



Richard's Pipit by Terry Laws

- News & Announcements • Writing for the Kent Bird Report – what larks! •
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- Fifty Years Ago •

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Editorial

There is reputedly a Chinese curse which expresses to ones foes “May you live in interesting times” . My familiarity with Chinese philosophy is somewhat hampered by a lack of language skills, but on the basis of my research this seems to be largely apocryphal. However, in historical terms it is clear that the sentiment resonates, referring to times of war, famine, political instability and pestilence. Suddenly these words seem to resonate with our modern world all the more!

Modern birding involves a good deal of travel at many levels, from the ten-minute drive to my local patch, or last autumn's flights and road trip around north-eastern Greece, to the frantic, mad-dash twitches across the country and epic pan-global wanderings of many of our more intrepid members. Current global events are already having an impact on some levels of this mobility and the situation may well get worse before it gets better, although my cynical nature does wonder just how much ‘truth’ is emanating from our government, lost in a tidal wave of myth and misinformation on social media.

Some, like myself, are fortunate to be able to enjoy good birding in and from the seclusion of my garden and so it is worth remembering that the epic of spring migration is already underway. I have already encountered several singing Chiffchaffs, while Wheatears, Sand Martins, Sandwich Terns and a few other arrivals have made landfall in the country already. Local birding is still a potential source of delight and wonder, we are most fortunate to enjoy a hobby which is rooted in the natural world, removing us, even temporarily from the worries of the human world.

One final positive thought. So far, no one has suggested that our current proto-pandemic is vectored by migrating birds!!

Good birding
Norman

News and announcements

IMPORTANT NOTICE

In view of the increasing concerns over public gatherings & the Coronavirus, it has been decided to cancel this year's AGM. We will seek to conduct the business on line during April & will circulate papers to members by e mail or if necessary, by post in due course. I am sure that members will fully understand the need to take this course of action. For further information please check the society's website and Facebook page.

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 national Rare Birds Breeding 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 <http://rbbp.org.uk/>
3. Submit to the KOS database, <http://birdgroups.co.uk/kos/default.asp>, there is an automatic filter, which means that the records are not shown on the website but stored in the database,
4. Submit your records to Birdtrack, there is a similar filter and your observations will be secure.
5. 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.

The RBBP <http://rbbp.org.uk/> collects data on the rarer species of birds breeding in the United Kingdom. Its records allow the production of annual totals of breeding pairs for each species on its list. It was formed in 1972 by representatives of the RSPB, the BTO, The Nature Conservancy Council and *British Birds*. The present Panel is made up of representatives of the Joint Nature Conservation Committee, RSPB, BTO, three independent members, and a Secretary and a report is published each year in *British Birds* and available on their website. Approximately 160 species are monitored by the RBBP, although the list is reviewed and changing so that in 2019 Cetti's Warbler will no longer be recorded but Turtle Dove is now being considered. Each year details of between twenty and twenty-five species are submitted by the KOS. Records from Kent are collated by the Kent Ornithological Society and submitted to the UK RBBP. These records form the basis for relevant sections in the annual KBR.

For more information refer back to the previous KOS May Newsletter.

Brian Watmough
brianrwat@yahoo.co.uk

COLOUR RINGED LAPWING



Picture by Richard Pope

A number of young lapwing were colour- ringed, under license, at Elmley National Nature Reserve last summer as part of a pilot research project to investigate the dispersal of young birds. If you see a colour ringed lapwing please email Brian Watmough brianrwat@yahoo.co.uk.

The number of Lapwing breeding in the UK has declined by 55% during the last 25 years and the species is red listed as a bird of conservation concern. Elmley National Nature Reserve is one of the most important sites for breeding lapwing in southern England.

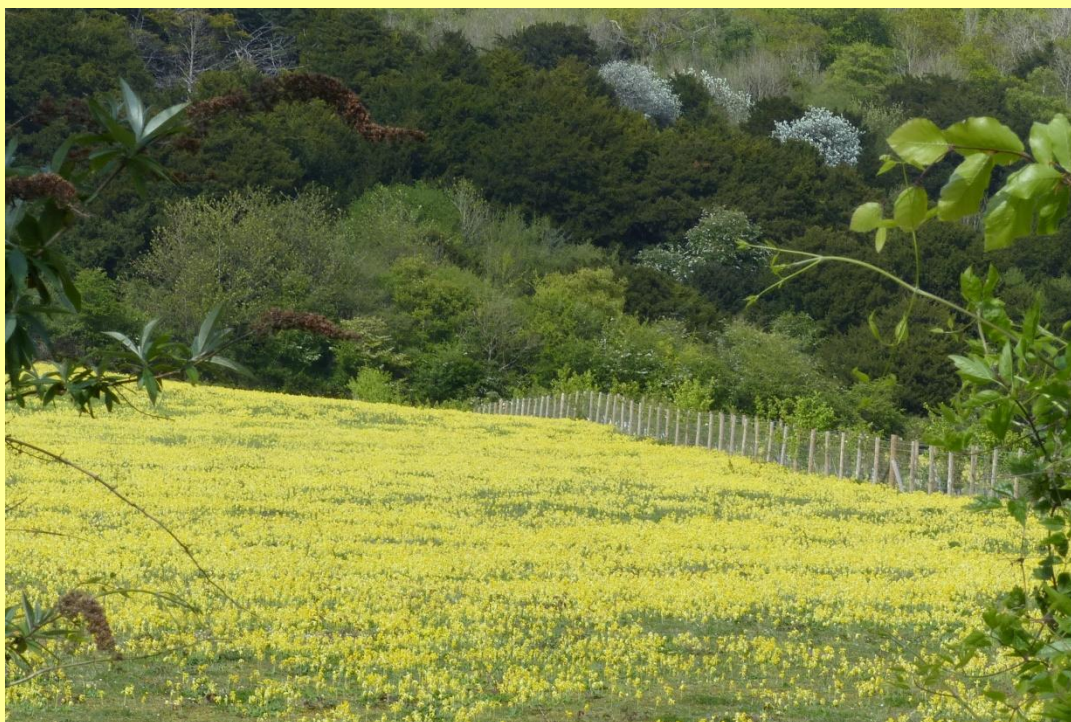
BTO BREEDING BIRD SURVEY IN KENT

The BTO/JNCC/RSPB Breeding Bird Survey (BBS) is the main scheme for monitoring the population changes in breeding bird species of the UK. For volunteers in the project BBS is a great way to become familiar with a small area of local countryside whilst contributing valuable data to aid bird research and conservation.

Participation in BBS involves two early-morning visits in the spring to a local 1-km square site, to count all the birds seen and heard whilst walking two 1-km lines across the square. Prior to this there is an initial visit to recce the site and record the habitat of the square, while volunteers also have the option to make later visits in summer to survey for butterflies. Recording forms are sent out to each volunteer or can be downloaded from BBS online, and results of bird counts can also be submitted on the website. If you can identify common birds by sight and sound then please consider taking on a BBS square – it is very rewarding! There are 135 1-km squares pre-selected for BBS in Kent, the vast majority already mapped with transect lines, though many sites require new volunteers for surveys.

Please take a look at the BBS webpages and use the map to find a square near you: <https://www.bto.org/volunteer-surveys/bbs/taking-part>. Complete the online form that will appear and as regional organiser I will then get in contact to allocate the square to you. Alternatively, just send me an email (rjknight53@gmail.com) to register your interest in BBS for Kent, and suitable squares in your location can then be discussed.

You might carry out a survey in a location such as Boxley Warren which was a vacant site when I signed up for BBS in 2019, and though not all squares are as beautiful as this area they are of equal importance for monitoring breeding birds. I look forward to hearing from you!



Boxley Warren

Bob Knight

KENT TURTLE DOVE SURVEY 2021

Next year the Kent Ornithological Survey will be running a survey of Turtle Doves in Kent. This species has decreased across the UK in recent times with a particularly marked decline in the last 10 years. Sadly, the Turtle Dove has now been added to the list of species monitored by the Rare Breeding Birds Panel (RBBP). A recent RBBP enquiry has revealed that Kent is now the top county for this species and as such we have a responsibility to try and make an accurate assessment of the Kent population. A lot of important work is being performed by Operation Turtle Dove and there is an active network of RSPB/farmer collaboration in place which involves feeding plots and site monitoring. However, a full and wider survey across Kent is required. This year will involve publicising the survey and the setting up of the survey methods and techniques.

