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Editorial

Yesterday afternoon I was delighted to spend some time watching a Song Thrush in my garden, vigorously bashing a small Cepeda snail on the concrete slab. I was a trifle conflicted as I once spent a whole summer studying land snails for a dissertation and grew to quite like these odd little inverts, still, 'thrush gotta eat'. It occurred to me that I had not seen this particular behaviour for some considerable time, largely because Song Thrushes have become rather sporadic visitors to my garden and its surrounds. A marked change from years ago, when they were everyday visitors to the garden throughout the year and bred in my boundary hedge on several occasions. In recent years the number of singing birds in spring has also declined so it was especially pleasing to count three individuals from my garden in one dawn chorus earlier in the year. This morning as I lay in bed in the early twilight, I delighted to realise that the loudest element of the incipient dawn chorus was a very vocal Song Thrush, probably singing from my conker tree. Let's hope that we will have a few more of them back in the garden patch soon.

Some of my non-birding friends (I do have a few, in spite of my best efforts) have expressed a certain disquiet when I happily announce that autumn has arrived in the latter part of July. As far as they are concerned it is still summer. From my perspective after years of hanging around sea bird colonies and coastal marshes there is little doubt that July marks the beginning of the long march south for many of Europe's birds. In my garden in East Kent this has usually been marked by the appearance of small groups of flyover Lapwings, gathering to winter locally. Sadly, this seldom happens nowadays, although I am not too sure why as there still seem to be substantial numbers of the species wintering around Pegwell Bay and some of the inland marshes, though nowhere near that in former years.

My own theory is that the decline is linked to the loss of some rather damp and generally unproductive cereal fields which bordered the village. In winter they were a regular haunt of good numbers of Lapwing and also attracted a regular flock of Golden Plover. Both species would take a turn over my garden from time to time, not infrequently accompanied by a Ruff or two. No longer, the cereal fields have gone, although against the trend of rural development they did not sink beneath ugly executive housing, but rather became high intensity orchards, satisfying our insatiable demand for tasteless and over-priced apples. Progress of a sort, perhaps!

Keep safe!
Good birding

Norman

News and announcements

IMPORTANT NOTICE

Covid-19

The BTO has had no further indication that the status of BTO volunteer surveys in England with regards to constituting 'voluntary or charitable activities' has changed since this decision was made in autumn 2020.

This means that survey volunteers can continue survey activities without restrictions on travel or group sizes. Volunteers can currently undertake surveys in most/all parts of the UK so long as they are careful to follow relevant guidance". Given the changing situation it would be prudent before undertaking any BTO survey away from your own house and garden please check the latest guidance at; www.bto.org/covid19.

Thanks,

Murray, Bob and Brian



The KOS Turtle Dove Survey 2021

The Kent Ornithological Survey is conducting a survey of Turtle Doves in Kent during 2021, in collaboration with the **RSPB/RBBP/Natural England and BTO**, who are conducting a national survey. Details of the survey and how to take part can be found at <http://kosturtledoves.birdsurvey.org.uk/> It is not too late to participate as the survey period has only just commenced, so if you would like to take part please follow the link above and select an available square.



Many thanks to all those who have volunteered to help with the Kent survey. So far over 250 squares have been allocated with county coverage approaching 80%, an excellent response. It's now time for volunteers to plan their first survey visits which need to be between May 11th and June 20th. At the time of writing the first birds are returning but it has been a slow spring for many summer migrants due to the prolonged cold weather and northerly winds. Hopefully by the end of May and beginning of June most birds will be back. Please remember to make your survey visits and to follow the instructions as provided on the KOS Turtle Dove Survey website – just click on your survey square and you will see the button links to print off the instructions, recording form and map of your square. Any problems please contact kosturtledoves@birdsurvey.org.uk

Note that the details for returning survey results have changed and are now:-

Please return the survey maps and summary forms by 31 August 2021 to Nicole Khan, Operation Turtle Dove, RSPB Swale Office, John Roberts Business Park, Pean Hill, Whitstable CT5 3BJ or scanned copies may be emailed to nicole.khan@rspb.org.uk

These details may well be different to those on forms that you've already printed off ahead of the survey, so please check.

Additional Turtle Dove Records

If people know of sites where they regularly record Turtle Doves, which are not included in the selected survey squares, please go ahead and survey if you are able and wish to do so. However, it's important that you note the 1km square reference and that you survey the whole square using the instructions and recording form provided on the survey website. These squares will not be displayed on the survey map, but the results will be used in the survey. Please submit results to the survey organiser as directed above and on the website.

Please submit all other records of Turtle Doves, outside the survey, to BirdTrack. Please give full details including date, accurate location (preferably 6-figure OS reference), number of birds, whether singing bird or pair etc plus any other relevant comments such as brief description of habitat. These casual records will be considered when the population estimate is calculated from the full survey results and will be important for the Society records and contribution to RBBP.

JNCC Seabird Count 2015/21 – survey of urban gulls in Kent 2021

This survey covers our urban nesting Gulls, which comprise the large numbers of Herring and Lesser Black-backed Gulls nesting on the roofs of our coastal towns and inland, particularly on factory roofs in industrial estates. Full details of the Seabird Count can be found at <http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/page-7413> Please also refer to previous Newsletters for further background.

This is the final year of the urban Gull survey which was due to complete in 2020, but fieldwork was curtailed due to the Corona Virus pandemic.

There are two arms to the survey in Kent: a survey of 'repeat sites', which are those where Gulls were surveyed during the last seabird census, and a survey of randomly selected squares, aimed to assess the expansion of breeding ranges since the last census.

Repeat (and potentially new) Sites

Remaining areas that need to be surveyed in 2021 are Dartford-Gravesend, Sittingbourne, Sheerness, Ashford and Dover. In the case of major breeding areas such as Dover, it is hoped to organise a group of volunteers to perform the survey in one or two visits if possible.

In essence, the survey of repeat sites will involve counting all Gulls breeding in the towns (if present) from suitable vantage points (AON – Apparently Occupied Nest; AOT – Apparently Occupied Territory or IND – count of individual adults).

Random Square Survey

The random square survey involves making ground-based counts as above. Obviously, it may not be possible to determine counts of AON from ground level and so assessments will largely be AOT and more likely IND. Only single visits are required but volunteers may wish to make repeat visits to confirm or otherwise previous observations.

There are 37 squares remaining that need to be covered which have a reasonable chance of holding breeding Gulls, and some will certainly do so ([see list of squares below](#)). If people could look through the list and cover one or more squares near to them, that would greatly help to complete the coverage.

For both surveys the recording period is end-April to mid-June (although later records are acceptable if young haven't fledged) so now is the time to get out and check squares for nesting Gulls.



| 1KM SQ | MAP LINK | LOCATION |
|--------|---|---------------------|
| TQ5478 | http://www.geograph.org.uk/showmap.php?gridref=TQ5478 | Rainham (Essex) |
| TQ5472 | http://www.geograph.org.uk/showmap.php?gridref=TQ5472 | Dartford |
| TQ5372 | http://www.geograph.org.uk/showmap.php?gridref=TQ5372 | Dartford |
| TQ5272 | http://www.geograph.org.uk/showmap.php?gridref=TQ5272 | Dartford |
| TQ6175 | http://www.geograph.org.uk/showmap.php?gridref=TQ6175 | Northfleet |
| TQ6275 | http://www.geograph.org.uk/showmap.php?gridref=TQ6275 | Northfleet |
| TQ6173 | http://www.geograph.org.uk/showmap.php?gridref=TQ6173 | Northfleet |
| TQ6473 | http://www.geograph.org.uk/showmap.php?gridref=TQ6473 | Gravesend |
| TQ6272 | http://www.geograph.org.uk/showmap.php?gridref=TQ6272 | Gravesend |
| TQ5972 | http://www.geograph.org.uk/showmap.php?gridref=TQ5972 | Bean |
| TQ6176 | http://www.geograph.org.uk/showmap.php?gridref=TQ6176 | Swanscombe |
| TQ7268 | http://www.geograph.org.uk/showmap.php?gridref=TQ7268 | Strood |
| TQ7867 | http://www.geograph.org.uk/showmap.php?gridref=TQ7867 | Gillingham |
| TQ7058 | http://www.geograph.org.uk/showmap.php?gridref=TQ7058 | Larkfield |
| TQ6960 | http://www.geograph.org.uk/showmap.php?gridref=TQ6960 | Snodland |
| TQ7060 | http://www.geograph.org.uk/showmap.php?gridref=TQ7060 | Leybourne/New Hythe |
| TQ9063 | http://www.geograph.org.uk/showmap.php?gridref=TQ9063 | Sittingbourne |
| TQ9165 | http://www.geograph.org.uk/showmap.php?gridref=TQ9165 | Sittingbourne |
| TQ9265 | http://www.geograph.org.uk/showmap.php?gridref=TQ9265 | Sittingbourne |
| TQ9075 | http://www.geograph.org.uk/showmap.php?gridref=TQ9075 | Sheerness |
| TQ9472 | http://www.geograph.org.uk/showmap.php?gridref=TQ9472 | Minster (Sheppey) |
| TQ9961 | http://www.geograph.org.uk/showmap.php?gridref=TQ9961 | Oare |
| TR1866 | http://www.geograph.org.uk/showmap.php?gridref=TR1866 | Herne |
| TR3144 | http://www.geograph.org.uk/showmap.php?gridref=TR3144 | Whitfield |
| TR2140 | http://www.geograph.org.uk/showmap.php?gridref=TR2140 | Hawkinge |
| TR0041 | http://www.geograph.org.uk/showmap.php?gridref=TR0041 | Ashford |

| | | |
|--------|---|---------------------------|
| TR0044 | http://www.geograph.org.uk/showmap.php?gridref=TR0044 | Ashford |
| TR0043 | http://www.geograph.org.uk/showmap.php?gridref=TR0043 | Ashford |
| TQ6655 | http://www.geograph.org.uk/showmap.php?gridref=TQ6655 | Kings Hill (West Malling) |
| TQ6744 | http://www.geograph.org.uk/showmap.php?gridref=TQ6744 | Paddock Wood |
| TQ5946 | http://www.geograph.org.uk/showmap.php?gridref=TQ5946 | Tonbridge |
| TQ5846 | http://www.geograph.org.uk/showmap.php?gridref=TQ5846 | Tonbridge |
| TQ5947 | http://www.geograph.org.uk/showmap.php?gridref=TQ5947 | Tonbridge |
| TQ5842 | http://www.geograph.org.uk/showmap.php?gridref=TQ5842 | Southborough |
| TQ5942 | http://www.geograph.org.uk/showmap.php?gridref=TQ5942 | Southborough |
| TQ5739 | http://www.geograph.org.uk/showmap.php?gridref=TQ5739 | Tunbridge Wells |
| TQ5938 | http://www.geograph.org.uk/showmap.php?gridref=TQ5938 | Tunbridge Wells |

If anyone wishes to help with either the Repeat Site or Random Square surveys, please contact Murray Orchard at murray.orchard@live.co.uk Survey instructions and recording form will be provided.

Rare Breeding Birds in Kent

The Kent Ornithological Society, like other county bird clubs, coordinates records of rare breeding birds and submits them to the Rare Breeding Birds Panel (RBBP). However, this is not straightforward. At a time when birders are being exhorted to be careful about publishing records of rare breeding birds on social media, we suspect that many observations are not reported. There are several ways in which you can help monitor rare birds and not risk publicising breeding locations.

