



*White-tailed Eagle by Mark Chidwick*

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## Editorial

It appears that by the time this newsletter reaches its target audience we should have seen a further substantial easing of restrictions which have affected our opportunities for birding in recent months. I hope it is not tempting the fates to hope that by the time the next issue hatches in July, we should be back to something like normality.

However, there are signs that the 'new normal' will not really be a return to the old game. There are far more people accessing the countryside for all sorts of legitimate and other recreational activities now. Many of these are ignorant or uncaring of conservation issues and needs and have little investment or interest in the wider countryside community. There are a lot more people out and about with cameras taking pictures but it is already clear that for some, as in all walks of life, there is a competitive dynamic which drives their involvement. Suddenly, as a consequence of increased footfall, we see payment machines turning up in even quite remote car parks which govern access to some nature reserves.

In birding itself, the past months have seen many creative and challenging responses to the restrictions. One friend confined his birding to a 5km radius from home, all covered on foot and produced an admirable bird list. Others stretched the envelope a bit, due to my own mobility issue I decided on 5-mile radius from home, which permitted a couple of short drives to public sites with good paths and access. Latterly, however, I was restricted to home and garden. Even so, I have reached a year total of 106 species and enjoyed the familiarity of my local and parish birds. There have, however, been individuals both within Kent and elsewhere, who have chosen to disregard the restrictions designed to keep the majority safe. Sadly, this sort of selfishness will always manifest itself in human activities and it is important to maintain some standards so that we can challenge those who would seek to curtail our freedoms in the future.

It is gratifying to find that this issue contains several pieces from a range of members, detailing much of the diversity of birding in Kent. It also marks the fortieth newsletter under my editorship, a minor milestone of sorts!

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](http://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 11<sup>th</sup> and June 20<sup>th</sup>. 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](mailto: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](mailto: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	<a href="http://www.geograph.org.uk/showmap.php?gridref=TQ5478">http://www.geograph.org.uk/showmap.php?gridref=TQ5478</a>	Rainham (Essex)
TQ5472	<a href="http://www.geograph.org.uk/showmap.php?gridref=TQ5472">http://www.geograph.org.uk/showmap.php?gridref=TQ5472</a>	Dartford
TQ5372	<a href="http://www.geograph.org.uk/showmap.php?gridref=TQ5372">http://www.geograph.org.uk/showmap.php?gridref=TQ5372</a>	Dartford
TQ5272	<a href="http://www.geograph.org.uk/showmap.php?gridref=TQ5272">http://www.geograph.org.uk/showmap.php?gridref=TQ5272</a>	Dartford
TQ6175	<a href="http://www.geograph.org.uk/showmap.php?gridref=TQ6175">http://www.geograph.org.uk/showmap.php?gridref=TQ6175</a>	Northfleet
TQ6275	<a href="http://www.geograph.org.uk/showmap.php?gridref=TQ6275">http://www.geograph.org.uk/showmap.php?gridref=TQ6275</a>	Northfleet
TQ6173	<a href="http://www.geograph.org.uk/showmap.php?gridref=TQ6173">http://www.geograph.org.uk/showmap.php?gridref=TQ6173</a>	Northfleet
TQ6473	<a href="http://www.geograph.org.uk/showmap.php?gridref=TQ6473">http://www.geograph.org.uk/showmap.php?gridref=TQ6473</a>	Gravesend
TQ6272	<a href="http://www.geograph.org.uk/showmap.php?gridref=TQ6272">http://www.geograph.org.uk/showmap.php?gridref=TQ6272</a>	Gravesend
TQ5972	<a href="http://www.geograph.org.uk/showmap.php?gridref=TQ5972">http://www.geograph.org.uk/showmap.php?gridref=TQ5972</a>	Bean
TQ6176	<a href="http://www.geograph.org.uk/showmap.php?gridref=TQ6176">http://www.geograph.org.uk/showmap.php?gridref=TQ6176</a>	Swanscombe
TQ7268	<a href="http://www.geograph.org.uk/showmap.php?gridref=TQ7268">http://www.geograph.org.uk/showmap.php?gridref=TQ7268</a>	Strood
TQ7867	<a href="http://www.geograph.org.uk/showmap.php?gridref=TQ7867">http://www.geograph.org.uk/showmap.php?gridref=TQ7867</a>	Gillingham
TQ7058	<a href="http://www.geograph.org.uk/showmap.php?gridref=TQ7058">http://www.geograph.org.uk/showmap.php?gridref=TQ7058</a>	Larkfield
TQ6960	<a href="http://www.geograph.org.uk/showmap.php?gridref=TQ6960">http://www.geograph.org.uk/showmap.php?gridref=TQ6960</a>	Snodland
TQ7060	<a href="http://www.geograph.org.uk/showmap.php?gridref=TQ7060">http://www.geograph.org.uk/showmap.php?gridref=TQ7060</a>	Leybourne/New Hythe
TQ9063	<a href="http://www.geograph.org.uk/showmap.php?gridref=TQ9063">http://www.geograph.org.uk/showmap.php?gridref=TQ9063</a>	Sittingbourne
TQ9165	<a href="http://www.geograph.org.uk/showmap.php?gridref=TQ9165">http://www.geograph.org.uk/showmap.php?gridref=TQ9165</a>	Sittingbourne
TQ9265	<a href="http://www.geograph.org.uk/showmap.php?gridref=TQ9265">http://www.geograph.org.uk/showmap.php?gridref=TQ9265</a>	Sittingbourne
TQ9075	<a href="http://www.geograph.org.uk/showmap.php?gridref=TQ9075">http://www.geograph.org.uk/showmap.php?gridref=TQ9075</a>	Sheerness
TQ9472	<a href="http://www.geograph.org.uk/showmap.php?gridref=TQ9472">http://www.geograph.org.uk/showmap.php?gridref=TQ9472</a>	Minster (Sheppey)
TQ9961	<a href="http://www.geograph.org.uk/showmap.php?gridref=TQ9961">http://www.geograph.org.uk/showmap.php?gridref=TQ9961</a>	Oare
TR1866	<a href="http://www.geograph.org.uk/showmap.php?gridref=TR1866">http://www.geograph.org.uk/showmap.php?gridref=TR1866</a>	Herne
TR3144	<a href="http://www.geograph.org.uk/showmap.php?gridref=TR3144">http://www.geograph.org.uk/showmap.php?gridref=TR3144</a>	Whitfield
TR2140	<a href="http://www.geograph.org.uk/showmap.php?gridref=TR2140">http://www.geograph.org.uk/showmap.php?gridref=TR2140</a>	Hawkinge
TR0041	<a href="http://www.geograph.org.uk/showmap.php?gridref=TR0041">http://www.geograph.org.uk/showmap.php?gridref=TR0041</a>	Ashford

TR0044	<a href="http://www.geograph.org.uk/showmap.php?gridref=TR0044">http://www.geograph.org.uk/showmap.php?gridref=TR0044</a>	Ashford
TR0043	<a href="http://www.geograph.org.uk/showmap.php?gridref=TR0043">http://www.geograph.org.uk/showmap.php?gridref=TR0043</a>	Ashford
TQ6655	<a href="http://www.geograph.org.uk/showmap.php?gridref=TQ6655">http://www.geograph.org.uk/showmap.php?gridref=TQ6655</a>	Kings Hill (West Malling)
TQ6744	<a href="http://www.geograph.org.uk/showmap.php?gridref=TQ6744">http://www.geograph.org.uk/showmap.php?gridref=TQ6744</a>	Paddock Wood
TQ5946	<a href="http://www.geograph.org.uk/showmap.php?gridref=TQ5946">http://www.geograph.org.uk/showmap.php?gridref=TQ5946</a>	Tonbridge
TQ5846	<a href="http://www.geograph.org.uk/showmap.php?gridref=TQ5846">http://www.geograph.org.uk/showmap.php?gridref=TQ5846</a>	Tonbridge
TQ5947	<a href="http://www.geograph.org.uk/showmap.php?gridref=TQ5947">http://www.geograph.org.uk/showmap.php?gridref=TQ5947</a>	Tonbridge
TQ5842	<a href="http://www.geograph.org.uk/showmap.php?gridref=TQ5842">http://www.geograph.org.uk/showmap.php?gridref=TQ5842</a>	Southborough
TQ5942	<a href="http://www.geograph.org.uk/showmap.php?gridref=TQ5942">http://www.geograph.org.uk/showmap.php?gridref=TQ5942</a>	Southborough
TQ5739	<a href="http://www.geograph.org.uk/showmap.php?gridref=TQ5739">http://www.geograph.org.uk/showmap.php?gridref=TQ5739</a>	Tunbridge Wells
TQ5938	<a href="http://www.geograph.org.uk/showmap.php?gridref=TQ5938">http://www.geograph.org.uk/showmap.php?gridref=TQ5938</a>	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](mailto: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](mailto:umbrellabirds66@gmail.com) or the county RBBP coordinator Brian Watmough [brianrwat@yahoo.co.uk](mailto: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.

