

2015



Folkestone and Hythe Bird Report



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Introduction

Welcome to the fourth Folkestone and Hythe Bird Report which covers the 199 species recorded in 2015, which was seven more than the total for the previous year. There were no additions to the area list, which remains on 299, but slow progress continues to be made with the Chinese Pond Heron record from 2014 – the description has been formally submitted but the results of the stable isotope analysis are still awaited.

There are yet again plenty of highlights to report including the second record of Night Heron, the third Black Stork and Red-breasted Flycatcher, the seventh Egyptian Goose and Caspian Gull, the eighth Great White Egret, the tenth Goshawk and Bee-eater, the ninth recent Red-backed Shrike and the ninth and tenth recent Hoopoes. Sightings of Black-necked Grebe, Rough-legged Buzzard, Yellow-legged Gull, Ring-necked Parakeet, Golden Oriole, Great Grey Shrike (2), Bearded Tit and Richard's Pipit added further excitement.

There were record counts or movements of Cormorant, Wood Pigeon, Goldcrest, Swallow, Whitethroat, Song Thrush, Rock Pipit and Chaffinch, record autumn totals of Short-eared Owl, Goldcrest, Spotted Flycatcher, Goldfinch and Lesser Redpoll, and a record year overall for Little Egret. The second highest ever counts of Red-throated Diver and Gannet, the second biggest arrival of Ring Ouzels, the second largest spring count of Meadow Pipits and an unprecedented summer irruption of Siskins, preceding the second highest ever autumn total, were also of note.

The early winter period saw record numbers of Chiffchaffs wintering (together with good numbers of Blackcaps) and the largest ever winter flock of Reed Bunting was logged. Spring produced the earliest ever arrivals of Swift and Wheatear, and the second earliest Swallows, whilst the latest departure date for Wigeon and the second-latest for Purple Sandpiper were also recorded. Highlights of the breeding season included a successful pair of Hobbies again, a record number of Sedge Warbler territories and Ravens possibly breeding for the first time. Autumn saw the equal latest ever Swallow, the second latest Wood Warbler and Yellow Wagtail, and notably late dates for Hobby, House Martin, Willow Warbler, Lesser Whitethroat, Sedge Warbler, Reed Warbler, Ring Ouzel and Wheatear.

There were welcome returns to the year list for Black Tern and Lapland Bunting (both the first since 2012). Once again there was just a single sighting of Turtle Dove and it was the second year in a row that Nightingale could not be found. The former is now considered to be globally threatened, being listed as 'vulnerable' by the IUCN, whilst the latter has recently been 'red-listed' as a conservation concern (Eaton *et al*, 2015). Other notable absentees were Eider (only the second blank year since 1980) and Pomarine Skua (the first blank year since 2009, and only the third blank year since 1997) in what was generally a poor spring for seawatching, producing low numbers of ducks, waders, skuas, Little Gulls and Common Terns. Autumn failed to produce Yellow-browed Warbler (for only the second time since 2003) and Snow Bunting (for only the second time since 1996).

Two Migration Day Events, held on the 20th September and the 18th October, coordinated by Paul Holt and the volunteers at Samphire Hoe proved extremely popular and successful. The Short-eared Owl on the front cover was part of a record influx and one of the highlights of the second event.

If there are any local records which have not been included within this report I would be very thankful to receive them. The boundaries of the local area can be found on page 104 and my contact details are given below.

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29th January 2016

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Front cover: Short-eared Owl at Abbotscliffe in October 2015 (Ian Roberts)

Citation: Roberts, I. A. (2016). *2015 Folkestone and Hythe Bird Report*

List of contributors

I have endeavoured to include all observers known to have contributed records or photographs for the year and their input has been very much appreciated. It is of course possible that there have been accidental omissions from the list below. It is hoped that should this be the case my apologies will be accepted for the oversight.

B Adams	M Kennett	N Webster
J Allchin		P J Wells
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D Clarke	R K Norman	
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D A Gibson	D E Smith	
C Gillard	P R Smith	
R Godden	A South	
J Gomm	M Stevens	
B Green		
	R Thorogood	
K Harding	J Tilby	
B Harper	J Tomlinson	
N Hollands	J Tomsett	
P Holt	P Trodd	
G Howard	G Tutton	
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C Jeffreys	M Varley	
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A Jupp		

Review of the year

January

January began as 2014 had finished, with a mild, wet south-westerly airflow dominating the weather and it was often rather windy. There were a couple of chillier spells in the second half of the month with some heavy frosts, sufficient to freeze the Willop Basin and parts of the canal, and even a little snow, but this did not generate any cold weather movement.

The highlight of the month was another wintering rare heron, as the 'Bittern' reported by local anglers at Nickolls Quarry since early January was identified on the 14th as a juvenile **Night Heron**. It remained until the 23rd and proved popular during the ten days that it was available.



Night Heron at Nickolls Quarry (Ian Roberts)

The drake **Goldeneye** found at Botolph's Bridge on New Year's Eve remained until the 15th and a female/immature **Goosander** in the West Hythe area from the 14th until at least the month's end was possibly the same as the one seen there in late December (as it ranged along the canal between Port Lympne and Palmmarsh, and could be elusive). Wildfowl numbers otherwise, with the mild conditions, were unremarkable in January. There was a peak of 13 Mute Swans at the Willop Basin on the 30th and four Greylag Geese were at Nickolls Quarry on the 27th, with up to five Shelduck at the former site throughout the month, and peaks there of 85 Teal (on the 27th) and 89 Mallard (on the 13th).

Nickolls Quarry also hosted up to 14 Tufted Duck, and there were up to 2 Gadwall, 3 Pochard, 4 Tufted Duck and 6 Teal on the lake at Folkestone Racecourse, Westenhanger. At Chesterfield Wood (Saltwood) up to 4 Gadwall, 12 Teal and 22 Mallard were present during the month, and Botolph's Bridge attracted a single Teal and up to 72 Mallard. Up to 57 Mallard were seen on the canal at Hythe, with smaller numbers at other sites giving a wintering population of up to nearly 300. Also of note were a Teal flying west past Samphire Hoe on the 5th and a peak of 19 Mandarin at Folks' Wood (Pedlinge) on the 5th.

As has been the case in recent years there were a few early easterly movements of Brent Geese, with over 540 logged during the month, including counts of 137 past Princes Parade on the 3rd, 143 past Samphire Hoe on the 20th, 50 east past the former site on the 23rd and 63 past the latter site on the 28th. Elsewhere two were on the flood at the Willop Basin from the 1st to the 7th. Few Common Scoter were noted however with a peak of just 35 off Seabrook on the 1st and 15 flying west past Mill Point on the 9th being worthy of mention.

Red-throated Diver numbers were relatively low, with a peak of just 17 east past Princes Parade, Seabrook on the 6th, however singles seen on the canal between West Hythe and Seabrook from the 15th to the 26th and flying over East Cliff Gardens (Folkestone) were unusual records. Great Crested Grebes were similarly scarce with a peak of 24 on the sea off the Willop Outfall on the 26th, though seven at Nickolls Quarry were of note and at up to four Little Grebes were seen at Botolph's Bridge, with another at Folkestone Racecourse (Westenhanger).

Up to eight Fulmars remained on the cliffs at Samphire Hoe whilst smaller numbers were noted at other coastal sites, and counts of Gannets included 36 west past Mill Point on the 9th and 51 east past Samphire Hoe on the 28th. 12 Cormorants flew east past Folkestone Harbour on the 5th, with eight east past Princes Parade the following day, and 15 were counted at Samphire Hoe on the 27th, with a Shag at Folkestone Harbour on the 25th.

In contrast to last winter Little Egrets were present in good numbers, with flocks of five (presumably the same birds) at West Hythe on the 17th and Nickolls Quarry on the 31st, and with singles at these sites on several dates, and others at Botolph's Bridge, the Willop Basin, Hythe Imperial golf course, Folkestone Harbour and flying over East Cliff Gardens (Folkestone).

A female/immature Marsh Harrier was at Donkey Street on the 23rd, a Merlin flew north over Hythe on the 24th, Peregrines were at Donkey Street on the 23rd and Hythe on the 30th, with two at Samphire Hoe throughout, and Buzzards were widespread. Water Rails were present in excellent numbers, including a record count of at least six along the canal between Twiss Road (Hythe) and Seabrook (on the 3rd), at least two at Nickolls Quarry and another along the canal at Palmarsh.



Goldeneye at Botolph's Bridge (Brian Harper)

However Coots were again in short supply with peaks of just 14 at Nickolls Quarry and 7 at Folkestone Racecourse (Westenhanger). Single Oystercatchers were seen at the Willop Outfall, Willop Basin and Hythe Ranges, with two present at Nickolls Quarry, where a pair usually breeds, by the end of the month. The regular Ringed Plover roost at Folkestone Beach held a peak of 27 birds on the 17th with one at the Willop Outfall on the 11th, and five Golden Plovers were at Botolph's Bridge on the 4th. Lapwing numbers at the Willop Basin increased steadily during the early part of the month, reaching a peak of 1,000 on the 11th before decreasing again, and very few were present when the flood froze over towards the end of the month, when ten at Westenhanger on the 28th and 32 at Nickolls Quarry on the 29th were wanderers from there or further afield.

Up to 16 Sanderling were seen on the shore between the Hythe Redoubt and Willop Outfall, and included an Icelandic-ringed bird on the 9th, whilst at least three Purple Sandpipers remained at Hythe throughout (frequenting the rock groynes opposite the ends of Stade Street and Twiss Road), with four counted there on the 18th and one at Battery Point (Seabrook) on the 1st, and up to two Dunlin were at the Willop Basin between the 2nd and 4th.

Snipe were present in just small numbers, including up to seven at Nickolls Quarry, six in the field inland of the Hythe Redoubt, six at Folkestone Racecourse (Westenhanger), three in the stubble field opposite the Little Piece on Donkey Street and three at Fairmead Farm (Westenhanger), whilst the only Jack Snipe was at Nickolls Quarry on the 29th. Single Woodcock were flushed from Folks' Wood (Pedlinge) and the field inland of the Hythe Redoubt on the 3rd, from the stubble field opposite the Little Piece on Donkey Street on the 4th and from Paraker Wood on the 13th.

A Curlew was at the Willop Basin on the 2nd, with five noted there on the 7th, and two Green Sandpipers remained in the Botolph's Bridge/Nickolls Quarry area all month. Up to 16 Redshanks were at the Willop Basin, with up to four in Folkestone Harbour, and Turnstones were logged at the Willop Outfall (peak of 18), Folkestone Harbour (peak of 10) and Stade Street groyne (Hythe) (peak of 8).

A Great Skua was lingering off Princes Parade from the 1st to the 3rd, with others (possibly the same bird) chasing gulls off Folkestone Harbour on the 5th and flying west past Mill Point on the 9th, with another flying west past Samphire Hoe on the 21st. Kittiwakes were only noted in small numbers, with a peak of 14 west past Mill Point on the 9th. Mediterranean Gulls were present as always but there were no notable counts, however 145 Common Gulls were logged at Church Hougham on the 15th and 16 Lesser Black-backed Gulls were on the Hythe Imperial golf course on the 3rd, whilst the partially leucistic Herring Gull remained in Folkestone Harbour. Very few auks were noted and the few that were seen well were Guillemots.

A flock of 35 Stock Doves remained in the stubble field opposite the Little Piece on Donkey Street and there was a noteworthy count of around 2,500 Wood Pigeons dispersing west across the marsh from the roost at West Hythe on the 16th, and both Little and Tawny Owls were noted there. Kingfishers were present in good numbers with perhaps as many as seven sighted along the canal between Seabrook and Stutfall Castle.

Sky Lark flocks were noted near the Willop Sewage Works (20) and opposite the Little Piece on Donkey Street (18), whilst Meadow Pipit counts included 30 at Samphire Hoe, 21 in a field off Aldington Road, 15 near Bluehouse Wood Lane and 15 on the Hythe Imperial golf course, with smaller numbers elsewhere.



Red-throated Diver at Seabrook (Brian Harper)

Rock Pipits were recorded at Samphire Hoe (7), Folkestone Harbour (2) and Folkestone Warren (2), with singles at Stade Street groyne (Hythe) and the Hythe Redoubt. Grey Wagtails were widespread in ones and twos and a male White Wagtail was reported at Copt Point on the 30th, whilst Pied Wagtail counts included 41 at Church Hougham and 22 on the Hythe Imperial golf course.

Single Black Redstarts were wintering at Folkestone Harbour, Hythe, Hythe Redoubt and Samphire Hoe and Stonechats were seen at Samphire Hoe (6), near the Willop Sewage Works (3), Church Hougham (2), Lympe Old Airfield (2) and Nickolls Quarry (2).

About 50 Redwings and 100 Fieldfares were in the Botolph's Bridge area on the 1st but quickly dispersed, with the only subsequent count of note being 15 Redwings at Nickolls Quarry on the 17th, whilst a count of 15 Song Thrushes in a stubble field opposite the Little Piece on Donkey Street on the 11th is worthy of mention.

Up to four Cetti's Warblers were at Nickolls Quarry with singles at Seabrook and West Hythe, and Blackcaps were recorded at East Cliff Gardens and Browning Place (Folkestone), along the canal by Hythe Roughs, at Mill Point, at Sandgate and along the canal between Hythe and Seabrook. Record numbers of Chiffchaffs were wintering, with at least 17 logged: at least eight were along the canal (at least four between Hythe and Seabrook, at least two between Hythe and West Hythe, and at least two between West Hythe and the dam), with two opposite the Little Piece on Donkey Street, and singles at Botolph's Bridge, Brockhill Country Park, Copt Point, Folkestone Racecourse (Westenhanger), Mill Point, Nickolls Quarry and Paraker Wood. Firecrests were also well represented, with singles at Brockhill Country Park, Saltwood, Samphire Hoe, Sandgate, Seabrook and West Hythe, and two at Mill Point.

At least four **Bearded Tits** remained at Nickolls Quarry from December until the month's end and a Marsh Tit was at Brockhill Country Park on the 4th. Ravens were noted along the cliffs with a peak of six at Samphire Hoe on the 30th. Following the sighting of four Tree Sparrows by the Little Piece on Donkey Street in December, a flock of at least 20 were found in a nearby stubble field close to the Willop Sewage Works (the largest flock recorded since 2006), and the same field also hosted a record wintering flock of at least 50 Reed Buntings. In the stubble field opposite the Little Piece there were 6 Reed Buntings, 40 Linnets and up to 45 Yellowhammers during January.

The total number of species recorded (110) was slightly higher than the 108 recorded last year but identical to the average logged in the previous five Januaries.

February

February was generally drier and cooler than January, though it turned milder in the latter part of the month. Despite some heavy snow showers none settled and there was no prolonged cold spells, consequently no cold weather movements were induced.

At the Willop Basin up to 26 Mute Swans were present during the month and this site also attracted an adult **White-fronted Goose** and three Greylag Geese on the 15th, whilst three Canada Geese were present in the Botolph's Bridge/Nickolls Quarry area from the 14th until the month's end. The latter site also hosted two **Egyptian Geese** briefly on the 27th before they flew off to the west.



White-fronted Goose at the Willop Basin (Brian Harper)

There were several up-channel movements of Brent Geese with the most noteworthy counts being 192 past Samphire Hoe on the 13th, 148 past Hythe/Samphire Hoe on the 14th, 75 past Seabrook on the 20th and 230 past Folkestone/Seabrook on the 28th. Up to three Shelduck remained at the Willop Basin throughout, whilst eight flew west at Hythe on the 1st and eight flew east past Hythe/Samphire Hoe on the 9th, with smaller counts from coastal sites later in the month.

A pair of Gadwall were at the Willop Basin on the 26th and there was a peak of 70 Teal there on the 8th, with up to six at Botolph's Bridge and one on the pond at Samphire Hoe on the 16th. At least 85 Mallard were logged in the Botolph's Bridge area on the 4th and a Shoveler was seen on the sea off the Willop Outfall on the 3rd, whilst up to 12 Tufted Ducks were noted at Nickolls Quarry. The female/immature **Goosander** remained in the West Hythe area until at least the 15th, whilst a flock of four flew west past Seabrook on the 14th and a drake flew over Botolph's Bridge on the 21st. Very few Common Scoter were noted, with a peak of just 16 off Seabrook on the 9th.

There were a few small up-channel movements of Red-throated Divers before the last day of the month produced an excellent total of **416** (the second highest ever count) flying east past Folkestone/Seabrook. There were also reasonable counts of Great Crested Grebes, including 178 off the Willop Outfall on the 3rd and 239 off Seabrook on the 9th, whilst up to four Little Grebes remained at Botolph's Bridge.

At least five Fulmars remained on the cliffs at Samphire Hoe, whilst eight flew east past Mill Point on the 6th, with seven east past Samphire Hoe on the 13th and five east past Folkestone/Seabrook on the 28th. Gannet counts were low apart from an excellent movement of **730** (the second highest ever) flying east past Samphire Hoe on the 13th, whilst Cormorants were present in exceptional numbers including 132 east at Samphire Hoe on the 7th, 167 east past Hythe on the 9th, a record count of **298** off Mill Point on the 11th (a flock of 142 on the sea and 156 flying east), and 150 east at Hythe and 100 west at Samphire Hoe on the 13th. An immature Shag was present off Samphire Hoe on several dates.

Little Egrets continued to be present in good numbers and up to three appeared to be roosting in the West Hythe area, with same birds presumably accounting for the several records in the Botolph's Bridge, Nickolls Quarry and Willop Basin areas. At least one was frequenting garden ponds in the Cheriton and Folkestone areas between the 15th and 22nd, with others at Samphire Hoe on the 11th and 23rd. A **Red Kite** flew over Fisherman's Beach (Hythe) on the 1st, whilst a female/immature Marsh Harrier (possibly the same bird and perhaps the one also seen in late January) was seen in the Botolph's Bridge/Willop Basin area on three dates. A flock of six Buzzards that flew east over Saltwood on the 18th were of note, and may have been early migrants. Up to three Peregrines were at Samphire Hoe throughout and a pair were observed mating at Abbotscliffe on the 7th.

At least three Water Rails remained along the canal between Twiss Road (Hythe) and Seabrook, with others along the canal at Palmars and at Nickolls Quarry, but Coot numbers remained low with a peak of 15 at Nickolls Quarry on the 3rd. The pair of Oystercatchers were still at Nickolls Quarry, with another pair at the Willop Basin, with singles in Folkestone Harbour on the 8th and flying east past Samphire Hoe on the 13th. The regular Ringed Plover roost at Folkestone Beach held a peak of 32 birds on the 5th with four in Folkestone Harbour the following day. Lapwing numbers at the Willop Basin remained low, with a peak of 126 on the 10th, whilst elsewhere there were 64 at Nickolls Quarry on the 27th, 50 at Hillhurst Farm (Westenhanger) on the 9th and five were grounded in fog at Samphire Hoe on the 16th.



Purple Sandpiper at Hythe (Paul Trodd)

Good numbers of Sanderling were at the Willop Outfall, including counts of 35 there on the 4th and 55 on the 7th, whilst singles were at Folkestone Beach on the 5th and Folkestone Harbour the following day, and at least three Purple Sandpipers remained at Hythe throughout (favouring the rock groyne opposite the end of Stade Street). The peak counts of Snipe were ten at both Botolph's Bridge and Nickolls Quarry on the 7th but the only Jack Snipe was at Nickolls Quarry on the 21st. An increase in Curlews was noted, with a count of 12 at the Willop Basin on the 8th, increasing to 14 on the 15th and with 11 remaining to the end of month, whilst one flew east past Samphire Hoe on the 13th. Up to two Green Sandpipers remained in the Nickolls Quarry area until at least mid-month.

Up to 13 Redshanks remained at the Willop Basin, with up to two in Folkestone Harbour and one at Botolph's Bridge on the 7th, whilst Turnstones flocks included up to 14 at the Willop Outfall, eight at the Hythe Redoubt and at least six at Hythe.

A Great Skua flew east past Samphire Hoe on the 13th, whilst Kittiwakes continued to only be noted in small numbers, with a peak of 17 east Samphire Hoe on the same day, and an adult Little Gull flew east past Mill Point on the 6th. The partially leucistic Herring Gull remained in the Folkestone area and again very few auks were noted. A **Barn Owl** was seen in the Botolph's Bridge area on the 3rd and 21st, with two Little Owls there on the 3rd and Tawny Owls were noted at Brockhill Country Park and Sandgate on the 8th. At least one pair of Kingfishers remained along the canal between Hythe and Seabrook, with singles along the canal at Palmars and at Botolph's Bridge.

Up to 23 Sky Larks were noted in a stubble field near the Willop Sewage Works, whilst one was seen flying in off the sea at Samphire Hoe on the 7th, whilst Meadow Pipit counts included 26 at Samphire Hoe, 15 on the Hythe Imperial golf course and 10 near the Willop Sewage Works. At Samphire Hoe up to seven Rock Pipits were present with another at the Willop Outfall on the 27th, whilst 19 Pied Wagtails were counted on the Hythe Imperial golf course on the 21st. The Black Redstart remained at Samphire Hoe all month, with singles at Marine Parade (Folkestone) on the 5th and on the cliff face above the Sunny Sands (Folkestone) on the 8th, whilst Stonechats remained at Samphire Hoe (up to 6), near the Willop Sewage Works (3) and at Church Hougham (2).

The only records of Fieldfare were 44 at Botolph's Bridge on the 15th and three at Samphire Hoe on the 4th, whilst Redwings were scarce with peaks of just 14 at Church Hougham on the 5th and seven, possibly early migrants, at Nickolls Quarry on the 27th. A flock of 12 Mistle Thrushes at Botolph's Bridge on the 6th is also worthy of mention. At least two Cetti's Warblers were at Nickolls Quarry with another at Seabrook, and wintering Blackcaps remained in gardens at Browning Place and East Cliff Gardens in Folkestone, at Pennypot (Hythe), and along the canal between Hythe and Seabrook, but the only Chiffchaffs noted were at Mill Point on the 11th, in a garden at Browning Place, Folkestone on the 13th, and (perhaps an early migrant) at Seabrook on the 25th.

A Goldcrest at Samphire Hoe on the 17th was an unusual winter record, whilst Firecrests were noted at Brockhill Country Park (2), Lympe and along the canal between Hythe and Seabrook.

The four **Bearded Tits** remained at Nickolls Quarry throughout and a pair of Marsh Tits were noted at Brockhill Country Park on the 8th, whilst Ravens were a regular feature along the cliffs. The stubble field near the Willop Sewage Works continued to hold up to 18 Tree Sparrows, 46 Linnets and 50 Reed Buntings, and attracted two Corn Buntings on the 15th, whilst at least 15 Yellowhammers were at Abbotscliffe.

The year list increased by eight to 118, which was an improvement of three on last year.



Corn Bunting near the Willop Sewage Works (Ian Roberts)

March

Wintering highlights remaining from the previous month included the female/immature **Goosander** in the West Hythe area until at least the 14th, the **Barn Owl** which afforded excellent views in the Botolph's Bridge area throughout, and the **Bearded Tits** at Nickolls Quarry, with up to four remaining until the month's end.

The flock of Mute Swans continued to roost at Nickolls Quarry and feed in the Willop Basin area by day, with a peak of 35 on the 18th. A pair of Greylag Geese were noted at the latter site on three dates and a single had returned to the former site (where breeding occurred last year) by the end of the month. Three Canada Geese remained at Nickolls Quarry, increasing to six on the 30th. At least two Water Rails were along the canal between Hythe and Seabrook with a further two at Nickolls Quarry, where at least one Green Sandpiper remained, as did up to three Purple Sandpipers at Hythe.

At least three pairs of Kingfishers were noted during the month – one at Botolph's Bridge, one at West Hythe and at least one between Hythe and Seabrook. Ravens were seen regularly and a pair appeared to be nesting on the cliffs at Capel-le-Ferne (which would be the first breeding record locally), whilst up to three were seen at Samphire Hoe and there were three sightings of singles flying over Lympe, with another at nearby Hythe Roughs. At least five Cetti's Warblers were holding territory at Nickolls Quarry, with others at Botolph's Bridge and Seabrook. The wintering male Blackcap at East Cliff Gardens, Folkestone remained until at least mid-month, when it started singing, whilst another singing male at Lympe early in the month was probably also a wintering bird.

There was a relatively mild start to March with a south-westerly airflow dominating and spring migration was typically slow to get going, though singles of Meadow Pipit and Chaffinch in off the sea at Abbotscliffe on the 1st, with a Redwing over Hythe that evening were the first signs of movement. Three Snipe at Nickolls Quarry and 11 Lesser Black-backed Gulls and 35 Mediterranean Gulls in a field opposite were also of note. A Little Egret was seen at Botolph's Bridge on the 2nd, when a Brent Goose, an Oystercatcher, a Curlew and 2 Shelduck were at the Willop Basin, and a Gannet, 5 Red-throated Divers and 6 Fulmars flew east past Mill Point on the 3rd.

On the 4th an *alba* wagtail, 5 Meadow Pipits, 7 Stock Doves, 7 Chaffinches and 20 Starlings flew in/west at Abbotscliffe and a flock of 31 Brent Geese arrived at the Willop Basin, with up to 27 lingering until the 8th, whilst two Oystercatchers and five Shelduck were seen there on the 6th. The temperature increased on the 7th and 8th, almost reaching 15°C, which encouraged three early migrants to arrive: a male Black Redstart in a garden in Cheriton on the 7th and a Chiffchaff and male Wheatear at Samphire Hoe the next day, the latter being the earliest ever record.

A Peregrine, 2 Redshank, 12 Curlew and 22 Teal were at the Willop Basin on the 7th, with four Oystercatchers at Hythe Ranges, and a Little Egret, 2 Lapwings and 3 **Ruff** were at the former site the following day (remaining until the 12th), whilst two female/immature **Goosanders** were at Botolph's Bridge. On the 9th a flock of five Pintail flew east past Samphire Hoe and a drake Shoveler was at the Willop Basin, where Shelduck increased to seven. A switch to a northerly wind on the 10th induced a decent movement of Chaffinches, with 1,100 flying east at Abbotscliffe, whilst an *alba* wagtail, a Greenfinch, 2 Linnets, 2 Goldfinches, 5 Meadow Pipits and 5 Siskins were also logged. A singing Chiffchaff was at Seabrook, with a Wheatear at Samphire Hoe, where 40 Brent Geese flew east.



Barn Owl at Botolph's Bridge (Brian Harper)

A south-easterly breeze on the 11th prompted 2 Dunlin, 4 auks, 6 Red-throated Divers, 10 Kittiwakes, 16 Fulmars, 18 Common Gulls and 20 Gannets to head up-channel past Samphire Hoe, where a Brambling flew east along the cliffs.

The wind remained in the easterly quarter over the next few days, which were quite productive. On the 12th two Swallows (the second earliest ever record) were seen at Folkestone, where a Goldcrest was present and 3 Buzzards flew east. Another Goldcrest was on Hythe seafront, with a Chiffchaff at Seabrook, 3 Dunlin, 6 Redshank and 12 Curlew at the Willop Basin, where 7 Siskins and 120 Starlings flew over, and 65 Fieldfares at Botolph's Bridge, whilst the pair of Oystercatchers were seen displaying at Nickolls Quarry. A good passage of Brent Geese was the main feature of the 13th, with a total of just over **1,300** heading east (1,168 past Samphire Hoe and 136 past Hythe later). A Curlew, a Mediterranean Gull, 14 Common Gulls, 16 Red-throated Divers and 19 Common Scoter also flew east at the former site, where singles of Grey Wagtail, *alba* wagtail and Siskin flew west, and three Buzzards flew high over Folkestone in the afternoon.

The 14th produced a Chiffchaff at Botolph's Bridge, two Ringed Plovers at the Hythe Redoubt, four Snipe at Nickolls Quarry, 44 Brent Geese flying east past Hythe and 4 Siskins and 60 Chaffinches flying east at the Willop Basin. A **Black-necked Grebe** was seen drifting east offshore of Seabrook on the 15th, whilst the first Razorbill of the year flew past, and Shelduck increased to 11 at the Willop Basin. On the 16th a pair of **Goshawks** flew east over Saltwood and two Goldcrests were noted in Folkestone.

The wind went northerly again on the 17th and there was another excellent passage of Chaffinches, with 2,550 flying east at Abbotscliffe, where an *alba* wagtail, a Reed Bunting, 7 Meadow Pipits, 17 Linnets and 42 Siskins also flew east, and 110 Brent Geese flew east past Samphire Hoe, where two Shags were seen. An **Avocet** appeared at the Willop Basin, singing Chiffchaffs were at Lympne and West Hythe, and there was a small nocturnal movement of Redwings.

Continuing northerlies with low, patchy cloud the next day produced an exceptional movement of Chaffinches, with a record count of **8,190** flying east at Abbotscliffe. A Grey Wagtail, 2 *alba* wagtails, 2 Reed Buntings, 2 Stock Doves, 5 Greenfinches, 5 Linnets, 8 Meadow Pipits and 48 Siskins also flew east there and singing Chiffchaff and Firecrest (remaining until the 19th) were present, with a Wheatear at Samphire Hoe. Nine Dunlin and 30 Brent Geese were at the Willop Basin (to the 19th, with 18 there the following day and smaller numbers to the end of the month). The 19th produced a new Chiffchaff at Abbotscliffe, where 65 Starlings flew in off the sea and 295 Chaffinches flew east, whilst a Redwing was at Samphire Hoe.

A Swallow arrived at Seabrook on the 20th (where it remained until the 23rd), and Chiffchaffs were at Abbotscliffe, Mill Point and Nickolls Quarry, with a Redwing and 2 Fieldfares at Nickolls Quarry, 30 Chaffinches flying east at Abbotscliffe and 70 Common Scoter on the sea off Hythe.

Chiffchaffs continued to arrive on the 21st, with 6 at Seabrook, 4 at Nickolls Quarry and singles at Copt Point, Hythe seafront, Donkey Street and Willop Sewage Works.

A male **Hen Harrier** was seen at Lower Wall, a Marsh Harrier, 24 Redwings and 31 Fieldfares were at Botolph's Bridge, a Woodcock was at Nickolls Quarry, and a Grey Plover, a Sanderling and 2 Ringed Plover were at Hythe Redoubt, with 2 Tufted Ducks offshore there. At Hythe 35 Brent Geese and 60 Chaffinches flew east. The following day produced just 95 Chaffinches flying east at the Hythe Redoubt/Willop Outfall and 3 Woodcock at Folks' Wood.

On the 23rd a Marsh Harrier flew west at Abbotscliffe and two Grey Plover were at the Willop Outfall. A drake Wigeon and a drake Pochard arrived at Nickolls Quarry on the 24th (with the former remaining until the month's end).



Wheatear at Samphire Hoe (Phil Smith)

On the 25th a Golden Plover flew east at Abbotscliffe, a singing Blackcap and several Chiffchaffs were along the canal at Princes Parade, 2 Goldcrests and 3 Chiffchaffs were at Samphire Hoe and two Chiffchaffs were at Folkestone Downs.

A strong southerly breeze on the 26th produced just a Brent Goose, an Oystercatcher, a Mediterranean Gull, 6 Common Scoter, 7 Fulmar and 67 Black-headed Gulls flying east past Mill Point. A Little Grebe, 4 Tree Sparrows and 9 Curlews were at the Willop Basin and several hundred Common Gulls were in fields near Folkestone Racecourse in the evening. On the 27th Firecrests arrived at Abbotscliffe and Mill Point (2), two Siskins flew east at Capel-le-Ferne and two Little Egrets flew west at Princes Parade, whilst a Blackcap was singing at West Hythe. A female Marsh Harrier was at Botolph's Bridge on the 28th, when a Brent Goose was seen on the golf course at Princes Parade and a female Wigeon was at the Willop Sewer.

Strong south-westerly winds on the 29th produced the first 6 Sandwich Terns, 32 Fulmars and 85 Brent Geese flying past Princes Parade. The 30th was bright and breezy and four **Red Kites** and a Buzzard east flew over Cheriton, whilst up to 16 Buzzards were in the Hythe/Saltwood area, and the first Sand Martin, 3 Oystercatchers and 12 Tufted Ducks were at Nickolls Quarry, whilst a Great Skua flew past Princes Parade. A Swallow was seen at Cheriton on the 31st.

There were 15 additions to the year list in March, which increased it to 133, five more than at the same time last year.

April

Highlights remaining from the previous month included the **Barn Owl** in the Botolph's Bridge area, with two birds being seen together on the 2nd, and the four **Bearded Tits** at Nickolls Quarry which were last seen on the 5th.

The flock of Mute Swans continued to roost at Nickolls Quarry and feed in the Willop Sewer area by day, with a peak of 36 on the 18th. Two pairs of Canada Geese remained at Nickolls Quarry and one pair bred, fledging eight young, whilst a pair of Greylag Geese were seen there intermittently. The drake Wigeon lingered at Nickolls Quarry all month, thereby becoming the latest ever record locally.

Up to 14 Tufted Duck were at Nickolls Quarry in the early part of the month but had dwindled to three by the end, when there were also three on the lake at Folkestone Racecourse (Westenhanger). Single pairs of Oystercatcher were at Nickolls Quarry and the Willop Basin throughout. Two pairs of Great Crested Grebe were also present at Nickolls Quarry in April and at least 11 Grey Heron nests were counted at Lympe Park Wood.



Garganey at Nickolls Quarry (Ian Roberts)

Three pairs of Kingfishers were noted during the month: at Botolph's Bridge, Brockhill Country Park and on the canal between Hythe and Seabrook. Ravens were seen regularly along the cliffs between Samphire Hoe and Capel-le-Ferne, where a pair appeared to be nesting, with other sightings at Folkestone Downs, Hythe Roughs and Saltwood.

At least five Cetti's Warblers were holding territory at Nickolls Quarry, with others at Botolph's Bridge and Seabrook, and a pair of Black Redstarts and up to 8 Stonechats were at Samphire all month.

There was a breezy start to the month and a Water Rail, a Snipe and 4 Chiffchaffs were at Nickolls Quarry on the 1st, with a Dunlin, 2 Redshank, 4 Curlew, 6 Sanderling and 29 Turnstone were at the Willop Basin. A calmer 2nd produced an **Osprey** circling over Beachborough Ponds and 12 Brent Geese flying east past Seabrook, whilst a drake Pochard was at Folkestone Racecourse (Westenhanger), three Ringed Plovers were at Hythe Redoubt and four Snipe were at Nickolls Quarry.

A light south-easterly wind encouraged some movement at sea on the 3rd when a Grey Plover, 2 Red-breasted Mergansers, 2 Shoveler, 4 Sandwich Terns, 4 Pintail, 4 Wigeon, 5 Tufted Ducks, 18 Cormorants, 25 Bar-tailed Godwits, 220 Brent Geese and 390 Common Scoter were logged heading east and 2 Little Egrets flew west, whilst 70 Common Scoter were in the bay off Seabrook. On the land a Firecrest and a Chiffchaff were noted at Mill Point and 80 Meadow Pipits flew west there, with a Swallow seen arriving in off the sea at Princes Parade (Seabrook).

The 4th produced the first House Martin, 4 Sand Martins and 8 Swallows at Nickolls Quarry, where a Pochard, a Green Sandpiper, a Goldcrest, a Redwing, 2 Shoveler, 2 Snipe, 2 Firecrests and 4 Chiffchaffs were also noted, and 12 Meadow Pipits flew north. A Firecrest and 2 Chiffchaffs were at Samphire Hoe, a Blackcap, 2 Wheatears and several Chiffchaffs were at Princes Parade, two Shoveler were at the Willop Basin and three Greylag Geese flew north over Saltwood. Single Buzzards appeared to be migrating over Nickolls Quarry and Princes Parade, whilst the following day saw nine over Botolph's Bridge, five over Hythe and five in the Saltwood area.