Full details will be available in due course but if you would like to take part in this hugely important survey then please contact either:-



Bob Knight riknight53@gmail.com

Brian Watmough brianrwat@yahoo.co.uk

Murray Orchard murray.orchard@live.co.uk

BREEDING WADERS OF WET MEADOWS SURVEY 2020

A repeat of this survey, last performed in 2002, will be carried out this year, organised by the BTO/RSPB. The purpose is to assess the importance of both existing and new wet grassland and other breeding wader habitats in England.

Volunteers will be required to visit allocated sites on three occasions between mid-April and end of June. Visits should be at least a week apart and be made between dawn and midday – avoiding cold, wet or windy weather.

A map will be provided showing the boundary of your site.

In Kent there are a total of 139 sites to be covered. Of these, coverage of 62 is being arranged by the RSPB and its network of volunteers. Of the remaining 77 sites, 30 are classed as Priority 1 sites and 47 as Priority 2 sites. It is hoped to get KOS and Kent BTO members (and other volunteers) to cover all the Priority 1 sites and as many Priority 2 sites as possible.

The Priority 1 sites comprise all those previously surveyed in 2002 and those included in a partial re-survey in 2009/10. Coverage of these sites is essential to be able to compare the earlier data with the 2020 survey. Also included in the Priority 1 sites are several Agri-Environment Scheme (AES) fields which comprise Lapwing plots and areas of newly created/improved wet grassland.

All remaining sites, which comprise areas last surveyed pre-2002 and AES fields, are classed as Priority 2 sites.

The full breakdown of Kent sites is given below: -

Priority 1 Sites (30)

12 surveyed in 2002

3 surveyed in 2009/10

15 AES sites (5 Lapwing plots; 10 new/improved wet grass)

Priority 2 Sites (47)

18 surveyed pre-2002

29 AES sites (17 Lapwing plots; 12 new/improved wet grass)

The greatest priority is to cover all wet grassland sites previously surveyed in 2002 and 2009/10. These are given in the table below. It is hoped, however, to also get coverage of the priority 1 AES sites and as many of the Priority 2 sites as possible.

Region	Coord_org	Priority	Site_name	Code_2020	Central OS GR	10 km sq	Site_type
KENT	BTO	1	Lingfield-Edenbridge	6600	TQ416448	TQ44	Surv_2002
KENT	BTO	1	Penshurst Bridge/Collie	3958	TQ528420	TQ54	Surv_2002
KENT	BTO	1	Stilstead-Eldridges Lock	3952	TQ635471	TQ64	Surv_2002
KENT	BTO	1	Pinkham To Stilstead (Medway)	3951	TQ663476	TQ64	Surv_2002
KENT	BTO	1	Tillingham Valley	10255	TQ900207	TQ92	Surv_2002

KENT	BTO	1	Palmarsh G.P.	4040	TR130330	TR13	Surv_2002
KENT	BTO	1	Puxton Marshes	4023	TR199603	TR26	Surv_2002
KENT	BTO	1	Wickhambreaux To Bekesbourne	4011	TR219583	TR25	Surv_2002
KENT	BTO	1	Preston Valley	4010	TR240611	TR26	Surv_2002
KENT	BTO	1	Wantsum Marshes (Wantsum)	4017	TR249662	TR26	Surv_2002
KENT	BTO	1	Hacklinge (North Stream)	4004	TR338544	TR35	Surv_2002
KENT	BTO	1	Sandwich Bay	4000	TR344604	TR36	Surv_2002
KENT	BTO	1	Cheyne Court/Walland Marsh	10540	TQ982233	TQ92	Surv_200910
KENT	BTO	1	Walland Marsh / Woolpack Inn Area	4051	TQ984240	TQ92	Surv_200910
KENT	BTO	1	Walland Marsh / Cheyne Court	4050	TQ991225	TQ92	Surv_200910

This is an on-line survey and volunteers will be able to select a site to cover from the BTO website and download instructions, maps and recording forms. Please visit the BTO website for further details <https://www.bto.org/our-science/projects/breeding-waders-wet-meadows>

Interested volunteers should contact the Regional Organiser – Bob Knight rjknight53@gmail.com

JNCC SEABIRD COUNT 2015/20 – Survey of Urban Gulls in Kent 2020

In 2018 a national survey was carried out of all seabird species nesting in “natural” locations. In Kent this covered all our breeding Gull species (Herring, LBB, Common, Black-headed and Mediterranean), Terns (Sandwich, Common and Little), plus Fulmar and Cormorant. Last year the survey was extended to cover 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 the March 2019 Newsletter for further background. 2020 is the final year of the Seabird Count and the aim is to complete the work started in 2019.



My thanks to all those who agreed to act as local

organisers last year and who arranged surveys in their regions. A special word of thanks to Ian Roberts, who surveyed every roof top in Folkestone and Hythe and mapped the locations of 877 Herring Gull nests! An extraordinary effort beyond the call of duty!

I will be contacting last year's local organisers to help again, and to spread the word and enlist volunteers to assist in their areas. 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 in 2000, and a survey of randomly selected squares, aimed to assess the expansion of breeding ranges since the last census. For the random squares, a total of 182 1km squares was originally selected across Kent, using a stratified random sampling approach. This means that all squares contain potential nesting habitat but not necessarily breeding Gulls. Covering such a large number of squares for the national survey is proving to be a challenge, but I would like to ensure that we get good coverage of all known sites in the county so that the Kent population estimates of our breeding Herring and Lesser Black-backed Gulls (combined with the 2018 survey of natural sites) are as accurate as possible.

Repeat (and potentially new) Sites

In 2019 coverage was achieved for Medway Towns, Maidstone, Faversham, Canterbury, Seasalter-Herne Bay, Thanet, Kingsdown-Dover Docks, Samphire Hoe-Hythe and Dymchurch-Dungeness.

Remaining areas that need to be surveyed in 2020 are Dartford-Gravesend, Sittingbourne, Sheerness, Ashford and Dover.

The survey of repeat sites requires counting and categorising all birds present at the site (AON – Apparently Occupied Nest; AOT – Apparently Occupied Territory or IND – count of individual adults) from suitable vantage points.

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. Many of the 182 1km squares randomly selected across Kent were inland rural or suburban areas highly unlikely to hold breeding Gulls, and by checking through the map links 100 squares have been removed from the list and will be

scored 0. There are still 52 squares remaining that need to be covered which have a reasonable chance of holding breeding Gulls, and some will certainly do so ([see list below](#)). If people could look through the list and plan a couple of late spring/early summer drives or bike rides to take in a couple of 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).

If anyone wishes to help with either the Repeat Site or Random Square surveys, please contact Murray Orchard at murray.orchard@live.co.uk

