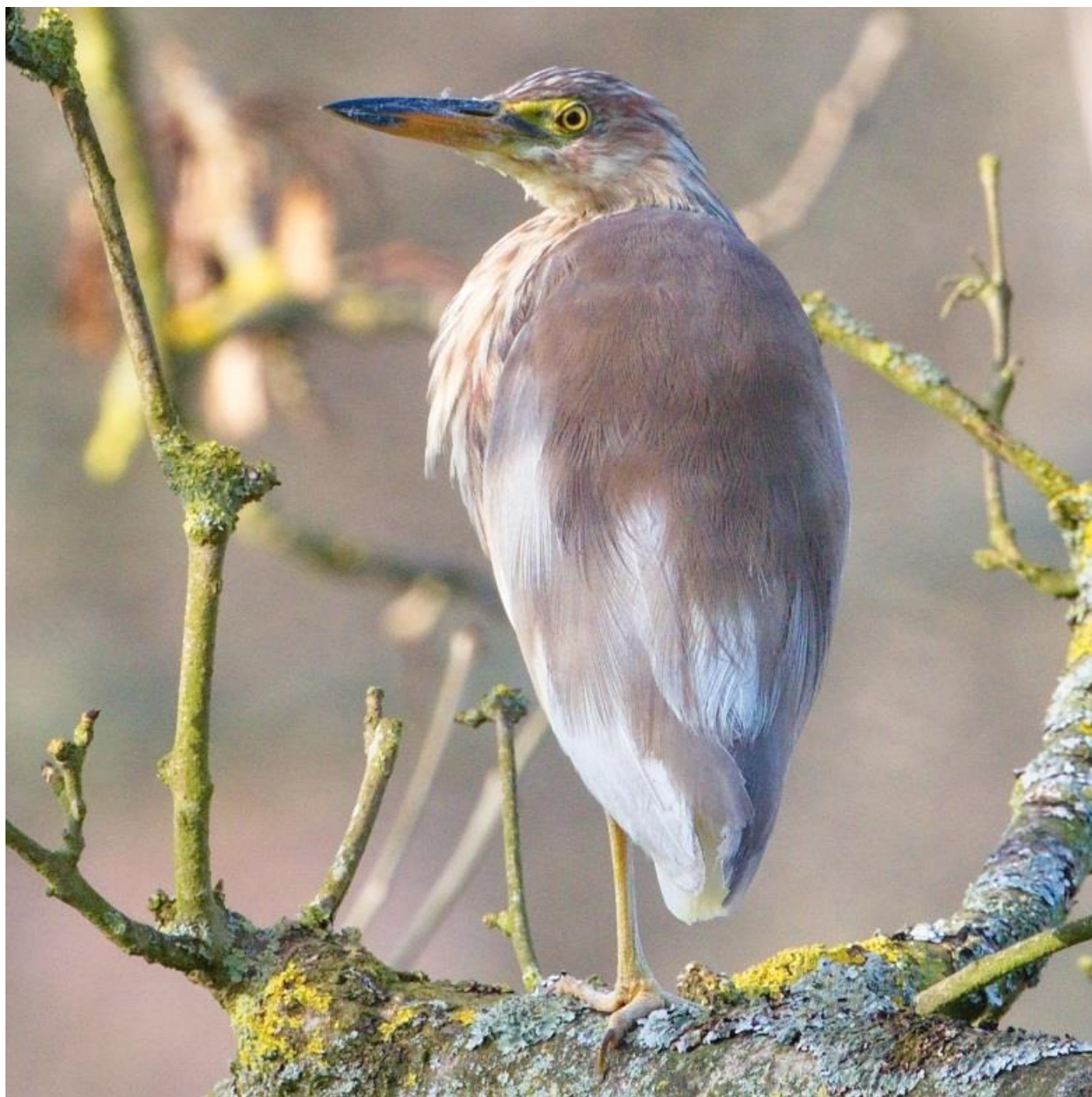


2014



Folkestone and Hythe Bird Report



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Introduction

Welcome to the third Folkestone and Hythe Bird Report which covers the 192 species recorded in 2014, which was six fewer than the total for the previous year. There was only one addition to the area list, Chinese Pond Heron, but this also made the national headlines as it was also the first record for Britain, though the formal assessment process is still underway. Paul Rowe's fine portrait of the heron graces this year's front page and this is now the second successive year that Paul has provided the cover image. This increased the area list to 299 and this report includes a review of some of the more likely candidates to bring up the milestone of 300.

Despite the relatively low annual total there were, once again, a wealth of highlights to report, including the third record of Nightjar, the third modern record of Quail, the fifth (and first wintering) Pallas's Warbler, the fifth Pale-bellied Brent Goose, the fifth and sixth records of Egyptian Geese, the sixth Purple Heron and Caspian Gull, and seventh record of Great White Egret. Sightings of Smew, Spoonbill, Black-necked Grebe, Rough-legged Buzzard, Little Ringed Plover, Yellow-legged Gull, Ring-necked Parakeet, Long-eared Owl, Wryneck, Lesser Spotted Woodpecker, Bearded Tit, Yellow-browed Warbler and two Wood Warblers added further excitement.

There were record counts or movements of Sooty Shearwater, Red Kite, Arctic Skua, Mediterranean Gull, Raven and House Martin, in a record year overall for Red Kite and Raven. There were the second largest ever counts of Brent Geese and Chiffchaff, the third largest counts of Teal and Mallard, record autumn passages of Great Skua and Wheatear, the best Eider total since 2004 and the strongest spring passage of Common Scoter since 2005.

There was a good autumn passage of Ring Ouzels, and Spotted and Pied Flycatchers, but it was a very poor autumn for finches, with just one Brambling, very few Lesser Redpolls or Siskins, and no Crossbills.

The earliest ever spring arrival of Sedge Warbler and the earliest autumn records of Brent Goose, Black-throated Diver (first August record) and Grasshopper Warbler (since the species bred locally) were also noteworthy. The latest ever autumn record of Wood Lark was also the first in December, the first to involve more than two individuals, and the first to be photographed.

In addition to this there were the first confirmed breeding records of Greylag Goose and Hobby. After a blank year in 2013 there was a welcome return for Tree Sparrow and Corn Bunting, whilst there was again just a single sighting of Turtle Dove and no records of Nightingale or, as was the case last year, Black Tern or Lapland Bunting.

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 112 and my contact details are given below.

It was another exciting year for the website with the launch of the new tetrad guides which will continue to be developed in 2015 and the establishment of a Google maps tool to show local sites and tetrad boundaries, which can be used in conjunction with GPS to pinpoint sightings. The popularity of social media continues to grow, with 392 followers of @folkestonebirds on Twitter at the time of writing.

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13th February 2015

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Front cover: Chinese Pond Heron at Hythe in March 2014 (Paul Rowe)

Citation: Roberts, I. A. (2015). *2014 Folkestone and Hythe Bird Report*

List of contributors 2014

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.

J Allchin	A Kennelly	S Warry
G Badcock	M D Kennett	N Webster
N Baker	M Kirk	P J Wells
S Beard	R Laker	A Whitehouse
B Boothroyd	D Lawie	M Whybrow
A Brown	S Lea	A Woodland
D Brown	O Leyshon	D Wrathall
S Broyd	S Lloyd	
G J A Burton	V Lloyd	
	A Luckhurst	
K Campbell		
R Card	A Mackay	
D Clarke	D Mansfield	
P Cliffe	S McMinn	
P Coleman		
L Collins	R K Norman	
M Collins		
	C Philpott	
M Dawson	E Preedy	
C Dyer	T Prentice	
C Dyett	K C Privett	
P Edmondson	R Rackliffe	
L G R Evans	I A Roberts	
	C D Roberts	
V Fairchild	B A Ryan	
D Featherbe	C Ryan	
B Findlay		
N C Frampton	P J Sharp	
	R Shrubsole	
D A Gibson	D E Smith	
C Gillard	P R Smith	
B Green	R Smith	
	S Smith	
B Harper	N Spencer	
M Harper	C Stokes	
N Hollands	M Sutherland	
P Holt	M Szczepanek	
G Howard		
P Howe	J Tilby	
B Hutchens	J Tomsett	
	P Trodd	
A Jupp		
	M Vandoen	
	M Varley	
	S Varley	

Review of the year 2014

January

The year began wet and windy as a series of depressions swept in off the Atlantic throughout the month. All but three days saw at least some rainfall and the total for the month was over 120mm. This did mean that it was mild, with daytime temperatures regularly into double figures and there were very few overnight frosts.

The month was most notable for two very unusual finds. With only one previous January record in the county, and just a handful in Britain, the discovery of a **Pallas's Warbler** in an area of wood and scrubland off Pond Hill Road, Cheriton on the 24th was quite amazing. This delightful bird remained until at least the end of February though could be frustratingly elusive at times. Even more unexpected was an *ardeola* heron seen in a private garden in Saltwood between the 21st and 24th. The resident suspected that it was a Squacco Heron but given the unusual date of occurrence thoughts quickly turned to the other members of the genus.



Pallas's Warbler at Pond Hill Road (Brian Harper)

Fortunately it was relocated later in the month and moved to a more public area in February, enabling better photographs to be taken, and its identity to be established as a **Chinese Pond Heron**.

An adult **White-fronted Goose** which flew west past Princes Parade, Seabrook on the 26th was another highlight but otherwise, with the mild conditions, wildfowl numbers were unremarkable in January. A Greylag Goose which appeared to have an injured wing was at the Willop Basin throughout the month and was joined by a pair on the 7th (with two, possibly the same birds, seen at Botolph's Bridge later that day) and another single on the 26th. There were a few early easterly movements of Brent Geese though in much smaller numbers than last year, including 224 east past Samphire Hoe and 195 east past Folkestone Beach (with probably some overlap between counts) on the 4th, 40 east past the latter site on the 15th and 28 east past Samphire Hoe on the 18th. Single Shelduck were noted on five occasions.

The only records of Wigeon were two west past Seabrook on the 26th and three west past Folkestone Beach on the 30th. The lake in Chesterfield Wood, Saltwood held up to 15 Teal, 23 Gadwall and 23 Mallard during the month, whilst 2 Pochard, 2 Tufted Duck and 5 Teal were on the lake at Folkestone Racecourse, Westenhanger on the 12th, up to four Tufted Duck were at Nickolls Quarry throughout, with three at Botolph's Bridge on the 2nd. Three Teal flew west past Folkestone Beach on the 3rd and up to 18 were on the sewer at the Willop Basin. Other counts of Mallard included 30 on the canal at Hythe, 23 at Radnor Park, Folkestone and 20 at Stutfall Castle, West Hythe, whilst an apparent "Brewer's Duck" (Gadwall x Mallard hybrid) was on the lake in Chesterfield Wood, Saltwood on the 12th January.

Two Velvet Scoter flew east past Folkestone Beach on the 12th and 100 Common Scoter flew west there on the 9th, whilst counts of Common Scoter in Hythe Bay included 150 off Hythe Redoubt on the 2nd, 200 off Princes Parade, Seabrook on the 3rd and 4th, and 120 off the Willop Outfall on the 24th.

Red-throated Diver numbers were relatively low, with peaks of 25 off the Willop Outfall on the 24th and 80 west there on the 27th, but there were some reasonable counts of Great Crested Grebes, including 20 off Folkestone Pier on the 1st, 100 off the Willop Outfall on the 24th and 131 flying west there on the 27th, whilst large numbers were on the sea off Samphire Hoe on the 18th and one on a pond there on the 4th was an unusual record.

Up to nine Fulmars were on the cliffs at Samphire Hoe whilst smaller numbers were noted at other coastal sites with an unusual record of one flying over Pond Hill Road, Cheriton on the 25th.

Up to 30 Gannets were counted on several dates, with a larger movement of 75 west past Princes Parade, Seabrook on the 26th.

The only Little Egret of the month was at West Hythe on the 1st. Single Marsh Harriers were at Nickolls Quarry on the 2nd and the Willop Basin on the 27th.



Chinese Pond Heron at Saltwood (Mike Dawson)

Buzzards continued to be seen at the usual sites, with singles at the Willop Basin on the 24th and Pond Hill Road, Cheriton on the 27th notable as they were away from the usual woodland haunts. A Merlin was seen over Saltwood on the 24th and the pair of Peregrines were still at the Willop Basin (from 2013) until at least the same date.

At least four Water Rails were wintering at Nickolls Quarry with another at Holy Well, Folkestone on the 21st. The mild weather meant that Coot numbers though were again very low, with a peak of just eight at Nickolls Quarry on the 5th and another on the lake at Folkestone Racecourse, Westenhanger.

The regular Ringed Plover roost at Folkestone Beach reached a peak of 41 on the 8th, but Lapwing numbers were disappointing: 128 were counted at the Willop Basin on the 3rd but very few were then seen there until around 220 flew over on the 24th, and none were noted elsewhere. The Willop area also produced the only records of Dunlin (on the 19th), Sanderling (on the 21st) and Knot (flying west on the 27th). Up to four Purple Sandpipers remained in the Hythe area throughout, being mainly seen on the rock groyne opposite the end of Stade Street. Small numbers of Snipe were recorded at widespread localities, with a peak count of eight at Fairmead Farm, Westenhanger on the 12th, when a Woodcock was also noted there, with others of the latter species at Saltwood on the 9th, Chesterfield Wood, Saltwood on two dates and near Shorncliffe Cemetery (3 or 4 over the last two weeks of the month).

Curlews were at the Willop Outfall in good numbers throughout, with a peak count of 48 there on the 27th, when 17 Redshank were also logged. Two Green Sandpipers were at Nickolls Quarry on the 5th, with one in a flooded field opposite Bluehouse Wood Lane from the 19th (into February) and another flying over Pond Hill Road, Cheriton on the 25th.

The stormy conditions led to Kittiwakes being regularly noted offshore, including counts of 35 west past Folkestone Beach and 64 west past Samphire Hoe on the 4th, and 35 west past Princes Parade, Seabrook on the 26th. There were two small influxes of Little Gulls, with single adults seen off Hythe on the 1st, Hythe Redoubt and the Willop Outfall on the 2nd and Battery Point, Seabrook on the 3rd, and in the last week on the month two first-winters were seen over the flood at the Willop Basin on the 24th, with an adult there on the 27th and another flying east past Folkestone Beach on the 29th. Mediterranean Gulls were present in good numbers as always, including up to 120 in the Church Road area of Cheriton throughout, 40 in Folkestone Harbour on the 9th and 12 at the Willop Basin on the 18th.

A colour-ringed first-winter Great Black-backed Gull seen at Folkestone Harbour on the 17th January had been ringed as a chick near Bergen, Norway in July 2013. There were also some notable counts of auks, though not quite in the same quantities as last year. Three figure counts involved 460 Guillemots (and at least 12 Razorbills) east past Folkestone Beach on the 12th, 395 Guillemots (and at least 80 Razorbills) west past Princes Parade, Seabrook on the 26th, 205 auks past Samphire Hoe on the 27th and 130 Guillemots west past Princes Parade, Seabrook on the 28th.



Bearded Tit at Nickolls Quarry (Ian Roberts)

A Tawny Owl was heard near Sandling Station on the 7th and a Kingfisher was seen along the canal at West Hythe on the 8th.

There were two large Jackdaw counts received, one of 500 flying west at the Willop Basin (presumably post-roost dispersal) on the 7th and a pre-roost gathering of 1,200 at Sandling on the 12th. Two Ravens were seen at Samphire Hoe on the 27th and there was a very interesting series of sightings further west, including singles in Chesterfield Wood, Saltwood on three dates, and flying over Botolph's Bridge on the 27th, Paraker Wood, Seabrook on the 30th and Pond Hill Road, Cheriton on the 31st.

Firecrests were noted at Brockhill Country Park, Pond Hill Road, Mill Point (2) and West Hythe (2). A male **Bearded Tit** lingered at Nickolls Quarry from 2013 until at least 5th January and a Marsh Tit was in Chesterfield Wood, Saltwood on the 10th. Two Cetti's Warblers were at Nickolls Quarry throughout, a male Blackcap was at Lympe on the 25th and a Chiffchaff was at Nickolls Quarry on the 5th. Presumably due to the mild weather, winter thrush numbers were very low. Redwings were only noted in single figures and the only report of Fieldfares was of 47 at Postling Wents on the 12th.

Single Black Redstarts were wintering at Folkestone Harbour and Samphire Hoe and pairs of Stonechat were seen at Nickolls Quarry, Samphire Hoe and the Willop Basin. Rock Pipits were noted at Folkestone Harbour (2) and Samphire Hoe (3) whilst 12 Meadow Pipits were counted at Nickolls Quarry on the 5th. Few Linnet flocks were recorded but 50 were at Folkestone Racecourse, Westenhangar on the 12th and 7 were at Fisherman's Beach, Hythe on the 19th, whilst the only Lesser Redpoll noted was a single in Chesterfield Wood, Saltwood on the 10th-11th.

The total number of species recorded (108) was very slightly less than the previous three Januaries, but this was more than compensated by the quality of some of those recorded.

February

February began where January left off with further Atlantic depressions and another 170mm of rain. At least it continued to be relatively mild with daytime temperatures typically around the double figure mark and no overnight frosts. The second half of the month showed some signs of promise with a few dry days and even a little sunshine.

The undoubted highlights of February continued to be the extraordinary pair of wintering Asian vagrants – the **Chinese Pond Heron** and **Pallas's Warbler** – which continued to delight locals and visitors alike, though both could be rather elusive. A **Pale-bellied Brent Goose** at the Willop Basin on the 9th was another highlight (being only the fifth record of this form) but otherwise, with the continued mild conditions, wildfowl numbers remained low. The Greylag Goose which appears to have an injured wing remained at the Willop Basin throughout and was joined by a pair on the 9th and a single on the 28th. A pair of Canada Geese had returned to the breeding site at Nickolls Quarry by the 22nd. There were just two small easterly movements of Brent Geese noted: 63 passing Samphire Hoe on the 3rd and 90 passing Folkestone Beach on the 24th. Up to two Shelduck were at the Willop Basin on several dates.

A male Mandarin was seen in Kiln Wood, Pedlinge on the 2nd whilst a flooded field at nearby Folk's Wood held up to ten between the 2nd and the 9th. Two Gadwall were at Botolph's Bridge on the 1st, when eight Teal were at Nickolls Quarry and 52 Teal were counted on the sewer at the Willop Basin on the 9th. The lake at Folkestone Racecourse, Westenhanger held up to four Pochard and five Tufted Duck during the month.

An immature male Eider was noted off Hythe Redoubt on the 22nd, single Velvet Scoter were noted off the Willop Outfall on the 1st and flying west past Folkestone Beach on the 5th, and counts of Common Scoter included 160 flying west past Folkestone Beach on the 5th, 170 off the Willop Outfall on the 10th and 250 off Princes Parade, Seabrook on the 28th.



Pale-bellied Brent Goose at the Willop Basin (Ian Roberts)

Single Little Egrets were seen flying over Saltwood on the 6th and at Botolph's Bridge on the 27th. The latter site also hosted a Marsh Harrier, a Buzzard and a Peregrine on the 21st, with several records of Buzzard from the more usual wooded areas and a Peregrine over Saltwood on the 4th.

Lapwings were virtually absent with a peak of just three at the Willop Basin on the 9th and there were peaks of 12 Curlew (on the 2nd) and 14 Redshank (on the 9th) there. Two Purple Sandpipers were at Battery Point, Seabrook on the 1st but only one was reported from Hythe during the month. A Jack Snipe was seen twice in a stubble field near Hillhurst Farm, Westenhanger on the 2nd and 26th, but Common Snipe were only noted in low numbers, with a peak of six at nearby Fairmead Farm on the 2nd. There was a very good count of nine Woodcock however in Chesterfield Wood on the 2nd, with singles in Kiln Wood, Pedlinge the same day and in Saltwood the following day. The Green Sandpiper remained in a flooded field opposite Bluehouse Wood Lane until at least the 9th, whilst two Curlew that flew east past Princes Parade, Seabrook on the 28th might have been early migrants.

A Little Gull reported over Turnpike Hill, Hythe on the 15th was an unusual record and up to 12 Kittiwakes were in Folkestone Harbour on the 27th. Up to 120 Mediterranean Gulls were seen regularly in the Church Road area of Cheriton with smaller numbers elsewhere. Nine Lesser Black-backed Gulls were at the Willop Basin on the 28th and a presumed Herring x Glaucous Gull hybrid was seen there on the 10th (with the same or another there on the 28th to 2nd March). Relatively few auks were logged but a small number of Guillemots and Razorbills were found dead at Seabrook at the end of the month, part of a large wreck further west along the English Channel.

A Little Owl was at West Hythe on the 1st and a Tawny Owl was hooting at Hythe Roughs on the 13th. A record count of six Ravens were seen over Folkestone Warren on the 25th and up to three were at Saltwood the following day, whilst Firecrests were wintering at Pond Hill Road, Mill Point (up to three) and Folkestone Warren (up to three). The Fieldfare flock remained at Postling Wents, with 40 there on the 2nd, but very few Redwings were noted. Single Black Redstarts remained at Folkestone Harbour and Samphire Hoe.

A Siskin was singing in Kiln Wood, Pedlinge on the 2nd and during February a nearby stubble field at Hillhurst Farm, Westenhanger held a Corn Bunting, 2 Reed Buntings, 10 Meadow Pipits, 15 Stock Doves, 17 Sky Larks, 30 Linnets and 50+ Yellowhammers.

There were just 7 additions to the year list in February, which increased it to 115.

March

Although the first few days of March saw another Atlantic depression pass through it was generally a much drier month.

The **Chinese Pond Heron** continued to roam the Saltwood and western Hythe area, though appears to have last been seen alive on the 13th and was sadly found freshly dead at Orchard Valley, Hythe on the 25th March. The remains were sent for DNA analysis which confirmed its identification. The **Pallas's Warbler** was last reported briefly at Pond Hill Road, Cheriton on the 1st.

Other wintering birds included up to 3 Greylag Geese, 6 Shelduck and 10 Curlew at the Willop Basin and four Greylag Geese arrived in the Botolph's Bridge / Nickolls Quarry area mid-month, with nine at the latter site on the 31st. Nickolls Quarry also held up to 10 Tufted Ducks, 3 Jack Snipe, 15 Snipe and 3 Cetti's Warblers. The immature male Eider first noted in February remained in the Hythe Redoubt / Willop Outfall area until at least the 24th, and 33 Great Crested Grebes were seen off the latter site on the 15th.



Chinese Pond Heron at Hythe (Paul Rowe)

There was a small influx of Shags, with up to 4 at Folkestone Harbour, 3 off Battery Point, Seabrook (on the 7th), up to 2 at Samphire Hoe and in the Mill Point area, and one at Hythe Redoubt on the 16th. Up to two Peregrines remained in the Botolph's Bridge area early in the month, with another at Hythe Ranges on the 11th, and up to two Purple Sandpipers were at Hythe throughout. A Firecrest was wintering at Mill Point and a Blackcap in a garden in Folkestone on the 6th was presumably also an overwintering bird. Single Black Redstarts remained at Samphire Hoe and in the Folkestone Harbour / Pier area.

Another Black Redstart at the Willop Outfall on the 1st might have been an early migrant and a Rock Pipit, 3 Pintail and 3 Dunlin were noted there the same day, whilst a Tufted Duck and 3 Shoveler flew past. Given the paucity of wintering thrushes, two Redwings at Church Hougham on the 4th were presumably migrants. Two Buzzards flew east over Cheriton the same day with another flying Buzzard flew south-west over Saltwood on the 5th, when eight were noted between Grange Road, Saltwood and the M20, and a Reed Bunting was at Abbotscliffe.

On the 6th eight Lesser Black-backed Gulls flew high east at Seabrook and 180 Brent Geese went east past Mill Point the following day. A flock of 20 Redwings at Perry Wood on the 8th was also likely to have been migrants, as might a Buzzard that flew over Saltwood the next day, though it is becoming increasingly difficult to distinguish passage birds from the thriving resident population. The 9th also produced a count of 13 Lesser Black-backed Gulls at the Willop Basin, with a further four heading north over Saltwood the following day, when 60 Chaffinches flew east at Abbotscliffe and 66 Brent Geese flew east at Samphire Hoe. A Black Redstart at Copt Point was presumably a new arrival, with another at Church Hougham on the 11th.

A Golden Plover was at Abbotscliffe on the 12th, when 29 Chaffinches flew east there and 70 Starlings flew north over Saltwood. On the 13th a Woodcock and two pairs of Stonechat were seen at Samphire Hoe, where 25 Gannets flew east and a Buzzard flew north over Folkestone.

The 14th produced the first migrant Chiffchaffs – at Saltwood and Samphire Hoe, whilst the latter site also attracted a new Black Redstart and a Reed Bunting, whilst singles of Grey and *alba* Wagtail flew east there, and two Redwings were at Abbotscliffe. A **Black-tailed Godwit** was at the Willop Basin briefly on the 15th, as was a Rock Pipit, and 4 Dunlin flew west. Another Chiffchaff was at Nickolls Quarry, a **Red Kite** and a Buzzard flew over Hythe, and a **Red Kite** and 10 Buzzards flew over Saltwood.

The 16th was the warmest day of the year so far, with temperatures reaching 18°C and this, combined with a moderate westerly wind, made for ideal conditions for raptors. There was a record movement of **Red Kites** including up to seven flying west at Abbotscliffe, with two south-west over Saltwood and singles seen over Brockhill Country Park, Hythe and Hythe Roughs. Marsh Harriers were noted at Abbotscliffe and Donkey Street, whilst widespread sightings of Sparrowhawk and Buzzard, including four of the former and about 12 of the latter at Abbotscliffe, no doubt included some migrants. A Redwing, a Goldcrest, a Reed Bunting and 3 Chiffchaffs were also seen at Abbotscliffe, a Greylag Goose flew east and 14 Linnets arrived in off the sea. A Chiffchaff was at Brockhill.



Black Redstart at Willop Outfall (Brian Harper)

Another **Red Kite** was seen over Samphire Hoe on the 17th, and Chiffchaffs continued to arrive as a south-westerly airflow became established, including three at Samphire Hoe, singles in gardens in Folkestone and Hythe, and others at Nickolls Quarry and West Hythe, whilst the only Fieldfare of the month was at Botolph's Bridge. The first two Wheatears were at Samphire Hoe the following day, where a Water Rail was also present (until it was taken by a Peregrine), and 6 Pintail flew west. A Chiffchaff, 2 Wheatears and 2 Black Redstarts were at Samphire Hoe on the 19th, when three Greylag Geese flew west and 40 Brent Geese went east. Elsewhere a Green Sandpiper was at Botolph's Bridge, but the 20th produced just a single Wheatear at Samphire Hoe and a Black Redstart at the Willop Outfall.

A **Little Ringed Plover** was with two Dunlin at the Willop Basin on the 21st and 49 Brent Geese flew east past Samphire Hoe, whilst a male White Wagtail and 2 Wheatears were at the latter site the following day. On the 23rd an *alba* wagtail and 19 Linnets flew in off the sea at Abbotscliffe, whilst 2 Sparrowhawks and 8 Buzzards there might have included passage birds. A pair of Shoveler, 4 Chiffchaffs and 5 Redwings were at Nickolls Quarry on the 24th, whilst next day saw the first two Sandwich Terns, 11 Red-throated Divers, 23 Gannets and 27 Common Scoter passing east off Folkestone.

Three Chiffchaffs were at Mill Point on the 27th and the first migrant Blackcap was singing there the following day, when the first Swallow was at Nickolls Quarry, 250 Brent Geese went east at Samphire Hoe, and a pair of Mandarin off Folkestone Pier was an unusual sighting. South-easterly winds on the 29th produced the best sea passage of the month, with a **Black-necked Grebe** and totals of 4 Sandwich Terns, 5 Red-breasted Mergansers, 6 Teal, 8 Pintail, 9 Shoveler, 12 Eider, 17 Brent Geese, 25 Red-throated Divers, 32 Gannets, 50 Common Gulls and 147 Black-headed Gulls east past Mill Point / Princes Parade, whilst two Wheatears were seen at the latter site.

The 30th saw a small arrival of Blackcaps with singles at Folkestone Warren, Road of Remembrance (Folkestone) and Princes Parade, Seabrook, and two at West Hythe. Two Sandwich Terns were seen off Princes Parade, 17 Brent Geese flew east at Mill Point and a Snipe was at the Willop Basin.

The final day of the month produced 29 Sandwich Terns and 313 Brent Geese east past Folkestone Pier, another Blackcap at Nickolls Quarry, and a Black Redstart in a garden Laurel Close, Cheriton.

Of note amongst birds settling into potential sites were single pairs of Lapwing and Oystercatcher at the Willop Basin, and single pairs of Canada Goose and Oystercatcher at Nickolls Quarry, with up to two pairs of Great Crested Grebe there. There were also several sightings of Raven along the cliffs which continues to be a regular but as yet non-breeding visitor.



Wheatear at Samphire Hoe (Ian Roberts)

Only 11 species were added to the year list in March and increased it to 128 species, which was considerably less than at the same time last year (140).

April

There was a mild and dry start to the month and lingering winter visitors included the immature drake Eider, which remained in Hythe Bay throughout (being seen from various points between the Willop Outfall and Sandgate) and being joined by a female from the 18th, and the Purple Sandpiper flock, which peaked at five at Battery Point, Seabrook on the 1st. Incoming summer migrants comprised a Wheatear at Princes Parade, a Chiffchaff at Fisherman's Beach, Hythe and 5 male Blackcaps at Mill Point on the 1st, when 71 Sandwich Terns flew east past Samphire Hoe. The latter site also held two Black Redstarts which remained throughout, and a Wheatear and 7 Stonechats.

A male **Goosander** flew east past Samphire Hoe on the 2nd, whilst totals from there and Folkestone Pier included a Red-breasted Merganser, 4 Common Scoter, 5 Red-throated Divers, 13 Gannets and 17 Brent Geese heading east and a Sky Lark, 2 Meadow Pipits and 8 Linnets arriving in off the sea. A Blackcap was at Abbotscliffe, with three at Folkestone Downs, and Chiffchaffs continued to arrive with five at the latter site, and widespread ones and twos at many sites thereafter. Single Reed Buntings were at Samphire Hoe and along the canal at Seabrook.

A southerly breeze on the 3rd produced a Curlew, 3 Red-throated Divers, 4 Lesser Black-backed Gulls, 17 Sandwich Terns, 20 Gannets, 28 Brent Geese and 32 Common Scoter flying east past Mill Point, and a Swallow at Hythe Ranges. In a light south-westerly the following day there was a massive movement of Brent Geese, with **2,580** passing east at Mill Point (the second largest ever count). A Black-throated Diver, the first five Common Terns of the year, 6 Sandwich Terns, 6 Mediterranean Gulls, 14 Red-breasted Mergansers, 20 Red-throated Divers, 21 Wigeon, 112 Gannets and 425 Common Scoter also flew east there, and a Shag was offshore, with a Ringed Plover on the beach.

On the 5th a **Red Kite** flew east over at Hythe, a Jack Snipe, a Blackcap and the first two Sedge Warblers were at Nickolls Quarry, a Black Redstart was singing at Risborough Barracks, a Swallow and several Blackcaps were at Eaton Lands, Saltwood, and another Blackcap was at Samphire Hoe (with regular, widespread records thereafter).

Heavy showers on the 6th grounded a House Martin, a Sand Martin and 11 Swallows at Nickolls Quarry, and singles of Willow Warbler and Wheatear at Samphire Hoe.

The following day saw 2 Green Sandpipers, 3 Sand Martins, 3 Swallows and 4 Sedge Warblers at the former site and two Wheatears at the latter, where 27 Common Scoter flew east.

A Wheatear, 2 Blackcaps and 4 Chiffchaffs were at Samphire Hoe on the 8th, with a Swallow and a Willow Warbler at Nickolls Quarry and another Willow Warbler at the Willop Basin, where there were singles of Curlew (remaining to the 13th) and Lapwing (to the 14th).



Egyptian Geese at the Willop Basin (Ian Roberts)

Willow Warblers continued to arrive, with three singing at Church Road, Cheriton the next day, and singles at Abbotscliffe and Folkestone Downs on the 10th, when a Yellow Wagtail and 6 Swallows flew in off the sea at the former site, and a Curlew flew east there whilst a Wheatear and 19 Linnets were logged. The 11th produced a flock of five Egyptian Geese at the Willop Basin and a Goldcrest and 2 Wheatears at Samphire Hoe, where 32 Goldfinches flew east. Three Avocet flew west past the Willop Outfall the following day and the first Reed Warbler (at Nickolls Quarry) and Whitethroat (at Princes Parade, Seabrook) were noted, whilst a Willow Warbler and 47 Linnets were at Abbotscliffe.

The year list continued to grow on the 13th when a **Rough-legged Buzzard** flew north over Saltwood, a **Ring-necked Parakeet** flew over Cheriton, a Redstart was seen at Abbotscliffe and a Lesser Whitethroat was at Nickolls Quarry. Also of note was a count of 13 Swallows flying in off the sea at Capel-le-Ferne.

A Sedge Warbler, 3 Willow Warblers and 5 Blackcaps were at Folkestone Downs on the 14th, whilst a Snipe, a Whitethroat and a Reed Warbler were at Nickolls Quarry, where Sedge Warblers had increased to five singing males, and a Willow Warbler was at the Willop Basin. The first Garden Warbler and 4 Blackcaps were at Nickolls Quarry on the 16th, when an Eider and 6 Common/Arctic Terns flew east past Mill Point and a Shag was seen off Folkestone Pier.

On the 17th two Mediterranean Gulls, 4 Great Skuas, 8 Sandwich Terns, 14 Gannets, 140 Common Scoter and 195 Brent Geese flew east past Samphire Hoe, a Whimbrel was at the Willop Basin, and a Cuckoo, a new Lesser Whitethroat, 2 Reed Warblers and 7 Sedge Warblers were at Nickolls Quarry.

A **Red Kite** flew over the Willop Basin the following day, when 3 Whimbrel were seen there, and a Jack Snipe and a Cuckoo were at Nickolls Quarry, 11 Dunlin were at the Hythe Redoubt and Whitethroats and Lesser Whitethroats continued to arrive. The 19th saw a House Martin, a Sand Martin, 3 Lesser Whitethroats and 8 Swallows at Folkestone Downs, a House Martin at Abbotscliffe, 11 Whimbrel east and 15 Swallows in off the sea at Samphire Hoe, and an escaped Cockatiel at Seabrook.

The 20th produced a Great Skua, a Grey Plover, 2 Bar-tailed Godwits, 2 Whimbrel and 7 Common/Arctic Terns east past Mill Point, with a Shag offshore and 6 Swallows in off the sea, whilst a Cuckoo was at Saltwood, 2 Shelduck, 2 House Martins and 3 Reed Warblers were at Nickolls Quarry and a Dunlin was at the Willop Outfall. A singing **Wood Warbler** and a Ring Ouzel were near Shorncliffe Cemetery on the 21st, when a **Yellow-legged Gull** was on the Hythe Imperial golf course, a Black Redstart, a Lesser Whitethroat, 2 House Martins, 2 Whitethroats, 3 Willow Warblers and 4 Wheatears were at Abbotscliffe and 2 Yellow Wagtails and 21 Swallows flew in off the sea. A Cuckoo was again at Nickolls Quarry where it remained until the end of the month (being joined by another from the 24th), a Wheatear and 2 House Martins were at Samphire Hoe and a Whimbrel flew east over Hythe.

On the 22nd an Arctic Skua, 8 Gannets, 8 auk sp., 9 Red-throated Divers, 12 Brent Geese, 16 Common/Arctic Terns, 22 Sandwich Terns and 245 Common Scoter flew east past Mill Point, a Tufted Duck flew west and 6 Swallows arrived in off the sea, with 3 Wheatears at Samphire Hoe, whilst a **Ring-necked Parakeet** flew over Hythe in the evening. The following day saw a **Red Kite** drift east over Samphire Hoe, whilst a Whimbrel, 5 Brent Geese, 17 Oystercatchers and 49 Common Scoter flew east at sea, three Yellow Wagtails arrived in off and a Shag was noted. At Mill Point a Curlew, 3 Whimbrel, 4 Little Terns, 10 Common/Arctic Terns, 15 Gannets, 200 Common Scoter and 300 Sandwich Terns flew east and another Yellow Wagtail flew in off the sea whilst 3 Wheatears were present. Two Yellow Wagtails were at the Willop Basin, whilst the first Hobby of the year flew over Seabrook.



Wood Warbler near Shorncliffe Cemetery (Ian Roberts)

Arrival continued on the 24th when 2 Sand Martins and 45 Swallows flew in off the sea at Abbotscliffe, with four Wheatears present, and a Yellow Wagtail flew over Church Road, Cheriton. A Cuckoo was at Saltwood, two Whimbrel were at Nickolls Quarry and two Whimbrel flew east past Folkestone Pier. The second **Wood Warbler** of the month (a brighter individual) was singing near Pond Hill Road, Cheriton the next day, when a Great Skua and 2 Whimbrel flew east past Copt Point and 5 Oystercatchers, 9 Bar-tailed Godwits, 17 Whimbrel, 31 Gannets and 107 Sandwich Terns flew east past Samphire Hoe, where 12 Swallows flew in off the sea. On the 26th 14 Bar-tailed Godwits and 55 Common Scoters flew east past Copt Point, 10 Whimbrel flew east over Hythe Roughs and c.50 Common/Arctic Terns flew east past Princes Parade, with the first Common Sandpiper of the year at Samphire Hoe.