On the 5th there was also a Barnacle Goose, a Jack Snipe, 2 Shelduck, and 5 Swallows at Nickolls Quarry, two Teal and 4 Greylag Geese off Hythe Redoubt, a Swallow, 2 Reed Buntings, 3 Blackcaps and several Chiffchaffs at Princes Parade and a Firecrest at Samphire Hoe, whilst 11 Sandwich Terns flew east at Hythe and 27 Chaffinches flew east at the cliffs. A **Red Kite** flew over Saltwood on the 6th and Buzzards were noted at Nickolls Quarry (4), Abbotscliffe (3), Hythe and Saltwood. A singing Corn Bunting, a Firecrest, 2 Goldcrests and 2 Chiffchaffs were at Abbotscliffe, where a Reed Bunting, 2 Swallows, 6 Linnets and 154 Meadow Pipits flew in off the sea and 3 Rooks and 31 Chaffinches flew east, whilst a House Martin flew north over Crete Road East. A Blackcap, a Goldcrest, 2 Swallows and 3 Chiffchaffs were at Samphire Hoe and six Shelduck flew east.

On the 7th two Teal, 4 Red-breasted Mergansers, 13 Oystercatchers, 25 Sandwich Terns and 86 Brent Geese flew east at Mill Point, whilst two Shoveler flew west and a Firecrest was present. A male Lesser Redpoll was seen in a garden in Foreland Avenue (Folkestone) and six Buzzards were at Hythe Roughs.

The next day produced **Red Kites** over Hythe and Saltwood, two Buzzards flying east at Seabrook, and a Common Tern and 51 Sandwich Terns heading east past Hythe. There was a foggy start to the 9th and a pair of **Garganey** and 3 **Black-tailed Godwits** were seen at Nickolls Quarry, with a Pochard, a Snipe, a Swallow and 2 Blackcaps also recorded there, whilst a **Red Kite** flew over West Hythe, the last Redwing flew north at Botolph's Bridge and two Swallows were at Church Hougham.

A **Red Kite**, a Swallow and at least 10 Chiffchaffs were at Folkestone Downs on the 10th, with a female Ring Ouzel at Samphire Hoe where 3 Little Egrets flew west and 75 Brent Geese flew east.



Ring Ouzel at Abbotscliffe (Ian Roberts)

Also on the 10th, the last Fieldfare and two Swallows were at Abbotscliffe, the first 4 Sedge Warblers were at Nickolls Quarry and two Mediterranean Gulls and 10 Common Terns flew east at Hythe. Another **Red Kite** flew over Saltwood on the 11th, a Firecrest and 2 Willow Warblers were at Samphire Hoe, two Willow Warblers, 2 Snipe and 6 Swallows were at Botolph's Bridge, a Reed Warbler, a Willow Warbler and c.10 House Martins were at Nickolls Quarry and a Reed Warbler and a Swallow were at Princes Parade.

A Ring Ouzel was at Samphire Hoe on the 12th and warblers continued to arrive, with the first Whitethroat, a Willow Warbler and a Reed Warbler at Botolph's Bridge, a Reed Warbler and 6 Sedge Warblers at Nickolls Quarry, a Willow Warbler at the Willop Basin and a Reed Warbler at Eaton Lands (Hythe). A pair of Wheatears were at Princes Parade and a Tree Sparrow was reported at Cheriton.

The following day saw a Willow Warbler and 2 Wheatears at Abbotscliffe, three Wheatears at Samphire Hoe and a Wheatear at Princes Parade, whilst the 14th produced an **Osprey** flying north over Folkestone, four Wheatears at Princes Parade, two Wheatears and 4 Swallows at Samphire Hoe, and two Whitethroats and 4 Blackcaps at Nickolls Quarry. The 15th was the warmest day of the year so far, with temperatures approaching 25°C and two Wheatears, 4 Swallows and 6 Ring Ouzels were at Abbotscliffe, a Black Redstart was singing at Hythe, a Wheatear was at Copt Point, a Wheatear, a Whitethroat, 2 Reed Warblers and 3 Blackcaps were at Princes Parade, and a Willow Warbler, 2 Whitethroats, 2 Reed Warblers, 5 Chiffchaffs, 6 Sedge Warblers and 6 Blackcaps were at Nickolls Quarry.

The following day was cooler as the wind picked up from the north-east (where it remained for the following week) and two Red-breasted Mergansers, 3 Whimbrel, 17 Sandwich Terns and 64 Common Scoter flew east past Mill Point, whilst a Siskin also flew east and 2 Swallows arrived in off the sea there, and the first Cuckoo was at Nickolls Quarry. A Great Skua, 4 Whimbrel, 23 Brent Geese, 26 Gannets and 80 Common Scoter flew east past Samphire Hoe on the 17th and 2 Swallows arrived in off the sea, whilst 3 House Martins were also noted, and 6 Sand Martins, 10 House Martins and 75 Swallows were at Nickolls Quarry, with 170 Common Scoter on the sea off Hythe.

A splendid **Hoopoe** was at Range Road (Hythe) on 18th, when the earliest ever Swift was at Nickolls Quarry, with a Cuckoo, 2 Whitethroats, 3 Reed Warblers, 4 Sand Martins, 5 Blackcaps, 12 Sedge Warblers, 20 House Martins and 40 Swallows also seen there whilst 2 Whimbrel flew east and a Wigeon was near the Willop Sewage Works. A Green Sandpiper, a Little Grebe, the last Snipe, 2 Shelduck, 4 Reed Warblers, 14 Sedge Warblers, 15 House Martins and 20 Swallows were at Nickolls Quarry on the 19th, when 2 Whitethroats, 3 Reed Warblers, 4 Blackcaps and 6 Chiffchaffs were at Princes Parade, a Siskin, 3 Little Egrets, 5 Goldfinches and 12 Linnets flew east at Hythe, 15 Swallows were at the Willop Basin, where 115 Common Scoter flew east offshore and a Shag was off Samphire Hoe (with singles there on two subsequent dates).

A Swift, a Cuckoo, 2 Green Sandpipers and 20 House Martins were at Nickolls Quarry the next day, when 8 singing Blackcaps and good numbers of Chiffchaffs were at Folkestone Downs.

Four Green Sandpipers were at Nickoll's Quarry on the 21st, when an *alba* wagtail, 2 Siskins, 2 House Martins, 5 Swallows, 10 Goldfinches and 10 Linnets flew in/east at the cliffs and two Pintail and 10 Whimbrel went east at sea.

On the 22nd six Whimbrel flew east past Copt Point, with a further six at Samphire Hoe and a Cuckoo, 3 Whitethroats and 8 Blackcaps were at Nickolls Quarry.



Hoopoe at Hythe (Simon Knight)

The first Arctic Skua, a Black-throated Diver, 10 Kittiwakes, 12 Whimbrel, 15 Oystercatchers and 23 Sandwich Terns flew east at sea the following day, when the first Hobby was at Lympe, male Black Redstarts were at Folkestone Harbour and Range Road (Hythe), and a Wheatear was at Samphire Hoe.

The wind finally dropped on the 24th and a Lesser Whitethroat, a Yellow Wagtail and 3 Whitethroats were at Capel-le-Ferne Gun Site, with a Wheatear, 2 Lesser Whitethroats and 3 Whitethroats at Abbotscliffe, 2 Whitethroats at Samphire Hoe, and a Wheatear at Princes Parade, whilst a Hobby, a Dunlin, 3 Whimbrel, 11 'Commic' Terns, 80 Brent Geese and 285 Sandwich Terns flew east at sea. The first two Common Sandpipers, 10 Reed Warblers and 14 Whitethroats were at Princes Parade on the 25th when a Yellow Wagtail and 4 Swallows flew west, a Willow Warbler was at Samphire Hoe and a Teal, a Lesser Whitethroat, 4 Sand Martins, 8 Dunlin, 10 Blackcaps and 30 Swallows were at Nickolls Quarry.

On the 26th a Wheatear, 3 Willow Warblers, 9 Whitethroats and at least 12 Reed Warblers were at Princes Parade, where 11 Swallows flew west, a Common Sandpiper and a Willow Warbler were at Botolph's Bridge, a Whimbrel, a Yellow Wagtail and 120 Common Scoters were at the Hythe Redoubt, five Purple Sandpipers were seen between Seabrook and Hythe, and 24 Whimbrel and 37 Dunlin flew east past the latter site. A Yellow Wagtail, 12 Linnets, 26 Swallows and 28 Goldfinches arrived into a fresh northerly wind at Capel-le-Ferne on the 27th, when a Marsh Harrier, 10 Sand Martins and 45 Swallows were at Nickolls Quarry, a Black Redstart was seen in a garden in Browning Place (Folkestone), a Wheatear was at Samphire Hoe and two Lesser Whitethroats were at Folkestone Downs.

The highlight of the 28th was the third **Osprey** of the month, which was seen flying north over Lympe, whilst a Sand Martin, 3 Whimbrel, 6 House Martins and 20 Swallows at Nickolls Quarry, a Wheatear and 2 Willow Warblers were at Samphire Hoe, a Lesser Whitethroat was at Botolph's Bridge and a Whimbrel was at Sunny Sands (Folkestone). In strong south-westerlies on the 29th two Manx Shearwaters flew west past Mill Point and 40 Common Scoter and 120 Brent Geese flew east there, whilst two Whimbrel and 100 Brent Geese flew east at Samphire Hoe, where three Wheatears were noted. A Willow Warbler was at Copt Point and a Yellow Wagtail was at Nickolls Quarry.

The month ended with a Garden Warbler at Princes Parade, a Common Sandpiper, a Whimbrel, 3 Lesser Whitethroats, 7 Reed Warblers and at least 12 Sedge Warblers at Nickolls Quarry and a Whimbrel flying north over Hythe.

There were 27 additions to the year list in April, which increased it to 160, one less than at the same time last year.

May

There was a cool and cloudy start to the month, with a north-easterly breeze and a Merlin and a Sparrowhawk arrived in off the sea at Samphire Hoe on the 1st, whilst a Whimbrel and 9 Kittiwakes flew east there, a Cuckoo was at Hythe Roughts and a Sand Martin, 20 Swallows and 40 House Martins were at Nickolls Quarry.

In similar conditions the following day a Red-throated Diver, 2 Arctic Skuas, 2 Bar-tailed Godwits 7 Whimbrel, 13 Fulmars and 53 Sandwich Terns flew east past Folkestone/Seabrook, and 21 Gannets flew west, whilst a Yellow Wagtail flew in off the sea at Samphire Hoe and 3 Lesser Whitethroats were at Hythe Ranges.



Common Sandpiper at Nickolls Quarry (Ian Roberts)

The 3rd began with a moderate south-easterly wind and rain and a Black Tern, an Arctic Skua, a Brent Goose, 3 Red-breasted Mergansers, 3 Whimbrel and 7 Bar-tailed Godwits, 25 Common Terns, 27 Common Scoters and 33 Sandwich Terns flew east past Folkestone/Hythe, whilst a Manx Shearwater and 47 Gannets flew west and two Common Sandpipers were seen along the canal at Seabrook.

A milder day with a southerly wind on the 4th produced a **Red Kite** flying over Saltwood, a Garden Warbler at Eaton Lands (Hythe), with two Garden Warblers at the breeding site at Heane Wood (Saltwood), two Common Sandpipers along the canal at Hythe, a Common Sandpiper, the Wigeon, 2 Cuckoos, 3 Lesser Whitethroats, 5 Cetti's Warblers, 8 Whitethroats, 8 Swifts, 11 Sedge Warblers and 21 Reed Warblers at Nickolls Quarry, a Cuckoo at Hythe Roughts, a Cetti's Warbler, 2 Reed Buntings, 11 Whitethroats and 15 Reed Warblers at Princes Parade, a Black Redstart at Folkestone Harbour, a Cuckoo, a Yellow Wagtail and 2 Sedge Warblers at the Willop Basin, with 9 Dunlin and 23 Sanderling on the beach there and three Whimbrel at Hythe Ranges, with another flying east at Hythe, where c.90 Common Scoters were on the sea. Visual migration across the area comprised 3 Yellow Wagtails and 21 Swallows, whilst Swifts continued to arrive.

The wind strengthened from the south-west on the 5th and a Manx Shearwater flew west past Samphire Hoe, where a single Wheatear was noted, whilst a Great Skua flew east past Mill Point and 14 Swallows arrived in off the sea there. It remained windy on the 6th and another Manx Shearwater flew west past Mill Point, where a Brent Goose and 3 Arctic Skuas flew east and 4 House Martins and 24 Swallows arrived in off the sea. Two Sand Martins, 10 Swallows, 12 House Martins and 20 Swifts were at Nickolls Quarry. On the 7th a Wheatear was at Samphire Hoe, where a Brent Goose flew east and 4 Swifts and 5 Swallows flew in off the sea. A Water Rail was found dead on the beach at Hythe.

There was some improvement in a lighter south-easterly wind on the 8th, with two Turnstone, 6 Shelduck, 32 Common Terns, 42 Little Terns and 45 Sandwich Terns flying east at Hythe, a Ring Ouzel, a Garden Warbler and a Corn Bunting at Abbotscliffe, where a Yellow Wagtail, a Siskin, 16 House Martins and 45 Swallows flew in/east, a Little Egret flying east at Samphire Hoe, a Hobby at Lympne Park Wood and 23 Swifts over Hythe. The following day saw two Great Skuas flying east at Mill Point, and an Arctic Tern, 2 Fulmars, 3 Manx Shearwaters, 3 Shelduck, 16 Common Terns and 28 Commic Terns flying east past Princes Parade, with 11 House Martins and 76 Swallows arriving there. Four Sand Martins, 4 Swifts and 15 Swallows were noted at Nickolls Quarry. On the 10th the last Purple Sandpiper was noted at Hythe.

Another breezy day on the 11th produced two Velvet Scoters, 3 Whimbrel and 52 Common Scoters flying east past Mill Point/Samphire Hoe and a flock of 8 Jays flew inland from the cliff top at Abbotscliffe.

On the 12th a **Red Kite** flew west over Hythe, a Spotted Flycatcher and a Wheatear were at Abbotscliffe, a Corn Bunting flew west at Nickolls Quarry and a Whimbrel flew east at Hythe Redoubt.

The 13th started sunny and relatively calm and a Hobby, a Yellow Wagtail and 13 Swallows flew in/west at Abbotscliffe, a Yellow Wagtail flew over Hythe Roughs and a Whimbrel and 35 Sandwich Terns flew east at Hythe.



Osprey at Capel-le-Ferne (Ian Roberts)

The 14th was much cooler, with a brisk easterly wind and showers, and these conditions produced some decent passage at sea, with 2 **Great Northern Divers**, 2 **Avocets**, 2 Black-throated Divers, 2 Ringed Plovers, 3 Arctic Skuas, 5 Whimbrel, 6 Oystercatchers, 9 Kittiwakes, 24 Common Scoter, 30 Gannets and 71 Sandwich Terns flying east past Mill Point, with 9 Swallows in off the sea there. There was another smaller movement the following day, with 3 Red-breasted Mergansers, 3 Whimbrel, 5 **Avocets** and 5 Brent Geese east past Mill Point/Samphire Hoe, with two Shags also noted at the latter site.

A north-westerly breeze on the 16th produced the second **Hoopoe** of the spring at Ferguson Close (Hythe) (with it or another apparently being video-recorded near Twiss Avenue (Hythe) at around the same time), a **Red Kite** over Saltwood, 9 Swifts and c.100 Swallows coasting west, a Wheatear at Hythe Ranges, two Little Egrets flying east at Hythe, 2 Yellow Wagtails along Donkey Street, and four Whimbrel flying east over Nickolls Quarry.

There was a calm and sunny start to the 17th and an immature male **Golden Oriole** was singing in a garden at Leaside Cottages (Saltwood) in the early morning before it flew north. Also of note were a **Red Kite** flying south over Folkestone Racecourse (Westenhanger), a Hobby, 11 House Martins and 30 Swallows at Abbotscliffe, two Hobbies at Lympe Park Wood, and 3 House Martins, 5 Swifts and 45 Swallows flying west at Princes Parade. The wind increased again during the day and the following two days were blustery and showery, producing little of note.

On the 20th three Yellow Wagtails, 9 Swallows and 55 Swifts flew in off the sea at Abbotscliffe and a Sand Martin and 14 Swifts were at Nickolls Quarry, with the following day producing a Common Sandpiper and Wheatear at Samphire Hoe. On the 22nd a Little Egret and 3 Mediterranean Gulls, 23 Sandwich Terns flew past Mill Point.

A north-westerly wind on the 25th produced an **Osprey** in off the sea at Capel-le-Ferne whilst **Red Kites** were seen over Abbotscliffe and Saltwood, Cuckoos increased to three at Nickolls Quarry, with another at Ladies' Walk (Hythe), a Little Egret was at Folkestone Warren, and 8 Swifts, 20 House Martins and 27 Swallows flew in off the sea at the cliffs.

On the 27th a **Red Kite** flew east at Abbotscliffe and a Hobby was also noted there, with it or another at Capel-le-Ferne, whilst an **Osprey** flew north over Folkestone the following day, when there were a pair of Whinchats at Abbotscliffe.

On the 30th a Hobby and at least 44 Swifts were at Botolph's Bridge and, having been seen on a couple of previous occasions, at least one **Barn Owl** was still in that area at the end of the month.

There were eight additions to the year list in May, which increased it to 168, one less than at the same time last year.

June

The beginning of the month was cool and unseasonably windy due to an intense low pressure system moving in from the Atlantic. A spell of fine, settled weather followed, after which it was generally dry but rather cool in an often westerly or north-westerly airflow, however it became very warm at the end of the month.

The blustery start to the month produced two Manx Shearwaters flying west past Mill Point and one flying west past Samphire Hoe on the 2nd, and 40 Swifts heading west at Botolph's Bridge on the 1st.

When the weather settled there were a few notable late spring arrivals, including a **Honey Buzzard** over Browning Place (Folkestone) on the 9th, a **Red-backed Shrike** at Samphire Hoe on the 14th, and a **Bee-eater** seen on wires at Newingreen on the 26th.



Black Redstart at Samphire Hoe (Phil Smith)

Other wanderers included a Little Egret in Folkestone Harbour on the 7th, three **Crossbills** flying west at Capel-le-Ferne Café on the 12th, and **Red Kites** at Abbotscliffe on the 14th, Palmarsh on the 17th and Lypne and Saltwood (3) on the 19th.

A **Marsh Warbler** was holding territory at Nickoll's Quarry from about the 1st to the 19th, but news could not be made public (for reasons explained in the systematic list).

At least one **Barn Owl** remained in the Botolph's Bridge area, the pair of Ravens remained in the Capel-le-Ferne area, the pair of Black Redstarts at Samphire Hoe successfully fledged three young, a pair of Stonechats probably bred at Hythe Ranges and a male Wheatear was seen at Hythe Ranges on the 6th. Hobbies were noted at Capel-le-Ferne and Samphire Hoe.

Two Teal at Samphire Hoe on the 15th were an unusual record, whilst early returning migrants comprised three Curlews and 40 Swifts flying west at Samphire Hoe on the 22nd, three Siskins and 200 Swifts flying over Saltwood on the 23rd, a Great Spotted Woodpecker flying north-east at Abbotscliffe on the 25th and a Curlew flying west at Abbotscliffe on the 28th.

Perhaps the strangest record of the month involved a Kingfisher which flew into a window at East Cliff Gardens (Folkestone) (quite some distance from the nearest breeding site) on the 27th and was picked up alive and taken to a local vet.

There were five additions to the year list in June, which increased it to 173, two more than at the same time last year.

July

The first of the month was the hottest July day on record for Britain and temperatures in Kent approached 35°C. After this however the month was typified by an Atlantic airflow, bringing westerly winds and generally cool and rather changeable conditions.

An early returning Wheatear was at Samphire Hoe on the 1st, whilst on the 4th a Red Kite flew east over Capel-le-Ferne, a Crossbill flew west over Saltwood and two Turtle Doves were seen on the seawall at the eastern end of Hythe Ranges.

Two further Crossbills and 75 Swifts flew west at Hythe on the 8th and seven Siskins flew east at Palmarsh the following day.

On the 10th a Honey Buzzard flew over Folkestone Downs, with two Common Sandpipers at Hythe Redoubt the next day. The unseasonal run of Siskins continued with another five flying east at Saltwood on the 13th, when four Little Egrets were at Samphire Hoe.



Black Stork at Dungeness (Martin Casemore), earlier seen at Saltwood and Hythe

The 14th produced over 500 Swifts flying south-west over Saltwood, with a similar number passing west over Hythe, and on the following day a small party of Sand Martins flew out to sea near the Hythe Imperial, whilst a colour-ringed juvenile Kittiwake seen at Princes Parade had been ringed in Brittany 12 days previously.

A further nine Siskins flew over Saltwood on the 16th, with seven Sand Martins flying west at Princes Parade the next day, with a Dunlin heard calling over Hythe at night. On the 18th a Yellow Wagtail and 9 Siskins flew west at Hythe and six Siskins were seen at Seabrook on the 19th.

Single Hobbies were seen at Samphire Hoe on the 20th, 29th, and 30th, with another at Saltwood on the 29th, and a post-breeding flock of Starlings at the former site built up from 20 on the 21st, to 60 by the 27th and to 100 on the 28th. A Curlew was seen at Samphire Hoe on the 26th and a Whimbrel flew west there on the 28th, when a Reed Warbler was present. Another Reed Warbler and 2 Willow Warblers were at Abbotscliffe on the 29th, when a Lesser Whitethroat and 2 Blackcaps were at Samphire Hoe, with a Little Egret at the latter site on the 30th.

Turtle Dove was the only additions to the year list in July, which increased it to 174, just one more than at the same time last year.

August

August began unsettled as low pressure led to westerly winds and rain belts crossing the country at frequent intervals. The weather was then quieter until mid-month but the latter half was generally unsettled again as a series of frontal systems brought some cloudy, wet days and torrential downpours at times. However, there were some fine days too with some warmth and sunshine, and temperatures approached 30 °C in the county on the 22nd August. Overall it was provisionally the wettest August in south-east England for nearly forty years.

Small numbers of warblers continued to move through, including a Reed Warbler, a Chiffchaff, 3 Sedge Warblers, 3 Blackcaps, 4 Whitethroats and 5 Willow Warblers at Nickolls Quarry on the 2nd, when a Blackcap and two Whitethroats were at Samphire Hoe. Three Whitethroats were at the latter site the next day, when 20 Swifts were also logged. Two Willow Warblers were at Samphire Hoe on the 4th, when six Oystercatchers flew west, and 2 Reed Warblers, 2 Sedge Warblers, 3 Lesser Whitethroats and 4 Whitethroats were seen there the following day, whilst the Starling flock increased to 120. On the 6th a Chiffchaff, a Whitethroat and 2 Blackcaps were at Nickolls Quarry, and 40 Sandwich Terns were seen at Hythe Redoubt. Up to 5 Black Redstarts remained at Samphire Hoe throughout.

On the 7th a **Black Stork** flew south over Saltwood and then west over Hythe, later being seen and photographed at Dungeness. Elsewhere a Hobby, 6 Ravens and 130 Starlings were at Samphire Hoe.

The following day produced a Garden Warbler at Nickolls Quarry, a Green Sandpiper and 3 Yellow Wagtails at Botolph's Bridge and a Peregrine at the Willop Basin. Another Garden Warbler and 5 Teal were at Botolph's Bridge on the 9th, whilst a Marsh Harrier flew north over Saltwood and a Hobby was at Samphire Hoe.

A Wheatear, a Blackcap, a Lesser Whitethroat, 2 Chiffchaffs and 4 Willow Warblers were at Samphire Hoe on the 10th.

A new record count of **920+** Mediterranean Gulls was made at Copt Point on the 11th, whilst a Golden Plover, a Sedge Warbler, 4 Willow Warblers, 8 Sand Martins and 9 Whitethroats were at Abbotscliffe the next day.



Knot at Hythe Redoubt (Brian Harper)

The 14th produced a Wheatear, 9 Blackcaps and 20 Chiffchaffs at Princes Parade, where two Sanderlings flew east, whilst a Wheatear, a Willow Warbler, 2 Whinchats and 3 Lesser Whitethroats were at Samphire Hoe. A **Honey Buzzard** flew south over Saltwood on the 15th, when a Grasshopper Warbler, a Lesser Whitethroat, a Blackcap, a Chiffchaff, 2 Whitethroats, 6 Willow Warblers and 12 Stonechats were at Samphire Hoe, 2 Chiffchaffs, 3 Lesser Whitethroats, 4 Whitethroats, 5 Blackcaps, 7 Willow Warblers and 14 Yellow Wagtails were at Botolph's Bridge, a Green Sandpiper was at Nickolls Quarry and a Wheatear was at Princes Parade.

A Greenshank flew over Botolph's Bridge on the 16th, whilst the following day saw a Garden Warbler, a Whinchat, a Grey Wagtail, 2 Common Sandpipers, 4 Whitethroats and 6 Wheatears at Samphire Hoe, and a Wheatear, 3 Kingfishers, 5 Willow Warblers and 14 Whitethroats were at Princes Parade. A Grasshopper Warbler, a Tree Pipit, a Wheatear, a Sedge Warbler, a Willow Warbler, a Lesser Whitethroat and 3 Whitethroats were at Abbotscliffe on the 18th, with a Spotted Flycatcher and a Whinchat at Church Hougham, and 4 Wheatears, 5 Willow Warblers and 150 Starlings at Samphire Hoe. The latter site produced a Common Sandpiper, a Whinchat, 4 Whitethroats and 6 Wheatears the next day, when 3 Common Sandpipers were at Hythe, and a Whinchat and 12 Willow Warblers were at Abbotscliffe.

On the 20th a Whimbrel and 5 Curlews flew west at Hythe, with a Wheatear at Copt Point. A Spotted Flycatcher, a Snipe, a Reed Warbler, 3 Willow Warblers, 3 Yellow Wagtails and 14 Whitethroats were at Abbotscliffe on the 21st, with 2 Willow Warblers and 5 Wheatears at Samphire Hoe. The 22nd saw a Garden Warbler and 3 Yellow Wagtails at Botolph's Bridge, whilst 13 Yellow Wagtails flew west at the Hythe Redoubt, and a Great Spotted Woodpecker, 2 Lesser Whitethroats, 2 Willow Warblers, 3 Whitethroats and 6 Robins were at Samphire Hoe.

The 23rd was a good day for waders with a record count of **13** Green Sandpipers at Nickolls Quarry, a Knot and a Common Sandpiper at the Hythe Redoubt and two Snipe at Abbotscliffe, whilst the following day saw a Pied Flycatcher at West Hythe and an Oystercatcher and 4 Dunlin flying east at Princes Parade. Three Whinchats, 3 Willow Warblers, 5 Wheatears, 5 Whitethroats and 23 Rock Pipits were at Samphire Hoe on the 25th, with 3 Yellow Wagtails, 4 Whitethroats and 5 Wheatears at Princes Parade, whilst two **Balearic Shearwaters**, 2 Arctic Skuas and 2 Great Skuas flew past Hythe in the evening as the wind increased from the south. The following morning produced a probable **Cory's Shearwater**, a Manx Shearwater, 2 **Sooty Shearwaters** and 2 Arctic Skuas past Copt Point and 2 **Balearic Shearwaters** off Hythe.

A Grasshopper Warbler, a Wheatear, 2 Whinchats, 2 Reed Warblers, 2 Willow Warblers and 2 Lesser Whitethroats were at Abbotscliffe on the 28th, when 5 Yellow Wagtails flew west, and Whinchat, a Reed Warbler, 2 Wheatears, 2 Willow Warblers, 2 Lesser Whitethroats, 3 Yellowhammers and 4 Whitethroats were at Samphire Hoe, whilst a Wheatear was at Princes Parade, where a Yellow Wagtail and 15 Sand Martins flew west.

The 29th was a productive day, with four **Honey Buzzards** seen flying out to sea at Hythe, a **Pied Flycatcher** and 6 Willow Warblers at Princes Parade, 2 Common Sandpipers, 2 Green Sandpipers and 5 **Wood Sandpipers** at Nickolls Quarry, a Sedge Warbler, 2 Whinchats, 2 Blackcaps, 4 Lesser Whitethroats and 9 Whitethroats at Abbotscliffe and a Curlew and 14 Yellow Wagtails at Botolph's Bridge.

A pair Hobbies bred successfully at Lympe Park Wood, with a fledged juvenile seen begging for food there on the 30th, whilst sightings of adults at Botolph's Bridge, Hythe Roughts and Nickolls Quarry during August presumably related to the same birds. The 30th also produced a Redstart and a Whinchat at Capel-le-Ferne, 2 Common Sandpipers, 2 Snipe, 3 Green Sandpipers and 4 Yellow Wagtails at Nickolls Quarry, a Raven and 3 Yellow Wagtails at Botolph's Bridge, and four Yellow Wagtails at Hythe Redoubt.



Wood Sandpiper at Nickolls Quarry (Brian Harper)

The month ended with a **Honey Buzzard** flying west over Hythe, and a Spotted Flycatcher, a Reed Warbler, a Common Sandpiper, 2 Willow Warblers, 4 Wheatears, 5 Lesser Whitethroats, 5 Blackcaps, 6 Whinchats and 22 Whitethroats at Samphire Hoe, where 3 Yellow Wagtails, 70 Swallows and 100 House Martins flew over.

There were ten additions to the year list in August, which increased it to 184, nine more than at the same time last year.

September

The month began with a cool north-westerly airflow in place accompanied by mostly broken cloud and occasional showers. There was a quite a 'fall' on the 1st, including a **Pied Flycatcher**, 2 Garden Warblers and 5 Spotted Flycatchers at Creteway Down, 2 **Pied Flycatchers** and 3 Spotted Flycatchers at Princes Parade, a **Pied Flycatcher**, a Spotted Flycatcher, a Tree Pipit and 3 male Redstarts at Capel-le-Ferne Gun Site, a Grasshopper Warbler, a Sedge Warbler and 2 Whinchats at Samphire Hoe, a Redstart, a Whinchat and a Sedge Warbler at Abbotscliffe and 2 Redstarts, 5 Spotted Flycatchers and 5 Whinchats at Church Hougham. There were also good numbers of Lesser Whitethroats (19), Wheatears (26), Blackcaps (50+), Willow Warblers (50+) and Whitethroats (130+) across the area, with smaller counts of Grey Wagtail, Yellow Wagtail, Goldcrest and Chiffchaff. Single Swifts were seen at Samphire Hoe, Church Hougham and Princes Parade, where 15 Sand Martins, 200 Swallows and 200 House Martins flew west.

New arrivals on the 2nd included a **Pied Flycatcher** and 5 Spotted Flycatchers at Folkestone Downs, a Reed Warbler and 2 Whinchats at Creteway Down, and a Kingfisher and 2 Reed Warblers at Samphire Hoe, whilst a Golden Plover flew over Abbotscliffe and the next day saw a Snipe and a Garden Warbler at Nickolls Quarry, whilst small number of hirundines continued to pass through. A Whinchat, a Reed Warbler and 5 Wheatears were at Samphire Hoe on the 4th, whilst a Grey Wagtail and 21 Siskins flew east at Capel-le-Ferne, and small numbers of common migrants remained at various sites.

The 5th produced a Redstart, a Whimbrel, a Lesser Whitethroat, 5 Willow Warblers, 6 Wheatears, 8 Blackcaps, 9 Whitethroats, 11 Robins and 600+ House Martins at Samphire Hoe, a Redstart, a Marsh Harrier, 6 Teal and 51 Canada Geese at Donkey Street, a Spotted Flycatcher and 33 Greylag Geese at Botolph's Bridge, a Little Egret, a Green Sandpiper and 2 Common Sandpipers at Nickolls Quarry and 5 Yellow Wagtails at the Willop Basin, whilst 86 Siskins flew over Botolph's Bridge/Donkey Street. Another Little Egret and 8 Swifts were seen at West Parade, Hythe and 2 Wheatears, 6 Whitethroats and 7 Willow Warblers were at Princes Parade.

High pressure became established over the country from the 6th, giving mainly dry conditions, and a north or north-westerly wind which ensured that new migrants continued to arrive. A Spotted Flycatcher, a Jay, a Yellow Wagtail, 2 Wheatears and 3 Lesser Whitethroats were seen at Samphire Hoe on the 6th, when a Golden Plover, a Snipe and 3 Wheatears were at Abbotscliffe and 47 Siskins flew east. 4 Sedge Warblers and 20+ Reed Warblers were counted along the canal by Princes Parade. On the 7th a **Wood Warbler**, a Redstart, a Garden Warbler, a Whinchat, a Little Egret, a Buzzard, 2 Spotted Flycatchers, 3 Wheatears, 3 Lesser Whitethroats, 12 Robins, 15 Willow Warblers, 20 Blackcaps and 70 Linnets were at Samphire Hoe and a Sedge Warbler, a Lesser Whitethroat, 2 Wheatears, 4 Goldcrests, 4 Jays, 6 Willow Warblers, 7 Sand Martins, 9 Whitethroats, 11 Reed Warblers and 50 House Martins were at Princes Parade.



Green Sandpiper at Nickolls Quarry (Brian Harper)

A Little Egret, 2 Whinchats, 4 Wheatears, 6 Whitethroats, 7 Blackcaps, 14 Stonechats and 100 House Martins were at Samphire Hoe on the 8th, where a Shelduck flew west, whilst a Tree Pipit flew west over Hythe. Four **Avocets** flew east past Mill Point on the 9th, when a Little Egret, a Curlew, a Whinchat, 2 Wheatears, 3 Common Sandpipers and 6 Siskins were at Samphire Hoe. On the 10th two **Pied Flycatchers** and 2 Whinchats were at Princes Parade, with a Redstart at Creteway Down, a Whinchat at Samphire Hoe and a Reed Warbler at Nickolls Quarry.

The 11th saw a Firecrest, a Reed Bunting, a Wheatear, 2 Whinchats, 12 Siskins and 130 Goldfinches at Abbotscliffe and 2 Whinchats and 2 Wheatears at Samphire Hoe, where a Grey Wagtail and 12 Siskins flew east. A Wheatear, 2 Yellow Wagtails, 4 Sand Martins, 4 Reed Warblers and 8 Blackcaps were at Princes Parade and a Little Egret and 5 Willow Warblers were at Nickolls Quarry.

With the influence of high pressure waning it turned generally cool and unsettled from the 12th, with the winds switching to the south, and a Firecrest was seen at Capel-le-Ferne Gun Site whilst 320 Swallows flew west at Botolph's Bridge. Another Firecrest, 2 Whinchats, 2 Sand Martins, 3 Wheatears, 3 Chiffchaffs and 5 Willow Warblers were at Samphire Hoe the following day, and 2 Wheatears were at Princes Parade, whilst a large movement of Swallows and House Martins was noted at both these sites. The 14th saw some significant rainfall, and there was little to be seen other than a steady westward movement of Swallows along the coast.