1. Ensure you follow the bird watchers code, <https://www.bto.org/sites/default/files/u10/downloads/taking-part/health/bwc.pdf> and do not disturb the bird.
2. Always follow the RBBP guidelines for reporting on social media, [RBBP -Guidance on reporting Rare Breeding Birds.pdf](#)
3. Submit your records to BirdTrack ([BirdTrack | BTO - British Trust for Ornithology](#)), there is the ability to mark records as sensitive, and there is a filter so that records of rare and scarce birds will not be shown online. Your observations will be secure.
4. You can e-mail in confidence the county recorder Barry Wright umbrellabirds66@gmail.com or the county RBBP coordinator Brian Watmough brianrwat@yahoo.co.uk.

In Kent there are about 30 species for which KOS collates the records and submits to the national RBBP. The table below shows for each rare breeding bird in Kent the totals submitted to national RBBP, the population estimates in the Kent Atlas and the estimated UK population (British Birds 113, February 2020, 69-104). Whilst we have reasonable records for some species, for others we are at present unable to adequately monitor the county populations. We need more information, not just on the presence of birds but also evidence of breeding. The RBBP considers birds as possible, probable or confirmed breeders based on the standard BTO breeding codes.

RBBP SPECIES IN KENT

| SPECIES | KENT 2018 | KENT ATLAS 2008-13 | UK POPULATION |
|--------------------|-----------|--------------------|---------------|
| Eurasian Bittern | 7 | 4 | 191 |
| Black-necked Grebe | 1 | 0-10 | 55 |
| Wigeon | 3 | 0-10 | 200 |
| Pintail | 2 | 0-5 | 27 |
| Garganey | 6 | 10-20 | 105 |
| Shoveler | 102 | 50-100 | 1100 |
| Common Pochard | 94 | 150-200 | 720 |
| Little Egret | 149 | 100-150 | 1100 |

| | | | |
|---------------------------|-----|-----------|-----------|
| Black-winged Stilt | 1 | - | 3 |
| Avocet | 240 | 150-300 | 1950 |
| Little Ringed Plover | 13 | 10-15 | 1250 |
| Little Tern | 11 | 0-10 | 1450 |
| Mediterranean Gull | 161 | 300-500 | 1200 |
| Common Quail | 2 | 0-50 | 355 |
| Spotted Crake | 0 | - | 27 |
| Honey Buzzard | 4 | 0-2 | 33-69 |
| Marsh Harrier | 41 | 80-100 | 590-695 |
| Peregrine Falcon | 20 | 30-40 | 1750 |
| Hobby | 34 | 250-300 | 2050 |
| Turtle Dove | 158 | 2000-3000 | 3600 |
| Long-eared Owl | 7 | 5-10 | 1800-6000 |
| Short-eared Owl | 3 | 0-5 | 620-2200 |
| Lesser Spotted Woodpecker | 29 | 150-200 | 600-1000 |
| Marsh Warbler | 3 | 0-2 | 8 |
| Savis Warbler | 0 | 0-1 | 5 |
| Black Redstart | 10 | 2-15 | 58 |
| Bearded Tit | 50 | 100-500 | 695 |
| Woodlark | 1 | 2-10 | 2300 |
| Hawfinch | 5 | 50-70 | 500-1000 |

Please submit records of any of the above species during the breeding season, especially if breeding is suspected, observing the guidelines given above.

Please contact Brian Watmough (brianrwat@yahoo.co.uk) if you are interested in more information.

Pleasant Forest – a new Kent woodland

At Forestry England, we manage over a quarter of a million hectares of public forest for the benefit of people, nature, and the economy. Woodland creation is a key part of providing new habitats for biodiversity and new spaces for people to enjoy the outdoors. Pleasant Forest, near Lenham in Kent, is one such project which will transform arable farmland into a new woodland.

Pleasant Forest is a 127ha site spread across 5 plots between the villages of Platt's Heath and Sandway. The key objectives for the site are carbon capture through the planting of 160,000 trees, biodiversity gain through habitat creation, and informal recreation. This map (below) shows an overview of our concept plan and you can find further details for each plot at www.forestryengland.uk/pleasant-farm.

Species and habitat diversity are key for a productive woodland. The existing Swallowmore pond (Plot C), combined with new smaller ponds and connected woodland, will provide stepping stones for the Great Crested Newt to move into new areas. Meanwhile, 35,000 shrub plants will create corridors for Dormice to access a stock of nuts and berries. These flagship species will bring a host of wildlife in their wake, including opportunities for bird life.

Birds are an important component of existing and future biodiversity at Pleasant Forest. Current species on site, including Skylark, Yellowhammer and House Sparrow, are found in arable and boundary habitats which represents much of the surrounding landscape. Development of this site will lead to several habitat transitions.

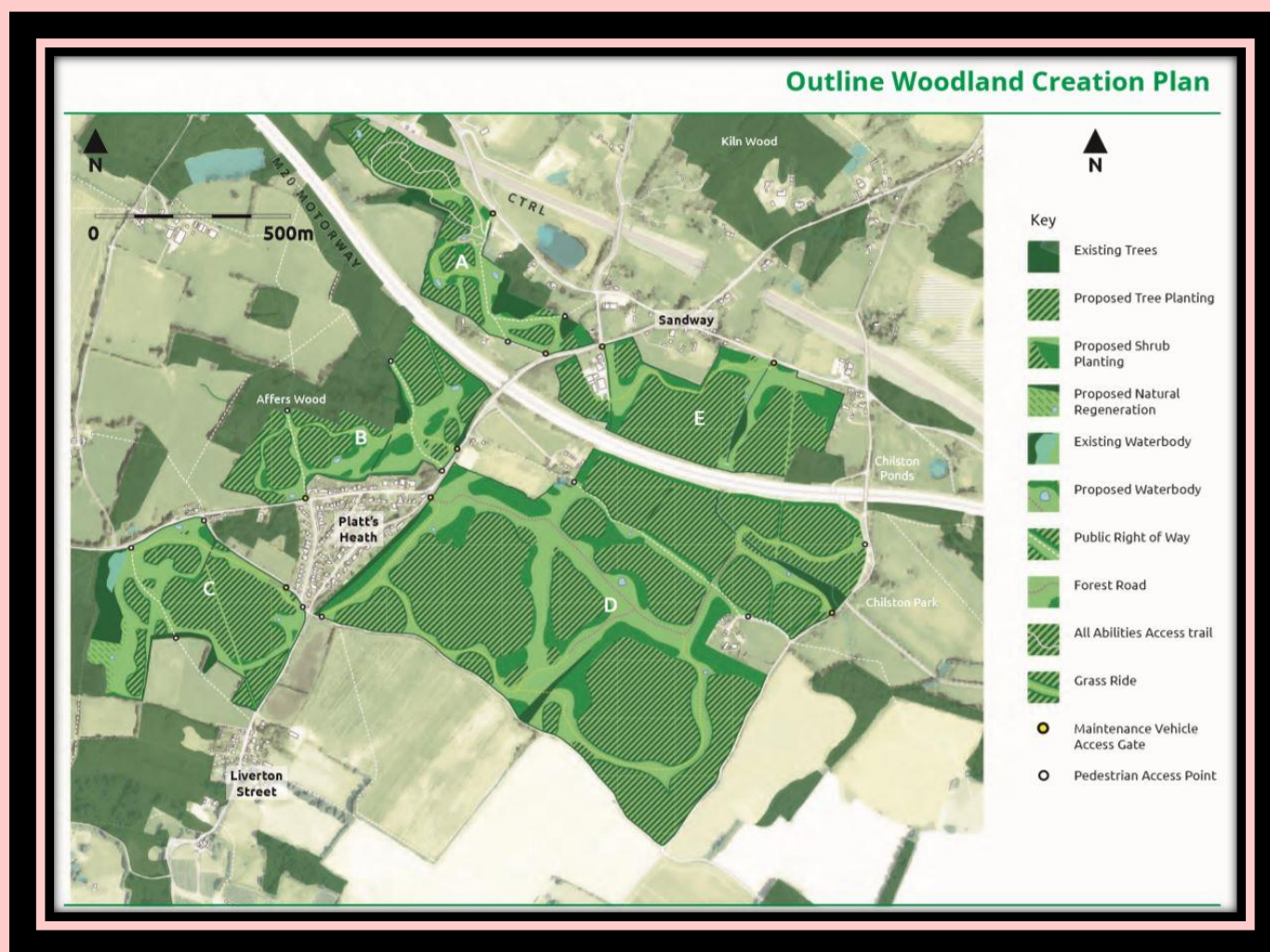
Creation of wildflower meadows in less disturbed areas of the site may attract ground nesting birds. We will retain the boundary hedgerows on site which were found to contain Blackcap, Blue Tit, Great Tit, Chaffinch, Robin, and Wren. Shrub species, including Spindle, Dog Rose, Guelder Rose, Elder, and Hawthorn, have been chosen to maintain a year-round supply of food for bird. Shrubs will be managed on a short rotation to create a scrubby environment, preferable for woodland edge and 'farmland' bird species.

Tree planting will commence in November 2021 and large areas of the plots will be fenced off to protect trees and shrubs as they establish. Over the first 0-10 years, the open grassy habitat will be favourable for ground nesting birds and the fencing will protect nesting sites from dogs.

As the canopy cover develops, it is likely that bird species such as Skylark will move into surrounding arable land whilst new species move into the site. Scrubby areas, meadows, and the seed orchard (where trees are more widely spaced and topped to restrict growth) are likely to continue to sustain other bird species.

We are keen to record the changing bird community in response to these landscape changes through time. This can be best achieved through BBS type transects in combination with periodic more detailed surveys every 3 – 4 years. This is where you come in!

We are keen to get local expert volunteers involved with biodiversity monitoring on site to build a better understanding of bird community changes during habitat transitions. If you live in Kent and would be interested in volunteering to carry out surveys, please get in touch at pleasantfarm@forestryengland.uk.



APPEAL FOR 2020 BREEDING RECORDS

As a result of Covid-19, many reserve wardens and staff were furloughed during the spring of 2020 . One result of this was that the usual monitoring of breeding birds did not take place this year. Despite the closure of hides and visitor centres, it was usually still possible for people to visit these reserves. If anyone has records of confirmed breeding noted during such visits, particularly for species of conservation concern, please can you submit them to the KOS Recorder (Barry Wright) or BirdTrack (www.birdtrack.net) etc. These might involve a brood of Pochard or Shoveler, or waders with young, or recently fledged Bearded Tits. Please search your notebooks/blogs etc. All such records will help to assess the 2020 breeding season. Thank you.

Surveys

Current surveys are usually posted on the KOS website, for further information please contact Murray Orchard at murray.orchard@live.co.uk

KOS – Sightings database

We have had some technical and security issues with the sightings database that is accessed from the KOS website. This is an external application developed by another society and is not controlled or managed by the KOS. After we became aware of a weakness in the database's security that meant that Kent Bird Report. We have already commissioned work to create a new reporting tool but this could take some time develop and put in place.

In the meantime we would urge existing users of the database to use other applications like BirdTrack or eBird to report their sightings. Records uploaded to these applications are passed on to the KOS. We are also looking to provide a template excel spreadsheet that will allow observers to report their sightings to the Area Recorders.

We apologise for the inconvenience that this may cause observers.

Brendan Ryan (Honorary Secretary KOS)

We would like to encourage members to contribute items or photographs for inclusion in the newsletter, especially regarding birds in Kent. If you are interested, I am always happy to offer advice or assistance to aspiring authors. To facilitate page composition text needs to be presented as a Word document, photos or illustrations as j-peg files.

