

2006 review

January

The year began with a north-westerly airflow, which switched round to the east from the 4th, feeding in cool but generally dry conditions from the Continent. A drizzly 8th marked the arrival of milder and damper Atlantic air, which dominated for a week or so. The second half of the month was generally dry and overcast, though there were clear skies on the 24th-25th which led frosty conditions, with overnight lows of -4 C in Hythe. January ended with another spell of cold easterlies from the 26th, which even produced a covering of snow on the 27th.

The snowy conditions on the 27th saw only notable movement of Red-throated Divers of the month, with 51 east past Mill Point, a **Red-necked Grebe** and 11 Great Crested Grebes flew east the same day. 14 Great Crested Grebes flew east past Mill Point on the 30th, and 10 were seen off Samphire Hoe the next day. A count of 15 Little Grebes on the New Cut on the 28th was noteworthy, as was an unusually high number of Gannets resting on the sea off Folkestone on the 22nd, with 120 counted between Copt Point and Mill Point.

A Little Egret was reported in the Saltwood Castle area intermittently between the 7th and 14th. The Mute Swan flock at Botolph's Bridge only reached 12 (on the 24th), and the only geese recorded were Brent, with 17 east past Hythe Ranges on the 2nd, and one east past Mill Point on the 30th. At least 10 Mandarins were at Sandling Park, and the same site held up to 30 Teal and 3 Gadwall. There was a peak of 10 Gadwall at Westenhanger on the 17th, and up to 7 Pochards and 20 Tufted Duck were also seen here, with Tufted Ducks also at Blackhouse Hill (21st) and Nickoll's Quarry (3 on 25th). Five Pochards arrived from the south at Mill Point in cold weather on the 27th, and a single drake Eider flew east there on the 30th.

A Merlin was hunting Meadow Pipits by the New Cut on the 28th. Water Rails were recorded at Samphire Hoe, West Hythe, and Nickoll's Quarry, and the latter site saw a peak of 31 Coot on the 28th. A count of 9 Ringed Plovers in Folkestone Harbour on the 7th was notable, but Golden Plovers numbered no more than 20 at Newingreen and 40 by the Willop Sewer. A Sanderling was at Hythe Ranges on the 2nd and 3 flew east past Copt Point on the 23rd, whilst up to 9 Purple Sandpipers were at Hythe early in the month. Woodcock were flushed from Brockhill CP and Blackhouse Hill (2). A Green Sandpiper was seen near the New Cut on the 1st.

Reasonable numbers of auks were noted late in the month, with c.200 Razorbills on the sea between Copt Point and Mill Point on the 22nd, 185 Guillemots and 135 Razorbills east past Mill Point on the 23rd, 200 Razorbills east there on the 26th, and 500 Guillemots east there the next day.

A flock of 300 Stock Doves were near the New Cut on the 1st and two Tawny Owls were calling in Paraker Wood on the 6th. Kingfishers were noted along the Hythe Canal (2-3) and at the Willop Sewer. A **Lesser Spotted Woodpecker** was at Brockhill CP on the 9th. A Black Redstart was seen at Samphire Hoe on the 7th, and at least 6 Stonechats were noted there, whilst c.100 Redwings were at Nickoll's Quarry on the 1st and c.50 were at Saltwood Castle on the 21st. Wintering warblers comprised a Cetti's Warbler at West Hythe, a Dartford Warbler at Samphire Hoe, two Blackcaps in Folkestone and single Chiffchaffs in Hythe and Folkestone. Brockhill CP hosted a Nuthatch and 2 Marsh Tits, and another Marsh Tit was at Blackhouse Hill.

17 Tree Sparrows were by the New Cut on the 14th. Siskins were present in good numbers, with flocks at Westenhanger (30), West Hythe (25), and Brockhill CP (40), and up to 30 Lesser Redpolls were at the latter site. 22 Linnets were along Hythe Ranges on the 2nd, and up to 25 Yellowhammers were at Westenhanger.

February

The month began cold but dry, gradually becoming milder before cooler weather returned at the end of the first week. A rather mild day on the 11th produced peak counts of wildfowl, before these dispersed during the windy and generally wet week which followed as an Atlantic airflow took over. The 18th saw a return to a moderate to strong north-easterly airflow, which dominated for the rest of the month, making it feel cold, with occasional snow showers.

The only notable movement of Red-throated Divers was 100 east past Mill Point on the 11th, one of the few mild days in the month, and 20 Great Crested Grebes were counted off Hythe the same day. Great Crested Grebes began to increase late in the month, with 10 east past Mill Point on the 26th, and 140 on the sea off Sandgate on the 27th. At least 9 Little Grebes remained on the New Cut into February. On the 26th 9 Fulmars passed Mill Point and 2 Shags were present offshore there.

A Little Egret was seen at Radnor Park, Folkestone on the 11th (photo), and Grey Herons started to return to the heronry at Lympne, with 10 in the area on the 4th. The Mute Swan flock at Botolph's Bridge gradually built up to a peak of 30 birds on the 10th. Whilst they failed to attract any other swans or geese, the racecourse lake at Westenhanger hosted 14 Eurasian **White-fronted Geese** (on the 11th, decreasing to 7 on the 19th) and 3 **Barnacle Geese** (on the 11th-12th). Brent Geese began to move at the end of the month, despite the weather, with one off Copt Point on the 25th, 20 east past Mill Point on the 26th and 19 east there the next day.



Little Egret - Radnor Park, Folkestone - 11th February (Ian Roberts)



first-winter **Caspian Gull** (left) - Folkestone Harbour - 19th February (Ian Roberts)

Westenhanger also held almost all the ducks of any note, with up to 3 Pintail, 7 Wigeon, 12 Gadwall, 13 Tufted Ducks, and 15 Pochard. Peak counts were generally around the 11th with numbers dissipating thereafter. A female **Goldeneye** there on the 3rd was a notable record, and a flock of 5 (4 drakes) were on the sea off Sandgate on the 27th. A Water Rail remained at Samphire Hoe until at least the 18th.

Ringed Plovers were at Folkestone Harbour (4) and the Willop Outfall (1) on the 25th, with a peak of just 25 Golden Plovers by the New Cut on the 10th. 14 Grey Plovers were at the Willop Outfall on the 5th, whilst one which flew east past Mill Point on the 26th was perhaps an early migrant. 50 Knot at the Willop Outfall on the 5th was a good count, and single Sanderlings were seen there the same day and at Folkestone Harbour on the 25th. Two Jack Snipe (12th) and up to 33 Snipe (1st) were at Nickoll's Quarry, and a Woodcock was seen at Sandling Park on the 18th. 18 Curlew were at the Willop Outfall on the 25th, and Redshanks peaked at 9 in Folkestone Harbour on the 10th-11th. Turnstones were noted at the Willop Outfall (20), Folkestone Harbour (8), and Mill Point (2).

Highlight of the month was a first-winter **Caspian Gull** in Folkestone Harbour on the 19th - the first area record (photo).

As is usual in February there were few passerines of note, apart from the Dartford Warbler at Samphire Hoe (which remained until at least the 1st). Otherwise 80 Pied Wagtails and a Stonechat in a field by Botolph's Bridge on the 17th, a peak of 250 Fieldfares there on the 24th, up to 20 Tree Sparrows still by the New Cut and single Brambling, Redpoll and 10 Siskins at West Hythe on the 7th were most noteworthy.