Kent Random Squares:-

1KM SQ	MAP LINK	LOCATION
TR0041	http://www.geograph.org.uk/showmap.php?gridref=TR0041	Ashford
TQ5372	http://www.geograph.org.uk/showmap.php?gridref=TQ5372	Dartford
TQ9063	http://www.geograph.org.uk/showmap.php?gridref=TQ9063	Sittingbourne
TQ9165	http://www.geograph.org.uk/showmap.php?gridref=TQ9165	Sittingbourne
TQ7058	http://www.geograph.org.uk/showmap.php?gridref=TQ7058	Larkfield
TQ6175	http://www.geograph.org.uk/showmap.php?gridref=TQ6175	Northfleet
TQ5942	http://www.geograph.org.uk/showmap.php?gridref=TQ5942	Southborough
TQ5946	http://www.geograph.org.uk/showmap.php?gridref=TQ5946	Tonbridge
TQ5472	http://www.geograph.org.uk/showmap.php?gridref=TQ5472	Dartford
TQ5174	http://www.geograph.org.uk/showmap.php?gridref=TQ5174	Crayford
TQ5846	http://www.geograph.org.uk/showmap.php?gridref=TQ5846	Tonbridge Kings Hill (West Malling)
TQ6655	http://www.geograph.org.uk/showmap.php?gridref=TQ6655	Dartford Minster (Sheppey)
TQ5272	http://www.geograph.org.uk/showmap.php?gridref=TQ5272	Northfleet Leybourne/New Hythe
TQ9472	http://www.geograph.org.uk/showmap.php?gridref=TQ9472	Ramsgate
TQ6275	http://www.geograph.org.uk/showmap.php?gridref=TQ6275	Swanscombe
TQ7060	http://www.geograph.org.uk/showmap.php?gridref=TQ7060	Tonbridge
TR3863	http://www.geograph.org.uk/showmap.php?gridref=TR3863	Sittingbourne
TQ6176	http://www.geograph.org.uk/showmap.php?gridref=TQ6176	Sandwich
TQ5947	http://www.geograph.org.uk/showmap.php?gridref=TQ5947	Herne
TQ9265	http://www.geograph.org.uk/showmap.php?gridref=TQ9265	Sheerness
TR3259	http://www.geograph.org.uk/showmap.php?gridref=TR3259	Northfleet Westbrook (Margate)
TR1866	http://www.geograph.org.uk/showmap.php?gridref=TR1866	Gillingham
TQ9075	http://www.geograph.org.uk/showmap.php?gridref=TQ9075	Strood
TQ6173	http://www.geograph.org.uk/showmap.php?gridref=TQ6173	Dover
TR3370	http://www.geograph.org.uk/showmap.php?gridref=TR3370	Tunbridge Wells
TQ7867	http://www.geograph.org.uk/showmap.php?gridref=TQ7867	Whitstable
TQ7268	http://www.geograph.org.uk/showmap.php?gridref=TQ7268	Hawkinge
TR3041	http://www.geograph.org.uk/showmap.php?gridref=TR3041	Rainham (Essex)
TQ5739	http://www.geograph.org.uk/showmap.php?gridref=TQ5739	Pegwell
TR1066	http://www.geograph.org.uk/showmap.php?gridref=TR1066	Whitfield
TR2140	http://www.geograph.org.uk/showmap.php?gridref=TR2140	Paddock Wood
TQ5478	http://www.geograph.org.uk/showmap.php?gridref=TQ5478	Ashford
TR3664	http://www.geograph.org.uk/showmap.php?gridref=TR3664	Broadstairs
TR2943	http://www.geograph.org.uk/showmap.php?gridref=TR2943	Snodland
TQ6744	http://www.geograph.org.uk/showmap.php?gridref=TQ6744	Deal
TR0043	http://www.geograph.org.uk/showmap.php?gridref=TR0043	
TR3967	http://www.geograph.org.uk/showmap.php?gridref=TR3967	
TQ6960	http://www.geograph.org.uk/showmap.php?gridref=TQ6960	
TR3651	http://www.geograph.org.uk/showmap.php?gridref=TR3651	

TR0864	http://www.geograph.org.uk/showmap.php?gridref=TR0864	Seasalter
TQ9961	http://www.geograph.org.uk/showmap.php?gridref=TQ9961	Oare
TR3670	http://www.geograph.org.uk/showmap.php?gridref=TR3670	Cliftonville
TR0241	http://www.geograph.org.uk/showmap.php?gridref=TR0241	Ashford
TQ5842	http://www.geograph.org.uk/showmap.php?gridref=TQ5842	Southborough
TR0044	http://www.geograph.org.uk/showmap.php?gridref=TR0044	Ashford
TR3144	http://www.geograph.org.uk/showmap.php?gridref=TR3144	Whitfield
TQ6272	http://www.geograph.org.uk/showmap.php?gridref=TQ6272	Gravesend
TR3754	http://www.geograph.org.uk/showmap.php?gridref=TR3754	Deal
TQ5972	http://www.geograph.org.uk/showmap.php?gridref=TQ5972	Bean
TR0341	http://www.geograph.org.uk/showmap.php?gridref=TR0341	Ashford
TQ5938	http://www.geograph.org.uk/showmap.php?gridref=TQ5938	Tunbridge Wells
TQ6473	http://www.geograph.org.uk/showmap.php?gridref=TQ6473	Gravesend

Surveys

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



Nature's Sure Connected

Farmland Wildlife Surveys – volunteers needed

Role: We are looking for enthusiastic volunteers to walk a set route across participating local farms, which are part of the **Upper Beult Farmer Cluster**, on a weekly basis. Each survey will take 1-2 hours and will vary with the size of the farm and can be done at your own leisure during suitable weather periods.

You will monitor and record the different species of farmland wildlife observed while walking a set route. Species you will be looking for will include birds, butterflies, mammals and plants that are indicative of the farmland landscape. We are asking volunteers to record presence of species such as turtle dove, yellowhammer, common poppy, ragged robin and water vole.

Training is provided to learn how to conduct the survey as well as identification skills for the indicator species. This will be a half a day session on the 2nd April and attendance will be required to fully understand the survey method. The data collected also contributes to various conservation schemes that are assessing how species groups are faring across the whole of the UK.

Why we need your help

There is an increasing recognition that collaborative working in a geographic area can achieve more than working in isolation,

i.e. the sum of the group is greater than its parts. This approach has led to the formation of Farmer Clusters. By working together, helped by a Conservation Advisor, farmers and land managers can work more cohesively together in their locality, enabling them to collectively deliver greater benefits for soil, water and wildlife at a landscape scale.

With the growth of the farmer cluster approach, the [Nature's Sure Connected](#) (NSC) project saw an opportunity to develop an approach to landscape-scale monitoring in this context. We are currently working with Kent Wildlife Trust's Farmer Cluster Officers and the Upper Beult Farming Cluster to develop a survey led by farmers, landowners and volunteers. We are working in collaboration with farmers to develop a survey approach that works for them, and answers one of the key landscape-scale questions prioritised by conservation professionals are part of the NSC project.

Establishing the numbers of individuals of a species in a population is typically very resource and labour intensive, meaning it is frequently unachievable in landscape-scale projects. Our approach uses the principle that species distribution can act as an alternative (or proxy) for abundance. When populations grow or contract, the area they occupy also grows or contracts. By measuring the area occupied by a population, we can detect changes in its size, without needing to count every individual, and within the scope of limited resources.

To try and determine species distribution at a landscape scale, we are asking volunteers to conduct farmland wildlife surveys on various sites in the Upper Beult Farmer Cluster. Take part in this survey to help us understand how our farmland wildlife is coping across a large landscape and importantly work towards a Wilder Kent.

Contact: Nature's Sure Connected Project Team - Alana Skilbeck - alana.skilbeck@kentwildlife.org.uk

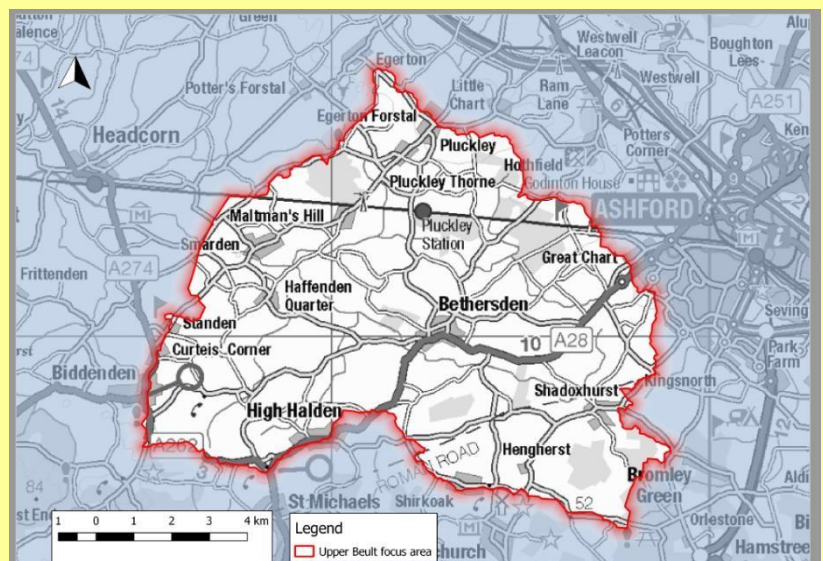
Area: Upper Beult Farmer Cluster – Pluckley, Egerton, Great Chart, Bethersden, Shadowhurst, High Halden, Biddenden, Smarden.