Norman McCanch (Editor) : nvmccanch@hotmail.com

We like to keep in touch with all our members, so if you change address, email address or phone numbers please remember to inform our membership secretary, Chris Roome. He can be contacted at:

Chris Roome, Rowland House, Station Rd., Staplehurst TN12 0PY

Tel: 01580 891686 e-mail: chrisroome105@icloud.com

Summer Migrants – Are They Arriving Earlier?



One Swallow by Steve Ashton

For some time there has been a growing belief that our summer migrants are arriving earlier; I first encountered claims of this nature when attending a couple of meetings organised by the Tyndall Centre of the UEA nearly 20 years ago, at which I dared to question their conclusions.

My attention has recently been drawn to a paper published in the *Ibis* in June 2016 which suggested that the phenology of spring migrants has changed since the 1960s. It demonstrated this by using generalised additive models (GAD) and showed that 11 of 14 common migrants became significantly earlier with 6 species advancing their arrival by more than 10 days <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/ibi.12367>

Along the same lines the RSPB reported a year later that due to climate change “Migratory birds are arriving earlier and egg-laying dates have advanced such that Swallows, for example, are arriving in the UK 15 days earlier and breeding 11 days earlier than they did in the 1960’s”.

I did not recognise either of these claims, whether from 60 years or more of my own personal observations or from consulting historical records and annual county Bird Reports that I have in my possession.

Confinement in ‘lockdown’ eventually allowed me to examine these claims in detail and to test their validity. I was able to do this by using the historical data from national Surveys conducted by the British Ornithologists’ Club (BOC) in 1905 and 1907 together with W Eagle Clarke’s survey results for the British Association on ‘Bird-Migration in Great Britain and Ireland’ which he published in his *Studies in Bird Migration* published in 1913 (WEC) and the records contained in more recent county Bird Reports from Norfolk and Kent.

I selected 12 species of summer visitors to analyse which I considered reasonably common as well as being easily recognisable and observable. These are listed in the table below. Chiffchaff and Blackcap, known to over-winter in Britain since the nineteenth century or earlier, were omitted because of confusion with spring arrivals.

First arrival dates were chosen as the preferred basis for analysis because of their consistency; there is only one first arrival date for a species in the country, or in a county, in any particular year. These dates are extracted by the compilers of the Reports and Surveys from the mass of information supplied by the contributors. I rejected using ‘main arrival’ dates because of the difficulty in being consistent in defining when ‘main arrival’ does take place, preferring instead the greater accuracy of using long term unambiguous records.



Whitethroat by Nick Smith

Public participation was used, probably for the first time ever, in the national BOC Surveys of 1905 and 1907 when standardised survey forms to be filled in by participants were used (unfortunately I have as yet been unable to find a sample). We do know that the 1905 Survey produced 15,000 individual records from around the country covering 29 species.

The 29 annual Bird Reports for Norfolk and 60 for Kent enabled me to extract a total of 1068 first arrival dates from the published records. With an average of 450 contributors per annum to the Norfolk Bird Report over 30 years and 350 to the Kent Bird Report over 60 years it could be argued that the resultant source material used in the two counties analyses came from the distillation of some 400,000 individual records.

The first arrival dates used for each species are factual records, traceable back in all cases to the original source. These were plotted on a simple dateline graph from which ten year means for each species were calculated for comparison with the historic data, the results of which are shown in the table below.

| First Arrival Dates of Summer Migrants | | | | | | | | | | |
|--|-----------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Surveys of recent ten year means from Norfolk and Kent compared with Surveys of 1905, 1907 and W Eagle Clarke's researches | | | | | | | | | | |
| Species | 1905-1907 | Norfolk | | | Kent | | | | | |
| | WEC | 1989-1997 | 1998-2007 | 2008-2017 | 1958-1967 | 1968-1977 | 1978-1987 | 1988-1997 | 1998-2007 | 2008-2017 |
| Cuckoo | Mar 31st | Apr 9th | Apr 8th | Apr 11th | Apr 9th | Apr 8th | Apr 10th | Apr 4th | Mar 28th | Apr 3rd |
| Swift | Apr 23rd | Apr 21st | Apr 17th | Apr 15th | Apr 22nd | Apr 21st | Apr 22nd | Apr 19th | Apr 17th | Apr 16th |
| Sand Martin | Mar 19th | Mar 11th | Mar 13th | Mar 14th | Mar 26th | Mar 22nd | Mar 20th | Mar 7th | Mar 10th | Mar 9th |
| Swallow | Mar 23rd | Mar 19th | Mar 18th | Mar 19th | Mar 24th | Mar 28th | Mar 23rd | Mar 18th | Mar 14th | Mar 15th |
| House Martin | Apr 3rd | Mar 24th | Mar 23rd | Mar 27th | Apr 1st | Apr 3rd | Apr 4th | Mar 22nd | Mar 20th | Mar 23rd |
| Yellow Wagtail | Mar 21st | Mar 23rd | Mar 26th | Mar 31st | Apr 2nd | Mar 30th | Mar 24th | Mar 22nd | Mar 18th | Mar 26th |
| Wheatear | Mar 13th | Mar 7th | Mar 13th | Mar 13th | Mar 10th | Mar 14th | Mar 11th | Mar 7th | Mar 5th | Mar 11th |
| Ring Ouzel | Mar 18th | Mar 20th | Mar 22nd | Mar 25th | Mar 28th | Mar 30th | Mar 26th | Mar 21st | Mar 24th | Mar 27th |
| Sedge Warbler | Apr 4th | Apr 3rd | Mar 29th | Apr 2nd | Apr 4th | Apr 6th | Apr 4th | Mar 30th | Mar 28th | Mar 29th |
| Reed Warbler | Apr 14th | Apr 19th | Apr 14th | Apr 11th | Apr 16th | Apr 17th | Apr 13th | Apr 12th | Apr 8th | Apr 5th |
| Whitethroat | Apr 5th | Apr 15th | Apr 9th | Apr 6th | Apr 8th | Apr 7th | Apr 12th | Apr 8th | Apr 3rd | Apr 4th |
| Willow Warbler | Mar 25th | Mar 27th | Mar 24th | Mar 27th | Mar 24th | Mar 28th | Mar 26th | Mar 19th | Mar 25th | Mar 23rd |

Within these mean dates there are variations but with the vagaries of nature and local weather we would not expect the first arrival date for each of our summer visitors to occur on exactly the same day each year. However, what is striking from these results is that for most of the species the dates of first arrivals do show a high degree of consistency over the 112 years, particularly noticeable in the cases of Wheatear, Whitethroat and Willow Warbler as shown below: -

| | | | | |
|----------------|------------------|----------------------|-------------------|----------|
| | 1905-1907 WEC | Norfolk 2008-2017 | Kent 2008-2017 | |
| Wheatear | Mar 13th | Mar 13th | Mar 11th | |
| Whitethroat | Apr 5th | Apr 6th | Apr 4th | |
| Willow Warbler | | Mar 25th | Mar 27th | Mar 23rd |

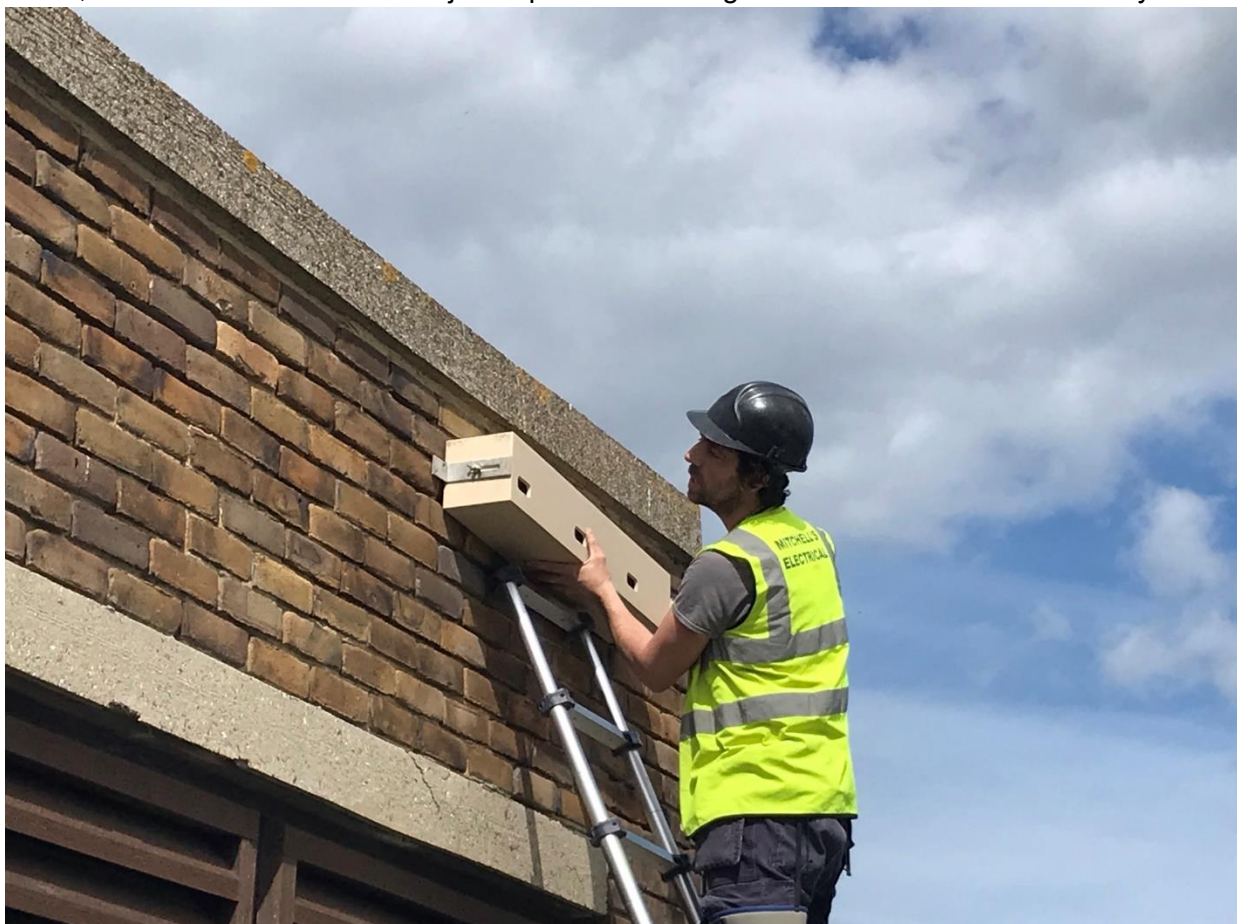
It is worth mentioning that there was a great deal of interest in bird migration in the latter part of the 19th century and early 20th century and we are fortunate to have the results of surveys that were carried out at the time. There is a mass of detailed information contained in the two BOC Survey Reports of 1905 and 1907 running to a total of 329 pages with maps and weather reports. It is sad that these historic surveys do not seem to attract the attention of students today. In connection with these early studies interest was also shown into the stimuli for the departure of spring migrants from their winter quarters and papers by Rowan and others in the early 20th century concluded that it was the natural rhythms of nature that forms the stimulus for their departure and not temperature as may be supposed.

Are our summer migrants arriving earlier than they once were? The results of this analysis would suggest there is insufficient evidence to support that claim, rather it would seem to confirm that, despite odd fluctuations, the long term trend is for continuity in the timing of their arrival.

Chris Wheeler

Lifeline for Thanet Swifts as Broadstairs College Installs Nest Boxes for the Endangered Bird

EKC Group's Broadstairs College has joined forces with local Wildlife Conservationist, Nik Mitchell, and RSPB's Thanet Local Group, to install seven new swift nest boxes in a mission to provide a lifeline to the endangered bird. Installed on the side of one of the College's tallest buildings, located a short distance from the seafront, the boxes mark the first major step in establishing Kent's first artificial swift colony.



