

## Review of 2010

### January

The year began with a heavy blizzard on the first day and the cold weather did not relent for a fortnight. Icy conditions followed from the 2<sup>nd</sup>, before considerable snowfall on the 5<sup>th</sup> / 6<sup>th</sup> left several inches of lying snow, and temperatures plunged further on the 7<sup>th</sup>. It remained very cold for the following week, with frequent snow showers and more prolonged snowfall on the 13<sup>th</sup>, before it finally turned to rain on the 14<sup>th</sup> and a slow thaw began. Temperatures then returned to normal but patches of snow remained to the month's end, when it briefly turned colder again. Overall it was the coldest January nationally for more than twenty years.

Indisputable highlight of the month was the area's first **Great White Egret** which was found at West Hythe dam on the 10<sup>th</sup> and which, eventually, performed well and remained into February. This closely followed a near-miss in late 2009, when one was seen flying north over Dover Harbour from the direction of Samphire Hoe on Christmas Eve, but at least we did not have to wait much longer for our first record. The bird was associating with good numbers of Grey Herons (up to 12 in the area) and a couple of Little Egrets were also in the vicinity, with others at Nickoll's Quarry (2), Willop Outfall and Samphire Hoe.



Great White Egret at West Hythe (top left and bottom right Brian Harper, top right Charles and Tricia Keen, bottom left Dale Gibson)

The cold snap also provided plenty of interest, as did the following two weeks as a number of birds remained displaced or were seen trying to relocate. Wildfowl are always a feature of such events and the highlights were two **Pale-bellied Brent Geese** near Botolph's Bridge on the 8<sup>th</sup> and a series of **Goosander** records, with a male at Hythe on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 2-3 red-heads in the Botolph's Bridge area between the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup>. Mute Swan numbers were fairly low with a maximum of 23 along Donkey Street and 7 in Hythe, though one east past Samphire Hoe on the 11<sup>th</sup> was of note. A Greylag Goose flew north over Westenhanger on the 3<sup>rd</sup> and around 35 Dark-bellied Brent Geese and 16 Shelduck were logged during January.

There were good numbers of Wigeon including around 120 off Hythe on the 26<sup>th</sup>, 40 along Donkey Street on the 18<sup>th</sup> and 30 in the Botolph's Bridge / Nickoll's Quarry area on the 8<sup>th</sup> - 9<sup>th</sup> and Teal reached peaks of 70 at Sandling on the 4<sup>th</sup> and 60 at Willop Sewage Works on the 1<sup>st</sup>, with smaller numbers elsewhere and several seen at sea. There were numerous Gadwall records, including maxima of 10 at Nickoll's Quarry on the 9<sup>th</sup> and Donkey Street on the 18<sup>th</sup>, and 6 at Sandling on the 4<sup>th</sup>, and over 300 Mallard were logged (including 100 at Hythe on the 2<sup>nd</sup>), whilst 13 Mandarin were at Sandling on the 4<sup>th</sup>.

Nickoll's Quarry produced peaks of 7 Pochard and 30 Tufted Ducks at on the 9<sup>th</sup> and two Red-breasted Mergansers and 4 Eider were on the sea off Seabrook on the 10<sup>th</sup>, with the latter remaining in the Sandgate/Seabrook area until the month's end. 26 Grey Partridges were counted at Abbotscliffe on the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 7 Red-legged Partridges were on Hythe Ranges on the 30<sup>th</sup>.

Numbers of Red-throated Diver were fairly modest, with 25 off Mill Point on the 22<sup>nd</sup>, 25 off Hythe on the 26<sup>th</sup> and 20 off Folkestone the next day being the only double-figure counts, however 230 Great Crested Grebes were off the Willop Outfall on the 5<sup>th</sup>. The peak counts of Gannets were made on the 26<sup>th</sup>, when 30 were seen off Samphire Hoe, with 15 off Hythe. Cormorants continued to use the canal cutting between Botolph's Bridge and West Hythe as a daytime roost, with 18 there on the 12<sup>th</sup>, and 8 flew east past Mill Point on the 28<sup>th</sup>. Single Shags were at Folkestone and Samphire Hoe.

A **Red Kite** flew over West Hythe dam on the 17<sup>th</sup>, Marsh Harriers were at Botolph's Bridge on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and flying east over Kiln Wood on the 4<sup>th</sup>, and a 'ring-tail' **Hen Harrier** was at Nickoll's Quarry on the 2<sup>nd</sup>. Buzzards were seen at four sites and there were 4 Peregrine sightings, possibly relating to the same individual, in the Botolph's Bridge area between the 2<sup>nd</sup> and the 17<sup>th</sup>.

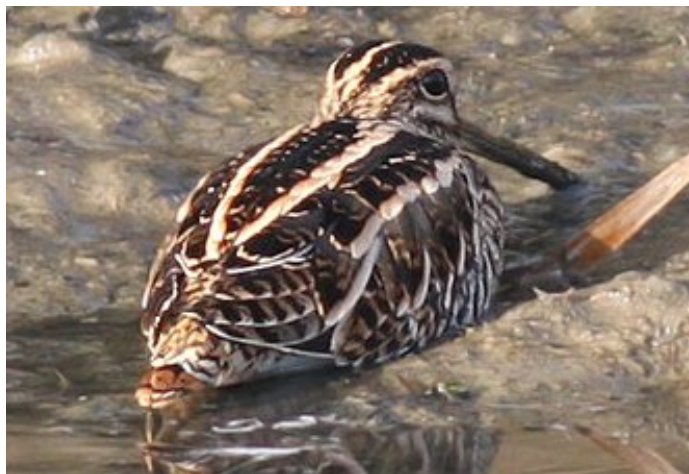
There were Water Rails along the canal at Seabrook (2) and West Hythe (2), with others at Holy Well, Folkestone (2) and Nickoll's Quarry (2-3). Coots increased to a peak of 42 at Nickoll's Quarry on the 9<sup>th</sup>, and ones and twos were at various other sites in the Hythe area, whilst a single at Folkestone Reservoirs on the 25<sup>th</sup> was more unusual.

After 22 were recorded in December 2009 the exceptional influx of Woodcock continued into January with another 36 being logged. Birds began to appear in gardens in Cheriton and Folkestone as they became increasingly desperate for food and one was picked up dead in a car park in Trinity Road on the 12<sup>th</sup>. The peak counts were 7 at Casebourne Wood and 4 at Bargrove Wood, both on the 19<sup>th</sup>. Plenty of Snipe were also recorded, including counts of 80 north-west of the Redoubt on the 6<sup>th</sup> and 20 at Nickoll's Quarry on the 18<sup>th</sup>, and smaller numbers were widely scattered, including several in areas where they are not normally seen. However just a single Jack Snipe was recorded, at Nickoll's Quarry on the 18<sup>th</sup>.

Golden Plovers and Lapwings were present in reasonable numbers in the first week of the month, with peak counts of 100 and 400 respectively at Willop Sewer on the 5<sup>th</sup>, but there were relatively few reported thereafter, and only counts of 12 Golden Plovers and 60 Lapwings at Postling Wents on the 18<sup>th</sup> were notable in the latter half of January. Up to 7 Purple Sandpipers were present in the Hythe area throughout and Dunlin were recorded at the Willop Sewage Works on the 1<sup>st</sup>, Willop Outfall on the 5<sup>th</sup> (4), Hythe fishing beach on the 26<sup>th</sup> (7) and Hythe Ranges on the 30<sup>th</sup>. There was a peak of 9 Redshank at Willop Sewage Works on the 1<sup>st</sup> but just ones and twos were seen elsewhere and 1-2 Green Sandpipers were in the Nickoll's Quarry / Botolph's Bridge area.



Woodcock in a garden in Folkestone (Mick Vandoen)



Snipe at Botolph's Bridge (Brian Harper)



Gadwall at Hythe Canal (Ian Roberts)



Blackcap in a garden in Hythe (Ian Roberts)

There was an increase in auks towards the end of the month, including 25 Guillemots off Mill Point on the 22<sup>nd</sup> and 40 Razorbills off Hythe on the 26<sup>th</sup>. There were only single records of Little Owl (at Nickoll's Quarry on the 18<sup>th</sup>) and Tawny Owl (at West Hythe on the 25<sup>th</sup>) in January. Kingfishers were seen at Botolph's Bridge, Hythe, Sandling and West Hythe.

Flocks of Sky Larks were at Newingreen (90) and Abbotscliffe (60) on the 3<sup>rd</sup> and there was a cold weather movement of 37 west over Hythe on the 7<sup>th</sup>, when 20 Meadow Pipits also flew west there. Other Meadow Pipit counts included 20 at the Willop Sewer on the 5<sup>th</sup> and 40 at Samphire Hoe on the 11<sup>th</sup> and a **Water Pipit** was found among the Rock Pipits at Samphire Hoe on the 17<sup>th</sup>. Grey Wagtails were noted at 10 sites and counts of Pied Wagtails included 15 at Willop Sewer on the 5<sup>th</sup> and 13 at Nickoll's Quarry on the 18<sup>th</sup>. A Stonechat was at Willop Sewer on the 1<sup>st</sup>, 2 were at Nickoll's Quarry on the 18<sup>th</sup> and several were at Samphire Hoe though their numbers appeared to decrease in the cold weather.

Following an influx in December 2009 there were decent numbers of winter thrushes around with totals of approximately 270 Fieldfares and 570 Redwings reported. Double-figure counts of the former were at Newingreen (18), Pedlinge (23), Hythe (20 west on 8<sup>th</sup>), Crete Road East (85) and Folkestone Warren (80 in off the sea on the 31<sup>st</sup>), whilst 50+ counts of the latter were at Hythe (50), Scene Wood (50), Seabrook (100) and Cheriton (50). A Mistle Thrush was at Samphire Hoe on the 11<sup>th</sup> (only the second record for the site, after a cold weather migrant last January) and on the 13<sup>th</sup> there were 20 Blackbirds and 30 Song Thrushes there.



The cold weather produced an excellent tally of 8 Blackcaps, including a pair in a garden in Hythe on the 30<sup>th</sup>, but there were just 2 Chiffchaffs – at Brockhill CP and Willop Sewage Works, both on the 1<sup>st</sup>. Single Cetti's Warblers were at Nickoll's Quarry on the 9<sup>th</sup> and along the canal at Seabrook on the 10<sup>th</sup>. A good total of 8 Firecrests were also recorded and there were Marsh Tits at Frogholt and Postling Wents on the 18<sup>th</sup>.

Two Ravens flew over Botolph's Bridge towards Lympe Castle on the 11<sup>th</sup> and a pair was at Church Hougham on the 20<sup>th</sup>. Only two Siskins were seen and there were no records of Redpoll, but 10 Linnets were at Botolph's Bridge on the 8<sup>th</sup>. There were very good counts of 42 Yellowhammers at Abbotscliffe on the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 15 at Donkey Street on the 18<sup>th</sup>, and single Corn Buntings were at Abbotscliffe and Newingreen on the 3<sup>rd</sup>.

A total of 111 species were recorded.

## February

Following the coldest January nationally for more than twenty years, February was the coldest since 1991. The most significant snowfall of the winter occurred on the 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup>, when some 20cm fell in the Folkestone and Hythe area, causing local disruption. The second half of the month was particularly unsettled and rainfall totals were almost double the normal amount, whilst sunshine totals were below average.

Mute Swan numbers remained low but increased slightly to a peak of 29 along Donkey Street on the 7<sup>th</sup>, and few geese were seen despite the cold weather: 2 Greylag Geese flew west over Hythe Roughs on the 4<sup>th</sup>, 3 Canada Geese were near Botolph's Bridge on the 21<sup>st</sup> and Brent Geese flew east past Hythe on the 4<sup>th</sup> (1) and 12<sup>th</sup> (2). Fewer ducks were seen than in January, though 2 Wigeon, 6 Gadwall, 6 Pochard, 7 Teal and 18 Tufted Ducks were at Nickoll's Quarry on the 1<sup>st</sup> and the Botolph's Bridge area held 2 Wigeon, 2 Teal, 3 Pochard and 4 Tufted Ducks on the 14<sup>th</sup>/15<sup>th</sup>, with 2 'red-head' **Smew** and an amazing flock of 12 **Goosanders** there on the 20<sup>th</sup>. Elsewhere a female Tufted Duck arrived at Samphire Hoe on the 3<sup>rd</sup> and remained all month – an unusual record for the site. The 4 Eider seen in January remained off Hythe until the 1<sup>st</sup>, whilst 5 Common Scoter were seen there on 8<sup>th</sup>, and four Red-breasted Mergansers were off Copt Point on the 14<sup>th</sup>.