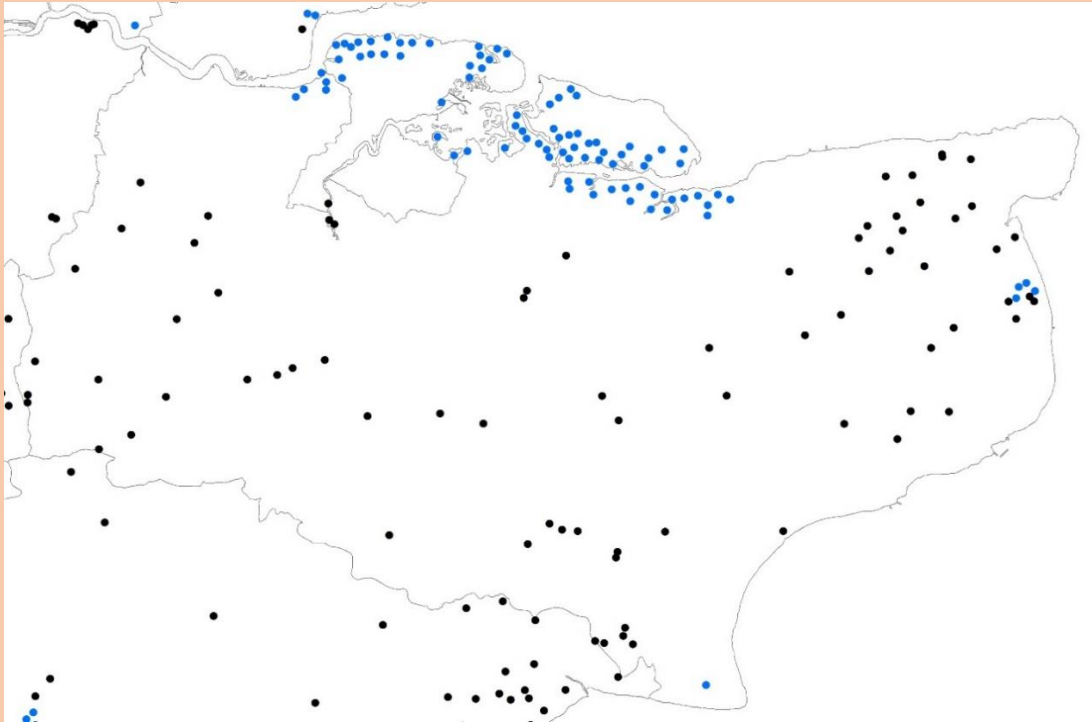
Please contact Brian Watmough ([brianrwat@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:brianrwat@yahoo.co.uk)) if you are interested in more information.

## Breeding Waders of Wet Meadows Survey 2021

This survey is planned to go ahead this spring (Covid-19 restrictions permitting) after being postponed last year. The survey was last carried out in 2002, and will revisit sites from that time, as well as other new areas since then. Those who volunteered in 2020 have been contacted, and all remaining sites are now available to view on the website to check if there is a site near you.

The purpose of this survey is to assess the importance of both existing and new wet grassland, also other wader habitats in England for declining breeding birds such as Curlew, Lapwing, Redshank and Snipe. The survey will involve up to four visits between mid-April and the end of June to record all waders within the allocated sites. This includes a single dusk visit for Snipe during May, though only if present at the site. In practise therefore the survey for Kent will mainly involve three daytime visits, preferable between dawn and midday. A map will be provided showing the boundary of your site.

In Kent the survey is being jointly managed by the RSPB and the BTO. The map below shows the coverage, with RSPB sites, largely in north-Kent, as blue dots, and BTO sites, in the remainder of the county, shown as black dots.



Coverage of 82 sites is being arranged by the BTO, of which 35 are classed as Priority 1 and the remainder as Priority 2. The Priority 1 sites comprise all those previously surveyed in 2002, plus Agri-Environmental Schemes (AES) fields which include Lapwing plots and areas of newly created / improved wet grassland. All other sites, which comprise areas last surveyed pre-2002 and additional AES fields, are classed as Priority 2.

There are 12 AES fields classed as Priority 1 sites including 5 Lapwing Plots. The Priority 1 grassland sites, unassigned to a volunteer at present, are shown in the table below:

SITE NAME AND CODE 2021	CENTRAL GRID REF.	10 KM REF.	PREVIOUS SURVEY
Cheyne Court / Walland Marsh: 10540	TQ982233	TQ92	2009-10
Hacklinge (North Stream): 4004	TR338544	TR35	2002
Palmarsh GP: 4040	TR130330	TR13	2002
Penshurst Bridge-Collie: 3958	TQ528420	TQ54	2002
Pinkham to Stilstead: 3951	TQ663476	TQ64	2002
Preston Valley: 4010	TR240610	TR26	2002
Puxton Marshes: 4023	TR199603	TR16	2002
Sandwich Bay : 4000	TR344604	TR36	2002
Stilstead-Eldridges Loc: 3952	TQ635471	TQ64	2002
Tillingham Valley: 10255	TQ900207	TQ92	2002
Walland Marsh / Cheyne Court: 4050	TQ991225	TQ92	2009-10
Walland Marsh / Woolpack Inn: 4051	TQ984240	TQ92	2009-10
Wantsum Marshes: 4017	TR249662	TR26	2002
Wickhambreaux-Bekesbourne A: 4011_A	TR228591	TR25	2002
Wickhambreaux-Bekesbourne B: 4011_B	TR209572	TR25	2002

Please visit the website to see further information about the survey: [www.bto.org/our-science/projects/breeding-waders-wet-meadows](http://www.bto.org/our-science/projects/breeding-waders-wet-meadows)

The map of available sites can be accessed by zooming into the Kent region via the Request Site facility on the website, also enabling a request to be made to allocate a particular site to yourself. Alternatively please contact the regional organiser to help find a site near you: Bob Knight - [rjknight53@gmail.com](mailto:rjknight53@gmail.com)

## 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](http://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](mailto:pleasantfarm@forestryengland.uk).



## Outline Woodland Creation Plan



## 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](http://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.

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### Surveys

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

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### **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)**

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## **A message from our President**

As President, it is my privilege to open the AGM and promptly hand over to the chairman for the rest of the business. Unfortunately, just before the time of the meeting on 8<sup>th</sup> April, the broadband to our village failed completely, so I had to leave the conduct of the meeting to acting-Chairman Chris Roome and Hon. Sec. Brendan Ryan. Of course, all ran smoothly in their safe hands.

Therefore, I would like to take this opportunity to express my thanks, on your behalf, to all those involved in the running of the KOS over the past peculiar year.

Thanks to Martin Coath who stood down as chairman after so many years in that office and to Chris Roome who stood in as acting chairman. He, Brian Watmough and so many of us will have been bitterly disappointed by the cancellation of last year's conference but we do still have that to look forward to in November, all being well.

Our secretary Brendan Ryan has probably had his travel wings clipped more than most this year but has been very positive in action on the problem of GDPR and the KOS website. Bringing our database up to date is also a great challenge but must be done to protect historical records in future. As long as Mike Henty has the purse strings we should be able to invest in the future, even with a subscription of a mere £12. It is so cheap that there is no excuse for any Kentish birdwatcher NOT to join.

Thanks to Norman McCanch for entertaining us with the newsletter every couple of months. It is always a pleasure to receive it and I thought that the March issue was one of the best ever.

The KBR moves on with more colour and analysis. Thanks to Keith and the team for that. If you have the opportunity, look back at a copy from the 1960s or 70s to see how much it has progressed.

Congratulations to Murray Orchard on his BTO Jubilee medal- well deserved. A worthy successor to other KOS recipients of BTO medals such as Geoffrey Munns and Ian Castle. Thanks too for coming forward, or not stepping back fast enough, to take over as BTO rep for the county.

Ray O'Reilly (& Lyn)'s field trips have suffered as a result of lockdown restrictions but it is good to see his plans for future meetings taking shape within the constraints of social distancing.

YouTube and Zoom have been very useful over the past year and the joint lectures with Sussex and other bird clubs have proved most enjoyable and informative as well as a good example of cooperation.

This is an appropriate place to welcome our new Chairman, Andre Farrar. With his wide experience and contacts in the conservation world, we can look forward to celebrating seventy years of the society's recording the birds of Kent and move on with the advances that digital innovations allow.

Our hobby has been a great consolation over lockdown but also a source of frustration, so I congratulate everyone who has exercised restraint in their birding this past year, in spite of the temptations of the two latest new birds for the county. I'm sure many of us know more about our home ranges than we did previously and hope that this knowledge can be maintained even when we are allowed freer movement.

As lockdown eases and spring progresses, please stay safe whilst we enjoy more freedom.

Good birding

**Chris Cox**  
**KOS President**

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-png files.

**Norman McCanch (Editor) : [nvmccanch@hotmail.com](mailto:nvmccanch@hotmail.com)**



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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](mailto:chrisroome105@icloud.com)

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## Articles

### ROOK Census 2021



*Rook and nest (wikicommons)*

Covid lockdown restrictions meant that for the first time since 2004 when my wife and I started this annual survey we were unable to undertake any counts during the spring of 2020.

This year with restrictions easing it was possible to restart the survey. The cold spring weather meant that the majority of trees were late coming into full leaf so reasonably accurate counts were possible at most sites although, as always, there are problems when birds chose to nest in ivy covered trees. This is a particular problem at Lydd, Church Whitfield & Sarre

A total of 43 sites were visited and the total number of nests counted was 1,159 the highest ever and an increase of 9% on the 2019 figure. Two new Rookeries were found one in the village of Staple and the other on the old A20 close to the M20 Services area at Stanford. The held 13 & 29 nests respectively. There was no trace of nesting at six locations that had held birds in 2019. These included that in the village of Acol which had been occupied since at least 2004 although numbers had been decreasing from a peak of 22 in 2016. The other five locations had held fewer than ten nests each. Another site which appears to be suffering serious decline is that at West Hythe. It held 82 nests in 2016 when it was initially surveyed this total had halved by 2019 and this year just 8 nests were found.

Thankfully numbers in the two largest Rookeries in the survey area Lydd & Stodmarsh appear to be increasing. A total of 222 nests at Lydd represents an increase of 15% on the 2019 figure. This year with no deciduous trees in leaf, conditions for counting were ideal so while the total may be a genuine increase it may also mean nests were missed in previous years. A combination of ivy covered trees and some nests in conifers it is always the most difficult site to survey.

Year	04	05	06	07	08	09	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21
Stommarsh	55	62	52	nv	35+	nv	30	55	4	45	54	58	48	55	55	76	nv	75+
Lydd								126	nv	nv	170+	120+	135	145	180	193	nv	222

nv = not visited

It is of interest to compare the number of nests in the various rookeries. Of the 43 sites visited this year 75% contained fewer than 30 nests.