The 27th was showery with a moderate south-easterly wind which encouraged a Manx Shearwater, a Black-throated Diver, 2 Red-breasted Mergansers, 3 Eider, 3 Arctic Skuas, 5 Great Skuas, 5 Brent Geese, about 20 Arctic Terns, 40 Common Terns, 22 Fulmars, 23 Bar-tailed Godwits, 135 Gannets and 176 Common Scoter to fly east past Mill Point. A Redshank was on the beach at the Willop Outfall, with c.500 Common Scoter offshore. The following day produced an Osprey over Folkestone, three Whimbrel at Nickolls Quarry and 30 Bar-tailed Godwits east past Mill Point.

A Ring Ouzel, 4 Whitethroats and 6 House Martins were at Samphire Hoe on the 29th, when a Great Skua, a Whimbrel and 6 Kittiwakes flew east and a Yellow Wagtail flew in off the sea. At Copt Point a Tufted Duck, 2 Arctic Skuas and 75 Sandwich Terns flew east and a Hobby was seen at Capel-le-Ferne. The final day of the month saw 2 Shovelers and 4 Whimbrel flying east past Folkestone Pier, with 5 Swallows in off the sea there, and a Yellow Wagtail in off at Samphire Hoe, where a Shag was present.

A pair of Canada Geese were present at Nickolls Quarry throughout and produced three young, whilst up to ten Greylag Geese remained in the area all month (up to four Nickolls Quarry area and up to six at the Willop Basin) but there had been no evidence of breeding by the end of the month. Up to 17 Tufted Ducks were at Nickolls Quarry in the first half of the month and up to four pairs remained into May, with another pair at Botolph's Bridge. Single pairs of Oystercatcher were at Nickolls Quarry and the Willop Basin, but the Lapwing pair disappeared from the latter site. The former site also held at least three Cetti's Warbler territories during April. Up to four Ravens were noted along the cliffs, with two along Folkestone Downs on the 23rd, with singles at Chesterfield Wood on the 6th, Cheriton on the 18th and Hythe on the 19th. Finally a singing Corn Bunting was at Abbotscliffe from the 12th until the month's end.

The year list increased considerably in April, by 35 species to 161, which meant that it had recovered to the same level as last year.

May

After a fairly wet first day, May was generally dry and rather mild, with a particularly warm spell mid-month.

The month began slowly with a Wheatear, a Willow Warbler, 5 Swallows and 6 House Martins at Samphire Hoe, where 6 Sandwich Terns, 14 Brent Geese and 85 Common Scoter flew east, 9 Shelduck flew west and a Shag was present offshore.

Two Shags were seen off Folkestone Pier the following day and 6 Whimbrel, 6 Dunlin and 21 Sandwich Terns flew east, whilst 3 Swallows flew in off the sea at Hythe Redoubt and 7 Swallows flew north over Nickolls Quarry.



Purple Heron at Nickolls Quarry (Ian Roberts)

On the 3rd a **Pomarine Skua** was reported flying east past Samphire Hoe, a Great Skua, 5 Little Terns, 11 Sandwich Tern, 14 Common Tern 33 Whimbrel and 40 Bar-tailed Godwits flew east past Mill Point, the first two Swifts were seen over Folkestone and 11 House Martins and 21 Swallows flew in off the sea at Capel-le-Ferne.

The next day saw 2 Mute Swans, 3 Whimbrel, 3 Red-throated Divers, 10 Sandwich Terns, 22 Black-headed Gulls, 50 Bar-tailed Godwits and 110 Common Scoter head east past Samphire Hoe, where a Hobby, a Wheatear, 2 Lesser Whitethroats, 3 Yellow Wagtails, 4 Swallows and 9 House Martins were noted, whilst a Wheatear and a Yellow Wagtail were along Crete Road West and 2 Yellow Wagtails and 6 Swallows flew in off the sea at the cliffs. Temperatures climbed in the afternoon and produced a Buzzard and a **Honey Buzzard** over Cheriton, a Merlin, a Peregrine and Buzzard over Folkestone, and a Raven and 3 Buzzards over Saltwood. Also of note were a Common Sandpiper, the long-staying Eider and 2 Ringed Plovers at the Hythe Redoubt, a Cuckoo and 18 Swifts at Nickolls Quarry, and two Garden Warblers at Heane Wood, Saltwood.

A Great Skua, a Black-throated Diver, a Curlew, 2 Great Crested Grebes, 3 Shelduck, 6 Whimbrel, 9 Oystercatchers, 23 Sandwich Terns, 29 Black-headed Gulls and 68 Common Scoter flew east past Folkestone Pier on the 5th, with a Common Sandpiper and a Shag also of note there, and Swifts continued to arrive in small numbers. The following day saw singles of Great Skua, Black-throated Diver, Whimbrel, Ringed Plover and Common Sandpiper heading east past Folkestone Pier / Mill Point, whilst 73 Common Scoter also flew up-channel. An **Egyptian Goose** was at the Willop Basin on the 7th, with 12 Swifts in off the sea there, and a Greenshank flew west over the Hythe Redoubt, where the last Purple Sandpiper, 2 Eider and a further 7 Swifts was also noted. A Hobby, a Sand Martin, 6 Swallows and 12 Swifts flew through Nickolls Quarry the same day, whilst a Lesser Whitethroat, 2 Cuckoos, 2 Cetti's Warblers, 4 Whitethroats, 10 Sedge Warblers and 12 Reed Warblers were counted there.

Several days of moderate south-westerly winds with some blustery showers followed and migration slowed. On the 8th two Hobbies were at West Hythe and 7 House Martins, 13 Swifts and 30 Swallows were at Nickolls Quarry, whilst a Marsh Harrier was at the former site and a Yellow Wagtail at the latter the next day. Five Swallows and 24 Swifts flew in off the sea at the Mill Point on the 10th, and a Dunlin, 22 Guillemots and 37 Gannets flew west there, whilst 3 Swifts and 10 Swallows were at Nickolls Quarry and 7 Swifts flew west at Hythe. A Common Sandpiper was at Samphire Hoe on the 11th, with an Eider and a Shag there the next day, when 4 Swallows and 10 Swifts flew west at the Willop Outfall, and a Willow Warbler was at Nickolls Quarry.

A change to a northerly breeze on the 13th led to a small arrival, including a Spotted Flycatcher, a Wheatear and 2 Yellow Wagtails at Abbotscliffe, and a 'northern' Willow Warbler, a Sedge Warbler, a Wheatear, 2 Spotted Flycatchers and 2 Lesser Whitethroats at Samphire Hoe, whilst 3 Sand Martins, 4 Swifts, 81 House Martins and 154 Swallows flew in off the sea, and four Shags were reported at the latter site.

The following day produced two Wheatears at Samphire Hoe, and at Abbotscliffe where a further 56 House Martins and 93 Swallows arrived in off the sea, whilst a Yellow Wagtail, a Sand Martin and 25 Swallows flew in off the sea at Capel-le-Ferne on the 15th.

Temperatures reached 20°C on the 16th and a **Purple Heron** circled Nickolls Quarry before heading off east over Hythe, with a Red-breasted Merganser and a Common Sandpiper also of note there, whilst the next day saw a flock of three **Great White Egrets** flying east past Abbotscliffe.



Great White Egrets at Abbotscliffe (Ian Roberts)

The first Whinchat was also seen along Crete Road East on the 17th, a Yellow Wagtail, 8 Swifts, 15 House Martins and over 50 Swallows flew in off the sea at the cliffs, 4 Wheatears were at Samphire Hoe and 2 Common Sandpipers were seen at Hythe. The 18th produced a **Red Kite** and a Buzzard over Folkestone, three Common Sandpipers at Nickolls Quarry, a Yellow Wagtail and 14 Swallows in off the sea at the cliffs, and 50 House Martins at Samphire Hoe.

The 19th was the warmest day of the month and a **Pomarine Skua** flew east past Mill Point, with three Eiders on the sea off Seabrook, a Yellow Wagtail and 2 Wheatears at Abbotscliffe, and a Common Sandpiper at Samphire Hoe. Another **Red Kite** flew over Newingreen on the 20th, when 10 Shoveler flew east at Folkestone Pier, with two Manx Shearwaters west there the next day, with a Black-throated Diver east past Mill Point and a Hobby at the Willop Basin. Three Eider were on the sea off the Willop Outfall on the 24th and 15 House Martins flew west at Hythe.

On the 25th a **Honey Buzzard** flew east at Capel-le-Ferne, and a Sedge Warbler was at Samphire Hoe, whilst 10 Swallows, 15 House Martins and 15 Swifts flew in off the sea at the former site the next day, when a Hobby was at Nickolls Quarry. The 27th saw 10 Swallows, 15 Swifts and 50 House Martins at Abbotscliffe, with a Hobby, 10 House Martins and 50 Swifts at the Willop Outfall the following day, and 6 Swifts at Nickolls Quarry on the 29th. The final day of May produced a female Marsh Harrier at Botolph's Bridge, a Hobby and 3 Buzzards over Hythe and 2 Mediterranean Gulls flying east there.

A pair of Greylag Geese at Nickolls Quarry produced three young (the first confirmed breeding record locally) and up to eight remained at the Willop Basin until mid-month. A pair of Oystercatchers was seen carrying food at the former site and a pair was also present at the latter site in May. Nickolls Quarry also held a pair of Great Crested Grebes and up to 13 Tufted Ducks, whilst the annual census of the heronry at Lympe Park Wood returned 13 nests.

The year list increased by just eight species in May to 169 which left it five behind the same time last year

June

June was also generally dry and warm, with daytime temperature highs regularly exceeding 20°C, before the month ended with a couple of days of heavy and even torrential rain.

The month began well with a flock of 7 **Red Kites** over Saltwood and another Red Kite over Round Down on the 1st, whilst some late sea passage comprised 10 Shelduck and 25 Sandwich Terns flying past Hythe Ranges. Notable summering species included an Eider off Princes Parade, Seabrook on the 2nd and single sightings of Shag (possibly the same bird) at Samphire Hoe on the 3rd and Abbotscliffe on the 6th.

Late summer arrivals involved a **Honey Buzzard** over Cheriton on the 12th, a **Turtle Dove** at Abbotscliffe on the 13th, a singing Reed Warbler at Samphire Hoe on the 1st, late Chiffchaffs at Hythe on the 18th June and Samphire Hoe on the 24th and a Yellow Wagtail there on the 22nd.

Single Hobbies were noted at Capel-le-Ferne Gun Site on the 7th, Seabrook on the 14th and Hythe on the 24th whilst further **Red Kites** were noted flying over Lympe Castle on the 19th and Peene Quarry on the 21st, and single **Honey Buzzards** flew over Folkestone on the 22nd, Cheriton on the 25th, Samphire Hoe on the 28th and West Hythe on the 29th.

The highlight of the month however was a **Spoonbill** which was seen flying over Saltwood on the 23rd.

Breeding successes included two pairs of Black Redstarts and Stonechats at Samphire Hoe.

The Spoonbill was one of just two additions to the year list in June (Turtle Dove being the other), which increased it to 171.



Fledgling Black Restart at Samphire Hoe (Phil Smith)

July

There was a mostly settled start to month, with daytime highs typically exceeding 20°C, and there was a particularly warm spell around mid-month when the temperature approached 30°C on the 18th, preceding a spectacular thunderstorm that evening. The following day saw further heavy, thundery showers but the remainder of July was generally dry and rather warm.

The month got off to an excellent start with the first area record for 15 years of **Lesser Spotted Woodpecker**, with one at Cheriton on the 2nd. Rather more expected were small numbers of returning waders, including four Green Sandpipers at Botolph's Bridge on the 2nd, a peak of six Common Sandpipers at Samphire Hoe on the 8th, with one on the canal at Seabrook on the 20th, a Curlew west over Seabrook on the 12th, with another north at Samphire Hoe on the 22nd, a Dunlin over Hythe at night on the 27th, and several Oystercatchers.

Returning Sand Martins are another typical feature of July and included four west at Abbotscliffe on the 7th, six along Donkey Street on the 9th and a good count of at least 225 at Nickolls Quarry on the 13th. It was generally quiet offshore, though an Eider was noted at Abbotscliffe on the 8th and 2 Great Crested Grebes, 4 Tufted Ducks, 5 Common Terns and 15 Gannets flew past Hythe on the 10th, with 12 Gannets off Samphire Hoe on the 22nd, and a Shag there on the 29th. Wandering Grey Herons involved two east at Abbotscliffe on the 7th and one east at Samphire Hoe on the 22nd, whilst Little Egrets were at Samphire Hoe on the 22nd (two) and in Folkestone Harbour from the 23rd to the 26th.

Hobbies were recorded at Nickolls Quarry and Crete Road East on the 13th, Church Hougham on the 21st, and Samphire Hoe on six dates. A reeling Grasshopper Warbler at Samphire Hoe was a surprise on the 14th, as was an adult Little Grebe there on the 17th, and 2 Ravens were at Folkestone Warren on the 23rd. A juvenile Wheatear was at Samphire Hoe on the 21st, with another there on two dates, a Sedge Warbler there on the 29th and 5 Willow Warblers at Abbotscliffe the same day.

Further breeding records of note included a pair of Ringed Plovers which successfully bred at Folkestone Harbour (though the two chicks later appeared to have been predated by gulls), a pair of Tufted Ducks which may have bred at Botolph's Bridge and at least three successful pairs of Mute Swans, whilst Kingfishers were present at Botolph's Bridge and West Hythe, and a post-breeding flock of 200+ Starlings were at Samphire Hoe from the 22nd.

There were just two additions to the year list in July, which increased it to 173.

August

The month began with a continuation of the generally dry and rather warm weather but the second week saw some heavy thundery showers and cooler conditions.

The rest of the month saw only occasional rain but temperatures remained lower, rarely exceeding 20°C.

Small numbers of waders continued to pass through including a Green Sandpiper at Botolph's Bridge and an Oystercatcher at Folkestone Warren on the 2nd, a Dunlin at Samphire Hoe on the 6th, and Common Sandpipers at Botolph's Bridge and Hythe Redoubt (2) on the 9th, and Samphire Hoe on the 5th and the 11th.



Marsh Harrier at Donkey Street (Brian Harper)

Grounded migrants comprised a Reed Warbler, a Sedge Warbler, a Lesser Whitethroat, 4 Willow Warblers and 5 Whitethroats at Botolph's Bridge on the 2nd, a Sedge Warbler, 8 Willow Warblers, 8 Whitethroats and 12 Lesser Whitethroats at Abbotscliffe on the 3rd, 9 Willow Warblers, 13 Lesser Whitethroats and 14 Whitethroats at Abbotscliffe the next day, 5 Wheatears at Samphire Hoe on the 5th, a Sedge Warbler at Samphire Hoe on the 6th and 3 Wheatears there on the 8th. Overhead 25 Swifts flew west at Abbotscliffe on the 3rd, with 2 Sand Martins and 40 Swifts there the following day, and small numbers of Yellow Wagtails at various sites.

On the 9th a Garden Warbler, 2 Willow Warblers, 2 Lesser Whitethroats and 3 Yellow Wagtails were at Botolph's Bridge, with a Little Egret at Folkestone Harbour on the 10th, a Sedge Warbler and 5 Wheatears at Samphire Hoe on the 11th and a Whinchat and 10 Wheatears there the next day. Singles Hobbies were seen at Samphire Hoe on the 4th and 6th, with two at Lympne on the 8th, with two Ravens there the same day, and another at Botolph's Bridge on the 9th, and up to six Black Redstarts were at Samphire Hoe. A Greenshank flew over Botolph's Bridge on the 16th, when 2 Greenshank and 3 Common Sandpipers were at Hythe Redoubt and 2 Wheatears were on the Hythe Imperial golf course. The following day produced 2 Lesser Whitethroats, 3 Willow Warblers and 6 Whitethroats at Abbotscliffe, where 12 Swifts flew west, whilst on the 18th a Curlew flew over Hythe and at least 480 Mediterranean Gulls were noted at Copt Point. A Shag, a Whinchat and 20 Wheatears were at Samphire Hoe on the 19th.

A Black-throated Diver off Folkestone Sands on the 20th was the earliest even autumn record and the first to be recorded in August. A Lesser Whitethroat, 2 Spotted Flycatchers and 2 Wheatears were at Folkestone Downs the same day, with 3 Wheatears and 12 Yellow Wagtails at Abbotscliffe the next day. On the 22nd a Whinchat, a Lesser Whitethroat, 2 Wheatear and 2 Ravens were seen at Abbotscliffe, whilst four Whimbrel flew west past Copt Point. On the 23rd a Common Sandpiper was at the Hythe Redoubt, with 3 Eider and 30 Lapwings at the Willop Outfall and 2 Wheatears at Princes Parade, Seabrook, with 2 Sand Martins, 3 Buzzards and 82 Swallows flying west at Hythe and a total of 11 Yellow Wagtails at sites from Hythe westwards, including 5 at Botolph's Bridge.

A light south-easterly wind produced a small arrival on the 24th, when an Osprey was seen at West Hythe, a Whinchat and 17 Wheatears were counted along Hythe Ranges, with 25 Yellow Wagtails and 140 Swallows passing over, a Spotted Flycatcher, a Hobby, 3 Yellow Wagtails, 3 Willow Warblers and 3 Buzzards at Botolph's Bridge, a Common Sandpiper, a Ringed Plover and 2 Wheatears at Hythe Redoubt, 2 Whinchats, 10 Whitethroats and 10 Wheatears at Samphire Hoe, where 150 Sand Martins and 175 House Martins flew west, and a Buzzard heading west at Capel-le-Ferne. The following day was quieter, with just a Shag, a Whinchat, and 5 Wheatears of note at Samphire Hoe and the 26th produced a Sedge Warbler, 4 Whinchats, 8 Whitethroats, 10 Wheatears and 200 Mediterranean Gulls there and a Curlew, 4 Wheatears and 11 Swifts at Church Hougham.

On the 27th a Redshank, 2 Sedge Warblers, 2 Ravens, 4 Whinchats and 5 Wheatears were at Samphire Hoe, where 9 Oystercatchers flew past, with a further 8 passing Hythe, two Spotted Flycatchers were at Mill Point and three Wheatears were at the Willop Outfall.

Three Avocets flew west at the Hythe Redoubt on the 28th, with 3 Common Sandpipers also noted there.

On the 29th a Common Sandpiper, a Whimbrel, a Sanderling, 3 Arctic Skuas, 17 Common Terns, 21 Turnstones and 119 Sandwich Terns were at Hythe Redoubt, with two Green Sandpipers at Nickolls Quarry, and 2 Hobbies, 7 Yellow Wagtails, 12 Sand Martins, 15 Swallows and 26 Swifts flew west over Botolph's Bridge, whilst 9 Bar-tailed Godwits flew west at Samphire Hoe, where a Shag and 6 Whitethroats were also of note.



Pied Flycatcher in Folkestone (Dale Gibson)

A Pied Flycatcher in a garden in Joyes Road, Folkestone was an excellent record on the 30th, when a Marsh Harrier, a Hobby, a Cetti's Warbler, a Grey Wagtail, 2 Green Sandpipers and 7 Yellow Wagtails were at Botolph's Bridge, an Eider was at Copt Point, a Cuckoo was at Seabrook, two Common Sandpipers at the Hythe Redoubt, four Wheatears at Hythe Ranges, seven Wheatears at Samphire Hoe, a Hobby at the Hythe Imperial golf course, and a Hobby and a Ringed Plover at the Willop Outfall.

The month ended in fine style on the 31st, when a shift in the wind to the north-west produced a **Quail**, a Pied Flycatcher, a Tree Pipit and 3 Whinchats at Abbotscliffe, an Osprey over Hythe Ranges, a Pied Flycatcher at Samphire Hoe, a Redstart at Botolph's Bridge, a Marsh Harrier at Donkey Street, an Eider at Princes Parade, Seabrook, a Whinchat at the Hythe Imperial golf course, four Buzzards west over Saltwood, and good numbers of grounded common migrants at several sites, whilst hirundines were noted moving steadily westwards, along with a few Swifts and Yellow Wagtails.

Yet again there were two additions to the year list, which increased it to 175.

September

September was exceptionally dry (with the lowest rainfall total since records began over a hundred years ago) and unusually warm, with daytime highs regularly rarely exceeding 20°C.

The first week of the month saw the continuation, from late August, of the best arrival of Pied and Spotted Flycatchers in over a decade. There were single Pied Flycatchers at Abbotscliffe on the 1st, Samphire Hoe on the 1st-2nd, Church Hougham on the 2nd, Samphire Hoe on 5th, Crete Road East on the 6th and Samphire Hoe again on the 7th, whilst Spotted Flycatchers were seen at Crete Road East (up to 3 individuals), Hythe (2 together), Abbotscliffe, Botolph's Bridge and Samphire Hoe. There was also a strong showing of Redstarts in September, including 2 at Samphire Hoe and 3 at Abbotscliffe on the 1st, and one at Crete Road East on the 6th.

The first seven days of September also produced good numbers of Whinchats and Wheatears, with peak counts of the former of 10 at Abbotscliffe on the 1st and 7 at Samphire Hoe on the 5th, and singles at Crete Road East on the 1st and Church Hougham on the 2nd, whilst there were 12 of the latter at Samphire Hoe on the 1st-2nd, 11 at Abbotscliffe on the 1st and a few scattered singles. There were also peaks of 6 Black Redstarts at Samphire Hoe on the 2nd and 12 Stonechats there on the 5th.

Good numbers of common warblers were also moving through, with counts of 35 Willow Warblers, 15 Blackcaps and 7 Whitethroats at Folkestone Downs on the 5th, and 11 Whitethroats, 6 Willow Warblers and 4 Lesser Whitethroats at Abbotscliffe on the 1st being of particular note, whilst scarcer species comprised a Garden Warbler in Cheriton on the 1st, a Sedge Warbler at Samphire Hoe on the 2nd, and single Sedge and Grasshopper Warbler at Abbotscliffe on the 6th. A late Cuckoo at Church Hougham on the 2nd was the first September record for twenty years.

Overhead small numbers of Grey and Yellow Wagtails were logged, with a single Tree Pipit south over Crete Road East on the 7th and four Tree Sparrows east over Abbotscliffe on the 6th.



Ruff at Crete Road East (Brian Harper)

Hirundines began to increase in number, with hourly rates of c.100 Sand Martins, 250 House Martins and 2,000 Swallows moving west at Abbotscliffe on the 1st, 430 Swallows south-west over Saltwood the same day, 1,000 House Martins at Samphire Hoe on the 2nd, with 600 there on the 5th, and 400 Swallows and 1,500 House Martins over Abbotscliffe on the 6th.

The highlights from the first week however involved a **Red Kite** flying east over Saltwood on the 4th and a flock of three **Ruff** flying over Crete Road East on the 7th, whilst other waders of note comprised a Greenshank at Nickolls Quarry on the 1st, up to 3 Green Sandpipers there, a Ringed Plover west at Samphire Hoe on the 3rd and a Knot on the apron at Folkestone Warren on the 6th. Also of interest was a presumed aberrant Little Egret (or possibly a Cattle x Little Egret hybrid) at Folkestone Warren on the 6th, whilst normal Little Egrets were seen at Samphire Hoe on the 2nd (2) and 6th, and in Folkestone Harbour on the 7th and 10th, with 2 on the 14th. A pair of Ravens were regularly noted at the cliffs (remaining throughout the month), three Buzzards flew over Samphire Hoe on the 7th, a Shag was at the latter site on the 2nd and 3rd, when 3 Shoveler and 3 Teal flew east past Hythe, and Mediterranean Gull counts included 250 at Abbotscliffe on the 1st and a record count of c.550 in the fields inland of Crete Road East on the 7th.

On the 8th a Golden Plover flew over Crete Road East, a Common Sandpiper flew past Hythe and a Hobby was noted at Folkestone Downs, with 5 Whinchats at Samphire Hoe, whilst the following day produced a **Ruff** flying west along Princes Parade, a Redshank on the beach at Hythe, a Redstart at Crete Road East and a **Wryneck**, caught by a cat, in Cheriton but released alive the next morning. Three Whitethroats, several Goldcrests, c.15 Chiffchaffs/Willow Warblers and 20 Blackcaps were in the Crete Road East / Folkestone Downs area on the 10th, when 3 Whinchats and 14 Robins were noted at Samphire Hoe. On the 11th a Hobby, a Tree Pipit, 3 Whinchats and 8 Robins were at Abbotscliffe, whilst an Eider was seen on the sea off Hythe and the first 2 Brent Geese of the autumn flew east.

A **Nightjar** flying over Seabrook on the 12th was only the third area record, and a Redstart and a Spotted Flycatcher at Crete Road East, a Spotted Flycatcher at Folkestone Downs, and 2 Whinchats at Abbotscliffe were also of note, whilst 21 Meadow Pipits flew east at Hythe. The following day produced a Wheatear, 2 Yellow Wagtails and 120 Meadow Pipits at Princes Parade, Seabrook, and a Whinchat at Samphire Hoe.

On the 14th a Sedge Warbler was at Princes Parade, where 100+ Meadow Pipits and 600+ hirundines flew east, a Corn Bunting, a Yellow Wagtail, 25 Linnets and 30 Meadow Pipits were at Abbotscliffe, a Willow Warbler, 2 Lesser Whitethroats, 3 Chiffchaffs, 3 Reed Warblers and 5 Blackcaps were at Nickolls Quarry, ten Siskins were at Samphire Hoe, and a Common Sandpiper was at Hythe. The following day produced a Sedge Warbler, the last Lesser Whitethroat and 4 Whinchats at Abbotscliffe, where 7 Jays flew west, a Grey Wagtail, a Wheatear, a Reed Bunting, 2 Whinchats, 23 Gannets and 42 Meadow Pipits at Samphire Hoe, and a Hobby and 3 Spotted Flycatchers at Saltwood.

A Wheatear, a Reed Warbler, a Buzzard, a Merlin, a Teal, 3 Little Egrets, 6 Whinchats and 11 Chiffchaffs were at Samphire Hoe on the 16th, when 8 Yellow Wagtails flew over Crete Road East, a Yellow Wagtail, 2 *alba* wagtails and 12 Meadow Pipits flew east at Hythe, a Wheatear was seen in Cheriton and 3 Hobbies were noted at Lympe. The 17th saw a Spotted Flycatcher at Folkestone Downs, a Green Sandpiper, a Blackcap and 5 Chiffchaffs at Nickolls Quarry, and 19 Lapwings at the Willop Basin. On the 18th a Ring Ouzel, a Whinchat, a Lapwing, a Great Spotted Woodpecker and 7 Chiffchaffs were at Abbotscliffe and a Tree Pipit, a Yellow Wagtail and 3 Reed Buntings flew over. A Redstart, a Wheatear, 3 Whinchats and 220 Mediterranean Gulls were at Samphire Hoe, with another Redstart in a garden in Browning Place, Folkestone, and 2 Spotted Flycatchers at Nickolls Quarry.



Wryneck at Cheriton (Ron Laker)

A flock of 12 Grey Herons flew over Crete Road East, and 200 Meadow Pipits flew east the cliffs, with another Grey Heron over Hythe at night and 200 Swallows flew east there. The following day produced a Common Sandpiper, a Teal, a Sedge Warbler, a Reed Bunting, a Wheatear, a Song Thrush, 2 Goldcrests, 2 Whitethroats, 3 *alba* wagtails, 5 Grey Wagtails, 6 Whinchats, 6 Wigeon, 10 Robins, 12 Blackcaps, 13 Chiffchaffs and 350 Meadow Pipits at Samphire Hoe, where a Brent Goose flew east, a Firecrest, a Green Sandpiper, a Great Spotted Woodpecker, 2 Cetti's Warblers, 6 Robins, 8 Blackcaps and 10 Chiffchaffs along Botolph's Bridge Road, a Spotted Flycatcher and 100 Meadow Pipits at Capel-le-Ferne, and at least 10 Chiffchaffs around Hythe.

A Wigeon, a Sedge Warbler, 3 Teal, 3 Whinchats, 3 Wheatears, 3 Black Redstarts, 7 Blackcaps, 24 Robins, 45 Chiffchaffs and 360 Meadow Pipits were at Samphire Hoe on the 20th, when two Firecrests were at Crete Road East, a Wheatear, a Goldcrest and good numbers of Chiffchaffs were seen in the Hythe area, with 2 Yellow Wagtails, 3 Grey Wagtails and 35 Brent Geese flying west. A Yellow Wagtail was at Botolph's Bridge, a Hobby was at West Hythe and three Eiders were at the Hythe Redoubt. A Yellow Wagtail, 2 Firecrests and 3 Goldcrests were at Crete Road East on the 21st, with a Tree Pipit and 6 Chiffchaffs at Capel-le-Ferne, a Firecrest and 4 Yellow Wagtails at Princes Parade, Seabrook, where 22 Common Scoter flew east, a Great Spotted Woodpecker and 2 Wheatears at Abbotscliffe, where a Tree Pipit, a Grey Wagtail, a Yellow Wagtail and 4 Siskins flew over, and a Ring Ouzel, 3 Wheatears and six Blackcaps were seen at Samphire Hoe, where 2 Yellow Wagtails and 15 Brent Geese flew east.

On the 22nd a Tree Pipit, a Whinchat, 2 Great Spotted Woodpeckers, 2 Reed Buntings, 4 Stonechats and 5 Chiffchaffs were at Abbotscliffe, and 70 Meadow Pipits flew east, whilst a Tree Pipit and 9 Blackcaps were at Folkestone Downs, a Merlin and the last Willow Warbler were at Samphire Hoe and four Buzzards flew high east over Seabrook. 2 Whitethroats, 4 Whinchats and 8 Blackcaps at Samphire Hoe were of note the next day, with two Brent Geese past.

Following one of the few spells of rain in the month on the 24th there was a record movement of **50,000** House Martins flying west over Hythe. Two Grey Wagtails and 2,000 Swallows also flew west and a Jay and 11 Brent Geese flew east there, whilst a Firecrest was at Folkestone Warren. On the 26th a Firecrest, a Whinchat, 3 Chiffchaffs and 7 Stonechats were at Abbotscliffe and single Shags were seen on the sea off Battery Point and Princes Parade, Seabrook, whilst a Cetti's Warbler and 30 Pied Wagtails were at Princes Parade the next day, and nine Wheatears were at Samphire Hoe. On the 28th a Goldcrest and 2 Chiffchaffs were at Hythe and 6 Chiffchaffs were at Botolph's Bridge Road, whilst the month ended with a Redstart, 2 Goldcrests, 4 Chiffchaffs and 79 Goldfinches at Abbotscliffe, a Hobby, a Reed Bunting, 7 Sky Larks, 10 Jays, 14 *alba* wagtails, 15 Linnets and 50 Starlings flying over, and 2 Whinchats, 3 Wheatears, 6 Blackcaps, 12 Chiffchaffs and 15 Stonechats at Samphire Hoe.

There were five additions to the year list in September, which increased it to 180, just three lower than last year.

October

After the exceptionally dry September, October was wetter than average, but remained unusually warm with winds predominately from the southerly quarter, and the 31st went down as the warmest Halloween on record.

The month began dry and rather quiet, with singles of Hobby, Ring Ouzel and Wheatear at Samphire Hoe on the 1st, whilst two Grey Wagtails also flew west there and a Hobby was at Botolph's Bridge, with the following day producing just two Wheatears at Abbotscliffe. On the 3rd a Great Spotted Woodpecker, a Blackcap, 3 Yellowhammers and 5 Wheatears were at Samphire Hoe and 5 Brent Geese flew past, whilst a Raven flew over Hythe, a Brent Goose was seen offshore and three *alba* wagtails flew in off the sea. Three Ring Ouzels were at Crete Road East on the 4th and 3 Brent Geese and 18 Gannets flew past Hythe.



Redstart at Abbotscliffe (Ian Roberts)

The 5th produced a Firecrest, the last Whitethroat, 2 Goldcrests, 3 Song Thrushes, 6 Blackcaps, 6 Stonechats and 35 Sky Larks at Abbotscliffe, where 2 Golden Plovers, 5 Reed Buntings, 8 Jays and 10 *alba* wagtails flew over, and a Cetti's Warbler, 3 Kingfishers, 35 Pied Wagtails, and exceptional counts of 40 Blackcaps and 150+ Chiffchaffs were at Princes Parade, Seabrook whilst a flock of five Buzzards flew over Folkestone Harbour.

The wind increased on the 6th and an Arctic Skua and the last Common Tern of the year flew west past Hythe, with a Great Skua, a drake Eider and 7 Brent Geese west there the next day. In strong southerly winds and blustery showers on the 8th record counts of **11 Sooty Shearwaters** and **30 Arctic Skuas** flew west at Hythe, with 3 Little Gulls, 5 Kittiwakes, 9 Brent Geese, 11 Great Skuas and 35 Gannets also passing. With the wind moving round to the south-west the following day sea passage dried up but 40 Lesser Black-backed Gulls were counted at the Willop Basin.

There was a calm start to the 10th and 2 Jays, 2 Little Egrets, 3 *alba* wagtails, 4 Sky Larks, 10 Meadow Pipits, 70 Linnets and 195 Goldfinches flew west at Hythe, with a further seven Jays flying high south-west over Saltwood. When the wind increased later in the day 4 Arctic Skuas were seen off Hythe and single Arctic and Great Skua were logged at Samphire Hoe. Another Great Skua was seen off Folkestone Pier the following day, with a Wheatear there, a Wheatear and 3 Stonechats at Church Hougham, a Firecrest and 3 Wheatears at Abbotscliffe, 4 Wheatears and 5 Black Redstarts at Samphire Hoe, a Cetti's Warbler and 4 Goldcrests at Princes Parade, Seabrook, where 150 Swallows and 200 Linnets flew west and a Buzzard and 3 Wigeon flew west at Hythe.

On the 12th a Ring Ouzel, a Redstart, a Wheatear, a Great Spotted Woodpecker, a Buzzard, 2 Blackcaps, 3 Goldcrests, 4 Jays, 6 Stonechats, 7 Chiffchaffs, 7 Reed Buntings, 10 Robins, 28 Sky Larks and 40 Linnets were at Abbotscliffe, where 6 Greenfinches flew west and 165 Starlings arrived in off the sea. At Nickolls Quarry 2 Cetti's Warblers, 2 Blackcaps, 2 Song Thrushes, 6 Chiffchaffs and 18 Goldfinches were present whilst at least two Siskins flew over, and a Water Rail and a Cetti's Warbler were at Princes Parade, Seabrook, where an Eider was seen offshore and two Sand Martins and 30 Swallows flew west, and 2 Shags and 14 Robins were at Samphire Hoe.

A Wigeon, a Tufted Duck, 9 Great Skuas, 14 Gannets, 24 Common Scoter and 130 Brent Geese flew past Hythe on the 13th, when two Green Sandpipers and 14 Canada Geese were at Nickolls Quarry, two Ring Ouzels were at Samphire Hoe, a Peregrine flew over Saltwood and a Dunlin, 2 Curlew, 2 Wigeon, 3 Teal, 13 Lapwings and a very good count of 285 Mallard were at the Willop Basin.

The 14th saw a good arrival of Ring Ouzels, with a total of at least 33 logged: 17 at Abbotscliffe, 13+ at Lympe, two at Samphire Hoe and one at Crete Road East. A Mistle Thrush, 3 Wheatears, 7 Song Thrushes and 16 House Martins were also at Abbotscliffe, and 230 Brent Geese flew west, 5 Wheatears, 10 Blackbirds and 13 Stonechats were at Samphire Hoe, a Green Sandpiper and 6 Chiffchaffs were at Nickolls Quarry, where 5 Tree Sparrows flew over, 16 Turnstones, 22 Lapwings and 32 Pied Wagtails were at Willop Basin, a Raven flew over Crete Road East and at least 15 Redwings and 42 Song Thrushes flew over Hythe after dark. A **Hen Harrier** and 2 Ring Ouzels were at Samphire Hoe on the 15th, three Redwings, 3 Goldcrests, 3 Chiffchaffs, 7 Swallows, 7 Song Thrushes and 11 Ring Ouzels were at Abbotscliffe, where a Siskin, 3 *alba* wagtails, 5 Reed Buntings, 6 Yellowhammers and 52 Meadow Pipits flew west, two Ring Ouzels, 4 Redwings and 12 Swallows were at Folkestone Downs and six Redwings were at Crete Road East.