Smew at Botolph's Bridge (Brian Harper)



Goosanders at Botolph's Bridge (Brian Harper)

35 Red-throated Divers and 50 Great Crested Grebes were off Hythe on the 8<sup>th</sup>, when a Fulmar and 18 Gannets flew east, and 3 Fulmars flew east past Mill Point on the 23<sup>rd</sup>, whilst others were back at breeding sites on the cliffs. A flock of 11 Cormorants flew east past Hythe on the 12<sup>th</sup> and a Shag was at Copt Point on the 1<sup>st</sup>. The **Great White Egret** and 2 Little Egrets remained in the West Hythe area throughout.

A Marsh Harrier was seen in the Donkey Street / Nickoll's Quarry area on the 15<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> and Buzzards were noted at 3 sites. Water Rails were reported from the canal at Seabrook and Samphire Hoe and there was a peak count of 44 Coot at Nickoll's Quarry on the 1<sup>st</sup>.

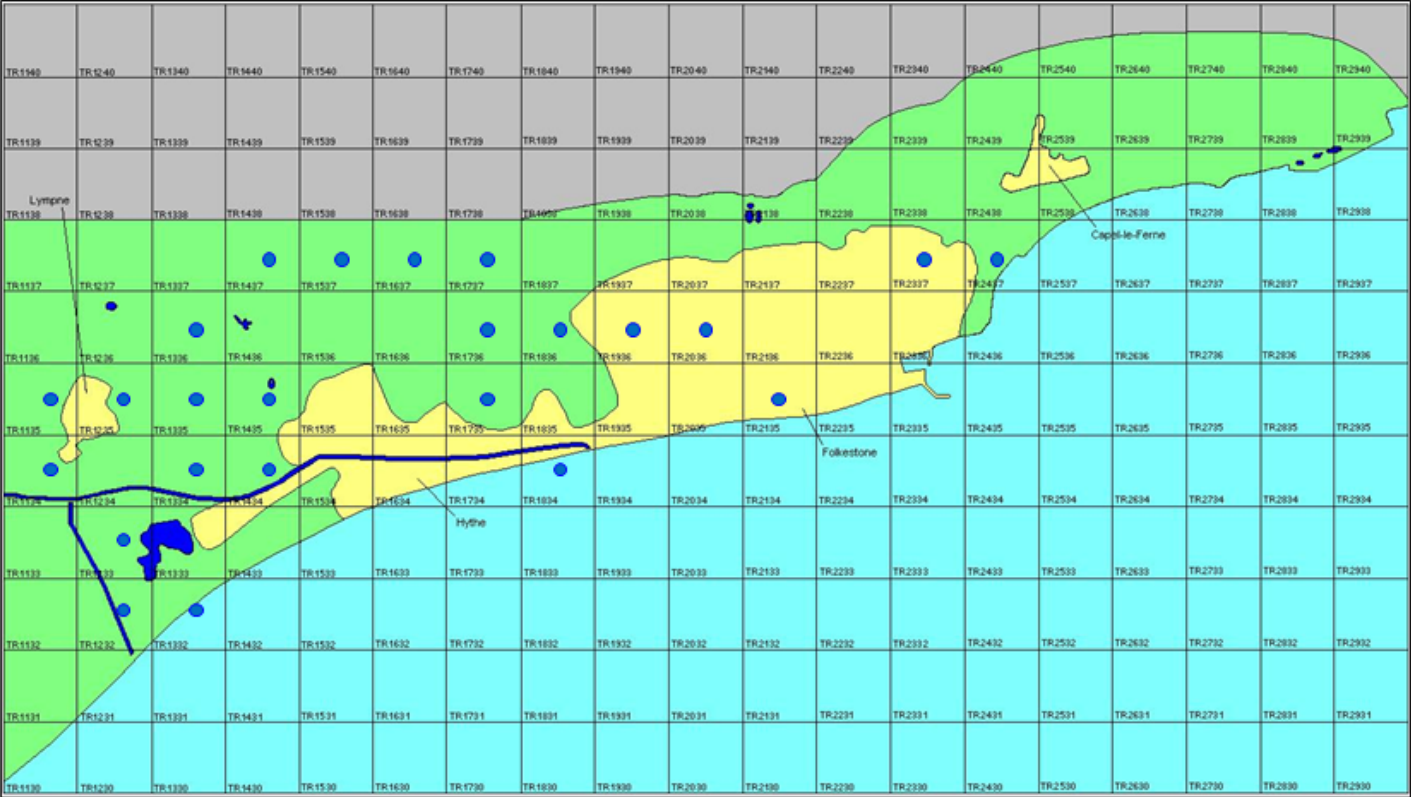
The influx of Woodcock fizzled out early in the month, but one along Old London Road on the 1<sup>st</sup>, 3 in the Summerhouse Hill area on the 7<sup>th</sup> and 3 in Kiln Wood on the 9<sup>th</sup> brought the total for the winter to an incredible 64 birds. A map of distribution of records for winter 2009/10 is shown below.

Snipe numbers also returned to normal, though 8 in the Lympe / Pedlinge area on the 1<sup>st</sup> were clearly left over from the January influx, and the peak count for the rest of the month was 7 at Nickoll's Quarry on the 15<sup>th</sup>.



Marsh Harrier at Nickoll's Quarry (Brian Harper)

**Distribution of Woodcock in winter 2009/10**



The blue dots show the 1km squares in which the species was recorded between November 2009 and February 2010.

Up to 11 Purple Sandpipers remained at Hythe throughout, favouring the rock groynes off Stade Street and the Hotel Imperial, and 5 Oystercatchers and 10 Turnstones were also counted there.

Lapwing and Golden Plover numbers stayed low and there was just one report of the latter in February: 2 at Donkey Street on the 7<sup>th</sup>. A Knot seen in Folkestone Warren on the 6<sup>th</sup> and 5 at the Hythe Redoubt the next day were notable as winter records are unusual. A Green Sandpiper remained at Botolph's Bridge all month, with 2 there on the 20<sup>th</sup>.

Single Kittiwakes were noted off Hythe on the 8<sup>th</sup> and Mill Point on the 23<sup>rd</sup>, and 20 Razorbills flew west past the former site on the 8<sup>th</sup>.



Knot at Folkestone Warren (Dave Featherbe)



Mediterranean Gulls in the snow at Copt Point (Dave Featherbe)

A **Barn Owl** was watched hunting in the Nickoll's Quarry / Botolph's Bridge area on 3 dates from the 20<sup>th</sup> and Little Owls were seen at Samphire Hoe and West Hythe (2). There were single Kingfishers at West Hythe on the 1<sup>st</sup> and Botolph's Bridge on the 21<sup>st</sup>.

The **Water Pipit** was again at Samphire Hoe on the 13<sup>th</sup>, along with 4 Rock and 43 Meadow Pipits, but only one Grey Wagtail was reported, at Brockhill CP on the 7<sup>th</sup>.

Three **Waxwings** in the Cheriton / Sandgate area on the 14<sup>th</sup> were part of a small influx into the county at this time.



Barn Owl at Nickoll's Quarry (Brian Harper)

Stonechats appeared to have suffered in the cold weather, with just 2 at Samphire Hoe on the 3<sup>rd</sup> and one further single there on the 13<sup>th</sup>. Winter thrushes, however, were still present in good numbers, with totals of approximately 135 Redwings and 380 Fieldfares logged, including counts of 40 of the former moving over Hythe in blizzard conditions on the 11<sup>th</sup>, and 55 of the latter in the Summerhouse Hill on the 7<sup>th</sup>, with 60 at Pedlinge on the 1<sup>st</sup> and 230 on Donkey Street on the 7<sup>th</sup>. A count of 16 Song Thrushes at Samphire Hoe on the 16<sup>th</sup> was noteworthy.

Four Blackcaps remained into February: a pair in Hythe, a male in Seabrook and a male in Folkestone, and there were Firecrests at Brockhill CP on the 7<sup>th</sup> and Cheriton on the 12<sup>th</sup>. There was only one record of Siskins (6 along the canal at Hythe Roughs on the 4<sup>th</sup>) but flocks of 40 Linnets were seen in the Lympe / Pedlinge area and at Fisherman's Beach, Hythe.

A total of 102 species were recorded.

## March

March continued the theme, with a cold first fortnight, though it was generally dry and fine. The **Great White Egret** remained in the West Hythe area until at least the 22<sup>nd</sup> though it continued to wander widely and a Little Egret was near Westenhanger on the 8<sup>th</sup>. There were some early hints of spring, with 3 Brent Geese and 4 Shelduck flying east past Samphire Hoe on the 2<sup>nd</sup>, and 40 Brent Geese east there the next day, but these proved to be a false dawn as the first twelve days of the month were all about wintering birds. The Tufted Duck was still at Samphire Hoe (until the 24<sup>th</sup>), where there was also a Water Rail, and 2 Wigeon were at the Willop Outfall on the 6<sup>th</sup>. A Marsh Harrier at Nickoll's Quarry on the 3<sup>rd</sup> appeared to be the bird seen there in February.

Purple Sandpipers remained at Hythe throughout and a Green Sandpiper was again at Botolph's Bridge. Four Curlew, 4 Oystercatchers and 6 Dunlin were at the Willop Outfall on the 6<sup>th</sup>, a Ringed Plover was at Hythe Ranges on the 7<sup>th</sup> and 25 Golden Plovers were at Westenhanger on the 10<sup>th</sup> (the largest count since early January). 180 Mediterranean Gulls were counted at Copt Point.

Two Kingfishers were at West Hythe and 60 Sky Larks remained in stubble at Abbotscliffe. The Rock Pipits at Samphire Hoe included a Scandinavian (*littoralis*) bird on the 3<sup>rd</sup>. A Black Redstart appeared in a garden in Hythe on the 6<sup>th</sup> and remained until mid-month and another was seen in Cheriton on the 7<sup>th</sup>, when 40 Fieldfares were at Paraker Wood. At least 5 wintering Blackcaps remained into March and Firecrests were at West Hythe and Paraker Wood on the 7<sup>th</sup>, and Brockhill CP on the 10<sup>th</sup>. A Raven was at Abbotscliffe on the 7<sup>th</sup> and 9 Siskins flew east there, whilst 25 Linnets and 40 Yellowhammers were in stubble at Abbotscliffe on the 2<sup>nd</sup>.



Wintering Black Redstart and Blackcap at Hythe (Ian Roberts)



The weather became more changeable from the 13<sup>th</sup>, with rain at times, but migrants began to arrive. Two **Red Kites** and 2 Buzzards flew over Folkestone, a Woodcock was at Capel-le-Ferne and 30 Siskins flew east at Samphire Hoe. At Nickoll's Quarry a Cetti's Warbler, 8 Tufted Ducks and 14 Snipe were noted. A female **Garganey** and a Firecrest were at Castle Hill Reservoir the next day, and another Firecrest was at Abbotscliffe on the 16<sup>th</sup>. The 17<sup>th</sup> produced a Black Redstart and a Chiffchaff at Samphire Hoe, and 3 Brent Geese flew east, whilst the first 2 Wheatears arrived there on the 19<sup>th</sup>. Another Wheatear was at Abbotscliffe the next day and 2 Water Rails, 2 Blackcaps and 4 Chiffchaffs were along the canal at Seabrook, where a Peregrine flew over. Several migrants Redwings and Fieldfares were noted at coastal sites.