March

March started cold, with moderate north-westerly winds, overnight frost and even a few snow showers. After a quiet first few days there was a trickle of visual migration comprising a Buzzard over Hythe, and a Siskin and 5 Stock Doves over Capel-le-Ferne Café on the 4th, 30 Starlings, 20 Chaffinches, 2 Stock Doves, a Siskin, and a Reed Bunting over the Café on the 5th and 61 Chaffinches, 50 Wood Pigeons, 37 Starlings, 9 Siskins, 4 Stock Doves, 4 Meadow Pipits and a Sky Lark over there the next day. Heavy frost on the 4th produced 2 Tufted Ducks and a Pochard at Nickoll's Quarry, and there were 6 Little Grebes there and 5 on the New Cut. Water Rails were still present at Nickoll's Quarry and Samphire Hoe early in the month.

First migrant dates in March:

27th - Wheatear
26th - Firecrest
25th - Little Ringed Plover
- Sandwich Tern
22nd - Black Redstart*
14th - Garganey
12th - Chiffchaff*

*excludes wintering birds

South-westerlies on the 7th saw some movement at sea, with 86 Brent Geese, 39 Red-throated Divers, 25 auks, 10 Common Scoter, 8 Fulmars and 2 Mediterranean Gulls east past Mill Point, but northerly winds soon returned and it again turned cold, with frost and a little snow. The only birds of note were a Little Egret in Radnor Park on the 9th (presumably the bird seen in February) and 18 Tufted Ducks and 5 Pochards at Westenhanger. North-easterlies on the 12th produced a flock of 5 Buzzards in off the sea at Folkestone, and a Chiffchaff, 2 Shoveler, a Dunlin, a Jack Snipe, and 46 Snipe were at Nickoll's Quarry. A Green Sandpiper and 22 Teal were noted at Botolph's Bridge.

The wind turned southerly and it felt milder on the 13th and 285 Brent Geese flew east past Samphire Hoe, whilst a Little Egret appeared there, and south-easterlies the next day saw a good total of 1,880 Brent Geese, 5 Garganey, and 2 Shoveler east past there. Similar conditions the next day saw 440 Brent Geese, 63 Pintail, 11 Shoveler, 7 Shelduck, and 5 Curlew moving up-channel.

Unfortunately strong, cold (north-easterly) winds returned from 16th and migration ground to a halt. Five Purple Sandpipers were seen at Battery Point (Seabrook) on the 20th and 9 Rock Pipits at Samphire Hoe included an apparent *littoralis* individual, whilst a migrant Rock Pipit was at Nickoll's Quarry on the 21st. The wind eased a little on the 22nd and 570 Chaffinches passed through at the cliffs, with the first migrant Black Redstart at Copt Point and a 'continental' Coal Tit at Capel-le-Ferne Café also of note, but only 40 Chaffinches flew east the next day.

Milder south-easterlies on the 24th encouraged 560 Brent Geese, 70 Black-headed Gulls, 50 Lesser Black-backed Gulls, 40 Gannets, 35 Red-throated Divers, 25 Sanderling, 19 Oystercatchers, 2 Grey Plovers, 2 Redshanks, and 2 Red-breasted Mergansers to move east past Samphire Hoe, and a Black Redstart was reported at Mill Point. A Little Ringed Plover at Samphire Hoe the next day was only the second record for the site, and the first Sandwich Terns (6) of the year were seen, whilst 140 Brent Geese flew east.

There was a very heavy passage of thrushes overnight but just 10 Redwings were grounded at Samphire Hoe on the morning of the 26th. Single Firecrest, Chiffchaff, and Black Redstart were also seen there and 90 Brent Geese flew east. A blustery south-westerly on the 27th produced just 20 Brent Geese on the sea past Samphire Hoe, but the first Wheatear was recorded on the land. A scattering of migrants the next day included a Firecrest in Cheriton, a Chiffchaff at Samphire Hoe, and a Wheatear reported at the Gun Site, whilst a flock of 12 Greylag Geese flew south over Abbotscliffe.

The wind eased on the 29th and there was a little more movement, with 370 Wood Pigeons, 4 Stock Doves, 8 Linnets, and 2 Siskins through, and single Chiffchaffs at Samphire Hoe and Copt Point. However the wind again picked up from the south-west and the month ended quietly, aside from 3 Firecrests at Samphire Hoe on the 30th.

April

The month started well with a **White Stork** (photo) circling over Folkestone for almost an hour on the 1st, when the first 2 Swallows of the year were seen over Saltwood Castle, and 4 'continental' Coal Tits, 2 Chiffchaffs, and a White Wagtail were at Samphire Hoe. Two **Hawfinches** were at Capel-le-Ferne (Gun Site) on the 2nd, and the first Willow Warbler and House Martin were also seen there, as was another 'continental' Coal Tit. The first migrant Blackcap and several Willow Warblers and Chiffchaffs were at West Hythe, and 4 Swallows arrived by the Cafe. 350 Wood Pigeons (the first of an excellent total of 7,050 logged during the month) and 5 Stock Doves flew west at the cliffs on the 2nd, and visual passage continued in north-westerly winds the

First migrant dates in April:

30th - Garden Warbler
27th - Swift
26th - Tree Pipit
25th - Reed Warbler
24th - Cuckoo
 - Arctic Tern
22nd - Lesser Whitethroat
21st - Whimbrel
19th - Redstart
 - Arctic Skua
17th - Nightingale
16th - Sedge Warbler
15th - Whitethroat
 - Common Tern
 - Yellow Wagtail

next day, with 1,280 Wood Pigeons, 6 Stock Doves, and a Collared Dove west at Capel-le-Ferne and 8 Siskins east. 8 Swallows, 20 Meadow Pipits, and 10 Chaffinches arrived in off the sea.

Similar conditions on the 4th produced a Marsh Harrier, the first Sand Martin, 2 Swallows and 42 Meadow Pipits in off at the cliffs, 380 Wood Pigeons and 2 Stock Doves west and 34 Chaffinches, 26 Siskins, 10 Linnets and a Brambling east. Three 'continental' Coal Tits were at Samphire Hoe and single Blackcaps were in song at the Gun Site and behind the Cafe. The wind went round to the east on the 5th, and there were a few migrants noted at Samphire Hoe including 2 'continental' Coal Tits, a Firecrest, a Wheatear, and a Black Redstart. 83 Siskins flew east there, and at 5 Chiffchaffs were at the Gun Site. A quiet couple of days followed with westerly winds producing no more than a single Willow Warbler at Samphire Hoe on the 7th, although 23 Siskins flew east there.