Stonechat at Crete Road East (Brian Harper)

Elsewhere a Jay, a Great Spotted Woodpecker, a Cetti's Warbler, 3 Song Thrushes, 5 Robins and 10 Blackbirds were at Nickolls Quarry, 3 Dunlin, 5 Teal and 45 Lapwings were at the Willop Basin and 450 Brent Geese flew south over Westenhanger. On the 16th a male Merlin, a Redwing, a Goldcrest, 2 Ring Ouzels, 2 Cetti's Warblers, 5 Blackcaps, 5 Song Thrushes, 5 Robins, 12 Chiffchaffs and 20 Blackbirds were at Nickolls Quarry, 2 Ravens, 3 Buzzards, 3 Ring Ouzels and 10 Redwings were at Folkestone Downs, and a Reed Bunting, 6 Meadow Pipits and 8 Swallows flew west at Hythe.

A **Long-eared Owl**, 2 Ravens, 3 Buzzards, 3 Redwings and 5 Ring Ouzels were at Creteway Down, Folkestone on the 17th, with 3 Stonechats, 4 Ring Ouzels and 5 Redwings at nearby Crete Road East. At Abbotscliffe a Great Spotted Woodpecker, 2 Reed Buntings, 3 Goldcrests and 11 Ring Ouzels were seen, 3 *alba* wagtails, 25 Linnets, 42 Meadow Pipits and 65 Goldfinches flew west and 100 Starlings flew in off the sea. A Blackcap, 2 Goldcrests, 2 Redwings, 4 Song Thrushes, 6 Robins and 14 Chiffchaffs were at Nickolls Quarry, a Great Skua and 34 Mediterranean Gulls were seen off Hythe and two Black Redstarts were seen on Bouverie Road West, Folkestone.

Further strong southerlies on the 18th saw a **Sooty Shearwater**, a Red-breasted Merganser, a Curlew, 2 Arctic Skuas, 6 auks, 7 Sky Larks, 10 Wigeon and 110 Gannets fly west past Hythe, where two Buzzards flew east, and a Cetti's Warbler, a Water Rail and 3 Jays were at Princes Parade, Seabrook, with 60 Goldfinches flying west, and a Ring Ouzel was at Abbotscliffe. A Great Skua was seen off Princes Parade the next day, with 48 Mediterranean Gulls there and 150 Fieldfares flew in off the sea, whilst a Chiffchaff, at least 4 Ring Ouzels and 4 Song Thrushes were at Capel-le-Ferne, where a Reed Bunting and 7 Swallows flew west.

On the 20th a Great Spotted Woodpecker, a Buzzard, 2 Ring Ouzels, 4 Stonechats and 5 Reed Buntings were at Abbotscliffe and 3 Siskins and 12 *alba* Wagtails flew over, whilst a Ring Ouzel and 12 House Martins were at Capel-le-Ferne Gun Site. A Little Gull and 12 Gannets were noted off Hythe the next day, whilst several House Martins and Swallows were seen at Capel-le-Ferne and Hythe. A Short-eared Owl, a Black Redstart and 2 Great Spotted Woodpeckers were at Abbotscliffe on the 22nd, a Great Spotted Woodpecker, a Mistle Thrush, 2 Siskins, 5 Reed Buntings, 6 Chaffinches, 15 Sky Larks, 17 Goldfinches, 28 Meadow Pipits and 57 Stock Doves flew over Capel-le-Ferne Café, where 2 Goldcrests and 3 Song Thrushes were grounded, a Ring Ouzel and a Chiffchaff were at Folkestone Downs, and a Brent Goose and 48 Lapwings were at the Willop Basin.

On the 23rd a Mandarin was seen with the local Mallards near Stade Street bridge, Hythe, whilst the following day saw an Arctic Skua, 27 Common Scoter and 387 Brent Geese flying past Samphire Hoe and a Sandwich Tern, 6 Swallows and 160 Brent Geese passing Hythe.

A **Yellow-browed Warbler**, a Chiffchaff, 2 Firecrests and 4 Goldcrests were at Mill Point on the 25th, where 20 Chaffinches flew in off the sea and 20 Goldfinches flew west. At Abbotscliffe a Ring Ouzel, 3 Jays, 3 Stonechats, 3 Ravens and 4 Swallows were logged, whilst the last 2 House Martins, 4 Swallows, 35 Goldfinches and 35 Stock Doves flew west at Hythe. The next day produced 5 Reed Buntings and 40 Sky Larks at Abbotscliffe, where 940 Starlings flew in off the sea, a Firecrest, a Goldcrest, a Chiffchaff, a Jay and 6 Robins at Nickolls Quarry, and 100 Starlings flying in off the sea at Hythe.



Yellowhammer at Crete Road East (Brian Harper)

There was little of note during the day on the 27th but good numbers of thrushes were moving overnight, with further movements on subsequent nights, mainly involving Blackbirds, Song Thrushes and Redwings.

The first Purple Sandpiper had returned to Hythe by the 28th and two Black Redstarts were seen at Lypne, with the last Wheatear and six Brent Geese at Samphire Hoe. On the 29th a Mistle Thrush, the last 3 Swallows, 3 Fieldfares, 4 Redwings, 5 Chiffchaffs, 6 Goldcrests, 14 Pied Wagtails, 35 Goldfinches and 100+ Blackbirds were at Princes Parade, with 62 Mediterranean Gulls counted on the beach. A Chiffchaff, 2 Cetti's Warblers, 4 Goldcrests, 9 Robins and 10 Blackbirds were at Nickolls Quarry and two Redshanks were at the Willop Basin, with ten Robins at Samphire Hoe.

The 30th produced a Chiffchaff, a Goldcrest, 2 Grey Wagtails, 3 Stonechats, 9 Stock Doves, 25 Yellowhammers and 55 Linnets at Abbotscliffe, with 50 Goldfinches flying west. In the afternoon the first Red-throated Diver of the autumn, a Curlew, 7 Red-breasted Mergansers and 42 Brent Geese flew past Hythe. The month ended with 10 Teal, 12 Brent Geese and 57 Lapwings at the Willop Basin.

There were five additions to the year list in October, which increased it to 185, five lower than last year.

November

November, like the preceding month, was milder and wetter than average. On the 1st a Goldcrest was noted at Hythe, where 2 Sky Larks and 30 Goldfinches flew over, and 21 Sky Larks flew over the Willop Basin, where 94 Lapwings were counted. At sea 3 Teal flew west past Hythe whilst the following day, in strong southerly winds, a single Teal, two **Sooty Shearwaters**, 2 Great Skuas, 2 Lapwings, 15 Kittiwakes and 160 Gannets flew past there. A Black Redstart was seen at the Civic Centre, Folkestone on the 4th, when a Chiffchaff and 101 Lapwings were at the Willop Basin, four Goldcrests were at Mill Point and seven Common Scoters were on the sea off Hythe. Two Redwings, 4 Song Thrushes and 4 Blackbirds were at Nickolls Quarry on the 5th, when 130 Starlings flew north there, a Goldcrest was at Capel-le-Ferne, and single Sky Lark and Reed Bunting flew over.

A **Wood Lark**, a Ring Ouzel, 2 Snow Buntings, 2 Goldcrests, 4 Song Thrushes, 14 Blackbirds, 15 Yellowhammers and 17 Sky Larks were at Abbotscliffe on the 6th, when a further 11 Sky Larks and 75 Starlings flew in off the sea there. The following day saw a Little Gull, a Great Skua, 2 Shelduck, 2 Curlew, 3 Gadwall, 10 Gannets, 28 Brent Geese and 115 Common Scoter passing Hythe, whilst two Greylag Geese, 74 Brent Geese and 145 Lapwings were at the Willop Basin. This latter site also held a Curlew and up to 8 Teal and 8 Mute Swans during the first week of the month.

On the 8th a Marsh Harrier was seen along Donkey Street and 12 Gannets and 54 Kittiwakes flew west past Hythe, with 10 Common Scoter on the sea there.

The 9th produced a Golden Plover and two Tree Sparrows on Donkey Street, a Marsh Harrier and a Cetti's Warbler at Botolph's Bridge, a Buzzard, 2 Redshank, 19 Brent Geese, 21 Teal and 23 Wigeon at the Willop Basin, single Black Redstarts at Fisherman's Beach, Hythe and the Hythe Redoubt, with 2 Rock Pipits at the latter site, two Buzzards and 3 Sky Larks flying west at Hythe, 15 Common Scoter offshore and two Goldcrests at Mill Point.

A Black Redstart and 2 Goldcrests were at Samphire Hoe on the 10th and 18 Gannets flew west at Hythe the next day, with a nocturnal passage of Blackbirds, Redwings and Song Thrushes noted that evening.



Snow Bunting at Abbotscliffe (Ian Roberts)

Six Goldcrests were at Capel-le-Ferne Café on the 12th, when three Shelduck flew west at Hythe. The last Ring Ouzel of the autumn was at Folkestone Downs on the 13th, and a Raven was at Capel-le-Ferne Gun Site, with a Wigeon, 31 Brent Geese and 157 Lapwings at the Willop Basin.

The 14th saw 4 Eider, 6 Brent Geese and 17 Gannets fly west past Hythe and 25 Common Scoter were offshore. A Chiffchaff and 2 Goldcrests were at Mill Point on the 15th, with a further four Goldcrests at St. Eanswythe's Church, Folkestone and four at Capel-le-Ferne. A Purple Sandpiper was noted at Hythe, where 15 Brent Geese flew east, and ten Brent Geese and 243 Lapwings were at the Willop Basin. Purple Sandpipers increased to five at Hythe on the 16th, with two Red-throated Divers noted offshore and 14 Pied Wagtails and 300+ Black-headed Gulls on the Hythe Imperial golf course. Four Tree Sparrows, 30 Yellowhammers and 47 Sky Larks were along Donkey Street and four Goldcrests were seen at Saltwood, with a Great Spotted Woodpecker and 2 Ravens at Abbotscliffe.

A Little Egret and 3 Black Redstarts were at Samphire Hoe on the 17th and a drake Eider, a Curlew, 3 **Goosander** and 28 Brent Geese flew west there. Redwings were noted moving after dark and the following morning saw two grounded in a garden in Folkestone.

The 18th also produced a Grey Plover, 16 Turnstone and 243 Lapwing at the Willop Basin, a Kestrel and 5 Buzzards flying over Cheriton, and 50 Goldfinches at Samphire Hoe, where 5 Red-throated Divers flew east and 50 Brent Geese flew west, whilst Redwings were again passing over at night.

A **Wood Lark** was at Samphire Hoe on the 19th (remaining until the 20th), with a Chiffchaff, 2 Ravens, 3 Black Redstarts, 8 Goldcrests and 53 Goldfinches also seen there, whilst a Corn Bunting, a Redwing, a Song Thrush, 2 Stonechats, 5 Blackbirds, 15 Sky Larks and 15 Yellowhammers were at Abbotscliffe, and 9 Redpolls and 20 Goldfinches flew over. Elsewhere a Redwing, a Stonechat, 2 Curlew, 3 Song Thrushes and 16 Blackbirds were at Nickolls Quarry and eight Fieldfares flew east at Saltwood.

The following day produced two Goldcrests at Samphire Hoe and 4 Lapwings, 8 Siskins and 30 Goldfinches flew east, whilst a flock of c.50 Golden Plovers flew south over Westenhanger. On the 21st a Firecrest, a Snipe, a Redwing, 2 Song Thrushes and 5 Blackbirds were at Samphire Hoe. Two Dunlin, 4 Shelduck, 5 Curlew and 560 Lapwing were at the Willop Basin on the 22nd, with 65 Fieldfares flying over, and 2 Song Thrushes, 2 Reed Buntings, 5 Robins and 17 Blackbirds at Nickolls Quarry where 32 Lapwings and 54 Fieldfares flew over. A Little Egret was at Botolph's Bridge and a Little Grebe was noted on the canal by Princes Parade, Seabrook.

On the 23rd a Chiffchaff, a Fulmar and 2 Goldcrests were at Samphire Hoe, with a Little Egret in Folkestone Harbour and two Marsh Tits at Cowtye Wood. Two Curlew, 3 Shelduck and 460 Lapwings were at the Willop Basin on the 25th and a Chiffchaff was at Mill Point on the 27th, when 65 Fieldfares were seen going to roost in the Hougham Valley.

Six Purple Sandpipers and 20 Turnstones were logged at Hythe on the 28th, when 3 Wigeon, 3 Shelduck, 24 Teal and 424 Lapwings were counted at the Willop Basin, and the Little Egret was again in Folkestone Harbour on the 29th, with a Shag there the next day.

There were just two additions to the year list which increased it to 187, eight lower than last year.



Wood Lark at Samphire Hoe (Ian Roberts)

December

December remained mild and wet before the last week of the year saw some heavy frosts. The month began well with a first-winter **Caspian Gull** in Folkestone Harbour and five **Black-tailed Godwits** at the Willop Basin on the 1st. The former site also hosted up to three Redshanks and six Turnstones, whilst the latter attracted 3 **Ruff** on the 6th, a Peregrine on the 11th, a Stonechat on the 14th, a Golden Plover and two Bar-tailed Godwits on the 22nd, and regularly held good numbers of ducks and waders during the month, with peaks of up to two Gadwall, two Snipe, two Curlew, five Shelduck, nine Wigeon, 11 Redshanks, an exceptional 105 Teal and 592 Lapwing. A Velvet Scoter was noted offshore with 15 Common Scoter on the 21st, three Dunlin flew east on the 2nd, four Shelduck and 42 Red-throated Divers flew east on the 8th, 200 Great Crested Grebes were on the sea on the 9th, a Ringed Plover and 3 Sanderling were on the beach on the 14th and single Rock Pipits were seen on several dates.

A female/immature Red-breasted Merganser was an unusual find on the canal at Seabrook on the 13th, where it remained until the 19th, and a Little Grebe, a Cetti's Warbler, a Blackcap, 2 Kingfishers, 3 Water Rails and up to 5 Chiffchaffs were also noted there. This was followed by the discovery of a female/immature **Goosander** at West Hythe from the 20th (to 30th) which provided an excellent opportunity for comparison of these two saw-bills. A Little Egret, a Marsh Harrier, 2 Buzzards, 2 Tawny Owls, 2 Kingfishers, 2 Firecrests, 8 Bullfinches, 9 Teal and 180 Redwings were also recorded in the West Hythe area.

A Short-eared Owl was hunting at Botolph's Bridge on the morning of 14th and this site also hosted up to two Little Egrets, 2 Green Sandpipers, 3 Buzzards, 40 Fieldfares and 100 Redwings, with another Little Egret at Palmarsh on the 20th. A stubble field opposite the Little Piece on Donkey Street attracted up to four Tree Sparrows, 12 Sky Larks, 15 Song Thrushes, 27 Yellowhammers and 45 Stock Doves during the month.

At least three Purple Sandpipers remained at Hythe through December, on the rock groyne at the end of Stade Street, Hythe, and up to seven Common Scoters were seen offshore, whilst 18 Great Crested Grebes flew east on the 13th, whilst a Fieldfare was on the golf course there on the 22nd.

Two Firecrests were at Mill Point on the 1st, with one at Samphire Hoe on the 3rd, and two there on the 7th, and the latter site also produced four Fieldfares on the 5th, a Brambling on the 6th, a Snipe on the 7th, a Snow Bunting on the 8th, a Teal and a Chiffchaff on the 16th, with up to two Shags, 2 Peregrines, 2 Black Redstarts, 3 Little Egrets, 8 Stonechats, 16 Rock Pipits and 40 Meadow Pipits also logged there, whilst Fulmars had returned to the cliffs by mid-month.

The temperature dropped after Christmas and this led to several interesting sightings.

On the 27th a red-head **Smew**, a first-year **Glaucous Gull**, an Avocet and a Great Skua flew west past Hythe, whilst the following day produced three **Wood Larks** at Hythe Ranges and at least 5 **Bearded Tits** at Nickolls Quarry (where they remained into 2015).

Six **White-fronted Geese** flew west over Seabrook and Nickolls Quarry on the 28th, and a smart drake **Goldeneye** was found at Botolph's Bridge on New Year's Eve, where it remained into 2015.



Goldeneye at Botolph's Bridge (Brian Harper)

This cold weather also induced a small influx of wildfowl, with several Brent Geese at various sites (with a peak of 11 east past Samphire Hoe on the 31st), 12 Shelduck flying east past Samphire Hoe on the 26th, with six at Nickolls Quarry on the 26th, 24 Wigeon off Hythe on the 27th, with seven at Nickolls Quarry on the 28th and one at Botolph's Bridge on the 30th, a Gadwall at Seabrook and two at Nickolls Quarry on the 28th, and a Teal east past Hythe on the 27th with 13 at Nickolls Quarry the next day. Common Scoters increased to 27 off Princes Parade, Seabrook.

A small arrival of Little Egrets was also apparent, with up to 2 in Folkestone Harbour, 4 at Seabrook on the 28th and 6 at West Hythe on the 30th. A Marsh Harrier flew over Samphire Hoe on the 30th, with single Merlins at Hythe and West Hythe the same day, and a Peregrine at Botolph's Bridge on the 29th, with 3 Little Grebes at the latter site. On the 27th 150 Gannets were feeding offshore from Samphire Hoe, with a Water Rail there on the 26th and two at Nickolls Quarry on the 30th.

Five Oystercatchers flew west at Hythe on the 26th and two Green Sandpipers were at Nickolls Quarry on the 30th, with a Dunlin in a flooded field nearby on the 29th and a Redshank at Botolph's Bridge on the 31st. Nickolls Quarry also held at least two Cetti's Warblers at the month's end. The conditions led to the appearance of single Blackcaps in two gardens in Folkestone (on the 26th and the 29th) and Sandgate (on the 30th), with another at Botolph's Bridge on the 29th, and Stonechats were noted at Hythe Ranges on the 30th and Botolph's Bridge on the 31st.

Thanks largely to this late flourish of activity there were five additions to the year list in December, which finished on 192, six fewer than the 198 recorded in the previous year, and 11 less than in 2012.

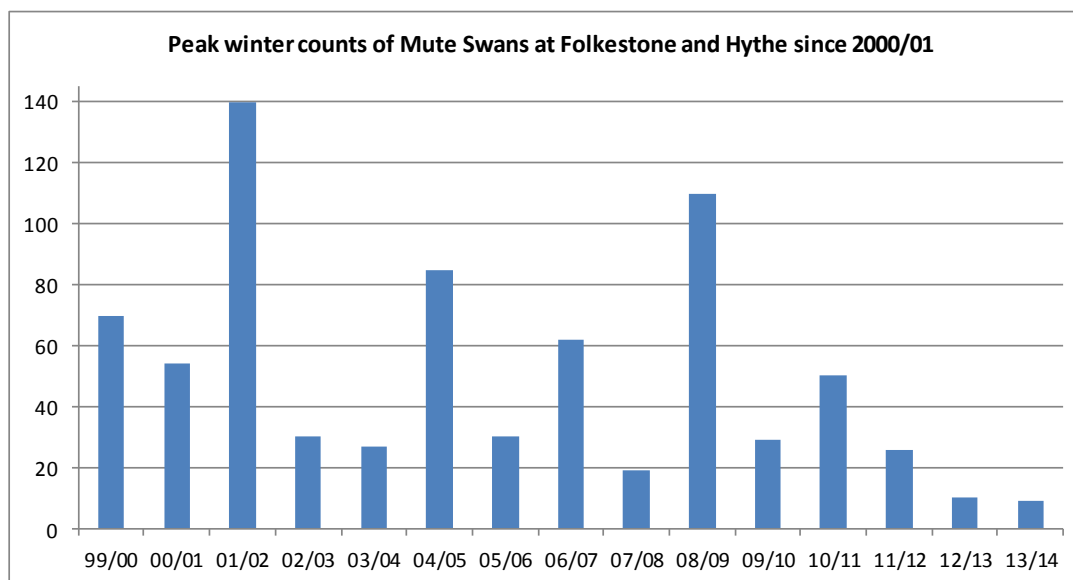
Systematic list

Mute Swan

Cygnus olor

Breeding resident, winter visitor and passage migrant.

Numbers in the early winter period were again disappointing, with a peak just nine in the Botolph's Bridge area on the 24th January. Although lower numbers are to be expected in a mild winter, the peak count was the lowest in at least the last fifteen years as the chart below demonstrates. The Kent Bird Report for 2012 remarks on the apparent recent decline of the species in the county.



At least three pairs bred, one at Nickolls Quarry, one near Botolph's Bridge and at least one along the Royal Military Canal near Hythe.

There was little evidence of any passage although two flew east at Samphire Hoe on 4th May, four were on the sea off the Willop Outfall on the 28th May and two were on the sea there on the 9th September.

Numbers in the late winter period were no better, with a peak of eight at the Willop Basin in November.

White-fronted Goose

Anser albifrons

Rare migrant and winter visitor.

An adult flew west at sea past Seabrook on the 26th January (I. A. Roberts) and a flock of six (two adults and four juveniles) flew west over Seabrook and Nickolls Quarry on the 28th December (B. Harper, D. Wrathall). The 26th and 27th area records.

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.

An individual with an injured wing was at the Willop Basin from the 1st January to at least the 20th March. An additional pair were also seen there on the 7th January when two, possibly the same birds, were at Botolph's Bridge, and up to two additional birds were at the Willop Basin intermittently between late January and mid-March.

Some movement was apparent around mid-March, coinciding with the departure of the Willop Basin birds. On the 16th March one flew east at Abbotscliffe and on the 19th March three flew west at Samphire Hoe, whilst two pairs arrived in the Botolph's Bridge / Nickolls Quarry area mid-month. The latter birds remained in this area until at least the end of May and one pair bred – the first confirmed breeding for the area – with three young noted on 16th May, though only one chick could be located by the 21st May.

There was an isolated record of five extra birds (total count of nine) at Nickolls Quarry on 31st March and at the Willop Basin two appeared on 5th April, increasing to three on the 8th, four on the 11th, five on the 23rd, six on 28th April and peaking at eight on the 2nd May, though there were no signs of a breeding attempt and all had disappeared by mid-May. There was a further record in April of one flying west at Samphire Hoe on the 16th.



Pair of Greylag Geese with chick at Nickolls Quarry
(Ian Roberts)

The only record from the late winter period was of two at the Willop Basin on the 7th November.

Canada Goose

<i>Branta canadensis</i>

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

Two were at Nickolls Quarry on the 22nd February and a pair were noted there regularly from mid-March, where they bred, raising three young. Elsewhere one was at the Willop Basin on the 9th April and two flew west at Abbotscliffe on the 21st April.

The only record from the latter half of the year involved 14 flying west over Nickolls Quarry on the 13th October.

Brent Goose

<i>Branta bernicla</i>

Winter visitor and passage migrant.

Following the remarkable up-channel movement noted in January 2013, this year saw some further notable easterly movements in January, though the numbers involved were lower. On the 4th there were counts of 224 east past Samphire Hoe and 195 east past Folkestone Beach (with probably some overlap between counts), with 40 east past the latter site on the 15th and 28 east past the former on the 18th. A further 63 went east past Samphire Hoe on the 3rd February and small numbers were noted offshore from various sites during January and early February.

An individual of the **Pale-bellied form** (*B. b. hrota*) was seen at the Willop Basin on the 9th February (I. A. Roberts *et al*) and was only the fifth area record, see photograph on page 8.

Spring passage proper again got underway from the second half of February, and included counts of 90 east past Folkestone Beach on the 24th February, 180 east there on the 7th March, 66 east past Samphire Hoe on the 10th March, 250 east past Samphire Hoe on the 28th March and 313 east past Folkestone Pier on the 31st March. In April there was a massive up-channel movement on the 4th, with **2,580** passing Mill Point in light south-westerly winds (the second largest ever count – the record is 2,800 east past Copt Point on the 9th March 1996). Numbers tailed off fairly quickly thereafter, with the last notable count being 195 east past Samphire Hoe on the 17th April, and the last record involved 14 flying east there on the 1st May.

The total for the spring (including the early movement in January) was about 4,450 which, whilst considerably lower than last year's record total of 8,065, was still well above the mean for the previous ten years of 2,435.

The first in autumn, two flying east past Hythe on the 11th September, were the earliest ever (the previous earliest arrival date was 14th September, 2008, excluding the extraordinary summer record in July last year). The next flew east past Samphire Hoe on the 19th, with 35 west past Hythe the following day and smaller numbers were recorded in late September and early October before a more significant passage occurred mid-month when 130 flew west at Hythe on the 13th, 230 flew west at Abbotscliffe on the 14th and a flock of about 450 flew south over Westenanger on the 15th – an unusual inland record. Later in October counts of 160 past Hythe and 387 past Samphire Hoe on the 24th, and 42 west past Hythe on the 30th were of note, whilst 12 were at the Willop Basin on the 31st.

In November 28 passed Hythe on the 7th when there was a notable count of 74 at the Willop Basin, with further records of 19 there on the 9th, 31 on the 13th and ten on the 15th. Small coastal movements continued with 15 east past Hythe on the 15th, 28 west at Samphire Hoe on the 17th and 50 west there the next day being of particular note. One was lingering at the Willop Basin between the 6th and 22nd December before some colder weather in the final week of the year led to several small movements, with a peak of 11 east past Samphire Hoe on the 31st.

The bird/day total for second half of the year of 1,836 was the second largest ever (following the record total last year).

Egyptian Goose

<i>Alopochen aegyptiaca</i>

Very rare vagrant.

Five were seen at the Willop Basin on the 11th April (I. A. Roberts, J. Tomsett), see photograph on page 12, with a further single there on the 7th May (B. Harper). These were only the fifth and sixth area records, but there have now been four in the last four years.

Shelduck

<i>Tadorna tadorna</i>

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

In January singles flew west past Seabrook on the 3rd, east past Folkestone Beach on the 30th and east past Seabrook on the 31st, with further singles at the Willop Basin on the 18th and 30th. Two were at the latter site on the 1st February, where they remained until the 10th. Another single was seen there from the 28th February, being joined by two more on the 9th and there was a further increase to six birds on the 12th March. These remained at the Willop Basin until the 22nd March but then reduced to two by the 24th, and were gone the next day.

Elsewhere one flew east past Folkestone Beach on the 11th March and there were further signs of passage, or wandering birds from April: one at the Willop Basin on the 13th April, two at Nickolls Quarry on the 20th April, two east past Samphire Hoe on the 22nd April, four west there on the 23rd April, one east there on the 25th and five west at Mill Point on the 27th April. In May nine flew west at Samphire Hoe on the 1st, three flew east at Folkestone Pier on the 5th and two flew west and later back east at Abbotscliffe on the 18th. The final record from the first half of the year related to a flock of ten which flew east at Hythe on the 1st June.

In the latter part of the year two flew west past Hythe on the 7th November, with three flying west there on the 12th, and four were at the Willop Basin on the 22nd November, with three remaining until the end of the year, with a larger count of five on the 7th December and four flying east offshore the following day. Colder weather in the final week of the year produced one west past Hythe on the 26th, 12 east past Samphire Hoe the same day and six at Nickolls Quarry on the 29th.

Introduced breeding resident.

As usual nearly all records were from the woods in the Saltwood area with a notable accumulation again on flooded roadside fields at Kiln Wood, Pedlinge in the early part of the year, with a peak of ten there on the 7th February.

The only sightings elsewhere were of an unusual record of a pair off Folkestone Pier on the 28th March and of one with Mallards near Stade Street bridge, Hythe on the 23rd October.

Winter visitor and passage migrant.

With mild weather dominating the early winter period there were very few recorded, with just two west past Seabrook on the 26th January and three west past Folkestone Beach on the 30th January, whilst spring passage comprised just 21 east past Mill Point on the 4th April.

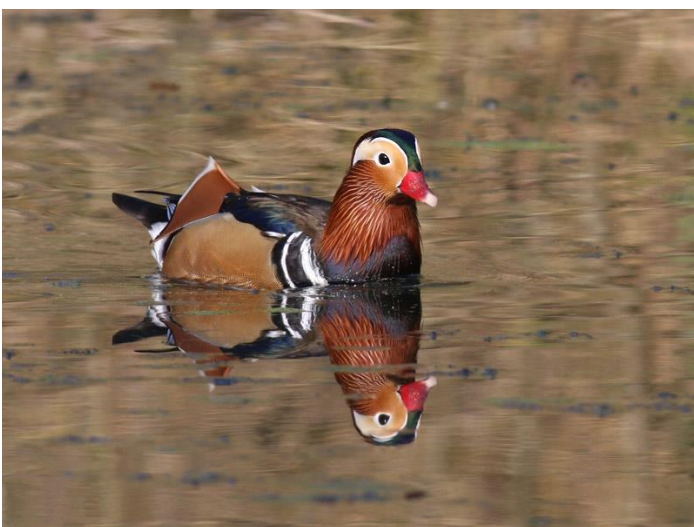
In autumn there were six at Samphire Hoe on the 19th September, with one remaining the next day, and three flew west at Hythe on the 11th October, with a male offshore there on the 13th October, when two were at the Willop Basin, and ten flew west at Hythe on the 18th October. November produced 23 at the Willop Basin on the 9th, with a male there on the 13th and three on the 28th, with four there on the 1st December and nine on the 3rd. Colder weather in the last week of December produced 24 (11 east, 13 west) off Hythe on the 27th, seven at Nickolls Quarry on the 28th and a female at Botolph's Bridge on the 30th.

Winter visitor and passage migrant.

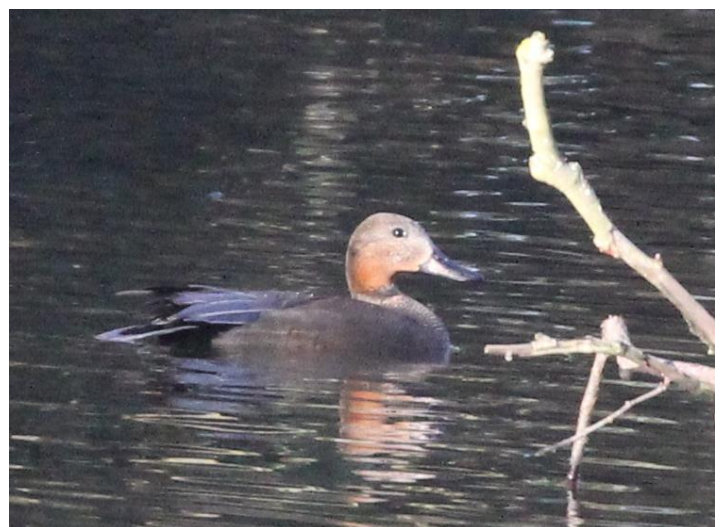
Up to 23 were present on the lake in Chesterfield Wood, Saltwood during January and two were at Botolph's Bridge on the 1st February, but none were noted on spring passage.

In the second half of the year one was on the sea off Folkestone on the 28th September, three flew west past Hythe on the 7th November, a pair were at the Willop Basin on the 3rd December, and on the 28th December a female was on the canal at Seabrook and two were at Nickolls Quarry.

An apparent "Brewer's Duck" (Gadwall x Mallard hybrid) was at Chesterfield Wood, Saltwood on the 12th January.



Mandarin at Brockhill Country Park (Brian Harper)



Apparent "Brewer's Duck" at Sandling (Ian Roberts)

Winter visitor and passage migrant.

In the early winter period there were peak counts of 5 at Folkestone Racecourse, Westenhanger, 8 at Nickolls Quarry, 15 at Chesterfield Wood, Saltwood and 52 at the Willop Basin. Elsewhere, three flew west past Folkestone Beach on the 2nd January.

The only sign of spring passage was six flying east past Mill Point on the 29th March.

Autumn produced three flew east past Hythe on the 3rd September and one at Samphire Hoe from the 16th to 19th September, with three there on the 20th, whilst in October there were three at the Willop Basin on the 13th, increasing to five on the 15th and ten on the 31st.



Teal at Samphire Hoe (Phil Smith)

Three flew west at Hythe on the 1st November, with one west the following day, and at the Willop Basin numbers increased to 21 by the 9th and 24 by the 28th November, with 52 there on the 1st December and 62 on the 3rd. There were still 45 in the Willop area on the 7th (22 on the basin and 23 offshore) but numbers dwindled thereafter before an exceptional 105 were counted on the 23rd – only the 8th December 2012 has seen larger counts (when 135 flew past Folkestone and 400 were seen off the Willop Outfall).

Elsewhere nine were in a flooded field near Stutfall Castle, West Hythe on the 7th December, one was at Samphire Hoe on the 16th, 25 were in Chesterfield Wood, Saltwood on the 20th, one was at Botolph's Bridge on the 21st, one flew east past Hythe on the 27th December and 13 were at Nickolls Quarry the following day.

Breeding resident and winter visitor.

Counts from the early winter period included 30 on the canal in Hythe, 23 at Chesterfield Wood, Saltwood, 23 at Radnor Park, Folkestone and 20 at Stutfall Castle, West Hythe, all in January. A record of two flying west at sea past Folkestone Beach on the 9th January was also of note.

In the late winter period 26 were counted at Botolph's Bridge on the 1st October and an exceptional 285 were at the Willop Basin on the 13th October – the third largest count ever, and the highest since the 1960s, when there 300 at Sandling Park in September 1966 and 400 there in September 1960. Numbers decreased thereafter but picked up again in the last week of December, when 50 were at Chesterfield Wood, Saltwood, 40 were at Botolph's Bridge, 30 were on the canal in Hythe and ten were at Samphire Hoe.

Winter visitor and passage migrant.

Three were at the Willop Basin on the 1st March, six flew west past Samphire Hoe on the 18th March and a total of eight flew east past Hythe/Mill Point on the 29th March. A return to normal after last year's record passage, with the total of 17 being slightly lower than the mean for the previous ten years of 23.

There were no records in the second half of the year.

Shoveler

<i>Anas clypeata</i>

Winter visitor and passage migrant.

Three flew west at the Willop Basin on the 1st March, a pair were at Nickolls Quarry on the 24th March, a total of nine flew east past Hythe/Mill Point on the 29th March, two flew east past Folkestone Pier on the 30th April and a flock of ten flew east there on the 20th May. A return to normal after last year's record passage, with the total of 26 being slightly lower than the mean for the previous ten years of 32.

The only record from the second half of the year was of three flying east past Hythe on the 3rd September.

Pochard

<i>Aythya farina</i>

Winter visitor and passage migrant.

The only records from the early part of the year were from Folkestone Racecourse, Westenhanger where up to four were present on the lake in January and February.

There were no records from the late winter period.

Tufted Duck

<i>Aythya fuligula</i>

Breeding resident, winter visitor and passage migrant.

Counts in January and February were low due to the mild weather, with peaks of just three at Botolph's Bridge, four at Nickolls Quarry and five at Folkestone Racecourse, Westenhanger. Numbers increased at Nickolls Quarry during March, to seven on the 19th, and ten on the 24th, reaching a peak in April of 17 on the 11th, and up to 13 remained there throughout May. A pair were also seen nearby at Botolph's Bridge in April and July, and breeding may have occurred at both sites, though no young were noted.

Elsewhere singles flew west at the Willop Outfall on the 1st March, west past Mill Point on the 22nd April and east at Copt Point on the 29th April, with four flying west past Hythe on the 10th July, and one flying east there on the 13th October.

Eider

<i>Somateria mollissima</i>

Passage migrant and winter visitor, formerly summered.

An immature male was seen regularly in Hythe Bay, between the Willop Outfall and Battery Point, Seabrook from the 22nd February, and was joined by a female from the 18th April, with three birds (two immature males and a female) present between the 19th and 24th May, but just one remained on the 2nd June and was not seen thereafter.

Elsewhere migrants comprised 12 east past Mill Point on the 29th March, one east there on the 16th April and three east there on the 27th April, with one on the sea off Samphire Hoe on the 12th May.

In the latter half of the year there was one off Abbotscliffe on the 8th July, three off the Willop Outfall on the 23rd to 24th August, single immature/female birds off Copt Point on the 30th August, Hythe on the 31st August and 11th September, and three off Hythe Redoubt on the 20th September. A drake flew west past Hythe on the 7th October, with an immature/female off Hythe on the 12th, four (3 drakes) flying west there on the 14th November and a drake west past Samphire Hoe on the 17th November.

A good year, with the total of around 36 individuals being the best since 2004.

Common Scoter

<i>Melanitta nigra</i>

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

At least 250 remained in Hythe Bay from last year until the end of February and smaller numbers were noted elsewhere, with a couple of larger movements of 100 west past Folkestone Beach on the 9th January and 160 west there on the 5th February.

There was another strong spring passage from late March, including counts of 425 east past Mill Point on the 4th April, 140 east past Samphire Hoe on the 17th April, 245 east at Mill Point on the 22nd April, 200 east there the next day, 176 east there on the 27th April and 110 east past Samphire Hoe on the 4th May. A further 500 were seen on the sea off the Willop Outfall on the 27th April. The total of 2,280 was the best since 2005.

Smaller numbers were noted in the latter half of the year with counts of 22 east past Princes Parade, Seabrook on the 21st September, 24 west past Hythe on the 13th October, 27 past Samphire Hoe on the 24th October and 115 west past Hythe on the 7th November, with up to 27 present in Hythe Bay in November / December.

Velvet Scoter

<i>Melanitta fusca</i>

Winter visitor and passage migrant.

Two flew east past Folkestone Beach on the 12th January, one was seen off the Willop Outfall on the 1st February and a single flew west past Folkestone Beach on the 5th February, but none were noted on spring passage.