No. of nests	1 to 10	11 to 20	21 to 30	31 to 40	41 to 50	51 or more
No. of sites	12	8	12	6	3	2
% of total	28%	19%	28%	14%	7%	5%

## Rooks 2021 PART ONE March 31<sup>st</sup> (72.3miles)

Locations	2019	2021	Locations	2019	2021
Westgate (King Ethel)	No trace	No trace	Upstreet	12	17
Quex (opp entrance)	10	7	C`bury Uni	39	32
Acol Village	8	No trace	Bilting	30	35
Cleve Court		25	Snave	31	16
Minster Village	6	6	Nr Brenzett	15	6
Monkton Village	46	48	Nr Ivychurch	26	22
Monkton R`bout	35	29	Ivychurch	9	13
Gore Street	No trace	8	Old Romney(Church)	9	7
Sarre	19	22+	Old Romney	29	35
Preston Church	11	9	Lydd Town	193	222
Wingham East	34	42	New Romney	4	6
Wingham West	5	No trace	New Romney KTNC	18	32
Staple church	9	12	St Mary`s Bay	2	3
Staple (Rowe Close)		13 \$	West Hythe	44	8
Eyethorne Village	23	28	Shepway Cross	26	24
Nonington	15	11	Lympe	20	35
Nonington cricket	18	38	Sandling Park area	38	22
Whitfield R`bout	10	8	Sandling Station	25	28
Church Whitfield	32+	20+	Elham village	24	17
Hacklinge	18	23	Barham Vineyard	29	33
Sandwich Centre	4	8	Nr. Stanford		29 \$
Opposite Thanet Waste	19	28			
St Augustines golf club	0	13			
Former Richborough Power Station	15	36+	\$ = new in 021		
Sandwich Bay	4	No trace			
Sandwich Toll	4	No trace			

John Websper, April 2021

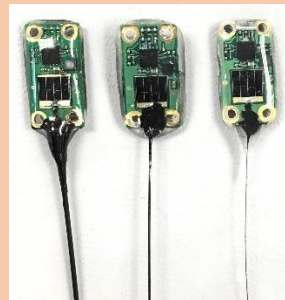
## Dungeness Bird Observatory. Motus UK (SE) - The Way Forward?

Dungeness Bird Observatory has been monitoring bird migration and population trends over the Dungeness Peninsula since 1952. We started out with Heligoland traps dotted over most of the bushes on the shingle with a maximum of 12 by the 1960s. Two of our trustees designed the original ringing pliers that were the precursors of the modern design, prior to that rings were closed with their teeth!



With the development of mist nets, Dungeness was one of the first Observatories to try these out and slowly switched to net sites set up in sheltered rides within the trapping area and the moat. These are more efficient for catching birds but are much more weather dependant than the Heligolands, although we still have a double one in the Moat.

New technologies are advancing all the time and with the development of smaller, cheaper, more accurate, satellite, GPS and radio tags, we are now looking at using radio telemetry to help further our knowledge of migration strategies of birds and bats, such as how long do they feed up before departure, which is the preferred direction for birds departing and what are the possible flyways. Cornell University, in Canada, developed a system of automated telemetry which is now being used for a wide variety of applications, on land or sea, especially tracking smaller animals such as fish and dragonflies. The improvements in the size and durability of tags makes it much feasible for them to be deployed on smaller animals and birds. There are strict protocols in place to determine the size of tag for the particular animal. In Kent, Dungeness and Sandwich Bay Observatories and the Kent Bat Group are working together as Motus-UK(SE) part of the Motus – UK group. This project is a collaboration with Hull University, The BTO, The BOC, the Bat Conservation Trust, The RSPB and other Observatories as well as the European network of bat and bird ringing stations so we can give informed information for future developments.



*Tags come in different shapes and sizes. Left – Lotek Nanotags; right – CTT Lifetags. Lifetags contain a small solar panel and can therefore last for the length of the bird's life.*

At Dungeness BO we managed to fund one tower on the Observatory building and, following permission from EDF, this went ahead in October 2019. We had installed an outside power point, EDF supplied a cherry picker and Ewan Parsons (Norfolk Bat group) ascended to the heights to install the four antennae on a sturdy pole securely attached to the chimney.



*Installing the antennae and the control box*

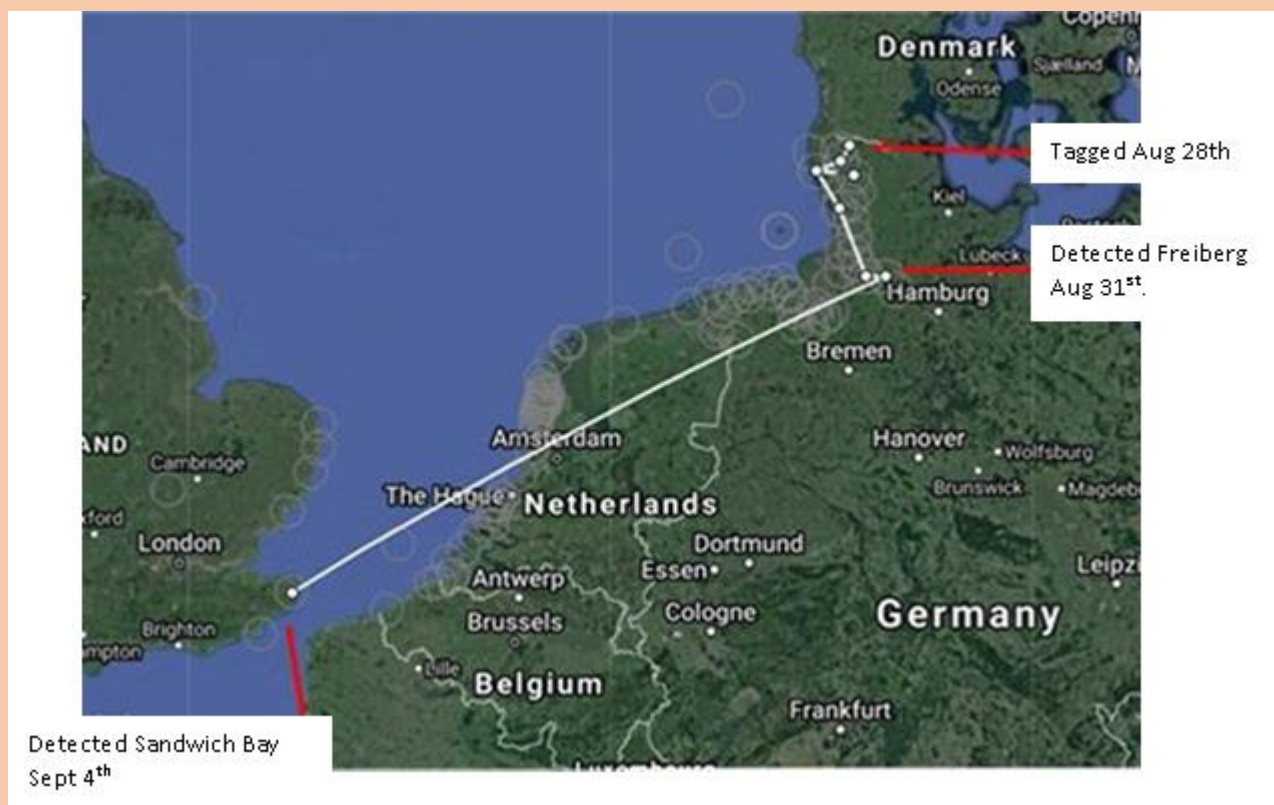


The system is run by a Raspberry pi computer housed in a small cabinet attached to the side of the building and, in this instance, the data is automatically uploaded regularly to the Motus website for information and analysis. The data is processed centrally, and then plotted on a map which shows bird and bat movements and is available on the Motus website.



*Map of Motus antennae world wide*

Sandwich Bay Bird Observatory installed their station in February 2020 and have had some interesting hits on their system which prove the value of the project and are starting to give insights into migration patterns



*Track of a **Whitethroat** from Lund to Sandwich.*

At the moment we are in the early stages of establishing a Motus network and act mainly as a listening station as part of a growing network of stations monitoring migration from northern Scandinavia through Western Europe into Spain and beyond. There have been a few hits with Robins and Blackbirds and Starlings and Whitethroat, tagged in Heligoland and Lund, being detected in Suffolk and Sandwich Bay Observatory. We are just starting with a pilot project to tag Blackcaps, with the first Blackcap being fitted at Landguard Bird Observatory with a tiny nanotag, weighing just 0.25g. This will fall off in a few weeks but, hopefully, it will provide data about how long the bird remains in the area, which direction it headed off in and some idea of the route it took.

There will be further tags fitted through the spring and autumn migration at some of the Observatories. The ongoing plan is to extend the stations to cover the whole of the Kent and Sussex coast to link up with the Isle of Wight and South Western stations with an increased use of tags, not just on Blackcaps, but other species of passage passerines and bats.

All this costs money and we are now looking for funding, as well as places to host stations. We will be looking at setting up a Just Giving page to help fund more stations. A station costs between £3,000-£4,000 and can be sited anywhere, on buildings, as at Dungeness and Sandwich, or on a tower anchored to the ground, as at Spurn.

Anyone who can host a tower can become involved with this exciting project so please get in touch if this is you and we can give you lots more details and will organise support with ordering/installation etc

Modern technology is moving very fast and as the hardware improves and gets lighter and cheaper this exciting area is one that will add to our knowledge which, in turn, will help to make future decisions that will lead to better informed plans for the environment, for us and for our migrating birds.

**Mrs G Hollamby**  
**Chair, Dungeness Bird Observatory**

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## **A potted biography of European Stonechat 'VW' sometime resident of Samphire Hoe**

This is a short partial biography of a female Stonechat that has been part of a colour ringing scheme at Samphire Hoe since being ringed in October 2018 and illustrates the depth of knowledge of bird behaviour that can only be determined by seeing birds as individuals using techniques such as colour ringing that allow the bird to be recognised from a distance and without interfering with their activities.

As those that have visited the site will know that Samphire Hoe is a 30-hectare site backed by 100m high cliffs. Built from the excavated chalk marl from the building of the Channel Tunnel it is now a predominantly grazed chalk grassland with scattered Sea Buckthorn and Bramble whilst another area shows the site's heritage as a construction site of broken concrete and invasive Buddleia. This all makes the site favourable for Stonechats with data from Holt and Smith (2019) with Clements et al (2015) suggesting the site could hold circa 15 percent of Kent's breeding population.



*VW in Oct 2018 at ringing (Author)*

A joint project between White Cliffs Countryside Partnership, which manages the site on behalf of owners Eurotunnel, and the East Kent Wildlife Group has so far resulted in more than fifty birds being colour ringed and becoming part of the study.

To introduce the bird that is the focus of this article identified by a violet ring over a white ring on the right leg (BTO metal on the left) and referred to from now on as VW. VW was captured on 14<sup>th</sup> October 2018 and ringed as age code 4 indicating she was at least a year old at that point. VW then appears to have soon left the Hoe and was not recorded again in 2018.