The 8th was better, and saw some movement on both land and sea between heavy showers, with a Marsh Harrier, 155 Wood Pigeons, and a Swallow through, and 50 Sandwich Terns and 42 Brent Geese past. North-westerlies on the 9th again induced good diurnal passage, with 1,750 Wood Pigeons (photo), 55 Linnets and a Buzzard west, 16 Siskins east, and a Hobby, 2 Sand Martins and 12 Swallows in off the sea. A 'continental' Coal Tit was in bushes by the Cafe. A further 450 Wood Pigeons flew west at Capel-le-Ferne Café the next day, whilst 13 Siskins flew east, 2 Swallows arrived in off the sea, and a Firecrest was in the bushes there. A chilly 11th saw just 2 'continental' Coal Tits and a Swallow at the Capel-le-Ferne Café, and the 12th was little better, with just 130 Wood Pigeons, 13 Siskins and a Swallow through. 46 Brent Geese and a Shag flew east past Mill Point on the 13th.

The first Ring Ouzel of the year was at Capel-le-Ferne (Gun Site) on the 14th, when 230 Wood Pigeons flew west and 12 House Martins flew in off the sea, and the following day produced three new summer migrants - Whitethroat at Capel-le-Ferne (Gun Site), Yellow Wagtail at Samphire Hoe and Common Tern (3) at Mill Point, as the weather eventually began to turn warmer. On a mild and overcast 16th a **Wood Lark** was recorded at Samphire Hoe (a new species for the site), and a Ring Ouzel, 2 Wheatears, 3 Yellow Wagtails, a Whitethroat, 2 Willow Warblers, 24 Swallows, and 4 House Martins were also recorded at the cliffs. A Sedge Warbler

- 14th - Ring Ouzel
- 9th - Hobby
- 4th - Sand Martin
- 2nd - House Martin
 - Willow Warbler
 - Blackcap*
- 1st - Swallow

*excludes wintering birds



White Stork - Folkestone - 1st April (Dale Gibson)



Wood Pigeons - Capel-le-Ferne - April (Ian Roberts)

along the Hythe Canal was new for the year. Similar conditions the next day produced the first Nightingale in song below Capel-le-Ferne Café and a Ring Ouzel, 10 Whitethroats, 5 Wheatears, and 3 Willow Warblers were also grounded at the cliffs, whilst 320 Wood Pigeons, 41 Swallows, 11 Siskins, 7 House Martins, 6 Yellow Wagtails, 4 Sand Martins, and a Brambling flew through. North-westerlies on the 18th saw 770 Wood Pigeons, 9 Swallows, 3 House Martins, 3 Sand Martins, 2 Stock Doves, and 2 Siskins moving over Capel-le-Ferne.

Despite an unpromising start, with low cloud and a brisk south-westerly, the 19th turned out to be an excellent day with a fine male **Subalpine Warbler** at Samphire Hoe in the morning (a new species for the area) and 2 **Ravens** there in the afternoon (to 20th, new for the site). A male Redstart was also new for the year, as were 2 Arctic Skuas and a Great Skua which flew east along with 150 Common Scoters. 10 Swallows came in off, and 6 Willow Warblers and 5 Whitethroats were counted. On a calmer 20th a Hobby flew west at Samphire Hoe and a Bonxie flew east. 365 Wood Pigeons and 5 Swallows flew through at the cliffs and 6 Wheatears were present.

A very light south-easterly was enough to encourage 240 Sandwich Terns, 210 Common Terns, 160 Black-headed Gulls, 3 Arctic Skuas, and 2 Whimbrels to move up-channel past Samphire Hoe on the 21st. Despite the wind picking up from the east, only a Little Egret, a Bar-tailed Godwit, an Arctic Skua, 19 Whimbrel, and 150 Sandwich Terns went east at Samphire Hoe the next day. The first Lesser Whitethroats were at the Gun Site and Samphire Hoe and 6 Wheatears were at Abbotscliffe. The 23rd was calmer and a Black-throated Diver and a flock of 150 Bar-tailed Godwits flew east past Samphire Hoe, where 2 Shags were seen offshore. A Ring Ouzel was at the Gun Site, 2 Lesser Whitethroats and 3 Wheatears were at Abbotscliffe, and 11 Sand Martins, 8 Swallows, 2 Yellow Wagtails, a White Wagtail, and a Redpoll flew through.

The 24th was overcast with a moderate north-easterly breeze, perfect conditions for the sea, where a **Black-tailed Godwit**, a Black-throated Diver, 2 Pomarine Skuas, 5 Arctic Skuas, a Bonxie, 12 Arctic Terns, 97 Sandwich Terns, 66 Gannets, 122 Kittiwakes, 41 Bar-tailed Godwits, 2 Dunlin, a Grey Plover, and a Redshank flew east. The best seawatch of the month was overshadowed however by events in the afternoon, when a **Cattle Egret** was seen on the main pool at Samphire Hoe before flying west (a new species for the area). The first Cuckoo of the year was heard at Capel-le-Ferne. Two days of dense fog followed which restricted coverage considerably, and only the first Reed Warblers of the year (at several sites in the west of the area) were seen on the 25th. A few grounded migrants at Hythe on the 26th included the first Tree Pipit of the year and 2 Little Egrets were at Samphire Hoe.

A spell of northerly winds from the 27th induced some visual passage, with the first 3 Swifts of the year and 19 House Martins, 17 Swallows, and 2 Sand Martins in off the sea at the cliffs on the 27th, 11 Swallows, 11 House Martins, 5 Sand Martins, 3 Yellow Wagtails, and a Swift in off the sea there on the 28th, and 15 Swallows, 6 House Martins, 2 Sand Martins, and a Yellow Wagtail in off the next day. The 29th also produced 2 male Ring Ouzels at Capel-le-Ferne. Early rain grounded a Garden Warbler, a Sedge Warbler, and 4 Wheatears at the cliffs on the 30th.

May

May began wet and windy, and the only birds of note on the 1st were a Garden Warbler at Samphire Hoe and a Hobby near the Café. The 2nd was dry and the wind moderated a little (to south-westerly 4-5), and 6 Velvet and 320 Common Scoters, 7 Arctic Skuas, and a Bonxie flew east past Samphire Hoe, whilst 2

First migrant dates in May:

12th - Spotted Flycatcher

8th - Little Tern

3rd - Turtle Dove

- Common Sandpiper

Hobbies were hunting at Nickoll's Quarry.

The 3rd was calm and clear, and temperatures rocketed to 24 C. The annual bird race produced a total of 96 species in the area, with the highlights being a Black-throated Diver, 3 Med Gulls, 6 Whimbrel, 100 Sandwich Terns, and 160 Common Scoter east past Samphire Hoe, also a Hobby, a Little Egret, 5 Wheatears, 2 Yellow Wagtails, and a Coal Tit there, the first Turtle Doves of the year at the Gun Site and West Hythe, and the first Common Sandpiper at Nickoll's Quarry. Cetti's Warblers were at West Hythe and Botolph's Bridge and Nightingale was singing at Peene. 6 Purple Sandpipers were still by the Hythe Imperial.

Next day was even warmer (28 C) with a light easterly wind, ideal conditions for Pomarine Skuas, 8 of which flew east past Samphire Hoe. An Arctic Skua, 175 'Commic' Terns, 65 Kittiwakes, 48 Gannets, 5 Bar-tailed Godwits, and 100 Common Scoter also flew east there, and a Ring Ouzel was at the Gun Site. Two **Ravens** (presumably the birds seen in April) re-appeared at the cliffs on the 5th (and were also reported the next day; photo), whilst single Cuckoo and Hobby flew east there and 165 Wood Pigeons flew west. 2 Black-throated Divers flew east past Samphire Hoe and a **Barn Owl** was hunting at Nickoll's Quarry in the evening (reported as present 3-4 weeks).