Fieldfare at Folkestone (Ian Roberts)

The **Water Pipit** was seen again at Samphire Hoe on the 21<sup>st</sup>, when 2 Black Redstarts, 2 Firecrests, 3 Wheatears and 3 Chiffchaffs were also present, and 3 Grey Wagtails and 90 Brent Geese flew east. A Buzzard flew north over Folkestone and 3 arrived in off the sea at Abbotscliffe, where another Chiffchaff was noted. Chiffchaffs were also at Copt Point and Brockhill CP, with the latter site also hosting a Firecrest and 3 Lesser Redpolls. 25 Siskins and 270 Chaffinches flew east at the cliffs and a White Wagtail along the canal at Hythe in the evening completed a busy day.

The last ten days of the month saw the first two Swallows at Samphire Hoe on the 24<sup>th</sup>, the first Ring Ouzel there on the 28<sup>th</sup> and the first Sandwich Tern at Hythe the same day, whilst Wheatears, Black Redstarts, Blackcaps, Chiffchaffs and Firecrests continued to arrive. Despite arrival on the land it remained quiet at sea, with just 3 Shelduck and 15 Brent Geese east past Samphire Hoe on the 23<sup>rd</sup>, and 6 Brent Geese there the next day. A Teal was an unusual record for Samphire Hoe on 23<sup>rd</sup>-24<sup>th</sup>, whilst a Raven was seen there on the 28<sup>th</sup> and 2 Little Grebes were present on the 29<sup>th</sup>. A Buzzard flew over Hythe on the 28<sup>th</sup> and a Brambling was with 40 Chaffinches at Church Hougham on the 30<sup>th</sup>.

## April

April began with unsettled weather conditions and migrants continuing to trickle in. A Black Redstart was in a garden in Folkestone on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3 Swallows were west of Hythe the next day, whilst small numbers of Blackcaps and Chiffchaffs were at various sites. On the evening of the 4<sup>th</sup> a superb **Alpine Swift** was found in The Durlocks area of Folkestone, where it roosted on one of the buildings for four nights before departing to the west on the morning of the 8<sup>th</sup>. Two Wheatears and 2 Black Redstarts were at Samphire Hoe on the 6<sup>th</sup>, when another Black Redstart was at Capel-le-Ferne Gun Site. The first Whitethroat of the year was at Hythe on the 7<sup>th</sup> and the first Yellow Wagtail flew in off the sea at Folkestone the same day, whilst a Ring Ouzel, a Wheatear, a Black Redstart, 3 Swallows, 3 Corn Buntings and 30 Yellowhammers were at Abbotscliffe. Ten Sandwich Terns and 20 Common Scoters passed Folkestone on the 6<sup>th</sup> and a Brent Goose and 20 Sandwich Terns flew east there the following day.

A **Wryneck** was reported at Radnor Park, Folkestone on the 9<sup>th</sup>, when another Whitethroat was at Capel-le-Ferne Gun Site. An **Osprey** flew west over Folkestone on the morning of the 10<sup>th</sup> and the first Sedge Warbler, a Jack Snipe, a Green Sandpiper and a Whitethroat were at Nickoll's Quarry, whilst another 2 Green Sandpipers were at Botolph's Bridge. Blackcaps, Chiffchaffs and a few more Swallows continued to arrive. A Ring Ouzel was at Samphire Hoe on the 11<sup>th</sup>, and a Little Egret was at Westenhanger, but a cold north-easterly airflow slowed arrival thereafter. Two Shags were noted at Samphire Hoe on the 13<sup>th</sup> and an early Lesser Whitethroat struggled through to Abbotscliffe on the 14<sup>th</sup>.





Alpine Swift at Folkestone (Brian Harper *bottom left*, Ian Roberts *others*)



The wind eased on the 18<sup>th</sup> and there was a small rush of migrants including a Ring Ouzel and 2 **Red Kites** at Abbotscliffe, the first Common Redstart in Folkestone Warren, 3 Ring Ouzels at Samphire Hoe and the first Cuckoo at Nickoll's Quarry. A total of 10 Lesser Whitethroats across the area was a good total for so early in the month, and 4 Willow Warblers were also logged. At sea 8 Whimbrel and 63 Brent Geese flew east past Samphire Hoe and 11 Mute Swans flew west, whilst the next day produced a Great Skua, 4 Dunlin, 5 Whimbrel, 6 Oystercatchers, 12 Sandwich Terns and 25 Common Scoter flying east past Mill Point.

The 20<sup>th</sup> witnessed another reasonable arrival, with a Common Redstart, a Lesser Whitethroat, 2 House Martins, 2 Swallows, 3 Chiffchaffs, 3 Blackcaps, 4 Black Redstarts, 4 Whitethroats, 5 Wheatears and 8 Willow Warblers at Samphire Hoe, and singles of Common Redstart, Lesser Whitethroat, Willow Warbler, Wheatear, Whitethroat and Swallow at Church Hougham, whilst and a Sand Martin and 2 Swallows flew in off the sea at Capel-le-Ferne Café. The first 2 Reed Warblers were along the canal at Seabrook on the 22<sup>nd</sup> and 2 Swifts over Folkestone were also new for the year. Four Wheatears were on the Hythe Imperial Golf Course and on the 23<sup>rd</sup> 4 Mandarins were seen at Brockhill CP.

A Short-eared Owl was at Samphire Hoe on the 24<sup>th</sup> and there was a scattering of common migrants across the area, including the first double-figure total of Swallows. At sea 4 Common Terns, 14 Sandwich Terns and a flock of 23 Little Terns flew east past Mill Point and 9 Whimbrel flew east over Hythe in the evening.

The first Turtle Dove was at West Hythe the next day and a Greylag Goose, 3 Arctic Skuas, 35 Common Scoters, 47 Brent Geese, 162 Sandwich Terns and 200 'commic' Terns flew east past Folkestone Beach. The first two Hobbies were seen over Folkestone on the 26<sup>th</sup> and a Yellow Wagtail and a Corn Bunting were at Church Hougham the next day.



Mandarin at Brockhill CP (Ian Roberts)

On the 28<sup>th</sup> a fine **Red-rumped Swallow** lingered for an hour over Samphire Hoe and 2 Wheatears were also present, whilst 2 Yellow Wagtails flew in off the sea there and another was at Church Hougham. A Raven, a Sand Martin, a Wheatear, a Lesser Whitethroat, 7 Whitethroats and 8 House Martins were at Samphire Hoe on the 29<sup>th</sup> and a Willow Warbler, 2 Lesser Whitethroats and 8 Whitethroats were at Abbotscliffe. A Buzzard was flew north over Broadmead Village, Folkestone on the 30<sup>th</sup> and Swifts continued to arrive.

At least 4 singing Cetti's Warblers were recorded in April which was encouraging following the prolonged cold spell this winter, and there were 4 male Stonechats at Samphire Hoe and at least one at Abbotscliffe. Up to 8 Purple Sandpipers remained at Hythe throughout.

A total of 108 species were recorded.

## May

The first half of the month was generally cool, with a north-easterly or northerly airflow. An **Osprey** flew north-west over Folkestone on the 1<sup>st</sup> and 15 Swifts were also noted there, whilst nearby singles of Garden Warbler, Reed Warbler (an out of habitat migrant) and Lesser Whitethroat were seen at Cheriton. A Cetti's Warbler, a Lesser Whitethroat and 2 Cuckoos were at Botolph's Bridge and a Cetti's Warbler was at West Hythe. After a day of heavy rain on the 2<sup>nd</sup> another **Osprey** was seen arriving over Folkestone in the evening and 8 Purple Sandpipers were still at Hythe (but none were reported after the 3<sup>rd</sup>).

A rather quiet period followed, though 3 Black Redstarts were at Samphire Hoe on the 3<sup>rd</sup>, two Wheatears and a Cuckoo were at Church Hougham on the 5<sup>th</sup>, 15 Swallows flew in off the sea at Capel-le-Ferne Gun Site on the 6<sup>th</sup> and a Common Sandpiper was at West Hythe on the 7<sup>th</sup>. The 8<sup>th</sup> saw the only appreciable passage at sea in May, when 5 Mediterranean Gulls, 6 Little Terns, 10 Sanderlings, 37 Bar-tailed Godwits, 80 Common Terns and 100 Whimbrel flew east past Mill Point. Two Wheatears were also seen there and 3 were at Hythe.

A Common Sandpiper, 2 Hobbies, 2 Cuckoos, 4 Snipe, 4 Sedge Warblers, 9 Tufted Ducks, 5 Sand Martins, 10 Swifts, 50 House Martins and 150 Swallows were at Nickoll's Quarry on the 9<sup>th</sup> and another Hobby was Botolph's Bridge. A Chiffchaff, a Lesser Whitethroat and 2 Black Redstarts were at Samphire Hoe, and 6 Shelducks flew east there, whilst a Wheatear was at Abbotscliffe. The next day produced another Common Sandpiper at Botolph's Bridge, a Garden Warbler at Cowtye Wood and a Bar-tailed Godwit, a Yellow Wagtail and a Cuckoo in fields inland of Hythe Redoubt.





Cuckoo at Botolph's Bridge (Brian Harper)



Nuthatch at Brockhill CP (Brian Harper)

Another lull followed but this came to a dramatic end on the 15<sup>th</sup> with the discovery of a **Dark-eyed Junco** in a private garden in Folkestone but, despite a three day stay, the first Nearctic passerine for the area was only seen by the residents.



Dark-eyed Junco at Folkestone (Susan Dixon)



Temperatures rose during the second half of the month (with the 21<sup>st</sup>-24<sup>th</sup> being particularly warm) and a few more arrivals were noted. A Spotted Flycatcher was at West Hythe on the 15<sup>th</sup>, where a Cetti's Warbler, a Wheatear and a Yellow Wagtail were also seen, whilst a Corn Bunting and 4 Yellow Wagtails were at the Willop sewage works. Another Spotted Flycatcher was at Capel-le-Ferne Gun Site the next day and a **Honey Buzzard** and a Hobby flew north over Hythe, with a Cetti's Warbler at Nickoll's Quarry and 2 Wheatears at Abbotscliffe.

A small influx of **Red Kites** was noted from the 17<sup>th</sup>, when one flew north over Folkestone, with one flying north over Lympne and two flying east over Saltwood Castle on the 22<sup>nd</sup>, and another flying east over Cheriton on the 23<sup>rd</sup>. A Hobby was seen over Crete Road East on the 18<sup>th</sup> and 6 were seen from Summerhouse Hill on the 23<sup>rd</sup>, as were 5 Buzzards. A Cetti's Warbler, a Turtle Dove and 2 Cuckoos were at West Hythe on the 25<sup>th</sup>, a Corn Bunting was at Abbotscliffe on the 27<sup>th</sup> and another Hobby was at Capel-le-Ferne Café on the 28<sup>th</sup>.

Overall May was the driest across the UK for over a decade, but mean temperatures and sunshine totals were close to the seasonal average. A total of 106 species were recorded.

## June

High pressure dominated much of June, producing plenty of dry and sunny weather, and this was particularly the case during the second half of the month when temperatures rose significantly, peaking at close to 30 Celsius on the 27<sup>th</sup>. The mean temperature was above the seasonal average, it was the third sunniest June in the last 80 years and rainfall was well below average.

The weather was perfect for late spring overshooting migrants and they arrived on the 8<sup>th</sup> in the form of two glorious **Bee-eaters**, which flew west over Samphire Hoe, having possibly been seen the day before at Copt Point. Otherwise the first half of the month was rather quiet though it was also enlivened by a visit to Capel-le-Ferne on the 13<sup>th</sup> from the two adult and two juvenile Ravens that had bred at Langdon, just east of Dover.

A report on the breeding season will feature in the July summary but highlights from June included around six pairs of Fulmars at Capel-le-Ferne, a successful pair of Mandarin's at Folk's Wood, a pair of Peregrines at Samphire Hoe, up to four pairs of Lapwings attempting to nest at the Willop Outfall, a Turtle Dove in suitable habitat at Nickoll's Quarry and at least one pair of Black Redstarts at Samphire Hoe.

There was some evidence of continuing arrivals, including a Cuckoo which wandered into a Hythe garden on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and out-of-habitat Reed Warblers near Newington on the 17<sup>th</sup> and Hockley Sole (Capel-le-Ferne) on the 20<sup>th</sup>. Groups of 150 Swifts at Capel-le-Ferne on the 12<sup>th</sup> and 80 at Samphire Hoe on the 20<sup>th</sup> were most likely to be feeding flocks, whilst a Hobby at Abbotscliffe on the 15<sup>th</sup> could have been a migrant or a local breeder.