Despite several complete censuses of the Hoe where the entire site is swept across checking for Stonechats VW did not reappear until March 2019 when she was seen associating with a male known as NV. This pairing continued throughout the Spring and eventually as a pair they were seen to be raising five chicks. VW then disappeared and was not recorded again until September when she was seen associating with a different male BO.

October 2019 and VW again went absent throughout the winter and reappeared in March 2020 to enjoy a quieter than normal Hoe whilst it was closed to the public by the pandemic. However, visits by staff noted that she was paired with male GG and fledged at least two young. By the end of June and the relaxation in lockdown allowed more regular surveying and VW did her routine temporary summer disappearance. Appearing back on the Hoe for a short period in the autumn she was last recorded in the third week of October.

Coming up to date in 2021 VW reappeared on 25<sup>th</sup> February and was immediately engaged in combat with WB a female that had only 'paired up' with GG a few days earlier. After at least one physical altercation leaving both birds grappling on the floor VW came out as the dominant female and reclaimed her previous partner.

As we leave the story, VW has paired again with GG and has nested. Four nestlings have been ringed and will hopefully soon fledge successfully. VW has now repeated the pattern of spending Spring and Autumn on the Hoe three times and each time returned to a discrete area of the Hoe with all sightings of her inside an area 400m by 300m. So far VW has not been seen other than on the Hoe so there are many blanks and unknowns within this biography but as reported by Callion (2015) British ringed Stonechats have been recorded wintering as far away as Spain, Portugal and Morocco. So we can only imagine where VW has spent her time away from the Hoe.



VW during March 2019 (Author)

## References

Callion, J. 2015. Some observations of breeding European Stonechats in Cumbria. *British Birds* 108 pp648-659  
Clements, R., Orchard, M., McCanch, N., Wood, S. and Coultrip, G. (2015). Kent breeding bird atlas 2008-13  
Smith, D. and Holt, P. (2019). Samphire Hoe Bird Report 2018. Samphire Hoe.

**Martin Collins**

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## SHRIKES IN KENT

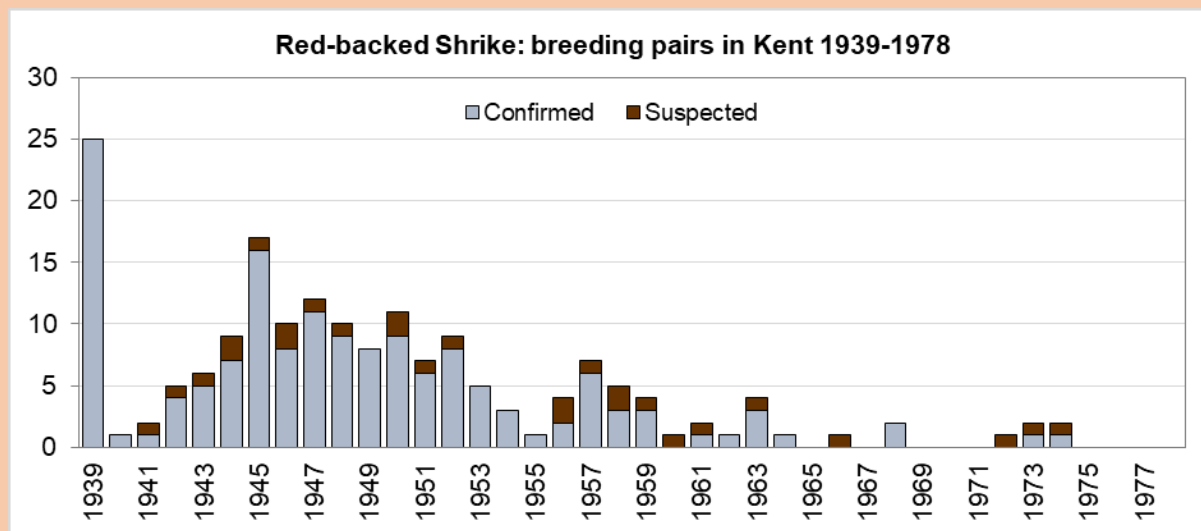
For this newsletter, I have pulled together summaries of the status of the shrikes that have occurred in Kent. These were prepared separately and differ slightly in approach, but I hope will be of some interest. Beginning with Red-backed, I follow with Great Grey before covering the rarer species.



## Red-backed Shrike

The Kent Bird Report for 1968 included a paper by John Hollyer, entitled The Day of the Red-backed Shrike. It's hard to imagine now: you're walking along a quiet lane on the Kentish downs in summer. A sweet lark sings in the clear air of the day. In a small chalk quarry, insects buzz and scatter. And there, on a bush, is a male shrike, which descends to catch a grasshopper before carrying it to denser hawthorns on the quarry's rim.

In his paper, John Hollyer described how a breeding bird that had been widespread early in the twentieth century, even if never abundant, had diminished almost to vanishing point – and indeed that point was reached soon afterwards. He pulled together information from many sources, and produced a histogram of breeding numbers. This is repeated below, and extended to include the final breeding records of 1972-1974. In modern terminology, both confirmed and suspected cases would be classed as confirmed breeding – the difference was generally that in 'suspected' breeding, fledged young were not seen.



John suggested a number of factors that may have contributed to the decline. These included built development, vegetation succession, climate change, pesticide use and even possibly competition for food with Little Owls. We still don't know for certain why they were lost, but all of those may have been involved. We do know there was a huge decline in insect abundance during the second half of the twentieth century, and that cannot have helped species such as Red-backed Shrike.



*Red-backed Shrike by Terry Laws Allhallows July 2016*

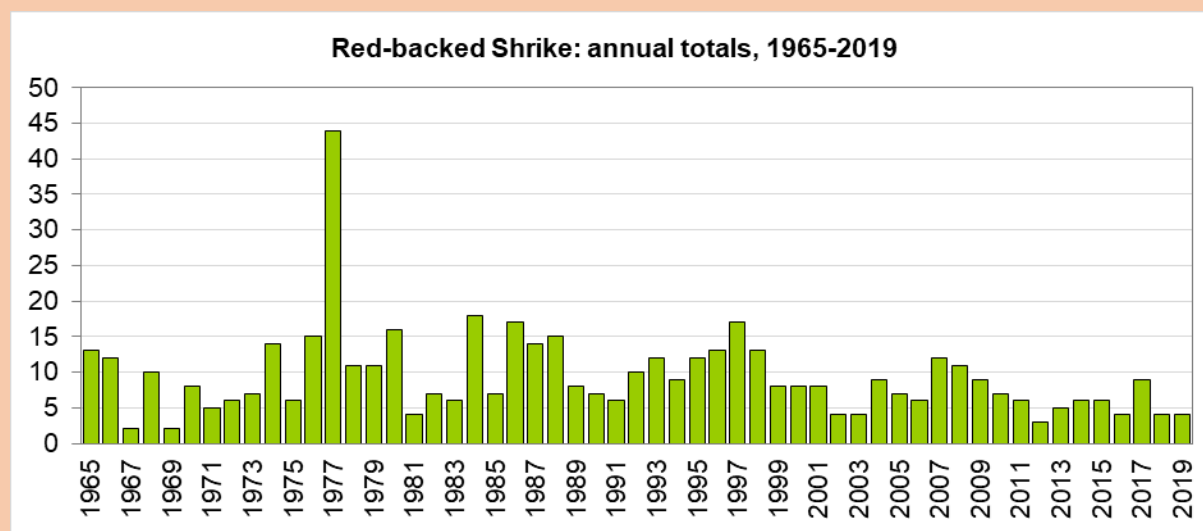
The chart above of breeding numbers is, as noted by John Hollyer, not complete for a couple of reasons. Most obviously, there is the dip in 1940 with subsequent recovery to 1945 – it doesn't take much thought to conclude that observers were otherwise occupied in those years. Secondly, it is likely that some parts of the county, then as now, were little visited by bird-watchers: John commented that the areas he mapped as unoccupied were exactly the areas most neglected by observers. Nevertheless, while incomplete, the chart surely shows well the pattern of decline.

After the last breeding records (one pair near Gravesend and one in the Blean woodlands in 1974), Red-backed Shrike has been primarily a spring and autumn migrant. There have been a few occasions when a bird has appeared in mid-summer in suitable breeding habitat, and sometimes an individual has remained for several weeks, but there has been no confirmation of breeding since 1974.



Juvenile Red-backed Shrike by Chris Bond

The next chart shows the annual totals of Red-backed Shrikes in Kent since 1965, almost at the end of the period when the species bred here (and note that fledged young are excluded). There were two years back in the 1960s with only two individuals being seen, even though that was within the breeding era, and several more recently with only three or four. The fluctuation between years must reflect the numbers of migrants, probably deriving largely from Scandinavian and Finnish populations, which arrive in the county, or not, depending on weather conditions. Despite the increasing numbers of observers, however, there has been no increase in numbers being found and, from the 1990s, there is a suggestion of a gradual decline. The average annual total during 1965-1990 was eleven birds (and excluding the exceptional year of 1977 it was still ten birds), while during 1991-2019 it was eight birds. Preliminary information suggests at least ten were seen in 2020, but they are not included in the chart.