The 16th was another wet day but 2 Wheatears, 2 Goldcrests, 3 Lesser Whitethroats, 3 Whitethroats, 5 Whinchats, 6 Blackcaps, 15 Robins and 30 Siskins were seen at Samphire Hoe and 2 Sedge Warblers, 2 Lesser Whitethroats, 4 Whitethroats, several Goldcrests, 9 Blackcaps and 50+ Chiffchaffs/Willow Warblers were at Princes Parade. A clearer day with a north-westerly breeze on the 17th produced 4 *alba* wagtails, 5 Grey Wagtails, 5 Sand Martins, 9 Yellow Wagtails, 105 Goldfinches, 325 Siskins and 380 Meadow Pipits flying east at Abbotscliffe, with a male Marsh Harrier heading out to sea, and a Whinchat, a Firecrest, a Sedge Warbler, 2 Wheatears, 2 Goldcrests, 3 Whitethroats and 120 Goldfinches were grounded. A Whinchat, a Wheatear, 2 Whitethroats and 2 Goldcrests were at Samphire Hoe and 3 Wheatears, 3 Blackcaps, 4 Siskins, 16 Pied Wagtails, 25 Meadow Pipits and 40 Goldfinches were at Princes Parade.

At least 25 Sand Martins and 2,500 Swallows flew west between heavy showers at Hythe on the 18th, and 9 Yellow Wagtails flew west at Princes Parade, where a Wheatear was noted, whilst a Lesser Whitethroat, a Whitethroat, a Willow Warbler, a Stonechat and 2 Blackcaps were at Abbotscliffe and 2 Whinchats and 2 Wheatears were at Samphire Hoe.

The following day saw another large westerly movement of hirundines, with estimated totals of 4,000 Swallows and 8,000 House Martins at Abbotscliffe, also 2 Swifts and 13 Sand Martins flew west there, a pair of Marsh Harriers flew out to sea, a Redpoll, a Grey Wagtail, 40 Meadow Pipits and 57 Siskins flew east, and a Firecrest, a Goldcrest, a Whitethroat and 6 Chiffchaffs were grounded. A **Honey Buzzard** flew east at Capel-le-Ferne Gun Site and a Redstart, a Little Egret, a Wheatear, a Lesser Whitethroat, a Goldcrest and 2 Whinchats were at Samphire Hoe, whilst single Buzzards flew out to sea at both sites and 5 Sparrowhawks and 5 Buzzards flew over Hythe.

The 20th marked the first Wildlife Migration Day event, the highlight of which was another large movement of hirundines that was witnessed from many locations between Samphire Hoe and Hythe Ranges, with estimated totals of 100 Sand Martins, 8,000 House Martins and 10,000 Swallows.



Whinchat at Princes Parade (Nigel Webster)

Also of note were a Swift, a Golden Plover, 2 Grey Wagtails, 2 Yellow Wagtails, 3 Reed Buntings, 4 Redpolls, 4 Great Spotted Woodpeckers, 4 *alba* wagtails, 10 Chaffinches and 60 Siskins at Abbotscliffe, where a Lapwing, a Lesser Whitethroat, a Whitethroat, 2 Stonechats, 3 Wheatears, 5 Goldcrests, 6 Song Thrushes, 12 Chiffchaffs, 14 Blackcaps, 15 Dunnocks, 20 Robins and 100 Meadow Pipits were grounded, a Firecrest, a Sedge Warbler, a Willow Warbler, a Goldcrest, a Reed Bunting, 2 Whinchats, 2 Lesser Whitethroats, 6 Wheatears, 7 Blackcaps, 14 Stonechats and 23 Robins at Samphire Hoe, a Redstart and a Wheatear at Church Hougham, and a Firecrest, a Sedge Warbler, a Jay and 3 Goldcrests at Capel-le-Ferne Gun Site, where 2 Yellow Wagtails and 6 Siskins flew over. A Spotted Flycatcher, 3 Blackcaps and 4 Chiffchaffs were at Creteway Down, where 7 Siskins and 20 Meadow Pipits flew east, a Lesser Whitethroat, 2 Wheatears, 4 Chiffchaffs, 12 Blackcaps and 12 Robins were at Folkestone Downs, where a Mistle Thrush and 7 Siskins flew over, and 3 Blackcaps, 4 Whitethroats and 10 Chiffchaff were at Folkestone Warren. In the Hythe area a Wheatear, 2 Sedge Warblers, 3 Blackcaps, 4 Goldcrests and 50 Chiffchaffs were at Princes Parade, where a Redpoll, 4 Yellow Wagtails and 8 Siskins flew over, seven Brent Geese flew east along the seafront and eight Wheatears were at Hythe Ranges where 10 Siskins flew over. Two Blackcaps, 3 Goldcrests and 10 Chiffchaffs were at Nickolls Quarry.

The next day saw just a single Whinchat at Samphire Hoe and 140 Swallows flying west at Princes Parade and there were no reports on a particularly wet 22nd. The 23rd was also relatively quiet, with a Goldcrest, 2 Blackcaps and 2 Whinchats at Samphire Hoe, where 6 Siskins flew east, and a few Redpolls, Siskins and Meadow Pipits flying over Capel-le-Ferne Gun Site. A **Balearic Shearwater**, 2 Arctic Terns, 7 Arctic Skuas, 18 Sandwich Terns and 22 Common Terns flew west past Hythe on the 24th, when a Wheatear, 16 Lapwings, 20 Sand Martins and 600 Swallows were at the Willop Basin, 5 Goldcrests and 18 Chiffchaffs were at Princes Parade, where 2 Redpolls, 30 Swallows and 33 Siskins flew west, and two Wheatears and 50 Meadow Pipits were at Church Hougham.

Another area of high pressure moved in towards the month end bringing sunny and dry days with easterly winds. A Goldcrest, 3 Chiffchaffs and 5 Stonechats were at Abbotscliffe on the 25th, where a Tree Pipit, 2 Jays, 2 Reed Buntings, 2 Grey Wagtails, 6 *alba* wagtails, 13 Chaffinches, 18 Redpolls, 19 Siskins, 27 Sand Martins, 500 Swallows and 500 House Martins flew over. At least two Swifts were seen with large numbers of hirundines between Capel-le-Ferne and Folkestone Downs, where a Whitethroat, 12 Blackcaps and at least 25 Chiffchaffs were noted and 10 Siskins flew east. A Wheatear, a Goldcrest, 3 Blackcaps and 13 Chiffchaffs were seen at Princes Parade and a Spotted Flycatcher, a Great Spotted Woodpecker, a Reed Warbler, a Lesser Whitethroat, 10 Robins and 15 Chiffchaffs were at Nickolls Quarry.

The 26th produced a Grey Plover, 2 Wheatears and 14 Lapwings at the Willop Basin, a Tree Sparrow, a Whinchat, 2 Green Sandpipers and 4 Stonechats at Botolph's Bridge, 2 Goldcrests, 12 Blackcaps and 30 Chiffchaffs at Nickolls Quarry and 5 Blackcaps, 10 Goldcrests and 14 Chiffchaffs at Mill Point, where a Great Spotted Woodpecker, a Grey Wagtail, 2 Redpolls and 20 Siskins flew east.

On the 27th a **Wryneck** was found at Abbotscliffe (remaining until the following day), and a Merlin, a Tree Pipit, a Coal Tit, a Great Spotted Woodpecker and a Lapwing were also noted, whilst a Ring Ouzel, a Whinchat and 2 Wheatears were at Samphire Hoe and a Wheatear was at Folkestone Warren, where six Brent Geese flew past.



Wryneck at Abbotscliffe (Ian Roberts))

A Ring Ouzel, a Reed Bunting and 3 Goldcrests were at Abbotscliffe on the 28th, when a Goldcrest and 2 Wheatears were at Samphire Hoe and a Wheatear and 5 Goldcrests were at Princes Parade, whilst 3 Brent Geese, 12 Linnets, 18 Common Terns, 20 Meadow Pipits, 35 Siskins and 90 Swallows flew east.

A Little Egret, a Lesser Whitethroat, 4 Goldcrests, 4 Blackcaps, 6 Wheatears, 12 Robins and 14 Chiffchaffs were at Samphire Hoe on the 29th, when 55 Siskins flew east, and a Ring Ouzel and 5 Redpolls were at Creteway Down, whilst two Rock Pipits were at Princes Parade and a Redpoll and 10 Meadow Pipits flew east at Hythe. The month ended with a Firecrest at Capel-le-Ferne Café, a Whitethroat, 5 Chiffchaffs and 10 Blackcaps at Folkestone Downs, a Whitethroat at Samphire Hoe, 9 *alba* wagtails, 22 Siskins and 55 Goldfinches flying east at Abbotscliffe and two Mistle Thrushes, 3 Rock Pipits, 7 Grey Wagtails, 22 Goldfinches, 35 Linnets, 70 Swallows and 300 Siskins flying east at Hythe/Princes Parade, whilst 7 Goldcrests were at the latter site.

Up to 7 Black Redstarts remained at Samphire Hoe throughout, whilst other long-stayers included a Cetti's Warbler and two Kingfishers at Princes Parade, and a Cetti's Warbler at Nickolls Quarry. There were just two additions to the year list in September, which increased it to 186, six more than at the same time last year.

October

High pressure remained in place at the start of October, with sunny, dry days and easterly winds continuing. A Firecrest, a Lesser Whitethroat, 3 Blackcaps and 5 Goldcrests were at Samphire Hoe on the 1st, where 2 Yellow Wagtails, 30 Siskins, 40 Linnets and 55 Goldfinches flew east, whilst a Mistle Thrush, 3 Reed Buntings, 3 Blackcaps, 14 Pied Wagtails and 25 Meadow Pipits were at Princes Parade, where 40 Swallows and 75 Siskins flew east, and 4 Chiffchaffs and 4 Blackcaps were at Folkestone Downs, whilst 17 Brent Geese flew east at Princes Parade. Up to 7 Black Redstarts remained at Samphire Hoe throughout, whilst other long-stayers included at least four Ravens along the cliffs, up to two Cetti's Warblers and two Kingfishers at Princes Parade, and a Cetti's Warbler at Nickolls Quarry.

The following day produced a Firecrest, a Whinchat, a Reed Warbler, a Little Egret, 3 Ring Ouzels and 8 Goldcrests at Abbotscliffe, where 3 Grey Wagtails, 3 Reed Buntings, 4 Redpolls, 11 Siskins and 100 Swallows flew east, a Firecrest, 2 Lesser Whitethroats, 9 Blackcaps, 11 Goldcrests, 26 Pied Wagtails, 30 Meadow Pipits and 50+ Chiffchaffs at Princes Parade, where 18 Siskins and 100+ Swallows flew east, a Firecrest, 6 Blackcaps and 8 Chiffchaffs at Nickolls Quarry, and 2 Lesser Whitethroats, 2 Wheatears, 4 Blackcaps, 6 Chiffchaffs at Samphire Hoe, where ten Brent Geese flew past.

On the 3rd two Wheatears, 3 Song Thrushes, 11 Stonechats, 16 Chiffchaffs, 16 Robins, 18 Goldcrests and 20 Blackcaps were logged at Samphire Hoe, whilst 14 Chiffchaffs and 25 Goldcrests were at Capel-le-Ferne, 4 Chiffchaffs and 12 Goldcrests were at Mill Point, 2 Green Sandpipers, 4 Chiffchaffs, 5 Goldcrests and 10 Blackcaps were at Nickolls Quarry and a Tree Sparrow and 37 Snipe were at Botolph's Bridge.

A **Honey Buzzard** flew west at Mill Point on the 4th, whilst a Wheatear, 4 Stonechats, 4 Rock Pipits and 10+ Goldcrests were at Folkestone Warren, 2 Firecrests, 5 Goldcrests and 6 Chiffchaffs were at Enbrook Park (Sandgate), 2 Redpolls, 3 Blackcaps and 4 Siskins were at Abbotscliffe and a Stonechat, a Rock Pipit, 2 Redpolls, 3 Blackcaps, 20+ Chiffchaffs were at Princes Parade, where 5 Siskins and 30 Swallows flew east. An unsettled spell, with mostly light rain and an increasing southerly breeze, followed from the 5th when a Shag and nine Brent Geese flew past Samphire Hoe and a Great Skua and three Brent Geese flew past Mill Point, where ten Goldcrests were noted.



Lesser Redpoll at Princes Parade (Nigel Webster)

Only a single Ring Ouzel at Samphire Hoe was of note on the 6th, but the next day saw a Snipe, a Great Spotted Woodpecker, a Mute Swan, 2 Blackcaps, 2 Reed Buntings, 4 Redpolls, 5 Ring Ouzels, 24 Swallows and 50 House Martins at Abbotscliffe. It was generally dry again from the 8th, with lighter, easterly winds as high pressure again exerted influence over the weather, and it continued to be rather mild. A Sedge Warbler, 2 Stonechats, 3 Blackcaps, 7 Goldcrests, 16 Chiffchaffs and 31 Pied Wagtails were at Princes Parade on the 8th, when 5 Swallows and 11 Siskins flew west, and a Wheatear was at Abbotscliffe, where 2 Reed Buntings, 8 Siskins, 8 Redpolls and 18 Chaffinches flew over, whilst 7 Blackcaps and 9 Chiffchaffs were at Folkestone Downs, 20 Sky Larks flew south-west over Saltwood and a male Bullfinch at Samphire Hoe was an unusual record.

The following day produced 6 Ring Ouzels, 6 Goldcrests and 10 Chiffchaffs at Abbotscliffe, where a Great Spotted Woodpecker and 2 Grey Wagtails flew over, 2 Blackcaps, 4 Goldcrests, 16 Meadow Pipits, 25 Chiffchaffs, 26 Redpolls and 39 Pied Wagtails at Princes Parade, where 2 Sky Larks flew east, 2 Blackcaps, 8 Goldcrests and 18+ Chiffchaffs at Nickolls Quarry, and 12 Blackcaps and 25+ Chiffchaffs at Samphire Hoe, whilst five Buzzards flew high east over Saltwood.

On the 10th a Brambling, 4 Redpoll, 8 *alba* wagtails, 18 Swallows, 51 Siskins, 150 Goldfinches flew east at Abbotscliffe, where a Reed Bunting, 2 Chiffchaffs, 5 Goldcrests and 5 Stonechats were noted, a Great Spotted Woodpecker, a Little Egret, 2 Blackcaps, 4 Goldcrests and 6 Chiffchaffs were at Capel-le-Ferne, a Water Rail, 2 Red-throated Divers, 3 Blackcaps, 4 Goldcrests, 15 Redpolls and 17 Swallows at Princes Parade, a Marsh Harrier, 4 Grey Wagtails, 11 Snipe, 19 Tree Sparrows, 35 Sky Larks, 50 Siskins and 315 Goldfinches were at Botolph's Bridge and 2 Blackcaps, 2 Chiffchaffs and 8 Song Thrushes were at Folkestone Downs.

The 11th produced 4 Jays, 5 Goldcrests, 25+ Chiffchaffs and 25+ Redpoll at Princes Parade, where a Sky Lark, 11 Linnets, 30 Goldfinches, 45 Brent Geese and 48 Siskins flew east, a Blackcap, 4 Song Thrushes, 6 Goldcrests, 7 Chiffchaffs and 12 Blackbirds at Nickolls Quarry, 2 Teal and 4 Lapwings at the Willop Basin and 3 Mute Swans on the sea off Hythe Ranges.

The 12th was an excellent day, with the highlights being a **Richard's Pipit** which flew east at Abbotscliffe (having probably been seen at Creteway Down earlier), and a substantial arrival of thrushes at the cliffs/downs – including the largest arrival of Ring Ouzels since 1998, with a total of up to **102** noted (42 at Abbotscliffe, 35 at Samphire Hoe and 25 at Creteway Down), over 280 Song Thrushes, including a record count of **240** at Creteway Down, good numbers of Mistle Thrushes (16) and Blackbirds (76), and the first Fieldfares (25) and Redwings (31) of the autumn. Visual migration comprised a Golden Plover, a Brambling, 2 Grey Wagtails, 3 Reed Buntings, 8 *alba* wagtails, 15 **Crossbills**, 22 Redpolls, 40 Linnets, 61 Siskins, 260 Swallows and an excellent total of **780** Goldfinches flying east, whilst a Merlin arrived in off the sea, and grounded birds involved a Wheatear, a Coal Tit, 6 Lapwings, 44 Goldcrests and 55 Sky Larks, whilst 60 Brent Geese flew east at sea. Elsewhere a Great Spotted Woodpecker, 3 Blackcaps, 8 Goldcrests, 10 Blackbirds and 15 Chiffchaffs were at Nickolls Quarry and 300 Swallows were at Princes Parade.



Short-eared Owl at Abbotscliffe (Ian Roberts)

A Brambling, a Yellow Wagtail, 3 Reed Buntings, 45 Linnets, 48 House Martins, 54 *alba* wagtails, 62 Redpolls, 81 Siskins, 430 Swallows and 740 Goldfinches flew east at Abbotscliffe on the 13th, when a Wheatear, a Little Egret and 7 Brent Geese were at Samphire Hoe, a Ring Ouzel, a Redwing, a Goldcrest, 2 Blackcaps and 11 Chiffchaffs were at Nickolls Quarry and two Water Rails, 20 Redpolls and 150 Swallows were at Princes Parade. The following day saw 3 Blackcaps, 4 Ring Ouzels, 10 Goldcrests, 11 Redpolls and 350 Goldfinches at Abbotscliffe, a Little Egret, a Ring Ouzel, a Redwing and 10 Goldcrests at Samphire Hoe, and a continental Coal Tit at Capel-le-Ferne.

A particularly productive period followed from mid-month as cooler overcast conditions and occasional showers combined with a north-westerly wind. On the 15th a **Great Grey Shrike**, a **Lapland Bunting**, a Grasshopper Warbler, 3 Reed Buntings, 5 Redwings, 7 Stonechats, 13 Song Thrushes, 25 Robins, 25 Goldcrests and 57 Ring Ouzels were at Abbotscliffe, and 2 Bramblings, 61 Redpolls, 84 Siskins, 105 Fieldfares, 150 Swallows and 360 Goldfinches flew over. Firecrests were noted at Ingles Manor (Folkestone) and Creteway Down (2), whilst four Ring Ouzels, 20 Song Thrushes and 20 Robins were at Folkestone Downs, a Treecreeper, 2 Wheatears, 3 Water Rails were at Princes Parade, where 2 Sand Martins, 17 Redwings, 35 Redpolls, 50 House Martins, 140 Goldfinches, 160 Swallows and 200 Siskins flew over, a Little Egret, a Brambling and 8 Brent Geese were at Copt Point, a Ring Ouzel, 5 Blackcaps, 10 Goldcrests and 20 Robins were at Samphire Hoe, with 70 Siskins east, and 280 Swallows flew over Hythe/Seabrook.

The next day produced a 'ring-tail' **Hen Harrier**, a Little Egret, 2 Wheatears, 3 **Short-eared Owls**, 8 Blackcaps and 22 Ring Ouzels at the cliffs/downs, whilst a Hobby, a Brambling, a Reed Bunting, 4 Mistle Thrushes, 6 Redpolls, 65 Fieldfares, 135 Siskins, 310 Redwings, 700 Swallows and **1,550** Goldfinches flew over.

On the 17th two **Short-eared Owls**, 7 Goldcrests and 18 Ring Ouzels were at Abbotscliffe, where 4 Crossbills, 4 Redwings, 6 Reed Buntings, 7 Brambling, 16 *alba* wagtails, 27 Redpolls, 60 Chaffinches, 150 Swallows, 260 Siskins and 645 Goldfinches flew over, a Wheatear, a Brambling 5 Blackcaps, 6 Ring Ouzels, 9 Goldcrests and 27 Robins were at Samphire Hoe, four Ring Ouzels and 40 Redwings were at Folkestone Downs, two Water Rails, 6 Jays, 25 Redpolls, 28 Siskins and 100 Swallows were at Princes Parade, a Green Sandpiper, a Little Egret and 10 Tree Sparrows at Botolph's Bridge, two Rock Pipits, 16 Redpoll, 65 Siskins, 70 Swallows and 650 Goldfinches were at Hythe Ranges, 500 Swallows were at Hythe and 80 Fieldfares flew west at Saltwood.

A second very successful Wildlife Migration Day event was held on the 18th, when a **Dartford Warbler** (remaining to the 20th), a **Short-eared Owl**, a Great Spotted Woodpecker, 2 Bramblings, 2 Little Egrets, 15 Ring Ouzels and 16 Goldcrests were at Samphire Hoe, 3 **Short-eared Owls**, a Firecrest, 7 Ring Ouzels, 10 Blackcaps, 14 Fieldfare, 23 Chiffchaffs, 30 Song Thrushes, 45 Redwings and a record count of **130** Goldcrests were at Creteway Down/Capel-le-Ferne Gun Site and a **Short-eared Owl**, a Little Egret, 9 Ring Ouzels and 10 Goldcrests were at Abbotscliffe, whilst visual migration at the cliffs/downs included a Mistle Thrush, a Great Spotted Woodpecker, 2 Jays, 2 Grey Wagtails, 2 Reed Buntings, 3 Bramblings, 8 Rooks, 12 Sky Larks, 12 *alba* wagtails, 40 House Martins, 40 Chaffinches, 43 Redpolls, 125 Siskins, 190 Swallows, 200 Starlings and 250 Goldfinches.



Red-breasted Flycatcher at Samphire Hoe (Phil Smith)

The Hythe area produced a **Great Grey Shrike**, a Jay, 2 Wheatears, and 3 Stonechats at Hythe Ranges and a Water Rail, a Great Spotted Woodpecker, 3 Jays, 3 Redwings, 3 Blackcaps, 5 Goldcrests, 9 Chiffchaffs, 12 Meadow Pipits, 15 Pied Wagtails and 18 Redpolls at Princes Parade, whilst a Marsh Harrier, 2 Mute Swans 2 Bramblings, 3 **Crossbills**, 3 Sky Larks, 15 House Martins, 34 Siskins, 40 Redpolls, 240 Goldfinches and 300 Swallows flew along the coast. Elsewhere 4 Ring Ouzels were at Risborough Lane (Cheriton), 2 Little Egrets and 4 Tree Sparrows were at Botolph's Bridge and 6 Chiffchaffs, 20 Goldcrests and 40 Robins were at Castle Hill. The following day produced a **Short-eared Owl** and 13 Redwings at Creteway Down, where 20 Siskins flew over, 280 Fieldfares in off the sea at Capel-le-Ferne, a Hobby, a Wheatear, 4 Blackcaps, 4 Bramblings, 5 Redwings, 7 Ring Ouzels and 15 Goldcrests at Samphire Hoe, and a Ring Ouzel, 2 Stonechats and 4 Goldcrests at Abbotscliffe, where a Grey Wagtail, 5 *alba* Wagtails, 8 Fieldfares, 13 Redpolls, 165 Siskins, 195 Swallows, 290 House Martins and 380 Goldfinches flew over.

A **Red-breasted Flycatcher** at Samphire Hoe (the first site record and only the third for the area) was the highlight of the 20th, when a Firecrest, 2 **Short-eared Owls**, 2 Wheatears, 4 Chiffchaffs, 5 Ring Ouzels, 6 Blackcaps and 8 Redwings were also noted there, and a Firecrest, a Little Egret and 2 Ring Ouzels were at Abbotscliffe, where a Crossbill, a Fieldfare, a Grey Wagtail, 5 Redwings, 6 Bramblings, 6 Reed Buntings, 17 *alba* wagtails, 20 House Martins, 24 Sky Larks, 42 Redpolls, 47 Chaffinches, 60 Swallows, 66 Siskins, 165 Starlings and 600 Goldfinches flew over. A **Crossbill** flew over Saltwood and a Brambling and 3 Buzzards flew over Hythe. A Ring Ouzel, 2 **Short-eared Owls**, 2 Chiffchaffs and 10 Goldcrests were at Samphire Hoe the following day, when a Firecrest was at Princes Parade.

The last ten days of the month saw a southerly airflow become established, bringing generally mild conditions and it was a little quieter though still with some good birds to be found. On the 22nd a Little Egret, a Fieldfare, a Reed Bunting and 3 Redwings were at Abbotscliffe and 4 Redpolls flew over, whilst a Stonechat, a Reed Bunting, 4 Redpolls, 6 Siskins and 8 Goldcrests were at Princes Parade, where 4 Rooks and 22 Swallows flew east, 2 Great Spotted Woodpeckers, 2 Chiffchaffs, 5 Blackbirds and 22 Greenfinches were at Nickolls Quarry and 19 Tree Sparrows were counted at Botolph's Bridge (increasing to 36 the next day).

The first returning Purple Sandpiper was at Hythe on the 23rd, when a Blackcap, 2 Chiffchaffs, 4 Little Egrets, 5 Redpolls, 35 Swallows and 120 Goldfinches were at Abbotscliffe, 2 Firecrests, 3 Chiffchaffs and 15 Goldcrests were at Mill Point, a Firecrest and 100 Blackbirds were at Saltwood and 20 House Martins and 100 Swallows flew west at Hythe. A **Rough-legged Buzzard** flew over Sandling on the 24th, when a Grey Partridge and a Marsh Tit were at Saltwood Castle and a Firecrest and many Robins were noted at Samphire Hoe. On the 26th a Firecrest and 15 Goldcrests were at Samphire Hoe and a Great Spotted Woodpecker, 4 Chiffchaffs, 5 Goldcrests, 5 Song Thrushes and 12 Blackbirds were at Nickolls Quarry.

The 27th produced a Ring Ouzel at Samphire Hoe, a Black Redstart and 2 Firecrests at Mill Point and a Firecrest, a Treecreeper, 2 Water Rails, 2 Blackcaps, 3 Coal Tits, 9 Meadow Pipits, 11 Goldcrests, 12 Pied wagtails and 17 Chiffchaffs at Princes Parade, where 2 Sky Larks, 2 Swallows and 4 Grey Wagtails flew over. A Redpoll and 6 Swallows flew over Hythe on the 28th. At least 5 Firecrests and 20 Goldcrests were at Mill Point on the 29th, when a Coot, 2 Redpoll, 3 Water Rail, 5 Goldcrests, several Chiffchaffs and 19 Siskins were at Princes Parade, a Water Rail and 2 Chiffchaffs were at Nickolls Quarry, a Green Sandpiper was at Botolph's Bridge and 61 Lapwings were at the Willop Basin. The 27th produced a Ring Ouzel at Samphire Hoe, a Black Redstart and 2 Firecrests at Mill Point and a Firecrest, a Treecreeper, 2 Water Rails, 2 Blackcaps, 3 Coal Tits, 9 Meadow Pipits, 11 Goldcrests, 12 Pied wagtails and 17 Chiffchaffs at Princes Parade, where 2 Sky Larks, 2 Swallows and 4 Grey Wagtails flew over.



Snipe at Botolph's Bridge (Brian Harper)

A Redpoll and 6 Swallows flew over Hythe on the 28th. There were eight additions to the year list in October, which increased it to 194, nine more than at the same time last year.

November

The mild southerly airflow persisted into November and led to a fairly quiet start to the month. A Firecrest, 3 Fieldfares, 4 Redpolls, 5 Goldcrests, 7 Chiffchaffs and 28 Siskins were at Princes Parade on the 1st, whilst the Coot, 2 Kingfishers, 2 Cetti's Warblers and 3 Water Rails remained there from October, as did the Purple Sandpiper at Hythe. Five Sky Larks flew west at Princes Parade and 14 Sky Larks flew east at Saltwood, whilst 7 Fieldfares were seen at Abbotscliffe and 2 Siskins flew east there. A **Short-eared Owl** was at Samphire Hoe the following day, when a Red-breasted Merganser flew west at the Willop Outfall and a Marsh Harrier, a Little Egret and a Kingfisher were at Botolph's Bridge, where about 20 Tree Sparrows were still present from last month.

Further Firecrests were seen at Ladies Walk (Hythe) and at Seabrook on the 3rd, when good numbers of Goldcrests and 6 Yellowhammers were at Nickolls Quarry, and a Marsh Tit was noted at Brockhill Country Park. There was a small nocturnal movement of Redwings. A late Wheatear and 30 Robins were noted at Folkestone Warren the next day, when a Red-throated Diver flew west at Mill Point. Six Redwings flew over Cheriton on the 5th, when 35 Lapwings were noted at Hillhurst Farm (Westenhanger). A Peregrine, a Green Sandpiper and 6 Little Egrets were at Botolph's Bridge on the 7th, with 65 Lapwings at the Willop Basin, whilst the same or another Peregrine was at Hythe Roughs the following day, when Green Sandpipers increased to two at Botolph's Bridge and two Common Scoters, 6 Kittiwakes, 10 Gannets and 17 auks flew past Mill Point. The highlight of the first week of the month was a **Shore Lark** seen on the seawall near the Hythe Redoubt.

The 9th produced a **Short-eared Owl** at Samphire Hoe, 3 Firecrests at Mill Point, a Kingfisher in Folkestone Harbour and a late Swallow flying west at Hythe, whilst 2 Firecrests, 2 Blackcaps, 2 Fieldfares and 9 Goldcrests were at Cheriton Road Cemetery the next day. Three Lesser Redpolls were seen in a garden at Hythe on the 11th. A flock of 11 Canada Geese were at Botolph's Bridge on the 12th, with around 50 Sky Larks in the stubble fields there. Two Lapwings, 2 Fieldfares, 6 Stock Doves and 390 Wood Pigeons flew west at Abbotscliffe on the 13th, when 23 Stock Doves and at least 300 Wood Pigeons flew west at Princes Parade and a Blackcap, 5 Chiffchaffs, 5 Redpolls and 34 Siskins were also recorded there.

Further Wood Pigeon movements were noted the next day, when 450 flew in off the sea at Hythe and 800 flew over Botolph's Bridge, whilst 2 Black Redstarts and 25 Rock Pipits were at Samphire Hoe and four Common Scoters were on the sea off Hythe.

A **Short-eared Owl** was seen at Hythe Roughs on the 15th, when two Firecrests were at Enbrook Park (Sandgate) and a Brent Goose flew west at the Willop Outfall, whilst another **Short-eared Owl** was at Samphire Hoe the next day, when Purple Sandpipers increased to four at Hythe and a Firecrest was seen in Folkestone on the 17th. The 19th produced 6 Redwings, 12 Fieldfares, 20 Stock Doves and about 3,000 Wood Pigeons at Botolph's Bridge, whilst a Brent Goose and a Common Scoter were at the Willop Outfall where 12 Siskins flew west.



Dartford Warbler at Abbotscliffe (Phil Smith)

The weather turned cooler for a few days from the 20th, with even a couple of overnight frosts, and produced several interesting sightings. A **Dartford Warbler** was found at Abbotscliffe on the 20th (remaining until at least the 24th), when a late Ring Ouzel and a Fieldfare were also present, whilst a Chiffchaff and 3 Siskins were at Princes Parade. The following day produced a Firecrest at Mill Point, where 2 House Martins flew west, a Little Egret, a Curlew, a Lapwing, an Oystercatcher, 2 Teal, 3 Red-throated Divers, 5 Dunlin, 9 auks and 72 Brent Geese passed by offshore and 130 Starlings arrived in off the sea.

A **Great White Egret** was seen briefly at Botolph's Bridge on the 22nd, before it flew off to the west, whilst there was a noticeable arrival of Blackbirds, including 11 at Samphire Hoe, 30 at Abbotscliffe and 56 at Creteway Down. The former site also produced 2 Stock Doves, 3 Siskins, 3 Redpolls and 130 Starlings flying over, whilst the latter held two Fieldfares and 17 Brent Geese flew over. A House Martin flew east at Princes Parade and a Little Grebe, a Firecrest, a Blackcap, 3 Chiffchaffs, 3 Fieldfares, 4 Goldcrests, 5 Redpolls, 7 Redwings and 14 Siskins were also noted there, whilst 7 Red-throated Divers and 450 Brent Geese flew west past Hythe. A Little Egret flew past Mill Point and six Ringed Plovers were counted in Folkestone Harbour.

The 23rd produced a **Yellow-legged Gull** at Saltwood, whilst a Teal, a Stonechat, 3 Cetti's Warblers, 4 Water Rails, 5 Little Egrets, 6 Wigeon and 12 Great Crested Grebes were noted at Nickolls Quarry, with 2 Snipe, 10 Lapwings and 30 Tree Sparrows at Botolph's Bridge, 2 Chiffchaffs, 3 Redwings, 4 Redpolls and 7 Siskins at Princes Parade and six Fieldfares at Samphire Hoe. In strong south-westerly winds on the 24th four Shelduck and 45 Gannets flew past Mill Point, whilst a **Ring-necked Parakeet** flew east at Samphire Hoe the next day.

A Stonechat, a Reed Bunting, a Blackcap, 2 Redwings, 3 Goldcrests, 5 Chiffchaffs and 5 Fieldfares were at Princes Parade on the 26th, when a Golden Plover flew over Abbotscliffe and some thrush passage was noted over Hythe after dusk. The first Fulmars were prospecting at the cliffs at Capel-le-Ferne on the 27th, when single Stonechats were at Folkestone Warren and Princes Parade. The 28th produced two very late House Martins flying west at Princes Parade, whilst 3 Chiffchaffs, 4 Goldcrests, 6 Siskins and 38 Goldfinches were also seen there, a Little Egret flew east past Copt Point and 3 Little Egrets were at Botolph's Bridge, where there an exceptional total of around **10,000** Wood Pigeons (a record count locally).

Nine Mandarins were noted at Folks' Wood on the 29th and the month ended on a high note when a sub-adult **Caspian Gull** was identified at Princes Parade.

There were five additions to the year list in November, which increased it to 199, twelve more than at the same time last year.

December

The month was dominated by unseasonably mild and moist tropical maritime air masses, and it was the warmest December across the UK since 1910, with remarkably no air frosts recorded across southern England. Frequent deep depressions brought strong winds and it was particularly dull though the rainfall total was close to the average.

A drake **Goosander** was seen in the Hythe/Seabrook area on several dates between 3rd and the 8th, whilst two drake **Goosanders** were seen circling Beachborough Ponds on the 13th, when a drake Wigeon was at Botolph's Bridge.



Goosander at Hythe (Phil Smith)

There were several small movements of Brent Geese, including five east past Hythe on the 1st, six east there on the 13th and 12 east past Mill Point on the 14th. Red-throated Divers were noted only in low numbers, with a peak of 7 off Mill Point on the 14th, when 20 Gannets were also seen there, and 28 Gannets were counted off Samphire Hoe on the 20th, whilst 20 flew west past Hythe on the 30th. A Shag and a Little Egret were seen at Samphire Hoe on the 1st, with two Little Egrets there on the 9th, whilst up to two Little Egrets were noted regularly in the Botolph's Bridge area.

Two **Red Kites** were seen over Hythe on the 9th and one flew north-west there on the 16th, whilst Peregrines were noted at Botolph's Bridge, Hythe Roughs, Saltwood and Samphire Hoe. A Coot and at least 2 Water Rails remained in the Princes Parade area and a single Water Rail was recorded at Samphire Hoe on the 28th. Purple Sandpipers increased to six at Hythe from the 11th and an Oystercatcher flew east there on the 9th, whilst 43 Lapwings flew west over Botolph's Bridge on the 13th, four Sanderling were at the Willop Outfall on the 18th and 22 Curlew were at the Willop Basin on the 10th. Two Green Sandpipers remained at Botolph's Bridge, increasing to three on the 19th. A Redshank and up to five Turnstone were noted in the Folkestone Harbour area and at least 12 Turnstone were at Hythe.

A Great Skua and ten Kittiwakes flew past Mill Point on the 30th, whilst Mediterranean Gulls were present in good numbers, including 95 at Nickolls Quarry, 121 at Hillhurst Farm (Westenhanger) and 220 at Hythe, and Great Black-backed Gulls counts comprised 40 at Folkestone Harbour and 54 at Samphire Hoe. 48 auks noted passing Samphire Hoe on the 20th included at least one Razorbill. Large numbers of Wood Pigeons remained in the Botolph's Bridge area, with a peak of around 7,000 noted on the 11th and up to 50 Collared Doves were at Grange Farm (Saltwood) on the 29th. Single **Barn Owls** were seen at Beachborough Ponds on the 9th and by the entrance to the Samphire Hoe tunnel (Round Down) on the 24th. Two Kingfishers remained at Princes Parade, with others logged at Botolph's Bridge and Folkestone Harbour. An exceptionally late Swallow (equalling the latest ever record) was seen flying west along the canal at Princes Parade on the 8th.