Turtle Dove at Botolph's Bridge (Brian Harper)

Later in the month there were early signs of return passage, with 50 Lapwings flying north over the Willop Outfall on the 19<sup>th</sup>, a Knot at Samphire Hoe on the 20<sup>th</sup> and two Siskins flying east along the Hougham Valley on the 29<sup>th</sup>. A Shag at Samphire Hoe on the 22<sup>nd</sup> and a Buzzard over Folkestone on the 25<sup>th</sup> were also of note, whilst 3 Helmeted Guineafowl loose at Pedlinge on the 13<sup>th</sup> made for an unusual sight!

## July

July started as the previous month had ended with warm, dry weather and temperatures approached 30 Celsius in the second week. There was a gradual change from mid-month as the largely settled, static weather patterns of spring and early summer were replaced by a more changeable Atlantic type, and this airstream was still relatively warm but often more cloudy, and there were a couple of days of quite blustery winds and, at last, even some rain.

2010 saw the third year of the BTO breeding atlas survey and to date 89 species have had a breeding status of at least 'possible' recorded locally. The 20 most widespread species are shown in the table below. The percentage indicates the proportion of the 86 one kilometer squares where a breeding status of at least 'possible' was recorded.

Rank	Species	%
1=	Wren	98.8%
1=	Blackbird	98.8%
3=	Wood Pigeon	97.7%
3=	Carrion Crow	97.7%
5=	Dunnock	96.5%
5=	Magpie	96.5%
7	Robin	95.3%
8	Chaffinch	94.2%
9	Blue Tit	93.0%
10	Great Tit	90.7%
11	Greenfinch	89.5%
12	Blackcap	84.9%
13	Song Thrush	81.4%
14=	Whitethroat	79.1%
14=	Starling	79.1%
16	Collared Dove	77.9%
17	Chiffchaff	76.7%
18	Green Woodpecker	75.6%
19	Goldfinch	69.8%
20	Jackdaw	68.6%

It is easier to confirm breeding for some species than for others and Blackbird was confirmed in 49% of squares whereas Wren was only confirmed in 20%.

Some very widespread species, such as Wood Pigeon, Carrion Crow, Greenfinch, Collared Dove, Chiffchaff and Goldfinch had comparatively low rates of confirmed breeding.

The final recording year of 2011 will focus on increasing the levels of confirmed breeding and any help would be gratefully received. The fieldwork will inform local distribution maps which will be published in due course.

The fifteen or so squares with the largest diversity of species with a breeding status of at least 'possible' are shown below.

Rank	Grid ref	Location	Species
1	TR1233	Botolph's Bridge / Nickoll's Quarry (North)	56
2	TR1234	West Hythe / Lympe Park Wood	49
3=	TR1232	Nickoll's Quarry (West) / Redoubt	45
3=	TR1334	Hythe Roughs (West)	45
3=	TR1434	Hythe Roughs (East)	45
6=	TR1134	West Hythe Dam	41
6=	TR1235	Lympe	41
6=	TR1736	Bargrove Wood / Dibgate	41
9	TR1635	Saltwood Castle	40
10=	TR1130	Willow Outfall	39
10=	TR1435	Brockhill CP	39
10=	TR1837	Newington / Peene	39
13=	TR1131	Willow Sewer (South) / Sewage Works	38
13=	TR1333	Nickoll's Quarry (East)	38
13=	TR1535	Saltwood	38
13=	TR1537	Bluehouse and Cowtye Woods	38

The only sign of return passage in the first ten days of the month was a Siskin flying east over Bluehouse Wood (Postling) on the 5<sup>th</sup>, but things began to gather pace from the 11<sup>th</sup>, when a migrant Cuckoo was at Abbotscliffe. A flock of 30 Sand Martins were seen flying west from a boat c.10 miles off Folkestone on the 12<sup>th</sup>, 8 Sand Martins, 9 Crossbills and 20 Swifts flew west along the Hougham Valley on the 18<sup>th</sup>, and 2 Sand Martins flew west over Saltwood Castle on the 19<sup>th</sup>, with another 8 going west at Samphire Hoe the same day.

Two Common Sandpipers were at Samphire Hoe on the 21<sup>st</sup>, when 30 Common Scoters were noted offshore. A **Wood Warbler** and 5 Willow Warblers were at Abbotscliffe on the 27<sup>th</sup>, and 2 Cuckoos, 6 Willow Warblers and 13 Whitethroats were seen there the next day, with a Sedge Warbler present on the 29<sup>th</sup>.



Fulmar off Folkestone (David Featherbe)

## August

The settled weather that had characterised June and July had already begun to break down in late July, and August was a much cooler, cloudier and wetter month. There several days of particularly heavy rainfall in Kent which resulted in some localised flooding in the county. The end of the month was fine but felt very autumnal in a brisk northerly wind. Overall it was the coolest August nationally since 1993 and rainfall was well above normal.

The month began with 2 Sedge Warblers, 3 Lesser Whitethroats, 4 Whitethroats and 7 Willow Warblers at Abbotscliffe on the 1<sup>st</sup> and a Cuckoo, 2 Wheatears, 2 Lesser Whitethroats and 7 Whitethroats were seen there on the 4<sup>th</sup>. A Grasshopper Warbler was at Abbotscliffe on the 11<sup>th</sup>, when a Cuckoo, a Wheatear, 3 Lesser Whitethroats, 6 Willow Warblers, 6 Yellowhammers and 16 Whitethroats were also noted.

A Whinchat, 2 Willow Warblers, 2 Whitethroats, 3 Black Redstarts, 8 Common Sandpipers and 13 Wheatears were at Samphire Hoe on the 15<sup>th</sup> and a Little Egret, a Chiffchaff, 2 Whinchats, 2 Willow Warblers and 3 Wheatears were seen there on the 17<sup>th</sup>, whilst 3 Arctic Skuas and 40 Gannets were noted offshore. The 17<sup>th</sup> also produced a Tree Pipit, a Blackcap, 3 Lesser Whitethroats, 4 Whitethroats and 6 Willow Warblers at Abbotscliffe, whilst a Wheatear and 3 Whinchats were at Samphire Hoe the next day.

A Lesser Whitethroat, 2 Wheatears, 2 Willow Warblers, 3 Whitethroats were at Abbotscliffe on the 19<sup>th</sup> and 2 Sand Martins and 3 Yellow Wagtails flew west there. On the 21<sup>st</sup> two Teal, 2 Kittiwakes and 5 Gannets flew west past Copt Point and 20 Common and 30 Sandwich Terns were seen offshore. A flock of 15 Swifts flew west past Capel-le-Ferne Café on the 23<sup>rd</sup>.

The 24<sup>th</sup> saw a Lesser Whitethroat, 2 Common Sandpipers, 3 Wheatears and 3 Willow Warblers at Samphire Hoe and a Whimbrel, a Willow Warbler, 5 Whitethroats and 6 Wheatears were present the next day. The 25<sup>th</sup> also produced a Whinchat and 6 Whitethroats at Abbotscliffe and a Great Skua, 2 Oystercatchers, 5 Gannets, 11 Cormorants and 42 Mediterranean Gulls at Copt Point.



A cool north-westerly breeze brought the best arrival of the month on the 28<sup>th</sup>, when a Grasshopper Warbler, a Redstart, a Swift, a Hobby, a Blackcap, a Lesser Whitethroat, a Spotted Flycatcher, 2 Pied Flycatchers, 10 Wheatears, 10 Willow Warblers, 15 Whinchats and 18 Whitethroats were at Abbotscliffe and a Pied Flycatcher, a Reed Warbler, a Sedge Warbler, a Common Sandpiper, 2 Redstarts, 2 Lesser Whitethroats, 3 Blackcaps, 3 Oystercatchers, 4 Whinchats, 8 Wheatears and 10 Whitethroats were at Samphire Hoe.



Willow Warbler at Botolph's Bridge  
(Brian Harper)



Whinchat at Samphire Hoe  
(Phil Smith)



Pied Flycatcher at Samphire Hoe  
(Paul Holt)

A **Spotted Redshank** at Samphire Hoe on the 30<sup>th</sup> was a new bird for the site and a Willow Warbler, 2 Swifts, 2 Black Redstarts, 3 Whitethroats, 4 Wheatears, 6 Robins and 150 House Martins were also noted. August ended with a Pied Flycatcher, a Little Egret, a Blackcap, a Chiffchaff, 2 Redstarts, 3 Whinchats, 4 Black Redstarts, 12 Wheatears and 38 Mediterranean Gulls at Samphire Hoe on the 31<sup>st</sup>.

## September

The first week of September was dry and mild with the wind generally from the easterly quarter. A Marsh Harrier, a Whinchat, 2 Ravens, 3 Wheatears, 3 Whitethroats and 6 Black Redstarts were at Samphire Hoe on the 1<sup>st</sup> when a Redstart, a Whinchat, a Lesser Whitethroat, a Chiffchaff and 2 Whitethroats were at Abbotscliffe. A Greenshank flew west at Samphire Hoe the next day and 2 Whinchats, 2 Wheatears, 2 Blackcaps and 3 Whitethroats were also noted. At Abbotscliffe there were a Spotted Flycatcher, a Reed Warbler, a Song Thrush, 2 Chiffchaffs, 3 Whinchats and 4 Whitethroats, and a Redstart was at Crete Road East.

An **Osprey** flew south over the Golden Valley (Cheriton) on the 3<sup>rd</sup>, a Whinchat, 2 Wheatears and 3 Whitethroats were at Abbotscliffe and a Whinchat, a Whitethroat and a Willow Warbler were at Samphire Hoe. Another probable **Osprey** flew east at Abbotscliffe the following day and a Tree Pipit, a Reed Warbler, a Great Spotted Woodpecker, a Jay, 2 Buzzards, 2 Grey Wagtails, 2 Lesser Whitethroats, 3 Willow Warblers and 6 Whitethroats were seen. A Redstart, a Whinchat and 8 Chiffchaffs were at Crete Hill, 4 Whinchats were along Donkey Street, 2 Wheatears were along Princes Parade (Hythe), and a Cetti's Warbler, a Yellow Wagtail and a Lesser Whitethroat were along Botolph's Bridge Road.

Yet another **Osprey** flew out to sea over Abbotscliffe on the 5<sup>th</sup> but the highlight of the day was a **Wryneck** at Samphire Hoe, where a Chiffchaff, 2 Ravens, 2 Wheatears, 2 Whitethroats and 4 Whinchats were logged, and a Whinchat was seen along Lower Wall Road.

The 6<sup>th</sup> produced a Blackcap, 2 Whinchats, 2 Wheatears, 3 Whitethroats, 3 Chiffchaffs, 4 Black Redstarts and 7 Robins at Samphire Hoe, and on the 7<sup>th</sup> a Water Rail, a Chiffchaff, 2 Whinchats and 8 Wheatears were grounded there, whilst a Buzzard and 6 Sand Martins flew west. A Willow Warbler, a Chiffchaff, 2 Lesser Whitethroats, 3 Whinchats and 4 Whitethroats were at Abbotscliffe. The next day a Redstart, a Spotted Flycatcher, a Lesser Whitethroat, 2 Whitethroats, 2 Willow Warblers, 6 Blackcaps, 11 Wheatears and 20 Chiffchaffs were at Samphire Hoe and a Hobby, a Whinchat and 2 Whitethroats were at Abbotscliffe. A Swift, a Yellow Wagtail, 12 Sand Martins and 200 Swallows flew east at the cliffs and 55 Linnets flew west. A Whinchat and a Wheatear were on Folkestone Pier and a Grey Wagtail and 3 Chiffchaffs were at Seabrook.

A few days of showers and south-westerlies ensued and movement slowed a little. However a Wheatear, 2 Lesser Whitethroats and 3 Chiffchaffs were at Abbotscliffe on the 9<sup>th</sup>, when a Tree Pipit and 2 Grey Wagtails flew over, and a Wheatear, a Whitethroat, 3 Willow Warblers and 9 Chiffchaffs were at Samphire Hoe. A Grasshopper Warbler was at the latter site on the 11<sup>th</sup> and a Whinchat, a Chiffchaff and a Reed Bunting were also recorded.