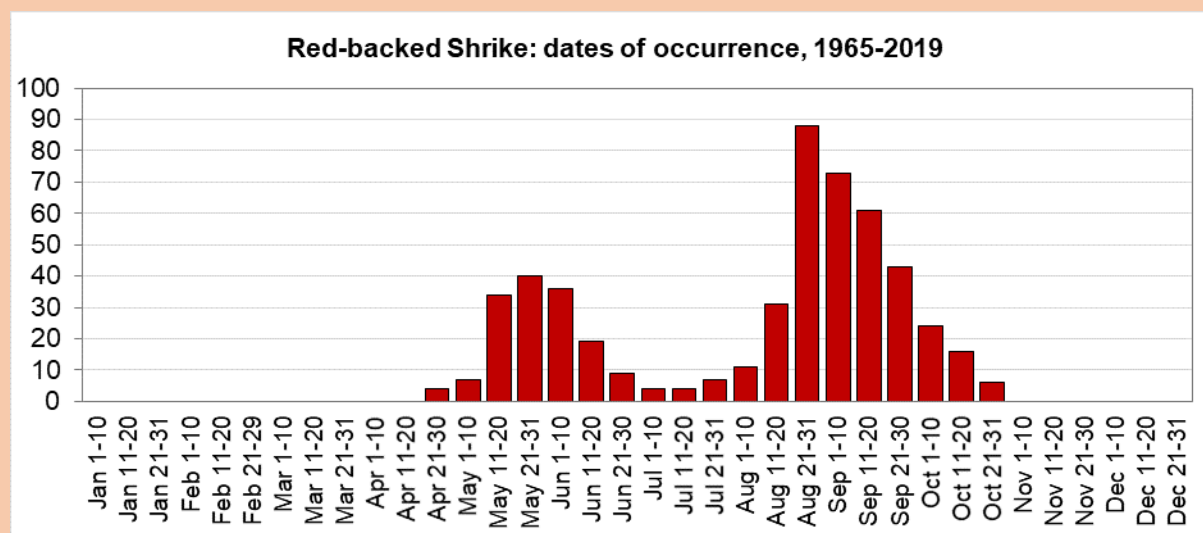


The year 1977 was remarkable. Not only were there ten in May-June, a typical total for the whole year, but there were 34 in autumn. The most concentrated arrivals were during 16th-23rd August, when counts included four at Shellness, four at Foreness and three at Sandwich Bay. The next highest annual total was 18 in 1984, and on only two other occasions have there been three together: both at Sandwich Bay, on 30th August 1966 and 8th-9th September 2008. It was not only Red-backed Shrike but also species such as Wryneck, Icterine Warbler and Pied Flycatcher that were more numerous than usual in August 1977, so conditions were evidently right for arrivals of Scandinavian migrants.

With their high levels of coverage, it's not surprising that the two bird observatories have recorded a good proportion of the shrikes: of the 517 recorded during the 55 year period, 105 (20%) were at Sandwich Bay and 94 (18%) were at Dungeness.

The third chart, below, shows the seasonal pattern of occurrence. Around 29% of birds have been found during April-June, and 71% during July-October. Red-backed Shrikes are one of the later spring migrants, peaking in late May and early June. April records are now quite unusual, and the earliest from 1965 onwards was one that arrived at Reculver on 25th April 2009. Previously, a handful of early April or March records occurred, the earliest being one at Sevenoaks on 28th March 1948.

Autumn passage peaks in late August but continues through September, and October records are not unusual. The latest were one at Halling on 29th-31st October 1982, another at Oare Marshes on 31st October 2004 and (not in the chart) the one at St Mary's Bay during 10th-29th October 2020. November records are not unknown in Britain, but there don't seem to have been any in Kent yet.



Could they return as a breeding species? It's not impossible, but if you go back to that quarry today, it may still be there, but it's been filled with farm waste. The scrub has grown into shaded woodland of sycamore and little else. No lark sings over the fields, but the quiet lane has become noisy with traffic.

## Great Grey Shrike

Sitting on the stark twigs of a hawthorn in open countryside, a Great Grey Shrike is easily found and easily recognised – but can still be the highlight of a winter's day. Here, I'm giving a brief summary of their status over the past seventy years.

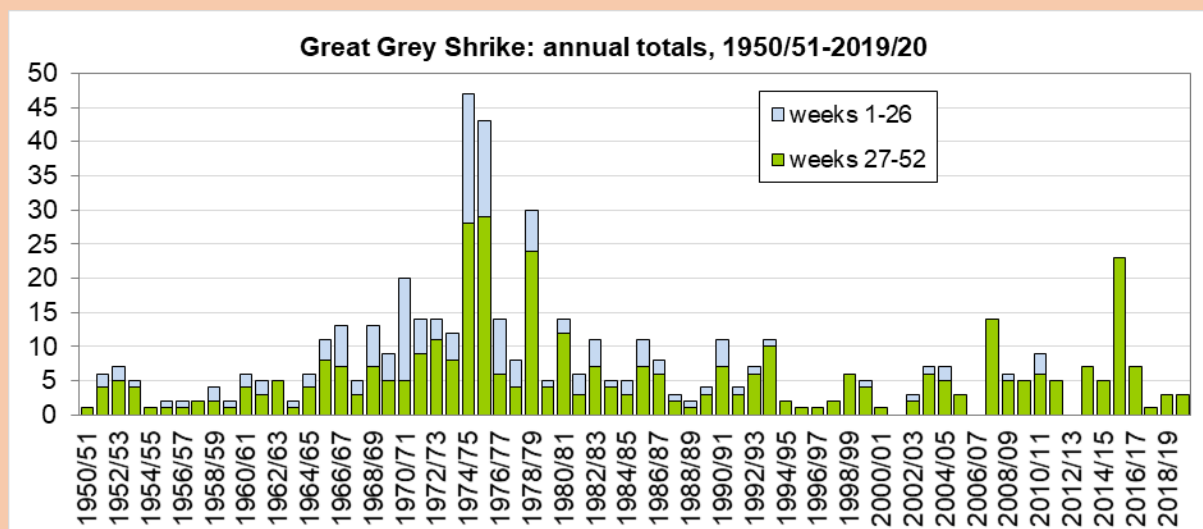
Over the whole period, an average of about 7.7 has been recorded per year, but that has varied quite a lot, especially during the 1970s when the average rose to over 20 per year. The first chart shows the annual totals (July-June years since this is a winter visitor). Especially in the peak years, there is some uncertainty about the precise totals because of the possible double-counting of birds that moved location and uncertainty as to whether birds seen on successive dates were the same or different. The totals for the peak years in the 1970s need checking on the record cards, which are not currently available.



Great Grey Shrike by Steve Ashton Bockhill, 2019

The usual background level of between five and ten found per year is clear, even in the early years. Somewhat surprisingly, the three blank years (2001/02, 2006/07 & 2012/13) have been quite recent, despite the higher numbers of observers now active. It could be that this implies a decline over the years, yet we still find some years with markedly higher totals, such as the 23 in 2015/16.

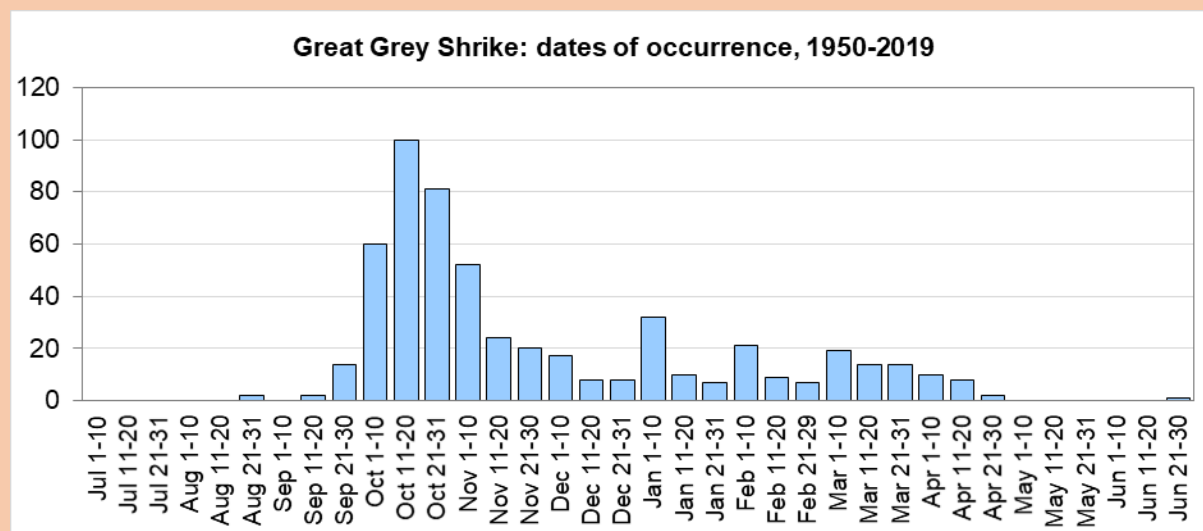
Then there is the bulge during the 1970s, with the background level rising to between 10 and 15 per year, and four years with 20 or more, including 47 in 1974/75 and 43 in 1975/76. This pattern is not restricted to Kent: national ringing data (BTO website) show only seven years when more than 17 Great Grey Shrikes were ringed, namely 1966 and seven of the years during 1970-78, peaking at 32 in 1976. I have no easy explanation of why numbers were higher then. However, it is noticeable that a similar pattern exists for quite a few other scarce species (look at the charts for Red-necked and Slavonian Grebes in the January 2020 Newsletter, for example), though the timing of the bulge varies considerably.



In the annual totals chart, I have shown records of birds that were found in autumn or early winter (labelled weeks 26-52) in a different colour from those found in late winter or spring (weeks 1-26). Late winter/spring totals were proportionately higher during the years when overall totals were larger (38% were in the first half of the year during 1971/71-1979/80, 22% in all other years). That could point to an explanation – but I'm still not sure what it might be.

Long-staying individuals have decreased in recent times. One was at Chilham from 26th October 2014 to 5th April 2015. If that taxes your arithmetic, it was 162 days. No other stays of 50 or more days seem to have occurred going back from then until winters 1992/93 and 1993/94 when birds (or perhaps the same one in both years) over-wintered at Westbere-Stodmarsh. Before that, long stays were regular, occurring in most winters back to the late 1950s. The Westbere-Stodmarsh area was often favoured, but other locations used were widespread, including Hayesden, New Hythe and Stonelees.

The second chart shows the seasonal pattern of occurrence – note that this is based on the dates when birds were found, so does not indicate the presence of long-stayers. Autumn, rather than winter, is when most are found: some 62% of first dates were in October–November. Rather few are found in mid winter (the raised totals for the 1st–10th of some months reflects imprecision in how birds are recorded in Kent Bird Reports), but then a small spring passage is evident. As mentioned above, the proportion found early in the year has changed over the years.



First dates in autumn are generally in October, but late September birds are fairly frequent. Many years ago there were two in August: Sandwich Bay on 25th August 1961 and Dungeness on 24th August 1970. At the end of winter, most have left by the end of March, and though April records were fairly common there have been none since 1993 apart from the Chilham long-stayer of 2014/15 mentioned above. The latest in spring appear to be individuals at Darland Bank, Chatham on 23rd April 1956 and at Dungeness on 23rd April 1966. There has been one summer record, of a bird at Dover on 22nd June 1953, described in the Kent Bird Report as “fully investigated”.