Commitment: 1-2 hours per survey, dependent on the size of the farm. Between 1 and 4 surveys per month through the survey season (April-August).

Required skills, qualities and experience:

- Friendly and approachable,
- An interest in wildlife in general,
- Bird, plant or mammal identification knowledge desirable but not essential as training is provided,
- Be able to follow clear instructions, health and safety guidelines and work methodically.

Other requirements: Due to location own transport is essential. Access will be coordinated with the farmer and will vary depending on harvest/other activities taking place.



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Roger Norman has a collection of bird journals free to a good home, on the proviso that the buyer collects from his home. Roger writes:

I have the following journals to give away free - to be collected from me in St Mary's Bay TN29

British Birds 1951 - 1988

Bird Study. 1954 - 1980

Lincs Bird Report. 1960 – 1993

If you are interested please contact Roger by e-mail on:

Rogernorman@keith751.plus.com

Kent Breeding Bird Atlas

We still have a modest stock of this useful publication which was well received on its release a couple of years ago. If you do not yet own a copy there will shortly be an opportunity to purchase some of the remainder of the stock at a reduced price. Keep an eye on the KOS web site for further details

Editorial and Records sub-committee

The KOS Editorial & Records Committee would like to hear from any individuals within the membership that would like to join the county rarity panel. Contact Barry Wright or Alan Fossey, (details above)

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

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.

Writing for the Kent Bird Report – what larks!

Readers of KOS newsletters may have noticed occasional appeals for people to join the team of writers who help compile the annual Kent Bird Reports. I've been doing it for a while: the 2017 report marked the fortieth anniversary of my first attempt (though there have been some gaps), so maybe I could give a personal view of what's involved and why it's worthwhile.

The basics

Writers of the systematic list are sent spreadsheets of every record for each species (coming from the KOS online system, BirdTrack, WeBS, BirdGuides, the two observatories, and elsewhere), and also spreadsheets showing the peak monthly counts at each site. All they have to do is to boil down those records into a short summary of the year's occurrences of each species.

Needless to say, it is a bit more complicated than that, and not helped by the large numbers of records held in the KOS database. Over 100,000 records were gathered by KOS in 2017, and a quick check shows that, for example, for Chaffinch alone there were almost 5500 in 2018! The question is how all those records can be condensed into a short and interesting summary.

Writers are sent a few pages of guidelines each year that describe the all the key points, including the basic style and format that KOS uses. It is important that everyone writes things like dates, numbers and place names in the same way, to make sure that readers aren't tripping up over changes in style and can easily find sites in a table, for example. A few aspects that I'd pick out are:

- It's very helpful to look at previous reports, to see what was included then and to ensure that a reasonably consistent approach is taken, while not shying away from sensible innovations.
- For many species, a lot more information can be conveyed in a table than in blocks of dense text. As time has gone on, more and more tables have appeared in KBRs, beginning with wildfowl and now extending through all of the major groups. The spreadsheets of peak monthly counts that you'll receive will help with report tables, though you do have to be careful about differing site names that partially or even completely overlap (a result of receiving data from multiple sources).
- If counts are being reported in text, try to reduce the number that you include. It's all too easy to think 'I'd better include that...and that...and that', when only the highest count was really necessary.
- The records spreadsheet can be sorted to enable you to pick out, for example, high counts or first & last records of migrants. Procedures like this are really valuable when dealing with hundreds or thousands of records; if you're not confident in the use of spreadsheets, there will be someone in the writing team who can help you.
- Stay alert and avoid slipping into birds report clichés, such as "There was a single at Dungeness on the 5th". That would be better as "One was at Dungeness on the 5th".
- Also, beware the occasional error in the records. These can be misidentifications but most probably are due to mistakes in data input (wrong species, wrong date, even wrong number). I remember one occasion coming across a record of 11 Tawny Owls somewhere: not impossible but surprising and it turned out to be a stutter on the keypad! With possible errors, it is best, if you can, to follow them up yourself, ideally by going direct to the observer. If that's not possible, then mark the queries for the editorial team to follow up.
- Once you've finished each species, read through it to make sure it's OK. Then leave it a day or two and do it again, checking against the data sheets – you'll be surprised how many improvements you'll make.

Your accounts will go through an editing process after you send them off. You can always ask to see what changes have been made, and why. Try not to be upset if changes are made – accuracy in style and decisions on content are difficult, but you will find it easier if you persist year by year. Nothing is perfect, by the way, and all writers do make mistakes, even after forty years, I assure you.

Adding value

Whatever we do, it's unlikely that the Kent Bird Report will get into the bestseller lists, or even get read from end to end. But there are ways by which the species accounts can be made more interesting and useful. I was stimulated to try to do this partly by a talk given to the KOS many years ago by Mike Rogers, one-time Sussex recorder and BBRC secretary. He illustrated how just a little background or an illuminating turn of phrase could lift a dreary list of numbers and dates into something that was worth reading.

We don't want to make species accounts too long – that puts readers off and makes the report more costly to produce – but with care and a little effort, a few snippets on what the birds were doing can enliven the text. Examples might be how quickly a rarity appeared and disappeared, some odd behaviour of a Water Rail, or what a big flock of finches was feeding on. I remember discussing with one former editor how we might make the entry for Pheasant more interesting, based as it was on few records mostly of released birds. We were tempted to include a recipe – that would perhaps have been going too far, but you get the drift! A glance through any recent Kent Bird Report will find examples of the sort of thing I mean. It's worth doing that to get other people's ideas for improving one's own efforts.

One aspect that I am particularly keen on is to describe how the status of a species in Kent compares to other parts of the country, or how it has changed over time. A lot of species' entries in the reports consist of quite dense text listing noteworthy counts. But for the newcomer, and I dare say even the more established birder, how can a reader tell whether 1600 Woodpigeons, 140 Willow Warblers or 57 Wheatears are a lot or a little contrasted with previous years, or what the significance is of 500 Coots or 50 pairs of Sedge Warblers?

To do this effectively, you'll need to check facts – but that is now so easy to do online (of course, making sure you're using up-to-date sources) or by referring to previous reports. Examples of the sort of context I have in mind are:

- Comparing the arrival date of a summer migrant such a Reed Warbler to the previous ten, twenty or more years.
- Drawing attention to peak counts of a duck such as Shoveler that are particularly high in relation to the national or international criteria for importance.
- Showing how the frequency of occurrence of a scarce or rare species has changed over the years.
- Commenting on long-term and year to year trends from the BTO Breeding Bird Survey.

An example: Shore Lark

The examples above (and they are only examples) vary in complexity. Even examining population trends in Kent can vary from a simple list of all occurrences of a rarity through to detailed descriptions of long-term, geographic and seasonal occurrence of common species. For more complex analyses, sources of information may include:

- Lists of rarity occurrence in the Kent List on the KOS website (preferably checked against British Birds Rarities Committee reports).
- The entries in previous Kent Bird Reports. They go all the way back to 1952, and digital versions exist for those covering 1952-2002.
- The KOS archives, including digitised records from the late 1990s and hand-written cards from earlier. Access to these (and their use) is more complicated, but with sufficient notice it can be arranged. Using original material is recommended for greatest accuracy, though data extracted from Kent Bird Reports will often give a very similar result. Incidentally, it is hoped that the paper archive will in due course be digitised.

As an example of what can be done, I've chosen, more or less at random, a moderately scarce species (Shore Lark), and used partly archive data and partly the Kent Bird Reports as source materials, such as this KBR entry from 1992.

Shore Lark

Eremophila alpestris

Passage migrant and winter visitor, usually in very small numbers.

There were seven single birds recorded in the autumn, all arriving between Oct.5th and 19th. These were at Foreness on the 5th, 8th and 15th, Dungeness from the 9th-13th (only the fifth record for the observatory), a male in full breeding plumage at Reculver from the 10th-13th, a third record for Bough Beech between the 18th-28th (see Plate 10) and one W at Grain on 19th. This represents an average showing for recent years, and there has been no more than two recorded together since 1986.