A flock of 32 Sky Larks were noted at Abbotscliffe on the 28th, whilst up to 25 Meadow Pipits were in stubble fields at Botolph's Bridge throughout. Excellent numbers of Rock Pipits were present at Samphire Hoe, with a record peak of 35 on the 16th, whilst one or two were noted in the Folkestone Harbour area. Pied Wagtail counts included 22 at Church Hougham and 25 at Botolph's Bridge, whilst single Grey Wagtails were widespread.

A Black Redstart was at Samphire Hoe on the 28th and up to six Stonechats were noted there, with others at Princes Parade and Church Hougham (2). Two Fieldfares were at Botolph's Bridge in early December, increasing to 18 on the 26th. Nocturnal movements of Redwings were recorded on the 7th/8th and 17th/18th but only small numbers were wintering. A Blackcap, two Cetti's Warblers and up to 7 Chiffchaffs remained at Princes Parade throughout, a pair of Blackcaps were seen at Saltwood towards the end of the month and Chiffchaffs were also noted at Seabrook on the 19th and Hythe Roughs on the 30th (3).

Two Firecrests were at Princes Parade on the 2nd, with one lingering until at least the 21st, and another was at Hythe Roughs on the 30th, whilst up to 12 Goldcrests were at the former site. A pair of Marsh Tits were noted in Kiln Wood (Pedlinge) on the 29th, whilst up to two Ravens remained at Samphire Hoe, with three flying over Lympe on the 10th and one at Saltwood on the 29th.

The Tree Sparrow flock at Botolph's Bridge increased to 50 on the 19th and to 53 on the 28th, whilst a Brambling was seen along the canal near Twiss Avenue (Hythe) with a flock of Chaffinches and Goldfinches on the 5th. Up to 27 Siskins remained at Princes Parade until the 9th, with 13 still present at the year's end, and elsewhere one flew west at Botolph's Bridge on the 1st, two were seen in a garden in Folkestone on the 9th and nine were at Abbotscliffe on the 28th, when 22 Yellowhammers were counted there.



Purple Sandpiper at Hythe (Nigel Webster)

Up to six Yellowhammers, six Corn Buntings and 15 Reed Buntings were frequenting stubble fields in the Botolph's Bridge area.

There were no additions to the year list in December so it finished on 199, seven more than at the end of last year.



Caspian Gull at Princes Parade in November (Ian Roberts)

Systematic list

Mute Swan

Cygnus olor

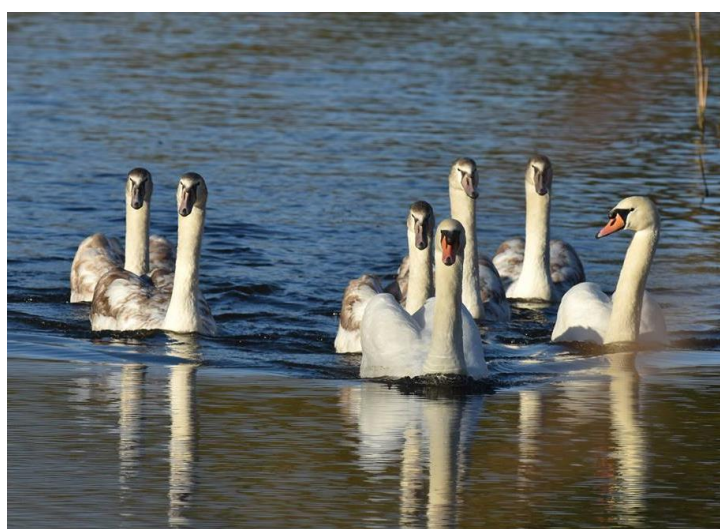
Breeding resident, winter visitor and passage migrant.

Numbers in the early winter period steadily increased in the Willop Sewer area from six in early January to 13 by the end of the month, 26 by the 7th February, 35 by the 18th March and peaked at 36 on the 18th April before dispersing. The flock was seen to be using Nickolls Quarry as an overnight roost site. This represented a significant improvement on last year and was the highest count since the 2010/11 winter.

At least four pairs bred, one on the sewer at the Willop Basin, one on the canal cutting near Botolph's Bridge and at least two along the Royal Military Canal – one near West Hythe and another at Seabrook.

There were several records in October which were suggestive of local migration, with one on the sea off Abbotscliffe on the 7th, three on the sea off Hythe Ranges on the 11th, two flying west at Abbotscliffe on the 15th and two flying east at Hythe Ranges on the 18th.

In the late winter period at least 14 were present in the Botolph's Bridge area from late November.



Mute Swans at Princes Parade (Nigel Webster)



Greylag Geese at Botolph's Bridge (Brian Harper)

White-fronted Goose

Anser albifrons

Rare migrant and winter visitor.

An adult was present at the Willop Basin on the 15th February (B. Harper, I. A. Roberts), see photograph on page 8. This was only the 28th area record but there have now been ten in the last seven years. This was the first record for the site and the tetrad (TR13 A).

Greylag Goose

Anser anser

A regular winter visitor and passage migrant, with most presumably relating to the increasing feral populations within the county. At least one early record, and possibly some others, relate to genuine wild birds. Having been recorded in recent summers in suitable habitat, breeding was confirmed for the first time in 2014.

The only records from the first two months of the year concerned four at Nickolls Quarry on the 27th January and three at the Willop Basin on the 15th February, whilst two were at the latter site on the 2nd and the 6th March, and two flew west there on the 14th March. A pair had returned to Nickolls Quarry by the end of March and were seen intermittently there through April, but there were no further records or repeat of last year's successful breeding.

There was some apparent movement in the first half of April, with three flying north over Saltwood on the 4th, four off the Hythe Redoubt on the 5th and singles, possibly the same individual, flying past Hythe and Princes Parade on the 12th.

The only record from the second half of the year involved a remarkable flock of 33 at Botolph's Bridge on the 5th September. This was the third highest count ever, following 53 flying north-east at Nickolls Quarry on the 7th September 2003 and 85+ at Copt Point on the 17th September 1996. A large flock of Canada Geese were seen at nearby Donkey Street the same day.

Canada Goose

<i>Branta Canadensis</i>

Currently breeds almost annually but formerly more numerous. Otherwise can be a visitor at any time of year.

Three were seen at Botolph's Bridge on the 14th February and three were noted regularly at Nickolls Quarry from the 27th February, increasing to four there on the 28th March and six on the 30th March. One was shot at Nickolls Quarry on the 4th April but two pairs remained there until at least the end of May, with one pair breeding and raising eight young.

The only records from the second half of the year involved a flock of 51 at Donkey Street on the 5th September and 11 at Botolph's Bridge on the 12th November. The September count was the largest since 2006 and coincided with a large flock of Greylag Geese were seen at nearby Botolph's Bridge the same day.

Barnacle Goose

<i>Branta leucopsis</i>

Rare migrant and winter visitor. Feral birds also recorded.

One was seen at Nickolls Quarry on the 5th April. Present for a single day during the migration season, this has a case for being considered as a wild bird but feral individuals are becoming increasingly frequent in the county.



Canada Geese at Donkey Street (Brian Harper)



Barnacle Goose at Nickolls Quarry (Brian Harper)

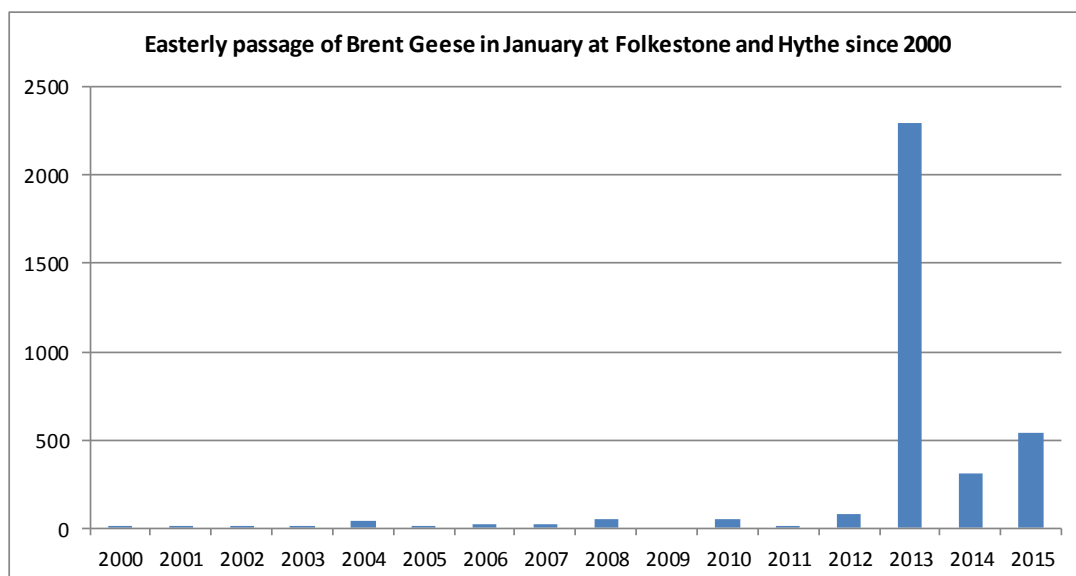
Brent Goose

<i>Branta bernicla</i>

Winter visitor and passage migrant.

Large movements in January were unknown before the exceptional events of 2013 but appear to be becoming a regular occurrence, as the chart below demonstrates. A total of over 540 were logged moving east in January 2015, including counts of 137 past Princes Parade, Seabrook on the 3rd, 143 past Samphire Hoe on the 20th, 50 past Princes Parade on the 23rd and 63 past Samphire Hoe on the 28th.

Elsewhere two were on the flood at the Willop Basin from the 1st to the 7th January, and February saw a further 645 heading east, including 192 past Samphire Hoe on the 13th, 148 past Hythe/Samphire Hoe on the 14th, 75 past Princes Parade on the 20th and 230 past Folkestone/Seabrook on the 27th.



On the 4th March a flock of 31 arrived at the Willop Basin, with up to 27 lingering there until the 8th, and passage counts included 40 east past Samphire Hoe on the 10th, a very good total of **1,304** east past Hythe/Samphire Hoe on the 13th (there have been just seven larger counts), 44 east past Hythe the next day, 110 east past Samphire Hoe on the 17th and 85 east past Princes Parade on the 29th. One on the golf course at the Hythe Imperial on the 28th March was an unusual record.

Counts in April included 220 east past Samphire Hoe on the 3rd, 86 east past Mill Point on the 7th, 100 east past Mill Point/Samphire Hoe on the 10th, 80 east the same sites on the 24th and 220 east there on the 29th. The last, five flying east past Mill Point on the 15th May, were rather late as there have been later sightings on just three occasions.

The total for the spring (including the early movement in January) was about 3,585 which, whilst lower than the previous two years, was still above the mean for the previous ten years of 2,678.

The first in autumn, two flying east past Hythe on the 20th September, were nine days later than the particularly early arrival last year but very close to the average arrival date of the previous decade of 21st September. These were followed by two flying past Samphire Hoe and six east past Copt Point on 27th, and two east past Samphire Hoe and three east past Hythe the next day. Numbers increased in October and included counts of 17 east past Hythe on the 1st, 45 east past Folkestone on the 11th and 60 east past Samphire Hoe on the 12th. In November 72 were seen off Mill Point on the 21st, whilst 450 flew west past Hythe on the 22nd when a flock of 17 were seen flying inland over Creteway Down, but only small numbers were noted in December.

The bird/day total for second half of the year was 844 which was considerably less than the previous two years but about average compared to the previous decade.

Egyptian Goose

Alopochen aegyptiaca

Very rare vagrant.

Two were at Nickolls Quarry on the morning of the 27th February before they flew west (I. A. Roberts). This was only the seventh area record, but there have now been five in the last five years as the species continues to establish a foothold in the county.

Winter visitor and passage migrant, probably having bred on at least one occasion.

Up to five were at the Willop Basin throughout January and February and numbers increased in March to 7 on the 9th, 8 on the 14th and peaked at 11 on the 15th to 17th before steadily declining to just three by the end of the month, and with the last sighting there on the 2nd April.

There were no sightings elsewhere in January, but in February eight flew west past Hythe on the 1st, eight flew east past Hythe/Samphire Hoe on the 9th, three flew west past Mill Point on the 11th, six flew west past Hythe/Samphire Hoe on the 14th, three were seen off Samphire Hoe on the 16th and three flew east past Seabrook/Folkestone on the 28th. In March one was at Nickolls Quarry on the 5th.

April records comprised two flying west past Princes Parade on the 3rd, two at Nickolls Quarry on the 5th, six flying east at Samphire Hoe on the 6th, two flying east over Nickolls Quarry on the 19th, two east past Mill Point on the 24th and two west past Samphire Hoe the next day. In May two flew at Samphire Hoe on the 7th, with six east past Hythe and two west past Samphire Hoe on the 8th, three east at Princes Parade on the 9th, four west at Samphire Hoe on the 11th and two west over Nickolls Quarry on the 16th.

In the latter half of the year one flew west past Samphire Hoe on the 8th September, one was seen there on the 23rd November and four flew east past Mill Point on the 24th November.



Brent Geese at the Willop Basin (Brian Harper)



Wigeon at Nickolls Quarry (Ian Roberts)

Introduced breeding resident.

All records were from the woods in the Saltwood area with a notable accumulation again at Folks' Wood (Pedlinge) with peaks there of 19 on the 3rd January and 9 on the 29th November.

Wigeon	<i>Anas penelope</i>
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Winter visitor and passage migrant.

It was another disappointing winter and spring passage with just seven birds recorded. However a drake which arrived at Nickoll's Quarry on the 24th March lingered until the 4th May, thereby becoming the latest ever record (which was previously 7 east past Copt Point on the 10th April 1998). The other sightings involved a female on the Willop Sewer on the 28th March, two pairs flying east past Samphire Hoe on the 3rd April and a drake on the Hoorne's Sewer on the 18th April.

Very few were noted in the latter winter period either, with six flushed from the north ditch at Nickolls Quarry on the 23rd November and a male at Botolph's Bridge on the 13th December.

Gadwall	<i>Anas strepera</i>
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Winter visitor and passage migrant.

Numbers in the early winter period were very low with peaks of just four at Chesterfield Wood (Saltwood) and two on the lake at Folkestone Racecourse (Westenhanger) in January. Elsewhere a pair on the flood at the Willop Basin on the 26th February were presumably migrants but no others were noted on spring passage and none were recorded in the late winter period.

Teal	<i>Anas crecca</i>
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Winter visitor and passage migrant.

In the early winter period there were peak counts of six at Botolph's Bridge, six on the lake at Folkestone Racecourse (Westenhanger), 12 at Chesterfield Wood (Saltwood), 14 in the Hoorne's Sewer area and a very good total of 85 at the Willop Basin (on the 27th January). Elsewhere three singles were seen at Samphire Hoe – flying west on the 5th January, and on the pond on the 16th February and 17th March.

The only signs of spring passage were two on the sea off the Hythe Redoubt on the 5th April, two flying east past Mill Point on the 7th April and a female at Nickolls Quarry on the 25th April. Two at Samphire Hoe on the 15th June were noteworthy as June records are unusual.

In the latter half of the year there five at Botolph's Bridge on the 9th August, six at Donkey Street on the 5th September, two at Willop Basin on the 11th October, two flying west at Mill Point on the 21st November and one at Nickolls Quarry on the 23rd November.

Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>
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Breeding resident and winter visitor.

Peak counts from the early winter period included 14 at Samphire Hoe, 17 at Westenhanger, 17 on the canal at Seabrook, 22 at Chesterfield Wood (Saltwood), 40 on the canal at Hythe, 72 at Botolph's Bridge and 89 at the Willop Basin.

In the latter half of the year there were counts of 20 along the Aldington Road (near Lympe), 49 at the Willop Basin and 52 at Botolph's Bridge all on the 24th September, and 40 on the canal at Hythe in December.

Pintail	<i>Anas acuta</i>
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Winter visitor and passage migrant.

Five flew east past Samphire Hoe on the 9th March, four flew east there on the 3rd April and two flew east past Princes Parade on the 21st April. The total of 11 was well below the mean for the previous ten years of 25. There were no records in the second half of the year.

Garganey	<i>Anas querquedula</i>
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Rare migrant, mainly in spring, possibly bred in the past.

A pair were present at Nickolls Quarry on the 9th April (I. A. Roberts, B. Harper), see photograph on page 13. This was the 26th area record, but only the third since 2008 and the first at this site since 2002.

Shoveler	<i>Anas clypeata</i>
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Winter visitor and passage migrant.

One was seen on the sea off the Willop Outfall on the 3rd February. A modest spring passage involved a drake at the Willop Basin on the 9th March, a pair flying east past Samphire Hoe on the 3rd April, a pair which flew off from the Willop Basin on the 4th April (with presumably the same birds later at Nickolls Quarry) and two flying west past Mill Point on the 7th April. The total for the spring of just nine was well below the mean for the previous ten years of 29. There were no records from the second half of the year.

Pochard	<i>Aythya farina</i>
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Winter visitor and passage migrant.

Up to four were at the usual site of Folkestone Racecourse lake (Westenhanger) in January and February, with a drake also noted there on the 2nd April. Elsewhere a drake was at Nickolls Quarry on the 2nd April, with a duck there on the 4th April and a drake again on the 9th April.

At least two were on the lake at Folkestone Racecourse (Westenhanger) again from November.

Tufted Duck	<i>Aythya fuligula</i>
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Breeding resident, winter visitor and passage migrant.

Numbers increased at Nickolls Quarry during January from 3-4 early in the month to 11 on the 20th and peaked at 14 (12 drakes) on the 31st, with 12 still present on the 3rd February. Up to 7 remained through February and March, increasing to 12 (9 drakes) on the 30th March and 14 (9 drakes) on the 4th April. Two pairs lingered through May and June and breeding might have occurred. Only small numbers were noted there in the latter half of the year.

Elsewhere at least four were present on the lake at Folkestone Racecourse (Westenhanger) from January to at least late April, two were seen on the sea off the Hythe Redoubt on the 21st March and five flew east past Mill Point on the 3rd April.

Common Scoter	<i>Melanitta nigra</i>
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Non-breeding summer visitor, winter visitor and passage migrant.

A few were wintering in Hythe Bay, with a peak count of 35 from Princes Parade, Seabrook on the 1st January. Elsewhere 15 flew west past Mill Point on the 9th January.

Numbers increased in Hythe Bay from mid-March, presumably swelled by migrant birds, with up to 70 present off Princes Parade from the 20th March, rising to a peak of 170 on the 17th April, whilst counts of 115 off the Willop Outfall on the 19th April and 120 off the Hythe Redoubt on the 26th April presumably related to the same flock. Up to 90 remained off Hythe into early May.

A total of about 900 were seen passing east off coastal watch-points between mid-March and mid-May, including counts of 390 east past Mill Point on the 3rd April, 64 east there on the 16th April, 80 east past Samphire Hoe on the 17th April and 52 east there on the 11th May. Whilst lower than the previous two years this was still a reasonably strong passage.

Very few were noted over the summer, with a peak of 12 at Mill Point on the 4th June. Autumn passage was also modest with the only notable counts being 25 flying east past Samphire Hoe on the 3rd October and 60 flying west past Mill Point on the 30th October and the late winter peak was just four off Hythe on the 14th November.

Velvet Scoter	<i>Melanitta fusca</i>
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Winter visitor and passage migrant.

The only record referred to two which flew east past Mill Point and Samphire Hoe on the 11th May. A poor year.

Goldeneye	<i>Bucephala clangula</i>
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Winter visitor and passage migrant.

The drake found at Botolph's Bridge on the 31st December last year remained in the area until the 17th January (B. Harper, I. A. Roberts, C. Gillard *et al*). See photograph on page 6.

Red-breasted Merganser	<i>Mergus serrator</i>
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Winter visitor and passage migrant.

A pair flew east past Mill Point on the 3rd April, with four east there on the 7th April and a pair east there on the 16th April. In May three flew east past Princes Parade, Seabrook on the 3rd and three flew east past Samphire Hoe on the 15th. The total of 14 was slightly less than last year's spring passage (22) and the mean for the previous ten years of 20.

In autumn one flew west past the Willop Outfall on the 2nd November.

Goosander	<i>Mergus merganser</i>
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Winter visitor and passage migrant.

A female/immature in the West Hythe area from the 14th January until at least the 14th March was possibly the same as the one seen there in late December 2014 (as it ranged along the canal between Port Lympne and Palmarsh, and could be elusive). In addition a flock of four flew west past Seabrook on the 14th February, a drake flew over Botolph's Bridge on the 21st February and two female/immature birds were at Botolph's Bridge on 8th March before they flew east.

In the latter winter period a drake was seen in the Hythe/Seabrook area on several dates between 3rd and the 8th December (see photograph on page 30), whilst two drakes were seen circling Beachborough Ponds on the 13th.

The total of six records was the second best ever.

Red-legged Partridge*Alectoris rufa*

Breeding resident.

Small numbers were noted at the usual sites of Nickolls Quarry, Hythe Ranges and the Abbotscliffe/Round Down area, whilst three were seen near Folks' Wood on the 11th January and singles were noted at Samphire Hoe on 24th March, 5th April and 22nd August.



Red-legged Partridge at Hythe Redoubt (Brian Harper)



Red-legged Partridge at Botolph's Bridge (Brian Harper)

Grey Partridge*Perdix perdix*

Breeding resident.

Up to two were noted at Abbotscliffe from April and there were two at Church Hougham in April and one near Saltwood Castle in October.

Pheasant*Phasianus colchicus*

Breeding resident.

As always very few counts of this species were received. Singles at Samphire Hoe on four dates between the 28th September and the 1st December, with two on the 6th October, were of some local interest as it relatively unusual at this site.

Red-throated Diver*Gavia stellata*

Winter visitor and passage migrant.

Numbers in the early winter period were very low with a peak of just 17 off Hythe on the 6th January. There were a couple of unusual inland records however, with one on the canal in the West Hythe area from the 15th to the 22nd January (see photograph on page 7), with presumably the same bird on the canal at Seabrook on the 26th January, and one flying over East Cliff Gardens (Folkestone) on the 25th January.

Spring passage was noted from around mid-February, with a few small up-channel movements preceding an excellent total of 416 flying east past Folkestone/Seabrook on the 28th February. This was the second highest ever count, with the largest being 468 east past Copt Point on the 22nd February 1996. Smaller numbers were noted during March and April, with the last off Mill Point on the 2nd May.

The first birds of the autumn were two vocal individuals that flew west and then back east past Princes Parade on the 10th October and only low numbers were noted in the late winter period, with peak counts of just 7 west past Hythe on the 22nd November, 6 off the Willop Outfall on the 23rd November and 7 off Mill Point on the 14th December.

Black-throated Diver

<i>Gavia arctica</i>

Winter visitor and passage migrant.

One flew east past Samphire Hoe on the 23rd April and a pair flew east past Mill Point on the 14th May. The total of just three was somewhat lower than the mean for the previous ten years of 6.1.

Great Northern Diver

<i>Gavia immer</i>

Rare migrant and winter visitor.

A summer-plumaged pair flew east close inshore past Mill Point on the 14th May (I. A. Roberts, B. Harper). The 30th area record.

Fulmar

<i>Fulmarus glacialis</i>

Breeding visitor and passage migrant.

Birds had begun arriving back at the cliffs at Samphire Hoe from late November 2014 and had increased to 8 by January 2015, with three or four pairs breeding here and up to three pairs at Capel-le-Ferne.

Elsewhere small numbers were noted at other coastal sites in January, whilst counts in February included eight flying east past Mill Point on the 6th, seven flying east past Samphire Hoe on the 13th and five flying east past Folkestone/Seabrook on the 28th. In March six flew east past Mill Point on the 3rd, with 16 flying east at Samphire Hoe on the 11th, seven flying east past Mill Point on the 26th and a total of 32 (11 west, 21 east) off Princes Parade during strong south-westerly winds on the 29th. On the 17th April 12 flew east past Samphire, whilst the last spring movement of note was 13 flying east past Mill Point on the 2nd May.

Small numbers were recorded until mid-September, with no counts of note, but there were no sightings thereafter until late November when six had returned to the breeding site at Capel-le-Ferne and prospecting birds were noted at Samphire Hoe in December.

Sooty Shearwater

<i>Puffinus griseus</i>

Rare passage migrant.

Two flew past Copt Point on the 26th August (D. A. Gibson). The 46th area record.

Manx Shearwater

<i>Puffinus puffinus</i>

Passage migrant.

Two flew west past Mill Point on the 29th April, with singles seen flying west past Hythe on the 3rd May, Samphire Hoe on the 5th May and Mill Point on the 6th May, whilst three flew east past Princes Parade on the 9th May. In June two flew west past Mill Point and one flew west past Samphire Hoe on the 2nd, whilst there was just a single record in autumn when one flew past Copt Point on the 26th August.

With the mean for the previous ten years being 6.6, the total of 12 was an above average showing.

Rare passage migrant.

All records were from Hythe, where two flew west on the 25th August (I. A. Roberts), two flew west the following day (I. A. Roberts) and a single flew west on the 24th September (I. A. Roberts). The 34th to 36th area records.

Passage migrant.

Counts in January included 36 flying west past Mill Point on the 9th and 51 flying east past Samphire Hoe on the 28th, whilst numbers in February were unremarkable with the isolated exception on an excellent movement of **730** (the second highest ever) flying east past Samphire Hoe in strong south-easterly winds on the 13th.

Up-channel passage was noted in spring between early March and mid-May, but was very light with just over 150 logged. Counts included 20 east past Samphire Hoe on the 11th March, 22 east there on the 11th April and 16 east there on the 17th April, whilst 47 were logged flying west at Mill Point on the 3rd May.

Up to ten were recorded regularly from June until the end of the year, with larger counts of 20 off Mill Point on the 4th June, 17 off Samphire Hoe on the 13th July, 45 west past Mill Point on the 24th November, 20 there on the 14th December, 28 off Samphire Hoe on the 20th December and 20 west past Mill Point on the 30th December.

A non-breeding visitor at all times of year.

Counts in January of 12 flying east past Folkestone Harbour on the 5th, eight flying east past Prince Parade the next day and 15 at Samphire Hoe on the 27th gave no indication of what was about to happen in February. The first indication of an exceptional event was a good count of 37 at Samphire Hoe on the 3rd February, followed by a record movement of 132 flying east there on the 7th, with 167 flying east past Hythe on the 9th and an exceptional 298 noted off Mill Point on the 11th (comprising a flock of 142 on the sea and 156 flying east). A further 150 flew east at Hythe on the 13th, when 100 flew west at Samphire Hoe, but numbers quickly dispersed, with 37 east past Samphire Hoe on the 17th being the last double-figure count in the month.

The reason for these unprecedented totals is unclear but they presumably related to flocks dispersing from a roosting site, and perhaps exploiting a localised concentration of prey, rather than passage birds. The previous highest count was 112 off Mill Point on the 14th October 1989.

Smaller numbers were noted in March and April, including 28 off Samphire Hoe on the 9th March, 14 there on the 17th March and 18 flying east there on the 3rd April. Ten were noted on the beach at the Hythe Redoubt on the 12th May. The peak counts in the latter part of the year were just 11 at Samphire Hoe on the 29th September and 12 there on the 5th October.

Passage migrant and winter visitor, with occasional summer records.

One was at Folkestone Harbour on the 25th January and an immature was noted at Samphire Hoe on six dates in February, with two there on the 17th March. Singles were again seen at Samphire Hoe on three dates in April, with two there on the 15th May.

All records from the latter half of the year were from Samphire Hoe, where there were singles on seven dates from the 5th October, with two there on the 27th October. The total of 18 bird/days was a little below the average for the previous decade of 25.

Very rare vagrant.

A juvenile identified at Nickolls Quarry on the 14th January was presumably the 'Bittern' which had been reported by local anglers as being present since early January (I. A. Roberts *et al*), see photograph on page 5. It was well-watched during its stay until the 23rd, frequenting the same tree as its daytime roost. The bird might have been the same as one previously seen in Essex in late December 2014, and later seen in Sussex in late January 2015.

This was the second area record following the long-staying adult in the winter of 2008/09. That both records have occurred in the winter period is remarkable.



Shag at Samphire Hoe (Phil Smith)



Little Egret at Cheriton (Vincent Lloyd)

A scarce non-breeding visitor at any time of year, now regular in winter and on passage.

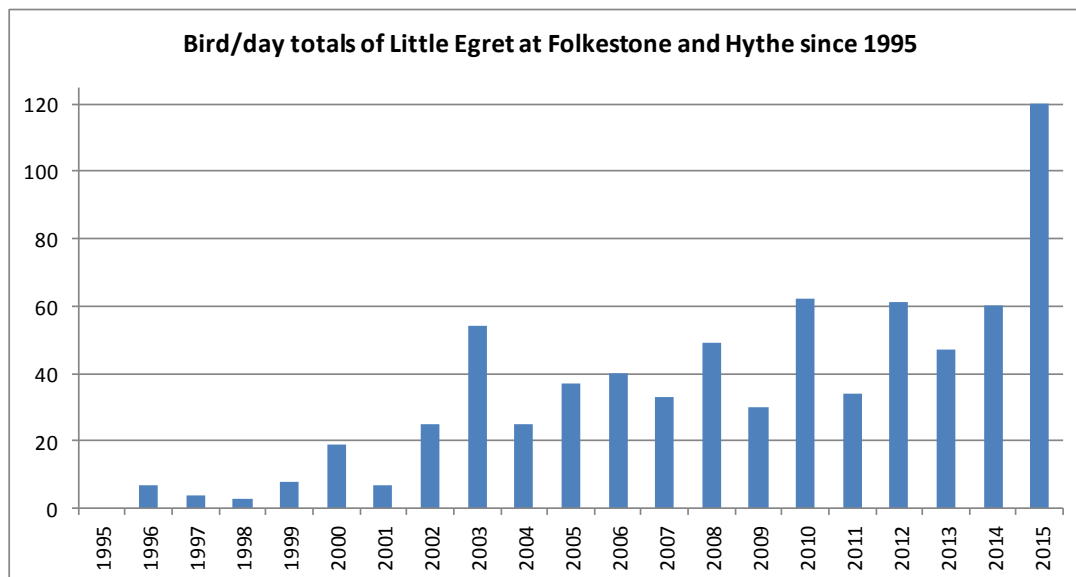
In contrast to last winter, good numbers were present (following an apparent arrival in December 2014) and up to five appeared to be roosting in the West Hythe area during January and February, with regular sightings from Botolph's Bridge, Nickolls Quarry and the Willop Basin areas presumably relating to these birds. Elsewhere singles were seen at the Hythe Imperial golf course, Folkestone Harbour and flying over East Cliff Gardens (Folkestone) in January, whilst at least one was frequenting garden ponds in the Cheriton and Folkestone areas between the 15th and 22nd February, with others at Samphire Hoe on the 11th and 23rd February.

In March one was at the Willop Basin on the 8th and two flew west at Princes Parade on the 27th, whilst in April two flew west at Princes Parade on the 3rd, three flew west at Samphire Hoe on the 10th and three flew east at Hythe on the 19th. Irregular sightings continued into May, with little apparent pattern, comprising one flying east past Samphire Hoe on the 8th, two flying east at Hythe on the 16th, one flying west at Mill Point on the 22nd May and one on rocks at Folkestone Warren on the 25th May, whilst one was seen in Folkestone Harbour on the 7th June.

Four were seen on the west beach at Samphire Hoe on the 13th July, with one there on the 30th July but none were noted in August. In September there were singles at Hythe and Nickolls Quarry on the 5th, Samphire Hoe on the 7th to the 9th, Nickolls Quarry on the 11th and Samphire Hoe again on the 19th and 29th. October produced 16 records of 23 birds, including two flying west past Samphire Hoe on the 6th, two flying east there and two at Botolph's Bridge on the 18th, two at Samphire Hoe on the 19th and four at Abbotscliffe on the 23rd.

Up to six were frequenting the Botolph's Bridge/Nickolls Quarry in November, with at least two remaining to the end of the year, whilst singles flew past Mill Point on the 21st and 22nd November, and Copt Point on the 28th November, with two at Samphire Hoe on the 9th December.

The total of 120 bird/days was the best ever as the chart below demonstrates:



Great White Egret

Ardea alba

Very rare vagrant.

One was seen near Stonereach Bridge (Botolph's Bridge) for a few minutes on the 22nd November before it flew off to the west (I. A. Roberts). This was only the eighth area record but all have occurred in the last six years.

Grey Heron

Ardea cinerea

Breeding resident and passage migrant.

At least 11 nests were occupied in Lymgne Park Wood, where the population appears to be stable with 11 to 13 pairs noted in each of the last seven years.

Small numbers were seen at many sites across the area during the year. There were very few records suggestive of passage or dispersal, with one flying in off the sea at Princes Parade on the 4th October being the most noteworthy.

Black Stork

Ciconia nigra

Very rare vagrant.

One which flew west over Saltwood and Hythe on the 7th August (P. Howe, S. McMinn, N. Webster) was later seen, and photographed (see p. 19), at Dungeness. The third area record, following singles seen at Hythe in June 2011 and Folkestone in June 1995.

Little Grebe

Tachybaptus ruficollis

Breeding resident and winter visitor.

Up to four were at Botolph's Bridge in the early winter period, with others at Folkestone Racecourse (Westenhanger) in January and the Willop Basin in March. Two were present at Nickolls Quarry in mid-April but not stay to breed.

In the late winter period one was on the canal between Hythe and Seabrook from the 22nd November, with small numbers in the Botolph's Bridge area.

Breeding resident and winter visitor.

Numbers were low in January, with a peak of just 24 on the sea off the Willop Outfall on the 26th, but increased considerably in February, including counts of 178 off the Willop Outfall on the 3rd and 239 off Seabrook on the 9th, before fairly quickly dispersing again. The peak count in March was 25 off Princes Parade on the 21st and there was little suggestion of spring passage, though four flew east past Folkestone/Seabrook on the 28th February, two flew east past Mill Point on the 7th April and one flew west there on the 1st May.

Up to seven were present at Nickolls Quarry in January, with two pairs remaining into spring and probably breeding, though proof was not recorded. There was a peak of 12 there on the 23rd November but only small numbers were noted on the sea.

Black-necked Grebe

Podiceps nigricollis

Very rare vagrant.

One was seen drifting east offshore from Princes Parade on the 15th March (B. Harper, I. A. Roberts). This was only the 18th area record but the fourth in the last five years.



Little Grebe at Botolph's Bridge (Brian Harper)



Black-necked Grebe at Princes Parade (Brian Harper)

Honey Buzzard

Pernis apivorus

Scarce passage migrant.

Singles were seen flying over Folkestone on the 9th June (M. Vandoen) and Folkestone Downs on the 10th July (M. Varley), whilst in August one flew south over Saltwood on the 15th (P. Howe) with four flying out to sea at Hythe on the 29th August (S. McMinn) and another flying west there on the 31st (S. McMinn). One flew east at Capel-le-Ferne Gun Site on the 19th September (D. A. Gibson) and a relatively late bird (only the sixth October record) flew west at Mill Point on the 4th October (K. Harding).