The only record from the late winter period was of one off the Willop Outfall on the 21st December.

Goldeneye

<i>Bucephala clangula</i>

Winter visitor and passage migrant.

A drake at Botolph's Bridge on New Year's Eve, where it remained into 2015 (B. Harper), was the 48th area record, see photograph on page 26.

Smew

<i>Mergellus albellus</i>

Rare migrant and winter visitor.

A 'red-head' which flew west past Hythe on the 27th December (I. A. Roberts) was only the 18th area record but the third to be recorded in the last five years.

Red-breasted Merganser

<i>Mergus serrator</i>

Winter visitor and passage migrant.

Five flew east past Mill Point on the 29th March, one flew east past Folkestone Pier on the 2nd April, with 14 east past Mill Point on the 4th April and two east there on the 27th April. A late bird was reported at Nickolls Quarry on the 16th May. The total of 22 was slightly down on last year's spring passage (25) but still above the mean for the previous ten years of 19.

In autumn one flew west past Hythe on the 18th October, with seven west there on the 30th October and an immature/female was present on the canal at Seabrook between the 13th and 19th December.

Winter visitor and passage migrant.

A male flew east past Samphire Hoe on the 2nd April (M. D. Kennett). This species is rarely noted on spring migration, with the only other record relating to three flying east past Copt Point on the 17th April 1994.

In autumn three were seen off Samphire Hoe on the 17th November (per D. E. Smith) and a female/immature was present in the West Hythe area between the 20th and 30th December (D. Wrathall *et al*).



Red-breasted Merganser at Seabrook (Brian Harper)



Goosander at West Hythe (Brian Harper)

Breeding resident.

Small numbers were noted at the usual sites, including the Botolph's Bridge area, Hythe Ranges, and the Abbotscliffe / Round Down area, whilst singles were noted at Samphire Hoe on three dates in spring.

Breeding resident.

All records were from the Abbotscliffe area, where there was a peak of five on the 4th August, apart from a singleton at Samphire Hoe on the 6th April.

Very rare vagrant.

One flushed from an arable field at Abbotscliffe on the 31st August (M. D. Kennett) was only the third modern record. The previous two were also at Abbotscliffe – on the 1st October 1994 and 24th April 2004.

Breeding resident.

As always very few counts of this species were received. One at Samphire Hoe on the 11th April was of some local interest as it relatively unusual at this site.

Winter visitor and passage migrant.

Numbers in the early winter period were relatively low with peaks of 25 off the Willop Outfall on the 24th January and 80 west there on the 27th January. Spring passage was very poor, with a total of little more than 100 recorded, and peaks of just 25 east past Mill Point / Princes Parade, Seabrook on the 29th March and 20 east past Mill Point on the 4th April.

Noted in autumn from 30th October but with only single figure counts until ten flew west past Hythe on the 5th December and 42 flew east past the Willop Outfall on the 8th December.

Winter visitor and passage migrant.

Singles flew east past Mill Point on the 4th and the 27th April, Folkestone Pier on the 5th and the 6th May, and Mill Point on the 23rd May. The total of 5 was only slightly below the mean for the previous ten years of 6.5.

There was an unusual record of one on the sea off Folkestone Sands on the 20th August which is the earliest ever autumn record, and the first to be recorded in August. The previous earliest related to one flying west past Samphire Hoe on the 26th September 2010.

Breeding visitor and passage migrant.

Birds had begun arriving back at the cliffs at Samphire Hoe from late November 2013 and had increased to 8 by the end of December. These remained throughout January and February, with a peak count of 9 on the 27th January, and 3 or 4 pairs were thought to have bred, with one or two others at Capel-le-Ferne.

Elsewhere small numbers were noted offshore during the early winter period, with a notable inland record of one flying over Pond Hill Road, Cheriton on the 25th January. An up-channel passage was noted in spring, with a peak of 22 east past Mill Point on the 27th April, and counts of ten on the sea off Samphire Hoe on the 1st May and 13 west past Mill Point on the 10th May are also worthy of mention.

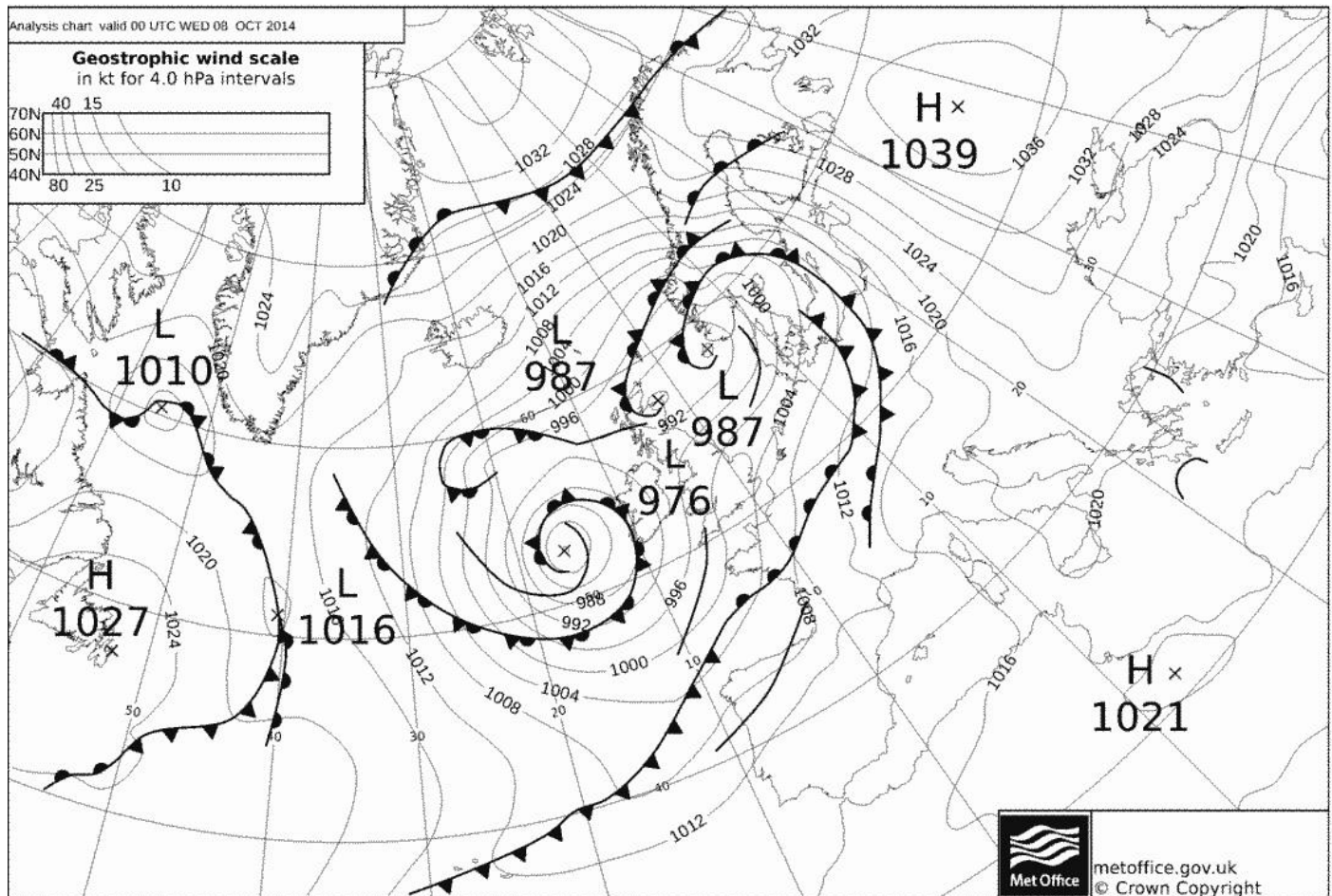


Fulmar at Folkestone Pier (Brian Harper)

Small numbers were noted into early September, with a peak of seven at Samphire Hoe on the 26th August, but there were no records thereafter until one was seen at Samphire Hoe on the 23rd November, with one off the Willop Outfall on 7th December, and three were back on the cliffs at Samphire Hoe by 15th December with two prospecting at Capel-le-Ferne on the 20th December.

Rare passage migrant.

In strong southerly winds and blustery showers on the 8th October a record count of 11 flew west past Hythe in a 75 minute period from 10:00. The weather chart below presents the situation as at midnight on that day and shows the deep area of low pressure which moved west across southern Britain bringing these conditions.



There were further sightings at Hythe of a single west on the 18th October and two west on the 2nd November. These were the 43rd to 45th area records.

Passage migrant.

One flew east past Mill Point on the 27th April and two flew west past Folkestone Pier on the 23rd May.

With the mean for the previous ten years being 6.6, this was a below average showing.

Passage migrant.

Numbers in the early winter period were unremarkable, with a peak of just 75 west past Princes Parade, Seabrook on the 26th January.

Up-channel passage was noted in spring between early March and early May, but was significantly lower than last year's record tally. In total just over 470 were logged, including counts of 112 east past Mill Point on the 4th April and 135 east there on the 27th April. Small numbers were noted thereafter, with a peak count of 37 west past Mill Point on the 10th May.

Counts of up to 25 were regular offshore throughout the summer and into the autumn, with larger totals of 35 west past Hythe on the 8th October, 110 west there on the 18th October and 160 west there on the 2nd November, with 150 seen feeding offshore from Samphire Hoe on the 27th December.

Cormorant

<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>

A non-breeding visitor at all times of year.

Small numbers were seen throughout the year and larger counts or movements included nine flying east at Nickolls Quarry on the 31st March, 13 at Hythe Ranges on the 30th August, ten at the latter site on the 20th September and at Samphire Hoe on the 23rd September and 14 west past Princes Parade, Seabrook on the 19th October.

Shag

<i>Phalacrocorax aristotelis</i>

Passage migrant and winter visitor, with occasional summer records.

For only the second time in the last ten years there were no records in January or February. There was however a good showing in March, beginning with one in Folkestone Harbour on the 4th, which was followed by three (two adults and immature) on the sea off Battery Point, Seabrook on the 7th, one off Samphire Hoe on the 10th (with single sightings, relating to at least two individuals, there on seven further dates), two west past Folkestone Beach on the 11th, one off Hythe Redoubt on the 16th, one west past Mill Point on the 21st, and one in Folkestone Harbour on the 26th, increasing to four there on the 28th.

In April singles were seen off Folkestone Pier, Mill Point and Samphire Hoe on a total of seven dates, whilst in May two were seen off Folkestone Pier on the 2nd, with one there on the 5th, and singles off Samphire Hoe on two dates, with four reported there on the 13th. Late individuals were at Samphire Hoe on the 3rd June and Abbotscliffe on the 6th June. One was at Samphire Hoe on the 29th July, with singles there on four dates in August and two dates in September, whilst two were seen off Hythe on the 26th September. There were two at Samphire Hoe on the 12th October, with one there on the 14th October, one in Folkestone Harbour on the 30th November and in December two were seen there on the 4th, with singles on three dates.

Despite the poor start it was overall another good year, with the total of 58 bird/days being the fourth highest to date.

Chinese Pond Heron

<i>Ardeola bacchus</i>

Very rare vagrant.

One was present in the Hythe and Saltwood areas from the 21st January until March, and appears to have last been seen alive on the 13th March before it was discovered freshly dead at Orchard Valley, Hythe on the 25th (M. Dawson, M. Kirk, I. A. Roberts *et al*). The first British record. See pages 92-105 for further information.

Little Egret

<i>Egretta garzetta</i>

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

There were very few records in the early winter period, with just singles at West Hythe on the 1st January, flying over Saltwood on the 6th February and at Botolph's Bridge on the 27th February, and none in spring for the first time since 1998.

There were two sightings however in July – two flying east past Samphire Hoe on the 22nd and one in Folkestone Harbour from the 23rd to the 26th, with one at the latter site on four dates between the 10th August and the 10th September, and two there on the 14th September. At Samphire Hoe there were two on the 2nd September, three on the 16th and singles on three dates in the month, with another on the 6th October, and two flew west at Hythe on the 10th October. There were singles at Samphire Hoe on four dates in the second half of November, with one at Botolph's Bridge on the 22nd, and one in Folkestone Harbour on the 23rd and 29th, whilst good numbers were seen in December, with up to two in the Botolph's Bridge area throughout, up to three at Samphire Hoe to the 16th, up to two in Folkestone Harbour in the last week, four at Seabrook on the 28th and six at West Hythe on 30th.

On the 6th September a presumed aberrant Little Egret (or possibly a Little x Cattle Egret hybrid) was photographed at Folkestone Warren. A similar, though it would appear not identical bird, was seen on the Isle of Sheppey in autumn 2013.



Aberrant egret at Folkestone Warren
(per Amy Woodland)



Little Egret at Botolph's Bridge (Brian Harper)

Great White Egret	<i>Ardea alba</i>
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Very rare vagrant.

A flock of three flew east offshore of Abbotscliffe on the 17th May (I. A. Roberts), see photograph on page 15. This was only the seventh area record but all have occurred in the last five years.

Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>
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Breeding resident and passage migrant.

A total of 13 nests were counted in Lympe Park Wood, where the population appears to be stable with 11 to 13 pairs noted in each of the last six years.

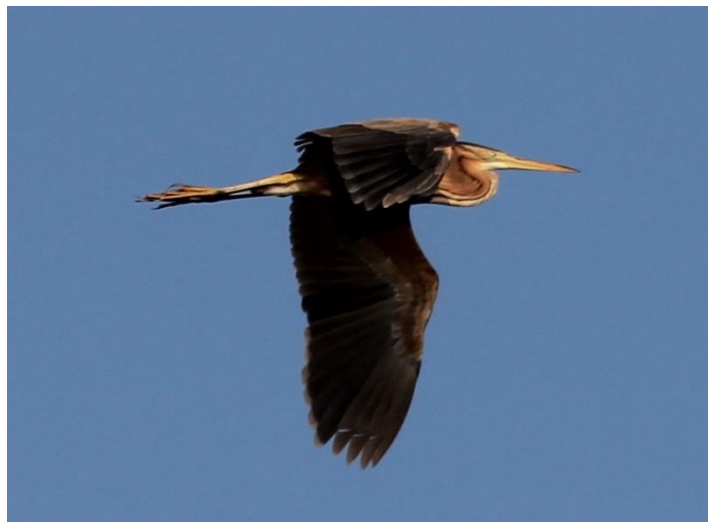
Small numbers were seen at many sites across the area during the year. There were a few records suggestive of passage or dispersal, including two north over Saltwood on the 27th April, one east at Mill Point the following day, two east at Abbotscliffe on the 7th July, one east at Samphire Hoe on the 22nd July, a flock of 12 over Crete Road East on the 18th September, with another heard calling over Hythe that night, and two heading west a long way offshore from the latter site on the 14th October.

Purple Heron

Ardea purpurea

Very rare vagrant.

One which flew west and then back east over Nickolls Quarry on the 16th May (I. A. Roberts) was the 6th area record. Also see photograph on page 14. In the photograph below note the contrast between the older outer primaries (three on the left, four on the right) which are yet to be replaced and the rest of the wing.



Purple Heron at Nickolls Quarry (Ian Roberts)



Grey Heron at Nickolls Quarry (Brian Harper)

Spoonbill

Platalea leucorodia

Very rare vagrant.

One which flew over Saltwood on the 23rd June (P. Howe) was the 11th area record but the first for ten years.

Little Grebe

Tachybaptus ruficollis

Breeding resident and winter visitor.

Numbers in the early winter period were very low, with a peak of just two at Botolph's Bridge on the 12th March. Summer-plumaged adults at Samphire Hoe on the 26th May and 17th July were unusual summer records at this site, but breeding was not suspected. In the late winter period one on the canal between Hythe and Seabrook from the 22nd November was of note but the highest count to the west of Hythe was just three at Botolph's Bridge on the 30th December.

Great Crested Grebe

Podiceps cristatus

Breeding resident and winter visitor.

Numbers in early January were low, with a peak of 20 off Folkestone Pier on the 1st, but appeared to increase from mid-month, with "large numbers" noted off Samphire Hoe on the 18th, 100 on the sea off the Willop Outfall on the 24th and 131 flying west there on the 27th. An individual seen on one of the ponds at Samphire Hoe on the 4th January was an unusual occurrence there.

There were no counts of note in February, and in March a peak off 33 on the sea off the Willop Outfall on the 15th. Little evidence of spring passage was noted, though two flew east past Folkestone Pier on 5th May. Up to four were again present at Nickolls Quarry throughout the spring / summer and presumably bred, though proof was not recorded.

Two were seen off Hythe on the 10th July and small numbers were noted regularly offshore in autumn, with larger counts of 200 on the sea off the Willop Outfall on 9th December and 18 east past Hythe on the 13th December, whilst up to six were at Nickolls Quarry in December.

Black-necked Grebe

<i>Podiceps nigricollis</i>

Very rare vagrant.

One flew east past Mill Point on the 29th March (I. A. Roberts). This was only the 17th area record but the third in the last four years.

Honey Buzzard

<i>Pernis apivorus</i>

Scarce passage migrant.

In May singles flew over Cheriton on the 4th (B. Harper), Capel-le-Ferne on the 25th (D. A. Gibson), whilst in June singles were seen over Cheriton on the 12th June (B. Harper), Folkestone on the 22nd June (D. A. Gibson), Cheriton once more on the 25th June (C. Gillard), Samphire Hoe on the 28th June (per D E Smith) and West Hythe on the 29th (per RBA).

A total of 113 have now been recorded in the area in the 25 years since 1990 (4.5 per year) so the six in 2014 was just a little above average, and this was also a fairly typical array of records.

Red Kite

<i>Milvus milvus</i>

Rare migrant, but increasing.

There was a significant movement in mid-March, with singles over Hythe (I. A. Roberts) and Saltwood (P. Howe) on the 15th preceding a total of up to 12 the next day: seven, including a flock of four, flew west at Abbotscliffe (I. A. Roberts), two flew south-west over Saltwood (P. Howe) and singles were seen over Hythe Roughs (B. Harper), Hythe and Brockhill Country Park (I. A. Roberts), and one over Samphire Hoe on the 17th.

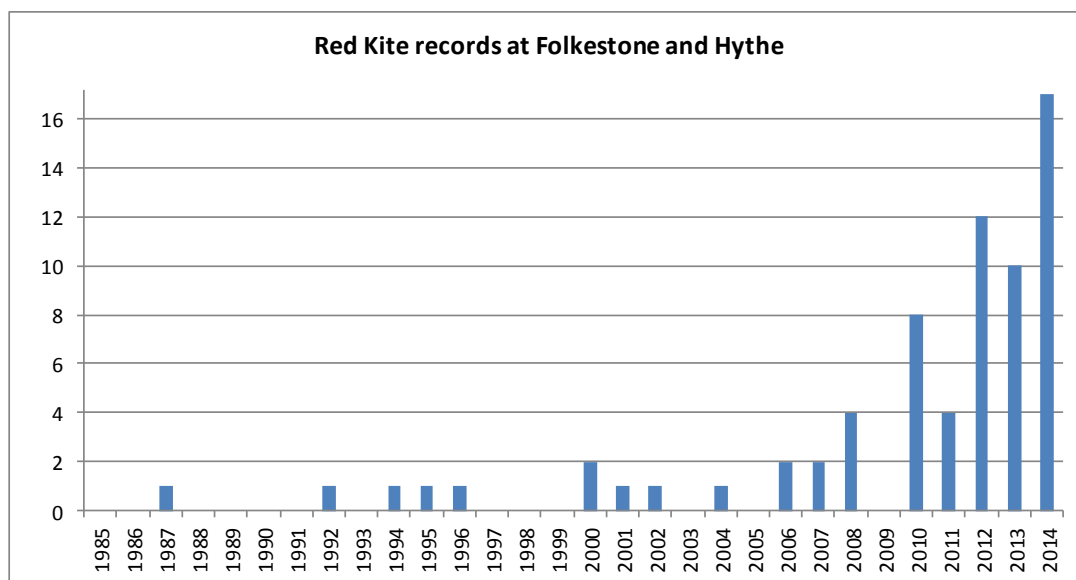
In April singletons were noted at Hythe on the 5th (I. A. Roberts), the Willop Basin on the 18th (B. Harper) and Samphire Hoe on the 23rd (M. D. Kennett), with further records from the western end of Folkestone on the 18th May (N. C. Frampton) and Newingreen on the 20th May (N. Spencer).

A remarkable flock of seven were seen over Saltwood (P. Howe) on the 1st June, with another at Round Down the same day (M. D. Kennett) and singles were seen over Lympne Castle on the 19th June (P. Sharp) and Peene Quarry on the 21st June (B. Harper).

The only record in autumn was of one flying east over Saltwood on the 4th September (P. Howe).

The total of 18 records of 31 birds is the best to date, as shown in the chart below, and a total of 72 records have now been logged, with spring producing the bulk of sightings: 80% having occurred between week 11 and week 25 (roughly mid-March to late June). This species will no longer be treated as a rarity from 2015.

Latest results from the national Breeding Bird Survey show an increase of over 800% over the last 20 years (BTO, 2014).



Marsh Harrier

Circus aeruginosus

Winter visitor and passage migrant.

Continuing the pattern of more regular winter occurrences (as described in the last report), there were singles in the early winter period at Nickolls Quarry on the 2nd January, the Willop Basin on the 27th January and Botolph's Bridge on the 21st February.

In spring singles were seen at Abbotscliffe and Donkey Street on the 16th March, with later birds at West Hythe on the 9th May and Botolph's Bridge on the 31st May.

In autumn a juvenile, possibly the same individual, was seen at Botolph's Bridge on the 30th August and Donkey Street on the 31st, see photograph on page 17, with further sightings, again possibly relating to a single bird, at the same two sites on the 8th and 9th November. There were additional singles at West Hythe on the 21st December and Samphire Hoe on the 30th December.

Overall it was another good year with up to 13 records which, although less than the 18 noted last year, is still slightly above the average for the previous ten years of 11.1.

Hen Harrier

Circus cyaneus

Rare migrant and winter visitor.

One flew west along the cliff-top at Samphire Hoe on the 15th October (D. E. Smith). This was only the 38th area record but the species has now been recorded in 11 of the last 13 years (with only 2008 and 2009 being blank).

Sparrowhawk

Accipiter nisus

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 although four at Abbotscliffe on the 16th March (a day which saw a significant movement of raptors), two there on the 23rd March and three at Capel-le-Ferne Gun Site on the 30th March may have involved migrants.

There was even less suggestion of autumn migration.

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

It is becoming increasingly difficult to distinguish passage birds from the thriving resident population and there were widespread records throughout the year.

In March two which flew east over Cheriton on the 4th and one which flew south-west over Saltwood on the 5th might have been migrants, whilst there was a notable count of eight between Grange Road, Saltwood and the M20 on the latter date. Further singles flying north over Folkestone on the 13th and north-east over Hythe on the 15th could also have been passage birds, and ten were also seen at Saltwood on the latter date. A count of 12 at Abbotscliffe on the 16th (a day of significant raptors movement) no doubt included some migrants, as did eight there on the 23rd.

There were a number of sightings of up to three birds in April and May which were suggestive of passage, whilst three which “flew strongly north-east” over Saltwood on the 1st June “appeared to be migrants” to the observer.

Records in autumn that appear to possibly relate to migrant birds included three west at Hythe on the 23rd August, three over Botolph's Bridge on the 24th August, four west over Saltwood on the 31st August, three west over Samphire Hoe on the 7th September, four east over Seabrook on the 22nd September and five over Folkestone Harbour on the 5th October, together with numerous other sightings of up to three in October. In November five flew over Cheriton on the 18th.



Sparrowhawk at West Hythe (Brian Harper)



Buzzard at Botolph's Bridge (Brian Harper)



Kestrel at Willop Basin (Brian Harper)

Rough-legged Buzzard	<i>Buteo lagopus</i>
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Very rare vagrant.

One flew north over Saltwood on the 13th April (P. Howe). This was just the 12th area record but the fifth to be recorded in the last four years.

Osprey	<i>Pandion haliaetus</i>
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Scarce passage migrant.

Singles were seen over Folkestone on the 28th April (D. A. Gibson), West Hythe on the 24th August (C. Dyett) and Hythe Ranges on the 31st August (S. McMinn).

A total of 71 have been recorded in the area in the 25 years since 1990 (2.8 per year) so this was a fairly average showing.

Kestrel	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>
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Breeding resident and passage migrant.

The highest counts received were of eight at Samphire Hoe in September and six at Folkestone Downs in October. There was very little evidence of any migration though one flying out to sea at Samphire Hoe on the 6th September, three flying south over Saltwood on the 28th September and one over Cheriton on the 18th November are perhaps worthy of note.

Merlin	<i>Falco columbarius</i>
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Winter visitor and passage migrant.

Singles flew over Saltwood on the 24th January and Folkestone on the 4th May, whilst in autumn singles were seen at Samphire Hoe on the 16th and 22nd September, with a male at Nickolls Quarry on the 16th October, before colder weather in the last week of December produced one flying north over Hythe and another at West Hythe on the 30th.

The previous decade saw an average of 4.4 records per year so the total of seven was an average showing.

Hobby	<i>Falco subbuteo</i>
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A summer visitor with breeding suspected in many years but not proven until 2014.

The first, one at Seabrook on the 23rd April, was eight days earlier than the first arrival last year, and was followed by another April sighting at Capel-le-Ferne Gun Site on the 29th. In May there was one at Samphire Hoe on the 4th and one at Nickolls Quarry on the 7th, with a pair at Lympne Park from the 8th, and further singles at the Willop Basin on the 20th and 28th, Nickolls Quarry on the 26th and Hythe on the 31st.

The Lympne Park Wood pair were seen regularly hunting in the area through the summer and a juvenile was seen with them on the 16th September – the first confirmed breeding locally though it has been suspected in most recent years. The 2013 report details the increase of this species nationally and in the Folkestone and Hythe area.

Records from nearby Botolph's Bridge and Nickolls Quarry between June and August may have been related to the breeding pair. Elsewhere there were singles at Capel-le-Ferne Gun Site on the 7th June, Seabrook on the 14th June, Crete Road East on the 13th July, Church Hougham on the 21st July, Samphire Hoe between the 21st July and 6th August, and Princes Parade and the Willop Basin on the 30th August.

In September one was at Folkestone Downs on the 8th, with one at Saltwood on the 15th and singles flying west at Abbotscliffe on the 11th and 30th. The last records were of singles at Botolph's Bridge and Samphire Hoe on the 1st October which were ten days later than the departure date last year.

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 3 pairs present in summer though there was no evidence of breeding success. One was seen to take a Water Rail at Samphire Hoe on the 18th March.

Elsewhere the wintering pair from 2013 remained at the Willop Basin until at least the 24th January and may have been the same birds that were noted intermittently in the Botolph's area in February and early March. One flew over Saltwood on the 4th February and another was at Hythe Ranges on the 11th March.

A series of records in early May could have related to migrants or wandering individuals: one flying east at Folkestone Pier on the 2nd, one over Folkestone on the 4th, and singles over Peene and flying north at Saltwood on the 5th.

In autumn singles were seen over Seabrook on the 18th August and Saltwood on the 26th August, with another at the latter site on the 13th October, whilst in December there were singles at the Willop Basin on the 11th and Botolph's Bridge on the 29th.



Peregrine at Abbotscliffe (Ian Roberts)

Water Rail

<i>Rallus aquaticus</i>

Winter visitor and passage migrant.

Up to four were at Nickolls Quarry in the early winter period, with one noted at Holy Well, Folkestone on the 21st January.

On the 18th March there was an unusual record of one which flew from the rocks at the eastern end of Samphire Hoe and was then taken by a Peregrine.

Singles were seen along the canal between Hythe and Seabrook on the 12th and 18th October, and at least three were present there in December, when there was one at Samphire Hoe on the 26th and two at Nickolls Quarry on the 30th.



Water Rail at Seabrook (Nigel Webster)

Moorhen	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>
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Breeding resident.

There were widespread records relating to small numbers with larger counts of ten at the Willop Basin on the 4th November and eight along the canal at Seabrook on the 18th December.

Coot	<i>Fulica atra</i>
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Breeding resident and winter visitor.

The mild weather meant that numbers though were again very low, with a peak of just eight at Nickolls Quarry on the 5th January and another on the lake at Folkestone Racecourse, Westenhanger in January and February.

In spring/summer there were up to two pairs at Nickolls Quarry, up to three pairs at the Willop Basin and one at Botolph's Bridge and breeding may have occurred at these sites.

Only small numbers were again present at Nickolls Quarry and the Willop Basin in the latter part of the year.

The annual peak was again the lowest since 1995. This decline in numbers, as discussed in last year's report, is probably localised and reflects habitat changes at Nickolls Quarry.

Oystercatcher	<i>Haematopus ostralegus</i>
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Breeding species, passage migrant and winter visitor.

The only records from the early winter period were of one flying west past Folkestone Beach on the 12th January and two at the Willop Outfall on the 24th January.

Two flew east at Folkestone Beach on the 8th March, but spring passage was mainly noted between early April and early May, with around 50 being logged, and peak counts of 17 (including a flock of 14) east past Samphire Hoe on the 23rd April and nine east past Samphire Hoe on the 5th May. A flock of 8 flying west at Samphire Hoe on the 2nd June were also of note.

At Nickolls Quarry the breeding pair returned at the end of March and again bred successfully on the island in the lake. A pair were also present at the Willop Basin from early March to at least late May, and might have bred though there was no evidence noted.

On the 2nd June eight flew west at Samphire Hoe and one flew past Hythe the following day, with three at the latter site on the 1st July, another on the 27th July and there were three sightings, of a total of six birds, at Samphire Hoe in the last week of the month. August produced a number of records, with the largest counts being nine off Samphire Hoe (4 west, 5 east) and a further eight west past Hythe on the 27th August, and ones and twos were noted between September and November, before five flew west at Hythe on the 26th December.

Avocet	<i>Recurvirostra avosetta</i>
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Rare migrant.

Three flew west at the Willop Outfall on the 12th April (B. Harper), a further three flew west at the Hythe Redoubt on the 28th August (B. Harper) and one flew west at Hythe on the 27th December. The 57th to 59th area records.

Little Ringed Plover

<i>Charadrius dubius</i>

Formerly a breeding summer visitor and scarce passage migrant. Now a very rare vagrant.

One at the Willop Basin on the 21st March (I. A. Roberts) was only the 7th record away from the Nickolls Quarry area (where it was regular until 2006).

Ringed Plover

<i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>

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

The winter roost at Folkestone Beach held a peak of 41 birds on the 8th January but the only sign of spring passage was a single flying east past Folkestone Pier on 6th May.

A pair were seen at the Hythe Redoubt on the 4th May, and one was seen there on the 24th August, but there was no evidence of breeding at the nearby Ranges. A pair did breed successfully at Folkestone Harbour, on the outer arm, raising two young, but they appeared to have later been predated by gulls.

Autumn passage was equally light, with just singles at the Willop Outfall on the 30th August and flying west past Samphire Hoe on the 3rd September, whilst in the late winter period there was one on the beach at the Willop Outfall on the 14th December.

Golden Plover

<i>Pluvialis apricaria</i>

Winter visitor and passage migrant.

The only record from the first half of the year was of one at Abbotscliffe on the 12th March.

One flew over Crete Road East on the 8th September, with two flying over Abbotscliffe on the 5th October, and one along Donkey Street on the 9th November, before a flock of around 50 flew south over Westenhanger on the 20th November. Finally one was at the Willop Basin on the 22nd December.

It was another poor year, despite the flock of c.50 which equals the largest count since 2010. The local decline was discussed in last year's report.

Grey Plover

<i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>

Winter visitor and passage migrant.

The only records concerned one flying east past Mill Point on the 20th April and one at the Willop Outfall on the 18th November.

A poor year, with the fewest recorded since 1995.

Lapwing

<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>

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

At the Willop Basin 128 were counted on the 3rd January but there were no further records until 220 flew over there on the 24th January. Three were at the same site on the 9th February, with two the following day, and up to two were seen there regularly from early March to mid-April, but again there was no sign of a breeding attempt.

Birds were noted again regularly at the Willop Basin from August, when 30 were seen on the 23rd, and numbers began to slowly increase in October, with 45 there on the 15th, 48 on the 22nd, and 57 on the 31st, then more quickly in November, when there were 94 on the 1st, 101 on the 4th, 108 the next day, 145 on the 7th, 157 on the 13th and 243 on the 15th, before reaching a peak of 560 on the 22nd.

Up to 500 were seen regularly at this site into early December but numbers then dwindled to 177 by the 9th before increasing to 588 on the 14th and to 592 on the 20th. At least 300 remained until Christmas but the flock appeared to have been dispersed by colder weather in the last week of the year. The peak count of the year at the Willop Basin (592) was very similar to the maximum in 2013 (582).

Very few were seen elsewhere and these comprised one at Abbotscliffe on the 18th September, two flying west at sea past Hythe on the 2nd November, four flying east along the cliff over Samphire Hoe on the 20th November and 32 flying over Nickolls Quarry on the 22nd November.

Knot	<i>Calidris canutus</i>
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Passage migrant.

One flew west past the Willop Outfall on the 27th January and one was seen on the apron at Folkestone Warren on the 6th September. A poor year.

Sanderling	<i>Calidris alba</i>
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Winter visitor and passage migrant.

The only record from the early part of the year was of one at the Willop Outfall on the 21st January and none were noted on spring passage.

In autumn one was at the Hythe Redoubt on the 29th August and up to three were noted at the Willop Outfall from September until the year's end.



Sanderling at the Willop Outfall (Brian Harper)



Knot at Folkestone Warren (per Amy Woodland)

Purple Sandpiper	<i>Calidris maritima</i>
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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, with the last on the 7th May. The first returning bird was at Hythe on the 28th October, increasing to 5 on the 16th November and to six on the 28th November, with at least three remaining until the end of the year.



Purple Sandpiper at Hythe (Phil Smith)

Dunlin

Calidris alpina

Winter visitor and passage migrant.

One was at the Willop Basin on the 19th January and in March there were three there on the 1st and two on the 21st, with four flying west offshore on the 15th. The only signs of spring passage were 11 at the Hythe Redoubt on the 18th April, one at the Willop Outfall on the 20th April, six flying east past Folkestone Pier on the 2nd May and one flying west at Mill Point on the 10th May.

In autumn one flew over Hythe at night on the 27th July, one was at Samphire Hoe on the 6th August and one was at the Willop Basin on the 13th October, with three there on the 15th October. Two were seen at the Willop Basin on the 22nd November and three flew east offshore there on the 2nd December, whilst one was seen in a flooded field beside Burmarsh Road, Palmarsh on the 29th December.

Ruff

Calidris pugnax

Rare migrant and winter visitor.

Three flew east over Crete Road East on the 7th September (B. Harper), see photograph on page 19, and one flew west at Princes Parade, Seabrook on the 9th September (N. Webster).

In December three were at the Willop Outfall on the 6th, with still present the following day (R. K. Norman, B. Harper). These were the 28th to 30th area records and 2014 was the first year since 2005 to produce more than one sighting.

Jack Snipe

<i>Lymnocryptes minimus</i>

Winter visitor and passage migrant.

One, presumably the same individual, was flushed from a stubble field near Hillhurst Farm, Westenhangar on the 2nd and 26th February. There were no records at Nickolls Quarry in January or February but when the water levels fell in March two appeared on the 15th, increasing to three on the 28th, with one lingering until the 18th April.

None were noted in the late winter period.

Common Snipe

<i>Gallinago gallinago</i>

Winter visitor and passage migrant.

Small numbers were noted at several localities in the early winter period, with up to 15 at Nickolls Quarry (in March, few were recorded there until water levels abated), up to eight at Fairmead Farm, Westenhangar, up to four at Botolph's Bridge and singles at the Willop Basin on three dates. The last was at Nickolls Quarry on the 14th April.

There were few records from the late winter period though singles were at Samphire Hoe on the 21st November and 7th December and up to two were at the Willop Basin in December.

Woodcock

<i>Scolopax rusticola</i>

Winter visitor and passage migrant.

In the early winter period there was a peak of nine (the fifth highest ever count) at Chesterfield Wood, Saltwood on the 2nd February, with 3 to 4 in the Shorncliffe Cemetery area in the second half of January, and singles at Fairmead Farm, Westenhangar and Saltwood in January, and Kiln Wood (Pedlinge) and Saltwood in February.

A spring migrant was at Samphire Hoe on the 13th March.

None were noted in the late winter period.

Black-tailed Godwit

<i>Limosa limosa</i>

Rare passage migrant.

One was at the Willop Basin briefly on the 15th March before flying off east (I. A. Roberts) and a flock of five were seen there on the 1st December (I. A. Roberts). The 25th and 26th area records, but the first to be seen in December.

Bar-tailed Godwit

<i>Limosa lapponica</i>

Passage migrant.

Spring passage involved a total of 169 moving up-channel between the 20th April and 4th May, which was a considerable improvement on the 87 recorded last year and the 91 in 2012, though still below the average for the last ten years of 285. The largest counts included 23 east past Mill Point on the 27th April, 30 east there the following day, 40 east there on the 3rd May and 50 east at Samphire Hoe on the 4th May.