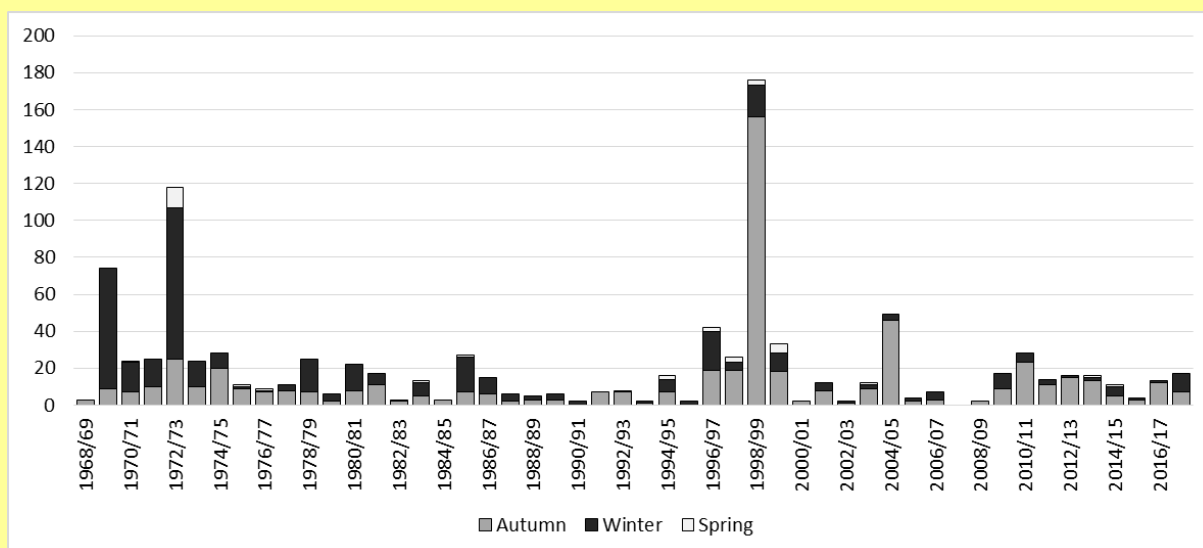
These records were entered into a spreadsheet:

Site	Date(s)	Count	Area	Notes
Elmley RSPB Reserve	21/10/1991	1	Swale	
Grain	23/10/1991	1	Thames	
Foreness	05/10/1992	1	East	
Foreness	08/10/1992	1	East	
Dungeness Bird Observatory	09/10/1992 to 13/10/92	1	South	
Reculver	10/10/1992 to 13/10/92	1	East	
Foreness	15/10/1992	1	East	
Bough Beech Reservoir	18/10/1992 to 28/10/92	1	West	
Grain	19/10/1992	1	Thames	Flew W
Foreness	14/04/1993 to 17/04/93	1	East	One seen on both 14/4 and 17/4 is assumed to be the same bird

The spreadsheet was then set up to allocate sightings to recording area and to season (applying simple rules, that peak counts during December-February were treated as winter records while peaks earlier or later were in autumn or spring). Some judgements had to be made, for example, in deciding if one record was of the same birds as another a few days later, or in a nearby location, but the effect of those decisions is unlikely to have significantly altered the overall patterns that emerged. The final set of columns in the spreadsheet add the totals for recording areas to produce county totals for each year (using July-June years, as this is a winter visitor).

		Totals	
	Autumn	Winter	Spring
1990/91	0	2	0
1991/92	7	0	0
1992/93	7	0	1
1993/94	1	1	0

The illustrations above are for years with relatively few records. Obviously, it can be more time-consuming and complicated when there are many more – but with a bit of effort and concentration, it doesn't take too long. The spreadsheet can then be used to generate charts, which could show seasonal patterns or where in the county they occur, but in this case the annual totals.



Annual totals of Shore Larks in Kent, 1968/69-2017/18

So, for Shore Lark, there is no clear trend of increase or decrease as is the case for many species. Rather there is a background level of around 10-15 per year, with some larger totals that very occasionally exceed 100 birds, and some smaller totals with one winter when none were found.

As well as illustrating this overall pattern of occurrence, it's worth adding a little more commentary. One can describe how the status over this fifty year period compares to that given by the Birds of Kent in 1981 and the earlier Kent avifaunas in 1953 and 1909. I would draw attention to the one winter when none appeared, give details of one or two of the highest counts during the period, and comment on how few occur as spring migrants. One feature that does become apparent from the chart is that the proportion occurring in winter was apparently higher during the first half of the period (60%) than later (20%). Is this a real change, or could it be related to the increased coverage of coastal areas (for example on Thanet and near St Margaret's Bay) from the late 1970s onwards? It's not possible to be certain from the sort of non-systematic data that the KOS collects, but some indication could be given by looking at any change in proportions of the totals for each recording area.

To end this section, I'll admit that my choice of Shore Lark was not completely at random, but because I'd made a similar analysis for Lapland Bunting for the forthcoming 2018 Kent Bird Report and thought the two would have some similarities. Well, they did, but far fewer than I'd expected. You'll have to look at that report to see how different the patterns are.



Shore Larks by Norman McCanch

Why bother?

I'd encourage any Kent Bird Report writers, old or new, to give analyses like this a try, and generally to increase the amount of contextual information throughout the report. There is already a lot more than twenty years ago, but additional material would be even better.

There are times when I wonder whether it's worth the effort to produce these county bird reports. After they are published, the few comments – in my experience – are either general statements of congratulation that centre on the photographs, or complaints about the few errors that have slipped through. Does much of it ever get read...? Well, I can give a few reasons why I think it is worth it.

- First, there is the satisfaction of seeing your own work in print and of having done a good job. That shouldn't be the main reason, of course, but it would be wrong to deny that it's insignificant. Working on the accounts can be absorbing, even fun, and a better way to spend time than slumped in front of Strictly Come Baking or whatever it's called.
- The reports form a valuable resource that gives us a better understanding of the world of birds that is a part of our lives. A rounded approach to birding will take in identification, migration patterns, changing status – the whole range of facets – and the reports can contribute a lot to our enjoyment, curiosity and knowledge, simply for its own sake.
- For conservation purposes, the more systematic surveys such as BBS and WeBS are crucial, of course, but that doesn't mean that county bird reports are of no consequence. For a start, not all species are covered adequately by those surveys, and the local focus of the reports also is important. A few years back, I asked one or two senior members of staff at the RSPB whether county reports were still useful to them: the answer was a very definite "yes".
- A couple of examples of how KOS records, through the Kent Bird Report, have stimulated conservation action. It was the KBR that first noted that large numbers of Red-throated Divers were present in the Thames estuary, something later forming a major focus of offshore bird studies and influencing wind farm development. Similarly, the efforts of Kent surveyors (aided by effective campaigning by Owen Sweeney) were instrumental in demonstrating to

RSPB that Lodge Hill was so important for Nightingales, with the result that the bulk of the site has (so far...) been saved from development.

If this article persuades even one or two people to join the KBR writing team, I'll be pleased. I believe that the reports are valuable and interesting, and that with a bit more effort and some new perspectives, they can become more so. It would be especially gratifying to find a few younger birders getting involved: I was in my twenties when I started but I'm not now, and I fear that applies to quite a few of the writers! By the way, having only recently moved on from the quill pen, I hope that the reports remain as print on paper; the online option does exist and undoubtedly has some merits, but for browsing and quick fact-checking the printed version is often better.

To volunteer to write up one, two or twenty species, or to discuss it further, email the KBR editor keith.privett@ntlworld.com. I shall look forward, with great expectations, to a bright future for the report.