Nik Mitchell installing Swift boxes.

Known for flying extraordinary distances of up to 500 miles per day whilst on migration, swifts spend almost all of their life on the wing, and only come to land when nesting. Years of progressive local habitat loss, building developments, and home renovations, has seen a decline in established nest sites in Kent – a trend this new initiative hopes to address.



Swift by Andy Taylor

Assistant Principal of Broadstairs College, Sarah-Jayne Benfield, commented: “We are really proud to be part of the ongoing swift conservation project in Thanet. “Working with Nik and RSPB’s Thanet Local Group, we have an exciting opportunity to engage with our students and our local community to raise awareness of these incredible birds and the importance of wildlife conservation.”

Prolific local Conservationist, Nik Mitchell, who installed the boxes added: “Swifts are incredibly loyal to a nest site, with the colony returning time and time again to the same spot. When an established nest location is blocked up or removed, it has a detrimental impact on the swifts’ wellbeing and population levels. Sadly, we’ve lost over half of our swifts in the last 20 years. The new nest site at Broadstairs College is in a brilliant location and provides a fantastic opportunity to help safeguard the future of swifts in Kent .It is hoped the site will become home to first-time nesters when the young adult swifts return from their fledgeling flight in two to three years’ time.

Alongside the boxes, information plaques including facts about swifts, will be installed on the College’s premises for students, staff and visitors to learn more about the initiative. The inclusion of the swift nest boxes is part of Broadstairs College’s ongoing journey to become an environmentally conscious organisation. For more information about the College and its journey, visit broadstairscollege.ac.uk

Amy Ward , Media Relations Officer E: amy. @eastkent.ac.uk

PEEPING AT STINTS

The smaller waders in the genus *Calidris* are usually known peeps in North America, since several of them have calls that can be transcribed as “peep”, and stints in Britain, probably because they stint their size (i.e. keep it small). I am not entirely sure how many species can be included in the group. It may be just seven (Little, Temminck's, Red-necked, Long-toed, Least, Semipalmated and Western) but Baird's and White-rumped seem to get included quite often. By the way, did you know that, at one time, Least Sandpiper was known here as American Stint?

Of the nine species listed above, three have not been (acceptably) recorded in Kent: Red-necked and Long-toed Stints, and Western Sandpiper. This article summarises the county status of the six species that have been seen, beginning with Little Stint and then working through the others in order of frequency.

Little Stint

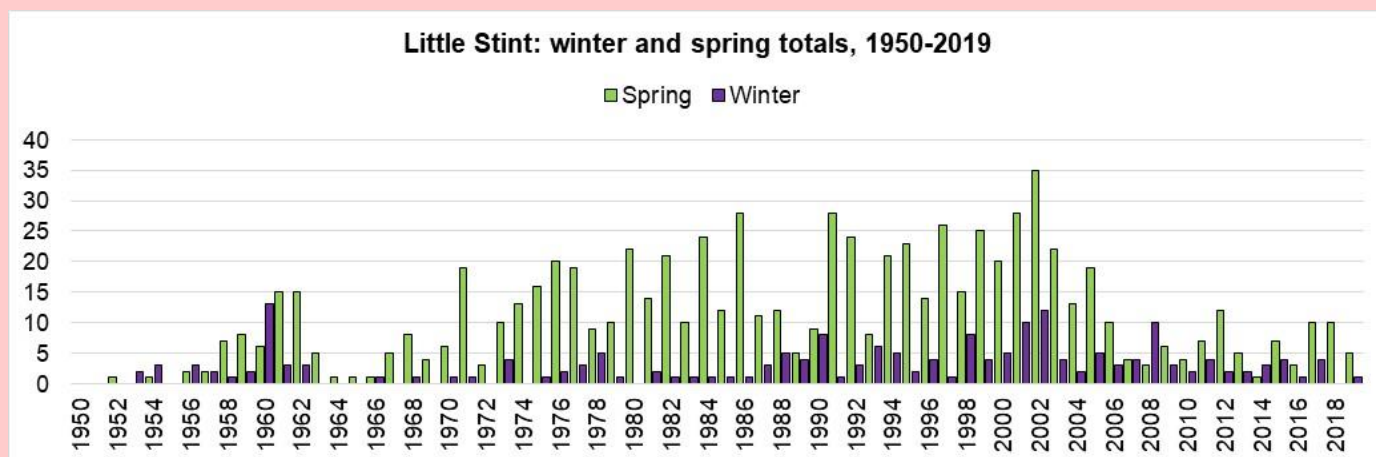
Little Stint is primarily an autumn migrant to Kent, though some occur in spring, and a very small number are seen in most winters. It has always been the commonest stint and, broadly speaking, has changed in status little since the nineteenth century.



Little Stint by Tony Morris

Winter and spring

Beginning with winter and spring, the first chart shows the total number of individuals seen each year in spring (March-June) and in winter (December-February). The totals are approximate, using information as presented in Kent Bird Reports. Some of the March records may relate to wintering birds, but for convenience I've separated the seasons as indicated. Note that winter totals are shown for the first of the years, so that birds seen during December 2010-February 2011 are shown for 2010.

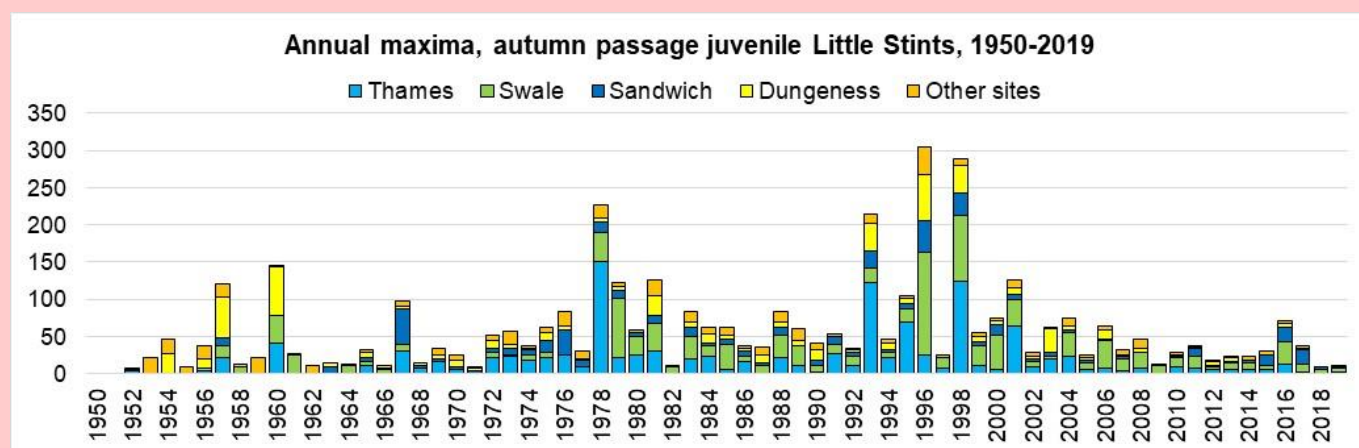
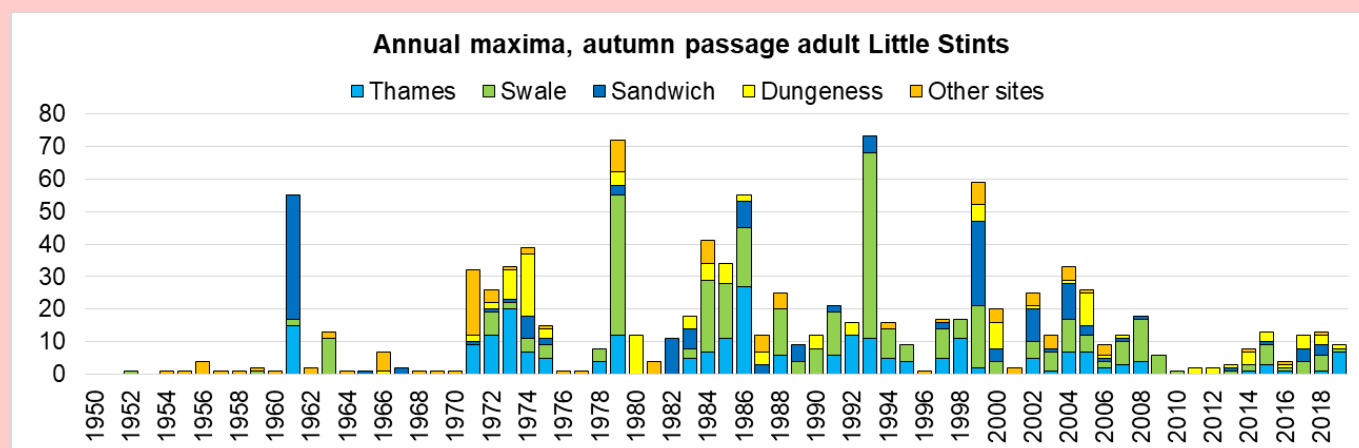


There have been a few years mostly in the 1960s and 1970s with none seen in winter, but on average there have been about three individuals each year. The highest totals were 13 in 1960/61, 10 in 2001/02, 12 in 2002/03 and 10 in 2008/09.

Spring passage is mostly between late April and early June, but March records – which may be either redistributing wintering birds or early migrants – are quite frequent. Spring totals have been rather variable, with larger counts during 1970-2005 than before or since: the average for 1970-2005 (36 years) was 17.1 while for 2006-2019 (14 years) it was 6.2. Most birds occur alone or in groups of two-three, but there have been higher counts including 11 at Cliffe on 11th-15th May 1982, nine there on 24th May 1992 and nine at Elmley on 16th May 1997. Small groups continue to appear into June in some years, most notably three on Dungeness reserve and eight at Bough Beech on 8th June 1976, and eight at Pegwell Bay on 2nd June 2005.

Autumn

Autumn passage is usually considerably larger than that in spring. It begins in July, typically around the 15th. The main passage of adults is in late July and early August is often rather small with no counts of over five at any one place in many years and normal county peaks of only 10-15. Passage of juveniles begins in mid-late August but counts often remain low until September, but then it continues into October and even November in some years. Some adults occur throughout this period but for convenience it's referred to here as juvenile passage. I've treated counts before about 15th-20th August as adults and later ones as juveniles. The two charts below (*note differing y-axis scales*) illustrate how the numbers occurring vary between years; the values are sums of peak counts at sites within each area (defined broadly). Note that the totals understate the numbers of birds using the sites since turnover is ignored.



The size of arrivals in Kent will depend on weather conditions, and perhaps especially the level of breeding success in the Finnish and Russian tundra. Influxes of Little Stints are often associated with those of Curlew Sandpipers (not covered here). However, although they often do coincide, this is not always the case, perhaps a reflection of their different distributions (they overlap but Curlew Sandpiper is more restricted).

Table 1 summarises details of the largest influxes to Kent during 1950-2019, including all arrivals of 50 or more adults or of 80 or more juveniles. The right hand column shows peaks at sites where at least ten were seen.