The only record in autumn related to a flock of nine which flew west at Samphire Hoe on the 29th August, whilst in December two were reported at the Willop Basin on the 22nd.

Passage migrant.

Spring passage involved a total of about 114, mostly noted moving up-channel, between the 17th April and 6th May. This was only slightly less than the 119 recorded last spring and the average for the last ten years of 123. The largest counts included 11 east past Samphire Hoe on the 19th April, 17 east there on the 25th April, 10 east over Hythe Roughts on the 26th April and 33 east at Mill Point on the 3rd May. The only records away from the sea were of one at the Willop Basin on the 17th April, two at Nickolls Quarry on the 24th April and three there on the 28th April.

There were only two autumn records – four flying west past Folkestone Pier on the 22nd August and one at the Hythe Redoubt on the 29th August.



Black-tailed Godwits at the Willop Basin (Ian Roberts)



Whimbrel at Willop Basin (Ian Roberts)

Winter visitor and passage migrant.

One was at Botolph's Bridge on the 1st January and a flock frequented the Willop Basin from January until mid-April, with 22 on the 2nd January, increasing to 37 on the 19th January and peaking at 48 on the 27th January (the third highest ever count, after two larger ones last year). Numbers decreased to 12 by the 2nd February and up to ten remained until late March, before the flock quickly dwindled, leaving just a single in April, which remained until the 13th.

There was a light spring passage, with two east at Seabrook on the 28th February, and singles east past Mill Point on the 3rd April, Abbotscliffe on the 10th April, Mill Point on the 23rd April and Folkestone Pier on the 5th May.

In autumn singles were seen flying west over Seabrook on the 12th July, north over Samphire Hoe on the 22nd July, west at Hythe on the 18th August and west over Church Hougham on the 26th August. Up to two were seen regularly at the Willop Basin from the 13th October until the end of the year, with five noted there on the 22nd November. Elsewhere singles flew west past Hythe on the 18th and 30th October, with two west there on the 7th November, one west at Samphire Hoe on the 17th November and two at Nickolls Quarry on the 19th November.

Passage migrant.

The first, one at Samphire Hoe on the 26th April, arrived on the same date as last year (excluding the exceptionally early March record in 2013).

The remainder of a fairly light spring passage were singles at Hythe Redoubt on the 4th May, Folkestone Pier on the 5th and 6th May, Samphire Hoe on the 11th May, and Nickolls Quarry on the 16th May, with three at the latter site on the 18th May and another at Samphire Hoe on the 19th May.

The first returning birds were one at Samphire Hoe on the 7th July, with six there the next day and small numbers were seen there regularly into August. Elsewhere one was at Botolph's Bridge on the 9th August and up to three were at the Hythe Redoubt between the 9th and 30th August, with one in Folkestone Harbour on the 25th August. In September one was heard calling at night at Hythe on the 8th, with another there on the 14th, and the last of the year was at Samphire Hoe on the 19th.

Green Sandpiper

<i>Tringa ochropus</i>

Winter visitor and passage migrant.

In the early winter period there were two at Nickolls Quarry on the 5th January, one near Bluehouse Wood Lane between at least the 19th January and 9th February, and one over Pond Hill Road, Cheriton on the 25th January. One at Botolph's Bridge on the 19th March and two at Nickolls Quarry on the 7th April were presumably spring passage migrants.

The first returning birds were three at Botolph's Bridge on the 1st July, with four there the next day, and one there on the 2nd August and two on the 30th August. Two were at Nickolls Quarry on the 29th to 30th August, with three there on the 1st September, up to two remaining until the 3rd, and further singles on the 17th and 19th September. Up to two were at Nickolls Quarry on the 13th-14th October, with two at Botolph's Bridge on the 6th December and two at Nickolls Quarry on the 30th December. These were the first records in the late winter period since 2011.

Greenshank

<i>Tringa nebularia</i>

Passage migrant.

One flying west past the Hythe Redoubt on the 7th May was the only spring record.

On the 16th August one flew over Botolph's Bridge and two were seen at the Hythe Redoubt, whilst the last record of the autumn involved one at Nickolls Quarry on the 1st September.

The total of five was very much in line with the mean for the previous ten years of 4.7.

Redshank

<i>Tringa totanus</i>

Winter visitor and passage migrant.

Up to 17 were at the Willop Basin in January, decreasing to 14 in February, and none were noted in March so one on the beach there on the 27th April was presumably a migrant. Elsewhere up to two were wintering in Folkestone Harbour and one was seen at Botolph's Bridge on the 17th to 19th March.

In autumn one flew east at Samphire Hoe on the 27th August, with one on the beach at Hythe on the 9th September, and two were at the Willop Basin on the 29th October, with one there on the 31st October. One was seen in Folkestone Harbour on the 23rd November and up to three were noted there on several dates in December. The Willop Basin also held up to six regularly in December, with a peak of 11 there on the 3rd.

Turnstone

<i>Arenaria interpres</i>

Winter visitor and passage migrant.

In the early winter period there were up to six at Folkestone Harbour, eight at Copt Point and nine at the Willop Outfall.

In the latter part of the year counts included up to six at Folkestone Harbour, 16 at the Willop Outfall, 20 at Hythe and 21 at Hythe Ranges.



Common Sandpiper at Hythe Redoubt (Brian Harper)



Redshank at Botolph's Bridge (Brian Harper)

Pomarine Skua

Stercorarius pomarinus

Passage migrant.

Singles flew east past Samphire Hoe on the 3rd May and Mill Point on the 19th May. A disappointing year, with a total well below the annual mean for the previous ten years of around 20 birds.

Arctic Skua

Stercorarius parasiticus

Passage migrant.

The first, which flew east past Mill Point on the 22nd April, was just two days later than the first sighting last year. A further three flew east there on the 27th April and two flew east past Copt Point on the 29th April, but unusually (for only the second year since 1997) there were no records in May.

In autumn three were chasing terns off the Hythe Redoubt on the 29th August and one was seen off Hythe on the 6th October, before there was a record movement of 30 past Hythe on the 8th October (the largest ever count of Sooty Shearwaters occurred in the same conditions, which are described under that species), when two were also noted off Samphire Hoe. Subsequent sightings involved four at Hythe and one at Samphire Hoe on the 10th October, two west past Hythe on the 18th October and one off Samphire Hoe on the 24th October.

Whilst the total for the spring (6) was relatively low compared to the annual mean for the previous ten years of around 18, autumn passage (at least 44 birds) represented a marked improvement on the average of 24.

Great Skua

Stercorarius skua

Passage migrant.

There was another strong spring passage, which began with four flying east at Samphire Hoe on the 17th April, and was followed by one east at Mill Point on the 20th April, one east at Copt Point on the 25th April, five east past Mill Point on the 27th April and one east at Samphire Hoe on the 29th April. In May singles flew east past Mill Point on the 3rd, Folkestone Pier on the 5th and Mill Point again on the 6th. The total of 15 equals the second best ever spring.

Autumn passage was also good, with one west at Hythe on the 7th October, a total of 11 (2 east, 9 west) there the next day, singles off Samphire Hoe on the 10th and Folkestone Pier on the 11th October, and nine (4 west, 5 east) past Hythe on the 13th October. Further singles were noted off Hythe on the 17th October and Princes Parade, Seabrook on the 19th October, with two flying west past Hythe on the 2nd November and one west on the 7th November. The total of 28 constitutes the best ever autumn passage.

Finally there was a winter record of one flying west past Hythe on the 27th December.

Kittiwake

<i>Rissa tridactyla</i>

Winter visitor and passage migrant.

Good numbers were again noted in January, including 35 flying west past Folkestone Beach and 64 west past Samphire Hoe on the 4th, 20 off Folkestone Beach on the 12th, 15 west there on the 17th and 35 west past Princes Parade, Seabrook on the 26th, but decreases in February, with a peak count of 12 in Folkestone Harbour on the 27th.

Spring passage however was disappointing after last year's record total. Just 29 were logged moving east between the 11th March and 23rd May, and with a peak of six east past Samphire Hoe on the 29th April.

Numbers in autumn were also modest, with the only counts of note being a total seven flying west (2 at Samphire Hoe and 5 at Hythe) on the 8th October, 15 west at Hythe on the 2nd November and 54 west there on the 8th November.

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 only counts were received were of 350 at the Willop Basin on the 16th October, 170 flying west past Hythe to roost on the 17th October and 300+ on the Hythe Imperial golf course on the 16th November.

Spring passage was noted between early March and mid-May, including counts of 147 east past Mill Point and Princes Parade, Seabrook on the 29th March, 22 east past Samphire Hoe on the 4th May and 29 east past Folkestone Pier the following day.

A colour-ringed bird from Finland was noted – see page 109 for further information.

Little Gull

<i>Hydrocoloeus minutus</i>

Winter visitor and passage migrant.

There was a small arrival in the first three days of the year, with single adults noted off Hythe on the 1st January, Hythe Redoubt and the Willop Outfall on the 2nd, and off Princes Parade, Seabrook on the 3rd January. Later in the month two first-winter birds were seen over fields at the Willop Basin on the 24th, with an adult there on the 27th and an adult off Folkestone Beach on the 29th January.

There was only one record in February, which was an unusual sighting of one flying over Turnpike Hill, Hythe on the 15th, and none were noted on spring passage.

In autumn three adults flew west past Hythe on the 8th October, with another adult offshore there on the 21st October and an adult flew west there on the 7th November.

The total of just 14 was well below the annual average for the previous ten years of 33.



Kittiwake at Folkestone Pier (Brian Harper)



Little Gull at Battery Point (Ian Roberts)

Mediterranean Gull

Larus melanocephalus

Winter visitor and passage migrant.

The only notable counts received for the early winter period were of 40 in Folkestone Harbour on the 9th January, 12 at the Willop Basin on the 18th January and up to 120 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 late April mostly involving ones and twos, but with six passing Mill Point on the 4th April.

As usual there were few records between May and July, and numbers only really began to increase notably during August, with at least 480 at Copt Point on the 18th August, 200 at Samphire Hoe on the 26th August, 250 at Abbotscliffe on the 1st September, a record count of 550 in fields inland of Crete Road East on the 7th September and 220 along the cliffs at Samphire Hoe on the 18th September. The previous record involved 500+ at the same site last year.

The counts received from the late winter period were considerably smaller, and included 35 flying west past Samphire Hoe during strong southerly winds on the 8th October, 34 east past Hythe on the 17th October, 48 at Princes Parade, Seabrook on the 19th October and 62 on the beach there on the 29th October.

Common Gull

Larus canus

Winter visitor and passage migrant.

Large numbers were seen in both the early and late winter periods but no counts were received.

There was a small easterly passage in March and April, with a peak count of 50 east past Mill Point and Princes Parade, Seabrook on the 29th March.

Lesser Black-backed Gull

Larus fuscus

Breeding species, winter visitor and passage migrant.

Only small numbers were noted in January and February with a peak count of three at the Willop Basin on the 19th January. There were some signs of spring passage from the end of February, including nine at the Willop Basin on the 28th February, eight high east over Saltwood on the 6th March, 13 at the Willop Basin on the 9th March and four north over Saltwood the next day. In April four flew east past Mill Point on the 3rd.

Birds were again noted in suitable breeding habitat on roof-tops in Folkestone, with two pairs also present at Hythe, but no evidence of success was obtained.

In autumn counts of 40 at the Willop Basin on the 9th October and 12 flying west at Capel-le-Ferne Café on the 22nd October were noteworthy.

Herring Gull

<i>Larus argentatus</i>

Breeding resident, winter visitor and passage migrant.

Large numbers were present across the area throughout the year, but the only three-figure counts received were from Samphire Hoe, where there were 150 on the 1st April, 100 on the 8th April, 200 on the 1st July, and 100 on the 28th July and 13th September.

A pale *argentatus* Herring Gull or Herring x Glaucous Gull hybrid (also known as 'Viking Gull') was seen at the Willop Basin on four dates between the 10th February and 2nd March.

A partially leucistic individual was in Folkestone Harbour from the 21st November into 2015, see photograph below (for more information on colour aberrations in birds see van Grouw, 2013).

Several colour-ringed birds were noted, including one from Belgium – see pages 109-110 for further information.



Mediterranean Gull at Folkestone (Marek Szczepanek)



Ab. Herring Gull at Folkestone Harbour (Ian Roberts)

Yellow-legged Gull

<i>Larus michahellis</i>

Rare migrant.

One was seen on the Hythe Imperial golf course on the 21st April (N. Webster). The 19th area record and the first to be recorded earlier than July.

Caspian Gull

<i>Larus michahellis</i>

Very rare vagrant.

A first-winter bird at Folkestone Harbour on the 1st December was the sixth area record (I. A. Roberts). This was the third record in the last four years and the fifth to be recorded in the Folkestone Harbour area, see photograph on page 58.

Glauconous Gull

<i>Larus hyperboreus</i>

Rare migrant and winter visitor.

A first-winter bird which flew west past Hythe on the 27th December (I. A. Roberts) was the 26th area record.

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 114 in Folkestone Harbour on the 1st December and 20 at Samphire Hoe on the 16th December.

Birds colour-ringed in North-western France, Denmark and Norway were noted – see pages 110-111 for further information.

Little Tern

<i>Sternula albifrons</i>

Passage migrant, formerly bred.

Four flew east past Mill Point on the 23rd April and five flew east there on the 3rd May. The total of nine was rather lower than the annual mean for the previous ten years of 20.

Sandwich Tern

<i>Sterna sandvicensis</i>

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

The first, two flying east past Mill Point on the 25th March, were some 16 days later than the arrival date last year, and counts in March were comparatively low, with a peak of 29 east past Folkestone Pier on the 31st. There were however some good movements in April, including 71 east past Samphire Hoe on the 1st, 300 east past Mill Point on the 23rd (there have been only seven larger spring counts), 107 east past Samphire Hoe on the 25th and 75 east past Copt Point on the 29th. Numbers dropped off in May, with a peak of just 23 east past Folkestone Pier on the 5th and small numbers continued to be noted offshore throughout the summer, including 25 off Hythe Ranges on the 1st June.

Autumn passage was light apart from a count of 119 on the beach at Hythe Ranges on the 29th August. The last, one west past Hythe on the 24th October, was just a day earlier than the final sighting last year.

Common Tern

<i>Sterna hirundo</i>

Passage migrant.

Five which flew east past Mill Point on the 4th April were remarkably early, five days earlier even than last year's notable date, and equalling the second earliest ever (the earliest on record is six east past Copt Point on the 3rd April 2005). There were no further records until the 16th April and the main passage occurred in late April and early May, though numbers were disappointing with peak counts of just 50 east past Seabrook on the 26th April and 60 east past Mill Point the next day. Some of these could only identified as Common / Arctic Terns but both species were definitely involved in the movement on 27th April, and possibly on the day before. Numbers fell away during May, with a late count of 15 east past Folkestone Pier on the 20th.

Autumn passage was light with a peak count of just 17 on the beach at Hythe Ranges on the 29th August. The last, one west past Hythe on the 6th October, was almost a month later than the final sighting last year.

Arctic Tern

<i>Sterna paradisaea</i>

Passage migrant.

As stated above the movement past Mill Point on the 27th April involved a number (probably c.20) of Arctic Terns.

Guillemot

<i>Uria aalge</i>

Winter visitor and passage migrant.

There were some reasonable counts in January, though nothing like the exceptional numbers noted last year: a total of 460 flew east past Folkestone Beach on the 12th, 395 flew west past Seabrook on the 26th, 205 (Guillemot/Razorbill) flew west at Samphire Hoe on the 27th and 130 flew west at Seabrook the following day. A count off 55 at Folkestone Harbour on the 30th January is also worthy of mention. Far fewer were noted in February but sadly three were found dead or dying on the beach at Seabrook on the 28th, part of a larger wreck noted further west, especially in Dorset.

A small up-channel spring passage was evident, with peak counts of eight past Folkestone Beach on the 11th March and eight (Guillemot/Razorbill) past Mill Point on the 22nd April. There was also a relatively late count of 22 west past Mill Point on the 10th May.

Very few were noted in the latter half of the year with a peak of just six (Guillemot/Razorbill) past Hythe on the 18th October.

Razorbill

<i>Alca torda</i>

Winter visitor and passage migrant.

There was no repeat of the exceptional numbers noted in the early winter period last year, and counts in January were relatively low, with peaks of 12 east past Folkestone Beach on the 12th and 80 west past Seabrook on the 26th. Very few were noted in February but sadly one was found dead on the beach at Seabrook on the 28th, part of the larger wreck mentioned above.

None were identified on spring or autumn passage though some counts could only be logged as Guillemot/Razorbill.

Feral Pigeon

<i>Columba livia</i>

Breeding resident.

A common and widespread species but the only counts received were of 56 at Fisherman's Beach, Hythe on the 9th March, 27 on beach by the Hythe Imperial on the 25th September, 65 in arable fields at Abbotscliffe on the 30th September and 30 at Samphire Hoe on the 16th November.

Stock Dove

<i>Columba oenas</i>

Breeding resident and passage migrant.

The peak count from the early winter period was 15 in stubble field at Hillhurst Farm, Westenhanger on the 2nd February, whilst the only suggestions of spring passage were four flying west at Abbotscliffe on the 16th March and two flying west there on the 18th March. Summer counts included five at Nickolls Quarry on the 2nd May and eight at Hythe Ranges on the 14th June.

Autumn passage was light, with the only notable movements being 57 Stock Doves west over Capel-le-Ferne Café on the 22nd October and 35 west over Hythe on the 25th October. In December up to 45 frequented a stubble field opposite the Little Piece on Donkey Street, and included a melanistic individual, see photograph below.



Caspian Gull at Folkestone Harbour (Ian Roberts)



Stock Doves, including melanistic individual, at Donkey Street (Ian Roberts)

Wood Pigeon

Columba palumbus

Breeding resident and passage migrant.

An abundant species but once again few counts were received. There was a large roost in use in the West Hythe at the end of the year and one observer reported that “uncountable numbers headed out across the marsh” from there on the 20th December. At Samphire Hoe there was a peak of 53 in the first half of the year (on the 25th March) and 72 in the latter half (on the 13th December). The only migration noted was when 30 flew east at Abbotscliffe on the 6th November.

Collared Dove

Streptopelia decaocto

Breeding resident and passage migrant.

A common resident but the only count received was of 34 flying west over the Willop Basin, presumably from a roost site, on the 20th October.

Singles were at Samphire Hoe, where the species is unusual, on the 14th May and the 3rd September.

Turtle Dove

Streptopelia turtur

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

Again there was just a single record this year: one at Abbotscliffe on the 13th June (M. D. Kennett). The local and national decline was described in last year's report.

Ring-necked Parakeet

Psittacula krameri

Very rare vagrant.

In April singles, possibly the same individual, were seen flying over Cheriton on the 13th (S. Lloyd, V. Lloyd) and Hythe on the 22nd (I. A. Roberts). The 18th and 19th area records.

Declining breeding summer visitor and passage migrant.

The first arrival, at Nickolls Quarry on 17th April, was slightly later than last year but still ahead of the mean arrival date over the previous ten years of 19th April.

Up to two were then regularly seen at the site until at least the end of May, with others noted at two locations around Saltwood in April (possibly migrants) and at Hythe Roughs during May (probably a breeding bird).

Autumn passage as always was very light, with single birds at Seabrook on the 30th August and a notably late one at Church Hougham on the 2nd September – there have only been September records in four previous years (1969, 1984, 1992 and 1993).



Cuckoo at Nickolls Quarry (Brian Harper)

Introduced resident breeding species.

Rather under-recorded again this year. The only sighting away from its stronghold at Hythe Roughs was of one at the Willop Basin on the 18th May.

Breeding resident.

There were records from Brockhill Country Park, Folkestone, Hythe Roughs, Paraker Wood, Sandling and West Hythe. This species is known to be more widely-distributed and tends to be under-recorded.



Little Owl at West Hythe (Brian Harper)



Tawny Owl near Hythe (Brian Harper)

Long-eared Owl	<i>Asio otus</i>
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Very rare vagrant.

One was found roosting by day, being mobbed by Jays and Magpies, at Creteway Down, Folkestone on the 17th October (M. Varley). The 11th area record.

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

One was at Abbotscliffe on the 22nd October and was seen hunting in the Stonereach Bridge area near Botolph's Bridge in the early morning of 14th December.

After a poor showing last year, the total of two again was below the annual average for the last ten years of 4.5.

Nightjar	<i>Caprimulgus europaeus</i>
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Very rare vagrant.

One which flew over Seabrook on the 12th September was only the third area record (A. Jupp).

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

Arrival was unusually late and for the first time since 2000 there were no records in April. The first two were at Folkestone on the 3rd May, after which there were daily sightings, and counts in May included 18 at Nickolls Quarry on the 4th, 19 between the Hythe Redoubt and Willop Outfall on the 7th, 13 at Nickolls Quarry on the 8th and 24 in off the sea at Mill Point on the 10th. Later in the month 15 flew in off the sea at Capel-le-Ferne on the 26th, 15 flew west at Abbotscliffe on the 27th and 50 were at the Willop Basin the next day.

There were no large counts in June or July, but in August 40 at Abbotscliffe on the 4th, 12 west there on the 17th, 11 at Church Hougham on the 26th and 26 west at Nickolls Quarry on the 29th were of note, with the last on the 31st August. None were noted in September for only the third time since 2002.

Kingfisher	<i>Alcedo atthis</i>
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Breeding resident, with dispersal to coasts and non-breeding areas in autumn and winter.

Seen regularly along the canal cutting between the Hythe Redoubt and West Hythe, where two pairs attempted to nest. There were also frequent sightings from the canal between Hythe and Seabrook, particularly in the latter half of the year, and included a count of three there on the 5th October.

Wryneck	<i>Jynx torquilla</i>
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Formerly bred, now a rare passage migrant.

One was caught by a cat in a garden in Cheriton on the 9th September but fortunately survived and was released the following morning (R. Laker), see photograph on page 20. The 20th area record since 1980.

Green Woodpecker	<i>Picus viridis</i>
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Breeding resident.

Widely recorded but there were no notable counts received.

Great Spotted Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos major</i>
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Breeding resident and passage migrant.

Widely recorded but there were no notable counts received of resident birds. Autumn passage produced singles at Abbotscliffe on the 18th September, along Botolph's Bridge Road the following day, and at Abbotscliffe on the 22nd, with two flying in off the sea at the latter site the next day. In October one flew over Samphire Hoe on the 3rd, with singles at Abbotscliffe on the 12th, Nickolls Quarry on the 15th, Abbotscliffe on the 17th and 20th, and at Capel-le-Ferne Café on the 22nd, when two were at Abbotscliffe, and a late individual was seen there on the 16th November.

The total of 13 migrants was a marked improvement on the one noted last year.

Lesser Spotted Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos minor</i>
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Formerly bred, now a very rare vagrant.

One recorded at the roundabout at junction 12 of the M20, at Cheriton, on the 2nd July (J. Tomsett), was only the seventh record since 1985, and the first since 1999. This is a particularly intriguing record – could it have been an instance of post-breeding dispersal (from where?) or a wandering non-breeding individual?

Magpie	<i>Pica pica</i>
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Breeding resident.

The only counts of note were 17 at Nickolls Quarry on the 16th May, 15 at Samphire Hoe on the 18th August and 16 at the latter site on the 23rd September.

Jay	<i>Garrulus glandarius</i>
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Breeding resident and passage migrant.

Resident birds were widely recorded. No spring passage was noted but in autumn up to 60 migrants were logged. These included seven flying west at Abbotscliffe on the 15th September, ten flying west there on the 30th September, a further eight west there on the 5th October, seven high south-west over Saltwood on the 10th October, four at Abbotscliffe on the 12th October, three at Princes Parade, Seabrook on the 18th October and three at Abbotscliffe on the 25th October.

Records of migrants from Samphire Hoe, where the species is unusual, of one 30th September and two on the 1st October are also worthy of note.

Jackdaw	<i>Corvus monedula</i>
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Breeding resident and passage migrant.

The largest counts related to birds moving to or from roosting sites and included 500 flying west at the Willop Basin (presumably post-roost dispersal) on the 7th January, a pre-roost gathering of 1,200 at Sandling on the 12th January and 1,000 leaving a roost near Sandling Station at dawn on 18th November. Counts of 100 at Hythe Redoubt on 2nd January and 9th November were also worthy of note.

Breeding resident and passage migrant.

The only count of note received was of a pre-roost gathering of 200 at Sandling on the 12th January.

There was little evidence of passage except for four flying west at Samphire Hoe on the 1st April.

Breeding resident and passage migrant.

The largest counts received were again at Samphire Hoe, where there was a peak of 40 on three dates in October, and 30 noted on the 22nd April, 30th June and 7th October. There was no evidence of passage.

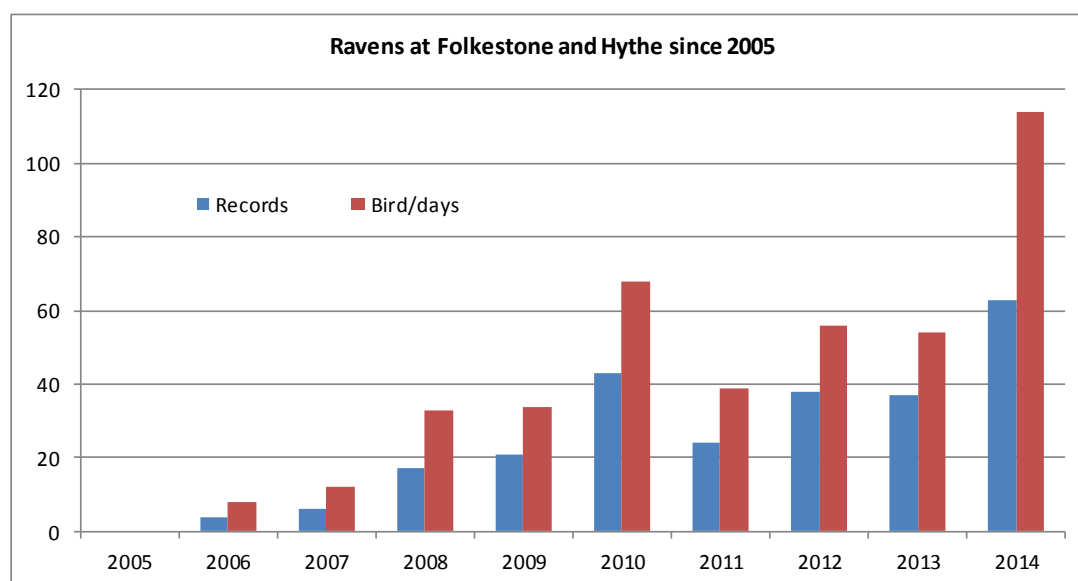
Formerly a vagrant, now a regular non-breeding visitor at any time of year.

Up to two were regularly seen along the downs and cliffs between Crete Road West and Samphire Hoe from late January through to December and were even showing signs of prospecting a potential nest site. Larger counts included a record six over Folkestone Warren on the 25th February, four at Capel-le-Ferne Gun Site on the 29th April, and four at Samphire Hoe on the 9th September, 23rd September and 1st October.

There was an interesting series of records from the Saltwood area, with singles at Chesterfield Wood, Saltwood on three dates in January, and again on the 6th April, with “at least one, maybe three” over Saltwood on the 26th February, and one flying north there on the 4th May. The “Saltwood Park” was another historic nesting site (Ticehurst, 1909).

Elsewhere there were singles seen over Botolph’s Bridge on the 27th January, Paraker Wood, Seabrook on the 30th January and Pond Hill Road, Cheriton on the 31st January, over Church Road Cheriton on the 18th April, and flying north over Seabrook Road, Hythe on the 19th April. A pair flew west at Lympe on the 8th August, with further singles at Botolph’s Bridge on the 9th August and flying west over Hythe on the 3rd October.

The 63 records received, totalling 114 bird/days is best ever, as shown by the chart below.



Breeding resident and passage migrant.

Resident birds were widely recorded but the only signs of spring passage were singles at Abbotscliffe on the 16th March and at Samphire Hoe on the 11th April.

Autumn passage was much improved on last year, with a total of about 100 marking a return to more like the expected numbers, though still a little under the annual mean for the previous ten years of around 120. Migration was noted between the 10th September and late November, and counts included 4 at Princes Parade, Seabrook on the 11th October, 4 at Mill Point on the 25th October, 4 at Nickolls Quarry and 6 at Princes Parade on the 29th October, 4 at Mill Point on the 4th November, 6 at Capel-le-Ferne on the 12th November, 4 there and 6 in the Mill Point area on the 15th November, and 4 at Saltwood the next day.

Firecrest

Regulus ignicapilla

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

In the early winter period there up to three at both Folkestone Warren and Mill Point, two at West Hythe, and singles at Pond Hill Road and Brockhill Country Park. This was a good showing, presumably due to the mild weather, however none were noted on spring passage.

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

About 19 were recorded on autumn passage, beginning with one along Botolph's Bridge Road on the 19th September, two at Crete Road East on the 20th and 21st, one at Princes Parade, Seabrook on the 21st, one at Folkestone Warren on the 24th and one at Abbotscliffe on the 26th September. In October there were singles at Abbotscliffe on the 5th and the 11th, two at Mill Point on the 25th and one at Nickolls Quarry on the 26th, whilst one was at Samphire Hoe on the 21st November.

Late migrants, or wintering birds, were at Mill Point on the 1st December (2), and Samphire Hoe on the 3rd and 7th (2), whilst there were two at West Hythe in late December.



Firecrest at West Hythe (Brian Harper)

Blue Tit

Cyanistes caeruleus

Breeding resident and passage migrant.

Few counts were received with peaks of six at Nickolls Quarry on the 19th September and nine at Samphire Hoe on the 28th September. There was no evidence of migration.

Great Tit

Parus major

Breeding resident and passage migrant.

There were no notable counts of resident birds, or evidence of any passage.

Coal Tit	<i>Periparus ater</i>
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Breeding resident and passage migrant.

There were no notable counts of resident birds, or evidence of any passage, with no records of the nominate continental form.

Marsh Tit	<i>Poecile palustris</i>
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Breeding resident.

There were records from Asholt Wood (Frogholt), Chesterfield Wood (Saltwood), Cowtye Wood (Postling Wents) and Paraker Wood (Seabrook) during the year.

Bearded Tit	<i>Panurus biarmicus</i>
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Rare migrant and winter visitor.

The metal-ringed male from 2013 remained until at least the 5th January (B. Harper, I. A. Roberts), see photograph on page 7.

At least five were found at Nickolls Quarry on the 28th December and remained into 2015 (B. Harper, I. A. Roberts).



Male and immature/female Bearded Tits at Nickolls Quarry (Brian Harper)

Wood Lark	<i>Alauda arborea</i>
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Rare passage migrant.

Singles were at Abbotscliffe on the 6th November (I. A. Roberts) and Samphire Hoe on the 19th to 20th November (R. Smith, P. Holt *et al*), with three at Hythe Ranges on the 28th December.

These were the 25th to 27th area records. The Samphire Hoe bird was only the second for the site and the first to be photographed locally (see page 25), whilst the Hythe Ranges record was the first to involve more than two individuals and the first in December.

Breeding resident, winter visitor and passage migrant.

The only count of note from the early winter period was of 17 in stubble field at Hillhurst Farm, Westenhangar on the 2nd February, whilst the only sign of spring migration was a single flying over Folkestone Pier on the 2nd April.

In autumn seven flew west at Abbotscliffe on the 30th September and 35 were counted there on the 5th October, whilst four flew west at Hythe on the 10th October, seven flew west there on the 18th and 15 flew west at Capel-le-Ferne Café on the 22nd October. At Abbotscliffe numbers increased to 40 by the 26th October.

On the 1st November 21 flew over the Willop Basin and two flew in off the sea at Hythe, whilst 17 were still at Abbotscliffe on the 6th November, when 11 flew in off the sea there. Three flew west at Hythe on the 9th November and 47 were in a stubble field opposite the Little Piece on Donkey Street on the 16th November (with at least 12 remaining there until the year's end), and 15 remained at Abbotscliffe into late November at least.

Passage migrant, has bred but not since 2003.

The first, one at Nickolls Quarry on the 6th April (with three there the next day), was the earliest arrival date since 2006. 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. The later arrival appears to correlate with the decline in breeding status locally (which was described in last year's report).

The remainder of the spring passage was rather light (though an improvement on the four birds recorded last year), with five further records of eight individuals, as follows: one at Crete Road East on the 19th April, two at Abbotscliffe on the 24th April, one at Nickolls Quarry on the 7th May, three at Abbotscliffe on the 13th May and one at Capel-le-Ferne on the 15th May.

The first returning migrants were two flying west at Abbotscliffe on the 7th July, with six at Donkey Street on the 9th July and a good count (the best since 2006) of at least 225 at Nickolls Quarry on the 13th July. Small numbers were noted generally moving west during the second half of July and in August, before 150 were at Samphire Hoe on the 24th August and a large movement occurred at Abbotscliffe on the 1st September when birds were moving west at a rate of about 100 per hour (based on a sample count of 30 per 15 minutes at the peak of the passage). 13 flew east at Hythe on the 5th and ones and twos were noted on various dates in September. In October two flew west at Hythe on the 12th. The departure date was 13 days later than last year, but October records are not unusual, having occurred in three of the last five years.

Breeding summer visitor and passage migrant.

The first of year was one at Nickolls Quarry on the 28th March. This was four days later than the arrival date last year, but only two days later than the mean for the previous ten years (26th March). There were March records in only half of the years between 1991 and 2006 but it has since been recorded annually in this month.

The next was at Hythe Ranges on the 3rd April, with one at Eaton Lands (Saltwood) on the 5th, and a count off 11 at Nickolls Quarry on the 6th April. Birds were noted almost daily thereafter, including counts in April of six in off the sea at Abbotscliffe on the 10th, 13 in off the sea at Capel-le-Ferne on the 13th, 15 in off the sea at Samphire Hoe (with a further 8 over Folkestone Downs) on the 19th, 21 in off the sea at Abbotscliffe on the 21st and 45 in off the sea at Abbotscliffe on the 24th.

In May 21 arrived in off the sea at Capel-le-Ferne on the 3rd and 30 were noted at Nickolls Quarry on the 8th, before 154 were logged moving into a northerly breeze at Abbotscliffe on the 13th. A further 93 arrived on the 14th, and arrival continued over the next few days, with 25 in off the sea at Capel-le-Ferne on the 15th, 50 in off the sea at the cliffs on the 17th, and ten at Samphire Hoe and 14 in off the sea at Abbotscliffe on the 18th. Passage then slowed, with ten in off the sea at Capel-le-Ferne on the 26th and Abbotscliffe on the 27th being the last double-figure counts of migrant birds.

An increase in autumn was noted from late August when 82 flew west at Hythe on the 23rd, 140 flew west at Hythe Ranges the following day and a “steady westerly passage” was noted at Princes Parade, Seabrook on the 31st. On the 1st September birds were noted moving west at Abbotscliffe at a rate of about 2,000 per hour (based on a sample count of 550 per 15 minutes at the peak of the passage) and at least 430 flew south-west over Saltwood. There were further counts of 400 east at Abbotscliffe on the 6th September, 200 east at Hythe on the 18th and 2,000 west at Hythe (amongst the large numbers of House Martins) on the 24th September, whilst 600+ hirundines were noted at Princes Parade on the 14th September.

Smaller numbers were noted into October, with later counts of 150 flying west at Princes Parade on the 11th October, 30 there the next day and 30 at Samphire Hoe on the 15th October. The last, three flying west at Princes Parade on the 29th October, were just a day earlier than the departure date last year.

House Martin	<i>Delichon urbicum</i>
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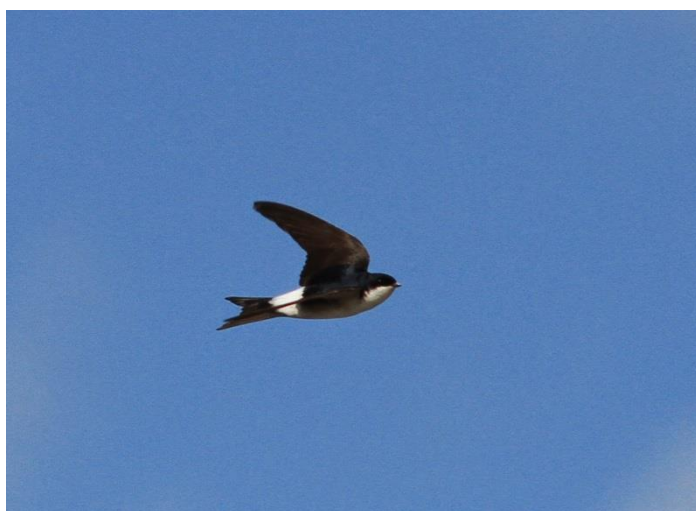
Breeding summer visitor and passage migrant.

The first, at Nickolls Quarry on the 6th April, was five days earlier than last year and the earliest since one at Capel-le-Ferne on the same date in 2007. Similarly to last year there was quite a gap until the next records, which were singles were at Abbotscliffe and Crete Road East on the 19th April, two at Nickolls Quarry the next day, and two at both Abbotscliffe and Samphire Hoe on the 21st April.