Andrew Henderson

Counting coots for pleasure and profit

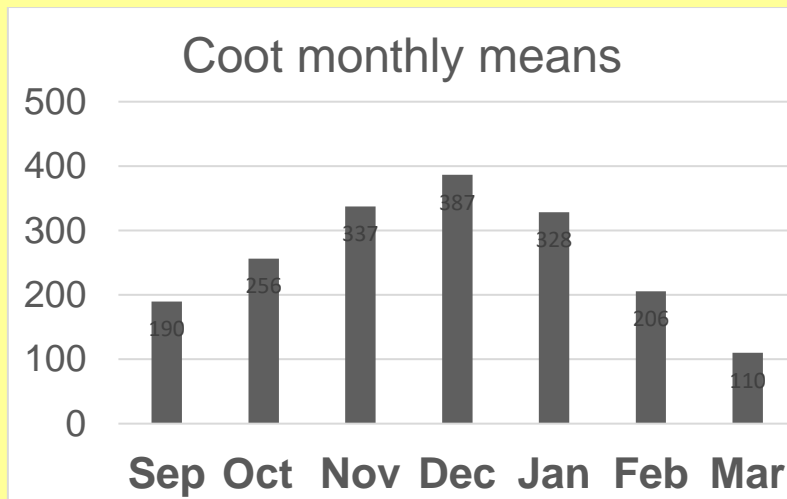
Birdwatching has changed over the years. In my early days it was seen as a pastime of the mildly eccentric, typically the older generation, and somewhat genteel. Or, in complete contrast, it was a mission for the determined and intellectually curious (although equally eccentric), known almost universally as 'birding'. One of the key differences was the former groups happiness to enjoy watching birds in relative comfort, often in the garden moderated by tea in fine china and sensible biscuits.

The latter group generally eschewed all comforts, were often out in atrocious weather, haunted muddy, swampy, and overgrown countryside and counted birds almost obsessively, recording their observations in notebooks no one else would ever read. This latter group could be further sub-divided into those obsessed with seeing lots of birds of different species and the rarer the better, and the really odd fish who were determined that the real value of this activity was in compiling statistical data on relatively common birds in all the various aspects of their lives. I once heard a classic example of the last group exclaim "I would rather see 100 Choughs in a day, than 100 different species". He had a bit of a thing about choughs, even so, by any measure an extreme view!

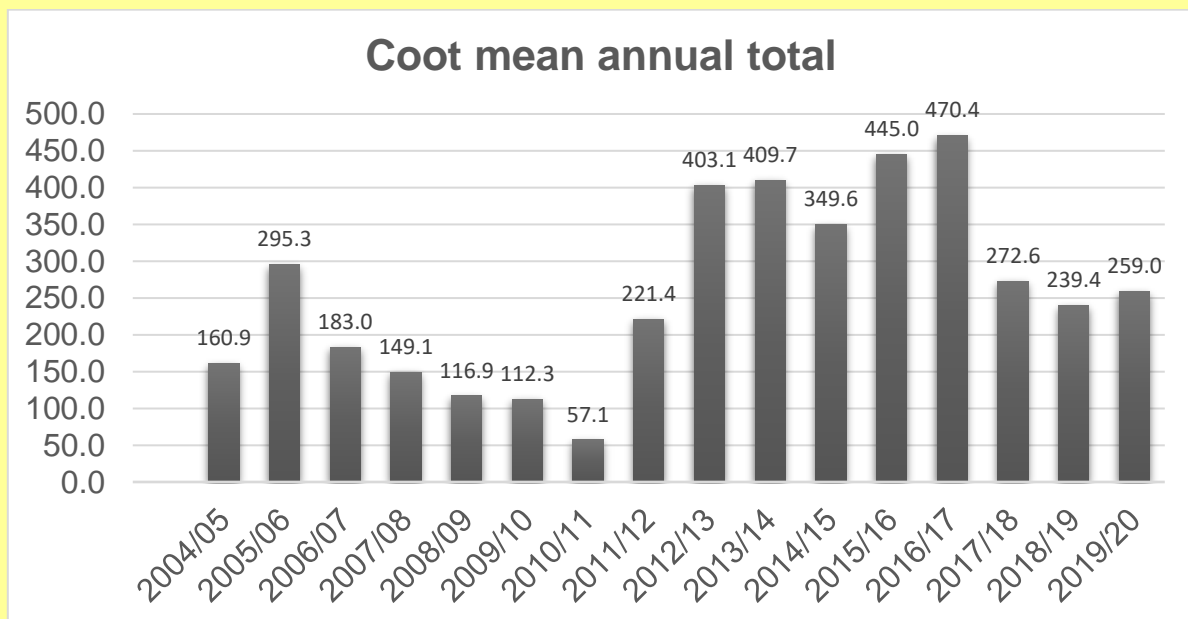
I guess I belong mostly in the latter camp, counting, surveying and watching behaviour of the common and ordinary. I am always pleased to see something new or unusual, but tend to be a 'Patch watcher', albeit not exclusively tied to just one patch. This can give a real insight into birds and their lives. I have carried out WeBS counts at Seaton Pits near Wickhambreux for a good number of years and the trends in population and attendance make interesting reading and pose a challenge to try and find explanations for the variations. Among the birds I see on every trip to the pit are a myriad of Coots. Generally speaking, this is a species often overlooked or even actively disliked by 'birdwatchers' because of its argumentative nature. This reflects a bit of a lack of understanding, these splashy, kicking coot fights are usually carried out by two females, fighting over the territory and their mates. Straight away that marks Coot down as different and attracts my curiosity.

Another consideration is about the population on the lakes; generally, there are about thirty pairs breeding in most summers, but winter numbers can be substantially higher. Some years ago, I found a winter coot frozen into a ball of snow and ice at Pegwell Bay. I took it home, thawed it out and kept it for a couple of weeks, initially living in my bathroom until it was strong enough to join some ducks in my outside aviary. Come the thaw it had gained weight to a normal level and I decided to release it, after ringing, at Stodmarsh. It flew onto the water, then paddled strongly away to the far side of the lake. Three years later I received a recovery form from the BTO, poor old Coot had been shot in Denmark, giving a clear indication of the Baltic origins of at least some of our winter Coot.

Data collected for the WeBS is a single monthly count during the period from September to March. This can give a slightly false impression of the levels of birds at any one time, as it is always possible that between counts local conditions might cause movements in or out of the site. Even so, looking at simple graphs of my counts covering the last sixteen winters can show some patterns which confirm our observations. The first graph shows the monthly means and clearly demonstrate how the numbers rise from the post-breeding total in September to a peak in December, then decline to the lower level in March, at the commencement of breeding.



The second graph shows the mean annual total for sixteen years of observations. This is a more enigmatic data presentation; it looks at the mean number of Coot present during the winter. This gives an idea of how different winters compare, but it is by no means wholly informative. For example, the maximum number recorded in a single count was over 900 birds. Clearly the data presented reflect differences between seasons, most likely weather related. The remarkably low year in 2010/11 featured several days of frozen conditions, when many birds, Coot included, left for the coast or points farther west.



One final feature of patch watching and Survey work is the insight into individual birds' lives. A few years ago, I noticed a Coot with a remarkable frosty head, heavily mottled with white. It was so striking that I made some field sketches. I saw it on a couple of visits, then not at all during the summer, but it, or a bird uncannily like it, returned in a subsequent winter. Now I keep an eye open for 'Frosty the Coot' or its descendants, just one more way these unusual and often disregarded birds have captured my imagination.