Above: Raven - Abbotscliffe - 5th May (Ian Roberts)

Below: Yellow-browed Warbler - Abbotscliffe - 9th May (Ian Roberts)



The warm weather continued on the 6th, with a light northerly breeze, and 2 **Black Kites** were seen over Abbotscliffe, whilst at least 100 Swallows, 20 House Martins and 10 Swifts arrived in off the sea, and c.2 Cuckoos were present. Fog on the 7th grounded singles of Tree Pipit, Sedge Warbler, and Wheatear at the cliffs, and 93 'Commic' Terns, 90 Gannets, 25 Sanderlings, 10 Whimbrel, 9 Dunlins, 2 Arctic Skuas, a Knot, a Common Sandpiper, and a Little Gull flew east at sea. Heavy rain the next day restricted observations to the sea, where 137 Sandwich, 51 'Commic', and the first Little Tern of the year, and 30 Bar-tailed Godwits and 2 Arctic Skuas flew east.

After early rain on the 9th, a singing **Yellow-browed Warbler** (the first spring record for the area; photo) was found in Church Gully, just inland from Abbotscliffe, where it remained all day. 2 Marsh Harriers and a Hobby also flew over once the weather brightened up. A flock of 14 Crossbills flew around the Café on the 10th before heading off west, and 25 Wood Pigeons, a Stock Dove, 16 Swallows, a Swift, a House Martin, 2 Sky Larks, and a Siskin also flew over. Several Crossbills were still in the area the next day, with flocks of 6, 5, and 3 and a single seen at the Café during the morning (photo), whilst a northerly breeze encouraged an Osprey and a Marsh Harrier to cross the Channel. 37 Swallows and 31 Swifts also flew in/east.

The first Spotted Flycatcher of the year was in trees below the Café on the 12th, and 33 Swifts, 30 Swallows, and a Redpoll flew in off the sea there. Fog on the 13th restricted coverage to the sea where 2 Knot and 25 Sandwich Terns flew east, and 13 Swallows arrived. A Little Egret was at Samphire Hoe. Overcast conditions the next day grounded a few migrants with a Spotted Flycatcher, a Tree Pipit, and 3 Turtle Doves at the Gun Site, and a Reed Warbler at Samphire Hoe. A Garganey, a Common Sandpiper, 2 Arctic Skuas, and 80 Common Scoter flew east at sea.



Crossbill - Capel-le-Ferne Café - 11th May (Ian Roberts)

The 15th was quiet, with just single Cuckoo, Turtle Dove, and Yellow Wagtail noted at Abbotscliffe, and the 16th was little better, with just 22 Swifts, 14 Swallows, and 2 House Martins west at the Café. The lull continued, with nothing of note on the next two days.

A front passed through on the night of the 18th/19th, and it was wet with unseasonably strong winds: severe gale 9 from the south-west. Winds continued to be strong (force 7-8), and from the south or south-west, until the 24th. Unsurprisingly, 11 Manx Shearwaters passed Copt Point on the 19th, as did 80 Gannets and 100 Sandwich Terns, and 4 Manx Shearwaters, an Arctic Skua, and a Bonxie flew west there the next morning. Far more remarkable however was a run of **Storm Petrel** sightings (the first ever in spring), which began with one off Mill Point on the afternoon of the 20th, followed by one past Copt Point on the 21st, with another there the next day, and an incredible **11+** there on the 24th (all flying west). Despite this unprecedented movement there was little else to be seen at sea, with just 2 Manx Shearwaters on the 22nd and a Little Tern on the 24th of note.

A calmer interlude on the 23rd saw a little movement on the land with a Spotted Flycatcher, a Turtle Dove, a Swift, and 4 Swallows through at the Gun Site. A Hobby came in off the sea at Copt Point on the 24th and at least 60 Swallows and 30 House Martins were feeding by the Café

the next day. Another front passed through on the 26th but produced little and the 27th was equally quiet.

The wind went north-westerly on the 28th which led to a late flourish of activity, with a **Red Kite** east over the Gun Site, and a Marsh Harrier, a Short-eared Owl, a Spotted Flycatcher, 35 Swifts, 40 Swallows and 100 House Martins in off the sea at the cliffs. A Honey Buzzard was reported over Samphire Hoe on the 29th, and 135 House Martins and 27 Swifts flew in off the sea, whilst showers in the morning grounded 2 Spotted Flycatchers at Abbotscliffe and singles of Spotted Flycatcher and Reed Warbler by the Café. Cool northerlies on the 30th saw just 3 Crossbills east and 28 Swifts west at the cliffs, and similar conditions the next day produced another Crossbill east at the Gun Site.

June

After a mixed first week, temperatures began to climb from the 7th, reaching the peak for the month of 30 C on the 12th. The 13th was humid with a few thundery showers, and the next day was very wet, with 13mm of rain. The weather warmed up again from the 15th, peaking at 27 C on the 18th, and the next few days were fresher as the wind increased a little from the south-west. Temperatures increased again, to 25 C on the 24th, preceding another 5mm of rain on the 25th. The end of the month was settled, with increasingly warmer days, eventually reaching 27 C again on the 30th.

A few late migrants continued to arrive in the first week of the month, with a Nightingale at Hythe Ranges and single Turtle Dove and Collared Dove in off the sea at Abbotscliffe on the 1st, a Hobby in off the sea at the Café on the 3rd, a Reed Warbler, a Cuckoo, and 2 Turtle Doves at the Gun Site on the 4th, another Reed Warbler at Copt Point on the 5th, and 53 Swifts and 20 House Martins in off the sea at the Café on the 6th. Two Avocets reported at Nickoll's Quarry briefly on the 2nd were unseasonable, as were 2 Bar-tailed Godwits that flew east past Hythe on the 6th.

Large raptors were a feature of the first half of the month, commencing with a Marsh Harrier in off the sea at Hythe Ranges on the 6th, then Common Buzzards at Pedlinge (2 on 8th), Beachborough, (1 on 9th-10th) and Folkestone (1 on 12th), and finally a **Red Kite** east over the Café on the 13th.

The summer run of Crossbill records continued into June, with singles over the Café on the 11th and 13th, 2+ heard there on the 15th, and 4 east over Hythe on the 18th.

A flock of up to 700 Common Scoters were present off Hythe throughout, and a Red-throated Diver there on the 6th was rather late. A drake Pochard at Westenhangar on the 9th and a pair of Tufted Ducks at Beachborough on the 10th were unusual records, and a count of 29 Cormorants at Hythe Ranges on the 25th was notably high for mid-summer. 3-4 Shags were also reported there earlier in the month.

Returning waders were noted from the 19th, when 2 Curlews flew west past Copt Point, with a Green Sandpiper at Nickoll's Quarry the next day, another Curlew west past Copt Point on the 21st, and small flocks of Lapwings in off the sea at the Café on the 24th and Nickoll's Quarry on the 25th.