Six were noted at the latter site from the 29th April, increasing to nine on the 4th May, whilst 11 flew in off the sea at Capel-le-Ferne on the 3rd May, when nine were at Samphire Hoe, and seven were at Nickolls Quarry on the 8th. A northerly breeze on the 13th May induced a larger arrival, with 81 flying in off the sea at Abbotscliffe (and 20 at Samphire Hoe), and a further 56 were logged the following day. There were regular counts of up to 20 at various sites thereafter, with larger counts of 50 at Samphire Hoe on the 18th May and Abbotscliffe on the 27th May probably involving a mix of breeding and migrant birds.

As usual birds were present at their ancestral haunts along the cliffs at Abbotscliffe and Samphire Hoe, though only 11 nests were noted which was a marked reduction on last year. Two nests still contained chicks as late as 22nd September.

An increase in autumn was noted from late August when there were 175 at Samphire Hoe on the 24th, with “large numbers” there and a westerly movement noted at Hythe on the 31st. On the 1st September birds were noted moving west at Abbotscliffe at a rate of about 250 per hour (based on a sample count of 65 per 15 minutes at the peak of the passage) and 1,000 were at Samphire Hoe the next day, when 120 were noted on wires in Church Hougham village.



House Martin at Samphire Hoe (Phil Smith)

At least 600 were noted at Samphire Hoe on the 5th September and 1,500 flew east at Abbotscliffe on the 6th. On the 11th 200 flew east at Abbotscliffe and 600+ hirundines were noted at Princes Parade, Seabrook on the 14th September.

The 24th September was a spectacular westward movement over Hythe. After early rain cleared some 50,000 or so were logged in two hours from 07:30, at time moving at a rate of over 500 per minute. This far exceeded the previous record passage of 13,000 heading east along the cliffs on the 25th September 1994. Smaller numbers were noted in the remainder of September and into October, with later counts of 16 at Abbotscliffe on the 14th October and 12 at Capel-le-Ferne on the 20th October. The last, two flying west at Hythe on the 25th October, were almost a fortnight later than the departure date last year.

Cetti's Warbler

<i>Cettia cetti</i>

Breeding resident.

At least two were at Nickolls Quarry in January and two males were singing there from mid-March, with three singing from 24th March. At least three were still singing through April, with at least two still holding territory into May. At least two were noted there through the autumn into December.

Elsewhere one was singing at Hythe Roughs on the 16th May and at least one was at Seabrook from the 27th September until the end of the year (the first records at this site since February 2012, and a welcome return). The rare breeding bird report for 2012 (Holling *et al*, 2014) stated that numbers seem to be recovering after the recent colder winters.

Long-tailed Tit

<i>Aegithalos caudatus</i>

Breeding resident and passage migrant.

The only counts of note related to possible migrants, with 11 at Nickolls Quarry on the 17th October, a flock of six flying west along Hythe seafront on the 9th November and 16 at Abbotscliffe on the 16 November.

Pallas's Warbler

<i>Phylloscopus proregulus</i>

Very rare vagrant.

One was found at Pond Hill Road, Cheriton on the 24th January and remained until the 1st March, though it could be elusive at times (M. P. Sutherland *et al*), also see photograph on page 5.

The fifth area record, and the second in the last three years, but the first to be recorded in winter (and only the third to be seen in the county in that season).



Pallas's Warbler at Pond Hill Road (Brian Harper)

Rare migrant.

One was at Mill Point on the 25th October (I. A. Roberts, M. Vandoen). This was only the 19th area record but the species has now been recorded in 11 of the last 12 years.

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

Single males were singing near Shornccliffe Cemetery on the 21st April (M. P. Sutherland, I. A. Roberts *et al*), see photograph on page 13, and at Pond Hill Road, Cheriton on the 25th April (M. P. Sutherland).

Despite the close proximity of these birds they were considered to be different individuals. These were 18th and 19th area records since 1990, and 2014 is the first year since 2000 to produce two sightings.

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

There was only one winter record, at Nickolls Quarry on the 5th January, which was something of a surprise considering the mild weather. This did mean however that it was easy to determine the first spring migrants – singles at Samphire Hoe and Saltwood on the 14th March. These were quickly followed by one at Nickolls Quarry on the 15th March, one at Brockhill Country Park and three at Abbotscliffe the next day, and three at Samphire Hoe, with singles at three other sites on the 17th. Birds were widely recorded thereafter, with notable counts including four at Nickolls Quarry on the 24th March, three at Mill Point on the 27th March, five at Folkestone Downs on the 2nd April and four at Samphire Hoe on the 8th April. As birds settled into territories it became harder to pick out new arrivals but passage continued into May, including singles at Samphire Hoe on the 5th and 17th, whilst a singing bird on the seafront at Hythe on the 18th June and another at Samphire Hoe on the 24th June were apparently very late arrivals.

Autumn migrants were noted from early August, with just small numbers seen in the first half of September, before a larger count of 11 were at Samphire Hoe on the 16th September. The 19th September saw a marked arrival, including 13 at Samphire Hoe, 10 at Nickolls Quarry and 10 in the Hythe area, with 45 at Samphire Hoe the following day, when there were also “good numbers” along the canal at Hythe. Only single figure counts were noted thereafter, apart from 12 at Samphire Hoe on the 30th October, until an exceptional 150+ were counted along the canal at Hythe on the 5th October. This was the second largest count ever, following an extraordinary record of “over 700” at Cheriton on the 25th September 1967 (a few days earlier that month there has also been “unprecedented numbers (600)” at Dungeness on the 21st).

There were 12 at Nickolls Quarry on the 16th October and 14 there the next day but numbers then dwindled quickly, and just singles were seen in November, at the Willop Basin on the 4th, Mill Point on the 15th, Samphire Hoe on the 19th and 23rd, and at Mill Point on the 25th. In December up to five were wintering along the canal between Hythe and Seabrook, and one was at Samphire Hoe a Chiffchaff on the 16th.

Breeding summer visitor and passage migrant.

The first, one at Samphire Hoe on the 6th April, was five days earlier than both last year and the mean arrival date over the previous ten years of 11th April. Despite this others quickly followed, with singles at Nickolls Quarry and the Willop Basin on the 8th, three at Church Road, Cheriton on the 9th, and singles at Abbotscliffe and Crete Road East on the 10th April. Spring passage overall though was rather modest, with subsequent counts of three at Folkestone Downs on the 14th April and Abbotscliffe on the 21st April being the largest recorded.

Arrivals continued into May with late singles at Nickolls Quarry on the 12th and a particularly pale, greyish individual at Samphire Hoe on the 13th – such birds, which resemble *acredula*, when “seen at south coast migration sites in May are thought likely to be en route to northern Scotland (Vinicombe *et al*, 2014).

The first returning birds were five at Abbotscliffe on the 29th July and autumn passage, as last year, was reasonable. Counts included four at Botolph’s Bridge on the 2nd August, eight at Abbotscliffe on the 3rd August, nine there the next day, seven at Samphire Hoe on the 24th August, six at Abbotscliffe on the 1st September, six at Samphire Hoe on the 2nd September and 35+ at Folkestone Downs on the 5th September (the highest count since 2006). Lower numbers were noted thereafter, with the last at Samphire Hoe on the 22nd September, seven days later than the departure date in 2013.

Blackcap

<i>Sylvia atricapilla</i>

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

The only records from the early winter period were of singles in gardens at Lympe on the 25th January and at East Cliff Gardens, Folkestone on the 6th March.

A singing male at Mill Point on the 28th March appeared to be the first arriving migrant, and was quickly followed by further singing males at Capel-le-Ferne Gun Site, Seabrook and West Hythe (2) on the 30th March, with another at Nickolls Quarry the next day. It has become difficult in recent years to identify the first migrants of the spring, but arrival appeared to be a week or so earlier than last year.

Reasonable numbers were noted in the early part of April, with five at Mill Point on the 1st, three at Folkestone Downs on the 2nd, several at Eaton Lands, Saltwood and three at Samphire Hoe on the 5th, and widespread one and twos elsewhere. Later in the month there were counts of five at Folkestone Downs on the 14th and four at Nickolls Quarry on the 16th April.

Autumn migrants were noted from late August, with counts in September including 15 at Folkestone Downs on the 5th, 20 there on the 10th, 12 at Samphire Hoe and 8 at Nickolls Quarry on the 19th, 9 at Folkestone Downs on the 22nd and 8 at Samphire Hoe the next day. In October there was an exceptional count of 40 along the canal at Hythe on the 5th, which exceeds the previous record of 32 at Capel-le-Ferne Gun Site on the 13th September 2000.



Chiffchaff at West Hythe (Brian Harper)



Blackcap at Crete Road East (Brian Harper)

Only small numbers were seen thereafter, with the last autumn migrant at Nickolls Quarry on the 17th October. Although none were seen in November there was one along the canal at Seabrook on the 17th December and colder weather in the last week of the year led to a number of sightings, with singles in gardens in Browning Place, Folkestone on the 26th, East Cliff Gardens, Folkestone on the 29th and Sandgate on the 30th, with another at Botolph's Bridge on the 29th.

Garden Warbler

<i>Sylvia borin</i>

Breeding summer visitor and passage migrant.

A singing bird at Nickolls Quarry on the 16th April was the earliest arrival since one at the same site on the 10th April 2001, but this was the only spring migrant recorded.

At least one pair were present again at the local breeding site in Heane Wood, Saltwood.

Autumn passage was typically light, with just two singles recorded: at Botolph's Bridge on the 9th August and in a garden in Carter's Road, Cheriton on the 1st September.

Lesser Whitethroat

<i>Sylvia curruca</i>

Breeding summer visitor and passage migrant.

The first, a singing male at Nickolls Quarry on the 13th April, was nine days earlier than last year and four days ahead of the mean arrival date over the previous ten years. A new individual was singing at Nickolls Quarry on the 17th April, with one at Capel-le-Ferne Gun Site on the 18th April, three at Crete Road East the next day and one at Abbotscliffe on the 21st April. Arrival continued through the last week of April, including the first at Samphire Hoe on the 23rd, two at Nickolls Quarry on the 24th, two at Capel-le-Ferne Gun Site on the 28th and into early May.

Autumn passage was noted from early August, with good counts of 12 at Abbotscliffe on the 3rd and 13 there the next day, then lower numbers thereafter until 15th September.

Common Whitethroat

<i>Sylvia communis</i>

Breeding summer visitor and passage migrant.

The first, a singing male at Capel-le-Ferne Gun Site on the 12th April was two days earlier than last year but still one day later than the mean arrival date over the previous ten years. The next was at Nickolls Quarry on the 14th April and the main arrival occurred in the latter part of the month, with the first records at Samphire Hoe on the 19th, and at Abbotscliffe and Seabrook on the 21st. Three were at Abbotscliffe on the 24th April and by the 29th there were four at Samphire Hoe and "many" at Capel-le-Ferne Gun Site. A count of four at Nickolls Quarry on the 7th May was also of note.

Autumn migrants were noted from early August, including counts of five at Botolph's Bridge on the 2nd, eight at Abbotscliffe on the 3rd, and 14 there the next day. Later in the month there were six at Abbotscliffe on the 17th, seven at Samphire Hoe on the 19th, ten there on the 24th, eight there on the 26th and "large numbers" noted there on the 31st. In September there were 11 at Abbotscliffe on the 1st, seven at Folkestone Downs on the 5th, seven at Samphire Hoe on the 8th, and six at Folkestone Warren on the 10th, but numbers dropped off thereafter, with just ones and twos noted in the latter half of the month. The last, at Abbotscliffe on the 5th October, was five days later than the departure date last year, but October records are not unusual, having occurred in seven of the previous ten years.



Lesser Whitethroat at Nickolls Quarry (Brian Harper)



Whitethroat at Samphire Hoe (Phil Smith)

Grasshopper Warbler

Locustella naevia

Passage migrant, formerly bred.

A reeling male at Samphire Hoe on the 14th July was a very interesting record, being the earliest autumn record since the species bred locally, which it had ceased to do by the time of the *1988-91 Breeding Atlas* (Gibbons *et al*, 1993). The first returning migrant date since then was the 21st July 1995. Singing birds are also unusual in autumn, but have been recorded on occasion, most recently one at Abbotscliffe on the 22nd September 2010.

The only other autumn record was one at Abbotscliffe on the 6th September. The annual mean for the previous ten years was 4.2 so this was a below average showing.

Sedge Warbler

Acrocephalus schoenobaenus

Breeding summer visitor and passage migrant.

Two singing males at Nickolls Quarry on the 5th April were the earliest ever arrival, beating one at the same site on the 7th April 2012. As mentioned in last year's report, the species is demonstrating a trend of earlier spring arrival in Britain (Sparks *et al*, 2007).

Numbers steadily increased at Nickolls Quarry, with four singing there on the 7th April, five singing on the 14th, seven singing on the 17th April and ten singing there on the 7th May, with successful breeding taking place. Elsewhere migrants were noted at Folkestone Downs on the 14th April and Samphire Hoe on the 13th and 25th May, with one in suitable breeding habitat at the Willop Basin on the 16th May.

The first returning bird was one at Samphire Hoe on the 29th July, with singles at Botolph's Bridge on the 2nd August, Abbotscliffe on the 3rd August and Samphire Hoe on the 6th and 11th August, with one at the latter site on the 26th August and two the next day.



Sedge Warbler at Nickolls Quarry (Brian Harper)

In September there were further singles at Samphire Hoe on the 2nd, Abbotscliffe on the 6th, Seabrook on the 14th, Abbotscliffe on the 15th and Samphire Hoe on the 19th and 20th.

Reed Warbler

<i>Acrocephalus scirpaceus</i>

Breeding summer visitor and passage migrant.

The first, one singing at Nickolls Quarry on the 12th April was five days earlier than the arrival date last year, but the same as in 2012. It was joined by another on the 17th April, increasing to three there on the 20th April, and to 12 by the 7th May. Elsewhere the usual sites in Common Reed (*Phragmites australis*) were occupied along the Royal Military Canal and on the Marsh, whilst one was singing from Rosebay Willowherb (*Chamerion angustifolium*) at West Hythe on the 16th May.

Birds continued to be noted at the breeding sites into September, though the last record from Nickolls Quarry, of three on the 14th September, may have included passage birds. The only records of migrants from the cliffs were of a singing male at Samphire Hoe on the 1st June and one there on the 16th September.

Nuthatch

<i>Sitta europaea</i>

Breeding resident.

As usual most records were from the woods around Saltwood.

Eurasian Treecreeper

<i>Certhia familiaris</i>

Breeding resident.

Widely recorded but there were no notable counts or unusual sightings received.

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 20th September and 5th November, ten on the 16th November and nine on the 13th December.



Treecreeper at Palmarsh (Brian Harper)



Wren at West Hythe (Brian Harper)

Starling	<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>
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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 70 flying north over Saltwood on the 12th March and 40 flying north over Nickolls Quarry on the 15th March.

Post-breeding birds were noted at Samphire Hoe from the 23rd June, and numbers increased there in late July, with 200 noted on the 22nd and 250 on the 29th, with a similar quantity remaining until late August. The peak count at Samphire Hoe in September was 100 on the 27th, decreasing to 50 there in October.

Autumn migrants included 50 flying west at Abbotscliffe on the 30th September, 165 in off the sea there on the 12th October, 100 in off the sea there on the 17th October, and 940 in off the sea there plus 100 in off at Hythe on the 26th October. In November 130 flew north over Nickolls Quarry on the 5th, with 75 in off the sea at Abbotscliffe the following day.

Ring Ouzel	<i>Turdus torquatus</i>
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Passage migrant.

The only spring sightings were singles near Shorncliffe Cemetery on the 21st April and Samphire Hoe on the 29th April. The mean for the previous ten springs was 4.8 birds so this was a below average showing.

In autumn singles were at Abbotscliffe on the 18th September, and Samphire Hoe on the 21st September and 1st October, with three at Crete Road East on the 4th October, one at Abbotscliffe on the 12th October and two at Samphire Hoe the next day. The 14th October saw a notable arrival with at least 33 logged across the area: 17 at Abbotscliffe, 13+ at Lympe, two at Samphire Hoe and one at Crete Road East. The following day saw 11 at Abbotscliffe and two at both Folkestone Downs and Samphire Hoe, whilst on the 16th there were three at Folkestone Downs and two at Nickolls Quarry. On the 17th there were 11 at Abbotscliffe and nine in the Crete Road East area, with at least four at Capel-le-Ferne on the 19th. The 20th produced two at Abbotscliffe and one at Capel-le-Ferne Gun Site, with further singles at Folkestone Downs on the 22nd and Abbotscliffe on the 25th.

In November there were late singles at Abbotscliffe on the 6th and Folkestone Downs on the 13th. The autumn total of 90 bird/days was the fifth best ever, whilst there have only been later sightings in two years.

Blackbird	<i>Turdus merula</i>
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Breeding resident, winter visitor and passage migrant.

Autumn migrants were apparent from mid-September but it was nearly a month later that the first double-figure counts occurred, with ten at Samphire Hoe on the 14th October and ten at Nickolls Quarry on the 15th, increasing to 20 there the next day. On the night of the 27th October good numbers of thrushes were moving, with further movements on subsequent nights, mainly involving Blackbirds, Song Thrushes and Redwings. On the morning of the 29th October at least 100 had been grounded at Princes Parade, Seabrook, with ten at Nickolls Quarry.

In November counts included 14 at Abbotscliffe on the 6th, 16 at Nickolls Quarry on the 19th and 17 at the latter site on the 22nd, whilst a nocturnal passage was noted on the 11th/12th.

Fieldfare	<i>Turdus pilaris</i>
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Winter visitor and passage migrant.

Presumably due to the mild weather numbers were very low, and the only flock noted was in the Postling Wents area, where 47 were counted on the 12th January, with 40 still present on the 2nd February. The only other record from the first half of the year was of one at Botolph's Bridge on the 17th March.

The first autumn arrival was fairly late but when it did happen, it involved a count of 150 flying in off the sea at Princes Parade, Seabrook on the 19th October. A further three there on the 29th was the only other October sighting. In November eight flew east at Saltwood on the 19th, with 65 flying over the Willop Basin and 54 over Nickolls Quarry on the 22nd. On the 27th a total of 65 were seen going to roost in the Hougham Valley.

Four were at Samphire Hoe on the 5th December, with 19 at Botolph's Bridge on the 11th and 40 there on the 21st December, with one on the Hythe Imperial golf course the next day. The last three days of the year saw numbers increase to up to 100 at Botolph's Bridge and one was at Princes Parade, Seabrook on the 30th December.

Song Thrush	<i>Turdus philomelos</i>
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Breeding resident, winter visitor and passage migrant.

There few counts received from the early winter period, with just six at Nickolls Quarry on the 5th January being of note, and the only evidence of any spring passage were one at Abbotscliffe on the 4th March and two at Samphire Hoe on the 13th March.

The first autumn migrant was at Samphire Hoe on the 19th September but the main arrival occurred from October, including counts of six at Samphire Hoe and seven at Abbotscliffe on the 14th, with at least 42 heard calling over Hythe that night, seven at Abbotscliffe the next day, five at Nickolls Quarry on the 16th and four at Capel-le-Ferne on the 19th. On the night of the 27th October good numbers of thrushes were moving, with further movements on subsequent nights, mainly involving Blackbirds, Song Thrushes and Redwings.

In November there were four at Nickolls Quarry on the 5th and Abbotscliffe on the 6th, whilst a nocturnal movement was noted on the 11th/12th before passage dwindled to ones and twos. In December a stubble field opposite the Little Piece on Donkey Street attracted up to 15 wintering birds.

Redwing	<i>Turdus iliacus</i>
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Winter visitor and passage migrant.

Presumably due to the mild weather, numbers were very low and Redwings were only noted in single figures, with a peak of 8 at Church Hougham on the 9th January. A light spring passage was evident in March, with two at Church Hougham on the 4th, 20 at Perry Wood, near Westenhangar on the 8th, two at Abbotscliffe on the 14th, one there on the 16th and five at Nickolls Quarry on the 24th. A couple of small nocturnal movements were also noted in March.

The first autumn record was a nocturnal movement of at least 15 over Hythe on the 14th/15th October, with three at Abbotscliffe and 10 in the Crete Road / Folkestone Downs area the following morning, ten at Folkestone Downs and one at Nickolls Quarry on the 16th, and eight at the former site and two at the latter the next day. On the night of the 27th October good numbers of thrushes were moving, with further passage on subsequent nights, mainly involving Blackbirds, Song Thrushes and Redwings, including at least 25 Redwings on the night on the 30th, whilst ones and twos were noted in November, with several nocturnal movements.

In December counts included 180 near Stutfall Castle, West Hythe on the 7th and about 100 at Botolph's Bridge on the 21st, with up to 40 remaining to the year's end.



Redwing at Botolph's Bridge (Brian Harper)

Breeding resident.

One at Abbotscliffe during a movement of other thrush species on the 14th October, one flying west at Capel-le-Ferne Café on the 22nd October and one at Princes Parade, Seabrook on the 29th October might have been migrants.



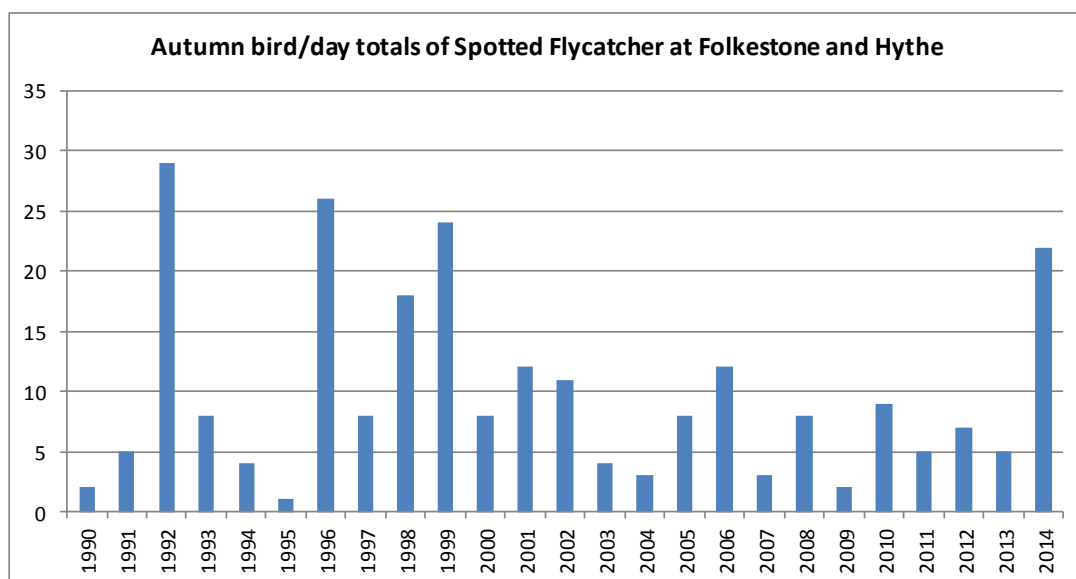
Blackbird at West Hythe (Brian Harper)



Mistle Thrush at Lower Wall Road (Brian Harper)

Declining breeding summer visitor and passage migrant.

In spring there were one at Abbotscliffe and two at Samphire Hoe on the 13th May. Autumn saw the best arrival in over a decade. In August two were at Capel-le-Ferne Gun Site on the 20th, one was at Botolph's Bridge on the 24th and two were at Mill Point on the 27th. September saw a further 17 bird/days, mostly singles but with two along the canal east of Hythe on the 5th, three at Saltwood on the 15th and two at Nickolls Quarry on the 18th. The total of 22 bird/days was the best autumn tally since 1999, as the chart below demonstrates.



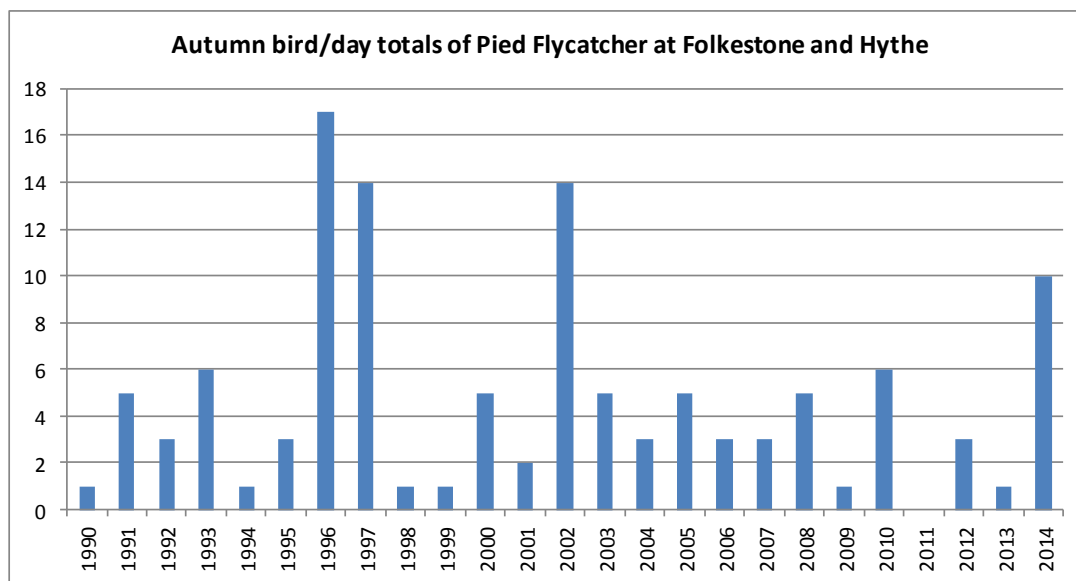
Breeding resident, winter visitor and passage migrant.

Autumn migrants were apparent from late August, when five were at Samphire Hoe on the 26th, increasing to seven there on the 28th. In September there were counts of eight at Samphire Hoe on the 6th, ten there on the 9th, 14 there the next day, eight at Abbotscliffe on the 11th, six at Nickolls Quarry and ten at Samphire Hoe on the 19th, a peak of 24 at the latter site on the 20th and 11 there on the 27th. October saw 13 at Samphire Hoe on the 4th, ten at Abbotscliffe and 14 at Samphire Hoe on the 12th, 12 at the latter site on the 14th, and nine at Nickolls Quarry and ten at Samphire Hoe on the 29th October with 12 at the latter site on the 5th and 16th November.

Passage migrant.

As with Spotted Flycatcher, autumn saw the best arrival in over a decade, with a total of ten bird/days recorded between the 30th August and 7th September as follows: one in a garden in Joyes Road, Folkestone on the 30th August (see photograph on page 18), singles at Abbotscliffe on the 31st August and 1st September, singles at Samphire Hoe on the 31st August, and 1st, 2nd, 5th and 7th September, one in the churchyard at Church Hougham on the 2nd September and one at Crete Road East on the 5th September.

As the chart below demonstrates, this was the best autumn tally since 2002. This species remains a true rarity in spring with just seven area records, and only one since 1997 (a male at Samphire Hoe on the 10th April 2007).



Breeding resident, winter visitor and passage migrant.

Singles were wintering in the Folkestone Harbour area and at Samphire Hoe from January into March, when the first migrants began to appear: one at the Willop Outfall on the 1st March (see photograph on page 10), one at Copt Point on the 10th March and another at Church Hougham the next day. On the 14th March a singing male had joined the wintering female at Samphire Hoe and up to two were noted here regularly thereafter into May. Elsewhere there singles at the Willop Outfall on the 20th March and in a garden in Laurel Close, Cheriton on the 31st March, on which date the wintering Folkestone Harbour bird was last noted. In April males were singing at Risborough Barracks, Cheriton on the 5th and at the most recent cliff fall at Abbotscliffe on the 21st.

At Samphire Hoe the pair bred at the eastern end of the site and were seen with three chicks from the 21st May, whilst a pair with two young were noted at the western end of the Hoe in early June, so it appears that two pairs successfully bred there, see photograph on page 16.

Up to six were seen regularly at Samphire Hoe from late July to September, decreasing to five in October and three in November and at least two there to the end of the year. Elsewhere one was at Folkestone Warren on the 10th September, with two at Bouverie Road West, Folkestone on the 17th October, one at Abbotscliffe on the 22nd October and one on Folk's Wood Way, Lympne on the 28th October. In November there were singles at the Civic Centre, Folkestone on the 4th and at the Hythe Redoubt and Fisherman's Beach, Hythe on the 9th.

Common Redstart	<i>Phoenicurus phoenicurus</i>
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Passage migrant.

The only spring record was one at Abbotscliffe on the 13th April but there was a decent autumn passage beginning with one at Botolph's Bridge on the 31st August, followed by two at Samphire Hoe and three at Abbotscliffe on the 1st September, and singles at Crete Road East on the 6th, 9th and 12th September. On the 18th September one was seen in a garden in Browning Place, Folkestone, with another at Samphire Hoe the same day, whilst the last two were singles at Abbotscliffe on the 30th September and 12th October, see photograph on page 21. The total of 13 bird/days was better than the mean for the previous ten years of 8.8.

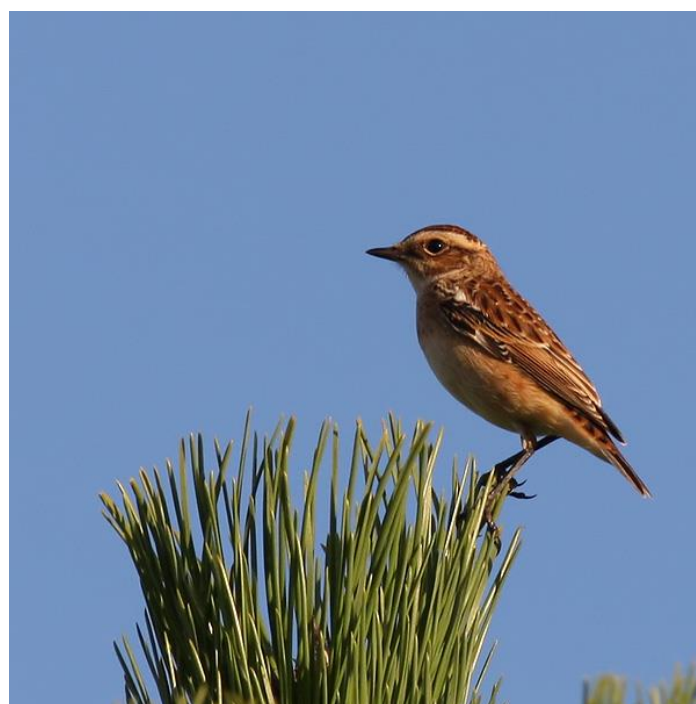
Whinchat	<i>Saxicola rubetra</i>
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Passage migrant. Has bred in the past.

As usual spring passage was light, with just one at Crete Road East on the 17th May.

After singles at Samphire Hoe on the 12th, 18th and 19th August, and Abbotscliffe on the 22nd August, there was a decent arrival in the last week of August and first week of September. Counts included four at Samphire Hoe on the 26th and 27th August, ten at Abbotscliffe on the 1st September and seven at the former site on the 5th September. Birds continued to be noted in small numbers until the 28th September with larger counts of six at Samphire Hoe on the 16th and the 19th. The only records away from these Abbotscliffe / Samphire Hoe were singles at Hythe Ranges on the 24th August, Princes Parade, Seabrook on the 31st August, Crete Road East on the 1st September and Church Hougham the following day.

The autumn total of 110 bird days was the best since 2004 and well above mean for the previous ten years of 62.



Whinchat at Crete Road East (Brian Harper)

Stonechat	<i>Saxicola torquatus</i>
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Breeding resident, winter visitor and passage migrant.

In the early winter period up to two pairs were at Samphire Hoe, with single pairs at Nickolls Quarry and the Willop Basin. Three pairs were noted at Samphire Hoe in late March and at least two pairs bred successfully as juveniles were noted at either end of the site on the 3rd May.

Up to 11 were noted at Samphire Hoe in July and there was a peak there in August of 14 on the 19th, with up to 12 remaining into September. Passage birds were noted from the 22nd September, when there four at Abbotscliffe, increasing to 7 there on the 28th September, whilst numbers at Samphire Hoe peaked at 15 on the 30th September. In October up to 13 were at Samphire Hoe, with up to six at Abbotscliffe, whilst elsewhere there were 3 at Church Hougham on the 11th and three at Crete Road East on the 17th see photograph on page 22.

At least six remained at Samphire Hoe into November, with up to two at Abbotscliffe, and one at Nickolls Quarry on the 19th, and up to eight were seen at Samphire Hoe in December, with singles at the Willop Basin on the 14th, Hythe Ranges on the 30th and Botolph's Bridge on the 31st.

Wheatear

Oenanthe oenanthe

A rare breeding summer visitor but common passage migrant.

The first arrival, a pair at Samphire Hoe on the 18th March, were five days earlier than last year but very close to the mean arrival date over the previous ten years of 19th March. Up to two were then seen at Samphire Hoe until the 24th March (see photograph on page 11), but there was clearly some turnover of birds as two males were present on the 22nd, and two were at Princes Parade, Seabrook on the 29th March.

Ones and twos were noted on many dates in April, mostly at Abbotscliffe and Samphire Hoe, with larger counts of three at Abbotscliffe on the 21st, three at Samphire Hoe on the 22nd, three at Mill Point on the 23rd and four at Abbotscliffe on the 24th. Fewer were seen in May though these did include four at Samphire Hoe on the 17th and two at Abbotscliffe on the 19th. The spring total of 61 bird/days was a little above the mean for the previous ten years of 54.

After a few singles at Samphire Hoe from the 21st July, the main passage took place from August, including counts of 10 at Samphire Hoe on the 12th to 13th, 20 there on the 19th, 10 at Samphire Hoe and 17 at Hythe Ranges on the 24th, and 10 at Samphire Hoe on the 26th. In September there were 11 at Abbotscliffe on the 1st and 12 at Samphire Hoe on the 1st to 2nd, decreasing to eight on the 5th, and seven by the 7th, with smaller numbers noted in the rest of the month, apart from a count of nine at Samphire Hoe on the 27th.

Counts of up to three were noted in October, with larger totals of five at Samphire Hoe on the 3rd, four there on the 11th and five there on the 14th October, and the last was logged on the 28th October, just two days earlier than the departure date last year.

The autumn total of 309 bird/days was the best ever, exceeding the previous highest of 288 in 1992, and significantly higher than the previous ten year mean (of 120).



Dunnock at Princes Parade, Seabrook (Brian Harper)



Wheatear at Samphire Hoe (Phil Smith)

Dunnock	<i>Prunella modularis</i>
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Breeding resident and passage migrant.

There appeared to be an increase at coastal sites in the autumn, suggestive of passage, including counts of 10 at Abbotscliffe on the 15th September and 16 at Samphire Hoe on the 5th November.

House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>
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Breeding resident.

A common though declining resident but there were no counts of note received.

A male at Abbotscliffe on the 12th October was at least at local wanderer as the species does not breed there.

Tree Sparrow	<i>Passer montanus</i>
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Declining passage migrant. No longer breeds and now rare in winter.

Four flew east at Abbotscliffe on the 6th September and five flew east at Nickolls Quarry on the 14th October, whilst a stubble field opposite the Little Piece on Donkey Street attracted two from the 9th November, increasing to four from the 16th November into December.

A welcome return after a blank year in 2013.

Yellow Wagtail	<i>Motacilla flava</i>
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Breeding summer visitor and passage migrant.

The first, one in off the sea at Abbotscliffe on the 10th April, was three days earlier than last year and very close to the mean arrival date over the previous ten years of 9th April. There were no further records though until two flew north over Abbotscliffe on the 21st April, but birds were seen regularly thereafter with one in off the sea at Mill Point, two at the Willop Basin and three over Samphire Hoe on the 23rd April, one over Cheriton on the 24th April, and a few singles in off the sea at the cliffs in the last week of the month.

In May there was a notable movement on the 4th, when one flew over Crete Road West, two flew in off the sea at Abbotscliffe and three flew over Samphire Hoe, and arrival continued well into the month, with two in off the sea at Abbotscliffe on the 13th and singles in off at the cliffs on the 15th, 17th, 18th and 19th. Elsewhere up to two were noted in the Botolph's Bridge / Nickolls Quarry and Willop Basin areas where the species breeds. There was an unusual summer record from Samphire Hoe of one on the 22nd June.

Return passage was noted the 1st August, when one flew west at Hythe, and was the best since 2004. Counts included 12 at Abbotscliffe on the 21st August, five at Botolph's Bridge on the 23rd August, 25 flying west at Hythe Ranges on the 24th August, seven flying west at Nickolls Quarry on the 29th August and seven at Botolph's Bridge the next day. Smaller numbers were noted in September, with the exception of eight over Crete Road East on the 16th, and the last were at Abbotscliffe, Crete Road East and Princes Parade, Seabrook (4) on the 21st September. Despite the good bird/day total (113) there were no October records for the first time since 2010.

Grey Wagtail	<i>Motacilla cinerea</i>
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Breeding resident and passage migrant.