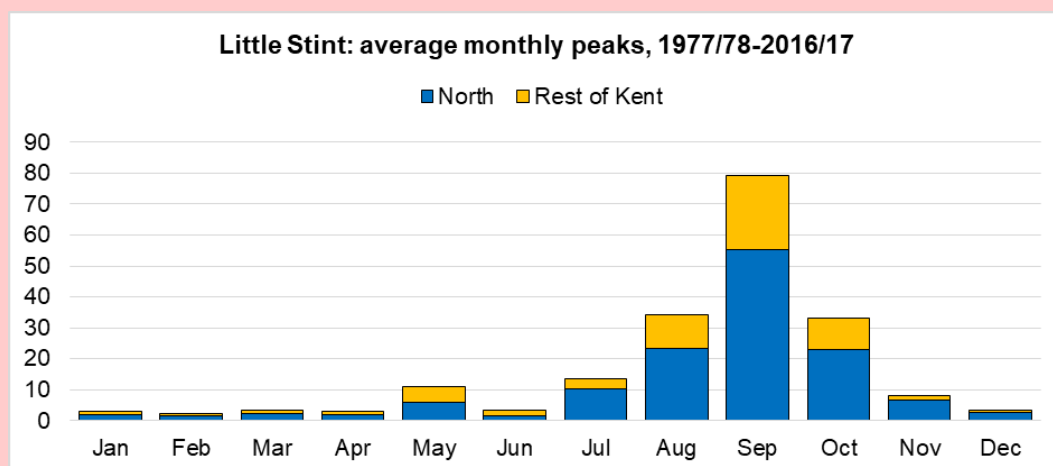
| Table 1. Large influxes of Little Stints, 1950-2019 | | | |
|---|--------------------|-------|--|
| Year | Dates | Total | Including counts of 10 or more |
| Adults | | | |
| 1979 | 24th Jul-4th Aug | 72 | 40 Elmley, 12 Cliffe |
| 1986 | 29th Jul-10th Aug | 55 | 22 Cliffe, 10 Elmley |
| 1993 | 25th Jul-5th Aug | 63 | 47 Elmley |
| 1999 | 2nd-9th Aug | 61 | 26 Pegwell Bay, 10 Elmley |
| Juveniles | | | |
| 1957 | 23rd-29th Sept | 103 | 55 Dungeness, 22 Stoke, 15 Sheppey, 11 Sandwich Bay |
| 1960 | 17th Sept-2nd Oct | 149 | 64 The Wicks, 41 Stoke, 38 Sheppey |
| 1967 | 20th Sept-21st Oct | 97 | 31 Cliffe, 48 Sandwich Bay |
| 1976 | 25th Sept-10th Oct | 89 | 32 Sandwich Bay, 25 Cliffe |
| 1978 | 6th-17th Sept | 227 | 146 Cliffe, 40 Shellness, 13 Bough Beech |
| 1979 | 24th Oct-9th Nov | 102 | 80 Elmley, 19 Cliffe |
| 1981 | 16th-20th Sep | 125 | 37 Elmley, 31 Cliffe, 27 Dungeness Reserve |
| 1993 | 2nd-19th Sept | 229 | 85 Cliffe, 38 Stoke, 37 Dungeness Reserve 23 Sandwich Bay, 12 Bough Beech |
| 1995 | 2nd-15th Sept | 89 | 23 Cliffe, 27 Stoke, 18 Elmley |
| 1996 | 14th Sept-3rd Oct | 302 | 80 Elmley, 51 Capel Fleet, 46 Dungeness Reserve 42 Sandwich Bay, 21 Bough Beech, 16 Dungeness |
| 1998 | 5th-19th Sept | 280 | 83 Cliffe, 44 Oare, 37 Elmley, 30 Sandwich Bay, 24 Lade |
| 2001 | 16th-29th Sept | 126 | 65 Cliffe, 19 Elmley, 15 Oare, 11 Grove |

Sometimes heavy passage of adults coincides with that of juveniles, and sometimes it doesn't. But what stands out to me is that there has been no large influx of either age group for almost twenty years; that phenomenon seems more marked for juveniles than for adults.

There are also few high counts during the 1950s and 1960s, but (a) data extraction for that period was from Kent Bird Reports which tend to be sketchy in the early years, and (b) there were far fewer observers than there are now. My suspicion is that the lack of high counts then is more a result of those factors than that it was true. The more recent drop-off in numbers is more likely to be genuine, but of unknown cause. BirdLife International suggests the global population is increasing or stable, so is the change the result of altered autumn weather patterns, or what? Preliminary information for 2020 is that it was another poor year: I'm aware of one in January, no reports in spring and no count over five in autumn.

As will be clear from the discussion above, Little Stints are far more easily found in autumn than at other times of year, as the next chart illustrates. North Kent is generally the best place to find them, and most of the large flocks are found feeding around the muddy fringes of brackish pools inland of the sea wall, rather than on the foreshore itself.

Concentrations can also be found at similar locations at or near Sandwich Bay and Dungeness. Relatively few are found inland, but sizeable flocks are not unknown. The largest inland counts have been 13 at Bough Beech reservoir on 8th September 1978, with 12 there on 6th September 1993 and 21 on 25th-27th September 1996, and 11 at Grove Ferry on 25th September 2001.



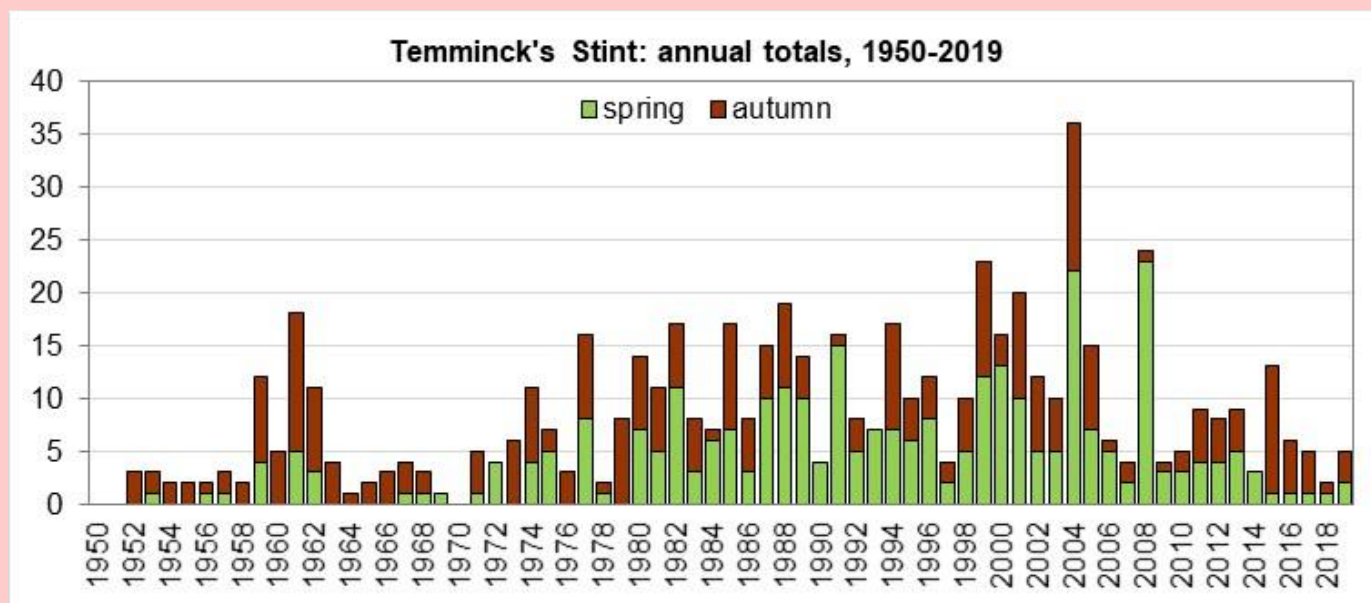
Temminck's Stint



Spring plumage Temminck's Stint by Andreas Trepte, www.avi-fauna.info.

Historically, in the second half of the nineteenth century, Temminck's Stint was regarded as rare, though it may well have been overlooked. Certainly by the 1930s and 1940s, it was being seen almost annually. Usually, only one or two individuals were found but occasionally a few more, the largest total being eight on Sheppey on 7th August 1938, which remains the highest single count for Kent. Probably the majority were in autumn, but quite a few were seen in spring, including four together on Sheppey on 17th-29th May 1939.

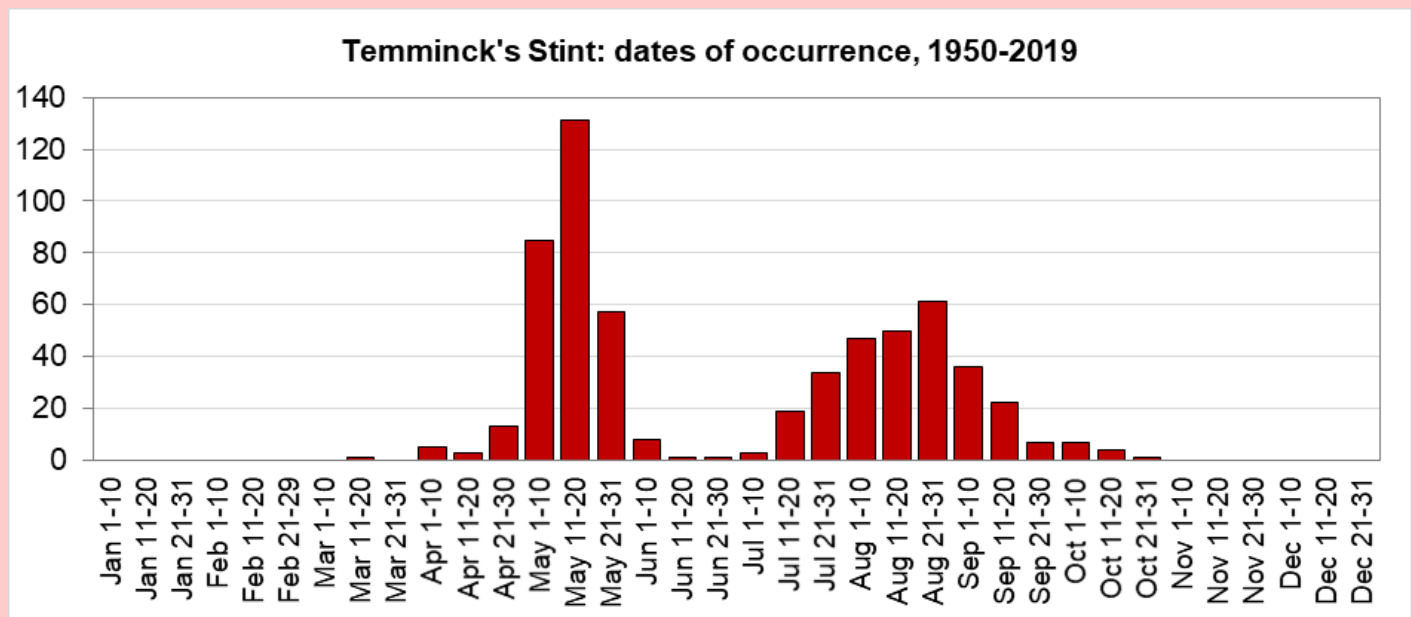
The pattern of occurrence has changed little since then, except that more are now found, no doubt a reflection of there being more observers and better equipment. The first chart shows the annual totals each year from 1950 to 2019, with those found in the first half of the year (spring) shown in a different colour from those in the second half of the year (autumn).



The species has been seen in almost every year. I have not traced any records in 1950 or 1951, before KOS was formed, and none were recorded in 1970. Through the period from 1970 onwards, the annual average was a little over ten birds, with 5.7 in spring and 4.6 in autumn. Numbers were a little higher during 1980-2008 (annual average of 13.2) and have been noticeably lower since then (2009-2019 average of 6.3). This is the same period during which

Little Stint numbers have been low. As with that species, it's not clear what the cause is. It could be decline of the population that reaches Kent as migrants, or some subtle change in the suitability of wetlands in Kent, or alteration of weather patterns making arrivals less likely.