As suggested by the details above, the species can turn up almost anywhere. Migrants are perhaps concentrated near the coast (reflecting where most observers are?) but even they can appear at places as far inland as Bough Beech. The majority of records concern single birds, but occasionally two and even three are present together in one area. There is one record of four, at Pegwell Bay on 20th October 2015, involving one that was present on the cliffs for a week or more, one that flew directly inland from offshore, and two in the Country Park.

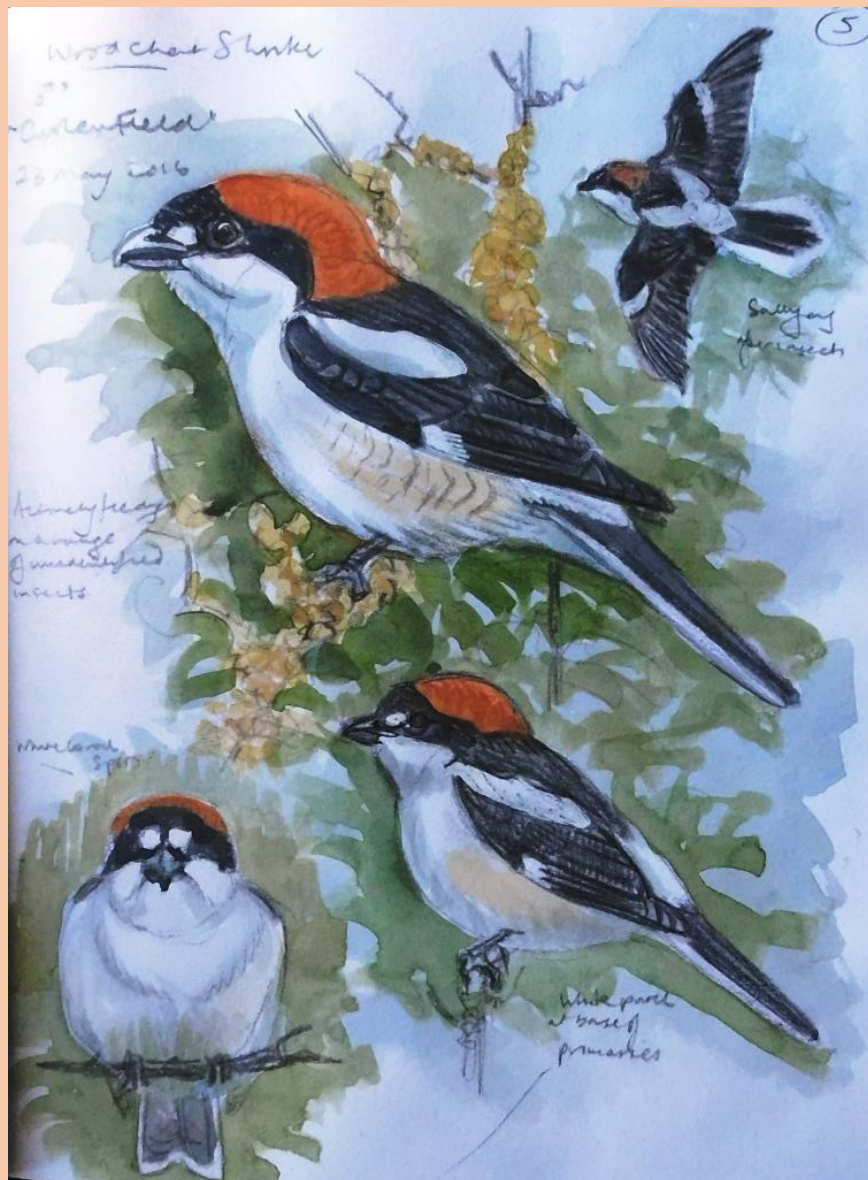
The majority of Great Grey Shrikes wintering in Kent, or passing through on passage, probably come from Scandinavia and Finland, but some may originate further east. One example of the central Asian subspecies *pallidirostris*, known as Steppe Grey Shrike, has been recorded, at Westmarsh in east Kent on 6th–7th November 2004. Passage birds are likely to winter further west in Britain or western Europe, but there are no ringing recoveries of this species (nor of any other shrike) affecting Kent.

## **Rarer shrikes**

In addition to Red-backed and Great Grey Shrikes, there have been four/five/six (delete according to taste and this week's taxonomic pronouncements) other species of shrike seen in Kent. The most frequent of these is Woodchat Shrike, which is described first here, followed by the others in order of the number of individuals seen in Kent.

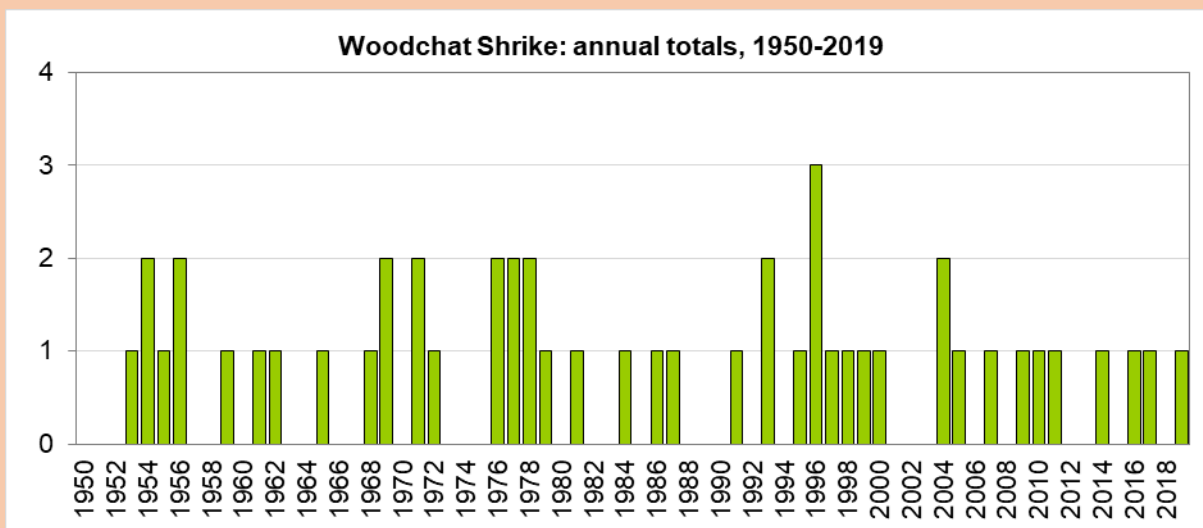
### ***Woodchat Shrike***

About 14 acceptable records exist before 1950, from the first, which was an immature male shot probably near Canterbury some time prior to 1835. These early records include the only instance of two together – a pair seen on Ash Levels on 5th May 1937. There are several unacceptable records including one of the Balearic race amid the discounted Hastings Rarities.



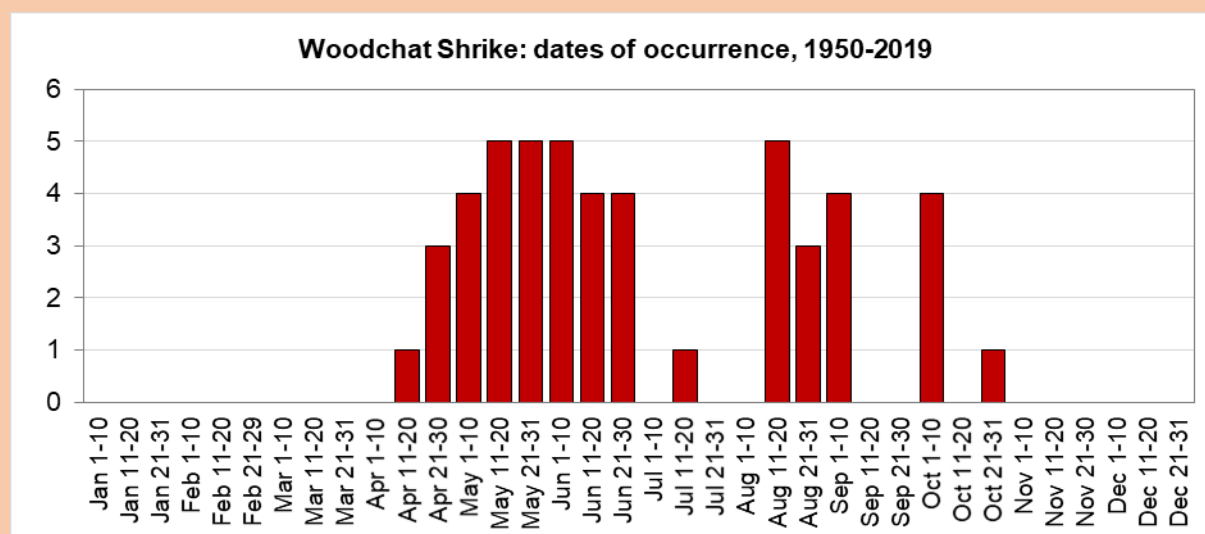
Woodchat Shrike, Seaton May 2016 by Norman McCannh

Since 1950, the species has appeared remarkably regularly (see first chart) with between four and ten per decade. There have been nine years in which two have occurred, and one (1996) when three were seen. Almost half (23 out of 49 since 1950) have been at or near Dungeness (including two at Lydd). Very few have been more than a mile or two from the coast, but they have included one at Langley near Maidstone in June-July 1977 and singles at Seaton near Wickhambreaux in May 2016 and October 2019.





Well over half (31 out of 49) seen since 1950 have been found in spring, between mid April and the end of June. The earliest was a female at Reculver on 19th-22nd April 2004 and the latest was the Langley bird mentioned about (but earlier there had been one near Sandwich on 5th July 1948). One has occurred in high summer, namely an adult female at Dungeness on 15th-21st July 1995. The remaining 17 have been seen in autumn, the earliest an immature trapped at Dungeness on 13th August 1959 and the latest a first-winter bird seen at Seaton gravel pits on 30th October 2019. That was the latest by quite a margin, the next being one at Kingsgate on Thanet during 6th-16th October 1984.