Singles were seen at well scattered sites in the early winter period, with the most frequent sightings at Botolph's Bridge, the Willop Basin and in the Saltwood area. The only hint of spring passage involved one flying east at Samphire Hoe on the 14th March.

In autumn a total of 38 bird/days were recorded, which was a similar total to last year, with almost all counts relating to ones and twos, apart from five at Samphire Hoe on the 19th September. Small numbers were again wintering at the end of the year.

Pied / White Wagtail

<i>Motacilla alba</i>

Breeding resident and passage migrant.

The only count of note from the early winter period was of a flock of 26 Pied Wagtails at Church Hougham between the 12th February and 4th March. There was a small spring passage of Pied / White ('alba') wagtails noted in March, including one flying east at Samphire Hoe on the 14th, two flying in/west at Abbotscliffe on the 16th, and one in off the sea at Abbotscliffe on the 23rd.

A male White Wagtail was seen at Samphire on the 22nd March but this was the only spring record and there was no repeat of last year's breeding event.

Autumn passage of 'alba' wagtails between mid-September and mid-November was more pronounced, and included counts of 30 on the Hythe Imperial golf course on the 27th September, 14 in/east at Abbotscliffe on the 30th September, ten at Samphire Hoe on the 1st October, 35 on the Hythe Imperial golf course and 10 in/east at Abbotscliffe on the 5th October, 32 at the Willop Basin on the 14th October, 12 at Abbotscliffe on the 20th October and 14 on the Hythe Imperial golf course on the 29th October. 14 were again seen at the latter site on the 16th November but numbers appeared to dwindle thereafter.

Tree Pipit

<i>Anthus trivialis</i>

Passage migrant.

One flew over Abbotscliffe on the 31st August and in September one flew south over Crete Road East on the 7th, one was at Abbotscliffe on the 11th and another flew west there on the 18th. On the 21st September singles were noted at Abbotscliffe and Capel-le-Ferne, whilst the following day one flew east at Abbotscliffe and one was at Folkestone Downs.

The total of eight was a marked improvement on last year and not far below mean for the previous ten years of 9.7.

Meadow Pipit

<i>Anthus pratensis</i>

Breeding resident, winter visitor and passage migrant.

The only counts of note received from the early winter period were of 12 at Nickolls Quarry on the 5th January and ten at Hillhurst Farm, Westenhanger on the 2nd February. Numbers at Samphire Hoe, where a few pairs breed, increased to ten in April and spring passage was typically light, comprising just two flying over Folkestone Pier on the 2nd April, one in off the sea at Mill Point on the 23rd April and one east at Capel-le-Ferne Café on the 3rd May.

Autumn passage was noted from the 10th September, when numbers at Samphire Hoe increased to 30, and 15 were at Abbotscliffe the following day, with 21 flying east at Hythe on the 12th September. 120 were logged at Princes Parade, Seabrook on the 13th, with at least 100 flying east there the following day, when 30 were at Abbotscliffe, and 42 were counted at Samphire Hoe on the 15th. The 16th September saw 12 flying east at Hythe, with 10 east at the Willop Basin the next day.

Larger numbers were noted from the 18th September, when 280 flew east at the cliffs, followed by 350 at Samphire Hoe (250 flying east and 100 grounded) and 100 at Capel-le-Ferne Gun Site on the 19th, and 360 at Samphire Hoe the following day (with up to 150 remaining until the 23rd), with 100 (70 east + 30) at Abbotscliffe on the 22nd. Only smaller counts were noted in the last week of the month, with a peak of 37 at Abbotscliffe on the 26th.

In October 100 were at Samphire Hoe on the 7th, 52 flew west at Abbotscliffe on the 15th, 42 flew west there on the 17th and 28 flew west at Capel-le-Ferne Café on the 22nd, whilst up to 30 remained at Samphire Hoe until the month's end, and throughout November, with 40 noted there on the 9th December.

Rock Pipit

<i>Anthus petrosus</i>

Breeding resident, winter visitor and passage migrant.

In the early winter period up to two were at Folkestone Harbour and up to three were at Samphire Hoe. Singles at the Willop Outfall on the 1st and 15th March were either migrants or overlooked wintering birds.

At Samphire Hoe numbers increased to six on the 22nd March and nine were present on the 25th March (possibly including passage birds), with up to five present throughout April to June, and at least one pair breeding successfully. Counts of ten there on several dates from late July into September presumably included fledged birds. Numbers increased at Samphire Hoe in late September, with 25 there on the 22nd September, 23 on the 24th October and 26 on the 5th November, with 16 still on the 2nd December and up to six until the year's end.

Elsewhere one was at Folkestone Pier on the 5th October, two were at the Hythe Redoubt on the 9th November, and singles were at the Willop Outfall on several dates in December.



Rock Pipit at the Willop Outfall (Brian Harper)

Chaffinch

<i>Fringilla coelebs</i>

Breeding resident, winter visitor and passage migrant.

Spring passage was virtually non-existent with the only counts being 60 east at Abbotscliffe on the 10th March and 29 east on the 12th March, and autumn passage was no better, with the only double-figure counts being ten at Nickolls Quarry on the 17th October and 20 in off the sea at Mill Point on the 25th October.

Brambling

<i>Fringilla montifringilla</i>

Winter visitor and passage migrant.

The only record was of one seen at Samphire Hoe on the 6th December. The worst year since systematic recording at the cliffs began in 1992.

Greenfinch

<i>Carduelis chloris</i>

Breeding resident, winter visitor and passage migrant.

The only indication of spring migration was one flying east at Abbotscliffe on the 4th March.

In autumn a peak of eight at Nickolls Quarry on the 19th September, two east at Abbotscliffe on the 30th September, three west at Hythe Ranges on the 10th October and six west at Abbotscliffe on the 12th October hinted at passage.

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

Spring passage was noted between mid-March and early May but numbers were low, with 18 at Nickolls Quarry on the 15th March and 32 east at Samphire Hoe on the 11th April being the only double-figure counts.

Autumn passage was also light, beginning with a slow build up in numbers in September, including 22 at Saltwood on the 8th, 30 at Abbotscliffe on the 18th and 79 there on the 30th. In October there were 20 at Samphire Hoe on the 1st, 195 flying west at Hythe on the 10th, 18 at Nickolls Quarry on the 12th, 65 west at Abbotscliffe on the 17th, 60 west at Princes Parade, Seabrook on the 18th, 20 west at Mill Point and 35 west at Hythe on the 25th, 35 at Princes Parade on the 29th and 50 west at Abbotscliffe on the 30th. On the 1st November 30 flew west at Hythe, with 38 at Princes Parade on the 16th, 50 west at Samphire Hoe on the 18th, 53 west there the following day and 30 east there on the 20th.

2013

An additional record has been received of 100 at Eaton Lands, Saltwood on the 15th September.

Winter visitor and passage migrant.

Wintering numbers were particularly low, presumably due to the mild weather, with the only record being one singing in Kiln Wood, Pedlinge on the 2nd February, and no spring passage was noted for the first time since 1996.

Autumn passage was noted between the 14th September and 20th November, with peak counts of just ten at Samphire Hoe on the former date and eight there on the latter. The total of 30 was the lowest since 2004.

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

Perhaps due to the mild weather, numbers in the early winter period showed an improvement on last year, with counts of 50 at Folkestone Racecourse, Westenhanger in January, c.30 (possibly part of the same flock) at Hillhurst Farm, Westenhanger in late February and seven at Fisherman's Beach on 19th January.

Spring passage was noted from early March to mid-April and included 14 in off the sea at Abbotscliffe on the 16th March, 19 in off the sea there on the 23rd March, 19 there on the 10th April, 47 there on the 12th April and 17 flying over the following day. Counts of 12 at Samphire Hoe on the 9th and 16th April were also of note.

Autumn passage was noted from about mid-September until the end of October and counts included 25 at Abbotscliffe on the 14th September, 25 at Hythe Ranges on the 20th September, 70 flying west there on the 10th October, 200 flying west at Princes Parade, Seabrook the following day, 40 at Abbotscliffe on the 12th October, 25 west there on the 17th October and 55 there on the 30th October.

The only count received from the latter winter period was of up to 7 at Hythe Ranges in November/December.

Winter visitor and passage migrant.

The only record from the early winter period was of one in Chesterfield Wood, Saltwood on the 10th-11th January, and none were noted on spring passage for the first time since 2002.

Autumn passage was also very poor, the worst since 1994, with just a single record of nine flying east at Abbotscliffe on the 19th November.

Bullfinch

<i>Pyrrhula pyrrhula</i>

Breeding resident.

There were records from a number of sites but the only notable count was of eight at West Hythe on the 21st December and there were no signs of any passage.

This species is rarely noted in any great concentrations and there have only ever been four records of more than eight. The largest count to date is of a westerly movement reported at Hythe on the 9th to the 11th January 1968, with over 50 on 11th, as documented in the Kent Bird Report for that year.

Snow Bunting

<i>Plectrophenax nivalis</i>

Passage migrant, occasionally overwinters.

Two were seen at Abbotscliffe on the 6th November (see photograph on page 24) and one was at Samphire Hoe on the 8th December. A fairly typical year.

Yellowhammer

<i>Emberiza citrinella</i>

Breeding resident.

In the early winter period there was a notable concentration of at least 50 in a stubble field at Hillhurst Farm, Westenhanger during February.

On the 10th April a total of 12 were counted along the downs and cliffs, with 5 at Folkestone Downs and 7 at Abbotscliffe.

In the autumn there were counts of 25 at Abbotscliffe on the 30th October and 30 along Donkey Street on the 16th November, with up to 27 at the latter site into December, with smaller numbers at other sites, mostly along the downs (see photograph on page 23).

At Samphire Hoe, where the species is now unusual, there were three on 3rd October.

Reed Bunting

<i>Emberiza schoeniclus</i>

Breeding resident, winter visitor and passage migrant.

Up to five were noted in the Nickolls Quarry area in the early winter period, with two seen in a stubble field at Hillhurst Farm, Westenhanger during February.

Spring migrants included singles at Abbotscliffe on the 5th March, Samphire Hoe on the 14th March, Abbotscliffe on the 16th and 17th March, and Samphire Hoe and Seabrook on the 2nd April.

Breeding birds comprised up to four pairs at Nickolls Quarry, with single pairs at the Willop Basin and Botolph's Bridge.

A light autumn passage was noted between the 9^h September and 5th November, including counts of 3 at Abbotscliffe on the 18th September, 5 there on the 5th October, 7 there on the 12th October, 4 flying west there on the 15th October, 5 there on the 20th October, 5 west at Capel-le-Ferne on the 22nd October and 5 at Abbotscliffe on the 26th October.

Breeding resident.

Single males were singing at Hillhurst Farm, Westenhanger on 26th February and at Abbotscliffe from the 12th April until the month's end, with singles at the latter site on the 14th September and the 19th November.

The lack of records last year was probably mainly due to reduced coverage at Abbotscliffe, though there can be no doubt that the species is in serious decline: the *Bird Atlas 2007-11* (Balmer *et al*, 2013) revealed a 58% range contraction in Britain since the *1968-72 Breeding Atlas* (Sharrock, 1976), whilst *The state of the UK's birds 2014* (Hayhow *et al*, 2014) reported a 90% decline in breeding numbers during 1970 to 2012. Locally there has been a decrease in range from 11 occupied tetrads in the 1998-91 Atlas to five in the most recent survey.

The decline has mainly been attributed to a switch from spring to autumn sowing of cereals, which has reduced the availability of weed-rich stubbles for winter feeding. Pesticide usage may also be implicated as a factor which reduces productivity.

Escaped species

Escapee.

One was seen at Seabrook on the 19th April (A. Jupp).

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 winter, or very early spring, record of Common Sandpiper and summer record of Brent Goose in 2013 (which have been excluded from the tables) are far more unusual.

In total some 18 summer visitors arrived earlier, including almost all warbler species, whilst only eight arrived later, which illustrates the 'late' spring of 2013. Departure dates however were more evenly split (13 earlier, 12 later). In contrast winter visitors generally departed earlier in the spring, and also typically arrived later in the autumn.

Summer migrants

Species	Arrival date		Difference	
	2014	2013	Earlier	Later
Honey Buzzard	4 th May	3 rd May		1
Hobby	23 rd Apr	1 st May	8	
Whimbrel	17 th Apr	20 th Apr	3	
Common Sandpiper	26 th Apr	26 th Apr*	Same	
Pomarine Skua	3 rd May	3 rd May	Same	
Arctic Skua	22 nd Apr	20 th Apr		2
Sandwich Tern	25 th Mar	9 th Mar		16
Common Tern	4 th Apr	9 th Apr	5	
Little Tern	23 rd Apr	5 th May	12	
Turtle Dove	13 th Jun	25 th May		19
Cuckoo	17 th Apr	14 th Apr		3
Swift	3 rd May	25 th Apr		8
Sand Martin	6 th Apr	10 th Apr	4	
Swallow	28 th Mar	24 th Mar		4
House Martin	6 th Apr	11 th Apr	5	
Chiffchaff	14 th Mar	3 rd Mar*		11
Willow Warbler	6 th Apr	11 th Apr	5	
Blackcap	28 th Mar*	7 th Apr*	10	
Garden Warbler	16 th Apr	4 th May	18	
Lesser Whitethroat	13 th Apr	22 nd Apr	9	
Common Whitethroat	12 th Apr	14 th Apr	2	
Sedge Warbler	5 th Apr	21 st Apr	16	
Reed Warbler	12 th Apr	17 th Apr	5	
Spotted Flycatcher	13 th May	22 nd May	9	
Ring Ouzel	21 st Apr	3 rd May	12	
Nightingale	-	14 th Apr		
Redstart	13 th Apr	-		
Whinchat	17 th May	26 th Apr		21
Wheatear	18 th Mar	23 rd Mar	5	
Yellow Wagtail	10 th Apr	13 th Apr	3	
Tree Pipit	-	-		

Departure date		Difference	
2014	2013	Earlier	Later
-	27 th Aug		
1 st Oct	21 st Sep		10
29 th Aug	12 th Nov	75	
19 th Sep	14 th Sep		5
-	-		
24 th Oct	11 th Oct		13
24 th Oct	25 th Oct	1	
6 th Oct	11 th Sep		25
-	-		
-	-		
2 nd Sep	19 th Aug		14
31 st Aug	14 th Sep	14	
12 th Oct	29 th Sep		13
29 th Oct	30 th Oct	1	
25 th Oct	12 th Oct		13
27 th Nov*	1 st Dec	4	
22 nd Sep	15 th Sep		7
17 th Oct*	1 st Dec	45	
1 st Sep	9 th Sep	8	
15 th Sep	29 th Sep	14	
5 th Oct	30 th Sep		5
20 th Sep	13 th Sep		7
16 th Sep	6 th Sep		10
19 th Sep	6 th Oct	17	
13 th Nov	25 th Nov	12	
-	-		
12 th Oct	12 th Oct	Same	
28 th Sep	6 th Oct	8	
28 th Oct	30 th Oct	2	
21 st Sep	5 th Oct	14	
22 nd Sep	15 th Sep		7

Winter migrants

Species	Departure date		Difference	
	2014	2013	Earlier	Later
Brent Goose	1 st May	3 rd May*	2	
Red-throated Diver	5 th May	4 th Jun	30	
Purple Sandpiper	7 th May	6 th May		1
Fieldfare	17 th Mar	11 th Apr	25	
Redwing	24 th Mar	13 th Apr	20	
Brambling	-	20 th Apr		
Siskin	2 nd Feb	12 th Apr		69
Snow Bunting	-	-		

Arrival date		Difference	
2014	2013	Earlier	Later
11 th Sep	26 th Sep	15	
30 th Oct	28 th Sep		32
28 th Oct	9 th Nov	12	
19 th Oct	11 th Oct		8
14 th Oct	7 th Oct		7
6 th Dec	2 nd Oct		65
21 st Sep	19 th Sep		2
6 th Nov	29 th Oct		8

The 2014 year list

January

1	Mute Swan	1 st Jan
2	Greylag Goose	1 st Jan
3	Mallard	1 st Jan
4	Tufted Duck	1 st Jan
5	Common Scoter	1 st Jan
6	Pheasant	1 st Jan
7	Fulmar	1 st Jan
8	Gannet	1 st Jan
9	Cormorant	1 st Jan
10	Little Egret	1 st Jan
11	Grey Heron	1 st Jan
12	Great Crested Grebe	1 st Jan
13	Moorhen	1 st Jan
14	Purple Sandpiper	1 st Jan
15	Curlew	1 st Jan
16	Kittiwake	1 st Jan
17	Black-headed Gull	1 st Jan
18	Little Gull	1 st Jan
19	Mediterranean Gull	1 st Jan
20	Common Gull	1 st Jan
21	Herring Gull	1 st Jan
22	Great Black-backed Gull	1 st Jan
23	Guillemot	1 st Jan
24	Feral Pigeon	1 st Jan
25	Wood Pigeon	1 st Jan
26	Collared Dove	1 st Jan
27	Magpie	1 st Jan
28	Jay	1 st Jan
29	Jackdaw	1 st Jan
30	Rook	1 st Jan
31	Carrion Crow	1 st Jan
32	Goldcrest	1 st Jan
33	Firecrest	1 st Jan
34	Blue Tit	1 st Jan
35	Great Tit	1 st Jan
36	Wren	1 st Jan
37	Starling	1 st Jan
38	Blackbird	1 st Jan
39	Song Thrush	1 st Jan
40	Robin	1 st Jan
41	Black Redstart	1 st Jan
42	House Sparrow	1 st Jan
43	Pied Wagtail	1 st Jan
44	Chaffinch	1 st Jan
45	Greenfinch	1 st Jan
46	Goldfinch	1 st Jan
47	Bullfinch	1 st Jan
48	Brent Goose	2 nd Jan
49	Teal	2 nd Jan
50	Red-throated Diver	2 nd Jan
51	Little Grebe	2 nd Jan

52	Marsh Harrier	2 nd Jan
53	Sparrowhawk	2 nd Jan
54	Kestrel	2 nd Jan
55	Water Rail	2 nd Jan
56	Common Snipe	2 nd Jan
57	Turnstone	2 nd Jan
58	Lesser Black-backed Gull	2 nd Jan
59	Stock Dove	2 nd Jan
60	Green Woodpecker	2 nd Jan
61	Cetti's Warbler	2 nd Jan
62	Mistle Thrush	2 nd Jan
63	Dunnock	2 nd Jan
64	Stonechat	2 nd Jan
65	Grey Wagtail	2 nd Jan
66	Meadow Pipit	2 nd Jan
67	Linnet	2 nd Jan
68	Reed Bunting	2 nd Jan
69	Shelduck	3 rd Jan
70	Lapwing	3 rd Jan
71	Peregrine	4 th Jan
72	Coot	5 th Jan
73	Green Sandpiper	5 th Jan
74	Bearded Tit	5 th Jan
75	Long-tailed Tit	5 th Jan
76	Chiffchaff	5 th Jan
77	Redshank	6 th Jan
78	Tawny Owl	7 th Jan
79	Ringed Plover	8 th Jan
80	Kingfisher	8 th Jan
81	Great Spotted Woodpecker	8 th Jan
82	Treecreeper	8 th Jan
83	Yellowhammer	8 th Jan
84	Rock Pipit	8 th Jan
85	Woodcock	9 th Jan
86	Redwing	9 th Jan
87	Gadwall	10 th Jan
88	Coal Tit	10 th Jan
89	Marsh Tit	10 th Jan
90	Lesser Redpoll	10 th Jan
91	Buzzard	11 th Jan
92	Nuthatch	11 th Jan
93	Sky Lark	11 th Jan
94	Pochard	12 th Jan
95	Velvet Scoter	12 th Jan
96	Oystercatcher	12 th Jan
97	Razorbill	12 th Jan
98	Raven	12 th Jan
99	Fieldfare	12 th Jan
100	Dunlin	19 th Jan
101	Sanderling	21 st Jan
102	Chinese Pond Heron	21 st Jan
103	Merlin	24 th Jan
104	Pallas's Warbler	24 th Jan
105	Blackcap	25 th Jan
106	Wigeon	26 th Jan

107	White-fronted Goose	26 th Jan
108	Knot	27 th Jan

February

109	Little Owl	1 st Feb
110	Siskin	2 nd Feb
111	Jack Snipe	2 nd Feb
112	Mandarin	2 nd Feb
113	Eider	22 nd Feb
114	Canada Goose	22 nd Feb
115	Corn Bunting	26 th Feb

March

116	Pintail	1 st Mar
117	Shoveler	1 st Mar
118	Shag	4 th Mar
119	Golden Plover	12 th Mar
120	Black-tailed Godwit	15 th Mar
121	Red Kite	15 th Mar
122	Wheatear	18 th Mar
123	Little Ringed Plover	21 st Mar
124	Sandwich Tern	25 th Mar
125	Red-legged Partridge	27 th Mar
126	Swallow	28 th Mar
127	Red-breasted Merganser	29 th Mar
128	Black-necked Grebe	29 th Mar

April

129	Goosander	2 nd Apr
130	Common Tern	4 th Apr
131	Black-throated Diver	4 th Apr
132	Sedge Warbler	5 th Apr
133	Grey Partridge	6 th Apr
134	Sand Martin	6 th Apr
135	House Martin	6 th Apr
136	Willow Warbler	6 th Apr
137	Yellow Wagtail	10 th Apr
138	Egyptian Goose	11 th Apr
139	Whitethroat	12 th Apr
140	Reed Warbler	12 th Apr
141	Avocet	12 th Apr
142	Lesser Whitethroat	13 th Apr
143	Redstart	13 th Apr
144	Ring-necked Parakeet	13 th Apr
145	Rough-legged Buzzard	13 th Apr
146	Garden Warbler	16 th Apr
147	Whimbrel	17 th Apr
148	Great Skua	17 th Apr
149	Cuckoo	17 th Apr
150	Bar-tailed Godwit	20 th Apr
151	Grey Plover	20 th Apr
152	Ring Ouzel	21 st Apr

153	Wood Warbler	21 st Apr
154	Yellow-legged Gull	21 st Apr
155	Arctic Skua	22 nd Apr
156	Little Tern	23 rd Apr
157	Hobby	23 rd Apr
158	Common Sandpiper	26 th Apr
159	Arctic Tern	27 th Apr
160	Manx Shearwater	27 th Apr
161	Osprey	28 th Apr

May

162	Swift	3 rd May
163	Pomarine Skua	3 rd May
164	Honey Buzzard	4 th May
165	Greenshank	7 th May
166	Spotted Flycatcher	13 th May
167	Purple Heron	16 th May
168	Whinchat	17 th May
169	Great White Egret	17 th May

June

170	Turtle Dove	13 th Jun
171	Spoonbill	23 rd Jun

July

172	Lesser Spotted Woodpecker	2 nd Jul
173	Grasshopper Warbler	14 th Jul

August

174	Pied Flycatcher	30 th Aug
175	Quail	31 st Aug

September

176	Tree Sparrow	6 th Sep
177	Tree Pipit	7 th Sep
178	Ruff	8 th Sep
179	Wryneck	9 th Sep
180	Nightjar	12 th Sep

October

181	Sooty Shearwater	8 th Oct
182	Hen Harrier	15 th Oct
183	Long-eared Owl	17 th Oct
184	Short-eared Owl	22 nd Oct
185	Yellow-browed Warbler	25 th Oct

November

186 Snow Bunting
187 Wood Lark

6th Nov
6th Nov

December

188 Caspian Gull
189 Brambling
190 Smew
191 Glaucous Gull
192 Goldeneye

1st Dec
6th Dec
27th Dec
27th Dec
31st Dec

New species for Folkestone and Hythe in 2014

Chinese Pond Heron was added to the Folkestone and Hythe list in 2014, which increased it to 299 species. An account of this record, which was also new for Britain, is given below.

Chinese Pond Heron at Hythe and Saltwood

21st January to 13th March 2014 (found dead on 25th March)

(Michael Dawson, Mike Kirk, Ian Roberts *et al*)

Status:

As shown in the map (hbw, no date), the breeding range extends from eastern India north-eastwards across most of eastern China, north to Beidaihe, Hebei Province. The species winters in the south of the breeding range and in South East Asia, south to Indonesia (Sumatra), Thailand, Malaysia and the Philippines, though the extent of the wintering range is hard to determine due to overlap with similar species such as Javan Pond Heron. The northern birds are more migratory, with the southern breeders less so, so the northern birds 'leapfrog' the southern ones to winter in the more southerly regions. It is abundant through most of its core distribution, and is stated to be expanding its range (Heron Conservation, no date, a).



There are a series of records of dispersal and vagrancy. To the east these include three sightings of breeding plumaged adults in Alaska: at Antone Lake, St. Paul Islands, Pribilof Islands on the 4th to 9th August 1996, on Attu Island, Aleutians West on the 20th May 2010, and at Gambell, St. Lawrence Island on the 14th to 15th July 2011. The spring bird was considered likely to be a drift vagrant, and the late summer birds also may have been assisted by tropical storms moving north-east off the Asian coast (Howell *et al*, 2014).

To the south birds have reached Christmas Island in March 2008 and June 2011, the Cocos Keeling Islands in May 2006 and Broome in Western Australia in March 2008, (Birding-Aus, 2008).

To the north and west it is a rare passage migrant in Mongolia, occurring mainly in May and June, though recorded annually in recent years, a vagrant in Sri Lanka (in 1995) and Kyrgyzstan (in October 2004), and there are two records in Oman, at Thumrayt (in August 2010) and Qatbit (in September 2012), (Heron Conservation, no date, a; Birding Mongolia; no date, Birds Oman, 2013).

There are also five previous European records (from Tarsiger.com, no date):

- An adult at Romsdal, Norway on 10th October 1973
- An adult female at Viragoskut fish-ponds, Hortobagy, Hungary on 14th August 2000
- An adult at Sea Palling, Norfolk on 31st October 2004, later seen at East Dean, Hampshire on 13th November
- An adult at Rautavaara, Finland on the 17th July 2007
- An adult at Turkansaari, Oulu, Finland in August 2012

The Norwegian record was accepted into category A (and was included in Lewington *et al*, 1991), then relegated to category D 'as a possible escape', and the Hungarian bird was also first considered to be wild before also being moved to category D.

The bird seen in Norfolk and later in Hampshire was discussed by the British Birds Rarities Committee (BBRC) in their report for that year (Rogers, M. J. *et al*, 2004). Based on the distribution and migration pattern the committee considered that wild occurrence “does fall within the bounds of possibility”.

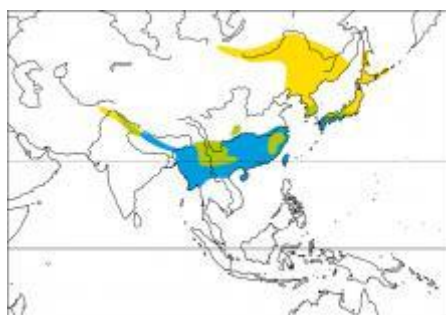
The BBRC was concerned however that the bird was still in breeding plumage as, following research, it appeared that this was not known in the wild at that time of year. However photographs have since emerged of one still in full summer plumage on its normal wintering grounds as late as November, though of course this is a very unusual occurrence (Garner, 2014c).

Because of the atypical plumage, the committee felt that there was a high probability that it was not of wild origin, and that the retained breeding plumage might be best explained by the bird having been kept in a captive environment, in which the normal moult cycle had been interrupted. In 2004, prior to the ban on wild bird imports into the European Union (BBC, 2007), the species was known in captivity, though was considered to be rare.

Whilst in Norfolk the bird did not appear to be ringed and showed behaviour consistent with a wild bird, it was “in a quiet, secluded garden and was not remotely 'tame'”. It was only viewed at 80ft closest and would not even land if observers were in view” (Tim Allwood, pers. comm.).

The two records from Finland in 2007 and 2012 were also placed in category E by their rarities committee (Batty, 2014).

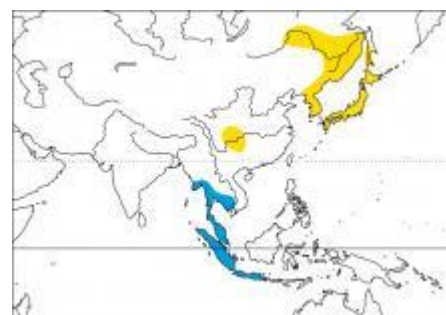
There are a number of other far-eastern vagrants which have occurred in Britain in recent years which have a similar distribution to Chinese Pond Heron, as shown below.



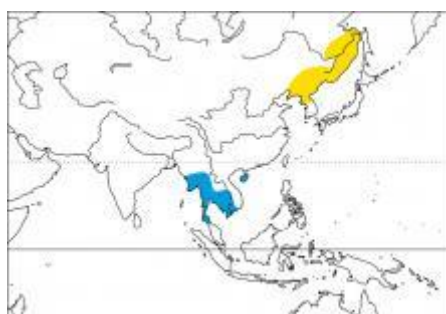
Chestnut-eared Bunting



Rufous-tailed Robin



Eastern Crowned Leaf Warbler



Pale-legged Leaf Warbler



Chinese Pond Heron

Distribution of far-eastern vagrants that have occurred in Britain in recent years compared to Chinese Pond Heron

Source: www.hbw.com

Interestingly the Chinese Pond Heron in Norfolk in October 2004 was found in the same month as Britain's first Rufous-tailed Robin and Chestnut-eared Bunting.

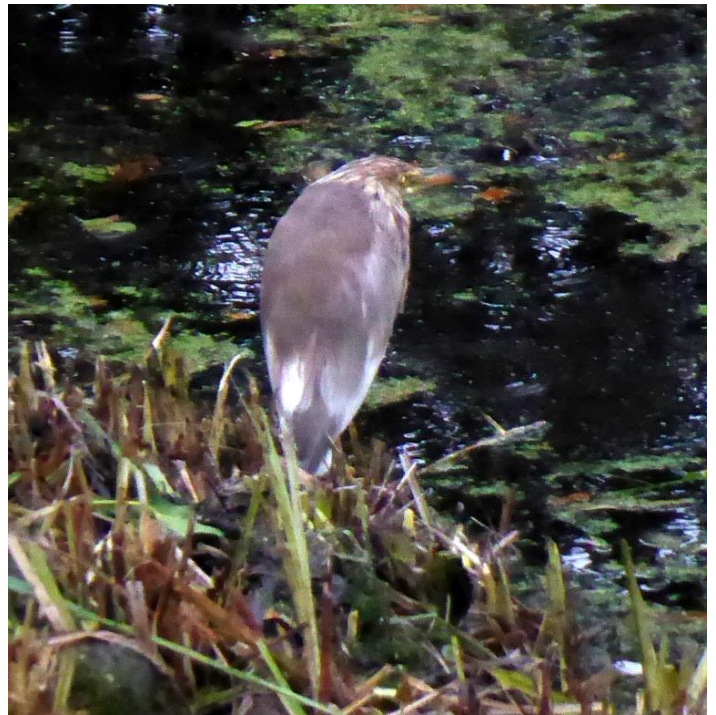
It is worth noting that the five previous European records all related to adults and that any immature birds that may have occurred could potentially have been overlooked as Squacco Herons.

Circumstances of the find:

On Tuesday, 21st January 2014 Michael Dawson, a non-birdwatcher, noticed an unusual bird on the lily pads on the pond within the shared grounds of his block of flats. The flats are set in large wooded grounds with a pond with a surface area of some 100+ square metres and a depth at maximum of about 1.8m. It contains a large area of water lilies covering about 20% of its surface area and has a significant area of reeds in one corner. It also contains many small fish and had recently had the water level reduced for cleaning purposes. The flats are located on North Road West, Hythe (51°04'30.4"N, 1°04'25.2"E).

Michael considered the bird to be "of a nervous disposition and flew away into nearby trees (we think) as soon as it saw movement or heard noise. It has been difficult to photograph because of its nervousness and it flies when flash photography is used". He continued to state that he had "tried to take more pictures without upsetting it but with little success as I cannot get close".

The bird made regular visits to the lily pads that day and most of the next few days to the 24th January. It was first thought to be a Bittern but seemed different, being "pure white in flight" whereas on the ground it blended in with the foliage. Despite looking in his bird books he was unable to identify it and sent two photographs (images 01 and 02, below) to the RSPB on the 27th January. It was strongly suggested by the RSPB that it was a Squacco heron and Michael was asked to pass the information on to Barry Wright, the county recorder, which he did.



Images 01 and 02: At North Road West, Hythe on about 21st January (Michael Dawson)

Barry suggested that Michael should contact me which he did on the evening of the 3rd February. I rang Michael to discuss the sighting and it was confirmed that there had been no further sightings since the 24th January. It was also ascertained that there was no possibility of viewing the pond from outside of the property. Whilst the most likely prospect, even despite any winter records in the county, was that it was a Squacco Heron, it was clear that the possibility of one of the other pond herons needed to be considered.

On the same evening (3rd February) David Walker, warden of Dungeness Bird Observatory, received an email from Mike Kirk of Saltwood stating that he had seen a Squacco Heron recently in his garden. David forwarded the email to me. A quick look in the phonebook showed that Mike lived in 21 Fairlight Avenue, which was very close to the original location (51°04'37.1"N, 1°04'29.4"E).

The following morning (4th February) I decided to drive up and see what viewing/access might be like at this new location. Almost as soon as I parked up at the side of the property a Squacco-type heron flew across the road and dropped into the garden!

Unfortunately it was not possible to see into the garden from the road. As it was still quite early in the day and I had not noted down Mike's phone number, I returned home and called him a short while later. Mike stated that he had noticed the heron in his garden but it had already flown off. He further stated that it had made a couple of visits to his pond earlier that week but appeared to flush as soon as it noticed movement at the windows. Mike agreed to let me know if it reappeared but was understandably reluctant to allow general access to his property and, given the bird's infrequent, brief visits and wariness, a twitch would not have been viable.

Mike was able to provide a photo taken on 3rd February (image 03) which was particularly interesting as it appeared to show a dark 'curtain' across the lower breast and possibly some maroon colouration to the breast sides, though was unfortunately of poor quality.

On the 4th February Barry Wright forwarded me another photo of the heron (of even poorer quality, image 04) which had been taken recently (perhaps on the 2nd) by Nigel Baker, when it was perched on a trampoline in a garden along Dark Lane, again in a similar area (51°04'33.0"N, 1°04'19.3"E).



03: At Saltwood on about 3rd February (Mike Kirk)



04: At Hythe on about 2nd February (Nigel Baker)

Over the next few days some local birders began to search the surrounding area and on the afternoon of the 11th February Steve Broyd located it in a publicly-accessible area by Turnpike Hill in Hythe (51°04'31.5"N, 1°04'06.2"E), whereupon the news was broadcast more widely. A few images were able to be obtained that afternoon (image 05) and over the days that followed (images 06 and 07).

Over the next four weeks it was regularly seen at Turnpike Hill and at other locations in the Hythe and Saltwood area, as far west as Green Lane, near Hythe Roughs (51°04'15.0"N, 1°03'56.3"E) and north to the centre of Saltwood (51°04'45.7"N, 1°04'43.4"E), with the gardens at the end of Redbrooks Way (51°04'28.3"N, 1°03'53.8"E) becoming a favoured site. However it could be frustrating elusive at times, going missing for entire days, and remained rather flighty and wary, and never allowing close approach.

Now that there was a chance to study the bird and obtain better photographs the identification could be properly tested. Chinese Pond Heron fairly quickly emerged as the likely candidate and this was confirmed through further research, with particular help from Martin Garner (Garner 2014a, b), with a couple of excellent series of photographs in support of this, Paul Rowe's being particularly instructive (images 08 to 12, see also front cover and page 9).