A north-westerly on the 12<sup>th</sup> produced a Pied Flycatcher, a Redstart, a Tree Pipit, a Yellow Wagtail, a Willow Warbler, 2 Reed Warblers, 2 Lesser Whitethroats and 8 Chiffchaffs at Samphire Hoe, a Redstart, 2 Spotted Flycatchers, 3 Buzzards, 8 Wheatears, 9 Yellow Wagtails and 15 Chiffchaffs at Capel-le-Ferne Gun Site, and a Lesser Whitethroat, 3 Whinchats and 5 Wheatears along Princes Parade, Hythe. A Lapland Bunting was found in the gully at Abbotscliffe on the 13<sup>th</sup> (where it remained until the 18<sup>th</sup>) and a Redstart, 2 Wheatears, 2 Blackcaps, 2 Whitethroats, 3 Yellow Wagtails, 12 Chiffchaffs and around 100 Meadow Pipits were also seen, whilst 500 Swallows flew west.



Grasshopper Warbler at Abbotscliffe (Dale Gibson)



Lapland Bunting at Abbotscliffe (Dale Gibson)

Temperatures fell as the wind continued round to the north-west and the day-time maximum on the 17<sup>th</sup> was just 16 Celsius, whilst at night it fell to 6 Celsius (compared to day-time highs of 21 and night-time lows of 16 earlier in the month). It remained generally dry but rather cloudy. Just 4 Yellow Wagtails and 60 Meadow Pipits were noted at Abbotscliffe on the 16<sup>th</sup>, but the next day a Merlin, a Swift, a Spotted Flycatcher, 2 Great Spotted Woodpeckers, 2 Whinchats, 3 Whitethroat, 3 Blackcaps, 4 Wheatears, 10 Chiffchaffs and 200 Meadow Pipits were seen there, with another 100 Meadow Pipits at Capel-le-Ferne.

In a light southerly on the 18<sup>th</sup> there was a decent arrival at the cliffs, including a Grasshopper Warbler, a Redstart, a Reed Warbler, a Lesser Whitethroat, a Spotted Flycatcher, a Firecrest, a Hobby, a Song Thrush, 2 Wheatears, 2 Whitethroats, 3 Bullfinches, 3 Whinchats, 3 Blackcaps and 25 Chiffchaffs at Abbotscliffe, where a Yellow Wagtail, 2 Grey Wagtails and 2 Swifts flew west. A Spotted Flycatcher, a Sedge Warbler, a Goldcrest, 5 Blackcaps and 36 Chiffchaffs were at Capel-le-Ferne Gun Site. A Short-eared Owl, a Little Owl, a Kingfisher, a Wheatear and a Cetti's Warbler were at Botolph's Bridge.



The long-staying Lapland Bunting had departed the gully on the 19<sup>th</sup> but another flew in off the sea at Abbotscliffe, whilst 2 were found in stubble at the eastern end. Otherwise it was quieter in a freshening south-westerly, with only a Firecrest, 5 Chiffchaffs and 6 Wheatears of note there. The wind continued to increase on the 20<sup>th</sup> and attention turned to the sea, where a Black Tern, a Great Skua, 2 Sandwich Terns and 16 Common Terns flew west past Copt Point. However a Firecrest was also seen, at Enbrook Park (Sandgate).



Spotted Flycatcher at Abbotscliffe (Dale Gibson)



Short-eared Owl at Botolph's (Brian Harper)

On a calmer 21<sup>st</sup> a Firecrest, a Goldcrest, a Dunlin, a Lesser Whitethroat, a Whitethroat, 4 Sand Martins, 7 Blackcaps and 30 Chiffchaffs were at Samphire Hoe and 2 Buzzards flew over Church Hougham. The 22<sup>nd</sup> saw temperatures climb back to 21 Celsius which even coaxed a Grasshopper Warbler into song at Abbotscliffe, where a Redstart, a Hobby, a Song Thrush, a Blackcap, a Whitethroat, 2 Wheatears and 6 Chiffchaffs were also of note, and singles of Grey, Yellow and Pied Wagtail flew west. Samphire Hoe also produced a Grasshopper Warbler, as well as a Swift, a Whinchat, a Whitethroat, a Song Thrush, 3 Wheatears, 5 Blackcaps and 11 Chiffchaffs. Two Wheatears were on the old airfield at Lympe, where there had been up to 6 recently. On a showery 23<sup>rd</sup> just a Redstart, a Whitethroat and 2 Whinchats were at Abbotscliffe and similar conditions the next day saw a Spotted Flycatcher in a garden in Folkestone and 4 Chiffchaffs at Capel-le-Ferne Gun Site.

The wind then increased from the north and temperatures fell again (to as low as 14 Celsius on the 26<sup>th</sup>), which brought the first 6 Redwings of the autumn to Samphire Hoe on the 25<sup>th</sup>, when a Common Sandpiper, 2 Song Thrushes, 4 Black Redstarts, 6 Blackcaps, 9 Stonechats and 13 Chiffchaffs were also present. The following day saw a Black-throated Diver fly west past Samphire Hoe and 15 Wigeon flew east there, with another 21 going east along the cliff-top at Abbotscliffe. The Hoe also produced 6 Song Thrushes. On the 27<sup>th</sup> a Marsh Harrier, a Redstart, a Reed Warbler, a Grey Wagtail, 2 Ravens, 3 Redwings, 5 Blackcaps, 8 Chiffchaffs and many Robins were at Samphire Hoe, and 20 Siskins flew east, whilst a Swift, a Redwing, a Great Spotted Woodpecker, a Goldcrest, 2 Jays, 4 Chiffchaffs, 7 Song Thrushes, 10 Goldfinches, 14 Yellowhammers, 16 Blackcaps, 24 Robins and 29 Linnets were at Abbotscliffe. A large number of House Martins and Swallows were feeding along the cliffs during this period but the only estimate attempted was 800 of the former at Samphire Hoe on the 26<sup>th</sup>.



Redstart at Samphire Hoe (Paul Holt)



The 28<sup>th</sup> was overcast with light, variable winds and a Blackcap, 6 Chiffchaffs, 8 Ring Ouzels, 11 Song Thrushes and 25 Goldfinches were at Abbotscliffe, whilst 2 **Ospreys**, 8 Sky Larks and 15 Siskins flew east. Elsewhere, a Ring Ouzel and a Tree Pipit were at Samphire Hoe. The month ended with a southerly breeze and showers and a Water Rail, a Merlin, a Redstart and 4 Ring Ouzels were at Samphire Hoe on the 29<sup>th</sup>, whilst 2 Tree Pipits, 2 Great Spotted Woodpeckers, 4 Siskins, 4 Mistle Thrushes, 9 Redwings and 30 Linnets were at Abbotscliffe, where 19 Cormorants flew west. On the 30<sup>th</sup> there were a continental Coal Tit, 2 Ring Ouzels, 2 Ravens, 2 Blackcaps and 9 Chiffchaffs at Samphire Hoe and a Redstart, a Tree Pipit, a Wheatear, 3 Blackcaps, 4 Chiffchaffs, 5 Ring Ouzels and 5 Song Thrushes at Abbotscliffe, with the first 3 Brent Geese of the autumn offshore.

## October

The wind picked up from the south on the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2 Ring Ouzels were seen at Abbotscliffe before rain set in, whilst an Arctic Skua, a Kittiwake, 3 Brent Geese, 4 Common Tern, 10 Gannet and 150 Swallows flew west past Copt Point. A calmer interlude on the 2<sup>nd</sup> produced a Mistle Thrush, 2 Whinchats, 3 Ring Ouzels, 3 Blackcaps, 4 Wheatears and 6 Chiffchaffs at Abbotscliffe and a Raven, a Grey Wagtail, 2 Reed Buntings, 7 Great Spotted Woodpeckers, 19 Siskins, 21 Jays, 22 Sky Larks and 150 Meadow Pipits flew over, before wind and rain returned on the 3<sup>rd</sup> when there was little of note.

Another calmer day on the 4<sup>th</sup> saw a Whinchat, a Wheatear, a Whitethroat, a Chiffchaff, a Buzzard, 2 Siskins, 3 Stonechats, 30 Chaffinches and 80 Linnets at Abbotscliffe, and a Raven was at Samphire Hoe, where 16 Siskins and 28 Goldfinches flew east. The 5<sup>th</sup> was breezy and showery and just singles of Ring Ouzel, Wheatear, Blackcap and Chiffchaff were noted at Samphire Hoe. It was another blustery day on the 6<sup>th</sup>, with more rain, and little change – a Ring Ouzel, a Blackcap, a Chiffchaff and 3 Wheatears were at Samphire Hoe and an Arctic Skua and a Sandwich Tern flew east there.

The wind eased on the 7<sup>th</sup> and a Short-eared Owl, a Tree Pipit, a Lesser Whitethroat, 2 Bramblings, 2 Buzzards, 2 Chiffchaffs and 3 Wheatears were at Abbotscliffe and 6 Jays flew east, whilst Samphire Hoe held a Ring Ouzel, a Wheatear, a House Sparrow and 8 Chiffchaffs.



Short-eared Owl at Abbotscliffe  
(Ian Roberts)



Raven at Samphire Hoe  
(Paul Holt)



Ring Ouzels at Abbotscliffe  
(Ian Roberts)

The 8<sup>th</sup> saw a change to an easterly airflow, though it remained fairly mild and early fog hampered observations. A Reed Bunting, 3 Song Thrushes, 3 Goldcrests, 3 Chaffinches, 4 Stonechats, 5 Chiffchaffs and 18 Robins were at Samphire Hoe, where 35 *alba* wagtails and 35 Goldfinches flew east. A **Honey Buzzard** flew east past the Capel-le-Ferne Café after the fog had lifted and a Raven was also seen there.

The wind remained from the east on the 9<sup>th</sup> but again there was early mist and fog. A Black Redstart, a Blackcap, 2 Reed Buntings, 3 Redwings, 6 Goldcrests, 7 Song Thrushes, 7 Stonechats, 9 Chiffchaffs and 21 Robins were at Samphire Hoe and 7 Chaffinches, 12 Linnets, 17 *alba* wagtails, 93 Siskins and 102 Goldfinches flew east there. A Redwing, a Mistle Thrush and 5 Song Thrushes were at Abbotscliffe and another 12 Siskins flew east.

The wind increased from the north-east on the 10<sup>th</sup> and cleared the early fog quite quickly. A **Shore Lark** was found in the gully field at Abbotscliffe (remaining to the 11<sup>th</sup>), and a Brambling, 2 Ring Ouzels, 2 House Sparrows, 3 Song Thrushes, 6 Goldcrests, 10 Redwings and 60 Sky Larks was also seen there, whilst visual migration comprised a Lapwing, a Buzzard, 2 Bramblings, 2 Jays, 2 Rooks, 3 Great Spotted Woodpeckers, 3 Mistle Thrushes, 4 Reed Buntings, 4 Yellowhammers, 10 Redpolls, 13 *alba* wagtails, 17 Stock Doves, 17 Siskins, 17 Greenfinches, 25 Linnets, 40 Swallows, 40 Chaffinches, 45 Meadow Pipits, 155 Starlings and 500 Goldfinches flying east. A Pied Flycatcher and a Brambling were on the seawall at Samphire Hoe and a Mute Swan, a Buzzard, a Black Redstart, a Chiffchaff and 2 Wheatears were also seen there.