The seasonal pattern of arrivals (second chart) shows the spring and autumn passage periods well. Spring passage tends to be more restricted, most occurring during May, while autumn passage extends from mid July to late September, with a few stragglers after that.



The earliest in spring, by quite a margin, was one at Westbere on 18th March 1977. The next earliest were one at Sandwich Bay on 7th April 1974 and two, also at Sandwich Bay, on 7th-9th April 2013. The largest spring groups were five at Pegwell Bay on 11th May 1980, six at Cliffe Pools on 16th-17th May 2004 and five at Grove Ferry on 16th May 2008. There have been records of single birds in June in ten years, with one at Grove Ferry on 11th-12th June 2004 perhaps the latest spring migrant, and one at the same place on 27th June 1961 best regarded as an early returning autumn migrant (though there are no further records until 6th July).



Autumn plumage Temminck's Stint by Tony Morris

The peaks in autumn include several records of four together plus one group of five at Grove Ferry on 1st September 1961, as well as the eight on Sheppey on 7th August 1938 mentioned earlier. There was also an unconfirmed report of five at Grove Ferry on 8th August 1999 but other observers only saw four there. At the end of autumn, eight single birds have been found in October, in seven different years. The latest in recent years (since 1970) was a juvenile at

Oare Marshes on 9th-12th October 1998, but earlier there had been records on Sheppey on 13th October 1957, at Sandwich Bay on 19th-20th October 1963 (date given as the 21st in the 1963 SBBO Report), and last of all on Walland Marsh on 24th October 1953. There is also one historic November record, as described in the extract below from Walter Prentis's Notes on the Birds of Rainham (1894).

TEMMINCK'S STINT.

Tringa Temmincki, Leisl.

Temminck's Stint has occurred on more than one occasion on our Rainham marsh. I once had the pleasure of shooting the bird, but this was outside my district, on the Isle of Sheppey; it was flying the opposite side of a wide ditch; I shouldered my gun thinking to shoot a Dunlin, and on pulling the trigger I observed the bird was smaller. I picked up a Temminck's Stint in winter plumage the 1st November, 1869.

F

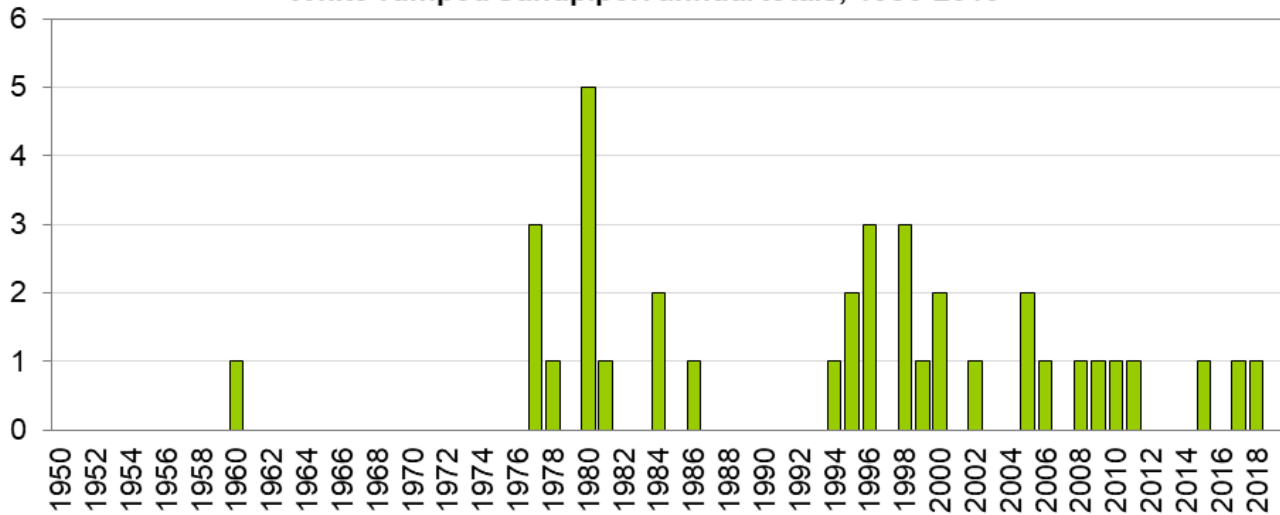
White-rumped Sandpiper



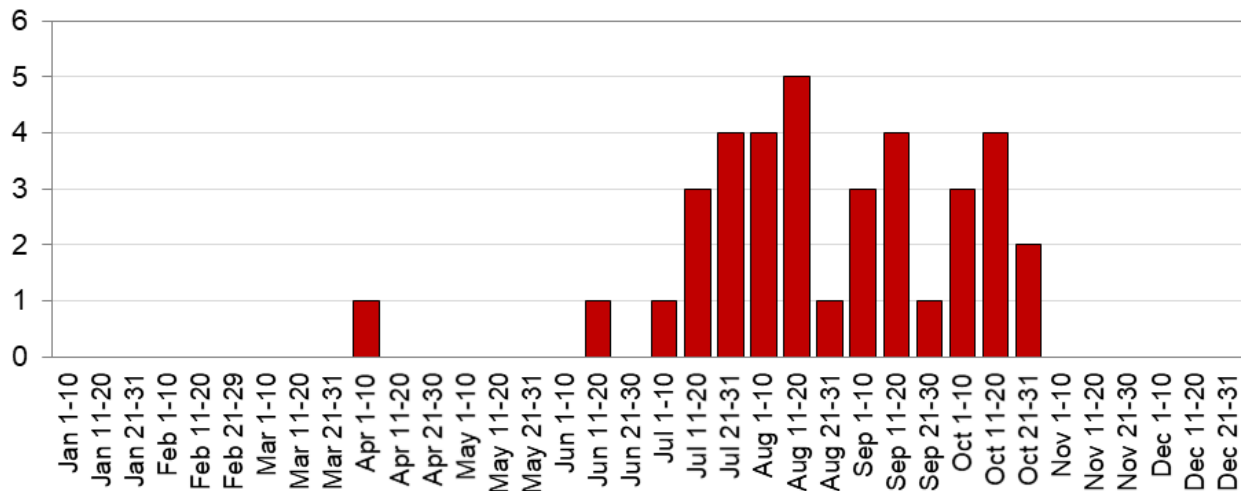
White-rumped Sandpiper, Texas (wikicommons)

There are 38 White-rumped Sandpipers recorded in Kent: one in 1945, one in 1960, and the remainder from 1977 onwards. An earlier claim, of one seen in east Kent on 26th April 1937, was reported in Harrison's 1953 Birds of Kent but has since then largely been disregarded. The two charts below show the number recorded each year, and the seasonal pattern of occurrence (using the dates when birds were found).

White-rumped Sandpiper: annual totals, 1950-2019



White-rumped Sandpiper: dates of occurrence, 1950-2019



Almost all were single birds but two were present together at Elmley during 12th-23rd October 1980. One of those was a juvenile, while the other was described as first-winter or adult. Of the others, 20 were recorded as adults, three as juveniles and one as a first-winter, with 12 unaged – thus showing a marked bias towards adult birds.

The one spring record was at Sandwich Bay on 9th April 1986. An adult seen at Grove Ferry on 19th-20th June 2008 doesn't comfortably fall in spring or autumn. The earliest in July was one at Shellness, Sheppey, on 4th July 2005. The latest in the year was a juvenile at Cliffe Pools on 28th October 1999.

In the peak year of 1980, as well as the two at Elmley mentioned above, there was an adult at Cliffe Pools on 2nd-11th August, an adult at Dungeness pits on 15th-21st September that was trapped and ringed, and a juvenile at Cliffe Pools on 18th-22nd October.

Most have been in low-lying coastal locations from Cliffe round to Dungeness, but four have been seen inland: three at Grove Ferry during 2000-2008 and one at Bough Beech reservoir on 27th August 1977.

Baird's Sandpiper



Baird's Sandpiper by Matt Hindle

The first Baird's Sandpiper for Kent was found at The Wicks, near Dungeness, on 19th September 1952. It was present, sometimes on the Sussex side of the county boundary, until the 27th, watched by many observers, as described by W. G. Fluke in *British Birds* vol. 46 pp.304-305.

All eight records are as follows:

| | | | |
|------|-----------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1952 | The Wicks | 19th-27th September | Adult |
| 1973 | Bough Beech Reservoir | 22nd-23rd September | One, age not recorded |
| 1987 | Dungeness | 20th-24th September | Adult |
| 1988 | Dungeness | 7th-15th September | Adult |
| 1989 | Elmley | 27th September-8th October | Juvenile |
| 1996 | Sandwich Bay | 4th October | One, age uncertain |
| 2005 | Dungeness | 3rd-17th October | Juvenile |
| 2016 | Reculver | 26th-28th August | Juvenile |

It is possible that the bird in 1988 was the same as that seen in 1987, but they are counted as different individuals.

Semipalmated Sandpiper



Juvenile Semipalmated Sandpiper, Canada (wikicommons)

The early history of Semi-palmated Sandpipers in Kent is mired in scandal and confusion (not to mention the disappearance of the hyphen). One recorded by both Ticehurst (1909) and Harrison (1953) was said to have been shot at Jury's Gap on 17th September 1907. It may not surprise you to hear that it was prepared for preservation by George Bristow, and that now it is among the Hastings Rarities. What's more, Jury's Gap, then on the county boundary, is now in Sussex and outside the KOS area.

The next two records, at Dungeness on 6th-9th September 1965 and at Sevenoaks on 10th September 1967 were initially accepted as Semipalmated Sandpipers, though with some observers and others concerned that mistakes might have been made. Remember, this was at a time when many British observers had little or no experience of birding in North America and field guides were inadequate for identification of stints/peeps. Eventually, in 1979, a paper by Ian Wallace in *British Birds* reviewed the species' occurrence in Britain and the two Kent records along with several others were no longer acceptable. The general view is that the two birds were Little Stints.

Semipalmated Sandpiper made it back on to the Kent list in 1984, when an adult was at Elmley on 21st-26th July. There were no more until 2011, and then records for three years in a row. All four Kent records are listed below.

| | | | |
|------|--------------|---------------------|------------------------------|
| 1984 | Elmley | 21st-26th July | Adult |
| 2011 | Cliffe Pools | 25th September | Juvenile, also seen in Essex |
| 2012 | Dungeness | 9th-17th September | Juvenile |
| 2013 | Dungeness | 10th-11th September | Juvenile |

Least Sandpiper



Least sandpiper by Tony Morris

There have been two records of Least Sandpiper in Kent. The first was seen at Great Stonar, near Sandwich, on 24th October 1977. There is a note of its sighting in the Kent Bird Report for 1977 p.44. The bird was described as having legs that appeared “dusky rather than dull olive” while the legs of this species as usually described as pale or yellow-green. At the time, there had been few Least Sandpipers recorded in Britain, and this was the latest in the year. That remains, almost, the case now, though there has been one in Cornwall that stayed for over one month to 25th October 2006, and there has been one in November-December in Ireland. There have also been a few spring records elsewhere in Britain.

The second Kent record was of an adult seen at Dungeness during 18th-25th August 1984. This bird also had odd legs, this time physically: it had become crippled and was missing some toes. A month earlier there had been one at Pett Pools in Sussex on 28th July; that was not seen to have damaged legs but it is possible that it was the same bird (but the two are counted separately in the official record). Incidentally, both were found by Peter Grant.