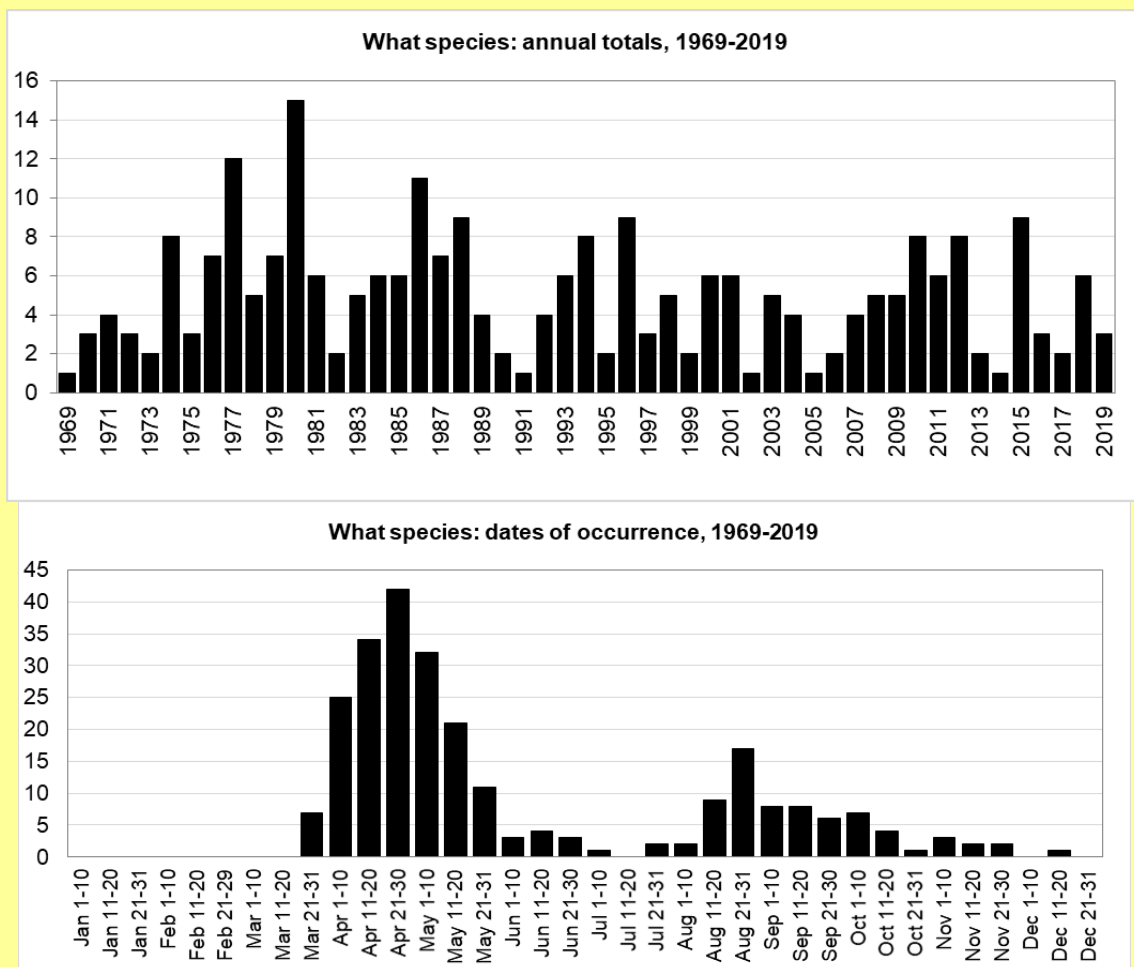
Frosty the Coot, Seaton, 9th September 2018 by Norman McCanch

Norman McCanch

Mystery Bird

This issue of the newsletter has included more than a usual complement of graphs, a conventional way of displaying numerical data, but by no means universally appreciated. In a spirit of mischief Andrew Henderson provided this pair of graphs which refer to the same species in the county. Can you decide what species the data refer to??

Answer in the next newsletter!



Andrew Henderson

KENT BIRD SIGHTINGS FOR JANUARY AND FEBRUARY 2020 - Chris Hindle

Where necessary the acceptance of records within this report is subject to ratification by the "British Birds" Rarities Committee (species in capital letters) or the KOS Rarities Committee. The results of their deliberations are regularly published on the KOS Website.

Species that fall into these two categories and therefore need descriptions or good quality photographs to be accepted are highlighted in red.

WEATHER

At the start of **January** high pressure lay over the southern parts of the country bringing settled weather but generally with plenty of cloud. This gradually moved away south-eastwards allowing frontal systems in from the west and from the 7th to 17th the weather was mild, unsettled and often very windy with a 64 mph gust reported from Langdon Cliffs on the 14th. High pressure brought settled weather from the 18th to 25th with plenty of sunshine initially but by the 22nd most places were overcast. Very mild air returned on the last three days.

February opened with four days of changeable westerlies and then high pressure briefly moved across the country between 5th and 7th bringing settled weather with sunshine and frosty nights. The rest of the month was windy and exceptionally wet with rain frequently moving in from the west and south west and giving large totals that made it the wettest February since records began. Storm Ciara on the 9th and Storm Dennis on the 15th also brought storm force winds with a 97mph gust at the Needles on the 9th. East Malling reported the warmest day when 16.0°C was recorded.

WILDFOWL

A **Black Brant** was reported from Harty Marshes on Jan 26th and from Swale NNR on Feb 14th whilst five **Pale-bellied Brent Geese** were found at Pegwell Bay on Jan 18th with six there from Feb 18th-25th and two seen at Elmley NNR on Feb 2nd with one was at Pegwell Bay on the 11th.

In January and February as many as twelve **Tundra Bean Geese** were recorded from Swale NNR, Dungeness, Worth Marshes, Sandwich Bay, Seaton GPs, Harty Marshes and Stodmarsh/Grove Ferry and one or two **Pink-footed Geese** were seen at Swale NNR, Sandwich Bay, Tilmanstone, South Foreland and North Foreland.

The peak count of **Russian White-fronted Geese** on Sheppey was 185 on Jan 20th and Feb 29th. Elsewhere up to 75 were seen at Dungeness RSPB, Stodmarsh/Grove Ferry, Brooksend, Worth Marshes, Sandwich Bay, Ash Levels, Swalecliffe, Whetsted GPs, Seaton GPs, Foreness, St Mary's Marsh, Halstow Marshes, Cooling Marshes and Hayesden.

During the winter up to 43 **Bewick's Swans** were seen on Walland Marsh and at Dungeness RSPB with smaller numbers recorded from Worth Marshes, Harty Marshes, Halstow Marshes, Hythe, St Mary's Marsh, Samphire Hoe, Capel Fleet, Appledore, Seasalter and Ramsgate.

Two **Whooper Swans** were still to be seen in the Dungeness/Walland Marsh area during January and February and five or six birds were also seen at Appledore or Scotney GPs from Feb 22nd-29th.

During these two months up to nine **Egyptian Geese** were recorded from Reculver, Scotney GPs, Dungeness RSPB, Hayesden, Conningbrook, Furnace Pond, Willop Basin, Northward Hill, Walland Marsh, Maidstone, Godmersham, Potman's Heath, South Foreland, Chipstead Lake, Sevenoaks WR and St Mary's Marsh and up to 13 **Mandarins** were recorded at Bough Beech, Seaton GPs, Hayesden, Whetsted GPs, Kearsney, Herne Bay and Furnace Pond.

Two **Red-crested Pochard** were found at Dungeness RSPB on Jan 4th, four **Scaup** flew W at DBO on Feb 8th and four **Velvet Scoter** flew past DBO on Jan 14th with two on the 15th and singles on Feb 7th and 10th.

Up to five **Long-tailed Ducks** were seen on Scotney GPs between Jan 1st and the end of February although often seen at the Sussex end of the pits.

The male **Smew** first seen at Dungeness on the last day of 2019 was still there until Feb 21st and in addition a redhead was seen there from Feb 12th-17th. A male was also recorded at Cliffe Pools on Feb 8th.

Up to 21 **Goosanders** were reported from Grove Ferry/Stodmarsh, Hampton, Bough Beech, Furnace Pond, Brooksend, Hayesden, DBO, Potman's Heath, Herne Bay, Singleton Lake, Swalecliffe and Reculver.

PARTRIDGE TO CORMORANT

Single **Black-throated Divers** were seen at Reculver, Bockhill, Leysdown-on-Sea, Sandwich Bay, Samphire Hoe, Shellness, DBO, Warden Point and Deal and single **Great Northern Divers** were seen at DBO, Minnis Bay and Swalecliffe.



Red-necked Grebe by Chris White

A **Red-necked Grebe** remained at Cliffe Pools until Feb 19th and others were seen off Swalecliffe on Jan 15th and Feb 22nd and at Dungeness RSPB from Feb 26th-29th whilst one or two **Black-necked Grebes** were recorded at Cliffe Pools, Oare Marshes and Whitstable. A **Slavonian Grebe** was seen at Reculver and later at Swalecliffe on Jan 3rd where it was seen until 25th and singles were also seen at Sandwich Bay on Jan 10th and Lower Halstow from Jan 13th-Feb 2nd.