Shore Lark at Abbotscliffe (Ian Roberts)



Brambling and Pied Flycatcher at Samphire Hoe (John Lees)



The north-easterly wind persisted on the 11<sup>th</sup> and produced a Merlin, a Redwing, 2 Ring Ouzels, 3 Song Thrushes and 6 Goldcrests at Abbotscliffe and a Brambling, a Siskin, a Redwing, a Great Spotted Woodpecker, 3 Sky Larks, 4 Reed Buntings, 10 *alba* wagtails, 11 Swallows, 11 Greenfinches, 13 Linnets, 20 Chaffinches, 30 Meadow Pipits, 49 Stock Doves and 340 Goldfinches flew east. In similar conditions the next day a Redwing, a Chiffchaff, 3 Goldcrests and 3 Song Thrushes were at Abbotscliffe and a Brambling, a Reed Bunting, 2 Great Spotted Woodpeckers, 7 Redpolls, 10 *alba* wagtails, 10 Meadow Pipits, 13 Chaffinches, 29 Greenfinches, 48 Swallows, 68 Siskins, 83 Stock Doves and 415 Goldfinches flew into the wind. A Ring Ouzel, a Wheatear, a Blackcap, a Tufted Duck, 2 Ravens, 3 Black Redstarts, 4 Chiffchaffs and 16 Goldcrests were at Samphire Hoe.

This productive airflow continued on the 13<sup>th</sup> and a **Bearded Tit** was found at Samphire Hoe (a new species for the site). A Ring Ouzel, 3 Chiffchaffs, 3 Blackcaps, 4 Redwings, 5 Rock Pipits, 8 Song Thrushes, 8 Stonechats, 8 Dunnocks, 13 Goldcrests, 17 Robins and 50 Meadow Pipits were also seen there, whilst a Brambling, a Grey Wagtail, 70 Siskins and at least 90 House Martins and 130 Swallows flew east. A Brambling, 5 Goldcrests, 8 Redwings and 14 Song Thrushes were at Abbotscliffe whilst a Brambling, a Great Spotted Woodpecker, 6 Redpolls, 8 *alba* wagtails, 20 Linnets, 25 Siskins, 150 Swallows and 530 Goldfinches flew east. The following day saw a **Yellow-browed Warbler** at Samphire Hoe and a Water Rail, a Blackcap, a Fieldfare, a Redwing, 2 Chiffchaffs, 3 Ring Ouzels, 3 Black Redstarts, 7 Song Thrushes, 8 Blackbirds 13 Goldcrests were also present, whilst 6 Siskins, 70 Swallows and 650 Goldfinches flew east.

On the 15<sup>th</sup> the wind edged round to the north and a Ring Ouzel, a Blackcap, a Reed Bunting, a Grey Wagtail, 3 Chiffchaffs, 4 Redwings, 4 Song Thrushes, 9 Stonechats and 11 Goldcrests were at Samphire Hoe whilst a Redpoll, 14 Siskins, 90 House Martins and 265 Goldfinches flew east. The wind strengthened on 16<sup>th</sup> and the temperature began to fall but this brought a Lapland Bunting to Abbotscliffe, where a Redwing, 2 Chiffchaffs, 2 Blackcaps, 3 Song Thrushes and c.100 Swallows were also seen, whilst a Redshank, a Great Spotted Woodpecker, 5 *alba* wagtails, 9 Redpolls, 9 Greenfinches, 11 Tree Sparrows, 14 Linnets, 32 Siskins, 113 Stock Doves and 485 Goldfinches flew east and a Tree Pipit, a Fieldfare and 6 Reed Buntings flew west. Two Grey Wagtails were along the canal at Hythe.



Yellow-browed Warbler at Samphire Hoe (Ian Roberts)



Lapland Buntings at Abbotscliffe (Dale Gibson)

The 17<sup>th</sup> saw overnight temperatures dip to 7 Celsius but another 2 Lapland Buntings arrived in the gully field at Abbotscliffe and 2 Buzzards, 2 Wheatears, 4 Ring Ouzels, 4 Sparrowhawks, 6 Chiffchaffs, 14 Redwings, 30 Sand Martins, 600 House Martins and 800 Swallows were also seen, whilst 6 Yellowhammers, 9 Redpolls, 11 Reed Buntings, 57 Siskins and 1,080 Goldfinches (the peak count in a month during which over 4,750 were logged) flew east and 350 Starlings flew in off the sea. Two 2 Whinchats were at Crete Hill and a Great Spotted Woodpecker, 12 *alba* wagtails, 14 Sky Larks and 70 Meadow Pipits flew in off the sea there. A Grey Wagtail and 4 Chiffchaffs were noted at Hythe and a Great Spotted Woodpecker flew east there too.



Despite a more westerly influence in the wind there was an overnight low of 3 Celsius on the 18<sup>th</sup>. A Ring Ouzel, a Snipe, 2 Wheatears and 15 Long-tailed Tits were seen at Abbotscliffe and a Great Spotted Woodpecker, 7 Siskins, 40 House Martins and 120 Swallows flew east there. A Ring Ouzel, a Snipe, 2 Redwings, 2 Chiffchaffs, 6 Goldcrests and 6 Song Thrushes were at Samphire Hoe. Similar conditions the next day produced a Ring Ouzel, 3 Lapland Buntings, 4 Reed Buntings, 12 Yellowhammers and 30 Linnets at Abbotscliffe and a Brambling, a Great Spotted Woodpecker, 3 Redpolls, 7 Siskins, 15 *alba* wagtails, 20 House Martins, 30 Chaffinches, 30 Linnets, 37 Swallows, 50 Goldfinches and 53 Stock Doves flew over.

The 20<sup>th</sup> was bitterly cold, with a moderate north-westerly wind and a low of just 2 Celsius, and the 11<sup>th</sup> Lapland Bunting of the autumn flew east at Abbotscliffe and a Great Spotted Woodpecker, a Buzzard, a Sand Martin, 4 Song Thrushes, 5 Golden Plovers, 5 Reed Buntings, 5 Redpolls, 6 *alba* wagtails, 10 Long-tailed Tits, 12 Swallows, 14 Bramblings, 14 Siskins, 28 Linnets, 50 Fieldfares, 50 House Martins, 55 Stock Doves, 70 Redwings, 75 Wood Pigeons and 170 Goldfinches also flew over there. The wind had eased the following day and, with clear skies, there was the first overnight frost of the autumn. The second **Yellow-browed Warbler** of the month was found in Folkestone and a Brambling, a Mistle Thrush, a Yellowhammer, 2 Great Spotted Woodpeckers, 2 Fieldfares, 3 Reed Buntings, 3 House Martins, 4 Redwings, 6 Swallows, 40 Chaffinches, 70 Starlings and 127 Stock Doves flew in/west at Abbotscliffe.

The wind became more westerly on the 22<sup>nd</sup> and a Ring Ouzel, a Chiffchaff, 2 Bramblings, 2 Goldcrests, 4 Redwings were at Abbotscliffe, but visual migration slowed and just a Swallow, 2 Stock Doves, 10 Chaffinches and 30 Goldfinches flew over. It was a similar situation at Samphire Hoe where a Redwing, a Yellowhammer, 2 Black Redstarts and 3 Song Thrushes were noted whilst a Redpoll, 13 Siskins and 25 Goldfinches flew over. A Little Egret flew over Westenhanger. The wind increased as it continued round to the south-west on the 23<sup>rd</sup> and attention moved to the sea, though there was only a Grey Plover, a Red-throated Diver, 3 Great Skuas and 8 Gannets of note off Copt Point.

A switch back to a north-westerly breeze made for a good day on the 24<sup>th</sup>, with a **Wood Lark**, a **Shore Lark**, 2 Snipe, 5 Reed Buntings, 6 Yellowhammers, **8 Lapland Buntings**, 50 Linnets and 100 Sky Larks counted in a stubble field at the eastern end of Abbotscliffe. A **Bearded Tit** was seen briefly before it flew west and a Ring Ouzel, 2 Firecrests, 3 continental Coal Tits, 4 Song Thrushes and 14 Redwings were also in the bushes. Overhead a Great Spotted Woodpecker, 2 **Waxwings**, 2 Redwings, 2 Redpolls, 8 Fieldfares, 18 Sky Larks, 26 Linnets, 37 Chaffinches and 470 Starlings flew in off the sea, another **Waxwing** flew south, 2 Reed Buntings, 3 Rooks, 5 Bramblings, 11 Swallows, 11 House Martins and 19 Stock Doves went west, and 17 Goldfinches and 35 Siskins flew east. Elsewhere a Little Egret, a Cetti's Warbler, a Kingfisher and 3 Grey Wagtails were at Botolph's Bridge, a Teal, a Chiffchaff and 8 House Martins were at Copt Point and a Purple Sandpiper had returned to the shore by the Hotel Imperial, Hythe.



Continental Coal Tit at Abbotscliffe (Ian Roberts)

Similar conditions the following day saw another **Waxwing** fly in off the sea at Abbotscliffe, as did 2 Bramblings, 43 Redwings and 55 Fieldfares. A Lapland Bunting, a Buzzard, 4 Redpolls, 11 Siskins and 32 Goldfinches flew east, and 15 Stock Doves flew west. A Lapland Bunting and a Snipe remained in the stubble at the eastern end and a Chiffchaff, 2 Fieldfares, 4 Redwings, 4 Song Thrushes, 6 Long-tailed Tits and 10 Blackbirds were grounded.

The wind returned to the south-west on the 26<sup>th</sup> and it was a quieter day, though a **Red Kite** arrived in off the sea at Samphire Hoe, where there were also 2 Ravens, and 400 Starlings came in off at Copt Point.

With the wind remaining from the south-west a quiet spell ensued, with nothing of note on the 27<sup>th</sup> and just 2 Reed Buntings, 6 Yellowhammers and 17 Siskins at Abbotscliffe on the 28<sup>th</sup>. This pattern continued, though on the 31<sup>st</sup> a Short-eared Owl, 2 Firecrests and 2 Ravens were at Capel-le-Ferne and 2 Bramblings, 8 Siskins and 12 Redpolls flew over Abbotscliffe.

## November

The month began with a northerly breeze which encouraged some visual passage at Abbotscliffe, including a Snow Bunting, 2 Lapland Buntings, 12 Stock Doves, 48 Siskins, 100 Goldfinches and 105 Redpolls flying east, a Reed Bunting, 2 Dunlin, 10 Linnets and 29 Stock Doves flying west and a Lapwing, a Brambling, 3 Fieldfares, 24 Redwings, 496 Chaffinches and 1,780 Starlings arriving in off the sea. A Short-eared Owl, a Firecrest, 2 Lapland Buntings, 2 Reed Buntings, 3 Swallows, 4 Yellowhammers, 5 House Martins, 60 Sky Larks and 70 Linnets were also present. At Capel-le-Ferne Café another Snow Bunting, a Bullfinch, 2 Ravens, 2 Siskins and 2 Redpolls flew east, a Brambling and 3 Redwings flew in off the sea and a Swallow and 6 House Martins lingered. A Chiffchaff, a Little Owl, 3 House Martins, 6 Redwings and 12 Swallows were at Samphire Hoe, where 60 Starlings arrived in off, and a Blackcap and a Chiffchaff were at Folkestone Harbour.

The wind backed round to the south-west after the 1<sup>st</sup>, with some light drizzle at times, and there was less to be seen. A Firecrest and a Velvet Scoter were at Mill Point on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and a Common Scoter, 2 Red-throated Divers, 5 Kittiwakes and 15 Gannets flew west there. The following day a Lapland Bunting, 5 Siskins and 8 Swallows flew west at Abbotscliffe and 2 Redpolls, 3 Reed Buntings and 25 Redwings flew west at Lympne. On the 4<sup>th</sup> a Dunlin flew west at the Willop Outfall.

The 6<sup>th</sup> saw the wind return to the northerly quarter and this produced some further visual migration. Two Reed Buntings, 2 Siskins, 3 Bramblings, 4 Redpolls, 5 *alba* wagtails, 10 Stock Doves, 14 Meadow Pipits, 33 Sky Larks, 90 Starlings and 315 Chaffinches flew north or west over the Castle Hill / Crete Road West area, and 3 Ravens flew east, whilst a Firecrest and a Chiffchaff were in trees there. At Abbotscliffe a Snow Bunting was found in the gully and at Samphire Hoe a Water Rail (which remained all month), 2 Black Redstarts and 8 Swallows were noted. Three Lapland Buntings were seen in a stubble field at the eastern end of Abbotscliffe on the 7<sup>th</sup>, and a Swallow, a Brambling, 3 Redpolls, 4 Fieldfares, 7 Siskins, 20 Redwings and 310 Starlings flew over. Further to the west, at Cheriton Hill, a Fieldfare, a Redwing, a Redpoll, 2 Bramblings, 4 Siskins, 35 Stock Doves, 105 Chaffinches and 900 Starlings flew north or west. Another Brambling was also seen at Shorncliffe Camp in Cheriton.