A total of 123 have now been recorded in the area in the 26 years since 1990 (4.7 per year) so the ten in 2015 were more than double the average, largely due to the flock of four which is the largest group ever to be recorded locally.

Scarce migrant, but increasing.

The first, one flying over Fisherman's Beach (Hythe) on the 1st February (S. McMinn) was only the fifth to be recorded earlier than March. Following a flock of four which flew east over Cheriton on the 30th March (D. A. Gibson), a further six singles were logged in early April: at Saltwood on the 6th (P. Howe), Hythe (S. P. Clancy, I. A. Roberts) and Saltwood (P. Howe) on the 8th, West Hythe on the 9th (P. J. Wells), Folkestone Downs on the 10th (M. Varley) and Saltwood again on the 11th (P. Howe).

There followed a gap of over three weeks before the next series of sightings in May, when a further seven singles were noted: at Saltwood on the 4th (P. Howe), Hythe on the 12th (I. A. Roberts), Saltwood on the 16th (P. Howe), Folkestone Racecourse (Westenhanger) on the 17th (J. Tomsett), Abbotscliffe (P. Coleman) and Saltwood (P. Howe) on the 25th, and Abbotscliffe on the 27th (M. Kennett).

In June singletons were seen Abbotscliffe on the 14th (M. Kennett) and Palmarsh on the 17th (P. Howe), whilst on the 19th one flew over Lympe (P. Coleman) and three were seen at Saltwood (C. Gillard). One seen flying east at Capelle-Ferne on the 4th July (J. Tomsett), two seen over Hythe on the 9th December (S. McMinn) and one flying north-west at Hythe on the 16th December (S. McMinn) were the first to be recorded in their respective months, and this species has now been recorded in every month of the year.

The total of 22 records of 28 birds constitutes another very good year.

Marsh Harrier

Circus aeruginosus

Winter visitor and passage migrant.

The pattern of more regular winter occurrences (as described in the 2013 report) continued, with sightings on four dates between 23rd January and 24th February of a female/immature (possibly the same individual) in the Botolph's Bridge/Donkey Street/Willop Basin area.

In spring there were singles at Botolph's Bridge again on the 21st and the 28th March, flying west at Abbotscliffe on the 23rd March and one "which looked like it had come in off the sea" at Nickolls Quarry on the 27th April.

In autumn one flying north over Saltwood on the 9th August preceded three sightings in September (at Donkey Street on the 5th, a male flying out to sea at Abbotscliffe on the 17th and a pair flying out to sea there on the 19th), two in October (at Botolph's Bridge on the 10th and flying high over Hythe on the 18th) and one in November (at Botolph's Bridge on the 2nd).

Overall it was yet another good year with the total of up to 15 records comparing favourably to the mean for the previous ten years of 11.9.

Hen Harrier

Circus cyaneus

Rare migrant and winter visitor.

A male was seen along the Lower Wall Road on the evening of the 21st March (B. Findlay) and a 'ring-tail' flew over Abbotscliffe on the 16th October (M. Varley). These were only the 39th and 40th area records but the species has now been recorded in 12 of the last 14 years (with only 2008 and 2009 being blank).

Goshawk

Accipiter gentilis

Very rare vagrant.

A pair flew east over Saltwood on the 16th March (P. Howe). The tenth area record.

Breeding resident, winter visitor and passage migrant.

Ones and twos were seen at many sites throughout the year. There was little evidence of spring passage but in autumn a flock of five which flew south over Hythe seafront on the 19th September may have been migrants.

Formerly scarce, now an increasing breeding species, winter visitor and passage migrant.

There were widespread records throughout the year. The peak count from the early winter period was six flying east over Saltwood on the 18th February, whilst there were signs of spring passage during March, including one flying east at Seabrook on the 10th, two at Samphire Hoe on the 11th, three flying east over Cheriton on the 12th and another three seen high over there the next day. Later in the month another flew over Cheriton on the 30th, when six flew over Hythe.

Large numbers were noted in early April and no doubt included some migrants: at least 19 were seen across the area on the 5th (including three flying north over Hythe and nine over Botolph's Bridge), three flew over Abbotscliffe and four flew over Nickolls Quarry on the 6th and six were seen over Hythe Roughs on the 7th, whilst ones and twos were at various sites.

Autumn migrants included five flying east over Hythe on the 19th September, when singles were seen flying out to sea from Capel-le-Ferne and Samphire Hoe, a flock of five flying high to the east over Saltwood on the 9th October, and three over Hythe on the 20th October.



Buzzard at Creteway Down (Brian Harper)



Peregrine at Abbotscliffe (Ian Roberts)

Very rare vagrant.

One was seen flying over Sandling on the 24th October (B. Harper). This was just the 13th area record but the sixth to be recorded in the last five years.

Osprey

<i>Pandion haliaetus</i>

Scarce passage migrant.

One was seen circling over Beachborough Ponds on the afternoon of the 2nd April (B. Green), whilst one flew north over Folkestone on the 14th April (B. Harper) and one flew north over Lympne on the 28th April (P. Coleman). In May further singles were seen arriving in off the sea at Capel-le-Ferne on the 25th (I. A. Roberts), see photograph on page 17, and flying north over Folkestone on the 28th (B. Harper).

A total of 76 have been recorded in the area in the 26 years since 1990 (2.9 per year) so five constituted an above average showing.

Kestrel

<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>

Breeding resident and passage migrant.

Widespread in small numbers with a peak count of seven Samphire Hoe in October.

Merlin

<i>Falco columbarius</i>

Winter visitor and passage migrant.

Singles were noted flying north over South Road (Hythe) on the 24th January, arriving in off the sea at Samphire Hoe on the 1st May, chasing Sky Larks at Abbotscliffe on the 27th September and flying in off the sea at Abbotscliffe on the 12th October.

The previous decade saw a mean of 4.4 records per year so the total of four was pretty average.

Hobby

<i>Falco subbuteo</i>

A summer visitor with breeding suspected in many years but not proven until 2014.

The first, one at Lympne on the 23rd April, matched last year's arrival date and was followed by one flying east at Mill Point the next day. A pair were present at Lympne Park Wood by mid-May and again bred successfully here, with a fledged juvenile seen begging for food on the 30th August. Sightings from at Botolph's Bridge, Hythe Roughs and Nickolls Quarry during the summer presumably involved the same birds.

Elsewhere singles were seen at Abbotscliffe on the 13th, 17th May and 27th May, with one at Capel-le-Ferne Café on the latter date, and at Samphire Hoe on the 14th June and Capel-le-Ferne Café again on the 18th June.

In July there were sightings at Samphire Hoe on the 20th, Saltwood on the 29th and Samphire Hoe on the 29th to 30th, with further singles at the latter site on the 7th and the 9th August. Very few were noted in September but there were notably late records in October, with one seen flying out to sea at Abbotscliffe on the 16th October and one at Samphire Hoe on the 19th October. There have only ever been two later records.

Peregrine

<i>Falco peregrinus</i>

Resident breeder, winter visitor and passage migrant.

There were regular records from the cliffs between Folkestone and Dover throughout the year, with up to three pairs present. Elsewhere singles were noted between January and May, and August and December, at the Willop Basin, Donkey Street, Botolph's Bridge, Lympne, Hythe Roughs, Saltwood, Hythe, Cheriton and Folkestone.

Most of the hunting activity observed involved pigeons but on the 31st March one was seen to take a Green Woodpecker at Shorncliffe Cemetery.

Winter visitor and passage migrant.

In early winter period birds were present along the canal between Hythe and Seabrook (4), at Nickolls Quarry (at least 2) and along the canal near Hythe Roughs (1). The last record was from Nickolls Quarry on the 1st April.

An unusual record involved one found dead on the beach at Hythe on the 7th May. This is a particularly late date for a migrant as wintering birds have generally departed by mid-April (though there is a previous May record involving one at Nickolls Quarry on the 1st May 2006). It is unlikely to have been present on the beach long before its discovery and indeed had disappeared by the following day. It is possible that the corpse may have been dumped from a passing ship.

In the late winter period there were records from the 10th October, with at least three along the canal between Hythe and Seabrook, at least four at Nickolls Quarry and one at Samphire Hoe on the 28th December.



Water Rail at Princes Parade (Nigel Webster)



Coot at Princes Parade (Nigel Webster)

Breeding resident.

There were widespread records relating to small numbers with larger counts of 9 near Cinderella Farm (Palmarsh), 12 along the canal at Seabrook and 14 at West Hythe.

Breeding resident and winter visitor.

Another mild winter meant that numbers in the early part of the year were low, with peak counts of just 7 at Folkestone Racecourse (Westenhanger) on the 9th January and 15 at Nickolls Quarry on the 3rd February.

In April an adult with three young was seen at a nest near the Willop Sewage Works and an incubating adult was seen at the Willop Basin, whilst pairs were also present at Botolph's Bridge and Nickolls Quarry, where breeding may have also occurred. There were no counts of note in the late winter period when again the weather was very mild. One on the canal at Princes Parade from the 29th October until the end of the year was worthy of mention.

Breeding species, passage migrant and winter visitor.

In January and February up to two were seen on several dates at the Willop Outfall, Willop Basin, Nickolls Quarry and Hythe Ranges, with singles at Folkestone Harbour on the 8th February and flying east past Samphire Hoe on the 13th February.

In March a pair were seen displaying at Nickolls Quarry, with three present on the 30th March, and breeding probably took place on the island in the lake, with regular sightings here until late May. A pair were also present at the Willop Basin from early March to at least early June, and might have bred though again no evidence was noted. Four were also seen at Hythe Ranges on the 7th March, with three there on the 22nd March.

Spring passage was noted between late March and mid-May, with around 50 being logged, and peak counts of 13 east past Mill Point on the 7th April, 15 east past Hythe on the 23rd April and six east past Mill Point on the 14th May. In late May seven flew west past Mill Point on the 22nd and in June one flew west at Hythe on the 3rd.

In the latter half of the year there were 16 records of 25 birds, including six flying west past Samphire Hoe on the 4th August, two west past Hythe Ranges on the 18th October and two at Mill Point on the 31st October, 13th November and 22nd November.



Oystercatcher at Nickolls Quarry (Brian Harper)



Ringed Plover at Folkestone Harbour (Ian Roberts)

Rare migrant.

One was at the Willop Outfall on the 17th March (B. Harper, I. A. Roberts) and in May two flew east past Mill Point on the 14th (I. A. Roberts), with five flying east there the following day (B. Harper). Finally four flew east past Mill Point on the 9th September (B. Harper). The 60th to 63rd area records.

Occasional breeding species, also a winter visitor and passage migrant.

The regular winter roost at Folkestone Beach held a peak of 32 birds on the 5th February. Elsewhere one was seen at the Willop Outfall on the 11th January, with four in Folkestone Harbour on the 6th February.

In March two were seen at Hythe Ranges on several dates from the 14th, with three present there on the 2nd April but there were no further sightings and no evidence of breeding was noted. The only sign of spring passage was two flying east past Mill Point on the 14th May.

The only record from the latter half of the year concerned six in Folkestone Harbour on the 22nd November.

Golden Plover

<i>Pluvialis apricaria</i>

Winter visitor and passage migrant.

The only records from the first half of the year related to five at Botolph's Bridge on the 4th January and one flying east at Abbotscliffe on the 25th March.

In autumn singles were noted at Abbotscliffe on the 12th August, 2nd September, 6th September, 20th September and 26th November, and at Samphire Hoe on the 12th October.

Grey Plover

<i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>

Winter visitor and passage migrant.

One was at Hythe Ranges on the 21st March, with two at the Willop Outfall on the 23rd March and one flew east past Samphire Hoe on the 3rd April.

The latter part of the year produced just a single sighting – one at Willop Outfall on the 26th September.

Another poor year but at least it was an improvement on the total of two recorded in 2014.

Lapwing

<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>

Occasional breeding species (most recently in 2011), also a winter visitor and passage migrant.

Numbers at the Willop Basin increased steadily during the early part of January, reaching a peak of 1,000 on the 11th before decreasing again, and very few were present when the flood froze over towards the end of the month, when ten at Westenhanger on the 28th and 32 at Nickolls Quarry on the 29th were wanderers from there or further afield. At the Willop Basin counts remained low in February, with a peak of 126 on the 10th, whilst elsewhere there were 64 at Nickolls Quarry on the 27th, 50 at Hillhurst Farm, Westenhanger on the 9th and five were grounded in fog at Samphire Hoe on the 16th. The last two were noted at the Willop Basin on the 8th March.

Small numbers were noted at the Willop Basin from the 24th August, with peak counts of 16 there on the 24th September, 61 on the 29th October, 65 on the 7th November and 40 on the 15th November. Elsewhere there were singles at Abbotscliffe on the 20th and 27th September, with six there on the 12th October, and two flew west on the 13th November. Up to 35 were at Hillhurst Farm in early November, increasing to 60 on the 29th November. One flew west at sea past Mill Point on the 21st November and 43 flew west over Botolph's Bridge on the 13th December.

Knot

<i>Calidris canutus</i>

Passage migrant.

The only record related to one at the Hythe Redoubt from the 23rd to the 24th August (see photograph on page 20). Another poor year.

Sanderling

<i>Calidris alba</i>

Winter visitor and passage migrant.

Up to 16 Sanderling were seen on the shore between the Hythe Redoubt and Willop Outfall in January, including an Icelandic-ringed bird on the 9th (see page 101), increasing to 35 there on the 4th February and 55 on the 7th, whilst singles were at Folkestone Beach on the 5th February and Folkestone Harbour the following day. Numbers decreased thereafter, with relatively few were noted in March and there was a peak of just six at the Willop Outfall in April (on the 1st), with the last of the wintering birds noted on the 4th.

Later counts of 23 at the Willop Outfall on the 4th May and eight there on the 7th May presumably related to migrants. In autumn two flew east at Hythe on the 14th August and up to four were at the Willop Outfall in December.

Purple Sandpiper

<i>Calidris maritima</i>

Winter visitor and passage migrant.

A flock of up to five were wintering at Hythe, frequenting the rock groynes opposite at the end of Stade Street, Hythe and Twiss Road, Hythe and at Battery Point, Seabrook, (see photograph on page 9) with the last on the 10th May being the second latest ever departure date (the latest refers to five at Folkestone Warren on the 20th May 1987).

The first returning bird was seen at Hythe on the 23rd October and was joined by three more on the 16th November, before the flock increased to six from 11th December (see photograph on page 31).

Dunlin

<i>Calidris alpina</i>

Winter visitor and passage migrant.

The only records in January related to up to two at the Willop Basin between the 2nd and 4th and none were noted in February. In March two flew east past Samphire Hoe on the 11th, with three at the Willop Basin from the 12th to the 14th, nine there on the 18th and four on the 20th, with one on the beach at the Willop Outfall on the 1st April. One flew east at Mill Point on the 24th April, with eight flying over Nickolls Quarry on the 25th April and 37 flying east past Hythe the following day. In May nine were on the beach at the Willop Outfall on the 4th, with the last three there on the 6th.

One was heard calling over Hythe at night on the 17th July, four flew east there on the 24th August and five flew west at Mill Point on the 21st November.

Ruff

<i>Calidris pugnax</i>

Rare migrant and winter visitor.

Two males and a female were at the Willop Basin between the 8th and the 12th March (B. Harper, I. A. Roberts). The 31st area record, with five of the seven most recent records at this site.

Jack Snipe

<i>Lymnocyptes minimus</i>

Winter visitor and passage migrant.

There were very few sightings in the early winter period with just singles at Nickolls Quarry on the 29th January, the 21st February and the 5th April. None were noted in the late winter period.

Winter visitor and passage migrant.

Small numbers were regularly recorded from the Nickolls Quarry area between January and the 19th April, with a peak of ten there on the 7th February. There were less frequent records from Botolph's Bridge in the early winter period but numbers also peaked at ten there on the 7th February. Elsewhere there were up to nine in the Westenhanger area (six at Folkestone Racecourse and three at Fairmead Farm), and up to four in a stubble field opposite the Little Piece on Donkey Street.

In autumn migrants were noted at Abbotscliffe on the 21st and 23rd August, whilst the first returned to the Nickolls Quarry area on the 30th August. Further passage birds were logged at Abbotscliffe on the 6th September and 7th October, whilst wintering birds increased to a peak of 37 at Botolph's Bridge on the 3rd October (see photograph on page 28).

Winter visitor and passage migrant.

In January there were singles near the Hythe Redoubt and at Folks' Wood on the 3rd, in a stubble field opposite the Little Piece on Donkey Street on the 4th and at Paraker Wood on the 13th. Sightings of one at Nickolls Quarry on the 21st March and three at Folks' Wood on the 22nd March may have related to migrants.

None were noted on autumn passage or in the late winter period.

Rare passage migrant.

Three were flushed from the shore near the sailing club at Nickolls Quarry on the 9th April (I. A. Roberts). The 27th area record.

Passage migrant.

Spring passage involved a total of just 34 moving up-channel, with 25 past Samphire Hoe on the 3rd April, two past Princes Parade on the 2nd May and seven past Mill Point the following day. The worst showing since 2009 and well below the average for the previous ten years of just over 300.

Passage migrant.

Spring passage involved a total of about 116, mostly noted moving up-channel, between the 16th April and the 16th May, which was very similar to the 114 recorded last spring and the average for the last ten years of 122. Counts included six east past Copt Point on the 21st, six at both Copt Point and Samphire Hoe on the 22nd, eight east past Hythe on the 23rd, 24 east there on the 26th and seven east past Mill Point on the 2nd.

Autumn passage was typically light, with just three records – one flying west past Samphire Hoe on the 28th July, one flying west past Hythe on the 20th August and one at Samphire Hoe on the 5th September.

Winter visitor and passage migrant.

Few were noted in January, with a peak of just five at the Willop Basin on the 7th, but numbers increased there in February, when there were 12 on the 8th, increasing to 14 on the 15th. Up to 12 remained at the Willop Basin until mid-March before numbers began to dwindle slowly, with the last noted there the 8th April.

Elsewhere singles flew east past Samphire Hoe on the 13th February and the 13th March, and one flew east at Hythe on the 8th April.

Early returning migrants comprised three flying west at Samphire Hoe on the 22nd June and one flying west at Abbotscliffe on the 28th June, with a further single at the former site on the 26th July. In August five flew west at Hythe on the 20th and one was seen at Botolph's Bridge on the 29th, with another at Samphire Hoe on the 9th September. One flew west past Mill Point on the 21st November and up to 22 were at the Willop Basin in December.



Sanderling at the Willop Outfall (Brian Harper)



Curlew at the Willop Basin (Brian Harper)

Passage migrant.

The first, two at Princes Parade on the 25th April, were just a day earlier than the arrival date last year, and were quickly followed by one at Botolph's Bridge the following day, with another at Nickolls Quarry on the 30th April.

In May two were seen along the canal at Seabrook on the 3rd, with one at Nickolls Quarry (see photograph on page 16) and two along the canal at Hythe the next day, and one at Samphire Hoe on the 21st. The spring total of 10 was slightly below the average for the previous ten years of 12 bird/days.

The first returning birds were two at the Hythe Redoubt on the 11th July but there were no further sightings until the second half of August, when two were at Samphire Hoe on the 17th (with singles on two further dates), three were at Hythe on the 19th, one was at the Hythe Redoubt on the 23rd and two were at Nickolls Quarry on the 29th to the 30th. Two were seen again at the latter site on the 5th September with the last three at Samphire Hoe on the 9th September.

Green Sandpiper

<i>Tringa ochropus</i>

Winter visitor and passage migrant.

In the early winter period there were up to two seen frequently in the Botolph's Bridge/Nickolls Quarry area until mid-February, with at least one remaining until the 4th April. Subsequent sightings at Nickolls Quarry of one on the 19th April, two on the 20th April and four the following presumably related to spring passage migrants.

The first returning bird was seen at Botolph's Bridge on the 8th August, followed by one at Nickolls Quarry on the 13th August and an exceptional count of 13 at the latter site on the 23rd August. This flock quickly moved on however, and a further two were seen there on the 29th August, with three on the 30th. Up to two were noted intermittently in the Botolph's Bridge/Nickolls Quarry area from September (see photograph on page 22), increasing to three from the 19th December.

The August count exceeded the previous highest of nine at the same site on several dates in July/August 1999 and 2000.

Greenshank

<i>Tringa nebularia</i>

Passage migrant.

One which flew over Botolph's Bridge on the 16th August was the only record. A poor year.

Wood Sandpiper

<i>Tringa glareola</i>

Rare passage migrant.

Five were seen at Nickolls Quarry on the 30th August (B. Harper), see photograph on p.21. The 22nd area record but the first since 2008.

Redshank

<i>Tringa totanus</i>

Winter visitor and passage migrant.

Up to 16 were at the Willop Basin in January, decreasing to 13 in February, and six in March, with the last two there on the 1st April. Elsewhere up to four were seen in Folkestone Harbour in January and early February, with one there on the 7th March, and one was at Botolph's Bridge on the 7th February.

In the latter part of the year up to three were seen in Folkestone Harbour in November and December but there were no reports from the Botolph's Bridge/Willop Basin area.

Turnstone

<i>Arenaria interpres</i>

Winter visitor and passage migrant.

In the early winter period there were counts of up to 18 at the Willop Outfall, ten at Folkestone Harbour, eight at the Hythe Redoubt and eight at Hythe.

A count of 29 at the Willop Basin on the 1st April presumably included migrant birds and two flew east past Hythe on the 8th May.

In the latter part of the year counts included up to six in the Folkestone Harbour area, seven at Hythe Ranges/Hythe Redoubt and 12 at Hythe.

Passage migrant.

The first, which flew east past Mill Point on the 23rd April, was just one day later than the first sighting last year. This was followed in May by two flying east past Mill Point on the 2nd May, one on the sea off Hythe on the 3rd May, three flying east past Mill Point on the 6th May and three flying east past the latter site on the 14th May. The total of ten was somewhat lower than the annual mean for the previous ten years of around 17.

Autumn passage was also unremarkable, with two passing Hythe on the 25th August, two off Copt Point the next day, and a total of seven flying west past Hythe/Willop Outfall on the 24th September. The total of 11 was less than half of the annual mean for the previous ten years of 26.

Passage migrant.

In January one was lingering off Princes Parade, Seabrook from the 1st to the 3rd, with others (possibly the same bird) chasing gulls off Folkestone Harbour on the 5th and flying west past Mill Point on the 9th, with another flying west past Samphire Hoe on the 21st. There was a further winter sighting from Samphire Hoe on the 13th February, whilst in spring singles were seen flying east past Princes Parade on the 30th March, Samphire Hoe on the 17th April and Mill Point on the 5th May, with two flying east at the latter site on the 9th May.

There were few records from the latter part of the year, with two flying east at Hythe on the 25th August, one flying west at Mill Point on the 5th October and another flying west at Hythe on the 30th December. The total of 15 birds was a little below the average for the previous decade of 23.



Turnstone at Princes Parade (Nigel Webster)



Kittiwake at Folkestone Harbour (Ian Roberts)

Winter visitor and passage migrant.

Small numbers were noted in the early winter period with peak counts of 14 flying west past Mill Point on the 9th January and 17 flying east past Samphire Hoe on the 13th February.

A light spring passage was noted between the 11th March and the 14th May, with a total of 46 logged moving up-channel, including ten past Samphire Hoe on the 11th March, ten past Mill Point on the 23rd April, nine east past Samphire Hoe on the 1st May and nine east past Mill Point on the 14th May.

There were two notable records in summer – a first-year bird was found dead on the beach at the Willop Outfall on the 14th June whilst a juvenile seen alive at Seabrook on the 15th July had been ringed in Brittany just 12 days previously (more details on page 102). Summer records became infrequent when the colony at Langdon Cliffs (near Dover) underwent a massive decline during the first half of the last decade and the British breeding population as a whole has recently been ‘red-listed’ as a conservation concern (Eaton *et al*, 2015).

Numbers in the latter part of the year were also modest, with the only counts of note being six west past Mill Point on the 8th November and ten west past Hythe on the 30th December.

Black-headed Gull

<i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>

Winter visitor and passage migrant.

Large numbers were present in both the early and late winter periods but the highest counts received were of 100 at Samphire Hoe on the 16th February and 170 there on the 17th November. Spring passage was noted between mid-March and mid-May, including counts of 67 east past Mill Point on the 26th March, 17 east there on the 7th April and 24 east there on the 6th May.

Little Gull

<i>Hydrocoloeus minutus</i>

Winter visitor and passage migrant.

An adult which flew east past Mill Point on the 6th February was the only record. This was the poorest showing since 1996.

Mediterranean Gull

<i>Larus melanocephalus</i>

Winter visitor and passage migrant.

The only notable counts received for the early winter period were of 35 at Palmarsh on the 1st March and around 100 seen regularly at Church Road, Cheriton in January and February. There was some evidence of a small easterly passage in spring, between early March and mid-May, but only involving ones and twos. There are usually few records between mid-May and July, so a movement of 30 west past Mill Point on the 4th June was notable, and is the highest count ever to be recorded in that month. Numbers increased through July as they typically do, before a new record count of 920+ was made at Copt Point on the 11th August, eclipsing the previous record of 550 at Crete Road East in the previous September.

Further counts of 155 at Church Hougham on the 1st September, 300 at Capel-le-Ferne on the 10th September and 78 on the Hythe Imperial golf course on the 8th October were also worthy of note. In the latter winter period 180 were counted at Hillhurst Farm (Westenhanger) on the 8th November and good numbers were present in December, including 95 at Nickolls Quarry, 121 at Hillhurst Farm and 220 at Hythe.

Colour-ringed birds from France, Belgium, Germany and Hungary were noted – see page 102 for further information.

Common Gull

<i>Larus canus</i>

Winter visitor and passage migrant.

Large numbers were seen in both the early and late winter periods with the highest counts received relating to 145 at Church Hougham on the 15th January and 125 at Hillhurst Farm (Westenhanger) on the 8th November.

There was a small easterly passage from February to May, including counts of 27 east past Mill Point on the 6th February, 18 east past Samphire Hoe on the 11th March, 25 east past Hythe on the 5th April and 15 east past Mill Point on the 23rd April. A count of 36 first-summer birds on the sea off Mill Point on the 3rd May presumably also related to migrants.

Breeding species, winter visitor and passage migrant.

Only small numbers were noted in January and February apart from a count of 16 at the Hythe Imperial golf course on the 3rd January. An increase was seen during in March, including 11 at Palmarsh on the 1st and 18 at the Willop Basin on the 29th, but there were few other signs of spring passage.

Birds were again present on roof-tops in Folkestone, Cheriton and Hythe during the summer, but no evidence of breeding success was noted. Autumn counts were unremarkable.



Mediterranean Gull at Princes Parade (Nigel Webster)



LBB Gull at Princes Parade (Nigel Webster)

Breeding resident, winter visitor and passage migrant.

Large numbers were present across the area throughout the year, but the only three-figure count received was of 120 at Cheriton on the 7th February.

The partially leucistic individual remained in the Folkestone Harbour area from 2014, being last seen on the 22nd May.

A couple colour-ringed birds were noted – see page 103 for further information.

Rare migrant.

One seen at Saltwood on the 23rd November (G. Cooke) was the 20th area record.

Very rare vagrant.

A sub-adult was roosting on the golf course at Princes Parade on the 30th November (I. A. Roberts). This was the seventh area record and the fourth to be identified in the last five years.

Great Black-backed Gull

<i>Larus marinus</i>

Winter visitor and passage migrant, small numbers over-summer.

The only counts of note received were of 45 in Folkestone Harbour on the 14th November, 38 at Princes Parade on the 20th November and 54 at Samphire Hoe on the 20th December.

A colour-ringed individual from Normandy (France) was noted – see page 103 for further information.

Little Tern

<i>Sternula albifrons</i>

Passage migrant, formerly bred.

Only recorded on a single date, when 42 flew east past Hythe on the 8th May, but this total represented a significant improvement on the annual mean for the previous ten years of 20.

Black Tern

<i>Chlidonias niger</i>

Scarce migrant.

One was feeding offshore of Mill Point with about 10 Common Terns for around 30 minutes on the morning of the 3rd May before it headed off east. A welcome return following two blank years.

Sandwich Tern

<i>Sterna sandvicensis</i>

Non-breeding summer visitor and passage migrant, rare in winter.

The first, six seen off Princes Parade on the 29th March, were four days later than the arrival date last year and seven days later than the average over the last decade. Following the next four which flew east past Folkestone/Seabrook on the 4th April, numbers quickly increased, with 11 east at Hythe on the 5th April, 25 east at Mill Point on the 7th April and 51 east past Folkestone/Hythe on the 8th April. There were regular records thereafter of birds feeding offshore or moving east, including counts of 25 off Hythe on the 10th April, a very good total of 285 flying east Mill Point on the 24th April (there have been only 11 larger spring counts), 53 east there on the 2nd May, 33 east there the following day, 45 east past Hythe on the 8th May, 35 east there on the 13th May and 71 east past Mill Point on the 14th May.

Small numbers continued to be noted offshore throughout the summer, with larger counts in August of 40 off Hythe Redoubt on the 6th, 20 there on the 24th and 20 off Hythe the following day. In September 30 were seen off Hythe Redoubt on the 18th, up to 31 were noted offshore between Abbotscliffe and Hythe on the 20th and 18 were seen off Hythe on the 24th. The last three were noted off Hythe on the 11th October.

Common Tern

<i>Sterna hirundo</i>

Passage migrant.

The first which flew east past Hythe on the 8th April was four days later than the arrival date last year, though still six days earlier than the mean arrival over the last decade. A further ten flew east past Hythe on the 10th April but spring passage was very poor, with peak counts of just 25 east past Mill Point on the 3rd May, 32 east past Hythe on the 8th May and 45 east past Seabrook on the 9th May. Some of these could only be identified as Common/Arctic Terns but both species were definitely involved in the movement on 9th May.

Autumn passage was light with 14 off Hythe on the 24th September and 18 flying east past Princes Parade on the 28th September being the only double-figure counts

Passage migrant.

As stated above the movement past Seabrook on the 9th May involved both Common and Arctic Terns, with at least one of the latter being identified.

In autumn two first-winter birds were seen flying west past Hythe on the 24th September.

Winter visitor and passage migrant.

Very few were recorded in the first half of the year with a peak of just 13 flying east past Samphire Hoe on the 13th February and spring passage was virtually non-existent.

Numbers in the latter half of the year were little better, with peak counts of 17 (Guillemot/Razorbill) past Mill Point on the 8th November and 47 (9 Guillemot and 38 Guillemot/Razorbill) past Samphire Hoe on the 20th December.

Winter visitor and passage migrant.

The only records from the first half of the year involved singles seen off Seabrook on the 15th March and Samphire Hoe on the 11th April and the 10th May, whilst in the latter half of the year one was noted off Samphire Hoe on the 20th December.

Breeding resident.

A common and widespread species but the only counts received were of around 200 being chased by a pair of Peregrines in the Hougham Valley on the 9th November and 27 at Samphire Hoe on the 27th December.

Breeding resident and passage migrant.

A flock of 35 were frequenting a stubble field opposite the Little Piece on Donkey Street in January. The only suggestions of spring passage were seven flying west at Abbotscliffe on the 4th March and two flying east there on the 18th March. A notable summer count involved 27 at Nickolls Quarry on the 6th May.

Autumn passage was noted in October and November but was light, with the only notable movement being six flying west at Abbotscliffe and 23 flying west at Princes Parade on the 13th November.

At least 20 wintering in the Botolph's Bridge area at the end of the year again included a melanistic individual.



Stock Doves at Botolph's Bridge (Ian Roberts)

Breeding resident and passage migrant.

The large roost at West Hythe remained in use in the early part of the year, with an estimated 2,500 seen heading west across the marsh on the 16th January. There was little discernible spring passage but in autumn 300 flew west at Hythe and 390 flew west at Abbotscliffe on the 13th November, 450 flew in off the sea at Hythe the next day and 235 flew west at Creteway Down on the 18th November.

Exceptional numbers were using the West Hythe roost and feeding in the Botolph's Bridge area from the second half of November into December, with estimates of at least 3,000 on the 19th and 23rd November, followed by a total of approximately 10,000 there in the early morning of 28th November, and at least 7,000 remained by the 11th December, with 5,000 still present on the 26th December. These are the largest counts ever recorded locally, with the previous highest being 3,000 at Abbotscliffe on the 1st February 1997.



Wood Pigeons (with some Stock Doves and Feral Pigeons) at Botolph's Bridge (Brian Harper)

Breeding resident and passage migrant.

The only notable count of resident birds received involved up to 50 at Grange Farm (Saltwood) on the 29th December. Possible migrants involved one flying east at Abbotscliffe on the 18th March, one there on the 15th May and two flying east there on the 18th October.

Declining breeding summer visitor and passage migrant, very rare in winter.

Once again there was just a single record this year, which related to two seen on the seawall at the eastern end of Hythe Ranges on the 4th July (S. P. Clancy). The local and national decline was described in the report for 2013 and the Turtle Dove is now considered to be globally threatened, being listed as 'vulnerable' by the IUCN (Eaton *et al*, 2015).

Very rare vagrant.

One was seen flying east at Samphire Hoe on the 25th November (per D. E. Smith). The 20th area record.

Declining breeding summer visitor and passage migrant.

The first, one at Nickolls Quarry on the 16th April, was one day earlier than the arrival date last year and almost a week earlier than the mean over the last decade. One was seen regularly there until the 22nd April but there were no further records until one was at Hythe Roughs on the 1st May. On the 4th May singles were seen at Hythe Roughs and the Willop Basin, whilst two were at Nickolls Quarry, where they remained throughout the month, with three present there on the 25th, on which date one, presumably a late migrant, was noted at Ladies' Walk (Hythe). At least one remained at Nickolls Quarry until at least late June but there were no further sightings.



Collared Dove at Hythe Redoubt (Brian Harper)



Cuckoo at Nickolls Quarry (Brian Harper)

Rare breeding resident, passage migrant and winter visitor.

One was seen in the Botolph's Bridge area on the 3rd and 21st February, before being recorded regularly in March, with sightings there on at least 12 dates (see photograph on page 11). Two were seen at Botolph's Bridge area on the 6th April and at least one was noted there on several dates to at least the 12th June, and was seen visiting a probable nest site.

In December singles were seen at Beachborough Ponds on the 9th and by the entrance to the Samphire Hoe tunnel (Round Down) on the 24th.

Little Owl	<i>Athene noctua</i>
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Introduced resident breeding species.

There were records from Donkey Street, West Hythe (Stutfall Castle), Botolph's Bridge, Nickolls Quarry and Church Hougham.

Tawny Owl	<i>Strix aluco</i>
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Breeding resident.

There were records from Lympe Park Wood, Folks' Wood, Brockhill Country Park, Saltwood Castle, Sandgate and Folkestone. This species is known to be more widely-distributed and tends to be under-recorded.

Short-eared Owl	<i>Asio flammeus</i>
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Passage migrant.

There was a record influx from mid-October with one seen flying in off the sea at Creteway Down and two at Abbotscliffe on the 16th, two (including one new arrival) at Abbotscliffe on the 17th, and a total of five across the area on the 18th – singles at Abbotscliffe (see photographs on page 26 and front cover), Capel-le-Ferne Gun Site and Samphire Hoe, and two at Creteway Down. One was again at Creteway Down on the 19th and two were at Samphire Hoe from the 20th to the 21st October. One was seen on the golf course at the Hythe Imperial on the 30th October, before off flying west over Hythe.

In November singles were seen at Samphire Hoe on the 2nd, 9th, 16th and 17th, and one was at Hythe Roughs on the 15th. The total of 21 bird/days was the best showing to date, bettering the nine recorded in 2012, and well in excess of the mean for the previous decade of 4.1.

