblers were seen there on the 28th, whilst 20 Sand Martins flew west. On the 29th singles of (immature/female) Redstart, Spotted Flycatcher, Whinchat, Sedge Warbler and Wheatear were at the same site, and 10 Sand Martins and 100 Swallows flew over. A new (male) Redstart was at Samphire Hoe on the 30th, as were 2 Wheatears and 16 Stonechats. Another Redstart was at Sandling on the 31st and a Grey Wagtail and 3 Yellow Wagtails flew over Samphire Hoe.

September

A rather wet and windy start to the month kept migration to a minimum and the first 6 days produced little more than a handful of common migrants (Whinchat, Wheatear, Lesser Whitethroat, Blackcap, Willow Warbler) on the land and just singles of Great and Arctic Skua, and a few 'commic' terns on the sea.

The 7th was more encouraging, with 2 Sedge Warblers, 2 Willow Warblers and 5 Wheatears at Samphire Hoe, 3 Wheatears at Hythe and a Spotted Flycatcher at Saltwood Castle, and the slow moving area of low pressure finally moved out into the North Sea on the 8th, which induced a reasonable arrival of migrants as the wind swung round to the south-east. The highlight was a **Wryneck** at Abbotscliffe, when a Redstart, a Tree Pipit, 4 Wheatears, 4 Chiffchaffs and 5 Whinchats were also recorded there, and singles of Pied and Spotted Flycatchers, Redstart, Whinchat and Lesser Whitethroat, 3 Chiffchaffs, 3 Blackcaps, 4 Wheatears and 10 Willow Warblers were at Samphire Hoe.

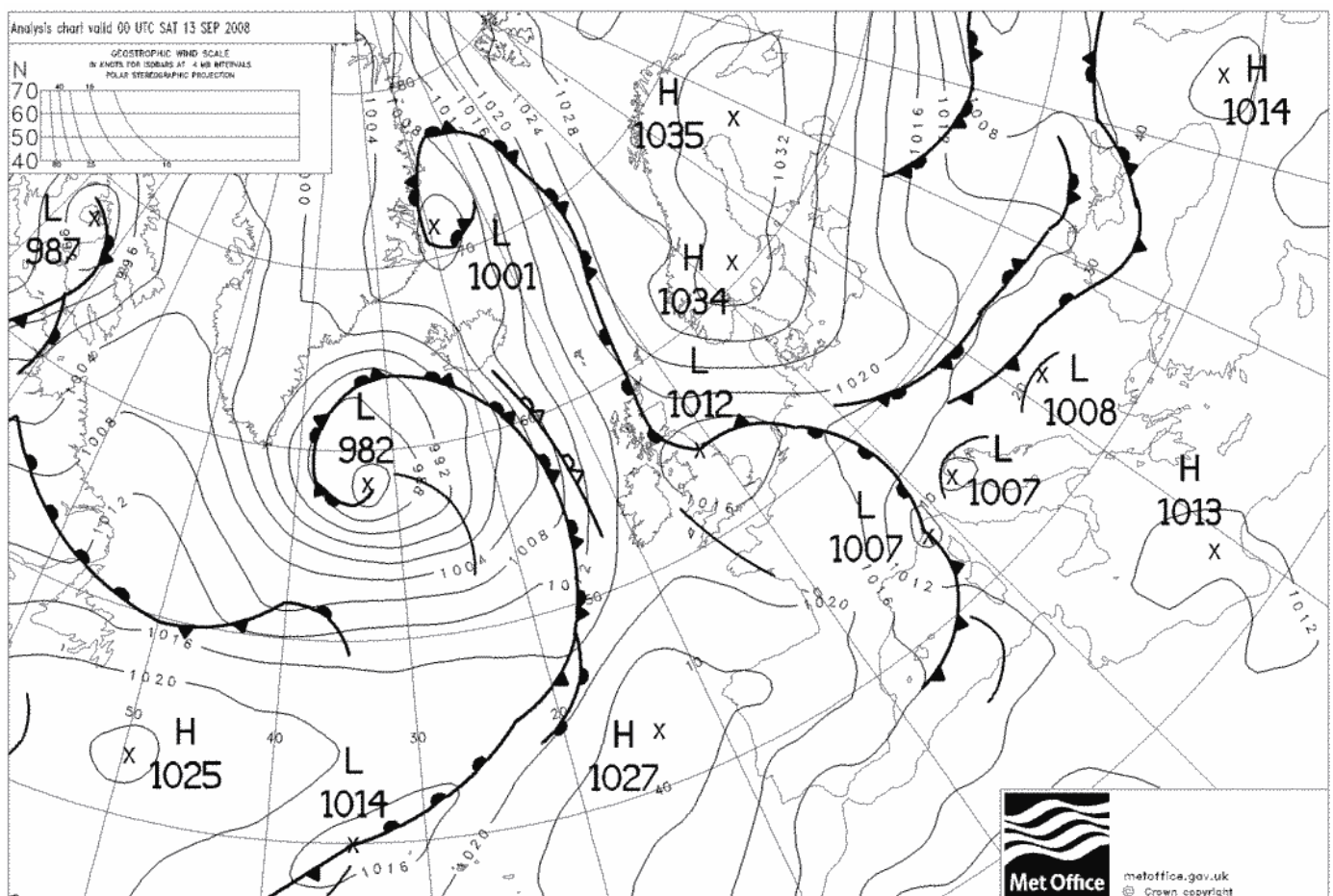
An Osprey flew south-west over Capel-le-Ferne the next day, when 3 Great Spotted Woodpeckers flew in off the sea at Abbotscliffe and a Hobby and a Whinchat were at the Gun Site. At Samphire Hoe there were singles of Pied and Spotted Flycatchers, Redstart, Whinchat and Garden Warbler, 4 Whitethroats, 4 Blackcaps and 4 Wheatears, and an increase in Robins (10) and Stonechats (12). The 10th saw quite a clear out of migrants, and just a Sedge Warbler at Samphire Hoe was new.