Andrew Henderson

KENT BIRD SIGHTINGS FOR MAY-JUNE 2021 - Chris Hindle

*Species printed in **red** require descriptions or good quality photographs to be accepted by the British Birds Rarities Committee (species in capital letters) or the KOS Rarities Committee (species in lower case). The results of these committees' deliberations are regularly published on the KOS website.*

WEATHER

May was generally showery and cool whilst during the month a number of deep low pressure systems moved through resulting in some particularly notable windy days. It was the coldest May in the UK since 1996 and also the fourth wettest since 1862.

The first half of **June** was largely dry and warm, but the second half had nearer average temperatures with some very cool days for the time of year. There were numerous showery days and some thunderstorms with heavy consecutive outbursts in the southeast where the rainfall was double the average. There was 86mm of rain at Bishopstone and 96mm at Manston.

WILDFOWL

An adult **Russian White-fronted Goose** was seen at Dungeness RSPB on May 1st.

As many as 10 **Egyptian Geese** were recorded from Bough Beech, Sevenoaks WR, Higham Marshes, Dungeness RSPB, Stodmarsh, Collard's Lake, Seaton, Dunorlan Park, Northward Hill, Swale LNR and Swalecliffe whilst up to eight **Mandarins** were recorded from Bough Beech and Weddington.

One or two **Garganey** were recorded from Oare Marshes, DBO, Cliffe Pools, Worth Marshes, Elmley and Swanscombe Marshes. A female with nine young was also discovered at Elmley on June 16th.

A **Scaup** flew past DBO on May 20th and three **Velvet Scoter** flew past there on May 4th with two on the 5th and 11th.

PARTRIDGE TO CORMORANT

A **Quail** was heard at Hempstead on June 29th with another heard at Ramsgate the next night.

Up to four **Black-throated Divers** flew past DBO on most days between May 1st and 11th and there was also one at Willop on the 5th, whilst one or two **Great Northern Divers** flew past DBO almost daily between May 1st and 10th. One was also seen at Motney Hill from May 1st-17th and there was another at Samphire Hoe on May 9th.

A **Manx Shearwater** flew past DBO on May 1st and nine were counted on the 3rd. With a westerly gale blowing on the May 4th there were 56 counted at DBO, seven at Mill Point, three at Minnis Bay and one at Swalecliffe. During the first part of May up to two were seen at DBO but there were higher numbers there from the 16th.

Manx Shearwater counts at Dungeness Bird Observatory May 16th-25th

| MAY | COUNTS |
|------|--------|
| 16th | 22 |
| 17th | - |
| 18th | - |
| 19th | - |
| 20th | 36 |
| 21st | 60 |
| 22nd | 8 |
| 23rd | - |
| 24th | 421 |
| 25th | - |

One was also seen at North Foreland on May 22nd and 66 flew past Hythe on May 24th.



Black Stork by Chris Bond

A **BLACK STORK** was seen at Bekesbourne on the evening of May 9th and next morning was seen flying over Grove Ferry/Stodmarsh and finished at Worth Marshes where it was still present on the morning of the 11th. It was also reported early in the morning of May 12th at Stodmarsh. Another bird was seen at South Foreland and Bockhill on June 3rd and at Sellindge on the 5th and 6th.

A **White Stork** was found at Grove Ferry on June 17th and at Westmarsh on the 21st.

The long staying **Glossy Ibis** remained at Dungeness RSPB until June 26th. Another bird was seen at Oare Marshes on May 2nd.

During May and June up to three **Spoonbills** were seen at Dungeness RSPB, DBO, Cliffe Pools, Reculver, Worth Marshes, Scotney, Pegwell Bay, Conyer Creek, Sandwich Bay and Elmley and one or two **Bitterns** were recorded from Dungeness RSPB, Elmley and the Stour Valley. One seen at Sandwich Bay on June 1st was unexpected.



Cattle Egret by Terry Laws

As many as eight **Cattle Egrets** were seen at Elmley, Dungeness RSPB, Sandwich Bay, Allhallows, Cliffe Pools, Northward Hill, Stodmarsh, Swalecliffe, Brookland, Oare Marshes and Halstow Marshes.



Purple Heron by Brendan Ryan

An adult **Purple Heron** was photographed at Ham Fen on May 8th whilst one was seen at Dungeness on May 12th. Others were reported from Stodmarsh/Grove Ferry between May 20th and 31st and at Seasalter on June 5th.

Up to five **Great White Egrets** were recorded from Dungeness RSPB, DBO, Bough Beech, Stodmarsh/Grove Ferry, Elmley, Hythe, Pegwell Bay and Sandwich Bay and one or two **Shags** were seen at Bockhill, Samphire Hoe, St Mary's Island and DBO.

BIRDS OF PREY

During May and June one or two **Ospreys** were seen at Sandwich Bay, Worth Marshes, Hacklinge, DBO, Bough Beech, Grove Ferry/Stodmarsh, Whitstable, Deal, Oare Marshes, Cliffe Pools, Gillingham and Swanley.

A **Honey Buzzard** was reported from Stodmarsh on May 12th after which there were reports of single birds from Dungeness, Sandwich Bay, Stour Valley, Kingsdown, South Foreland, Bockhill, Sholden, Teynham, Cliffsend and Northward Hill.

A **Hen Harrier** flew past DBO on May 6th and ring-tails were seen at Scotney on the 15th, at Worth Marshes on the 20th and at Monks Wall on the 27th and 29th with a male seen at Sarre and flying W past Dover Harbour on the 31st.

A **Montagu's Harrier** was reported flying NE at Bough Beech on May 12th with another ring-tail seen at Harty Ferry, Conyer and Swale LNR between June 6th and 11th.

An unidentified ring-tail **harrier** was seen at Stodmarsh on June 20th.

During May and June **Red Kites** were recorded at many sites in the County with double figures regularly reported and with peaks of 53 at Sandwich Bay May 27th, 45 at Graveney on the June 5th and 84 at Sandwich Bay, 73 at Highstead, 45 at Margate, 42 at Kingsdown on June 6th and 41 at Bockhill on the 9th.



Red Kite by Mike Gould

Single **Black Kites** were recorded at St Mary-in-the-Marsh on May 1st, at Swalecliffe on May 25th, Cliffe Pools on May 27th and Graveney and Castle Coote on the 31st. In June birds were reported from Postling and Eastry on the 5th, Dungeness RSPB on the 7th, Allhallows on the 9th and Cliftonville on the 14th.

There was a report of a **White-tailed Eagle** flying over Broadstairs on May 7th with another report of one at Eastry on May 23rd.

A **Stone-curlew** was seen at Pegwell Bay on June 25th and a **Black-winged Stilt** dropped into Worth Marshes on the evening of June 22nd but was not there the next morning.

A **WHITE-TAILED PLOVER** was seen briefly and photographed at Stodmarsh on June 2nd. This is only the second record of this species in Kent.



White-tailed Plover by Bryan East

A **Purple Sandpiper** was reported from Margate Harbour on May 16th and two **Little Stints** were identified at Cliffe Pools on May 2nd with one on the 23rd.

During May single **Wood Sandpipers** were recorded from Wouldham, Oare Marshes, Stonar, Elmley, Westbere, Scotney and Stodmarsh/Grove Ferry. The first returning birds were two seen at Stodmarsh on June 20th and these were followed by single birds at Sevenoaks WR and Whitstable.

Up to five **Spotted Redshanks** were seen at Cliffe Pools, Oare Marshes and Dungeness RSPB.

A **COLLARED PRATINCOLE** was seen at Higham Marshes on May 16th and at Cliffe Marshes on the May 19th and 22nd and from the 24th to the 31st. Two birds then arrived at Dungeness RSPB on June 6th and were joined by a third individual on the 7th with two still present on the 8th and with one reported from the 9th-11th. A total of only eleven birds have ever been recorded in Kent before this year.



Collared Pratincole by Chris Bond

AUKS TO GULLS

Up to five **Little Gulls** were recorded from DBO, Northward Hill, South Swale LNR, Conyer Creek and Scotney whilst the long staying **Iceland Gull** was still at Dungeness on May 1st and reappeared on the May 25th and June 4th.

An adult **Yellow-legged Gull** was seen at DBO on June 30th.

A **CASPIAN TERN** flew N at Worth Marshes on June 8th. If accepted this will be the fifth records for Sandwich Bay and the 26th for Kent.

As many as six **Black Terns** were seen at DBO during May with one at Sevenoaks WR on the 13th and another at Stodmarsh on the 31st. The first returning bird was recorded at Sandwich by on June 29th. 2,415 **Arctic Terns** flew past DBO on May 1st.

During May up to 21 **Great Skuas** were counted at DBO with up to six at Mill Point whilst as many as 28 **Arctic Skuas** were seen at DBO with single birds also seen at Mill Point.

Pomarine Skua counts at Dungeness Bird Observatory in May

| MAY | COUNTS |
|------|--------|
| 1st | 3 |
| 2nd | 1 |
| 3rd | 25 |
| 4th | - |
| 5th | - |
| 6th | 3 |
| 7th | - |
| 8th | 4 |
| 9th | 5 |
| 10th | 4 |
| 11th | 3 |
| 12th | 1 |
| 13th | - |
| 14th | - |
| 15th | 6 |
| 16th | - |
| 17th | - |
| 18th | 1 |

A **Puffin** flew E with three Guillemots at DBO on May 28th.

DOVES TO RING-NECKED PARAKEET

During May single **Short-eared Owls** were seen at Reculver Marshes, Seasalter, Elmley and Stodmarsh. One was still present at Reculver Marshes on June 1st.

A **Bee-eater** was heard as it flew over Walmer Castle on May 25th and others were heard or seen at Samphire Hoe and Dungeness on May 31st and at South Foreland and the Dungeness area on June 2nd and 5th. Ten birds were also seen at Dover on June 8th and on the 9th, there were 11 at North Foreland, nine at Folkestone Warren, four on Worth Marshes, two at South Foreland and one heard at Church Hougham.

A male **Red-footed Falcon** was seen at Collard's Lake on May 24th, a female was seen at Worth Marshes from June 6th-26th and there was a male at Bough Beech on June 14th and 20th.

SHRIKES TO HIRUNDINES

A female **Red-backed Shrike** was found at Langdon Hole on June 23rd.

A **Woodchat Shrike** seen at Langdon Hole on May 17th was subsequently identified from a photograph.

During May single male **Golden Orioles** were recorded at South Foreland on the 9th, at North Foreland on the 10th, at Northdown Park on the 16th, at Lyminge on the 18th and at Fordwich on the 28th. In June one was reported from Stelling Minnis on the 2nd with others at Stodmarsh on the 6th and Dungeness RSPB on the 11th.

As many as five **Ravens** were recorded from Dungeness RSPB, DBO, Bockhill, Lympe, Bough Beech and Botany Bay and a **Hooded Crow** was seen at Greatstone-on-Sea between June 5th and 20th and at Lydd on the 22nd.



Red-rumped Swallow by Howard Vaughan

A **Red-rumped Swallow** spent the day at New Hythe GPs on May 3rd with others seen at Samphire Hoe on May 11th and at Lade on May 18th with two at North Foreland on May 27th.

CETTI'S WARBLER TO WHEATEARS

On May 7th, single **Wood Warblers** were identified at DBO, Abbotscliffe and Elmley with another singing at Hamstreet on June 3rd.

A **Marsh Warbler** was reported singing at Stodmarsh on the very, early date of May 11th whilst another sang briefly at Chamber's Wall on June 9th and one was reported from Dungeness NNR on June 12th.

A singing **Melodious Warbler** spent the day at DBO on May 17th and another bird was reported singing at Langdon Hole on June 28th.