## Lesser Grey Shrike

The first Lesser Grey Shrike for Kent was seen on the North Downs in the central part of the county by F. W. Frohawk on 15th May 1897. His report of this in *The Zoologist* reads in full as follows:

I am pleased to be able to record another occurrence of this very rare visitor to the country, which I observed on May 15th last on the range of hills in mid-Kent, in company with my friend Mr. John Wood. As we passed under an ash-tree, I heard a strange cry overhead, and, looking up, I saw a bird fly out with a rather jerky flight, and uttering short notes, resembling, as well as I can remember, the sounds "chur-tic, chur-tic, tic". These notes were new to me, and from the appearance of the bird, as seen against the background of the brilliant blue sky, I was quite at a loss to make out the species; but it soon dipped down, and its striking colours became visible against the hill under which we were standing. The bird then alighted on the ground for a few seconds, when I brought my friend's field glasses to bear on it, which at once revealed the pattern and richness of its plumage. I then instantly knew what a rarity I was watching; the silvery grey, deep black and white of the upper parts, and the delicate pink breast and flanks, looked particularly rich in the sunlight, and in strong contrast with the turf on which it stood. It then flew up and perched in a small hawthorn, from that again to the ground, and then on to a furze-bush. After two or three such movements it disappeared over the brow of the hill. After waiting a short time I saw it again further along the hillside, chasing a smaller bird, I think a Linnet; but the distance was too great to be sure of the species, though the colouring of the Shrike was plainly visible. From the intensity of the black markings it was clearly a male. I think it very probable that it had taken up its abode on the hill for nesting purposes, for which the character of the place was admirably adapted; and if opportunities had been afforded, I intended paying another visit to the ground later on, with the hopes of seeing more of the bird and perhaps its nest.

At this time, Frederick William Frohawk was 35. The son of a Norfolk farmer, he had become a zoological illustrator and was also an enthusiastic field naturalist. He was a member of the BOU but his greatest interest was butterflies, and he was the author of several books on them, including the beautiful and influential *Natural History of British Butterflies* (1914). One further aside is that he named his third daughter Valezina after a variety of the Silver-washed Fritillary, and in 1996 she opened the 'Frohawk Ride' in the New Forest to commemorate him. But anyway, the main reason that I've quoted this account is because it is a rare instance of a nineteenth century rarity being carefully observed and reported, and not shot. Note that he does not even raise the possibility of shooting the bird, instead saying that a subsequent visit (which presumably did not happen) would be for further observations. While he may have been over-optimistic that it could be nesting there, other aspects of the account that I like are that he is honest about what he could not be sure about, and that he seems to have pinched his friend's binoculars to watch the bird; John Wood needs praise too for handing them over!



The next record of the Lesser Grey Shrike in Kent was less admirable: an immature female said to have been shot at Brookland on 7th October 1907, and seen by N. F. Ticehurst on the 10th, having already been stuffed by George Bristow. This record, with so many other so-called Hastings Rarities, was removed from the list of acceptable records in 1962, after the British Birds review.



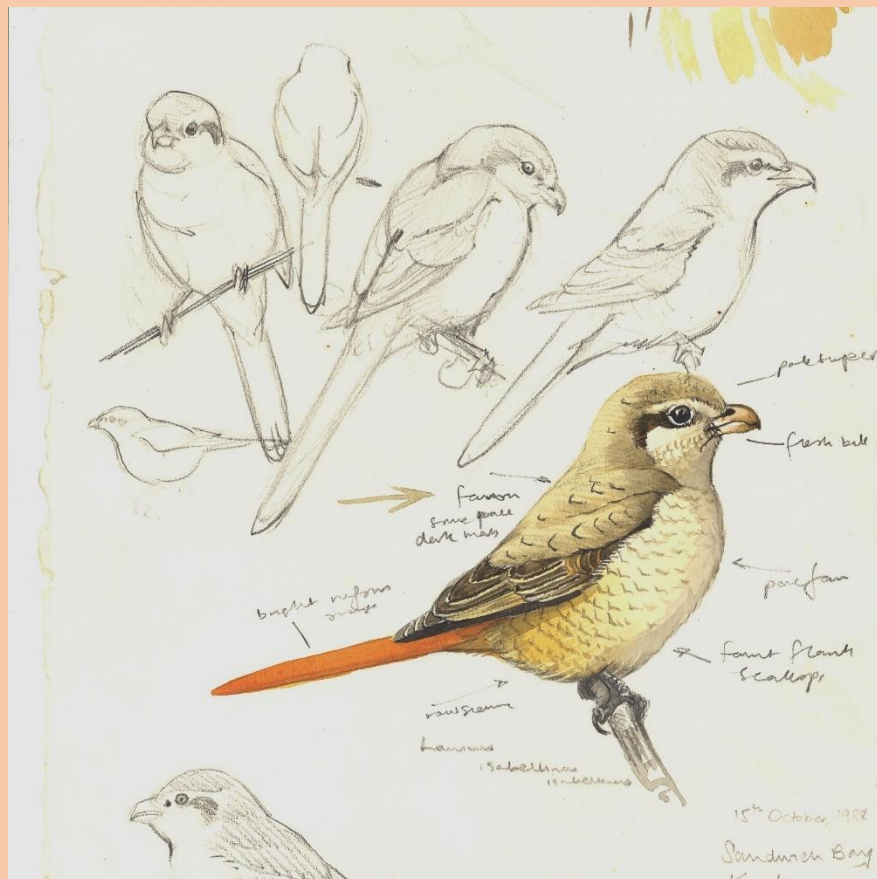
Lesser Grey Shrike, Seasalter, July 1977 by Norman McCanch

More recently, there have been eight records. All were found acceptable by the British Birds Rarities Committee, you'll be pleased to hear, including the 1956 one which was included in the review of 1951-1957 rarities (BB September 2006). Somewhat surprisingly, all have been adults; and note that the 1897 record was the earliest in the year.

- 1956 An adult at Midley near Lydd on 29th August-1st September.
- 1976 An adult at Crundale on 20th September.
- 1977 An adult near the Sportsman PH at Seasalter on 4th-12th June. [The Kent Bird Report says it was found on the 5th rather than the 4th.]
- 1980 An adult, probably male, at Marshside near Chislet on 5th June.
- 1994 An adult female at Sandwich Bay from 2nd to 28th August; it was trapped and ringed on the 18th.
- 1995 An adult at Foxhill Down near St Margaret's Bay on 13th-17th August.
- 2013 An adult at Capel Fleet on 5th-6th October.
- 2019 An adult male at Cooling Marshes-Northward Hill on 19th May.

## Isabelline Shrikes

Several races of sandy-coloured shrikes occur across the wide expanse of land from Kazakhstan to China. These were formerly regarded as one species, Isabelline Shrike *Lanius isabellinus*, but from 2018 were split into the south-westernmost Turkestan Shrike *L phoenicuroides* and three other races to the east within Daurian Shrike *L isabellinus*. Currently only adults are considered separable on field characters (and even DNA evidence may not be conclusive). Thus, first year birds are currently recorded by BBRC as Daurian/Turkestan Shrike, and it has not yet been possible retrospectively to decide to which taxon some of the older records of adults belong.



Red-tailed Shrike, Sandwich Bay, 15<sup>th</sup> October 1988 by Norman McCanch

All of the Kent records of the group are treated as Daurian/Turkestan Shrikes (despite what it may say in Kent Bird Reports!). They are:

- 1988 A first-winter bird at Sandwich Bay on 15th-16th October, trapped and ringed on the 15th.
- 1988 A first-winter bird, different from that at Sandwich Bay, at Stodmarsh during 4th-14th November.
- 1991 A first-winter bird at North Foreland on 28th October. [The Kent Bird Report says that this bird was also present on the 29th but that is not indicated in British Birds.]
- 1993 One on Worth Marshes from 24th October to 4th November.
- 2001 A first-winter male at Dungeness from 29th September to 5th October. [The KBR says this was 'attributed to the Turkestan race'.]
- 2006 A first-winter bird at Dungeness on 15th October. [The KBR says this was of the nominate race, i.e. Daurian.]
- 2011 An adult male at Cliffe Pools on 16th October. [The KBR says this was of the nominate race, i.e. Daurian, but, although it was an adult, this has not been confirmed in British Birds; also the KBR says it was there also on the 17th but that is not indicated in British Birds.]
- 2014 One of unknown age on Worth Marshes on 16th October. [British Birds originally published this as belonging to the race *phoenicuroides*, something retracted in the January 2021 issue. The Kent Bird Report describes it as a second-year bird, while British Birds classes it as 1CY+, i.e. of any age from first-year upwards.]

It is worth noting that the arrival dates of these birds have been more reliable than their taxonomy.





*Isabelline Shrike Worth October 2014 by Brendan Ryan*

## *Masked Shrike*



*Masked Shrike by Chris Bond*

A first-winter bird at Shuart Farm, near Minnis Bay, on 17th-19th October 2020 has been submitted to the British Birds Rarities Committee and quite a few people will be surprised if it's not accepted.

This will be the first acceptable record of Masked Shrike for Kent. An earlier record, of a worn adult male shot at Woodchurch on 11th July 1905, with a history very similar to that of the 1907 Lesser Grey Shrike mentioned above, was also discarded as a Hastings Rarity.

## *Steppe Grey Shrike*



*Steppe Grey Shrike by Dave Dowles*

This species currently does not exist. Birds of this Central Asian type were until 1997 regarded (by the BOURC and BB) as being the *pallidirostris* subspecies of Great Grey Shrike *Lanius excubitor*, but with the splitting off of Southern Grey Shrike *L. meridionalis*, whose distribution is centred on Iberia, *pallidirostris* became a subspecies of that. About three years ago, the subspecies was raised to a full species Steppe Grey Shrike *L. pallidirostris*. (I hope you're following this.) This change was then thought to be a steppe too far, and so it reverted to being a subspecies of *L. excubitor*. The only record of this race in Kent is one at Westmarsh in east Kent on 6th-7th November 2004. This bird was probably in a very confused state.

**Andrew Henderson**

## **KENT BIRD SIGHTINGS FOR MARCH AND APRIL 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

The first week of **March** was cold but largely settled and was followed by a disturbed spell of weather from the 9<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup>. It was predominantly dry during the second half of the month which was also much warmer, especially the last three days. Rainfall was less than average during the month with 37.25 mm of rain at Bishopstone.