The wind picked up from the south-west on the 11th and there was a small movement at sea off Samphire Hoe, including an Arctic Tern, 3 Grey Herons, 5 Pintail, 7 Knot and 11 Teal. The next day produced a Garden Warbler at Abbotscliffe and 25 Siskins flew east there, whilst Swallows began to move west during the day.

A ridge of high pressure then built over the eastern side of the country, which gave us easterly winds and some dry, settled weather. A **Corncrake** was flushed at Abbotscliffe on the 13th, where a **Honey Buzzard** flew east, and a Great Spotted Woodpecker, a Tree Pipit, a Sedge Warbler, 2 Tree Sparrows, 3 Whitethroats, 4 Blackcaps, 7 Chiffchaffs and 8 Willow Warblers were also logged. At Samphire Hoe there were a Grasshopper Warbler, a Redstart, 2 Willow Warblers, 4 Whitethroats, 5 Chiffchaffs and 11 Blackcaps. There was a steady westward passage of hirundines at the cliffs, plus 2 Grey Wagtails, at least 3 Swifts, several Yellow Wagtails and 16 Grey Herons, and 45 Siskins flew east. A Spotted Flycatcher was at Saltwood Castle, with 3 Wheatears at Hythe.

Similar conditions the next day saw a Grasshopper Warbler, a Garden Warbler, a Great Spotted Woodpecker, 3 Whinchats, 4 Wheatears and 5 Jays new in at Abbotscliffe, but just 2 Wheatears and 8 Willow Warblers at Samphire Hoe, although a Grey Wagtail and 135 Siskins flew east there and the first Brent Goose of the autumn and 25 Wigeon flew up-channel. 2 **Ravens** flew west over Peene and Beachborough late morning.

High pressure dominated the weather over the next fortnight and it was mainly dry, except when a weak weather front brought rain on the 23rd and 24th. The winds remained easterly throughout. One of the main features of these two weeks was an almost daily passage of Siskins moving into the wind, with an impressive total of just under 4,000 recorded, but very few other finches were noted during this time, with just a single Brambling and a few Lesser Redpolls and Goldfinches logged. Visual migration otherwise mainly involved a reasonable passage of Swallows, a notable total of 15 Grey Wagtails, smaller numbers of Yellow Wagtails, but relatively few Meadow Pipits.