Common Swift	<i>Apus apus</i>
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Breeding summer visitor and passage migrant.

The first, one at Nickolls Quarry on the 18th April, was the earliest ever record (preceding one at Copt Point on the 20th April 1985), with presumably the same bird present again on the 20th April. Otherwise though arrival was rather late, with the next not being seen until the 4th May when one was at Folkestone and eight were at Nickolls Quarry, however there were daily sightings thereafter. Counts included 20 at Nickolls Quarry on the 6th May and at Hythe on the 8th May but otherwise numbers were low in May until 14 were seen at Nickolls Quarry and 55 flew in off the sea at Abbotscliffe on the 20th and 44 were at Botolph's Bridge on the 30th.

Counts in June included 40 flying west at Botolph's Bridge on the 1st, 30 flying west at Abbotscliffe on the 6th, 40 at Samphire Hoe on the 22nd and 200 flying south over Saltwood the following day, whilst in July 75 flew west at Hythe on the 8th and about 1,000 headed south-west over Hythe/Saltwood on the 14th, when 115 flew west at Samphire Hoe. Numbers then rapidly diminished and the last double-figure count was 20 at Samphire Hoe on the 3rd August.

In contrast to last year when none were recorded in September, this year saw the most sightings in this month since 1998. Extraordinarily one was still feeding chicks at a nest in Joyes Road (Folkestone) in early September, whilst singles were seen at Samphire Hoe, Church Hougham and Princes Parade on the 1st, with eight at Hythe on the 5th, two flying west at Abbotscliffe on the 19th, one west there the next day and at least two feeding with hirundines between Capel-le-Ferne Café and Folkestone Downs on the 25th. This was the latest record since 2010 but there have been 16 later sightings, including six in October and three in November.

Breeding resident, with dispersal to coasts and non-breeding areas in autumn and winter.

Good numbers were present in January and February, with perhaps as many as seven sighted along the canal between Seabrook and Stutfall Castle, and three pairs were noted from March (at Botolph's Bridge, West Hythe and along the canal between Hythe and Seabrook), with an additional pair at Brockhill Country Park in April.

There was an unusual occurrence in June when one flew into a window at East Cliff Gardens (Folkestone), quite some distance from the nearest breeding site, on the 27th and was picked up alive and taken to a local vet, whilst one at the west beach at Samphire Hoe on the 2nd September was a good record for the site.

Up to three were noted at Princes Parade in August, with two remaining until the end of the year, and at least one was at Botolph's Bridge in November/December. Elsewhere one was seen on the Pent Stream at Folkestone Sports Centre on the 17th October and one was frequenting Folkestone Harbour from the 9th November.



Swift at Nickolls Quarry (Brian Harper)



Kingfisher at Princes Parade (Nigel Webster)

Very rare vagrant.

One was seen on wires at Newingreen, near the turning to Westenhanger, on the afternoon of the 26th June (P. Coleman). The tenth area record, all of which have occurred since 1999.

Formerly regular, bred on one occasion. Now a very rare vagrant.

One which spent the day on a patch of rough ground off Range Road (near Hythe Ranges) on the 18th April (see photograph on page 15) was enjoyed by many observers (I. A. Roberts, J. Tomsett, B. Harper, S. McMinn *et al*). Another was reported on grass at Ferguson Close, Hythe on the 16th May, with it or another video-recorded near Twiss Avenue (Hythe) at around the same time (per J. Tomsett). The 9th and 10th recent records.

Formerly bred, now a rare passage migrant.

One was seen at Abbotscliffe on the 27th to 28th September (M. D. Kennett, I. A. Roberts). The 21st area record since 1980. See photograph on page 24.

Breeding resident.

Widely recorded but there were no notable counts received. An instance of one being taken by a Peregrine at Shorncliffe Cemetery on the 31st March was worthy of note.

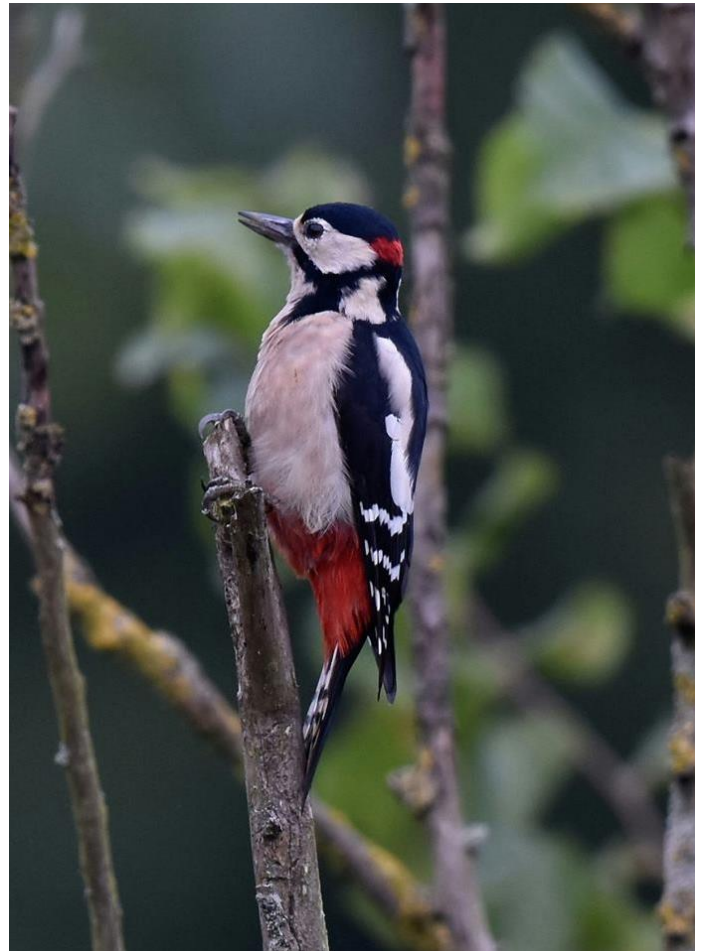
Breeding resident and passage migrant.

Widely recorded but there were no notable counts received of resident birds. One seen flying flew north-east at Abbotscliffe on the 25th June was a particularly early migrant and singles at Samphire Hoe on the 22nd August and Princes Parade on the 29th August were further examples of post-breeding dispersal. In September about eight migrants were noted from the 17th, including a total of four flying west at Abbotscliffe on the 18th, whilst at least 11 were logged in October, all singles except for two at Nickolls Quarry on the 22nd. The total of 22 migrants represented an increase on the 13 recorded last year.

A single at Samphire Hoe on the 28th December was an unusual record.



Green Woodpecker at Abbotscliffe (Phil Smith)



GS Woodpecker at Princes Parade (Nigel Webster)

Golden Oriole

<i>Oriolus oriolus</i>

Very rare vagrant, but possibly bred in the 1950s.

An immature male was singing from a birch tree in a garden by Leaside Cottages, off Bartholomew Lane in Saltwood on the early morning of 17th May before it flew off to the north (P. Howe). The 14th area record but the first since 2000.

In the mid-1950s the species was seen or heard in the breeding season in the Sandling Park area for four successive years and may have bred locally. Refer to the species account on the website for further information.

Red-backed Shrike

<i>Lanius collurio</i>

Formerly bred (until the 1950s), now a very rare vagrant.

One was reported at Samphire Hoe on the 14th June (per Rare Bird Alert). The ninth recent record and the first since 2011.

Great Grey Shrike

<i>Lanius excubitor</i>

Very rare vagrant.

Singles seen at Abbotscliffe on the 15th October (M. D. Kennett) and Hythe Ranges on the 18th October (B. Findlay) were the 12th and 13th area records and part of a significant arrival into the country at this time. This was the first year since 1975 to have produced more than a single sighting and there have now been six records in the last 11 years.

Magpie

<i>Pica pica</i>

Breeding resident.

The largest counts received were 21 at Hythe Roughs on the 11th January, 21 at Nickolls Quarry on the 16th January, 12 at the Willop Basin on the 7th February, 15 at Samphire Hoe on the 31st August and 20 at Botolph's Bridge on the 12th November.

Jay

<i>Garrulus glandarius</i>

Breeding resident and passage migrant.

Resident birds were widely recorded. The only sign of spring migration was a flock of eight which flew in/west at Abbotscliffe on the 11th May. In autumn one was at Samphire Hoe on the 6th September (the only record at the site in 2015), whilst four at Princes Parade the following day may also have been passage birds and later in the month one was at Capel-le-Ferne Gun Site on the 20th and two flew in/east at Abbotscliffe on the 25th. There was little evidence of passage in October though several records from Princes Parade, including a peak of six on the 17th, and two at Creteway Down the next day may have been migrants.

Jackdaw

<i>Corvus monedula</i>

Breeding resident and passage migrant.

The large roost remained in the Saltwood area but were no counts of note.

Breeding resident and passage migrant.

The large roost remained in the Saltwood area but were no counts of note.

There was some evidence of passage, with three flying east at Abbotscliffe on the 6th April, nine there on the 11th September, one flying east there on the 2nd October, four at Samphire Hoe on the 6th October, five flying north at Abbotscliffe on the 12th October, 8 flying west at Abbotscliffe on the 18th October, four flying east at Princes Parade on the 22nd October and five at Samphire Hoe on the 26th October.

Breeding resident and passage migrant.

The largest counts received were again at Samphire Hoe, where there were 100 on the 27th October and 50 flew west on the 5th September. Elsewhere there were 30 at Abbotscliffe on the 8th October.

The only signs of passage were a single seen flying in off the sea at Mill Point on the 16th April and three flying in off the sea at Samphire Hoe on the 1st May.

Formerly a vagrant, now a regular non-breeding visitor at any time of year, possibly bred for the first time in 2015.

Up to two were seen regularly along the downs and cliffs between Crete Road West and Samphire Hoe throughout the year and a pair appeared to be nesting on the cliffs at Capel-le-Ferne. Larger counts included six at Samphire Hoe on the 30th January, four at Folkestone Downs on the 10th July, six at Samphire Hoe on the 7th August, four there on the 2nd and 5th September, six at Capel-le-Ferne Gun Site on the 12th September, six at Samphire Hoe on the 18th September and four at Abbotscliffe on the 14th October.

Elsewhere one flew over Lympe on three dates in March, one was seen at Hythe Roughs on single dates in March, April and May, one flew over Saltwood on the 19th April, one was seen at Botolph's Bridge on the 30th August, three flew over Lympe on the 10th December and one was seen near Saltwood Castle on the 29th December.



Jackdaw at Hythe Redoubt (Brian Harper)



Raven at Botolph's Bridge (Brian Harper)

Breeding resident and passage migrant.

Resident birds were widely recorded throughout the year. There was an unusual winter record at Samphire Hoe where one was present on the 17th February. A light spring passage was noted between the 12th March and the 8th April, with a total of around ten migrants noted, mostly singles but with two at Samphire Hoe on the 25th March and Abbotscliffe on the 6th April.

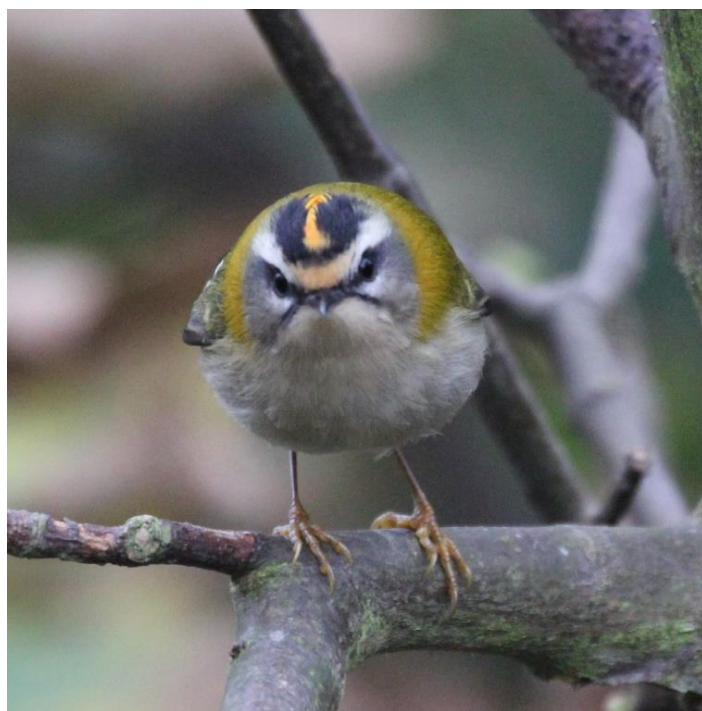
Autumn passage was the best ever, with 812 bird/days exceeding the previous highest of 648 in 1999. Small numbers were noted in September from the 1st, with larger counts of five at Abbotscliffe on the 20th, five at Princes Parade on the 24th, seven at Mill Point on the 26th, five at Princes Parade on the 28th and seven at the latter site on the 30th. Numbers increased in October, with five at Samphire Hoe on the 1st, eight at Abbotscliffe and 11 at Princes Parade on the 2nd, a total of at least 60 across the area on the 3rd (including 12 at Mill Point, 18 at Samphire Hoe and 20 at Capel-le-Ferne Gun Site), at least ten in Folkestone Warren on the 4th and ten at Mill Point on the 5th.

After a slight lull there was a further arrival of at least 52 across the area on the 12th October (with 8 at Nickolls Quarry, 11 at Abbotscliffe, 13 at Samphire Hoe and 20 at Creteway Down), with ten at Samphire Hoe and 25 at Abbotscliffe on the 15th and a record fall on the 18th October when at least 180 were logged across the area, including an exceptional 130 at Creteway Down. Later counts included 20 at Mill Point on the 29th October and 35 there the next day. Smaller numbers were noted into November and December, with peaks of nine at Cheriton Road Cemetery on the 10th November and at Princes Parade on the 9th December.

The previous highest count was 121 in Folkestone Warren on the 19th October 1999.



Goldcrest at Hythe (Brian Harper)



Firecrest at Mill Point (Ian Roberts)

Recently confirmed as a breeding species. Also a passage migrant and winter visitor.

In the early part of the year up to two were wintering at Brockhill Country Park, Mill Point and along the canal between Hythe and Seabrook, with singles at West Hythe, Lympne, Saltwood, Sandgate and Samphire Hoe.

Spring migrants involved a singing male at Abbotscliffe on the 18th-19th March, another there and two at Mill Point on the 27th March, and up to eight in early April, including two at Nickolls Quarry on the 4th.

Sandling Park (site of the first breeding record in 2012) was visited on the open day in May but again none were recorded, nor were there any sightings from other potential breeding sites.

Autumn produced a good total of 57 bird/days, the fifth highest tally and the best since 2009. After the first, at Abbotscliffe on the 11th September, a further seven singles were recorded at the cliffs in that month. In October a further 13 singles were noted, with multiple sightings of two at Enbrook Park (Sandgate) on the 4th, two at Creteway Down on the 15th, two at Mill Point on the 23rd, up to five at Mill Point between the 27th and 31st, and two at Saltwood on the 31st. In November there was one at Princes Parade on the 1st, singles at Hythe and Seabrook on the 3rd, three at Mill Point on the 9th, two at Cheriton Road Cemetery on the 10th, two at Enbrook Park (Sandgate) on the 15th, one at Folkestone on the 17th, one at Mill Point on the 21st and one at Princes Parade on the 22nd.

Two (a ringed bird and an un-ringed one) were wintering at Princes Parade in December and another was seen at West Hythe on the 30th.

Blue Tit

<i>Cyanistes caeruleus</i>

Breeding resident and passage migrant.

Few counts were received with a peak of eight at Samphire Hoe on the 4th and 9th October. There was no evidence of migration.

Great Tit

<i>Parus major</i>

Breeding resident and passage migrant.

There were no notable counts of resident birds and the only suggestions of any passage related to four at Samphire Hoe on the 6th October and five at Abbotscliffe on the 9th October.

Coal Tit

<i>Periparus ater</i>

Breeding resident and passage migrant.

There was some evidence of passage in autumn, including one at Hythe seafront on the 23rd September, four at Princes Parade on the 26th September, one at Abbotscliffe on the 27th September, one at Creteway Down on the 12th October, an individual of the nominate continental form at Capel-le-Ferne on the 14th October and three at Princes Parade on the 27th October (with two remaining into November).

Marsh Tit

<i>Poecile palustris</i>

Breeding resident.

There were records from Folks' Wood (Pedlinge), Kiln Wood (Pedlinge), Brockhill Country Park, Oak Banks (Saltwood) and Folkestone Downs during the year.

Bearded Tit

<i>Panurus biarmicus</i>

Rare migrant and winter visitor.

Four, including an adult male, remained at Nickolls Quarry from last year until 5th April raising hopes that they might stay to breed but unfortunately they departed (B. Harper, I. A. Roberts, R. K. Norman). This was only the 14th area record but it has now occurred in six of the last seven years.

Rare passage migrant.

Two were seen near Fisherman's Beach on the 31st October (S. McMinn). The 28th area record.

Breeding resident, winter visitor and passage migrant.

Counts in the early winter period included 18 opposite the Little Piece on Donkey Street in January, 23 near the Willop Sewage Works in February and 30+ at Abbotscliffe on the 23rd March, whilst one was seen flying in off the sea at Samphire Hoe on the 7th February. There was no evidence of spring passage.

Autumn passage was noted from early October to early November, with counts including 35 at Abbotscliffe on the 4th October, 20 flying south-west over Saltwood on the 8th October, 35 at Botolph's Bridge the next day, 55 at Abbotscliffe on the 12th October, 9 in off the sea at Abbotscliffe on the 15th October, 12 in off the sea at Creteway Down on the 18th October, 24 in off the sea at Abbotscliffe on the 20th October and 14 east over Saltwood on the 1st November.

In the latter part of the year at least 50 were wintering in stubble fields near Botolph's Bridge and 32 were counted at Abbotscliffe on the 28th December.

Rare passage migrant.

One was seen on the seawall just west of the Hythe Redoubt on a single date in the first week of November (A. J. South). The 22nd area record and the first since 2010.



Shore Lark near Hythe Redoubt (Andrew South)



Sand Martin at Nickolls Quarry (Brian Harper)

Passage migrant, has bred but not since 2003.

The first, one at Nickolls Quarry on the 30th March, was seven days earlier than the arrival date last year, and the earliest since 2005. March records were relatively regular in the 1990s but there has been only one since 2001 – at Capel-le-Ferne on the 26th March 2005. As last year's report highlighted, the recent later arrival dates appear to correlate with the decline in breeding status locally.

Spring passage overall saw a significant improvement on the previous two years, with a total of 40 bird/days as follows: four at Nickoll's Quarry on the 4th April, six there on the 17th April, four there and one at Donkey Street on the 18th April, four at Nickoll's Quarry on the 25th April, ten there on the 27th April, then ones and twos there until the 6th May, followed by four on the 9th May and a relatively late bird on the 20th May.

The first returning migrants involved a small party of birds which were seen flying out to sea at Hythe on the 15th July, with seven seen flying west there on the 17th July. Small numbers were noted through to mid-September, with peak counts of 15 at Hythe on the 28th August and the 1st September, and larger movements occurred in the latter half of September, including 25 flying west at the Willop Basin on the 18th, 100 flying west at Abbotscliffe on the 20th, 20 at the Willop Basin on the 24th and 27 flying west at Abbotscliffe on the 25th. Very few were noted into October with the last records involving two flying east at Hythe on the 15th and one flying east at Ingles Manor (Folkestone) on the 18th.

Swallow

Hirundo rustica

Breeding summer visitor and passage migrant.

The first, two at Folkestone on the 12th March, constituted the second earliest ever record, with the only earlier occurrence relating to one seen at Hythe on the 10th March 1952. The next, one which lingered along the canal at Seabrook from the 20th to the 23rd March, was still some eight days earlier than the first arrival last year. The final record in March was of one at Cheriton on the 31st.

There were almost daily sightings from the 3rd April, including counts of nine at Nickolls Quarry on the 4th, five there the next day, five at Botolph's Bridge on the 11th, four at Samphire Hoe on the 14th and four at Abbotscliffe on the 15th. There was a significant arrival on the 17th April when 75 were counted at Nickolls Quarry and up to 45 were noted there on several dates thereafter, whilst elsewhere arrivals included 15 at the Willop Basin on the 19th April, 6 at Abbotscliffe and 11 at Princes Parade on the 26th April, and 23 flying in off the sea at Capel-le-Ferne on the 27th April.

In May 20 were at Nickolls Quarry on the 1st, whilst 21 flew west at Hythe on the 4th, 14 arrived in off the sea at Mill Point on the 5th, 24 arrived in off there the next day and 45 flew in off the sea at the cliffs on the 8th. On the 9th a total of 76 were seen arriving at Hythe, whilst 15 were at Nickolls Quarry and about 100 were noted coasting west at Folkestone/Hythe on the 16th. The following day saw 30 flying in off the sea at Capel-le-Ferne and 45 flying west at Princes Parade, whilst the last significant movement of the spring involved 27 arriving in off the sea at the former site on the 25th May, though small numbers continued to arrive into early June.

An increase in autumn was noted from late August when 42 flew east at Princes Parade on the 24th, 50 flew west at Hythe Redoubt on the 30th and 70 flew east at Samphire Hoe on the 31st. On the 1st September 200 flew west at Princes Parade and 110 flew east in 30 minutes at Folkestone Downs the next day, whilst 320 flew west at Nickolls Quarry on the 12th September, a large movement was noted at Hythe on the 13th, when hundreds were at Samphire Hoe, and a steady westward passage was observed at Princes Parade on the 14th September.

Passage peaked in the second half of September, with estimates of 2,500 flying west at the Willop Outfall on the 18th, 4,000 at Abbotscliffe the next day and a record count of around 10,000 coasting west along the coast on the 20th (the previous highest count involved 8,200 flying east at Abbotscliffe twenty years previously on the 20th September 1995).

Smaller numbers were noted into October, with counts of 560 (260 east at the cliffs and 300 feeding at Hythe) on the 12th, 430 east at Abbotscliffe on the 13th, c.500 across the area on the 15th, 700 east at the cliffs on the 16th, 500 at Hythe and c.200 moving east on the 17th, and at least 300 coasting east on the 18th. The last three-figure count was of at least 110 over Hythe on the 23rd and numbers dwindled quickly thereafter. Although there was only one record in November – a single flying west at Hythe on the 9th – this was followed by an exceptionally late bird flying west at Princes Parade on the 8th December. This equals the latest ever record of one at Hythe on the 8th December 1955.



Swallow at Creteway Down (Brian Harper)



House Martin at Samphire Hoe (Phil Smith)



Swallow at Nickolls Quarry (Brian Harper)



House Martin at Creteway Down (Brian Harper)

House Martin

Delichon urbicum

Breeding summer visitor and passage migrant.

The first, at Nickolls Quarry on the 4th April, was two days earlier than last year and the earliest since one at Capel-le-Ferne on the 2nd April 2006. This was followed by one flying north over Crete Road East on the 6th April before ten were seen at Nickolls Quarry on the 10th and 17th April, with three at Samphire Hoe on the latter date.

Numbers increased to 20 at Nickolls Quarry from the 18th to 20th April, with smaller counts there until the end of month, whilst elsewhere there were two at Capel-le-Ferne Gun Site and Samphire Hoe on the 21st, four at Abbotscliffe on the 23rd and five at Samphire Hoe on the 27th.

In May 40 were seen at Nickolls Quarry on the 1st, whilst arrivals continued on the coast including four in off the sea at Mill Point on the 6th, 11 in off the sea at the cliffs on the 8th, 11 flying west along Princes Parade on the 9th, ten at Samphire Hoe on the 13th and 20 at Abbotscliffe on the 15th. On the 17th 11 flew in off the sea at Capel-le-Ferne Café and 30 were at Samphire Hoe, whilst 20 flew in off at the former site on the 25th May. Up to 50 were present at Samphire Hoe during the summer with a number of pairs nesting as usual at ancestral haunts along the cliffs.

An increase in autumn was noted from mid-August, when there were 60 at Hythe and 100 at Samphire Hoe on the 17th, with 100 at Samphire Hoe and 200 flying west at Hythe on the 1st September, hundreds moving west at Capel-le-Ferne Gun Site on the 3rd September, 600 feeding along the cliff top at Samphire Hoe on the 5th September and hundreds at Samphire Hoe on the 13th, when a large movement was noted at Hythe. Passage peaked in the second half of September, with estimates of 8,000 at Abbotscliffe on the 19th and 8,000 coasting west along the coast on the 20th. There have only been three higher counts.

Smaller numbers were noted into October, with a peak count of 290 east at Abbotscliffe on the 19th, and relatively few were noted in the latter part of the month, however there were three late sightings in November: two flying west at Mill Point on the 21st, one east at Princes Parade the following day and two flying west at the latter site on 28th November. There have only been three later sightings, with latest ever being one at Lympe on 2nd December 1974.

Cetti's Warbler

<i>Cettia cetti</i>

Breeding resident.

At least four were wintering at Nickolls Quarry in January and February, with others at West Hythe and Princes Parade. In March and April at least five were holding territories at Nickolls Quarry, with others singing at Botolph's Bridge and Princes Parade.

At least three were still at Nickolls Quarry during the autumn and late winter period, and one was noted at Princes Parade from September, increasing to two there from October until the end of the year.



Blackcap at Princes Parade (Nigel Webster)



Cetti's Warbler at Princes Parade (Nigel Webster)

Breeding resident and passage migrant.

The largest counts of resident birds received related to 11 at West Hythe on the 21st January, 16 at Nickolls Quarry on the 2nd August and 13 at Mill Point on the 23rd October.

One at Samphire Hoe on the 9th to the 11th February was an unusual record at this site, whilst 15 at Abbotscliffe on the 15th October and seven there on the 22nd October may have been local migrants.

Formerly regular, probably bred. Now a rare passage migrant.

One reported at Samphire Hoe on the 7th September (per D. E. Smith) was the second latest ever record, and only the 20th to be seen since 1990.

The latest ever record was one at Hythe on the 27th September 1965, which was the latest to be recorded in the county during the *Birds of Kent* review period of 1952-76 (Taylor et al, 1981).

Breeding summer visitor and passage migrant, with small numbers wintering.

In contrast to last winter, record numbers were present in January with at least 17 logged: at least eight were along the canal (at least four between Hythe and Seabrook, at least two between Hythe and West Hythe, and at least two between West Hythe and the dam), with two opposite the Little Piece on Donkey Street, and singles at Botolph's Bridge, Brockhill Country Park, Copt Point, Folkestone Racecourse (Westenhanger), Mill Point, Nickolls Quarry and Paraker Wood. However just three were noted in February – singles at Mill Point on the 11th, in a garden at Browning Place (Folkestone) on the 13th and (perhaps an early migrant) at Seabrook on the 25th.

One at Samphire Hoe on the 8th March was certainly a migrant with another at Seabrook on the 10th March, and the first arrivals at Botolph's Bridge on the 14th, Lympne and West Hythe on the 17th, Abbotscliffe on the 18th, and Mill Point and Nickolls Quarry on the 20th March. The 21st March saw a significant arrival with 13 across the area, including 4 at Nickolls Quarry and 6 at Seabrook. Birds were widely recorded thereafter, with notable counts of three at Samphire Hoe on the 25th March, four at Nickolls Quarry on the 4th April, at least ten at Folkestone Downs on the 10th April, five at Nickolls Quarry on the 15th April and six at Seabrook on the 19th April.

One at Samphire Hoe on the 30th June was an unusual record and may have been a very late arrival.

Autumn migrants were noted from early August and larger numbers were recorded from mid-September, including at least 50 at Princes Parade on the 16th, at least 90 across the area on the 20th (including 10 at Folkestone Warren and Nickolls Quarry, 12 at Abbotscliffe and 50+ at Princes Parade), 18 at Princes Parade on the 24th, 47 across the area on the 25th (including 11 at Creteway Down, 13 at Princes Parade and 15 at Nickolls Quarry), 30 at Nickolls Quarry on the 26th and 14 at Samphire Hoe on the 29th.

In October there were at least 50 at Princes Parade on the 2nd, at least 79 across the area on the 9th (including 18 at Nickolls Quarry, 25 at Princes Parade and 25 at Samphire Hoe), 25 at Princes Parade on the 11th, 23 at Creteway Down on the 18th, 17 at Princes Parade on the 27th and 14 there on the 30th. Numbers continued to dwindle in November, with three at Samphire Hoe on the 10th perhaps being the last migrants, and up to seven remained at Princes Parade into December, with three along the canal near Hythe Roughs on the 30th December.

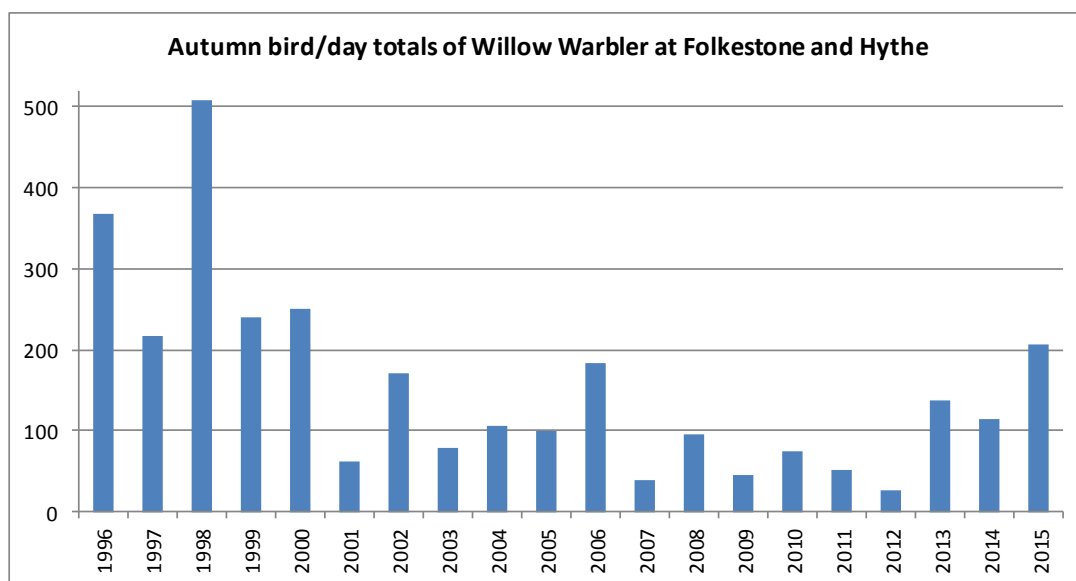
Breeding summer visitor and passage migrant.

The first arrival was five days later than last year, but was then quite widespread with two at Botolph's Bridge, two at Samphire Hoe and one at Nickolls Quarry on the 11th, one at the Willop Basin on the 12th and one at Abbotscliffe on the 13th. After another at Nickolls Quarry on the 15th there were no further sightings until another sequence in the last week of the month, when one was at Samphire Hoe on the 25th, with one at Nickolls Quarry and three at Seabrook the next day, two at Samphire Hoe on the 28th and one at Copt Point on the 29th April.

The first returning bird was one at Abbotscliffe on the 29th July and counts in August included five at Nickolls Quarry on the 2nd, six at Samphire Hoe and seven at Botolph's Bridge on the 15th and 12 at Abbotscliffe on the 19th. There was a significant arrival on the 1st September, when 20+ were at Capel-le-Ferne Gun Site, 10+ were at Princes Parade and 7 were at Creteway Down, with at least 20 at Folkestone Downs the following day.

Reasonable numbers remained during the first week of September, with further counts of 6 at Princes Parade and 15 at Samphire Hoe on the 7th, but counts dwindled thereafter and only singles were noted after mid-month with the last September record occurring on the 20th, though there was a notably late sighting of one at Samphire Hoe on the 9th October. Records in this month are unusual, having occurred in only nine previous years, and there have been only two later occurrences: at Nickolls Quarry on the 12th October 2004 and at Copt Point on the 19th October 1986.

The spring total of 17 bird/days was somewhat below the average for the last ten years of 25 and the second lowest tally in that period, however autumn passage was the strongest since 2000, as the chart below demonstrates. The longer term position over the last two decades remains one of a downward trajectory but the last three autumns have somewhat bucked that trend.



Breeding summer visitor and passage migrant, with small numbers wintering.

As with Chiffchaffs, good numbers of wintering birds were noted in January, with singles at Browning Place (Folkestone), East Cliff Gardens (Folkestone), Mill Point, Sandgate, Pennypot (Hythe), along the canal between Hythe and Seabrook, and along the canal by Hythe Roughs.

Some of these remained into February and the male at East Cliff Gardens was still present on the 15th March, when it was heard singing. Another singing male at Lympe on 6th March was probably an undetected wintering bird rather than an early migrant.

The first arriving migrant appeared to be a singing male at Princes Parade on the 25th March, with another at Hythe Roughts on the 27th March and arrival was widespread from early April, when there were three at Princes Parade on the 5th and the first records from Botolph's Bridge and Samphire Hoe on the 6th, Nickolls Quarry and Sandling on the 9th, and Abbotscliffe and Sandgate on the 10th. The largest counts came from Nickolls Quarry, where there were up to ten singing males present in the second half of April, and Folkestone Downs, where eight males were singing on the 20th April.

Autumn migrants were noted from mid-August, with nine at Princes Parade on the 14th, five at Botolph's Bridge the next day and five at Samphire Hoe on the 31st being notable. There was a significant arrival on the 1st September, when at least 30 were at Capel-le-Ferne Gun Site, 12 were at Samphire Hoe and good numbers were at Creteway Down, followed by at least 20 noted at Folkestone Downs on the 2nd/3rd. Subsequent counts included 20 at Samphire Hoe on the 7th September, at least 40 across the area on the 20th September (including 12 at Folkestone Downs and 14 at Abbotscliffe), 12 at Folkestone Downs on the 25th September and 12 at Nickolls Quarry on the 26th September. In October there were 10 at Nickolls Quarry and 20 at Samphire Hoe on the 3rd, 12 at Samphire Hoe on the 9th and the last double-figure count was of ten at Creteway Down on the 18th.

A pair in Folkestone Cemetery on the 10th November were perhaps the last migrants, whilst at least one remained at Princes Parade throughout November and December, with a pair at Saltwood in late December.

Garden Warbler

<i>Sylvia borin</i>

Breeding summer visitor and passage migrant.

The first, one at Eaton Lands (Hythe) and two at Heane Wood (Saltwood) on the 4th May, were somewhat later than the particularly early arrival last year (16th April), and slightly later than the mean over the last ten years (29th April). However appearance at Heane Wood (the only known local breeding site) has been remarkably consistent over the last few years with 4th May also being the arrival date there in 2014 and 2013, and it was 5th May in 2012. There was a further spring migrant at Abbotscliffe on the 8th May.

In Autumn there were singles in August at Nickolls Quarry on the 8th, Botolph's Bridge on the 9th, Samphire Hoe on the 17th and Botolph's Bridge on the 22nd, followed by two at Creteway Down on the 1st September (with one remaining the next day), one at Nickolls Quarry on the 3rd September and one at Samphire Hoe on 7th September.

The total of ten passage birds (two in Spring and eight in Autumn) constitutes the best year since 2008, when ten migrants were also logged (all occurring in the autumn).

Lesser Whitethroat

<i>Sylvia curruca</i>

Breeding summer visitor and passage migrant.

The first, one at Capel-le-Ferne Gun Site and two at Abbotscliffe on the 24th April, were 11 days later than the first arrival last year and eight days later than the mean arrival date over the previous decade. There were daily sightings thereafter though, including the first records from Nickolls Quarry on the 25th April, Folkestone Downs on the 27th April, Botolph's Bridge on the 28th April, Sandgate on the 1st May and Hythe Ranges on the 2nd May.