A moderate south-westerly on the 21st produced two Manx Shearwaters and 15 Gannets past Copt Point, and a fresh westerly the next day encouraged an exodus of Swifts, with 500 logged moving west over Hythe in just 10 minutes. The 24th saw a Little Egret at Beachborough and a Hobby at Samphire Hoe, but there was little of note in the last week of the month.

July

There was a hot start to the month, with temperatures reaching 31 C on the 2nd. It was typically quiet, but 2 Sand Martins east at the Café and 8 Lapwings in off the sea at Hythe on the 1st were early signs of return passage, and a flock of 30 Lapwings had built up at Nickoll's Quarry by the 5th. A Hobby was seen over Folkestone on the 1st, whilst another flew over Capel-le-Ferne on the 7th. At least 300 Common Scoter were still present off Hythe on the 3rd.

A front passed through on the 9th and produced a little rain, as well as a single Bonxie and 15 Common Scoters west past Copt Point. A Little Egret was at Nickoll's Quarry on the 11th (and intermittently to 19th), with an Eider off Battery Point (Seabrook) and 11 Oystercatchers at Hythe the next day. A Yellow Wagtail flew over Samphire Hoe on the 13th and a Great Spotted Woodpecker at Abbotscliffe on the 14th was probably another early migrant.

Things gathered pace from the 15th, with a Greenshank, 2 Green Sandpipers, and a Common Sandpiper at Nickoll's Quarry and a steady passage of Swifts moving into a brisk easterly breeze. Similar conditions the next day produced a flock of c.80 Sand Martins flying east over Hythe. A light passage of Sand Martins was noted at both Abbotscliffe and Nickoll's Quarry on the 17th, and the latter site also held 6 Green Sandpipers and a Whimbrel.

With the easterly breeze subsiding temperatures climbed again, breaking 33 C on the 19th, on which date single Dunlin were logged at Nickoll's Quarry and flying over Hythe. A Crossbill flew east over the Gun Site on the 20th and 2 Yellow Wagtails flew over Samphire Hoe. Showers on the 20th-22nd grounded a few passage warblers, with Lesser Whitethroat at the Gun Site and Blackcap at Abbotscliffe on the 20th, Sedge Warbler at Abbotscliffe and 2 Willow Warblers at the Gun Site on the 21st, and Reed Warbler, Sedge Warbler, 2 Lesser Whitethroats, and 2 Willow Warblers at Abbotscliffe on the 22nd. A count of 92 Mediterranean Gulls flying west along the beach at Hythe on the latter date was unusual.

A Honey Buzzard flew in off the sea at the Gun Site on the 23rd, but there were just 2 Willow Warblers at Abbotscliffe. 3 Sand Martins and 40 Swifts flew west, a Dunlin was at Samphire Hoe, and an Eider was seen off Copt Point. Two Pied Flycatchers were reported at Samphire Hoe on a foggy 24th and there was a peak of 7 Green Sandpipers at Nickoll's Quarry. A Corn Bunting at Abbotscliffe on the 25th was notable.

The 26th was hot (32 C) with thundery showers, which appeared to induce an unusual movement of 112 Sandwich Terns east past Samphire Hoe, whilst an adult Yellow-legged Gull was seen on Folkestone Beach. A **Wood Sandpiper** was at Nickoll's Quarry from the 27th (into August) and 160 Swifts were feeding inland of the Gun Site. It was quiet for passage warblers however with just a few Lesser Whitethroats, Blackcaps, and Willow Warblers to be seen.

On the 30th 5 Green and 2 Common Sandpipers were at Nickoll's Quarry, and 3 Little Egrets were seen over the Hythe Canal. The month ended on a blustery note, but these conditions did produce a **Balearic Shearwater** west past Copt Point.

August

The **Wood Sandpiper** remained at Nickoll's Quarry until the 1st August, on which date 3 Green and 2 Common Sandpipers were present. Numbers increased to 4 Green and 4 Common Sandpipers on the 3rd, when a Greenshank was also seen. Another Greenshank flew west past Samphire Hoe the next day and a Redshank was noted there on the 6th.

A moderate westerly on the 2nd encouraged a Yellow Wagtail, 2 Grey Wagtails, and 20 Swifts to move into the wind over Abbotscliffe, whilst a Spotted Flycatcher and 4 Willow Warblers were grounded. The wind went northerly the next day, and deposited a Whinchat, a Grasshopper Warbler, a Sedge Warbler, 4 Lesser Whitethroats, and 5 Willow Warblers at Abbotscliffe. Five Willow Warblers and a Lesser Whitethroat were at Samphire Hoe on the 4th and the first returning Wheatear was noted there on the 6th.

It was typically quiet on the sea, although 60 Gannets were offshore of Samphire Hoe on the 2nd and 2 Arctic Skuas flew west there on the 4th. A Tufted Duck was noteworthy at Nickoll's Quarry on the 3rd.

The next week was fairly wet, in contrast to the particularly dry July, with predominately north to west winds, and little was seen although coverage was rather limited.

A dry start on the 14th allowed a Garden Warbler, 2 Willow Warblers, a Yellow Wagtail, and the first 2 migrant Robins to be found at Samphire Hoe, whilst 3 Sedge Warblers, 4 Willow Warblers, and a Lesser Whitethroat were at Abbotscliffe. An overcast 15th produced 2 Reed and 4 Sedge Warblers at Abbotscliffe, a Whinchat, and a Sedge Warbler at Samphire Hoe, and totals of 15 Willow Warblers, 4 Lesser Whitethroats, and 3 Blackcaps at the cliffs. 3 Yellow Wagtails flew west.

The run of acrocephalus warblers peaked with at least 3 Reed and 7 Sedge Warblers at Abbotscliffe on the 16th, with another Reed Warbler in a Folkestone garden. 6 Willow Warblers and a Whinchat were also at Abbotscliffe. A single Tree Pipit was the only new arrival at Abbotscliffe on the 17th, and just 2 Yellow Wagtails flew west, and there was little else until a Cuckoo appeared at Creteway Down on the 19th.

A fairly early Snipe was at Nickoll's Quarry on the 13th and 50 Lapwings were seen there on the 15th, but only 1-2 Common and Green Sandpipers were recorded. A Common Sandpiper was notable at Samphire Hoe on the 15th, as was a Little Egret there the same day, and a migrant Teal was at Nickoll's Quarry. At least 200 Mediterranean Gulls were in stubble fields inland of the Gun Site on the 16th.

North-westerlies on the 22nd produced a Spotted Flycatcher, a Sedge Warbler, 2 Whinchats, 3 Lesser Whitethroats, 3 Robins, and 17 Willow Warblers at Abbotscliffe and 4 Yellow Wagtails flew west. A change to south-easterlies encouraged a rare look at the sea on the 23rd, and this was rewarded with a Black Tern, a Greenshank, a Dunlin, 18 Sandwich Terns, and 20 Gannets flying west past Samphire Hoe. Back on land a Sedge Warbler, 2 Wheatears, 2 Whinchats, 2 Turtle Doves, and 9 Willow Warblers were seen at the cliffs.

The only new arrival on the 24th was a Hobby at Samphire Hoe, which remained in the area to the 27th, and marked the start of a run of raptor sightings: another Hobby flew west over Hythe on the 25th, single Buzzards were seen at Castle Hill (Folkestone), Postling, and Pedlinge on the 27th, a Hobby and a Buzzard flew over the Gun Site on the 28th and 2 Peregrines were seen at Nickoll's Quarry the same day.