Synoptic chart on 13th September: high pressure over Scandinavia and easterly winds – this produced Corncrake, Honey Buzzard and commoner migrants

Notable migrants during this period included an *acredula*-type Willow Warbler at Samphire Hoe on the 27th-28th, a Firecrest there on the 24th, single Pied Flycatchers at Samphire Hoe (16th), Abbotscliffe (18th) and Saltwood Castle (27th), Grasshopper Warblers at Samphire Hoe on the 18th and 25th, 2-3 Ring Ouzels there on the 24th to 27th, Common Redstarts at Samphire Hoe (17th) and the Gun Site (22nd), and a couple of migrant Black Redstarts at Samphire Hoe on the 16th.

Of the more regular migrants, Robins (peaks of 19 at Samphire Hoe and 15 at Nickoll's Quarry), Wheatears (peaks of 18 at Samphire Hoe and 10 at Copt Point), Blackcaps (peak of 8 at Samphire Hoe), Chiffchaffs (peaks of 18 at Nickoll's Quarry and 11 at Samphire Hoe), and Goldcrests (peak of 33 at Samphire Hoe) were noted in good numbers. There were also 3 migrant Great Spotted Woodpeckers, up to 7 Tree Pipits at Samphire Hoe over 22nd-26th, peaks of 4 Whinchats at Samphire Hoe and Abbotscliffe, a peak of 6 Song Thrushes at the former site, the first Redwings there from the 22nd, a Sedge Warbler at Nickoll's Quarry, Reed Warblers there and at Samphire Hoe, single Garden Warblers also at those 2 sites, and ones and twos of Whitethroat, Lesser Whitethroat and Willow Warbler.

Migrant raptors comprised a Marsh Harrier at Nickoll's Quarry on the 26th, single Common Buzzards at Samphire Hoe (16th), Nickoll's Quarry (24th), Saltwood Castle (27th) and Hythe Roughts ("late September"), a Merlin at Samphire Hoe on the 15th and a Hobby there on the 22nd. A Short-eared Owl was also noted at Abbotscliffe (18th) and 2 **Ravens** were seen at Samphire Hoe on the 19th and 27th-28th.

Other sightings of note included the first Red-throated Diver of the autumn at Samphire Hoe on the 24th, 2 Shags there on the 25th, with 4 the next day, 2 Little Egrets at Samphire Hoe on 2 dates, a few Brent Geese offshore there and a Wigeon on the 20th.

The first returning Water Rail was at Samphire Hoe on the 25th, with a Lapwing there on the same date, a Common Sandpiper there on the 16th and 3 Green Sandpipers at Nickoll's Quarry on the 17th.



Raven at Samphire Hoe (Ian Roberts)

The high pressure started to decline at the very tail end of the month, and it was cooler with a north-westerly breeze. The drop in temperature induced an exodus of House Martins, with 370 heading east at Samphire Hoe on the 28th, and 1,700 the next day. The 28th also produced a Grasshopper Warbler and a Tree Pipit at Abbotscliffe, a Great Spotted Woodpecker, 2 Wheatears, 3 White Wagtails, 11 Blackcaps, 14 Goldcrests and 17 Chiffchaffs at Samphire Hoe and a Garden Warbler at Hythe. There was a similar cast at Samphire Hoe the next day, with a Little Grebe and a Common Sandpiper new in, but the 30th was very quiet.

October

There was an unsettled start to the month, with a north-westerly airflow and below average temperatures, and there was little of note other than a Little Egret in Folkestone Harbour on the 2nd and a Ring Ouzel and 2 Ravens at Samphire Hoe on the 6th, though coverage was limited.

A ridge of high pressure and clear skies saw a fairly surprising arrival of migrants on the 9th, with a **Richard's Pipit**, a Reed Warbler, 6 Black Redstarts and 20 Chiffchaffs at Abbotscliffe and 3 Firecrests and 10 Chiffchaffs at Samphire Hoe. South-westerly winds followed and it was again quiet, with the subsequent week producing little more than a Water Rail and Little Egret at Samphire Hoe on the 11th, a continental Coal Tit at there on the 13th, small numbers of Blackcaps, Chiffchaffs and Goldcrests in the bushes and a few Grey Wagtails, Redpolls, Siskins and Goldfinches overhead. Offshore singles of Shag and Red-breasted Merganser were noted.