Autumn passage was noted from early August, with peak counts in late August, when there were four at Abbotscliffe on the 29th and five at Samphire Hoe on the 31st, and early September, when there were five at Creteway Down, six at Capel-le-Ferne Gun Site and six at Samphire Hoe on the 1st. Smaller numbers were noted through September, with the last records of two at Princes Parade and two at Samphire Hoe on the 2nd October being noteworthy as records in this month are unusual (only 8 previous occurrences), and four birds on a single date unprecedented.

There was an unconfirmed report of one at Samphire Hoe on the 19th October, which would be the second latest ever record, but no further details have been received.

Breeding summer visitor and passage migrant.

The first, a singing male at Nickolls Quarry on the 12th April, occurred on the same date as the first arrival last year and very close to the mean over the previous decade (11th April). Two were at Nickolls Quarry on the 14th April, with almost daily records at this thereafter, whilst another was at Seabrook on the 15th.

The first arrivals at Beachborough Ponds and Fisherman's Beach (Hythe) were noted on the 19th April, with the first at Abbotscliffe on the 20th, and Folkestone Warren and Samphire Hoe the next day. Numbers then began to increase, with three at Nickolls Quarry on the 22nd, three at Samphire Hoe on the 23rd, three at Abbotscliffe and Capel-le-Ferne Gun Site on the 24th and 14 at Seabrook on the 25th April. Further counts in May included 8 at Nickolls Quarry and 11 at Seabrook on the 4th.

Autumn migrants were noted from early August, including counts of nine at Abbotscliffe on the 12th August, 14 at Princes Parade on the 17th August, 14 at Abbotscliffe on the 21st August and 22 at Samphire on the 31st August. The 1st September saw a record arrival, with at least 130 logged across the area, including counts of at least 50 at both Capel-le-Ferne Gun Site and at Samphire Hoe, but numbers dwindled quickly and there no double-figure counts after the 2nd. The last were singles at Folkestone Downs and Samphire Hoe on the 30th September.

The previous record arrival occurred in spring 1997, when there were 95 at the cliffs on the 27th April, whilst the previous highest autumn total was 54 across the area on the 21st August 1994.



Common Whitethroat at Princes Parade (Nigel Webster)



Lesser Whitethroat at Botolph's Bridge (Brian Harper)

Rare migrant and winter visitor.

Singles at Samphire Hoe from the 18th to the 20th October (M. Collins, P. Holt *et al*) and Abbotscliffe on the 20th to the 24th November (I. A. Roberts, C. Gillard, P. Smith *et al*), see photograph on page 29, were the 32nd and 33rd area

records but the first since 2009 when a couple of very cold winters led to a reduction in numbers and a contraction in range nationally.

Milder conditions since have probably enabled the Dartford Warbler to slowly recover, though data are not yet available to support this.

Grasshopper Warbler

<i>Locustella naevia</i>

Passage migrant, formerly bred.

Singles were seen at Samphire Hoe on the 15th August, Abbotscliffe on the 18th and 28th August, Samphire Hoe on the 1st September and Abbotscliffe again on the 15th October. The annual mean for the previous ten years was 4.2 so this was a very slightly above average showing.



Grasshopper Warbler at Samphire Hoe (Phil Smith)



Sedge Warbler at Nickolls Quarry (Ian Roberts)

Sedge Warbler

<i>Acrocephalus schoenobaenus</i>

Breeding summer visitor and passage migrant.

The first, four at Nickolls Quarry on the 10th April, were five days later than the particularly early arrival last year, but still six days earlier than the mean arrival date over the previous decade. Numbers increased there to six on the 12th April and at least 14 singing males were present on the 19th April – a record count for the site, exceeding the ten males present last year.

Elsewhere two were recorded at Seabrook on the 3rd May (one of which appeared to be nest building) and two males were singing at the Willop Basin on the 4th May, but there were no spring migrants noted at the cliffs.

Returning migrants were noted from early August with a total of 21 recorded away from Nickolls Quarry, mostly singles but with two at Samphire Hoe on the 5th August, four along the canal at Princes Parade on the 6th September and two at the latter site on the 16th and the 20th September.

The last record of the year was a notably late individual along the canal at Princes Parade on the 8th October. There have been only three later records, with the latest ever being one at Capel-le-Ferne Gun Site on the 15th October 1996.

Marsh Warbler

<i>Acrocephalus palustris</i>

Rare summer visitor and passage migrant.

A singing male was present at Nickolls Quarry from about the 1st June to at least the 19th June (I. A. Roberts, B. Harper). After a five year absence there have now been records locally in three of the last four years, and it is possible that it still persists as a breeding species. The *BBRC Rare Breeding Birds Panel report* (Holling *et al*, 2014) warns that “the disturbance to any areas containing a singing Marsh Warbler in spring or summer must be minimised”, so the sighting was not publicised at the time.

A recording of this bird can be found here: www.folkestonebirds.com/SoundFiles/Marsh-Warbler1.mp3

Reed Warbler

<i>Acrocephalus scirpaceus</i>

Breeding summer visitor and passage migrant.

The first, singing singles at Nickolls Quarry and Seabrook on the 11th April, were a day earlier than the arrival date last year, and six days earlier than the mean arrival date over the previous decade. Another was singing at Botolph's Bridge the next day, when a migrant was noted in non-breeding habitat at Eaton Lands (Hythe).

Numbers of singing males then began to increase at the main sites, with two at Nickolls Quarry on the 15th, three there on the 18th, four there the next day, seven there on the 30th April and a peak of 21 there on the 4th May. Along the canal at Seabrook there were two on the 15th April, three on the 17th, ten on the 25th, 12 on the 26th April and a peak of 15 there, also on the 4th May. Elsewhere smaller numbers were noted along the canal to the west, and across the Marsh, whilst at least one was holding territory at Beachborough Ponds.

Birds continued to be noted at the breeding sites into September, though a count of 20 along the canal at Princes Parade on the 6th September probably included passage birds. Elsewhere the first returning migrants were one at Samphire Hoe on the 28th July and two at Abbotscliffe the next day, with several singles noted in August and counts of two at Samphire Hoe on the 5th and Abbotscliffe on the 28th. There was one at Creteway Down and two at Samphire Hoe on the 2nd September, with one at the latter site on the 4th September and the last of the year was at Abbotscliffe on the 2nd October. This was some 16 days later than the final sighting last year and October records are relatively unusual with occurrences in only ten previous years.

Nuthatch

<i>Sitta europaea</i>

Breeding resident.

As usual most records were from the woods in the Saltwood area (Brockhill Country Park, Heane Wood, Willow Wood, and Garden House Orchard), with other sightings at Bartholomew's Wood (Postling Wents) and Enbrook Park (Sandgate).

Eurasian Treecreeper

<i>Certhia familiaris</i>

Breeding resident.

Widely recorded but there were no notable counts. One along the canal at Princes Parade from the 15th October was the first record for the site.

Wren

<i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>

Breeding resident and passage migrant.

Widely recorded. The highest counts received were from Samphire Hoe where there were eight on the 3rd October and seven on the 25th November.

Breeding resident, winter visitor and passage migrant.

There were no large counts received from the early winter period and the only signs of spring passage were records of 20 flying in off the sea at Abbotscliffe on the 4th March, 120 flying east at the Willop Outfall on the 12th March and 65 flying in off the sea at Abbotscliffe on the 19th March.

Post-breeding numbers at Samphire Hoe built up from 20 on the 21st July to 100 by the 28th July, 120 by the 5th August, 130 by the 7th August and peaked at 150 on the 18th August before dispersing. Migrants were noted at the cliffs from October, with 30 at Abbotscliffe on the 9th October, 70 (including 30 in off the sea) there on the 12th October, 200 there and 70 in off the sea at Creteway Down on the 18th October, 165 in/west at Abbotscliffe on the 20th October, 90 east there on the 22nd October, 130 in off the sea at Mill Point on the 21st November and 130 west at Abbotscliffe the following day.



Treecreeper at Princes Parade (Nigel Webster)



Reed Warbler at Botolph's Bridge (Brian Harper)

Passage migrant.

In spring one was at Samphire Hoe on the 10th April, with it or another there on the 12th April, six at Abbotscliffe on the 15th April (see photograph on page 14) and one at Abbotscliffe on the 8th May. The mean for the previous ten springs was 4.8 birds so this was a slightly above average showing.

There were singles in late September at Samphire Hoe on the 27th, Abbotscliffe on the 28th and Creteway Down on the 29th, before three were seen at Abbotscliffe on the 2nd October, with one at Samphire Hoe on the 6th, and two there and five at Abbotscliffe on the 9th October.

The 12th October saw the largest arrival since the remarkable influx of 1998, with a total of up to 102 noted: 25 at Creteway Down, 35 at Samphire Hoe and 42 at Abbotscliffe. Very few were noted the next day but these included one at Nickolls Quarry (records from the lower-lying areas are unusual). There was another notable arrival on the 15th October, when a total of 61 were logged, with four at Creteway Down, 17 grounded at Abbotscliffe and a flock of 40 flying high west there. The following day produced 22 at Abbotscliffe, whilst on the 17th there were 4 at Creteway Down, 6 at Samphire Hoe and 18 at Abbotscliffe. Good numbers were noted again on the 18th, with 4 at Risborough Lane (Cheriton), 7 at Creteway Down, 9 at Abbotscliffe and 15 at Samphire Hoe, but these quickly dwindled, with just eight seen across the area on the 19th, seven on the 20th, and only one (at Samphire Hoe) on the 21st. The last of the month was in gate scrub at Samphire Hoe on the 31st October and there was a late single (there have been just three later records) at Abbotscliffe 20th November. The autumn total of 297 bird/days was the second best ever.

Blackbird

Turdus merula

Breeding resident, winter visitor and passage migrant.

The only counts of note from the early part of the year were 25 at West Hythe on the 14th January and up to 12 at Samphire Hoe in January and February.

There was a noticeable passage in October, including 12 at Nickolls Quarry on the 11th, 16 at Abbotscliffe and 60 at Creteway Down on the 12th, 15 at Samphire Hoe on the 20th, c.100 at Saltwood on the 23rd, and 11 at Samphire Hoe, 30 at Abbotscliffe and 56 at Creteway Down on the 22nd.

Fieldfare

Turdus pilaris

Winter visitor and passage migrant.

About 100 were present in the Botolph's Bridge area on the 1st January but they quickly dispersed, with no subsequent records until three were seen at Samphire Hoe on the 4th February and 44 were at Botolph's Bridge on the 15th February. In March there were 65 at Botolph's Bridge area on the 12th, two at Nickolls Quarry on the 20th and 31 at Botolph's Bridge on the 21st. A single spring migrant was at Abbotscliffe on the 10th April.

The first autumn arrivals were five at Creteway Down and 20 flying in off the sea at Abbotscliffe on the 12th October, with 105 at Abbotscliffe on the 15th October, 8 flying in off the sea there and 65 flying west at Castle Hill the next day, 40 at Folkestone Downs and 80 flying west over Saltwood on the 17th October and 14 at Creteway Down on the 18th. The 19th produced eight in off the sea at Abbotscliffe and a flock of 180 in off the sea at Capel-le-Ferne Gun Site.

Few were noted in the latter part of October but arrival continued into November, including three at Princes Parade and seven at Abbotscliffe on the 1st, two at Cheriton Road Cemetery on the 10th, two flying west at Abbotscliffe on the 13th, 12 at Donkey Street on the 19th and one at Abbotscliffe on the 20th. The 22nd produced one at Samphire Hoe, two at Creteway Down and three at Princes Parade, whilst six were at Samphire Hoe the following day and five were at Princes Parade on the 26th. At least 18 were wintering in the Botolph's Bridge area in December.

Song Thrush

Turdus philomelos

Breeding resident, winter visitor and passage migrant.

In the early winter period up to 15 were frequenting a stubble field opposite the Little Piece on Donkey Street in January whilst up to eight were noted at Botolph's Bridge. There was no obvious evidence of any spring passage.

Increased numbers were noted in autumn from 20th September, when six were at Abbotscliffe, with eight at Folkestone Downs on the 10th October and an exceptional arrival of 240 at Creteway Down and 42 at Abbotscliffe on the 12th October. Smaller arrivals continued through October, with 13 at Abbotscliffe and 20 at Folkestone Downs on the 15th, and 30 at Creteway Down on the 18th. The previous highest count was 110 at Creteway Down on the 12th October 2013.

Winter visitor and passage migrant.

About 50 were in the Botolph's Bridge area on the 1st January but quickly dispersed, with the only subsequent count of note in that month being 15 at Nickolls Quarry on the 17th and numbers remained low in February, with a peak of just 14 at Church Hougham on the 5th.

Seven at Nickolls Quarry on the 27th February were possibly early migrants and the first nocturnal movement was noted at Hythe on the night of the 1st March. Spring passage was light with the only double-figure count being 24 at Botolph's Bridge on the 21st March whilst the last was noted there on the 9th April.

The first of the autumn were 30 at Creteway Down and one flying in off the sea at Abbotscliffe on the 12th October, with singles at Nickolls Quarry on the 13th and Samphire Hoe on the 14th. Five were at Abbotscliffe on the 15th October, when 17 flew west at Princes Parade, and the following day saw the largest arrival of the year, when 290 flew in off the sea at Abbotscliffe and 20 flew west at Castle Hill. Smaller numbers continued to arrive through October, with the only double-figure counts being 45 at Creteway Down on the 18th and 13 there the next day, November and even into December (when there were nocturnal movements on the 7th/8th and 17th/18th) but only small numbers were wintering.

Breeding resident.

A count of 12 at Botolph's Bridge on the 6th February was worthy of note, as was a flock of ten flying south-east over Seabrook on the 8th September. There was a series of records in autumn which were suggestive of passage, including two flying east at Princes Parade on the 30th September, one there the next day, 16 at Creteway Down on the 12th October, four at Capel-le-Ferne on the 16th October, two flying in off the sea at Abbotscliffe on the 17th October and one at Creteway Down the following day.

Declining breeding summer visitor and passage migrant.

The only record in spring was of one at Abbotscliffe on the 12th May.

After singles at Church Hougham on the 18th August, Abbotscliffe on the 21st August and Samphire Hoe on the 31st August, there was a significant arrival on the 1st September with a total of 14 across the area, including 3 at Princes Parade and 5 at both Creteway Down and Church Hougham. At least 3 remained at Creteway Down the following day, when 5 were noted at Folkestone Downs, but numbers then dwindled though new arrivals were seen at Botolph's Bridge on the 5th September and Samphire Hoe (2) on the 7th September. After a gap of almost a fortnight there were late singles at Creteway Down on the 20th and Nickolls Quarry on the 25th September. The autumn bird/day total of 36 was the highest ever.

Breeding resident, winter visitor and passage migrant.

Autumn migrants were apparent from late August, when numbers at Samphire Hoe increased to six on the 22nd, then to eight on the 1st September, 11 on the 5th September and 12 on the 7th September. Five were at Nickolls Quarry on the 10th September, with six at Abbotscliffe the next day and 15 were at Samphire Hoe on the 16th September. The 20th September saw a marked arrival, with 12 at Folkestone Downs, 20 at Abbotscliffe and 23 at Samphire Hoe, whilst ten were at Nickolls Quarry on the 25th September.

In October there was another increase around mid-month, with 24 at Samphire Hoe on the 12th, 20 there, 20 at Folkestone Downs and 25 at Abbotscliffe on the 15th, 27 at Samphire Hoe on the 17th, and 40 at Castle Hill on the 18th. Later in the month a count of 30 at Samphire Hoe on the 27th was notable, and 30 were also logged in Folkestone Warren on the 4th November, but numbers dwindled thereafter.



Spotted Flycatcher at Princes Parade (Nigel Webster)



Robin at Princes Parade (Nigel Webster)

Red-breasted Flycatcher

<i>Ficedula parva</i>

Very rare vagrant.

An immature or female at Samphire Hoe on the 20th October (M. D. Kennett, P. Holt, P. R. Smith *et al*) was the first site record and only the third for the area, following singles at Folkestone Warren in November 1998 and October 1999. See photograph on page 27.

Pied Flycatcher

<i>Ficedula hypoleuca</i>

Passage migrant.

After singles at West Hythe on the 24th August and Princes Parade on the 29th August, there was a small arrival on the 1st September, with one at Capel-le-Ferne Gun Site, one at Creteway Down and two at Princes Parade. Another was seen at Folkestone Downs the next day and two were at Princes Parade on the 10th September. The total of nine was the second highest since 2002.

Black Redstart

<i>Phoenicurus ochruros</i>

Breeding resident, winter visitor and passage migrant.

In the early part of the year singles were wintering at Hythe Redoubt, Hythe Town, the Folkestone Harbour area (possibly two birds, or one ranging between Marine Parade and Sunny Sands), and Samphire Hoe.

The first migrant was a male seen in a garden in Cheriton on the 7th March, whilst one at Samphire Hoe on the 7th April was probably a migrant, with a pair present there the following day, where they remained into the summer and bred, successfully fledging three young (see photograph on page 18).

Elsewhere a male was singing from a roof-top along Marine Parade (Hythe) on the 15th April, with it or another at Range Road (Hythe) on the 23rd April, a male was singing at Folkestone Harbour on several dates between the 23rd April and the 7th May and one was seen in a garden in Browning Place, Folkestone on the 27th April.

Up to five were at Samphire Hoe throughout July and August, increasing to seven in September and October, with up to two remaining until the end of the year. Elsewhere one was at Mill Point on the 27th October.

Common Redstart

<i>Phoenicurus phoenicurus</i>

Passage migrant.

There were no spring records but there was a good autumn passage again beginning with one at Capel-le-Ferne Gun Site on the 30th August. There was an arrival of six across the area on the 1st September, with one at Abbotscliffe, two at Church Hougham and three at Capel-le-Ferne Gun Site, followed by singles at Church Hougham on the 3rd, Donkey Street and Samphire Hoe on the 5th, Samphire Hoe on the 7th, Creteway Down on the 10th, Samphire Hoe on the 19th and Church Hougham on the 20th September. The total of 14 bird/days was the second highest since 1998 and somewhat better than the mean for the previous ten years of 9.3.

Whinchat

<i>Saxicola rubetra</i>

Passage migrant. Has bred in the past.

As usual spring passage was light, with the only sighting relating to a pair at Abbotscliffe on the 28th May.

The first autumn birds were two at Samphire Hoe on the 14th August, after which ones and twos were regularly encountered at the cliffs/downs, with larger counts of five at Samphire Hoe on the 25th August, six there on the 31st August, five at Church Hougham on the 1st September and five at Samphire Hoe again on the 16th September. Elsewhere there were two at Princes Parade on the 10th September (see photograph on page 23) and one at Botolph's Bridge on the 26th September. The last was seen at Abbotscliffe on the 2nd October. The autumn total of 68 bird days was slightly above the mean for the previous ten years of 59.

Stonechat

<i>Saxicola torquatus</i>

Breeding resident, winter visitor and passage migrant.

In the early winter period there were up to six at Samphire Hoe, three near the Willop Sewage Works, and two at Church Hougham, Lympne Old Airfield and Nickolls Quarry. Singles at Copt Point on the 10th and 22nd March may have been migrants.

At Samphire Hoe numbers increased to seven on the 10th March and eight on the 7th April, with at least three pairs breeding successfully there. A pair probably also bred at Hythe Roughts.

Up to 12 were at Samphire Hoe through August, increasing to 14 on the 1st September, with similar counts noted throughout the month. Singles were at Abbotscliffe on the 28th August and the 18th September, with two there on the 20th September and five on the 25th September. Four were at Botolph's Bridge on the 26th September.

In October 11 were at Samphire Hoe on the 3rd, with up to seven remained until the month's end, up to five were at Abbotscliffe on several dates, with a peak of seven there on the 15th, four were at Folkestone Warren on the 4th and up to two were at Copt Point mid-month. Further west one was at Princes Parade on the 4th, increasing to two on the 8th, with three along Hythe Ranges on the 18th.

At least six remained at Samphire Hoe into November and December, with up to four at Abbotscliffe, two at Church Hougham and singles at Folkestone Warren, Princes Parade and Nickolls Quarry.

A Stonechat colour-ringing scheme was launched at Samphire Hoe in 2015 (see page 101 for further details).

Wheatear

<i>Oenanthe oenanthe</i>

A rare breeding summer visitor but common passage migrant.

The first, a male at Samphire Hoe on the 8th March (see photograph on page 12), was the earliest ever record (preceding one at the same site on the 9th March 2000), and was some ten days earlier than the first last year and the mean arrival date over the previous decade. It or another was seen again there on the 10th March, with another individual on the 18th March but it was April before the main arrival took place, with another 36 bird/days logged between the 4th April and the 21st May. Despite the early arrival the spring total was considerably less than the 61 logged last year and the mean for the previous decade of 55.

Counts included three at Samphire Hoe on the 13th April, four at the Hythe Imperial golf course on the 14th April and three at Samphire Hoe on the 29th April, whilst only singles were noted into May. A few of the later birds were noted as showing characteristics of the Greenland form *leucorhoa*.

A male was seen at Hythe Ranges on the 6th June and breeding may have occurred here but access restrictions made it difficult to search for further evidence.

There was a particularly early migrant at Samphire Hoe on the 1st July, with the next not being seen until the 10th August, but after this there were regular sightings, with counts including six at Samphire Hoe on the 17th and 19th August, five at Princes Parade on the 25th August, 12 at Church Hougham and Samphire Hoe on the 1st September, and six at the latter site on the 5th September. There was a small arrival on the 20th September, when 21 were logged across the area, including six at Samphire Hoe and eight at Hythe Ranges, with a further six at Samphire Hoe on the 29th September.

Just ones and twos were noted into October until the 22nd, with a late bird at Folkestone Warren on the 4th November – records in this month as unusual, having been noted in only six previous years and there have been only four later sightings, with the latest ever being one at Samphire Hoe on the 9th November 1997.

The autumn total of 197 bird/days was lower than last year's record passage, but still significantly higher than the previous ten year mean (of 143).

Dunnock

<i>Prunella modularis</i>

Breeding resident and passage migrant.

There appeared to be an increase at coastal sites in the autumn, suggestive of passage, including counts of 15 at Abbotscliffe on the 20th September, 12 at Samphire Hoe on the 14th October and 20 at Abbotscliffe the following day.

House Sparrow

<i>Passer domesticus</i>

Breeding resident.

A common though declining resident with the only counts of note received being 25 along the canal near Green Lane (Hythe) on the 18th January and 19 at Abbotscliffe on the 28th August.

One at Samphire Hoe on the 9th October was unusual as the species does not breed there, and seven which flew east at Abbotscliffe on the 13th October may also have been local migrants.

Declining passage migrant. No longer breeds and now rare in winter.

Following the sighting of four at the Little Piece on Donkey Street in December 2014, a flock of at least 20 were found in a nearby stubble field close to the Willop Sewage Works on the 25th January, with 18 remaining into February and up to 12 still present to the 22nd February at least.

A further four were seen at the Willop Basin on the 26th March and one was reported in Cheriton on the 12th April.

After singles were seen at Botolph's Bridge on the 26th September and 3rd October, a flock of 19 was noted on the 10th October, where they remained until the 22nd October before increasing to 36 the following day. Up to 30 remained in this area, frequenting bushes along the canal cutting banks and adjacent stubble fields, until mid-December when there were further increases to 50 on the 19th and to 53 on the 28th December. This was the largest flock to be recorded since 1994.

The latest *State of the UK's birds report* (Hayhow *et al*, 2015) shows a recent increase in the Tree Sparrow population, which it attributes to local projects and agri-environment scheme provisions, but notes that a full recovery is a long way off, with the long-term population trend since 1970 at a 90% decline.



Dunnock at Hythe (Brian Harper)



House Sparrow at Botolph's Bridge (Brian Harper)



Tree Sparrow at Botolph's Bridge (Brian Harper)



Grey Wagtail at West Hythe (John Gomm)

Breeding summer visitor and passage migrant.

The first, one which flew in off the sea at Capel-le-Ferne Gun Site on the 24th April, was the latest arrival date since regular recording began in 1989 and a fortnight later than the first last year and the mean over the previous decade. Thereafter however arrival was rapid, with one flying west at Seabrook on the 25th April, one at the Hythe Redoubt on the 26th April, one in off the sea at Capel-le-Ferne Café the next day and one at Nickolls Quarry on the 29th April.

In May singles flew over Samphire Hoe on the 2nd and the 4th, when two flew west at Seabrook and one was at the Willop Basin. Small numbers were noted thereafter in the Donkey Street/Willop Basin area where breeding may have occurred, whilst incoming birds continued to be noted at the cliffs, with singles in off the sea at Abbotscliffe on the 8th and 13th, and three in off there on the 20th.

Return passage was noted from the 18th July, when one flew west at Hythe, and was the best since 2004. Counts included 14 at Botolph's Bridge on the 15th August, 13 flying west at Hythe Redoubt on the 22nd August, 14 flying west at Botolph's Bridge on the 29th August, nine flying west at Abbotscliffe on the 17th September and nine flying west at Princes Parade the following day. Numbers dwindled in late September and in October there were two at Samphire Hoe on the 1st and a notably late one at Abbotscliffe on the 13th – there has only ever been one later record (at Copt Point on the 20th October 1984).

Grey Wagtail

Motacilla cinerea

Breeding resident and passage migrant.

Ones and twos were seen at numerous sites in the early winter period. The only signs of spring passage were one flying west at Samphire Hoe on the 13th March, one flying east at Abbotscliffe on the 18th March and one flying west at Princes Parade on the 4th April.

Autumn passage was noted from 17th August, when one was at Samphire Hoe, until late October. A total of around 45 visual migrants were logged including five east at Abbotscliffe on the 17th September, 7 east at Hythe on the 30th September, three east at Mill Point on the 23rd October and four east at Princes Parade on the 27th October. Small numbers were also noted at the Willop Outfall, Botolph's Bridge, Brockhill Country Park, Hythe, Enbrook Park (Sandgate), Folkestone and Folkestone Harbour, with well-scattered ones and twos again wintering at the end of the year.

Pied/White Wagtail

Motacilla alba

Breeding resident and passage migrant.

The peak counts from the early winter period were 41 at Church Hougham and 22 on the Hythe Imperial golf course in January. There was a small spring passage of Pied/White ('*alba*') wagtails noted in March and April with a total of eight logged passing at coastal watch-points.

Autumn passage was noted from the 17th September, when 4 flew in/east at Abbotscliffe and 16 were on the Hythe Imperial golf course. In total up to 175 visual migrants were noted at the cliffs, including counts of nine flying east at Abbotscliffe on the 30th September, 54 flying east there on the 13th October, 16 east there on the 17th October and 17 in/east there on the 20th October. At the Hythe Imperial golf course numbers increased to 17 at the end of September, and in October to 26 on the 2nd, 28 on the 4th, 31 on the 8th and peaked at 39 on the 9th. Numbers steadily decreased there with just 12 remaining by the end of the month.

In November/December up to 25 were wintering at Botolph's Bridge, with 22 at Church Hougham.

The only confirmed record of White Wagtail (*M. a. alba*) was a male seen at Copt Point on the 30th January.

Very rare vagrant.

One which flew east at Abbotscliffe on the 12th October (having probably been seen earlier at Creteway Down) was the 16th area record and the first since 2012.

Passage migrant.

Singles were seen at Abbotscliffe on the 18th August, Capel-le-Ferne Gun Site on the 1st September, Hythe on the 8th September and at Abbotscliffe on the 25th and 27th September.

The total of five was slightly down on the previous decade of 8.9.

Breeding resident, winter visitor and passage migrant.

Counts from the early winter period included up to 30 at Samphire Hoe, 21 in a field off Aldington Road, 15 near Bluehouse Wood Lane, 15 on the Hythe Imperial golf course and 10 near the Willop Sewage Works.

Spring passage was typically light in March, with counts of 5 in/west at Abbotscliffe on the 4th, 5 in/west there on the 10th, 7 east there on the 17th, 8 east there the next day and 6 north over Nickolls Quarry on the 24th, but a much larger movement was noted in early April, with 80 west at Mill Point on the 3rd, 12 north at Nickolls Quarry on the 4th and 154 in off the sea at Abbotscliffe on the 6th. This latter movement was the second largest ever spring count, bettered only by 158 flying in off the sea at the cliffs on the 20th March 1994.

Autumn passage was noted from mid-September, with an early peak of 380 flying east at Abbotscliffe on the 17th September, when 25 were noted at Princes Parade, followed by 40 flying east at Abbotscliffe on the 19th September, 45 west there and around 100 grounded on 20th September, and 50 at Church Hougham on the 24th September. In October 30 were at Princes Parade on the 2nd, 40 were at Abbotscliffe on the 4th, 20 flew in off the sea at Abbotscliffe on the 8th, 20 flew east there on the 9th, 40 flew east there on the 13th, 25 were at Capel-le-Ferne on the 16th and 29 were at Samphire Hoe on the 22nd. In November/December up to 25 were wintering at Botolph's Bridge, with six at Samphire Hoe.



Meadow Pipit at Creteway Down (Brian Harper)



Pied Wagtail at Westenhanger (Ian Roberts)

Breeding resident, winter visitor and passage migrant.

Recorded from Samphire Hoe throughout the year, with peak monthly counts as follows:

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
7	7	6	4	4	3	10	23	9	15	25	35

The littoralis race is probably regular winter visitor and spring migrant and examples of this form were identified on the 13th March, 17th March and 22nd April (2). At least one pair bred successfully and were seen feeding young in May. The count in December was the highest ever, exceeding the previous best of 31 at Folkestone on the 12th November 1995.

Elsewhere, in the early winter period there were with two at Folkestone Harbour and Folkestone Warren in January and February, and singles at Hythe Redoubt on the 2nd January, the rock groyne opposite Stade Street (Hythe) on the 22nd January and the Willop Outfall on the 27th February.

In autumn, two were at the rock groyne opposite the Hythe Imperial on the 29th to 30th September, with three flying east over Hythe Seafront on the latter date, and one again by the Hythe Imperial on the 4th October, when four were seen at Folkestone Warren. Three were at Sunny Sands, Folkestone on the 11th October, with two at Hythe Ranges on the 17th October, two at the rock groyne opposite Stade Street (Hythe) the following day and up to two were seen regularly in Folkestone Harbour in November and December.



Rock Pipit at Folkestone Warren (David Featherbe)



Siskin at Princes Parade (Nigel Webster)

Breeding resident, winter visitor and passage migrant.

Wintering numbers were unremarkable, however in complete contrast to last year there was a record spring passage, with over 12,400 logged moving east between early March and early April. Counts included 1,100 at Abbotscliffe on 10th, 2,550 there on the 17th March and an exceptional 8,190 there on the 18th March, with all of these large movements occurring during northerly winds.

The previous highest day count was 4,333 on the 19th October 1998, whilst the previous record spring movement being 3,145 on the 27th March 2012.

Autumn passage was rather more modest, with peak counts of just 60 in off the sea at Abbotscliffe on the 17th October, 40 in off the sea at Creteway Down on the 18th October and 47 in/east at Abbotscliffe on the 20th October.

Winter visitor and passage migrant.

Despite the record spring passage of Chaffinches just a single Brambling was noted: one flying east at Samphire Hoe on the 11th March.

Autumn passage however showed a considerable improvement on last year, with a total of 36 bird/days recorded between the 10th and 20th October being higher than the mean for the previous decade of 26. There were ones and twos at various sites, with larger counts of seven in off the sea at Abbotscliffe on the 17th, three at Creteway Down on the 18th October, four at Samphire Hoe on the 19th and six in off the sea at Abbotscliffe on the 20th.

In December one was seen with a mixed flock of Chaffinches and Goldfinches by the canal at Twiss Avenue, Hythe on the 5th.

Breeding resident, winter visitor and passage migrant.

Greenfinches have been affected by a widespread and severe outbreak of *Trichomonosis* disease that first became apparent in 2005. This downturn is reflected in the *Breeding Bird Survey* trend for south east England which shows a 35% decline from 1995 to 2012 (KOS, 2015b) and the British race *C. c. harrisoni* has recently been 'red-listed' as a conservation concern (Eaton *et al*, 2015).

The species is still widespread locally but numbers remain low with little signs of recovery from the outbreak, though a peak of ten at Nickolls Quarry on the 31st January was the first double-figure count since 2011. The last three figure count was in 2007, when 200 were counted at Church Hougham on the 26th August.

There was a very light spring passage which involved a total of 11 birds flying east at the cliffs between the 10th March and the 27th April, whilst two were at Samphire Hoe (where the species is unusual) on the 24th May. In autumn a total of 27 visible migrants were noted at Abbotscliffe, with a peak of eight flying west on the 8th October, and there was a flock of 12 at nearby Round Down on the 15th October, whilst 22 were at Nickolls Quarry on the 22nd October (the largest count since 2010).

Breeding summer visitor and passage migrant, widespread but less common in winter.

Winter numbers were typically low with peak counts of just ten at Hythe Roughs on the 18th January and 19 at Hythe on the 31st January. Spring passage was noted between early March and mid-May but numbers were low, with ten flying east at Mill Point on the 3rd April, ten flying east at Capel-le-Ferne Gun Site and 28 flying in/east at Capel-le-Ferne on the 27th April being the only double-figure counts.

Autumn passage however was exceptional, with a record total of up to 9,790 bird/days, though there was no doubt some duplication in sightings at coastal watch-points. Counts included 225 at Abbotscliffe on the 17th September and in October 315 east at Botolph's Bridge on the 10th, 780 east at Abbotscliffe on the 12th, 740 east there on the 13th, 350 there on the 14th, 360 there on the 15th, a record-equalling total of 1,550 east there on the 16th, 645 east there and 650 east at Hythe Ranges on the 17th, and 600 east at Abbotscliffe on the 20th October. Movement dropped off in November but continued in small numbers into early December.

In late November/December at least 40 were frequenting Alders (*Alnus sp.*) at Princes Parade.

The movement on the 16th October equalled the previous day record (1,550 east at Capel-le-Ferne on the 21st October 2003).

Winter visitor and passage migrant.

It was not surprising, following a very poor autumn passage last year, that there were no records from the early winter period. Spring passage however, after a blank year in 2014, recovered to close to normal numbers with the total of 115 being only just below the mean for the previous decade of 126. The first were five flying east at Abbotscliffe on the 10th March, with 7 going west at the Willop Outfall on the 12th, four east there on the 14th, 42 east at Abbotscliffe on the 17th and 48 east there on the 18th March. Thereafter ones and twos were noted until the 8th May.

There was an unprecedented summer irruption with three flying south-west over Saltwood on the 23rd June, seven flying east at Palmarsh on the 9th July, five flying east at Saltwood on the 13th July, nine flying over there on the 16th July, nine flying west at Hythe on the 18th July and six seen in a garden in Seabrook before they flew west on the 19th July. There had only been one previous record in June and two in July (totalling just four birds) so this influx of 39 was most unexpected.

Autumn passage was also remarkable, with the total of 3,665 bird/days from the 4th September being the second highest ever (only exceeded in 2008 when 4,725 were logged). This however included a flock of up to 34 which were seen on several dates between the 17th October and the end of November, feeding in Alders (*Alnus sp.*) along the canal in the Princes Parade area, and there was no doubt some duplication in sightings at coastal watch-points, but the minimum total was at least 2,750.

Counts included 86 flying over Botolph's Bridge/Donkey Street on the 5th September, 325 east at Abbotscliffe on the 17th September, 300 east at Hythe on the 30th September, 160 east at Samphire Hoe on the 6th October, 200 east at Princes Parade on the 15th October, 260 east at Abbotscliffe on the 17th October and 165 east there on the 19th October.