A light south-westerly on the 25th produced a good arrival of Willow Warblers, with at least 30 at Nickoll's Quarry and at least 13 at cliffs, and a Garden Warbler, a Reed Warbler, a Spotted Flycatcher, and 5 Lesser Whitethroats were seen at the former site, with a Reed Warbler, a Blackcap, and a Turtle Dove at the Gun Site. Two Sedge Warblers were new in at Abbotscliffe on the 26th and 2 Golden Plovers flew over.

At least 500 Mediterranean Gulls were in fields inland of Capel-le-Ferne and Church Hougham on the 27th, and 5 Common Sandpipers were at Nickoll's Quarry.

The month ended with a spell of moderate north or north-westerlies which saw a little visual migration into the wind, including a Swift, 5 Yellow Wagtails, 6 Sand Martins, and a steady trickle of Swallows at Abbotscliffe on the 27th, 2 Sand Martins, 20 Swifts, c.150 Swallows, and c.300 House Martins there the next day, and 10 Yellow Wagtails and 10 Swifts on the 29th. Grounded migrants amounted to just 2 Wheatears at the cliffs on the 27th, 2 Whinchats and a Snipe at Abbotscliffe on the 28th, and a Garden Warbler, 2 Spotted Flycatchers, 2 Blackcaps, and 4 Willow Warblers at Abbotscliffe on the 30th.

3 Arctic Skuas, 5 Wigeon, and 3 Teal flew west past Copt Point on the 31st.

September

September began with a moderate south-westerly wind which increased to force 7-8 by the night of the 2nd/3rd when a front passed through, bringing the only rainfall of the first half of the month. Most attention focused on the sea, where 2 Arctic Skuas, 15 Sandwich and 25 Common Terns, and 42 Gannets flew west past Samphire Hoe on the 1st, and a **Balearic Shearwater**, 2 Great and 4 Arctic Skuas, 3 Shovelers, 4 Arctic, 35 Common and 40 Sandwich Terns, and 80 Gannets flew west past Copt Point on the 3rd.

Calmer conditions on the 4th saw a small arrival of migrants at the cliffs, including a Whinchat, a Reed Warbler, 2 Sedge Warblers, 2 Turtle Doves, 3 Wheatears, and a Great Spotted Woodpecker, whilst 3 Swifts and 5 Yellow Wagtails flew west. Windier weather returned the next day, and a Bonxie, 2 Arctic Skuas, 2 Shoveler, 2 Teal, 3 Wigeon, 10 Dunlin, 2 Arctic, 100 Common and 130 Sandwich Terns, and 60 Gannets went west past Samphire Hoe. The first Reed Bunting of the autumn was at Abbotscliffe on the 6th, but a single Sedge Warbler was the only other bird of note. The wind switched to northerly on the 7th, and the sea was surprisingly productive with a Sooty Shearwater, 3 Bonxies, 4 Arctic Skuas, 150 Gannets, and a Common Sandpiper flying west past Samphire Hoe.

Easterly winds dominated the next 4 days but due to sunny and warm conditions (including the warmest day of the month on the 11th, when temperatures reached 28 C) few migrants were grounded. Of note were a Sedge Warbler, 2 Willow Warblers, and 8 Chiffchaffs at the cliffs on the 8th, 2 Wheatears and 4 Whinchats at Abbotscliffe on the 9th, a Reed Warbler at the Gun Site on the 10th, and a Firecrest at Abbotscliffe on the 11th.

The 12th produced a Spotted Flycatcher at the Gun Site and a Sedge Warbler at Abbotscliffe, and there was a Spotted Flycatcher at Abbotscliffe and a Whinchat at Samphire Hoe the next day, when 6 Yellow and 3 Grey Wagtails flew west. Another Spotted Flycatcher was at Samphire Hoe on the 14th, when a Grasshopper Warbler, 2 Whinchats, and a Common Sandpiper were also present.

A spell of north to north-west winds followed and saw a little more movement, including a Marsh Harrier, a Turtle Dove, 2 Wheatears, and 3 Whinchats at the cliffs on the 15th, and a Pied Flycatcher, 2 Spotted Flycatchers, and 4 Whinchats at Samphire Hoe and 2 Whinchats at Abbotscliffe the next day. On the 16th a Redstart was at the Gun Site, whilst Samphire Hoe hosted singles of Spotted Flycatcher, Reed Warbler, Sedge Warbler, and Merlin, and totals of 2 Wheatears, 4 Chiffchaffs, 5 Whinchats, 8 Black Redstarts, 8 Robins, 10 Dunnocks, and 13 Blackcaps were logged at the cliffs. 80 Meadow Pipits, 3 Tree Pipits, 3 Yellow Wagtails, 2 Grey Wagtails, and single Golden Plover and Great Spotted Woodpecker flew over. A juvenile Honey Buzzard (photo) flew over Abbotscliffe on the 18th, but otherwise just single Goldcrest and Lesser Whitethroat were noted.



Honey Buzzard - Abbotscliffe - 18th September
(Ian Roberts)

The wind became westerly on the 19th and the next two days were very quiet, with just 3 Whinchats and 6 Chiffchaffs at Samphire Hoe on the 19th, and 4 Blackcaps there the next day. Four days of south to south-east winds followed, with occasional showers, and there were a few more migrants to be seen including a Sedge Warbler, a Wheatear, a Great Spotted Woodpecker, and 4 Whinchats at Abbotscliffe on the 21st, a Willow Warbler and 8 Chiffchaffs at the cliffs on the 22nd, a Garden Warbler at Nickoll's Quarry and 5 Whinchats and 14 Chiffchaffs in the area on the 23rd, and a Grasshopper Warbler at Samphire Hoe on the 24th. Different Sooty Shearwaters passed Copt Point and Samphire Hoe on the latter date.

A north-westerly wind and early rain grounded 33 Chiffchaffs, 14 Blackcaps, and a Spotted Flycatcher at the cliffs on the 25th, and 350 Meadow Pipits, 2 Yellow Wagtails, and a Tree Pipit flew east. Two Willow Warblers were the only evidence of new arrival the next day, as were 3 Whinchats at Abbotscliffe on the 27th. The month ended as it began, with a moderate south-westerly wind, and there was a little movement at sea, including a Great Skua past Samphire Hoe on the 29th and single Sooty Shearwater and Arctic Skua past Copt Point on the 30th.

October

South-westerlies continued into October and produced a Manx Shearwater, 2 Sooty Shearwaters, 2 Great and 9 Arctic Skuas, 8 Pintail, and the first 2 Brent Geese of the autumn west past Copt Point on the 1st, and a Black Tern, 2 Razorbills, and 19 Arctic Skuas west there the next day.