Winds persisted from the westerly quarter over the next 10 days or so, but varied between north-westerly and south-westerly, bringing both cool and mild conditions respectively, along with further spells of locally heavy rain and showers as Atlantic frontal systems swept in interspersed with drier, brighter intervals. There remained few birds to be seen, although the first Tree Creeper for Samphire Hoe on the 17th and a Dartford Warbler there on 18th were notable, whilst visual migration comprised 2 Grey Wagtails, 8 Redpolls, 15 Siskins and 80 Chaffinches on the 17th and a Brambling, 2 Grey Wagtails, 25 Redpolls and 300 Starlings the next day. A few Redwings passed over at night and 270 Mediterranean Gulls were counted at Copt Point.

The 19th saw little more than a Wheatear and a few Chiffchaffs and Goldcrests at Samphire Hoe, whilst 80 Goldfinches and 85 Siskins flew west there, and a Shag was fishing offshore.

Things were about to change however, as an unusual heron arrived at West Hythe sometime before the 26th, with the first report perhaps as early as the 19th, but with the news only finally reaching the birding public late on the 25th that it was the first **GREEN HERON** for the area and the county, and only the 6th British record.

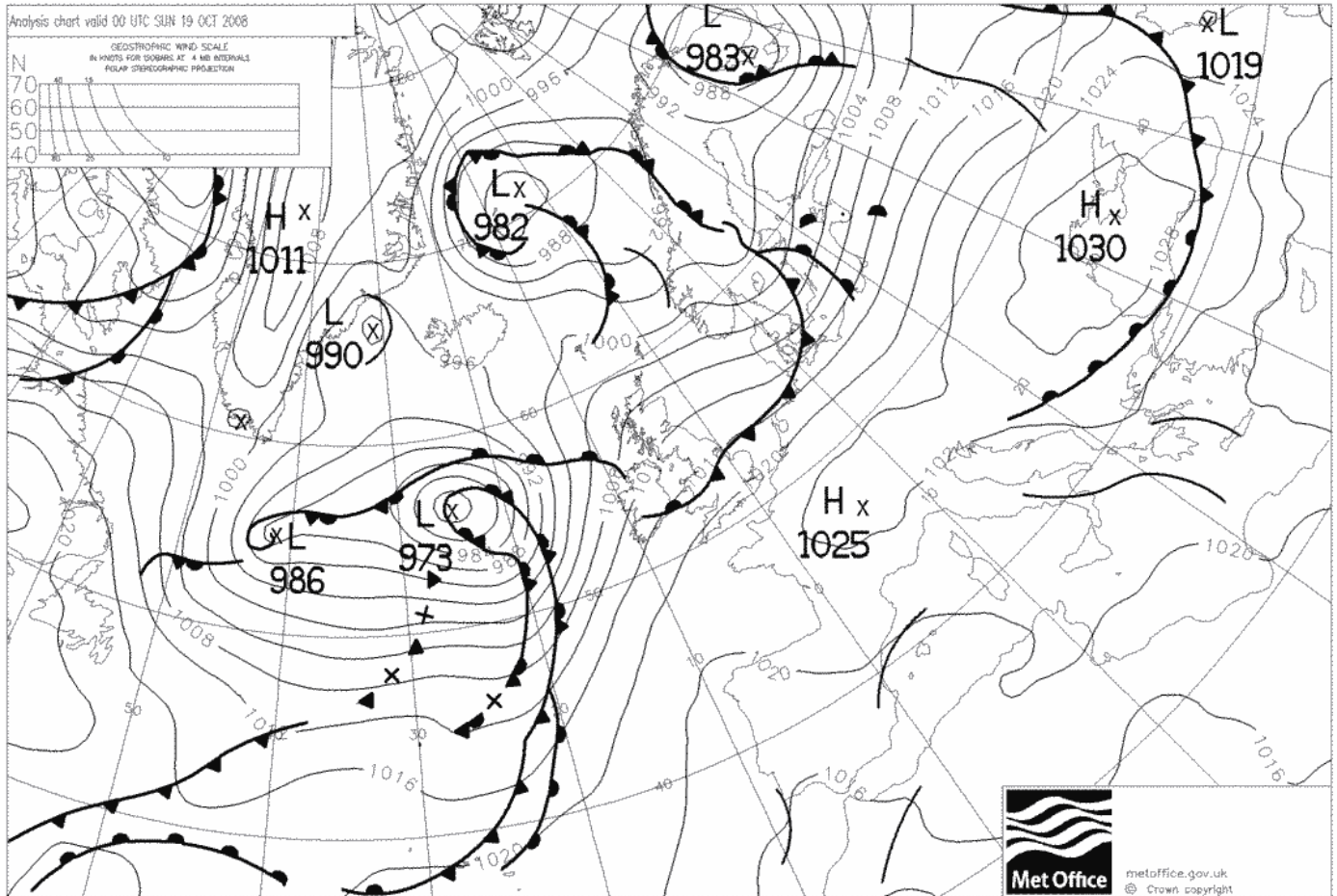


Dartford Warbler at Samphire Hoe (Ian Roberts)