During May and June one or two **Grasshopper Warbler** were recorded from Reculver Marshes, DBO, Stodmarsh/Grove Ferry, Swanscombe Marshes, Seasalter, Cliffe Pools, Oare Marshes, Minster, Thanet and Minnis Bay.

A **Dartford Warbler** was seen at DBO on May 14th.

During May and June single **Firecrests** were recorded from Denge Wood, Charing and Port Lympne.



Rose-coloured Starling by Alan Pavey

A **Rose-coloured Starling** was seen briefly at Dungeness on June 1st and five flew N at South Foreland and another was seen at Ramsgate on the 2nd, there were four at Sandwich Bay on the 3rd and one in the Dungeness area on the 4th and 5th. Others were also seen on Worth Marshes on June 6th, at Dungeness RSPB from the 10th-13th and from the 17th-19th and at Oare Marshes on the 12th.

During May up to three **Ring Ouzels** were recorded from Sandwich Bay, Faversham, Boughton-under-Blean, Langdon Cliffs, Swalecliffe, Eastchurch, Abbotscliffe, Rushenden, Lower Hope Point, Sevenoaks and Stodmarsh.

A female **Pied Flycatcher** was found at DBO on May 1st with other birds at Swanscombe and Gravesend on the 4th, Lade on the 5th and 7th, DBO on the 7th and Margate on the 20th.

During May and June up to eight **Black Redstarts** were seen at DBO, Bockhill, Botany Bay, St Mary's Island, Samphire Hoe, Langdon Cliffs and Dover Harbour.

DUNNOCK TO BUNTINGS

A male **Grey-headed Wagtail** was found on the beach at Reculver on May 9th and was still there the next day.



Grey-headed Wagtail by Matt Hindle

During May and June up to three **Common Crossbills** were reported from Denge Wood, Park Gate Down, Bockhill and Abbotscliffe.

Single **Serins** were seen at DBO on May 23rd and 31st and at Dengemarsh on June 7th and South Foreland on June 16th.

DBO = Dungeness Bird Observatory **BBRC** = British Birds Rarities Committee

RSPB = Royal Society for the Protection of Birds **BOU** = British Ornithological Union

"The Patch" = the warm water outflow from Dungeness Nuclear Power Station

NNR=National Nature Reserve **NR**=Nature Reserve **LNR**=Local Nature Reserve

FC = Field Centre **WR** = Wildlife Reserve **GP** = Gravel Pits **CP** = Country Park

CONTRIBUTORS

This summary owes much to the contributors to the various sites in "Latest Sightings" on the KOS Website at www.kentos.org.uk, KOSForum, Twitter and the RBA Hotline.

Records have been contributed by A. Appleton, P. Beraet, Bockhill Birders, Bough Beech (per A. Ford), P. Blanche, R. Bonser, E. Brown, N. Burt, G. Burton, F. Cackett, J. Cantelo, P. Carr, R. Carr, M. Casemore, J. Chantler, P. Chantler, M. Chidwick, J. Childs, G. Coultrip, K. Cutting, R. Davies, DBO (per D. Walker), A. Dunstan, K. Duvall, B. East, A. Edwards, D. Faulkener, Folkestone and Hythe Birds (per I. Roberts), Foreness Bird Group, C. Gibbard, R. Gomes, M. Gould, A. Hindle, C. Hindle, M. Hindle, M. Hollingworth, G. Johnson, M. Kennett, J. King, O. Leyshon, A. Lipczynski, K. Lord, R. Mace, J. Massey, B. Matlock, N. McCanch, S. Message, S. Morton, S. Mount, M. Norman, P. North, R. O'Reilly, M. Orchard, J. Partridge, K. Privett, M. Puxley, R. Rackliffe, B. Ring, M. Roser, K. Ross, B. Ryan, Samphire Hoe (per L. Collins, P. Holt, D. Smith, and P. Smith), SBBO (per A. Lipczynski and S. Walton), Sevenoaks WR (per S. Clerici), I. Shepherd, D. Smith, P. Smith, W. Stoneham, M. Sutherland, Swale NNR (per R. Smith, D. Faulkner, I. Davidson), A. Swandale, C. Tedder, P. Trodd, D. Tutt, N. Upton, J. van der Dol, M. Watts, M. Wilson, T. Wilson, T. Wood J. Woolgar, B. Woolhouse and B. Wright.

Please send records for this review to:

Chris Hindle at christopherhindle@hotmail.com

Records sent to me may not all be used for this report as I try to extract the more interesting sightings, however all records are equally important and I forward them to the appropriate Area Recorders who enter them all onto the KOS database.

Please also send to me any descriptions or photos of rare birds so that they may be assessed by the relevant committee.

The following 2021 KOS Rarities have so far been accepted by the KOS Rarities Panel based on published photos or as a result of descriptions submitted.

| | | |
|----------------------------|------------------|----------------------|
| Purple Heron | Westbere | April 21st-30th |
| Purple Heron | Ham Fen | May 8th |
| Purple Heron | Dungeness | May 12th |
| Black Kite (flying S) | Swalecliffe | May 25th |
| Rough-legged Buzzard | Bockhill | April 30th |
| Red-rumped Swallow | New Hythe | May 3rd |
| Red-rumped Swallow | Samphire Hoe | May 11th |
| Grey-headed Wagtail (male) | Reculver Marshes | May 9th-10th |
| Goshawk | Kent | March 13th |
| Goshawk | Kent | February 13th & 23rd |

Rare Birds requiring descriptions that were recorded in Kent in 2020

Below is a list of birds that were recorded in 2020 for which we do not have descriptions or photographs and will therefore not be included in the systematic list in the 2020 Kent Bird Report.

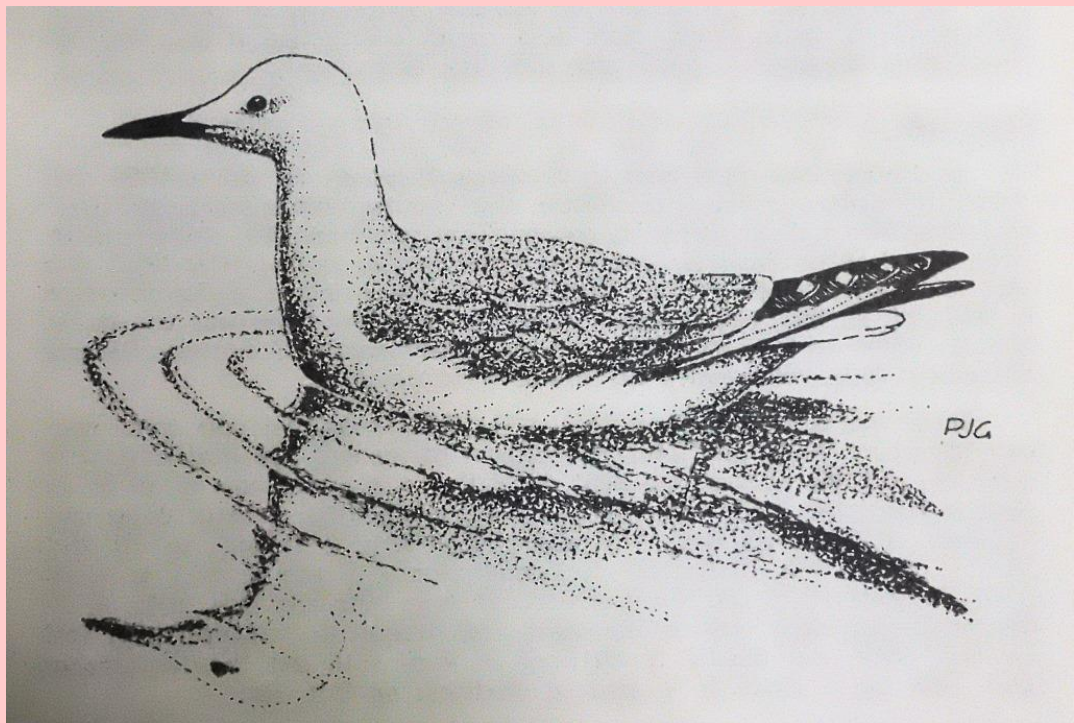
If you saw any of these birds please will you submit a description or a photograph for assessment by the KOS Rarities Panel to christopherhindle@hotmail.com

| | | |
|--|----------------------------|--------------------------|
| Green-winged Teal (male) | Kearsney | November 20th |
| Cory's Shearwater | Foreness Point | May 10th |
| Storm Petrel (flying E) | Reculver | September 27th |
| Glossy Ibis | Grove Ferry | May 31st |
| 4 Glossy Ibises (flying E) | Foreness | October 23rd |
| 4 Glossy Ibises (flying W) | Conyer | October 28th |
| Night-heron (adult SW) | Stonelees, Pegwell Bay | April 24th |
| SQUACCO HERON | Grove Ferry | May 29th |
| Pallid/Montagu's Harrier 2nd year male | Stodmarsh | May 7th |
| Black Kite (flying W) | Sittingbourne | April 8th |
| Black Kite (flying W) | Whitstable | April 16th |
| Black Kite (flying W) | Walmer | April 26th |
| Black Kite | Dungeness RSPB | May 12th |
| Black Kite (flying E) | Selling | May 13th |
| Black Kite (flying N) | Shellness | May 13th |
| Black Kite | Boughton Street | May 22nd |
| Black Kite (flying out to sea) | Seasalter | June 17th |
| Rough-legged Buzzard (flying E) | Broadstairs | April 23rd |
| Rough-legged Buzzard | Shellness/Graveney Marshes | October 3rd |
| 2 KENTISH PLOVERS | Capel Fleet | September 8th |
| Iceland Gull (adult flying E) | Foreness | December 6th |
| Kumlein's Gull (juvenile) | Pegwell Bay | December 19th |
| Caspian Gull (2nd winter) | Sevenoaks WR | November 8 th |
| Caspian Gull (adult) | Dover | December 2 nd |
| Caspian Gull (first winter) | Willow Basin | December 11th |
| Caspian Gull (adult) | Chillenden | December 22nd |
| Black Guillemot (flying E) | St Margarets-at-Cliffe | July 27th |
| Red-rumped Swallow | Dengemarsh | April 18th |
| Red-rumped Swallow (flying N) | DBO | April 23rd |

| | | |
|---------------------------------------|---------------------------|----------------|
| Red-rumped Swallow | Bough Beech | May 6th |
| Red-rumped Swallow (juvenile) | Bockhill | October 7th |
| Siberian Chiffchaff | Sevenoaks WR | December 16th |
| Dusky Warbler | South Foreland | October 16th |
| Dusky Warbler | Shuart | October 18th |
| Dusky Warbler | Weddington (private site) | December 15th |
| ARCTIC WARBLER | Courtstairs Park | Sept 20th-22nd |
| Icterine Warbler | Kingsgate | August 10th |
| WESTERN SUBALPINE WARBLER (female) | St Margarets-at-Cliffe | June 23rd |
| Rose-coloured Starling | Richborough Fort | June 14th |
| Richard's Pipit | Worth Marshes | October 17th |
| Richard's Pipit | Seasalter | October 26th |
| Richard's Pipit | Abbotscliffe | November 5th |
| TAWNY PIPIT | South Foreland | May 28th |
| Twite | Foreness | October 16th |

Fifty Years Ago

Slender-billed Gull



Slender-billed Gull-reproduced from field sketches by Peter Grant of the bird detailed below

One, an adult, first identified at the "patch" at Dungeness on July 21st was seen frequently until Aug. 1st. What was probably the same bird was seen at Minsmere on the 15th, before returning to Dungeness on the 31st, where it was seen until September 5th and again on the 12th (PJG, KR, RES et al). This is the first record for the county and only the third occurrence of this gull in Great Britain.

KBR 1971