On the 8<sup>th</sup> the wind veered south-easterly and increased to gale force as heavy rain set in. Seawatching from Folkestone was rather productive with a Sandwich Tern, 2 Arctic Skuas, 2 Grey Plovers, 3 **Pomarine Skuas**, 3 Bar-tailed Godwits, 8 Turnstone, 9 Great Skuas, 14 Red-breasted Mergansers, 14 Little Gulls, 31 Brent Geese, 35 Dunlin, 42 Wigeon, 92 Gannets, 115 Common Scoters and a very good count of 908 Kittiwakes, mostly flying east. At times the Kittiwake passage was very heavy and further to the east 230 were logged going past Samphire Hoe in just 30 minutes. The majority of birds were very close in and some Kittiwakes were even passing over the beach. A Little Gull was also seen off Sandgate Castle.



Kittiwake at Folkestone Beach (Ian Roberts)

The Little Gull was still off Sandgate Castle the next day and a Sandwich Tern, a Red-breasted Merganser, a Velvet Scoter and 5 Dunlin flew past, whilst another Velvet Scoter was on the sea with 30 Common Scoters off Mill Point. The latter site also hosted a Firecrest, whilst a Little Egret was at Westenhanger and 2 Ravens were at Samphire Hoe.

The wind became south-westerly from the 11<sup>th</sup> and a quiet spell ensued. A Chiffchaff, a Siskin and 6 Redwings were at Newington on the 12<sup>th</sup> and a Swallow, a Redpoll and 6 Redwings were at Horn Street the following day. The 13<sup>th</sup> also produced 2 Velvet Scoters off Mill Point (remaining until the 17<sup>th</sup>, with up to 95 Common Scoters) and 150 Mediterranean Gulls were counted at Sandgate, where 10 Siskins flew west. A **Goosander** and a Kingfisher were on the canal by the Hotel Imperial Golf Course at Hythe on the 14<sup>th</sup>, when a Red-breasted Merganser flew east at Hythe Ranges and 25 Siskins flew east at the Willop Outfall.

A Blackcap, a Chiffchaff, a Brambling and 2 Firecrests were at Church Hougham on the 15<sup>th</sup>, when a Reed Bunting, 3 Redwings, 4 Yellowhammers and 23 Fieldfares were at Hope Farm, Capel-le-Ferne, and 9 Siskins, 37 Redpolls and 590 Starlings flew over Crete Road East. Two Siskins and 15 Redwings were at Beachborough Ponds. The following day produced single Lapland Buntings over Abbotscliffe and Samphire Hoe, and a Reed Bunting, 6 Redpolls, 12 Siskins, 15 Linnets, 100 Stock Doves, 100 Wood Pigeons and 250 Starlings flew over the former. A Chiffchaff and 3 Firecrests were at Mill Point on the 17<sup>th</sup> and a Siskin and 4 Linnets flew west at Hythe Ranges on the 19<sup>th</sup>.

The wind moved round to the east on the 20<sup>th</sup> and continued round to the northerly quarter for the rest of the month as it became progressively colder. Overnight temperatures dipped below freezing from the 26<sup>th</sup> and there were snow flurries from the 27<sup>th</sup> which began to intensify on the final day of the month.

The highlight of this latter period of November was a **Great White Egret**, presumably the bird from last winter returning, which frequented the Botolph's Bridge area from the 27<sup>th</sup>. It was accompanied by a Little Egret, another of which was seen at Samphire Hoe.



Firecrest at Church Hougham (Ian Roberts)



Great White Egret at Botolph's Bridge (Ian Roberts)



Little Egret at Botolph's Bridge (Brian Harper)



Wildfowl are often a feature of colder weather and this was again the case, including a small influx of **Goosander**. One was on the sea off Hythe on the 27<sup>th</sup>, when another 3 flew east there, and a flock of 5, perhaps involving the same birds, were off Seabrook the next day. Finally another was at Botolph's Bridge on the 29<sup>th</sup>. A **Goldeneye** and 2 **Scaup** were on the sea off the Willop Outfall on the 27<sup>th</sup> and a Red-breasted Merganser was off Seabrook on the 29<sup>th</sup>.



Red-breasted Merganser at Seabrook (Ian Roberts)



Black Redstart at Hythe Redoubt (Brian Harper)

Of the commoner ducks; 30 Common Scoter flew east past Samphire Hoe on the 20<sup>th</sup>, 3 Teal flew east past Hythe on the 22<sup>nd</sup>, 3 Shelduck flew east past Mill Point on the 24<sup>th</sup> and a Pochard flew west past Hythe on the 27<sup>th</sup>. Numbers increased from the 28<sup>th</sup>, when 6 Gadwall, 14 Wigeon and 20 Teal were on the sea off the Hythe Redoubt and 35 Wigeon were seen off Hythe. On the 29<sup>th</sup> 77 Wigeon were on the sea off Hythe and 85, possibly incorporating the same flock, flew east past Mill Point. 5 Gadwall, 6 Common Scoters and 7 Shelduck were seen off the Willop Outfall and 5 Brent Geese flew east at Hythe Redoubt. The last day of the month produced 6 Tufted Ducks, 6 Wigeon, 8 Shoveler and 8 Gadwall at Nickoll's Quarry, where Coot had increased to 22.

A single Golden Plover flew west over Samphire Hoe on the 21<sup>st</sup> before a small influx occurred late in the month, no doubt in response to the weather: one was at Abbotscliffe and 75 were at Botolph's Bridge on the 28<sup>th</sup>, and one flew in off the sea at the Willop Outfall on the 29<sup>th</sup>, when 35 were in the Willop Sewer area. Lapwings were also affected, with 85 going west over Samphire Hoe on the 28<sup>th</sup> and 3 at Abbotscliffe the next day, when 4 flew west over Folkestone Harbour, 14 flew north over Hythe Roughs, 25 were at Summerhouse Hill and 30 flew in off the sea at the Willop Outfall.

Snipe began to appear in odd places, beginning with one flying north at Samphire Hoe on the 21<sup>st</sup>, and a further 11 were logged before the month's end, including two singles at Abbotscliffe, another two at Samphire Hoe on the 28<sup>th</sup>, 3 flying west at Hythe Roughs on the 29<sup>th</sup> and one in a garden in Cornwallis Avenue, Cheriton on the 30<sup>th</sup>. A single Jack Snipe was flushed at Botolph's Bridge on the 20<sup>th</sup>, when a Green Sandpiper was also seen there (and on several subsequent dates). Amongst the more usual wintering waders were up to 4 Purple Sandpipers at Hythe, up to 4 Redshank, 9 Turnstone and 27 Ringed Plovers in the Folkestone Harbour area and single Curlews at Abbotscliffe, Botolph's Bridge and the Willop Outfall.

45 Gannets were seen off Samphire Hoe on the 21<sup>st</sup> and single Shags were at Abbotscliffe on the 28<sup>th</sup> and Mill Point the next day.

A Marsh Harrier was at Botolph's Bridge on two dates and Merlins were seen at Westenhanger on the 22<sup>nd</sup> and Saltwood Castle the following day. 75 Great Black-backed Gulls were counted in Folkestone Harbour on the 29<sup>th</sup>. Two Short-eared Owls were at Round Down on the 20<sup>th</sup>, when an unusual concentration of 5 Green Woodpeckers together was also noted there. Kingfishers were recorded at four sites in the Hythe and Saltwood areas in November.

Up to 60 Sky Larks were in a stubble field at the eastern end of Abbotscliffe, 10 Rock Pipits were at Samphire Hoe and at least 11 Grey Wagtails were widely scattered through the area. There appeared to be a small late arrival of Black Redstarts, with 4 at Abbotscliffe and 1 at Samphire Hoe (the first there for a fortnight) on the 20<sup>th</sup> and 2 at Hythe Redoubt the next day. Stonechats were seen at Samphire Hoe (3) and Blackhouse Hill, but there were very few winter thrushes seen late in the month despite the onset of colder weather.

A Cetti's Warbler was at Botolph's Bridge on the 20<sup>th</sup>, when a Blackcap was at Round Down and another was at Samphire Hoe the next day. Chiffchaffs were at Samphire Hoe, Westenhanger and Hythe Roughs (3) and Firecrests were at Lympe on the 22<sup>nd</sup> and Mill Point on the 24<sup>th</sup>. Single Ravens were at Samphire Hoe on the 21<sup>st</sup> and Abbotscliffe on the 28<sup>th</sup>.

Visual migration continued late into the month with a Redpoll and 12 Siskins east at Nickoll's Quarry on the 20<sup>th</sup>, when another 12 flew east at Samphire Hoe, 13 Redpolls, 105 Goldfinches and 265 Siskins east at Abbotscliffe / Samphire Hoe on the 21<sup>st</sup>, and a Snow Bunting east at Samphire Hoe on the 22<sup>nd</sup>, when a Brambling east at Westenhanger, 14 Redpolls flew east at Abbotscliffe and 16 Redpolls flew east at Lympe. On the 24<sup>th</sup> 8 Siskins flew in off the sea at Mill Point and a Snow Bunting, 7 Siskins and 12 Redpolls flew east at Abbotscliffe on the 27<sup>th</sup>, when 25 Siskins flew east at Nickoll's Quarry. Feeding Siskin flocks included 8 at Hythe Roughs, 15 at Kiln Wood, 20 at Newington Quarry and 80 at Casebourne Wood and Redpolls were at Kiln Wood (3) and Hythe Roughs (23).

Three Lapland Buntings remained in a stubble field at the eastern end of Abbotscliffe until the 24<sup>th</sup>, with one there on the 27<sup>th</sup>, and 3 Snow Buntings were also seen there on the 24<sup>th</sup>. The same field also hosted a Corn Bunting, 9 Yellowhammers and 20 Linnets.

A total of 120 species were recorded.

## December

December is traditionally one of the quieter months of the year but this year was quite the exception. A remarkable and record-breaking influx of Waxwings occurred throughout, and the cold weather at either end of the month produced some equally amazing arrivals of wildfowl.

The month began with heavy snowfall and freezing temperatures: at least 7 inches of snow had lain across the area by the 2<sup>nd</sup>, driven in by a bitter easterly wind, and the temperature at Hythe dipped to -7C on the 3<sup>rd</sup>. However the snow and ice disappeared rapidly as the thermometer rose to +7C, accompanied by heavy rain, on the 4<sup>th</sup>.

An exceptional flock of **20 Goosanders** off Seabrook on the 1<sup>st</sup> got the month off to a flying start, and a drake **Goldeneye**, a Pochard and 10 Tufted Ducks were at Nickoll's Quarry. A Red-breasted Merganser was on the sea off Seabrook and 5 Red-breasted Mergansers, 6 Shelduck, 10 Brent Geese, 20 Teal and 40 Wigeon flew past, whilst 10 Brent Geese were in a field along Donkey Street. The extreme conditions produced a notable movement of wildfowl at Hythe on the 2<sup>nd</sup> with a red-head **Goldeneye**, 15 Tufted Ducks, 18 Teal, 20 Gadwall, 26 Mallard, 30 Pochard, 50 Brent Geese, 83 Shelducks and 600 Wigeon mostly moving west, and 3 **Goosanders** and 35 Shelduck passed Samphire Hoe. The next day saw just a Brent Goose, a Shelduck, a Tufted Duck and 12 Pochard pass Hythe but a drake Pintail, a Greylag Goose, 4 Teal, 7 Wigeon, 10 Gadwall, 11 Pochard and 15 Tufted Duck were at Nickoll's Quarry on the 4<sup>th</sup> and another 2 Greylag Geese flew west over Hythe, whilst a Red-breasted Merganser flew west at Samphire Hoe. On the 5<sup>th</sup> 6 Pochard, 7 Wigeon, 7 Teal, 40 Mute Swans and 56 Mallard were at the Willop Outfall.