The Green Heron remained until the 10th November, being well-watched and photographed throughout its stay.



Green Heron at West Hythe (Nigel Jarman)



Synoptic Chart on 19th October: a complex series of low pressure systems steamed across the Atlantic all month – one of which carried the Green Heron

An Osprey flew east over Folkestone on the 25th and a **Water Pipit**, a Firecrest and 2 Green Sandpipers were at West Hythe on the 26th. The month ended rather cold and wintry, and 14 Greylag Geese flew west at Samphire Hoe on the 27th, where there were a small number of grounded Redwings and Song Thrushes and a few Redpolls, Siskins, Bramblings and Chaffinches flew over. 4 Purple Sandpipers had returned to Hythe by the 28th, when 3 migrant Great Spotted Woodpeckers were at Nickoll's Quarry.

A cold easterly wind induced a large movement of Redwings on the night of the 29th/30th with a reasonable number grounded the following morning, including flocks of about 100 at West Hythe and Abbotscliffe. A small arrival of other species at Samphire Hoe included a Firecrest, a continental Coal Tit, a Short-eared Owl, a Fieldfare, a Blackcap, a Snipe, 5 Chiffchaffs and 23 Lapwings, whilst a late Reed Warbler was at West Hythe. Similar conditions the next day produced a continental Coal Tit, 2 Fieldfares, 4 Chiffchaffs and 4 Black Redstarts at Samphire Hoe, with a Crossbill, a Brambling, 2 Redpolls, 15 Lapwings and 200 Siskins flying east. There were still good numbers of Redwings, Song Thrushes and Blackbirds in the area and 35 Wigeon and a few Brent Geese flew east at sea.

November

The first week of the month was dominated by north-easterly winds and it was overcast, with occasional rain or drizzle, which was particularly heavy on the 1st, when observations were restricted to the sea, where an Arctic Skua, 6 Teal, 35 Wigeon and 165 Brent Geese flew past Samphire Hoe. A Dartford Warbler and 3 Ring Ouzels were at Abbotscliffe on the 2nd, and a further 3 Ring Ouzels were at Samphire Hoe, where a Short-eared Owl and 2 **Ravens** flew over.

The 4th produced a small arrival of migrants, with a Firecrest, a Ring Ouzel, a Fieldfare, a Blackcap, 2 continental Coal Tits, 2 Chiffchaffs and 3 Redwings at Samphire Hoe and there was a good range of thrushes at Nickoll's Quarry, with a Ring Ouzel, a Fieldfare, 2 Song Thrushes, 2 Mistle Thrushes, 10 Redwings and 25 Blackbirds there, also a Blackcap, 2 Chiffchaffs and 5 Tree Sparrows. The next day saw a movement of 10 Redpolls, 250 Goldfinches and 375 Siskins east at Samphire Hoe and 2 Chiffchaffs and 6 Goldcrests were noted there.

A Little Owl took up residence at Samphire Hoe from the 4th, Purple Sandpipers increased to 7 at Hythe on the 5th, a Cetti's Warbler and a Kingfisher were along the canal at Seabrook on the 6th, when 2 Chiffchaffs were at Nickoll's Quarry, and a Firecrest was at West Hythe on the 7th. Water Rails were seen at Nickoll's Quarry (2), Seabrook (2) and Samphire Hoe.

A change to an Atlantic influence followed as periods of rain and showers swept in from the west, often heavy and accompanied by strong winds or gales, and there was very little of note. A Green Sandpiper and a Pochard were at Botolph's Bridge on the 9th, when a Little Egret and a Chiffchaff were at Samphire Hoe.