A cooler north-westerly led to an arrival of Chiffchaffs on the 3rd, with c.70 in the area, together with 6 Wheatears, 5 Blackcaps, 4 Whinchats, 3 Goldcrests, and a late Whitethroat, and visual migration included 600 Swallows, 180 House Martins, 22 Sky Larks, 4 Sand Martins, 4 Grey Wagtails, 4 Reed Buntings, and a Golden Plover west at the cliffs. A Little Egret was feeding below Abbotscliffe and 3 Snipe and a Buzzard were at Nickoll's Quarry. Similar conditions on the 4th saw a passage of 850 Starlings, 600 Swallows, 190 Linnets, 9 Siskins, 7 Reed Buntings, 2 Sand Martins, 2 Grey Wagtails, and a Yellow Wagtail over at Abbotscliffe, but there were no new grounded migrants.

Totals of 22 Chiffchaffs, 11 Blackcaps, and a Wheatear at Samphire Hoe on the 5th were probably leftover from the arrival two days earlier. A freshening south-westerly wind encouraged 2 Arctic Skuas past on the sea, and the 6th saw a juvenile **Long-tailed Skua**, a Bonxie, 10 Arctic Skuas, and 20 Brent Geese pass Copt Point. The 7th produced little more than 2 Whinchats and 5 Wheatears at Abbotscliffe and a Tufted Duck at Botolph's Bridge.

21 Brent Geese, 2 Arctic Skuas, and the first Red-throated Diver of the autumn flew west Copt Point on the 8th, whilst a light visual passage at Abbotscliffe comprised 130 Linnets, 80 House Martins, 55 Goldfinches, 50 Meadow Pipits, 15 Greenfinches, and 5 Reed Buntings west, and 4 Siskins east. Southerly winds from the 9th made for a very quiet couple of days, with the only notable movement being 150 Goldfinches east at the cliffs on the 10th.

The wind continued round to the south-east on the 11th and remained in the easterly quarter for a week, producing a small influx of Ring Ouzels (photo): 6 were at Abbotscliffe on the 12th, with singles at Capel-le-Ferne on the 13th and Samphire Hoe on the 14th-15th, 13 at Abbotscliffe on the 15th, one at the Gun Site on the 17th, and 4 at Abbotscliffe the same day. Other scarce migrants were 2 Firecrests at Abbotscliffe on the 11th (with singles there on various dates thereafter) and one at Samphire Hoe on the 15th, a late Tree Pipit at Abbotscliffe on the 14th, a Black Redstart there the next day, and the highlight - a **Tawny Pipit** at the Gun Site on the 17th.



Ring Ouzel - Abbotscliffe - October (Ian Roberts)

Other migrant thrushes involved the first 5 Redwings of the autumn on the 11th, with a later arrival of 300 on the 16th, the first Fieldfare on the 17th, a general increase in Blackbirds and Song Thrushes, including an arrival of 40 of the latter in off the sea at the Café on the 12th, and a total of 7 apparently migratory Mistle Thrushes. An increase in Dunnocks (20 at Abbotscliffe on the 13th), Robins (10 there the same day), and Stonechats (14 there on 14th) was evident, with small numbers of Wheatears, and the last Whinchat on the 11th. Warblers however were few, with a peak of just 14 Chiffchaffs on the 15th, and Blackcaps and Goldcrests were present in ones and twos, but a flock of 9 Long-tailed Tits at Abbotscliffe on the 13th-14th was a notable record.

Visual passage during this period included reasonable numbers of Goldfinches (including 240 east on the 11th and 205 east on the 14th), a few Greenfinches (peak 53 on the 11th), and Siskins (20 west on the 11th and 8 in/east on the 12th), and single redpoll and Brambling. Peaks of 40 Sky Larks, 70 Meadow Pipits, and 14 alba wagtails, and 2 Grey Wagtails were noted. A total of 14 Tree Sparrows (in 2 flocks) flew over on the 12th and 5 Reed Buntings flew west on the 11th.

17 Grey Herons flew west at Abbotscliffe on the 11th, when the last Hobby was noted there, and a Buzzard flew north over Hythe on the 15th. A Little Egret was at Abbotscliffe on the 12th, 24 Lapwings flew in off the sea on the 12th, and 1-2 Snipe were flushed there on several dates.

The wind went back southerly to south-westerly from the 18th and increased in strength, with frequent rain and even a few thunderstorms. It was very quiet however on both land and sea, with the pick being a flock of c.3,000 Starlings in off the sea at Copt Point on the 19th, single

Arctic Skua and a Razorbill past on the 20th, a Firecrest at Mill Point and c.400 Goldfinches west on the 21st, and a Ring Ouzel over the Café the next day.

The 23rd was calmer and cooler with a westerly breeze, and a Lapland Bunting and 4 Ring Ouzels were found at Abbotscliffe, whilst a Marsh Harrier headed out to sea there and 70 Swallows, 60 Greenfinches, 21 Stock Doves, 4 Siskins, 3 Bramblings, 3 Tree Sparrows, 3 Reed Buntings, 2 Collared Doves, and a Great Spotted Woodpecker flew west. Similar conditions the next day produced a **Wood Lark** at Abbotscliffe, 8 Ring Ouzels (5 at Abbotscliffe and 3 at Samphire Hoe), and 60 Meadow Pipits, 55 House Martins, 15 Swallows, 10 Stock Doves, 4 Collared Doves, and 4 Reed Buntings flew west.

In a fresh south-easterly on the 25th 20 Brent Geese, 5 Red-breasted Mergansers, 2 Arctic Skuas, a Great Skua, 2 Curlews, a Lapwing, and a Little Egret passed Samphire Hoe. A Black-throated Diver, a Bonxie, 2 Sandwich Terns, and 12 Brent Geese flew past the same site the next day, whilst 2 Wheatears were present and 540 Starlings arrived in off the sea.

A cooler north-westerly again produced some visual migration on the 27th, when 450 Starlings, 305 Wood Pigeons, 218 Stock Doves, 24 Magpies, 22 Crows, 20 Jackdaws, 12 Reed Buntings, 6 Collared Doves, 4 Siskins, 3 redpolls, a Rock Pipit, and a Golden Plover flew west at Abbotscliffe. The wind switched to the south-west the next day and just a Ring Ouzel and 7 Goldcrests were seen at the Gun Site. The 29th saw another day of north-westerlies and another notable passage, with 571 Chaffinches, 470 Starlings, 226 Stock Doves, 4 Tree Sparrows, 4 Reed Buntings, a Merlin, and a Brambling in/west at Abbotscliffe, and 15 redpolls, 12 Siskins, and 6 Little Egrets east there. Ring Ouzels were seen at Abbotscliffe (3) and Samphire Hoe and a Wheatear was at the latter site.

375 Brent Geese, 18 auks, 4 Shelduck, 3 Little Gulls, 3 Curlew, an Eider, a Wigeon, and a Bonxie passed Copt Point on the 30th and 420 Starlings flew in off the sea there. A **Spotted Redshank** flew over Nickoll's Quarry and 600 Lapwings, 45 Golden Plovers, 12 Little Grebes, and a Tufted Duck were seen at Botolph's Bridge. On the 31st c.65 Razorbills and 40 Brent Geese flew west past Samphire Hoe.