Waders were also displaced by the weather. Lapwings began to appear in unusual places, including 2 in a car park in Folkestone on the 3<sup>rd</sup>, several on beaches at Seabrook, Hythe and Hythe Redoubt, and 3 at Samphire Hoe on the 4<sup>th</sup> (until the 9<sup>th</sup>) whilst others were seen arriving in off the sea or passing over. 300 Lapwings were counted in fields at the Willop Outfall on the 5<sup>th</sup>, where there was also a **Ruff** and a Golden Plover.

Dunlin too moved into atypical locations such as Folkestone Harbour (on the 1<sup>st</sup>) and Samphire Hoe (where there was on in the car park on the 4<sup>th</sup> and 2 on the seawall the next day). At least 7 were logged passing at sea, 3 were at the Willop Outfall, 6 were at both Hythe Redoubt and Botolph's Bridge, and 20 were in the Willop fields on the 5<sup>th</sup>.

Around 32 Snipe were at widely scattered locations, with peaks of 8 at Botolph's Bridge and 5 at Samphire Hoe, and single Woodcock were at Folkestone on the 3<sup>rd</sup> and at Willop Outfall on the 5<sup>th</sup>. Totals of 18 Redshanks and 12 Curlews were logged during this early cold spell and other waders included 2 Knot and 8 Bar-tailed Godwits flying east at Hythe on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and the 4 Purple Sandpipers there (which remained all month).



Displaced by the cold: a Dunlin on the seawall at Samphire Hoe (Phil Smith) and a Sky Lark in the snow at East Cliff, Folkestone (Dave Featherbe)

Other early highlights included a **Crane** at the Willop Outfall on the 5<sup>th</sup> and the continuing residence of the **Great White Egret** in the Botolph's Bridge / West Hythe area (to the year's end). Little Egrets were recorded at Samphire Hoe, West Hythe and the Willop Sewer (2) all on the 5<sup>th</sup> and a count of 9 Grey Herons at the Willop Sewer on the same day was noteworthy, whilst 4 flew west over Hythe on the 1<sup>st</sup>. Cormorants continue to use West Hythe as a daytime roost and reached a peak of 36 on the 5<sup>th</sup>. A Little Gull was seen off Hythe on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 1,500 Black-headed Gulls were counted at Nickoll's Quarry on the 1<sup>st</sup>.

Passerines appeared to be less affected by this early cold weather though around 10 Meadow Pipits and 35 Sky Larks flew over, generally in an easterly direction, with a peak of 12 of the latter east over Hythe on the 2<sup>nd</sup>. Three Redwings and 5 Song Thrushes were at Samphire Hoe on the 5<sup>th</sup>, male Blackcaps were at Hythe on the 3<sup>rd</sup> and Seabrook on the 5<sup>th</sup> and a Firecrest was at West Hythe on the 3<sup>rd</sup>. Siskins flew over Hythe on the 3<sup>rd</sup> and the Willop Sewer on the 5<sup>th</sup> (3), whilst 70 were at Saltwood on the 1<sup>st</sup>. A Reed Bunting flew west over Hythe on the 3<sup>rd</sup>.





Crane at the Willop Outfall (Brian Harper)



Great White Egret at West Hythe (Brian Harper)

A flock of 30 **Waxwings** were found in Hythe on the 1<sup>st</sup> and these increased to 39 on the 3<sup>rd</sup>, 51 on the 5<sup>th</sup> and peaked at an impressive **87** on the 13<sup>th</sup>. The birds generally favoured the Prospect Road area and delighted many observers however, with the berry supply diminished, a rapid decrease occurred mid-month though at least 11 were present to the month's end.

Meanwhile this flock was eclipsed by events at Park Farm in Folkestone, where 10 **Waxwings** were first noted on the 6<sup>th</sup>. 12 were present on the morning of the 7<sup>th</sup>, increasing to 30 by the afternoon. A similar number were noted on the 8<sup>th</sup> when **97** were found by Grace Hill (the largest flock ever recorded in the area). There was no further sign of the Grace Hill flock and these presumably joined up with the Park Farm flock, which increased to **120** the following morning and continue to grow to **162** by the afternoon (a new county record). The 10<sup>th</sup> saw a further increase, to **170**, but it was the 11<sup>th</sup> which was the truly remarkable day: **246** were counted in the early morning, increasing to **280** by late morning, **410** by mid-afternoon and up to **500** by late afternoon. This massive flock quickly devoured the local berries and very soon they began to disperse. **310** were still present early the next morning but decreased to **200** by midday and the last 25 were seen flying off early on the 13<sup>th</sup>. It seems likely that **200** which were seen in Cheriton on the 13<sup>th</sup> involved some of the same birds but thereafter relatively few were seen in Cheriton or Folkestone, though 50 flew over Broadmead Village on the 31<sup>st</sup>.

Elsewhere, **118 Waxwings** were seen flying east over the Willop Outfall on the 10<sup>th</sup>, 9 were in the Westenhangar on the 21<sup>st</sup> area and up to 5 were at Lympne.

Temperatures remained above freezing by day between the 5<sup>th</sup> and the 16<sup>th</sup>, although at night they sometimes dropped below zero. It was cloudy throughout with occasional showers, which were sometimes wintry, and the wind was generally from the northerly quarter.

Up to 20 Tufted Ducks and 31 Pochard remained at Nickoll's Quarry following the cold spell and a Red-breasted Merganser was in Folkestone Harbour on the 9<sup>th</sup>. A **Bittern** flew east over the Willop Outfall on the 10<sup>th</sup> and single Water Rails were at Samphire Hoe and Seabrook. Coot reached a peak of 81 at Nickoll's Quarry on the 17<sup>th</sup>.



Waxwing at Park Farm (Steve Ashton)



Waxwings at Park Farm (Steve Ashton)



100 of the Waxwing flock at Park Farm (Mike Gould)



Waxwing at Hythe (Brian Harper)

Waders were still relocating after the early freeze and Dunlin were seen at Folkestone Harbour (2), Samphire Hoe (3) and Botolph's Bridge (7) on the 7<sup>th</sup>. Jack Snipe were at Brockhill CP on the 6<sup>th</sup> and at Nickoll's Quarry the next day, when 15 Snipe were also present. Snipe were also noted at Blackhouse Hill (4 on the 6<sup>th</sup>), Samphire Hoe (1 on the 7<sup>th</sup>) and Newington (4 on the 8<sup>th</sup>) and Woodcock were at Saltwood on the 6<sup>th</sup>, Nickoll's Quarry on the 7<sup>th</sup> and Samphire Hoe (2) on the 8<sup>th</sup>. Two Green Sandpipers remained in the Botolph's Bridge area and 3 Redshank at Samphire Hoe on the 6<sup>th</sup> were notable. A Black Redstart and 2 Stonechats were at Samphire Hoe on the 6<sup>th</sup>, 65 Redwings were at Church Hougham on the 7<sup>th</sup>, a Cetti's Warbler was at Nickoll's Quarry the same day and 2 Ravens flew over Samphire Hoe on the 9<sup>th</sup>.

The arctic conditions returned from the 17<sup>th</sup>, with further significant snowfall from midday on the 18<sup>th</sup> accompanied by another overnight low of -7C. The intense cold and snow remained until the 21<sup>st</sup>, when it became a little milder. Christmas Eve saw another heavy frost and it remained below freezing throughout the 25<sup>th</sup>. After another very cold night Nickoll's Quarry had completely frozen over on Boxing Day. A southerly airflow provided some respite from the 27<sup>th</sup> and a slow thaw set in, as temperatures reached +5C, though fog became a problem.



A flock of **10 Bewick's Swans** roosted at Nickoll's Quarry on the night of the 25<sup>th</sup>, and were then tracked to fields by Botolph's Bridge where they spent the next three days feeding with Mute Swans. An exceptional influx of geese was noted across the county in late December and locally a **Barnacle Goose** and **180 White-fronted Geese** were found along Donkey Street on the 22<sup>nd</sup> (though they rapidly dispersed, with just 3 remaining on the 24<sup>th</sup>) and 70 Brent Geese and **300 White-fronted Geese** flew north then back south over Nickoll's Quarry on the 25<sup>th</sup>.

90 Wigeon were at Nickoll's Quarry on the 19<sup>th</sup>, with 30 off Samphire Hoe on the 21<sup>st</sup>, 80 along Donkey Street on the 22<sup>nd</sup>, 85 at Nickoll's Quarry and 95 on the Canal Cutting on the 24<sup>th</sup>, and 170 at the former site the next day. With even the larger lakes beginning to freeze, Wigeon began to congregate on the sea and an incredible **1,550** were counted off Hythe Redoubt on the 25<sup>th</sup>, whilst this flock increased still further to a phenomenal **2,850** on the 27<sup>th</sup>. Other dabbling duck included peaks of 34 Gadwall at Nickoll's Quarry on the 24<sup>th</sup> and 15 on the Canal Cutting on the 27<sup>th</sup>, a report of 100 Teal at Nickoll's Quarry on around the 22<sup>nd</sup>, 12 Pintail there on the 26<sup>th</sup>, and 6 Shoveler at Nickoll's Quarry on the 19<sup>th</sup>, with 2 at Botolph's Bridge on the 26<sup>th</sup>.



Wigeon at Nickoll's Quarry (Ian Roberts)



Bewick's Swans at Botolph's Bridge (Brian Harper)

On the 19<sup>th</sup> there were 16 Tufted Ducks and 54 Pochard at Nickoll's Quarry and these increased to peaks of 53 of the former on the 24<sup>th</sup> and 104 of the latter the following day. A female / immature **Scaup** was on the sea close inshore of Sandgate on the 19<sup>th</sup> and up to 4 **Goosanders** were in the Botolph's Bridge area from the 18<sup>th</sup>, with one at Nickoll's Quarry on the 30<sup>th</sup>. Up to 2 Little Egrets frequented the Botolph's Bridge area from the 18<sup>th</sup> and singles were at Nickoll's Quarry on 2 dates. A Marsh Harrier was at Botolph's Bridge on the 26<sup>th</sup> and a Kestrel flying over Hythe town centre on the 19<sup>th</sup> was an unusual record, whilst a Peregrine at Botolph's Bridge from the 25<sup>th</sup> (records away from the cliffs are still relatively scarce). Single Water Rails were at Seabrook and Hythe Roughts and 107 Coot were counted at Nickoll's Quarry on the 25<sup>th</sup>.

Waders were again affected by the cold weather and unusual Lapwing sightings were recorded at Samphire Hoe on the 21<sup>st</sup> (4) and Hythe Ranges on the 27<sup>th</sup> (2). A Dunlin was at Botolph's Bridge from the 24<sup>th</sup>. Small numbers of Snipe were at various locations, and 26 were counted at Nickoll's Quarry on the 26<sup>th</sup>. A Jack Snipe was flushed from a stubble field at Abbotscliffe on the 30<sup>th</sup> and 5 Woodcock were at Church Hougham on the 18<sup>th</sup>. A Curlew was at Samphire Hoe on the 21<sup>st</sup> and 2-3 Green Sandpipers remained in the Botolph's Bridge area.



A Barn Owl was at Nickoll's Quarry on the 26<sup>th</sup>, on which date an exceptional total of 351 Sky Larks were counted at Botolph's Bridge, and there were a number of records of Sky Larks dispersing as the thaw set in, including a substantial nocturnal passage over Hythe on the night of the 29<sup>th</sup>/30<sup>th</sup>. 60 Meadow Pipits at Samphire Hoe on the 21<sup>st</sup> was a high count for the time of year and two had ventured into a garden in Folkestone on the 28<sup>th</sup>. A Black Redstart was along Hythe Ranges on the 27<sup>th</sup>. Thrushes seemed little affected by the cold and the peak counts were just 35 of both Fieldfare and Redwing at Lympe on the 30<sup>th</sup>, though 15 Song Thrushes at Samphire Hoe on the 21<sup>st</sup> was notable. Finally, 2 female Blackcaps were in a garden in Folkestone from the 24<sup>th</sup>.

Nationally it was the coldest December in over 100 years.

A total of 113 species were recorded in the month and 189 species in all were recorded in 2010.