A change to dry weather, with a cool north-westerly breeze, on the 12th encouraged a passage of 160 Stock Doves and 1,300 Wood Pigeons west over Samphire Hoe, and a Snow Bunting, the last Swallow, 4 Redpolls and 5 Siskins also flew west there. A Firecrest was in gardens at Hythe. Light to moderate westerlies followed and a Lapland Bunting flew east at Samphire Hoe the next day, but otherwise just a single Brambling was of note there. Purple Sandpipers increased to 9 at Hythe.

A Firecrest was at Saltwood Castle on the 15th and 2 were at West Hythe on the 16th, when 2 Green Sandpipers were at Botolph's Bridge. Also on the 15th, a Nuthatch, a Grey Wagtail, a Kingfisher and 10 Siskins were at Brockhill CP. Two **Ravens** and 3 Little Egrets were at Samphire Hoe on the 16th and 90 Brent Geese flew east there the next day.



Firecrest at West Hythe (Brian Harper)



Purple Sandpipers at Hythe (Steve Reynaert)



The 21st saw a marked change to much colder conditions, with northerly winds, so when a **Night Heron** was reported at West Hythe the following day it was a complete surprise. It remained until the 23rd and became the second new heron species for the area in the space of 4 weeks. That it favoured exactly the same area as the Green Heron, and the prevailing weather, gave rise to speculation that it might have been of the nearctic form *hoactli*, but this race cannot safely be separated in the field.