Up to 27 remained along the canal at Princes Parade during December, with two in a garden at East Cliff Gardens (Folkestone) on the 9th and nine were at Abbotscliffe on the 28th December.

Breeding summer visitor and passage migrant, less common in winter.

In the early winter period a flock of 40 were frequenting a stubble field opposite the Little Piece, Donkey Street, with presumably the same flock moving to a nearby stubble field close to the Willop Sewage Works, and increasing to 46, in February.

Spring passage was noted from early March to late April and included counts of 17 in/east at Abbotscliffe on the 17th March, 20-30 near Cheriton Polo Ground on the 21st March, 27 at Abbotscliffe on the 23rd March, 14 at Samphire Hoe on the 14th April, 12 east at the Willop Outfall on the 19th April, ten east at Capel-le-Ferne Gun Site on the 21st April and 12 in/east at Capel-le-Ferne on the 27th April. In May there was a peak of 16 at Samphire Hoe on the 5th.

In autumn a flock at Samphire Hoe steadily increased with 23 on 10th August, 30 on the 17th August, 35 on the 30th August and a peak of 70 on the 7th September. Reasonable numbers remained there throughout September and October, with a later count of 60 on the 12th October, but they quickly dwindled in November.

Elsewhere there were 35 at Nickolls Quarry on the 30th August and counts of visible migrants included 35 east at Princes Parade on the 30th September, 40 east at Samphire Hoe on the 1st October, 49 in/west at Abbotscliffe on the 8th October, 40 east there on the 12th October, 45 east there the next day and 60 west there on the 22nd October.

Small numbers were wintering at the end of the year including 15 at the Willop Basin.

Winter visitor and passage migrant.

Following a poor autumn in 2014 there were no records from the early winter period and just one in spring – a male photographed in a garden in Foreland Avenue, Folkestone on the 7th April.

It was remarkable that following the worst autumn for 20 years, this autumn produced a record bird/day total of 686. This however included a flock of up to 26 which were seen on several dates between the 9th and the 18th October, feeding in Rosebay Willowherb (*Chamerion angustifolium*) along the canal in the Princes Parade area (see photograph on page 25), and there was no doubt some duplication in sightings at coastal watch-points, but the minimum total was at least 440, with perhaps as many as 530 individuals being recorded.

Notable counts included 18 east at Abbotscliffe on the 25th September, 22 east there on the 12th October, 62 east there the next day, 61 east there and 35 east at Princes Parade on the 15th October, 43 east at Abbotscliffe and 40 east at Hythe on the 18th October and 42 east at Abbotscliffe on the 20th October.

Much smaller numbers were noted in November, though these included up to five on several dates along the canal at Princes Parade into late November and three in a garden in Hythe on the 11th, whilst the last coastal migrants were three flying over Abbotscliffe on the 22nd.

The previous best autumn was 1997, when 616 bird/days were noted.

Winter visitor and passage migrant.

There was a small summer influx, when three flew west at Capel-le-Ferne Café on the 12th June, one flew west over Saltwood on the 4th July and two flew west over Hythe on the 8th July.

October produced a further series of sightings, with 15 over Creteway Down on the 12th, four east at Abbotscliffe on the 17th, 2 east at Princes Parade and 3 east at Hythe on the 18th and singles over Abbotscliffe and Saltwood on the 20th.

This species is highly irruptive in nature with no records in some years (e.g. 2014) and large influxes in others (e.g. 343 logged in 2012).

Breeding resident.

There were records of resident birds from numerous sites including West Hythe, Lympne, Hythe Roughs, Sandling Park, Saltwood, Eaton Lands (Hythe), Sandgate, Castle Hill, Folkestone Downs, Creteway Down, Folkestone Warren and Capel-le-Ferne.

Of particular interest was a male at Samphire Hoe on the 8th October – only the third record for the site, following singles in November 2002 and 2004. The species is also relatively unusual at Abbotscliffe, where there were singles on the 21st and 29th August, and 22nd November and Nickolls Quarry, where a pair were present in late April. Four which flew over Saltwood on the 2nd October may have been migrants.

Passage migrant, occasionally overwinters.

One was seen with Sky Larks in the large stubble field north-east of the underpass at Abbotscliffe on the 15th October. A welcome return after two blank years.

Breeding resident.

In the early winter period there was a notable concentration of up to 45 in a stubble field opposite the Little Piece, Donkey Street in January, whilst at least 15 were at Abbotscliffe in February and six were at Church Hougham in March.

The only record from Samphire Hoe was of three on the 28th August and autumn produced no notable counts. In the late winter period there were four at Church Hougham, six at Botolph's Bridge, six at Nickolls Quarry and 22 at Abbotscliffe in November/December.



Bullfinch at Palmarsh (Esther Preedy)



Yellowhammer at Creteway Down (Brian Harper)

Breeding resident, winter visitor and passage migrant.

A record wintering flock of at least 50 were seen in a stubble field close to the Willop Sewage Works in January and February with smaller numbers elsewhere, including six in a stubble field opposite the Little Piece on Donkey Street. There has only been one previous count which exceeded fifty, but these related to migrant birds (96 flying west at Abbotscliffe on the 15th October 1998).

Spring migrants included a male flying east at Abbotscliffe on the 17th March, two flying east there the next day and one arriving in off the sea at Abbotscliffe on the 6th April, whilst breeding birds included 3-4 pairs at Nickolls Quarry and single pairs at Beachborough Ponds and Princes Parade.

The first autumn migrant was noted at Abbotscliffe on the 11th September, followed by three flying east there and one at Samphire Hoe on the 20th September, two east at Abbotscliffe on the 25th September and one there on the 28th September. At least 43 passage birds were logged in October, with counts of four east at Abbotscliffe on the 12th, six east there on the 17th and 6 in off the sea there on the 20th.

In the late winter period at least 15 were wintering in the Botolph's Bridge area.

Breeding resident.

Two seen in a stubble field close to the Willop Sewage Works on the 15th February (see photograph on page 10) were the only record from the early winter period, whilst in spring a singing male was Abbotscliffe on the 6th April, one was seen there on the 8th May and one flew over Nickolls Quarry on the 12th May.

In the late winter period there were five at Botolph's Bridge from the 13th December, increasing to six from the 19th.



Breeding pair of Reed Buntings at Prince Parade (Nigel Webster)

Escaped species

Escapee.

One was seen near Peene Quarry on the 10th April (I. A. Roberts).

First and last dates for selected migrants

The arrival and departure dates for selected summer and winter migrants are shown in the tables below. In cases where records appear to relate to over-wintering or over-summering individuals these have been excluded, and are indicated by an asterisk by the date. Winter records of Chiffchaffs and Blackcaps have become so frequent in recent years that determining the first arriving or last departing migrant is now very difficult. The exceptional records of Siskins in June and July have also been excluded.

Overall spring arrivals of summer migrants were evenly balanced, with 13 species appearing earlier than last year and 12 later. Of particular note were the earliest ever sightings of Swift and Wheatear, and the second ever earliest Swallows. Spring departures of winter migrants were generally later than in 2014, with the second ever latest departure date of Purple Sandpiper being the most notable.

Departures of summer migrants were generally later than last year, with 18 leaving later and only 7 earlier, and these included the equal latest ever Swallow, the second latest Yellow Wagtail and notably late dates for Hobby, House Martin, Willow Warbler, Lesser Whitethroat, Sedge Warbler, Reed Warbler, Ring Ouzel and Wheatear.

Not included in the tables but worthy of note are the latest ever spring date of Wigeon and the second latest autumn date for Wood Warbler.

Summer migrants

Species	Arrival date		Difference	
	2015	2014	Earlier	Later
Honey Buzzard	9 th Jun	4 th May		36
Hobby	23 rd Apr	23 rd Apr	Same	
Whimbrel	16 th Apr	17 th Apr	1	
Common Sandpiper	25 th Apr	26 th Apr	1	
Arctic Skua	23 rd Apr	22 nd Apr		1
Sandwich Tern	29 th Mar	25 th Mar		4
Common Tern	8 th Apr	4 th Apr		4
Little Tern	8 th May	23 rd Apr		15
Turtle Dove	4 th Jul	13 th Jun		21
Cuckoo	16 th Apr	17 th Apr	1	
Swift	18 th Apr	3 rd May	15	
Sand Martin	30 th Mar	6 th Apr	7	
Swallow	12 th Mar	28 th Mar	16	
House Martin	4 th Apr	6 th Apr	2	
Chiffchaff	8 th Mar*	14 th Mar*	6	
Willow Warbler	11 th Apr	6 th Apr		5
Blackcap	25 th Mar*	28 th Mar*	3	
Garden Warbler	30 th Apr	16 th Apr		14
Lesser Whitethroat	24 th Apr	13 th Apr		11
Common Whitethroat	12 th Apr	12 th Apr	Same	
Sedge Warbler	10 th Apr	5 th Apr		5
Reed Warbler	11 th Apr	12 th Apr	1	
Spotted Flycatcher	12 th May	13 th May	1	
Ring Ouzel	10 th Apr	21 st Apr	11	
Redstart	-	13 th Apr		
Whinchat	28 th May	17 th May		11
Wheatear	8 th Mar	18 th Mar	10	
Yellow Wagtail	24 th Apr	10 th Apr		14
Tree Pipit	-	-		

Departure date		Difference	
2015	2014	Earlier	Later
4 th Oct	-		
19 th Oct	1 st Oct		18
5 th Sep	29 th Aug		7
9 th Sep	19 th Sep	10	
24 th Sep	24 th Oct	30	
11 th Oct	24 th Oct	13	
28 th Sep	6 th Oct	8	
-	-		
-	-		
23 rd Jun	2 nd Sep	71	
25 th Sep	31 st Aug		25
18 th Oct	12 th Oct		6
8 th Dec	29 th Oct		40
28 th Nov	25 th Oct		34
10 th Nov*	27 th Nov*	17	
9 th Oct	22 nd Sep		17
10 th Nov*	17 th Oct*		24
7 th Sep	1 st Sep		6
2 nd Oct	15 th Sep		17
30 th Sep	5 th Oct	5	
8 th Oct	20 th Sep		18
2 nd Oct	16 th Sep		16
25 th Sep	19 th Sep		6
20 th Nov	13 th Nov		7
20 th Sep	12 th Oct	22	
2 nd Oct	28 th Sep		4
4 th Nov	28 th Oct		7
13 th Oct	21 st Sep		22
27 th Sep	22 nd Sep		5

Winter migrants

Species	Departure date		Difference	
	2015	2014	Earlier	Later
Brent Goose	15 th May	1 st May		14
Red-throated Diver	2 nd May	5 th May	3	
Purple Sandpiper	10 th May	7 th May		3
Fieldfare	10 th Apr	17 th Mar		24
Redwing	9 th Apr	24 th Mar		16
Brambling	-	-		
Siskin	8 th May	2 nd Feb		95

Arrival date		Difference	
2015	2014	Earlier	Later
20 th Sep	11 th Sep		9
10 th Oct	30 th Oct	20	
23 rd Oct	28 th Oct	5	
12 th Oct	19 th Oct	7	
12 th Oct	14 th Oct	2	
10 th Oct	6 th Dec	57	
4 th Sep*	21 st Sep	17	



Red-throated Diver at Seabrook (Brian Harper)

Year list

January

1	Mute Swan	1 st Jan
2	Brent Goose	1 st Jan
3	Shelduck	1 st Jan
4	Teal	1 st Jan
5	Mallard	1 st Jan
6	Common Scoter	1 st Jan
7	Goldeneye	1 st Jan
8	Pheasant	1 st Jan
9	Red-throated Diver	1 st Jan
10	Gannet	1 st Jan
11	Cormorant	1 st Jan
12	Little Egret	1 st Jan
13	Grey Heron	1 st Jan
14	Little Grebe	1 st Jan
15	Great Crested Grebe	1 st Jan
16	Sparrowhawk	1 st Jan
17	Kestrel	1 st Jan
18	Moorhen	1 st Jan
19	Lapwing	1 st Jan
20	Purple Sandpiper	1 st Jan
21	Redshank	1 st Jan
22	Turnstone	1 st Jan
23	Great Skua	1 st Jan
24	Black-headed Gull	1 st Jan
25	Mediterranean Gull	1 st Jan
26	Common Gull	1 st Jan
27	Lesser Black-backed Gull	1 st Jan
28	Herring Gull	1 st Jan
29	Great Black-backed Gull	1 st Jan
30	Guillemot	1 st Jan
31	Feral Pigeon	1 st Jan
32	Stock Dove	1 st Jan
33	Wood Pigeon	1 st Jan
34	Collared Dove	1 st Jan
35	Little Owl	1 st Jan
36	Kingfisher	1 st Jan
37	Green Woodpecker	1 st Jan
38	Great Spotted Woodpecker	1 st Jan
39	Magpie	1 st Jan
40	Jay	1 st Jan
41	Jackdaw	1 st Jan
42	Rook	1 st Jan
43	Carrion Crow	1 st Jan
44	Goldcrest	1 st Jan
45	Firecrest	1 st Jan
46	Blue Tit	1 st Jan
47	Great Tit	1 st Jan
48	Sky Lark	1 st Jan
49	Long-tailed Tit	1 st Jan
50	Chiffchaff	1 st Jan
51	Blackcap	1 st Jan

52	Treecreeper	1 st Jan
53	Wren	1 st Jan
54	Starling	1 st Jan
55	Blackbird	1 st Jan
56	Fieldfare	1 st Jan
57	Song Thrush	1 st Jan
58	Redwing	1 st Jan
59	Mistle Thrush	1 st Jan
60	Robin	1 st Jan
61	Black Redstart	1 st Jan
62	Dunnock	1 st Jan
63	House Sparrow	1 st Jan
64	Grey Wagtail	1 st Jan
65	Pied Wagtail	1 st Jan
66	Meadow Pipit	1 st Jan
67	Chaffinch	1 st Jan
68	Greenfinch	1 st Jan
69	Linnet	1 st Jan
70	Bullfinch	1 st Jan
71	Yellowhammer	1 st Jan
72	Reed Bunting	1 st Jan
73	Tufted Duck	2 nd Jan
74	Water Rail	2 nd Jan
75	Coot	2 nd Jan
76	Dunlin	2 nd Jan
77	Snipe	2 nd Jan
78	Curlew	2 nd Jan
79	Green Sandpiper	2 nd Jan
80	Bearded Tit	2 nd Jan
81	Cetti's Warbler	2 nd Jan
82	Stonechat	2 nd Jan
83	Rock Pipit	2 nd Jan
84	Goldfinch	2 nd Jan
85	Gadwall	3 rd Jan
86	Mandarin	3 rd Jan
87	Fulmar	3 rd Jan
88	Oystercatcher	3 rd Jan
89	Woodcock	3 rd Jan
90	Sanderling	3 rd Jan
91	Kittiwake	3 rd Jan
92	Buzzard	4 th Jan
93	Golden Plover	4 th Jan
94	Nuthatch	4 th Jan
95	Coal Tit	4 th Jan
96	Marsh Tit	4 th Jan
97	Tawny Owl	8 th Jan
98	Pochard	9 th Jan
99	Red-legged Partridge	11 th Jan
100	Ringed Plover	11 th Jan
101	Night Heron	14 th Jan (but possibly present since early January)
102	Goosander	14 th Jan
103	Marsh Harrier	23 rd Jan
104	Peregrine	23 rd Jan
105	Merlin	24 th Jan
106	Tree Sparrow	25 th Jan

107	Shag	25 th Jan
108	Raven	25 th Jan
109	Greylag Goose	27 th Jan
110	Jack Snipe	29 th Jan

February

111	Red Kite	1 st Feb
112	Shoveler	3 rd Feb
113	Barn Owl	3 rd Feb
114	Little Gull	6 th Feb
115	Canada Goose	14 th Feb
116	White-fronted Goose	15 th Feb
117	Corn Bunting	15 th Feb
118	Egyptian Goose	27 th Feb

March

119	Ruff	8 th Mar
120	Wheatear	8 th Mar
121	Pintail	9 th Mar
122	Siskin	10 th Mar
123	Brambling	11 th Mar
124	Swallow	12 th Mar
125	Black-necked Grebe	15 th Mar
126	Razorbill	15 th Mar
127	Goshawk	16 th Mar
128	Avocet	17 th Mar
129	Grey Plover	21 st Mar
130	Hen Harrier	21 st Mar
131	Wigeon	24 th Mar
132	Sandwich Tern	29 th Mar
133	Sand Martin	30 th Mar

April

134	Osprey	2 nd Apr
135	Bar-tailed Godwit	3 rd Apr
136	Red-breasted Merganser	3 rd Apr
137	House Martin	4 th Apr
138	Barnacle Goose	5 th Apr
139	Grey Partridge	7 th Apr
140	Lesser Redpoll	7 th Apr
141	Common Tern	8 th Apr
142	Garganey	9 th Apr
143	Black-tailed Godwit	9 th Apr
144	Ring Ouzel	10 th Apr
145	Sedge Warbler	10 th Apr
146	Reed Warbler	11 th Apr
147	Willow Warbler	11 th Apr
148	Whitethroat	12 th Apr
149	Cuckoo	16 th Apr
150	Whimbrel	16 th Apr
151	Hoopoe	18 th Apr
152	Swift	18 th Apr

153	Black-throated Diver	23 rd Apr
154	Hobby	23 rd Apr
155	Arctic Skua	23 rd Apr
156	Lesser Whitethroat	24 th Apr
157	Yellow Wagtail	24 th Apr
158	Common Sandpiper	25 th Apr
159	Manx Shearwater	29 th Apr
160	Garden Warbler	30 th Apr

May

161	Black Tern	3 rd May
162	Little Tern	8 th May
163	Arctic Tern	9 th May
164	Velvet Scoter	11 th May
165	Spotted Flycatcher	12 th May
166	Great Northern Diver	14 th May
167	Golden Oriole	17 th May
168	Whinchat	28 th May

June

169	Marsh Warbler	1 st Jun
170	Honey Buzzard	9 th Jun
171	Crossbill	12 th Jun
172	Red-backed Shrike	14 th Jun
173	Bee-eater	26 th Jun

July

174	Turtle Dove	4 th Jul
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August

175	Black Stork	7 th Aug
176	Grasshopper Warbler	15 th Aug
177	Greenshank	16 th Aug
178	Tree Pipit	18 th Aug
179	Knot	23 rd Aug
180	Balearic Shearwater	25 th Aug
181	Sooty Shearwater	26 th Aug
182	Wood Sandpiper	29 th Aug
183	Pied Flycatcher	29 th Aug
184	Common Redstart	30 th Aug

September

185	Wood Warbler	7 th Sep
186	Wryneck	27 th Sep

October

187	Richard's Pipit	12 th Oct
188	Lapland Bunting	15 th Oct
189	Great Grey Shrike	15 th Oct

190	Short-eared Owl	16 th Oct
191	Dartford Warbler	18 th Oct
192	Red-breasted Flycatcher	20 th Oct
193	Rough-legged Buzzard	24 th Oct
194	Wood Lark	31 st Oct

November

195	Shore Lark	First week
196	Great White Egret	22 nd Nov
197	Yellow-legged Gull	23 rd Nov
198	Ring-necked Parakeet	25 th Nov
199	Caspian Gull	30 th Nov



Hoopoe at Hythe (Simon Knight)

Ringling recoveries

Details of birds ringed elsewhere and recovered in the Folkestone and Hythe area are given here. The code of the metal ring and colour rings are provided on the left. The distances and directions travelled are in relation to the ringing site in all cases.

Arguably the highlight in 2015 was an Icelandic-ringed Sanderling which wintered on the south Kent coast in 2013/14, and was recorded as it headed north on spring passage in Essex in 2014, then noted as it returned south (presumably from Iceland) on autumn passage in Shetland in 2014, before wintering again on our coast in 2014/15 when it frequented the Dymchurch/Willop Outfall area. This illustrates the insight into bird migration and site fidelity which colour-ringing can provide.

Also of particular note was a French-ringed Kittiwake which was ringed in the Pointe du Raz colony in Brittany on the 3rd July 2015, fledged on the 10th July, remained at the site for three days but failed to locate its natal nest and had crossed the channel to Seabrook three days later. According to the ringing scheme operator this is the first such event since the study began in 1979.

A French-born Great Black-backed Gull and Mediterranean Gulls which had been ringed in France, Belgium, Germany and Hungary are also worthy of mention.

I am grateful to Jeroen Reneerkens for providing the information on the Sanderling, to John Tomlinson for passing on details of the Kittiwake, to Nigel Webster for passing on details of the Mediterranean Gulls, to Paul Roper of the North Thames Gull Group (www.ntgg.org.uk) for the Herring Gull data and to Gilles Le Guillou of the Groupe Ornithologique Normand for the information on the Great Black-backed Gull.

An exciting development in 2015 was the launch of a Stonechat colour-ringing scheme at Samphire Hoe, led by the East Kent Wildlife Group. These birds have a unique combination of two coloured plastic rings. To report sightings of any of these birds please make a note of the position and order of the rings, the date and location, and either pick up a form from the Rangers' Office at Samphire Hoe or email pwjfindley@hotmail.com.

For more information, please ask at the Rangers' office at Samphire Hoe or contact the East Kent Wildlife Group www.ekwg.org. An update on early results from the project is planned for next year's report.



Female Stonechat 'green over black' being ringed at Samphire Hoe and later photographed in the field

Sanderling					<i>Calidris alba</i>
8108201	Ringed	31-May-2013	-	Sandgerði, Iceland	
G4WWBG	Read in field	02-Jun-2013	-	Sandgerði, Iceland	0km
	Read in field	21-Jan-2014	-	St. Mary's Bay, Kent	2,048km SE
	Read in field	13-Apr-2014	-	Shoebury, Essex	1,958km SE
	Read in field	19-Jul-2014	-	Foula, Shetland	1,171km ESE
	Read in field	19-Dec-2014	-	Dymchurch, Kent	2,048km SE
	Read in field	29-Dec-2014	-	Dymchurch, Kent	2,048km SE
	Read in field	09-Jan-2015	-	Willop Outfall	2,048km SE

Kittiwake					<i>Rissa tridactyla</i>
R/O – B/O/B*	Ringed	03-Jul-2015	Juvenile	Plogoff, Finistère, Brittany	
	Read in field	12-Jul-2015	Juvenile	Plogoff, Finistère, Brittany	0km
	Read in field	15-Jul-2015	Juvenile	Seabrook	573km NE

*Colour-ringed combination: red and orange on right leg, blue, orange and blue on left leg.

Mediterranean Gull					<i>Larus melanocephalus</i>
E923408	Ringed	14-May-2015	Adult	Antwerpen, Belgium	
White 3LAV	Read in field	18-Jun-2015	Adult	Antwerpen, Belgium	0km
	Read in field	28-Jun-2015	Adult	Princes Parade, Hythe	204km W
FS86051	Ringed	26-Jan-2013	Adult	Le Portel, Pas-de-Calais	
Green R90L	Read in field	06-Apr-2014	Adult	Amsterdam, Netherlands	304km NE
	Read in field	04-Nov-2015	Adult	Princes Parade, Hythe	52km NW
HA07663	Ringed	15-Jun-2013	Juvenile	Pest, Hungary	
Red H9A5	Read in field	29-Jul-2013	Juvenile	Scharendijke, Netherlands	1,198km NW
	Read in field	02-Dec-2015	2 nd -year	Princes Parade, Hythe	1,370km WNW
5354512	Ringed	20-Jun-2009	Juvenile	Grünendeich, near Hamburg, Germany	
Green AJKS	Read in field	14-Jul-2009	Juvenile	Grünendeich, Germany	0km
	Read in field	11-Feb-2011	2 nd -year	Cork Harbour, Eire	1,210km W
	Read in field	at same site on several dates to:			
	Read in field	08-Mar-2011	2 nd -year	Cork Harbour, Eire	1,210km W
	Read in field	15-Mar-2012	Adult	Whitegate, Cork, Eire	1,214km W
	Read in field	01-Feb-2013	Adult	Cork Harbour, Eire	1,210km W
	Read in field	12-Feb-2013	Adult	Cork Harbour, Eire	1,210km W
	Read in field	01-Jul-2013	Adult	Grünendeich, Germany	0km
	Read in field	15-Feb-2014	Adult	Cork Harbour, Eire	1,210km W
	Read in field	17-May-2014	Adult	Grünendeich, Germany	0km
	Read in field	24-May-2014	Adult	Grünendeich, Germany	0km
	Read in field	11-Feb-2015	Adult	Whitegate, Cork, Eire	1,214km W
	Read in field	17-Dec-2015	Adult	Princes Parade, Hythe	640km SW

E933573	Ringed	23-Jun-2012	Juvenile	Antwerpen, Belgium	
White 3ENX	Read in field	18-Mar-2014	2 nd -year	Icklesham, Sussex	256km W
	Read in field	at same site on several dates to:			
	Read in field	01-Apr-2014	2 nd -year	Icklesham, Sussex	256km W
	Read in field	14-May-2015	Adult	Antwerpen, Belgium	0km
	Read in field	15-Jun-2015	Adult	Antwerpen, Belgium	0km
	Read in field	21-Jun-2015	Adult	Antwerpen, Belgium	0km
	Read in field	23-Jun-2015	Adult	Antwerpen, Belgium	0km
	Read in field	17-Dec-2015	Adult	Princes Parade	204km W

Herring Gull

Larus argentatus

GR75027	Ringed	12-Jan-2013	3 rd -year	Pitsea, Essex	
Orange DZ9T	Read in field	04-Feb-2015	Adult	Hythe	68km SE
GC42467	Found injured	22-Feb-2009	Adult	Folkestone	
White A5MT	Released	05-Mar-2009	Adult	Pett Level, East Sussex	
	Read in field	26-Apr-2014	Adult	Mill Point, Folkestone	30km NE
	Read in field	26-Mar-2015	Adult	Mill Point, Folkestone	30km NE

Great Black-backed Gull

Larus marinus

DB115361	Ringed	02-Jul-2012	Juvenile	Le Harve, Normandy	
Black 80L	Read in field	29-Aug-2013	2 nd -year	Guernsey	196km W
	Read in field	02-Sep-2014	3 rd -year	Looe Island, Cornwall	340km WNW
	Read in field	04-Nov-2015	4 th -year	Folkestone Harbour	192km NE
	Read in field	18-Dec-2015	4 th -year	Princes Parade, Hythe	190km NE

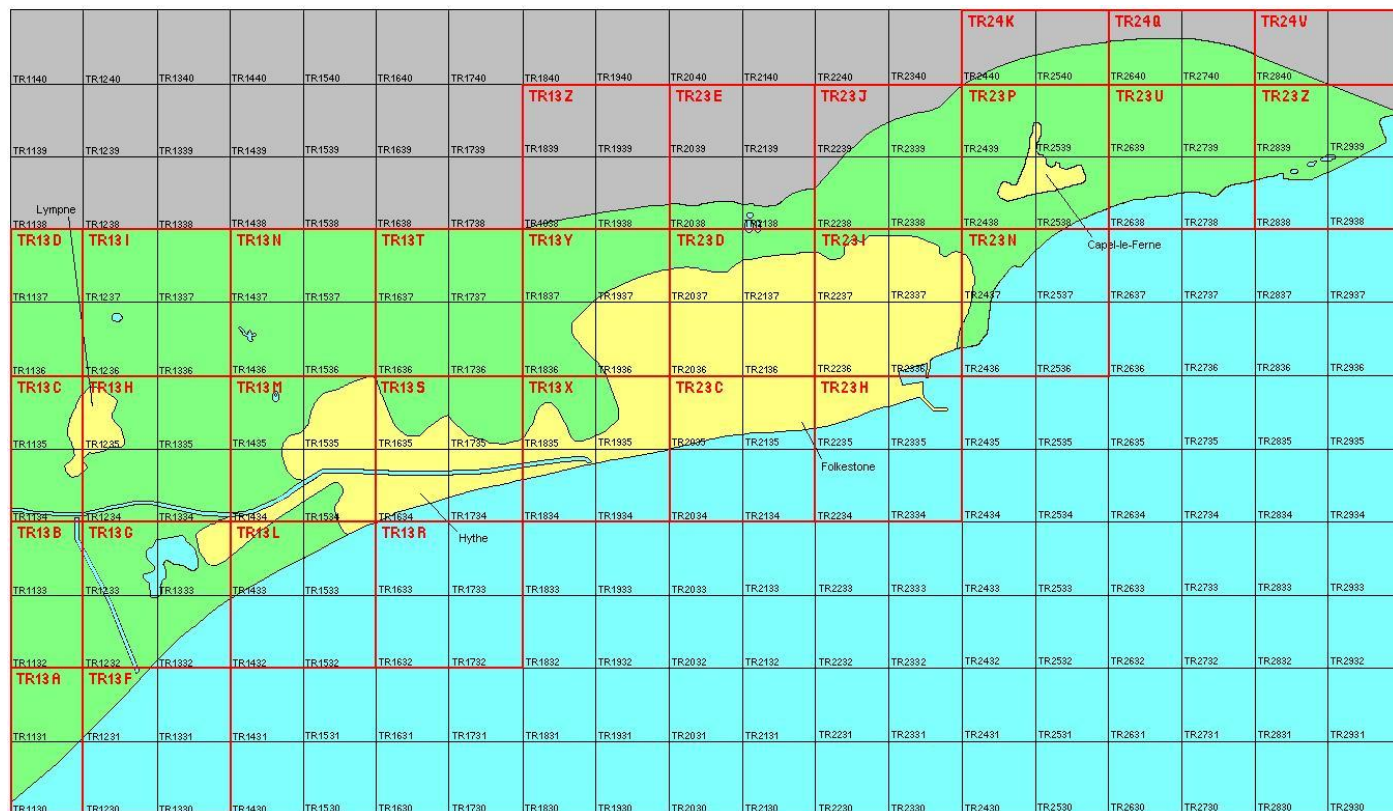


Icelandic-ringed Sanderling at the Willop Outfall (Ian Roberts)

The Folkestone and Hythe area

The Folkestone and Hythe area includes most of the 10km squares TR13 and TR23, though excludes the western half of the first 'column' of 2km tetrads in TR13 and the most northern 'row' of 2km tetrads, and it also includes a small component of the most southerly part of TR24, as shown in the map below.

It therefore extends from the Willop Outfall and Basin in the south-west to Folkestone Racecourse, Westenhanger in the north-west to Samphire Hoe in the east, and excludes Dymchurch, Sellindge, Hawkinge and Dover.



Gazetteer

The locations mentioned in this report are listed below together with the 2km square(s) or tetrad(s) in which they are located. The tetrads which form the Folkestone and Hythe area can be found on the map on the preceding page.

A map of some of the major sites listed together with the tetrads and 1km squares is now available via Google maps on the 'where to watch' section of the website: www.freewebs.com/folkestonebirds/wheretowatch.htm.

Site	Tetrad
Abbotscliffe	TR23 U / TR23 Z
Aldington Road	TR13 H
Bartholomew's Wood (Postling Wents)	TR13 N
Battery Point (Seabrook)	TR13 X
Beachborough Ponds	TR13 T
Bluehouse Wood Lane	TR13 N
Botolph's Bridge	TR13 G
Brockhill Country Park	TR13 M
Browning Place (Folkestone)	TR23 I
Capel-le-Ferne	TR23 P
Capel-le-Ferne Café	TR23 P
Capel-le-Ferne Gun Site	TR23 N / TR23 P
Castle Hill	TR23 D / TR23 E
Cheriton	TR13 Y / TR23 D
Cheriton Polo Ground	TR23 D
Cheriton Road Cemetery	TR23 D
Chesterfield Wood (Saltwood)	TR13 N
Church Hougham	TR23 U / TR24 Q
Church Road (Cheriton)	TR13 Y
Cinderella Farm (Palmarsh)	TR13 G
Copt Point	TR23 N
Crete Road East	TR23 I / TR23 J
Crete Road West	TR23 E
Creteway Down	TR23 J
Donkey Street	TR13 B
East Cliff Gardens (Folkestone)	TR23 I
Eaton Lands (Hythe)	TR13 S
Enbrook Park (Sandgate)	TR23 C
Fairmead Farm (Westenhanger)	TR13 I
Ferguson Close (Hythe)	TR13 S
Fisherman's Beach (Hythe)	TR13 L
Folkestone	TR23 C / TR23 D / TR23 H / TR23 I
Folkestone Beach	TR13 H
Folkestone Downs	TR23 I / TR23 J
Folkestone Harbour	TR13 H / TR13 I
Folkestone Racecourse (Westenhanger)	TR13 I
Folkestone Sports Centre	TR23 D
Folkestone Warren	TR23 N / TR23 P
Folks' Wood (Pedlinge)	TR23 H
Foreland Avenue (Folkestone)	TR13 I

Site	Tetrad
Garden House Orchard (Saltwood)	TR13 N
Grange Farm (Saltwood)	TR13 N
Green Lane (Hythe)	TR13 M
Heane Wood (Saltwood)	TR13 N
Hillhurst Farm (Westenhanger)	TR13 I
Hoorne's Sewer	TR13 B
Hougham valley	TR23 U / TR23 Z
Hythe	TR13 M / TR13 S
Hythe Imperial	TR13 S
Hythe Imperial golf course	TR13 S
Hythe Ranges	TR13 G / TR13 L
Hythe Redoubt	TR13 G (/TR13 F for records on sea)
Hythe Roughs	TR13 H / TR13 M
Hythe Seafront	TR13 S
Ingles Manor (Folkestone)	TR23 C
Joyes Road (Folkestone)	TR13 I
Kiln Wood (Pedlinge)	TR13 I
Ladies' Walk (Hythe)	TR13 S
Leaside Cottages (Saltwood)	TR13 M
Little Piece (Donkey Street)	TR13 B
Lower Wall	TR13 B
Lympne	TR13 H
Lympne Old Airfield	TR13 C
Lympne Park Wood	TR13 C / TR13 H
Marine Parade (Folkestone)	TR23 H
Marine Parade (Hythe)	TR13 S
Mill Point	TR23 C / TR23 H
Newingreen	TR13 I
Nickolls Quarry	TR13 G
Oak Banks (Saltwood)	TR13 T
Palmarsh	TR13 G
Paraker Wood (Seabrook)	TR13 X
Peene Quarry	TR13 Z
Pennypot (Hythe)	TR13 M
Port Lympne	TR13 C
Princes Parade	TR13 S / TR13 X
Range Road (Hythe)	TR13 M
Risborough Lane (Cheriton)	TR13 Y
Round Down	TR23 Z
Saltwood	TR13 M
Saltwood Castle	TR13 S
Samphire Hoe	TR23 Z
Sandgate	TR23 C
Sandling	TR13 N
Sandling Park	TR13 N
Seabrook	TR13 X

Site	Tetrad
Shorncliffe Cemetery	TR13 X
South Road (Hythe)	TR13 S
Stade Street groyne (Hythe)	TR13 S
Stonereach Bridge	TR13 G
Stutfall Castle (West Hythe)	TR13 C
Sunny Sands (Folkestone)	TR13 I
Twiss Avenue (Hythe)	TR13 S
Twiss Road (Hythe)	TR13 S
West Hythe	TR13 H
West Hythe dam	TR13 C
Westenhanger	TR13 I
Willop Basin	TR13 A
Willop Outfall	TR13 A
Willop Sewage Works	TR13 A / TR13 B
Willop Sewer	TR13 A / TR13 B
Willow Wood (Saltwood)	TR13 N



Whinchat and Stonechat at Botolph's Bridge in TR13 G (Brian Harper)

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Barn Owl at Botolph's Bridge (Brian Harper)