05: At Turnpike Hill, Hythe on 11th February (Steve Broyd)



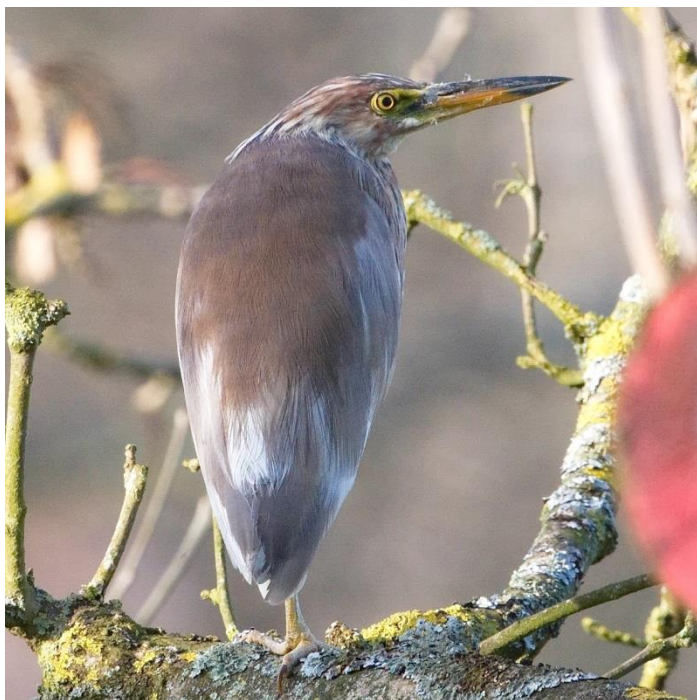
06: At Turnpike Hill, Hythe in heavy rain on 13th February (Steve Gantlett)



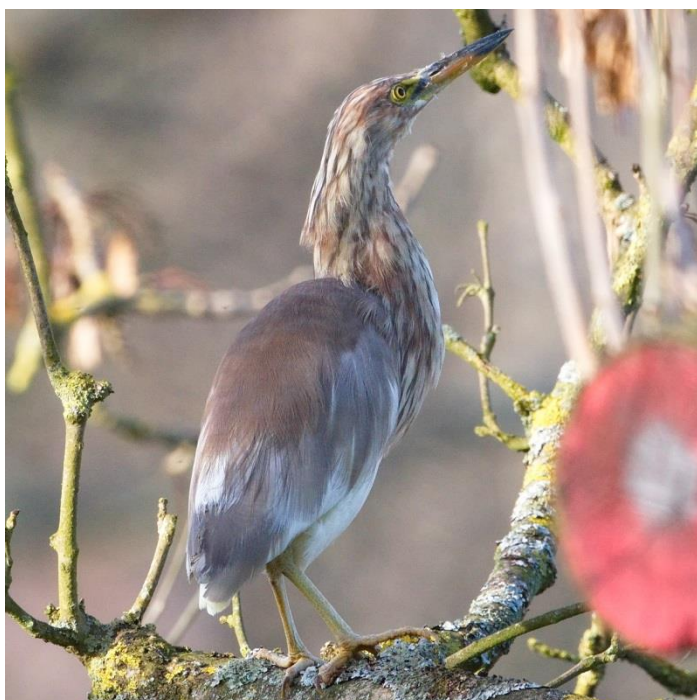
07: At Turnpike Hill, Hythe in heavy rain on 13th February (Steve Gantlett)



08: At Redbrooks Way, Hythe on 8th March (Paul Rowe)



09 - 10: At Redbrooks Way, Hythe on 8th March (Paul Rowe)



11 - 12: At Redbrooks Way, Hythe on 8th March (Paul Rowe)

The bird was last reported alive on the 13th March and was sadly found freshly dead (in various parts) at Orchard Valley, Hythe (51°04'17.1"N, 1°04'07.3"E) on the 25th March by Gill and Mike Badcock. The head was photographed (image 13) but this had disappeared a day or so later and by the time I was informed of the find (3rd April) just a few wing and body feathers remained (e.g. image 14). These were collected and a sample sent to Martin Collinson at the University of Aberdeen for DNA analysis which confirmed the identification as Chinese Pond Heron (pers. comm.):

"it is 100% identical to the four database sequences of Chinese Pond heron for the COI gene [mitochondrial gene cytochrome oxidase I, the most commonly used gene for DNA barcoding]. There's one Squacco Heron and one Indian Pond heron in the database, and it is 4-5% different from them, i.e. quite a difference. Unfortunately there is no Javan Pond Heron DNA sequenced at all, so unless we can find a sample I cannot include that in the analysis however ... it is inconceivable really that Javan would show an identical DNA sequence".



13: Head found at Orchard Valley, Hythe on 25th March (Gill Badcock)



14: Remains collected from Orchard Valley, Hythe on 3rd April (Ian Roberts)

Description of the bird:

Bill: The bill was thick throughout its length and distinctly two-toned, with a bright orangey-yellow base to the lower mandible contrasting with the mostly dark upper mandible (the orangey-yellow did just extend on to the lower edge) and tip (approximately one-third of the bill) – images 06 and 10 show the bill pattern particularly well.

Head/breast: The lores were yellow with a short dark streak in front of the yellow eye. The crown was darkly streaked and the rest of the head was paler, with a buffy colouration and mottled darker. Some maroon feathering could be seen on the lower crown (just above/behind the eye), below the eye (bordering a noticeable white spot below the gape) and on the sides of the breast. It has been suggested that this colouration may have developed during the bird's stay, however the earliest photos (taken c.21st January – image 01 and 02) of it are rather poor and so difficult to analyse. Some of this colouration may have already been present in early February (image 03), though again it is difficult to be certain, and it was certainly noticeable by 13th February (image 07). The sequence by Paul Rowe (e.g. image 08) shows that the plumage had altered little over the following three weeks to 6th March.

Upperparts: The mantle was quite dark appearing to have an almost purplish hue in certain light conditions and photographs. The wings appeared pure white in flight in the rather startlingly way that they do with Squacco Heron, however photographs (e.g. image 16) show some marking on the primary coverts and primaries indicating, together with the shape of the primary tips, that it is probably a first-winter bird. The tail was also white.

Underparts: The belly, vent etc. were also whitish and contrasted with the breast colouration. In the field and in a number of photographs (e.g. image 12) a distinct curtain effect across the lower breast was evident.

Legs/feet: The legs and feet were yellowish, with darker claws, and all were present and correct without any signs of damage.



15: On Hythe Roughs, near Green Lane on 4th March (Phil Palmer)



16: On Hythe Roughs, near Green Lane on 4th March (Phil Palmer)

Age: The bird appears to be a first-winter (second calendar year) due to the heavily pigmented dark outer primaries (image 16) and the rather tapered and worn tips to the outer primaries (image 17). Adults at this time of year have mostly/all white wing-tips and broad, rounded tips to the primary feathers. The inner three or more primaries have more rounded, fresher-looking tips (image 17), consistent with photographs of known first-winter birds at this time of year.



17: In flight (via Martin Garner, 2014c)

Identification:

Initial thoughts on the bird's identification erred on the cautious and it was broadcast as a probable Squacco Heron, as reported by the initial finder, and which appeared to be the most likely prospect, though it was clear that the possibility of one of the other pond heron species needed to be considered.

A literature search revealed that very little appeared to have published on the identification of non-breeding plumaged pond herons. Fortunately Martin Garner got in touch to say that he had looked at the subject with Ian Lewington, as part of the research for the Rare Birds of North America (Howell, 2014), and had studied skins at the Natural History Museum.

The first two photographs to emerge of the bird (image 01 and 02) gave no real clues as to its identity but image 03 appeared to show a dark curtain of feathering across the breast, also visible in image 05, which ruled out Squacco Heron (see image 18).



18: Chinese Pond Herons (upper 2) and Squacco Herons (lower 2) showing difference in underparts (Garner, 2014b)

Further features which appeared to rule out Squacco Heron included the dark loreal markings and thick, orange-based bill, though these characters may need further research.

Images 06 and 07 then showed emerging maroon plumage in the head pattern and underparts which made the identification rather straightforward as no other pond heron species has maroon feathering in these areas, see image 19 (from Garner, 2014c).

The identification was later confirmed further through DNA analysis (see page 97).



Breeding-plumaged Indian Pond Heron



Breeding-plumaged Chinese Pond Heron



Breeding-plumaged Squacco Heron



Breeding-plumaged Javan Pond Heron

Origin:

Even at the time of the sighting in Norfolk in 2004 Chinese Pond Heron was considered to be rare in captivity, and the atypical plumage appears to have been the main factor in the decision not to accept it as a wild bird. Interestingly photographs have since emerged of one still in full summer plumage on its normal wintering grounds as late as November, though of course this is very unusual (Garner, 2014c).

In 2005 a temporary ban on the import of wild birds into the European Union was imposed as part of measures to prevent outbreaks of the deadly H5N1 strain of bird flu, and this was made a permanent ban from July 2007 (BBC, 2007), so no Chinese Pond Herons will have been legally imported in recent years.

Wild bird trade has continued illegally since the ban though information is limited and best known for species listed under CITES (Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora), which does not include Chinese Pond Heron. Whilst the numbers involved have decreased considerably since the ban, the export of wild birds from China into Europe does continue (Li & Jiang, 2014).

It is difficult to know the full extent to which species are currently held in zoos and public collections, and impossible for private or illegal collections. However the Zootierliste website aims to provide a “database for the current and former vertebrate inventories of European zoos and other public collections”, and efforts are made to “keep the data as comprehensive and up-to-date as possible”. This website lists no current known holdings and only eight former holdings in Europe:

Country	Zoo	Dates held	Notes
Germany	Berlin (Tierpark Friedrichsfelde)	1961 to ?	Two young birds in 1996 did not survive
	Halle (Zoo)	1963 to ?	
	Timmendorfer Strand (Vogelpark Niendorf)	2012*	See below
Netherlands	Alphen aan den Rijn (Vogelpark Avifauna)	1992 to 1999	None bred
	Arnhem (Burgers Zoo)	1992 to 1998	Bred 1996, 1997
UK	Bratton Fleming (Exmoor Zoological Park)	2005 to ?*	See below
	Chester (Zoo)	1970 to 1971	None bred
	London (Zoo)	1959 to ? 1998 to 2005	Two young birds in 1999 did not survive

The Vogelpark Niendorf currently has a photograph of the species on their website (www.vogelpark-niendorf.de/reiher.html) though it is not listed in the ‘current inventory’ (undated) on the Zootierliste website, only the ‘former inventory’ (also undated, but presumably 2012). The park is situated on the north coast of Germany, north-east of Hamburg.

The website does not give an end date for the former holding at Exmoor Zoological Park, but the species does not appear in their current list (www.exmoorzoo.co.uk/about-the-zoo-north-devon-species).

In summary it appears that it was rare in captivity prior to the importation ban with very limited breeding success and is not known to currently be held in Europe.

Based on the same source, it would seem that the other pond heron species are slightly more frequent in captivity in Europe (with UK figures in parentheses):

	Chinese Pond	Indian Pond	Javan Pond	Squacco
Current	0 (0)	3 (0)	6 (0)	11 (1)
Former	8 (3)	7 (2)	7 (3)	21 (3)

An escaped pond heron in Europe, particularly in northern Europe (where Squacco is a rarity), is likely to attract attention as birds in non-breeding plumage might be misidentified as Squacco Heron, whilst the other species could be considered to be vagrants.

An Indian Pond Heron in Belgium in July 1988 did attract attention, appearing in a number of publications (e.g. Lewington *et al*, 1991, British Birds, 1990) and still listed on the Heron Conservation website (Heron Conservation, no date, b) as a dispersal record, however is not on the official Belgian list as it was considered to have been of captive origin. I have not been able to trace any other occurrences of this species in Europe. Escaped birds however often go unreported or unpublished, particularly when their origin is obvious, for example a Squacco Heron in the Netherlands in October 2013 which was bearing a colour ring (waarneming.nl, no date).

It is interesting that there are now six published records of Chinese Pond Heron in Europe but only one Indian Pond Heron, when the latter is slightly more frequent in captivity.

The Hythe and Saltwood bird showed no obvious signs of being of captive origin. It was un-ringed, its bill and feet were in good condition and it was wary.

Some of the remains have been sent for stable isotope analysis but the results have not yet been received.

Conclusion:

The identity of the bird is beyond doubt, based on field characters and confirmed by DNA analysis. The species has a record of vagrancy based on accepted records as widespread as Alaska, Australia and Oman, and has a similar distribution to several far-eastern species which have occurred in Britain and Europe in recent years. There are also five previous records from Europe, including one from Britain, though these were not accepted due to the possibility of captive origin. Prior to the ban on the importation of wild birds into the European Union in 2005 Chinese Pond Heron was present, though apparently rare, in captivity.

The species is not currently known in any European zoos and other public collections, though the possibility of birds being held in private collections or continuing to be illegally imported cannot be dismissed. Breeding success in captivity appears to be very limited and the bird was considered to be a first-winter.

The condition of the plumage was consistent with a typical first-winter at the time sighting, both in terms of progression of moult and wear. The bird showed no obvious signs of being of captive origin, being un-ringed, with bill and feet in good condition, and wary in behaviour.

On balance there would appear to be a good case for accepting this occurrence into category A of the British list.

Acknowledgements:

I would particularly like to thank Michael Dawson for pursuing the identity of the strange heron that appeared in his garden and for the photographs and information that he provided, Mike and Brenda Kirk for their photograph and notifications of the bird's appearances at their pond, Nigel Baker for his photograph, and Bryn and Jean Green for their updates on the heron's visits to their garden. Special thanks are also due to the many tolerant residents in the Turnpike Hill and especially Redbrooks Way area.

I would also like to thank Barry Wright and David Walker for passing on early news of the bird and for their helpful discussions on its identity, and to Martin Garner for his considerable input into the debate on identification and ageing.

I am grateful to Steve Broyd for locating the bird in a public area, thereby enabling the bird to be twitchable, if you were lucky or persistent enough. I am indebted to Paul Rowe, Steve Gantlett and Phil Palmer for allowing the use of their excellent and instructive images.

Gill and Mike Badcock deserve a particular mention for alerting me to the dead bird and allowing access to their property to collect the remains. I am very grateful also to Martin Collinson for undertaking the DNA analysis and for Chris Bromley for arranging for the stable isotope analysis to be performed.

Finally many thanks to the visiting birders who were well-behaved, friendly and respectful of the local residents' privacy.

The next new species for the Folkestone and Hythe area?

The Chinese Pond Heron increased the total number of species recorded in the Folkestone and Hythe area to 299. This article considers some of the more likely candidates (and a few of the less likely ones) to become number 300. The analysis is mainly based on the frequency of occurrence of potential additions within Kent but also takes into account wider national trends and the availability of suitable habitat locally. One of the many joys of birdwatching though is that just about anything can turn up just about anywhere so it could quite easily be something much more unlikely: Chinese Pond Heron, for example, would never have been predicted!

1. Surf Scoter – this species remains rare in the county with just 11 records, and none since 2000, but is a possibility in the scoter flocks which occur in Hythe Bay or passing a seawatching point. Three of the four most recent records were from across the bay at Dungeness. The first Kent record was the nearest though – an adult male killed off the Admiralty Pier, Dover in 1889.

2. White-billed Diver – another rare species in Kent with just 8 records in total, but since 1993 it has been recorded six times on spring passage past Dungeness, with all being seen in late April or early May. Five were adults, with the other a first-summer, and they generally passed by quite close inshore. Nationally this species appears to be increasing, though much of this is probably due to the discovery of previously undetected migration routes off Scotland. A possible prize for regular seawatchers.

3. Glossy Ibis – formerly a great rarity, this species was dropped from the list of those considered by the BBRC from the 1st January 2013 following the arrival of at least 126 into Britain in 2012. Many Kent birdwatchers will remember the famous long-staying Stodmarsh bird from 1975 (joined by another in 1979, with both remaining to 1985 and one to 1992) and in the 1970s it bred no closer than the Balkans, having become extinct in the Iberian Peninsula at the beginning of the twentieth century. However it has since spread back westwards, with breeding occurring in Italy during the 1980s, followed a decade later by re-establishment of breeding colonies in the Doñana National Park in south-west Spain, and the Ebro Delta in north-east Spain in 1996. The Glossy Ibis spread into the Camargue in southern France in 2006, where the population increased rapidly. These populations appear to have established a post-breeding dispersal to the north-west, possibly linked to drought conditions on the breeding grounds, with several influxes into Britain in recent years. A number of these birds have reached Kent, with 62 records to 2012. Whilst Dungeness and Stodmarsh have been favoured sites odd birds could appear at smaller wetland areas, such as the Willop Basin or Nickolls Quarry, and are increasingly likely to be picked up from coastal watch-points such as the cliffs. In 2013 there was a very near miss when one was seen flying north over Port Lympne, just outside the local area.

4. Pallid Harrier – another species which has seen a significant change in its rarity status over recent years, it was almost mythical in Britain prior to 1993 but has appeared in all but one year since 2001, including an incredible influx of 29 in 2011, including the second for Kent. It remains a major rarity in the county but if the increase in records continues, apparently linked to a western spread of the European population, then further sightings are to be expected. The Folkestone and Hythe area has a good record for raptors, no doubt due to it forming part of the shortest crossing to the continent, and Pallid Harrier should be considered a real possibility, though Eleonora's Falcon, Lesser Kestrel, Long-legged Buzzard or one of the European eagles could also conceivably occur. Many of these species are expanding in number and range, in line with the increase of a number of British raptors.

5. Green-winged Teal – with some 28 Kent records it is one of the more regular species that has not occurred locally and with 17 of those being reported since 2002 it is now more or less annual in the county. Not surprisingly many of the records have been from areas with large concentrations of wildfowl such as Dungeness, Cliffe, Elmley and the Stour Valley but it could conceivably appear wherever there are Teal, particularly the Willop Basin.

6. Pectoral Sandpiper – with 135 county records to 2012 this is one of the commoner species in Kent which is yet to occur at Folkestone and Hythe. However the shortage of wader habitat locally means that even the more regular species like Little Stint and Wood Sandpiper are real rarities here, particularly since the shallow margin at Nickolls Quarry was back-filled in 2006. Seasonally-flooded fields such as those at Willop Basin or in the Botolph's Bridge area probably offer the best opportunity for finding this or perhaps one of the other rarer American waders like White-rumped Sandpiper (8 Kent records), Long-billed Dowitcher (11 Kent records), Lesser Yellowlegs (16 Kent records) or

- Buff-breasted Sandpiper (27 Kent records), though the latter could occur in a drier habitat at the cliffs. From the opposite direction Broad-billed Sandpiper (17 Kent records) or Marsh Sandpiper (25 Kent records) could conceivably occur.
7. Whiskered Tern – the Folkestone and Hythe area has an impressive tern list already, which includes Lesser Crested, Caspian, Gull-billed and White-winged Black, so any potential addition will be a good one. With 11 county records to date (six of which were at Dungeness) Whiskered appears to be the most likely candidate. This is another possible prize for regular seawatchers though could occur at Nickolls Quarry or even along the Hythe canal.
8. Laughing Gull – similarly the next gull which is added to the Folkestone and Hythe list will be a quality one. Having occurred on eight occasions in Kent, with 7 in the Dungeness area, Laughing Gull would appear to be the most likely, though Bonaparte's (4 county records) or even Audouin's (3 county records) are potential rewards for careful checking of local gull flocks.
9. Isabelline Shrike – all of the eight county records have occurred since 1988 so it is an increasing, though still very rare, visitor to Kent where sightings are quite well spread between Sandwich Bay / Worth (3), Dungeness (2), North Foreland, Stodmarsh and Cliffe.
10. Penduline Tit – with over 60 records in Kent since the first in 1980 this species is certainly on the increase, and is now almost annual at Dungeness. The most likely sites locally for this species would appear to be along the Hythe Canal or the Botolph's Bridge / Nickolls Quarry area. Whilst most of the Dungeness records are from the gravel pits, a number have been recorded flying over the observatory area so a visual migration record from the cliffs is also a possibility.
11. Radde's Warbler – with 19 records in the county, including four at Dungeness and no fewer than six in the Bockhill / St. Margaret's Bay area, the species is almost overdue an appearance here. Greenish (1992), Pallas' (1996), Dusky (2004) and Arctic (2009) have all been added to the list in recent years and Radde's is the most likely *Phylloscopus* to occur next. Western Bonelli's Warbler (see below), Hume's Warbler and Iberian Chiffchaff are other possibilities however. The cliffs between Capel-le-Ferne and Samphire Hoe would be the likely point of landfall.
12. Western Bonelli's Warbler – there have been only five fewer records of Bonelli's Warblers than Radde's in Kent, though only eight have been attributed to the recently-split Western form, including the most recent just around the coast at Hope Point in August 2013, and the cliffs here would appear the most likely venue. The Eastern form has not been confirmed in the county.
13. Blyth's Reed Warbler – whilst there remains just one county record (a spring bird at Dungeness in 1999) this species is increasing significantly nationally, with 165 British records to the end of 2013, including 19 in that year alone, and it is now being confirmed with some regularity on the English east coast. Increased confidence in the identification of the species appears to be a factor combined with a westward expansion of its range. Again the cliffs probably offer the best chance of finding one locally.
14. Great Reed Warbler – there have been 36 county records of this impressive warbler though it has been scarcer in recent years following a reduction of about 50% in the population within western Europe, most likely attributable to habitat loss, with only six since 2000. The most likely sites locally for this species would appear to be along the Hythe Canal or the Botolph's Bridge / Nickolls Quarry area however the most recent Kent record, a 'near-miss' at Dover in 2013 spent the afternoon singing from scrub in a chalk valley!
15. Wallcreeper – with no accepted Kent records this is certainly one of the less likely possibilities but there can be few more suitable habitats than the cliffs between Capel-le-Ferne and Samphire Hoe, and a recent record near Boulogne was really not far away. It's a nice one to dream about!
16. Red-flanked Bluetail – there are only six county records but four of those have occurred since 2008. There has been a marked increase nationally with 127 recorded in Britain to the end of 2013, and its arrival on the east coast is almost expected now in suitable conditions in autumn. This appears to be an incredible statistic to the generations of birdwatchers who grew up with this being an almost mythical rarity!

17. Pied Wheatear – the Folkestone and Hythe area has already produced the only county record of Isabelline Wheatear (at Abbotscliffe in 1996), a Desert Wheatear (at Folkestone Warren in 1998) and a Pied or Black-eared Wheatear that was not identified to species (at Church Hougham in 1992). So whilst Pied Wheatear remains rare in the county, with just three records, it can be viewed as a possible next first for the local area. There have been 70 records nationally to the end of 2013 and Pied has been slightly more frequent than Black-eared in the south-east of the country in the recent years.

18. Red-throated Pipit – whilst there are 14 county records there has been only one accepted occurrence since 1999, which was a spring bird at Bockhill on the 4th May 2006. A call-only bird has already been recorded at Abbotscliffe where good numbers of pipits accumulate, and the cliffs have hosted Olive-backed Pipit as well as several Tawny and Richard's Pipits. The rarer Blyth's (one Kent record) or Pechora (no Kent records) could perhaps one day occur.

19. American Buff-bellied Pipit – there has been a significant increase nationally with 42 records in Britain to the end of 2013, including 10 in 2012. In 2011 Sussex recorded its first, closely followed by two inland birds in Berkshire in 2012, though it has yet to be detected in Kent. It is certainly worth checking the Rock Pipits which favour the undercliff between Copt Point and Samphire Hoe, and its distinctive disyllabic call should reveal its presence.

20. Little Bunting – despite being an increasingly frequent migrant in Britain it remains a rare bird in Kent, with just 10 records including the most recent at Sandwich Bay in April 2013. In contrast to the national pattern of occurrence 40% of county records have been in April (perhaps birds which have wintered in Western Europe moving back north), with the rest coming in autumn. Three have occurred in the Bockhill / St. Margaret's area and the first was trapped "near Dover" in 1907. The cliffs would seem the obvious location but the Botolph's Bridge / Nickolls Quarry area contains plenty of suitable habitat.

The number of county records have been taken from the 2012 Kent Bird Report plus any more recent reports which await publication. The Kent List on the KOS website and The Birds of Kent (1981) were other essential references.

Ringing recoveries in 2014

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.

The highlights in 2014 included four wintering Great Black-backed Gulls which had been ringed overseas. Two of these were of northern origin, one having been ringed as a chick in Norway and one as an adult in Denmark, and the other two were from the south-west, having been ringed as chicks in North-western France. Also of foreign origin was a Finnish-ringed Black-headed Gull, which had wintered as a younger bird in Amsterdam, and a Belgian-born Herring Gull, previously recorded in France and the Netherlands.

Most of the other Herring Gull recoveries involve local movements. The return of AU1T, last seen here as a first-year in 2012, having spent some time in northern France is perhaps worthy of note.

I am grateful to Martin Collins for providing the information on the Black-headed Gull, to the Research Institute for Nature and Forest for details of the Belgian Herring Gull, to Paul Roper of the North Thames Gull Group (www.ntgg.org.uk) for the other Herring Gull details, and to the ringers of the Great Black-backed Gulls: the Lista Ringing Group (www.ringmerking.no/cr), the Gull Research Organisation (<http://gull-research.org>) and Sébastien Provost for their life histories.

Black-headed Gull					<i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>
ST268804	Ringed	21-Jun-2010	Juvenile	Hauho, Finland	
White E8SL	Read in field	13-Oct-2010	1 st -year	Amsterdam	1,538km SW
	Then at the same site on numerous dates to:				
	Read in field	13-Jan-2011	1 st -year	Amsterdam	1,538km SW
	Read in field	08-Oct-2011	2 nd -year	Amsterdam	1,538km SW
	Read in field	23-Oct-2011	2 nd -year	Amsterdam	1,538km SW
	Read in field	01-Feb-2014	Adult	Battery Point, Seabrook	1,821km SW
Herring Gull					<i>Larus argentatus</i>
GR58858	Ringed	03-Nov-2012	2 nd -year	Rainham, Greater London	
Orange XY1T	Read in field	03-Dec-2012	2 nd -year	Boulogne, France	133km SE
	Read in field	09-Jan-2014	3 rd -year	Folkestone Beach	85km SE
GR30993	Ringed	03-Dec-2011	1 st -year	Pitsea, Essex	
Red AU1T	Read in field	14-Jan-2012	1 st -year	Pitsea, Essex	0km
	Read in field	18-Jan-2012	1 st -year	Folkestone Harbour	71km SE
	Read in field	28-Jan-2012	1 st -year	Pitsea, Essex	0km
	Read in field	17-Mar-2012	1 st -year	Folkestone Harbour	71km SE
	Read in field	28-Nov-2012	2 nd -year	Dannes, France	132km SE
	Read in field	30-Jan-2013	2 nd -year	Dannes, France	132km SE
	Read in field	22-Feb-2014	3 rd -year	Boulogne, France	121km SE
	Read in field	25-Mar-2014	3 rd -year	Folkestone Harbour	71km SE
	Read in field	30-Mar-2014	3 rd -year	Folkestone Harbour	71km SE
GR75574	Ringed	05-Oct-2013	1 st -year	Pitsea, Essex	
Red R2HT	Read in field	29-Mar-2014	2 nd -year	Hythe	68km SE
	Read in field	09-Jun-2014	2 nd -year	Dungeness	77km SSE
	Read in field	23-Jun-2014	2 nd -year	Hythe	68km SE

GR92881	Ringed	08-Mar-2014	4 th -year	Pitsea, Essex		
Red D8FT	Read in field	22-Mar-2014	4 th -year	Dungeness	77km	SSE
	Read in field	29-Mar-2014	4 th -year	Hythe	68km	SE
	Read in field	09-May-2014	4 th -year	Hythe	68km	SE
GR75898	Ringed	30-Nov-2013	1 st -year	Rainham, Greater London		
Red V9DT	Read in field	30-Mar-2014	1 st -year	Folkestone Harbour	85km	SE
GN87656	Ringed	25-Sep-2010	2 nd -year	Pitsea, Essex		
Red NP4T	Read in field	26-Feb-2011	2 nd -year	Pitsea, Essex	0km	
	Read in field	24-Nov-2012	3 rd -year	Pitsea, Essex	0km	
	Read in field	26-Apr-2014	4 th -year	Mill Point	71km	SE
GR94562	Ringed	15-Nov-2014	2 nd -year	Pitsea, Essex		
Orange A2JT	Read in field	01-Dec-2014	2 nd -year	Folkestone Harbour	71km	SE
H903322	Ringed	18-Jul-2012	Juvenile	Raversijde, Belgium		
Blue YRAA	Read in field	08-Aug-2012	Juvenile	Raversijde, Belgium	0km	
	Read in field	10-Aug-2012	Juvenile	Oostende, Belgium	7km	SW
	Read in field	31-Oct-2012	1 st -year	Blaringhem, France	67km	SSW
	Read in field	15-Mar-2013	1 st -year	Oss, Netherlands	197km	ENE
	Read in field	22-Mar-2013	1 st -year	Den Haag, Netherlands	140km	NE
	Read in field	29-Mar-2013	1 st -year	Oss, Netherlands	197km	ENE
	Read in field	12-Apr-2013	1 st -year	Oss, Netherlands	197km	ENE
	Read in field	24-May-2013	1 st -year	Blaringhem, France	67km	SSW
	Read in field	07-Jun-2013	1 st -year	Blaringhem, France	67km	SSW
	Read in field	20-Jun-2013	1 st -year	Blaringhem, France	67km	SSW
	Read in field	19-Sep-2013	2 nd -year	Blaringhem, France	67km	SSW
	Then at the same site on several dates to:					
	Read in field	31-Oct-2013	2 nd -year	Blaringhem, France	67km	SSW
	Read in field	13-Nov-2013	2 nd -year	Dannes, France	110km	SW
	Read in field	24-Apr-2014	2 nd -year	Blaringhem, France	67km	SSW
	Read in field	30-Dec-2014	3 rd -year	Hythe, Kent	124km	WSW

Great Black-backed Gull

Larus marinus

Green K43	Ringed	01-Jul-2011	Juvenile	Granville, France		
	Read in field	06-Jan-2014	3 rd -year	Folkestone Harbour	337km	NE
3038725	Ringed	02-Jul-2013	Juvenile	Villangsosen, Norway		
Black JJ079	Read in field	17-Jan-2014	1 st -year	Folkestone Harbour	1,099km	SSW
Black JE186	Ringed	04-May-2011	Adult	Norborg, Denmark		
	Read in field	24-Aug-2011	Adult	Le Portel, France	729km	SW
	Read in field	05-Jan-2012	Adult	Dungeness	745km	SW
	Read in field	25-Jan-2012	Adult	Boulogne, France	728km	SW
	Read in field	05-May-2012	Adult	Norborg, Denmark	0km	
	Read in field	15-Aug-2012	Adult	Dungeness	745km	SW
	Read in field	18-Aug-2012	Adult	Le Portel, France	729km	SW
	Read in field	21-Aug-2012	Adult	Dungeness	745km	SW
	Read in field	25-Aug-2012	Adult	Boulogne, France	728km	SW
	Read in field	25-Mar-2014	Adult	Folkestone Pier	721km	SW

Black K43	Ringed	18-Jun-2012	Juvenile	Le Harve, France	
	Read in field	21-Jan-2013	1 st -year	Le Portel, France	160km NE
	Read in field	09-Aug-2013	2 nd -year	Octeville-sur-Mer, France	6km N
	Read in field	01-Dec-2014	3 rd -year	Folkestone Harbour	190km NNE

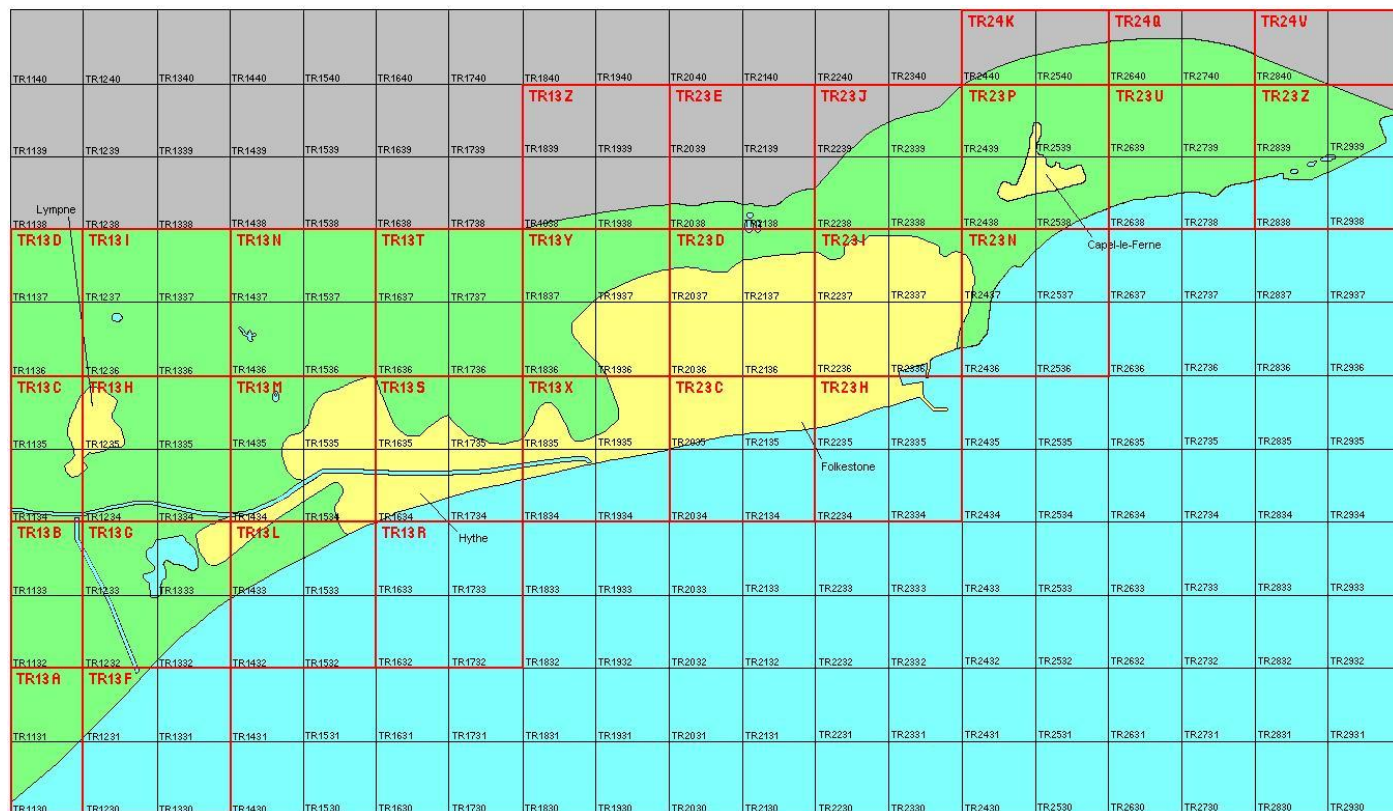


Norwegian-ringed Great Black-backed Gull at Folkestone (Ian Roberts)

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
Asholt Wood, Frogholt	TR13 T
Battery Point, Seabrook	TR13 X
Bluehouse Wood Lane	TR13 N
Botolph's Bridge	TR13 G
Botolph's Bridge Road	TR13 G
Bouverie Road West, Folkestone	TR23 C
Brockhill Country Park	TR13 M
Browning Place, Folkestone	TR23 I
Burmarsh Road, Palmarsh	TR13 G
Capel-le-Ferne	TR23 P
Capel-le-Ferne Café	TR23 P
Capel-le-Ferne Gun Site	TR23 N / TR23 P
Carter's Road, Cheriton	TR23 D
Cheriton	TR13 Y / TR23 D
Chesterfield Wood, Saltwood	TR13 N
Church Hougham	TR23 U / TR24 Q
Church Hougham churchyard	TR23 U
Church Road, Cheriton	TR13 Y
Civic Centre, Folkestone	TR23 H
Copt Point	TR23 N
Cowtye Wood	TR13 N
Crete Road East	TR23 I / TR23 J
Crete Road West	TR23 E
Creteway Down, Folkestone	TR23 J
Donkey Street	TR13 B
East Cliff Gardens, Folkestone	TR23 I
Eaton Lands, Hythe	TR13 S
Fairmead Farm, Westenhanger	TR13 I
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 Pier	TR13 H
Folkestone Racecourse, Westenhanger	TR13 I
Folkestone Sands	TR13 I
Folkestone Warren	TR23 N / TR23 P
Folk's Wood Way, Lympe	TR23 H

Site	Tetrad
Grange Road, Saltwood	TR13 N
Heane Wood, Saltwood	TR13 N
Hillhurst Farm, Westenhanger	TR13 I
Holy Well, Folkestone	TR23 J
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
Joyes Road, Folkestone	TR13 I
Kiln Wood, Pedlinge	TR13 I
Laurel Close, Cheriton	TR23 D
Little Piece, Donkey Street	TR13 B
Lympne	TR13 H
Lympne Castle	TR13 H
Lympne Park Wood	TR13 H
M20 Junction 12	TR13 Y
Mill Point	TR23 C / TR23 H
Newingreen	TR13 I
Nickolls Quarry	TR13 G
Orchard Valley, Hythe	TR13 M
Palmarsh	TR13 G
Paraker Wood, Seabrook	TR13 X
Peene	TR13 Y
Peene Quarry	TR13 Z
Perry Wood	TR13 I
Pond Hill Road, Cheriton	TR13 X / TR13 Y
Postling Wents	TR13 N
Princes Parade, Seabrook	TR13 X
Radnor Park, Folkestone	TR23 I
Risborough Barracks, Cheriton	TR13 Y
Road of Remembrance, Folkestone	TR23 H
Round Down	TR23 Z
Royal Military Canal, Hythe	TR13 M / TR13 S
Saltwood	TR13 M
Samphire Hoe	TR23 Z
Sandling	TR13 N
Sandling Park	TR13 N
Sandling Station	TR13 N
Seabrook	TR13 X
Seabrook Road, Hythe	TR13 S
Shorncliffe Cemetery	TR13 X
St. Eanswythe's Church, Folkestone	TR23 H
Stade Street bridge, Hythe	TR13 S

Site	Tetrad
Stade Street groyne, Hythe	TR13 S
Stonereach Bridge	TR13 G
Stutfall Castle, West Hythe	TR13 C
Turnpike Hill, Hythe	TR13 M
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



Kittiwake at Folkestone Pier in TR13 H (Brian Harper)

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