A **White Stork** was seen between Sevenoaks and Tunbridge Wells on Feb 26th. This was almost certainly a bird from one of the reintroduction schemes.

During these two months single **Bitterns** were only recorded from Dungeness RSPB and Stodmarsh.

Two **Cattle Egrets** were still to be seen at Sandwich Bay/Worth Marshes until Feb 25th and there were three seen at Lydd on Jan 20th with one at Dungeness RSPB the next day. Up to three were also reported along Stodmarsh Road between Feb 4th and the 27th in a field with livestock.

As many as 15 **Great White Egrets** were reported from Dungeness RSPB and Walland Marsh with one or two at Lydd, Grove Ferry/Stodmarsh, West Hythe, Warehorne, Kenardington, Chislet Marshes, Wittersham, Shuart, Chetney Marshes and Brooksend.

During January and February up to 16 **Shags** were seen on Thanet with up to three at Reculver, Dover, Samphire Hoe and Chatham.

BIRDS OF PREY

During the winter up to four **Hen Harriers** were recorded from Stodmarsh/Grove Ferry with one or two at Reculver Marshes, Sandwich Bay, Seaton, Romney Marsh, Luddenham Marshes, Dungeness, Swale NNR, Oare Marshes, Elmley, Littlebourne, Chetney Marshes, Lower Halstow, Funton Creek, Capel Fleet and Lydd.

The juvenile **Rough-legged Buzzard** first seen at Funton Creek in December 2019 was still there on Feb 25th. Another bird was reported from Walderslade on Jan 6th.



Red Kite by Chris Bond

One or two **Red Kites** were seen at Reculver Marshes, Swalecliffe, Bredgar, Folkestone, Worth Marshes, Conyer, Bearsted, Eastry, Penshurst Estate, Bough Beech, Mongeham and Brasted.

RAILS TO WADERS

Up to 10 **Purple Sandpipers** were recorded from Swale NNR, Swalecliffe, Hampton, Reculver, Thanet, Hythe and Dover.

A **Little Stint** was identified at Cliffe Pools on Jan 10th and during January and February single **Jack Snipe** were seen at DBO, Dungeness RSPB, Biddenden, Willop Basin and Cliffe.

Up to five **Spotted Redshank** were recorded from Sittingbourne, Lower Halstow, Swalecliffe and Cliffe Pools.

AUKS TO GULLS

An adult **Little Gull** was seen at DBO on Jan 17th.

A **Glaucous Gull** was reported from Dungeness RSPB on Jan 25th and a juvenile was seen at DBO on Feb 17th and 18th whilst a juvenile **Iceland Gull** was found at DBO on Feb 10th and remained there until the end of the month.

As many as six **Caspian Gulls** were seen at Dungeness with single birds at Lade, Dartford Marshes, Sevenoaks WR and Sandwich Bay and up to six **Yellow-legged Gulls** were seen at Dungeness with one or two at North Foreland, Walmer Beach, Sandwich Bay and Pegwell Bay.

A wintering or very early **Sandwich Tern** was seen at DBO on Feb 8th and may have been the same bird that flew N at Foreness on the 11th.

Up to three **Great Skuas** were seen at DBO, Bockhill, Cliftonville, Deal, South Foreland, Walmer Beach, Samphire Hoe and Sandwich Bay and single juvenile **Pomarine Skuas** were seen at DBO on Jan 11th and 24th.

DOVES TO RING-NECKED PARAKEET

During these two months up to three **Long-eared Owls** were seen at Elmley, Egypt Bay, Monkton and Dungeness RSPB.

During the first two months of the year between 26 and 32 **Short-eared Owls** roosted on Sheppey whilst up to four were seen at Reculver Marshes, Dungeness RSPB, Cliffe Pools, Chetney Marshes, Coombe Bay, Pegwell Bay, Foreness, Stockbury, West Hythe, Oare Marshes and Lydd.

Single **Merlins** were seen at Dungeness, Reculver Marshes, Seasalter, Chislet Marshes, Shuart, Elmley, Oare Marshes, Hythe, South Foreland, Worth Marshes, Scotney and Conyer.

SHRIKES TO HIRUNDINES

During these two months up to six **Ravens** were seen at over 25 sites throughout Kent.

An adult **Penduline Tit** was seen at Stodmarsh with a flock of Long-tailed Tits on Jan 24th.

A **Woodlark** was recorded from Cooling Marshes on Feb 1st whilst a party of five was seen at DBO on Feb 27th and a **Shore Lark** was seen near Plumpudding lagoon, Minnis Bay on Jan 15th.

Two **House Martins** were reported from Staplehurst sewage works on Feb 15th.

CETTI'S WARBLER TO WHEATEARS

A **Siberian Chiffchaff** was identified at Worth Marshes on Jan 8th and it or another was seen there from Feb 13th-27th whilst one or two were seen at Minster Sewage Works, Thanet between Feb 24th and the end of the month.

Three migrant **Chiffchaffs** were seen at DBO on Feb 29th.

Two **Dartford Warblers** were seen at DBO and one at Sandwich Bay on Jan 20th and one was recorded at Dungeness on Feb 7th.



Firecrest by Russ Blackman

Up to three **Firecrests** were counted at Swalecliffe, Shuart, Bockhill, Hythe, Newnham, Nickoll's Quarry, Sandwich Bay, West Hythe, Walmer Beach, Minster, West Blean Woods, South Foreland and DBO.



Ring Ouzel by Phil Smith

The wintering **Ring Ouzel** last seen at Samphire Hoe in December reappeared there on Feb 3rd and was still to be seen on the 19th.

As many as four **Black Redstarts** were seen at DBO, Foreness, North Foreland, Swalecliffe, Seasalter, Scotney, Ramsgate, Samphire Hoe, St Margarets-at-Cliffe, Lydd and Reculver.

DUNNOCK TO BUNTINGS

A **White Wagtail** was reported from Samphire Hoe on Feb 12th and the **Richard's Pipit** first seen during 2019 at Halstow Marshes was still there on Feb 1st.

During these two months up to 14 **Water Pipits** were recorded at Stodmarsh/Grove Ferry with up to 17 at Dungeness RSPB at the end of February and as many as three were seen at Sandwich Bay, Worth Marshes, Willop Basin, West Hythe, Ramsgate, Capel Fleet, Riverside CP, Wouldham and Oare Marshes.

Two **Hawfinches** were recorded at Horton Kirby on Jan 24th with one at Benenden on Feb 7th and another at Eastling on Feb 22nd whilst single **Common (Mealy) Redpolls** were reported from Furnace Pond between Jan 25th and Feb 1st and at Finberry on Feb 5th.

A **Twite** was photographed in a finch flock on Sheppey during February and a **Common Crossbill** was seen at Sissinghurst on Jan 21st.



Lapland Bunting by Chris Hindle

Up to six **Lapland Buntings** were seen at Reculver Marshes between Jan 5th and Feb 6th. One was also reported from West Hythe on Jan 10th.

Two **Snow Buntings** were seen at Sandwich Bay between Jan 19th and Feb 6th and there were two at Cooling Marshes on Feb 8th.

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

RSPB = Royal Society for the Protection of Birds

"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, B. Benn, Bockhill Birders, Bough Beech (per A. Ford), E. Brown, N. Burt, G. Burton, F. Cackett, J. Carnell, R. Carr, M. Casemore, B. Chambers, J. Chantler, R. Collins, G. Coultrip, K. Cutting, DBO (per D. Walker), R. Douthwaite, R. Dubbins, D. Eade, B. East, R. Elvy, D. Faulkener, D. Feast, Folkestone and Hythe Birds (per I. Roberts), C. Gibbard, S. Ginnaw, V. Green, J. Guiver, J. Hall, P. Haynes, J. Headley, A. Hindle,

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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 as I forward them to the appropriate Area Recorders who enter them all onto the KOS database.

Letters and Notes

Fifty Years Ago



Garganey by Archibald Thorburn (PDI)

Of the spring migrants the Garganey is frequently the first to arrive and a pair was seen on Chetney on March 13th and on the 25th seven pairs at Sevenoaks were an exceptionally large number for an inland location

KBR 1970

Norman McCanch