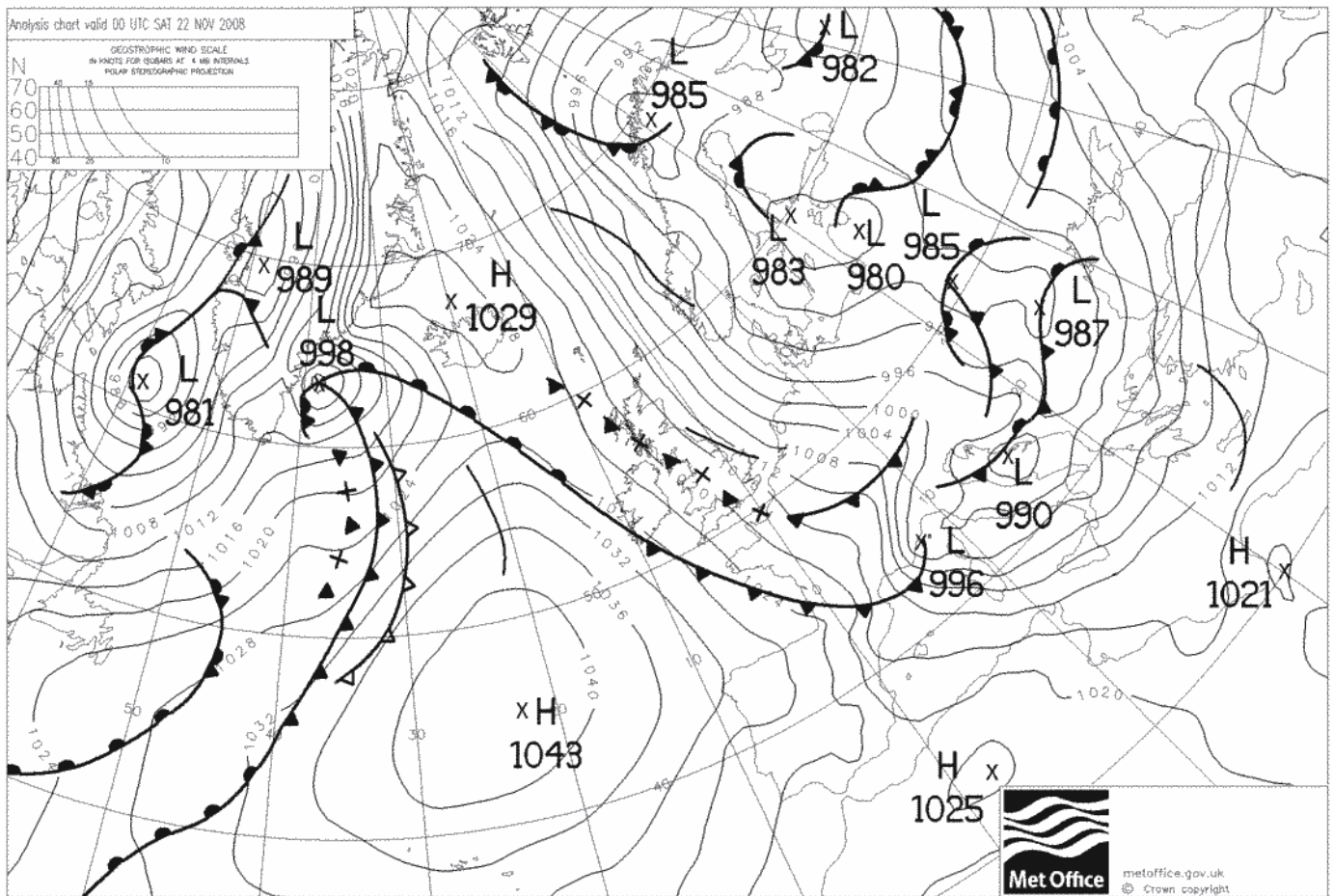


Night Heron at West Hythe (Brian Harper)

The cooler conditions produced a Snipe at Samphire Hoe on the 22nd and a Pintail and 8 Shelduck flew west at Hythe Redoubt ahead of a band of sleet/rain on the 23rd, when a Little Egret, a Green Sandpiper and 3 Kingfishers were at Botolph's Bridge.

A brief respite from the cold conditions came on 25th and 26th as showers died away and the wind became milder. However the rest of the month was unsettled with further rain or showers, these turning wintry at times by the end of the month as winds eased. There was little of note,

although 2 Goosanders flew over Paraker Woods (Seabrook) on the 30th, and the first Fulmars had returned to the cliffs at Samphire Hoe. Nuthatches were noted at Brockhill (2) and Paraker Woods.



Synoptic Chart on 22nd November: the close isobars show the cold northerly winds and the approaching fronts turned wintry as they met this cold air

December

There was an unsettled first half of the month with the weather alternating between cooler northerly airflows, characterised by sunny spells and sharp night frosts, and milder westerly winds, generally accompanied by wetter conditions. The third week saw more settled conditions and it was mostly dry and rather mild. From the 26th easterly winds developed, bringing in some very cold low-level air from the continent, and there were mostly clear skies and heavy frosts.

Migration persisted into the first week of December, with Chiffchaffs at Folkestone on the 6th and at Samphire Hoe on the 7th, a couple of Goldcrests at the latter site, a Siskin west there on the 1st and 25 Goldfinches east on the 7th, but soon petered out.

The **Night Heron** was rediscovered at West Hythe on the 9th and remained until the end of the month, attracting a steady stream of admirers. With increased coverage this area also produced a Buzzard (on the 14th), a Marsh Harrier (on the 22nd), a Barn Owl, single Little Egrets on 2 dates, Firecrests on 4 dates, a Marsh Tit (on the 17th), 2 Kingfishers regularly, and occasional sightings of Bullfinch and Treecreeper.

Nearby, there were up to 2 Little Egrets at Botolph's Bridge, with Green Sandpiper regular there and a Common Sandpiper on the 31st (only the second winter record, following one there in January this year), a Pochard on the 9th, up to 3 Snipe (on 31st) and up to 2 Kingfishers on several dates. A couple of miles to the west, along the Lower Wall, a Barnacle Goose was seen with c.80 Mute Swans on the 30th and on the canal at Palmarsh a Goosander was reported on the 28th.

In Folkestone a flock of **Waxwings** were discovered on the 20th, when 8 birds were present, and 6-7 remained until the 25th, when numbers had increased to 26 by the afternoon. 30+ were reported the following day, but the flock then slowly began to dwindle, with 27 present on the 27th, 25 on the 28th and 22 on the 31st.



Waxwing at Folkestone (Brian Harper)

At Samphire Hoe 2 **Ravens** flew west on the 2nd, when 2 Little Egrets were also present there, and Little Egrets were seen at Shornecliffe on the 7th and in the Broadmead Village area of Folkestone at the end of the month.

The regular wintering flock of Purple Sandpipers was again at Hythe, with a peak of 7 on the 27th, and other regulars included a Black Redstart, a Water Rail and a Little Owl at Samphire Hoe, and 2 Water Rails, a Kingfisher and a Cetti's Warbler along the canal at Seabrook. Also of note was a Marsh Tit at Paraker Woods on the 6th.