November

The month began with the first proper cold weather of the autumn, seeing overnight temperatures in the range of 0 to 3 C in the first week and the first frosts. There was a fresh northerly wind on the 1st, which induced the first movement of Fieldfares of the autumn, with 263 flying west at Abbotscliffe. 27 Redwings, 150 Wood Pigeons, and 12 Stock Doves also flew west there and 15 redpolls flew east. Two **Little Auks** were seen off Mill Point on the 2nd, following a large influx into the North Sea the previous day. A Goldeneye, 149 Brent Geese, 40 Shelduck, 4 Curlews, and 2 Red-breasted Mergansers also passed Mill Point and there was a notable arrival of 120 Blackbirds at Samphire Hoe, with 20 Redwings, 14 Fieldfares, 2 Bramblings, a Woodcock, and a Dartford Warbler (which remained until at least 20th) also being seen there. 50 Blackbirds, 6 Song Thrushes, and a Fieldfare at Abbotscliffe on the 3rd were no doubt remnants of the previous day's arrival, and just 8 Shelduck flew past at sea.

A cold north-westerly on the 4th produced the best visual migration of the autumn, with 2 **Wood Larks**, a male Hen Harrier, a Merlin, 3,175 Chaffinches, 1,735 Starlings, and 88 Sky Larks arriving in off the sea at Abbotscliffe. A much smaller passage of 180 Chaffinches and a Brambling flew in off the sea there the next day, and a Woodcock and 30 Blackbirds were also seen. Arrival slowed further still on the 6th, with just 6 Stock Doves, 2 Siskins, and a Brambling over Abbotscliffe. Elsewhere there was a Kingfisher in Folkestone Harbour on the 4th (until month's end), a Little Egret at Samphire Hoe on the 5th (with up to 3 there on several dates in the

month) and a Shag off the latter site the same day. A quiet few days followed, with only a White Pelican of unknown origin over Folkestone on the 9th providing any interest.

A moderate south-westerly on the 10th produced 41 Brent Geese, 4 Shelducks, and a Curlew off Samphire Hoe and 2 Siskins and 2 redpolls flew over the Café the next day. A Green Sandpiper and a Chiffchaff were at Nickoll's Quarry on the 12th. Another westerly blow on the 13th saw a Razorbill, 2 Little Gulls, 25 Common Scoters, and 40 Gannets pass Copt Point, and 2 Red-breasted Mergansers flew west at Samphire Hoe on the 14th. There appeared to be a sizeable passage of Redwings and Fieldfares on the night of the 15th/16th ahead of an incoming front, but the wet and windy weather that followed on the 16th produced just 2 Red-breasted Mergansers and a Razorbill off Copt Point.

Cooler weather on the 18th encouraged a little visual migration, with 25 Chaffinches and 60 Starlings in off the sea at Abbotscliffe. Another 36 Chaffinches came in off the next day and a Firecrest was found at Dover Hill. 3 Purple Sandpipers (photo) had returned to Hythe (with up to 5 there by the end of the month).

Two 2 **Bearded Tits** were found at Nickoll's Quarry on the 21st (remaining to 24th), and a Goldeneye was also seen there. A 1st-winter **Glaucous Gull** was at Nickoll's Quarry on the 24th, on which date an adult **Caspian Gull** was seen on the Folkestone Beach. 2 Water Rails and a Green Sandpiper were also at Nickoll's Quarry at the end of the month. A Firecrest and a Woodcock were seen in Folkestone Warren on the 29th.

December

The first week of December was characterised by mild, wet, and windy weather. The next ten days were cooler and drier, with a few overnight frosts, but this period was interspersed with a couple of milder, rain-bearing fronts. The wind had been predominately from the westerly quarter, but Anticyclonic conditions from the 19th brought a change to an easterly airflow, accompanied by heavy cloud. It was generally cool, with daytime temperatures only around 4-7 C, however the cloud cover prevented any frost. The last 3 days of the month saw a return to wet and windy westerlies.

A Red-throated Diver at Nickoll's Quarry on the 2nd was a notable inland record, but the only count of significance on the sea was 40 off Hythe on the 27th. A Fulmar flew past Copt Point on the 7th and the first bird returned to



Purple Sandpiper - Hythe - 24th November
(Andy Vidler)



Caspian Gull - Folkestone Harbour - 11th-13th
December (Ian Roberts)

the cliffs at Samphire Hoe on the 14th. A Little Egret was a Botolph's Bridge on the 16th and the fields to the west (along Donkey Street) attracted several herds of Mute Swans, which peaked at 62 on the 9th.

The only wildfowl of note in the first half of the month were 8 Wigeon and 3 Gadwall on the 1st, a drake Pochard on the 4th, 2 Tufted Ducks on the 10th, and 3 Wigeon on the 12th, all at Nickoll's Quarry. The change to an easterly airflow led to a small influx of ducks at the same site from the 19th-24th, with peak counts of 15 Mallards, 9 Wigeon, 8 Tufted Ducks, 5 Teal, 4 Shelducks, 4 Gadwall, 3 Shoveler, and a Pochard. Elsewhere 4 Wigeon flew east past Hythe on the 24th, a single Wigeon flew west there on the 27th, and 2 Pochard were at Samphire Hoe on the 28th. A flock of 15 Common Scoter was on the sea off Copt Point on the 6th.

Up to 4 Water Rails were wintering at Nickoll's Quarry and another was seen at Samphire Hoe. Nickoll's Quarry produced a peak of only 9 Coot, whilst the largest Lapwing flock noted was just 120 at Botolph's Bridge, and only a single Golden Plover was recorded. Nickoll's Quarry hosted up to 3 Jack Snipe during the month and there was a peak of 13 Common Snipe there on the 24th. The same site recorded single Curlews on two dates and a single Green Sandpiper was present throughout, with an additional 2 there on the 16th. At least 3 Purple Sandpipers were wintering at Hythe and up to 10 Redshanks were roosting in Folkestone Harbour.

A first-winter **Caspian Gull** was in Folkestone Harbour on the 11th-13th, and there were counts of 1,200 Herring and 300 Great Black-backed Gulls off Mill Point on the 18th, and 1,000 Black-headed Gulls in the Burmarsh Road area on the 1st. An adult Little Gull flew west past Copt Point on the 14th, on which date 5 Razorbills also went west there.

20 Stock Doves were at Nickoll's Quarry on the 2nd, and up to 8 Sky Larks, 50 Meadow Pipits, and 30 Pied Wagtails were wintering there. Stonechats were noted at Samphire Hoe (6), Nickoll's Quarry (4), and Hythe Bay (2), and a Grey Wagtail flew over Hythe on the



Bearded Tit - Nickoll's Quarry - one of the three present in December (Ian Roberts)



Little Egret - Botolph's Bridge - 16th December (Brian Harper)

28th. Although coverage away from Nickoll's Quarry was rather limited, winter thrushes appeared to be in very short supply and in fact just a single Redwing was reported.

2 Cetti's Warblers were at Nickoll's Quarry throughout and an eastern-type Chiffchaff was seen there on the 15th, with up to 2 individuals of the nominate race present on several dates. The 2 **Bearded Tits** remained at Nickoll's Quarry from November and 3 were seen there from the 10th to at least the 17th. A Lapland Bunting flew west over Nickoll's Quarry on the 16th, and this site hosted up to 12 Linnets, 5 Reed Buntings, and 3 Yellowhammers during the month.



Mediterranean Gull - Folkestone - December
(Andy Vidler)