**April** began settled, but soon turned very cold, and a notable feature of the month was the number of air frosts. Daytime temperatures did recover from the middle of April, but it was cold again in the closing days. Overall it was an unusually cold, dry and sunny month. It was extremely dry in Kent with, for instance, only 4.5 mm of rain falling at Bishopstone. Sunshine was well above average and it was provisionally UK's fourth driest April since 1862.

## EARLIEST SPRING MIGRANTS IN 2021

For some species like Whimbrel, Greenshank, Common Sandpiper, Black Redstart, Blackcap and Chiffchaff it can be difficult to unpick wintering birds from newly arrived migrants.

*Arrival dates compared to the Kent mean: (-) = earlier, (0) = the same, (+) = later*

**Garganey** – a male was seen at Dungeness RSPB on Mar 25<sup>th</sup>. **(+15)**  
**Osprey** – a bird was seen at Stodmarsh on Mar 26<sup>th</sup>. **(+1)**  
**Little Ringed Plover** – two on the WeBS count at Cliffe Pools on Mar 15<sup>th</sup>. **(-1)**  
**Whimbrel** – one was reported from Bough Beech on Mar 11<sup>th</sup>. **(-20)**  
**Common Sandpiper** – one was seen at Bough Beech on Apr 9<sup>th</sup>. **(+1)**  
**Greenshank** – one was found at Sandwich Bay on Mar 31<sup>st</sup>. **(-5)**  
**Wood Sandpiper** – one was reported from Dungeness on Apr 25<sup>th</sup>. **(+4)**  
**Black Tern** – three flew E at DBO on Apr 23<sup>rd</sup>. **(+7)**  
**Little Tern** – two birds flew past DBO on Apr 17<sup>th</sup>. **(+6)**  
**Sandwich Tern** – one flew over Lade GPs on Feb 24<sup>th</sup>. **(-8)**  
**Common Tern** – two birds were seen at DBO on Apr 1<sup>st</sup>. **(+5)**  
**Arctic Tern** – one or two birds at Bough Beech on Apr 22<sup>nd</sup>. **(+10)**  
**Turtle Dove** – two birds were recorded from Swalecliffe on Apr 16<sup>th</sup>. **(-5)**  
**Cuckoo** – one was reported from Swanscombe Marshes on Mar 30<sup>th</sup>. **(0)**  
**Common Swift** – one flew over the lighthouse at Dungeness on Apr 21<sup>st</sup>. **(+6)**  
**Hobby** – one was reported from Pluckley on Apr 3<sup>rd</sup>. **(-1)**  
**Sand Martin** – two were seen at Bough Beech on Mar 4<sup>th</sup>. **(-5)**  
**Swallow** – one was recorded at Pegwell Bay on Feb 26<sup>th</sup>. **(-13)**  
**House Martin** – a bird was seen at Pegwell Bay on Mar 5<sup>th</sup>. **(-16)**  
**Tree Pipit** – one was reported from Foreness on Mar 30<sup>th</sup>. **(-2)**  
**White Wagtail** – two were found at Foreness on Feb 22<sup>nd</sup>. **(-16)**  
**Yellow Wagtail** – two birds were seen at Elmley on Mar 23<sup>rd</sup>. **(+2)**  
**Nightingale** – one was reported from Fordwich on Mar 29<sup>th</sup>. **(-8)**  
**Black Redstart** – there were three birds at Sandwich Bay on Feb 20<sup>th</sup>. **(-9)**  
**Common Redstart** – one was seen on Worth Marshes on Mar 30<sup>th</sup>. **(-4)**  
**Northern Wheatear** – a very, early male was found at Lydd on Feb 21<sup>st</sup>. **(-13)**  
**Ring Ouzel** – there was one at Foreness on Mar 30<sup>th</sup>. **(-1)**  
**Grasshopper Warbler** – one was heard at Reculver Oyster Farm on Apr 8<sup>th</sup>. **(-2)**  
**Sedge Warbler** – two were seen and heard at Sandwich Bay on Mar 29<sup>th</sup>. **(+1)**  
**Reed Warbler** – single birds recorded at Reculver and Cliffe Pools on Mar 31<sup>st</sup>. **(-6)**  
**Lesser Whitethroat** – a bird was recorded from Pegwell Bay on Apr 18<sup>th</sup>. **(+7)**  
**Common Whitethroat** – one was singing at Longfield on Mar 30<sup>th</sup>. **(-5)**  
**Garden Warbler** – one was seen at South Blean Woods on Apr 8<sup>th</sup>. **(-4)**  
**Blackcap** – one was seen and heard at Sandwich Bay on Mar 28<sup>th</sup>. **(+9)**  
**Chiffchaff** – three birds were singing at Lade GPs on Feb 24<sup>th</sup>. **(-12)**  
**Willow Warbler** – one was recorded at Worth Marshes on Mar 26<sup>th</sup>. **(+2)**  
**Spotted Flycatcher** – one was seen at Temple Ewell on Apr 27<sup>th</sup>. **(-3)**

## An exceptional tern passage at Dungeness on April 28<sup>th</sup> – David Walker

A calm, cold and cloudy morning saw an initial steady movement of **Brent Geese**, **Common Scoters** and **Common Terns** but from mid-morning until early afternoon the flood gates opened and resulted in an astounding movement of terns in particular. Seawatching for 10.25 hours brought some incredible numbers with record day totals of 274 **Little Terns**, 23,272 **Common Terns**, 4,840 **Arctic Terns** and 84 **Black Terns** and an exceptional four **Roseate Terns** of note. Other notable totals included 1,355 **Brent Geese** and 1,248 **Common Scoters** along with a **Velvet Scoter**, four **Red-breasted Mergansers**, three **Black-throated** and a **Great Northern Diver**, a **Shag**, 19 **Whimbrel**, 25 **Sanderling**, seven **Mediterranean Gulls**, three **Great Skuas** and 11 **Arctic Skuas**.



## WILDFOWL

An adult **Black Brant** was identified at the Wantsum Outflow, Reculver Marshes on Mar 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> and one was seen at Lower Halstow on Mar 19<sup>th</sup>.



*Black Brant, Reculver by Chris Hindle*

In March up to 15 **Barnacle Geese** were reported from Sandwich Bay, Burmarsh, Stodmarsh, Lympne, Donkey Street, Nickoll's Quarry, Cliffe Pools and Burham.

A **Pink-footed Goose** was seen at Sandwich Bay from Mar 3<sup>rd</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> and two were recorded from Walmer on Mar 24<sup>th</sup> whilst a single **Tundra Bean Goose** was seen at Sandwich Bay from Mar 4<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> and there were one or two at Higham Marshes from Mar 5<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup>.

During March there were 640 **Russian White-fronted Geese** recorded at Swale NNR with 120 still there on the 27<sup>th</sup>. In addition, there were 104 at Seabrook and up to 128 seen at Sandwich Bay with smaller numbers recorded from at Burham, Tenterden, Seasalter, Reculver Marshes, Higham Marshes, Cliffe Pools, Boughton Monchelsea, Lympne, Greatstone-on-Sea, Willop Basin, Dartford, Sellindge, Wierton, Lower Halstow, Smallhythe, Marden, Chislet, North Foreland, New Hythe, Chetney Marshes, Otterham, Stodmarsh and Cheriton.

Up to nine **Egyptian Geese** were recorded from Sevenoaks WR, Lade, Chartham, Penshurst, Seaton, Cliffe Pools, Higham Marshes, Singleton Lake, Ash Lake, Godmersham, East Peckham, DBO and Stodmarsh and as many as seven **Mandarins** were reported from Sandwich Bay, Godmersham, Seaton, Whetsted GPs and Penshurst.

After the first male **Garganey** was seen at Dungeness RSPB on Mar 25<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> single birds were recorded from Collard's Lake and Dungeness RSPB. There was an arrival of birds on Apr 1<sup>st</sup> with an unprecedented flock of 18 seen at Dungeness RSPB and single birds seen at Folkestone and Grove Ferry. The flock of 18 remained at Dungeness RSPB the next day. After this, during the rest of April, as many as six were seen at Grove/Stodmarsh, Dungeness RSPB, DBO, Worth Marshes, Bough Beech, Elmley, Oare Marshes and New Hythe.

One or two **Scaup** were still present at Cliffe Pools until Mar 26<sup>th</sup>.

During March and April as many as 12 **Velvet Scoter** were seen at DBO, Folkestone, Samphire Hoe, Foreness, Willop Outflow and Whitstable. There was also an inland record of a male at Conningbrook on Apr 19<sup>th</sup> as well as an inland record of five **Common Scoter** at Bough Beech on Apr 3<sup>rd</sup>. April ended with 21 flying past DBO on the 30<sup>th</sup>.



*Velvet Scoter by Gary Stewart*

During March up to three **Goosanders** were seen at Folkestone Pier, Bough Beech, Nickoll's Quarry, Sevenoaks WR, Haysden and New Hythe.

#### PARTRIDGE TO CORMORANT

In March and April as many as three **Black-throated Divers** were recorded from DBO, Folkestone, Sandwich Bay, Swalecliffe, Samphire Hoe, Walmer and Whitstable.

During March one or two **Great Northern Divers** were recorded from DBO, Sandwich Bay, Hythe, Walmer, Willop and Kingsgate. The only birds in April flew past DBO on the 13<sup>th</sup>, 28<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup>.

The first **Manx Shearwater** of the year at DBO was recorded on Mar 26<sup>th</sup> and the next was seen there on Apr 23<sup>rd</sup> with two on the 25<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> and three on the 26<sup>th</sup>.

Single **Slavonian Grebes** flew E past DBO on Mar 28<sup>th</sup> and Apr 24<sup>th</sup> whilst during March up to four **Black-necked Grebe** were seen at Dungeness, Lade, Cliffe Pools and Higham Marshes.

A **Red-necked Grebe** was seen off Folkestone on Mar 1<sup>st</sup> and the New Hythe bird was still present on Mar 16<sup>th</sup>. One was also seen off DBO on Mar 23<sup>rd</sup>.



*White Stork by Brendan Ryan*

Between Mar 30<sup>th</sup> and the end of April one or two **White Storks** were recorded from Furnace Pond, Stodmarsh, Stuart, North Foreland, New Hythe, Shellness, Tunbridge Wells, DBO, Dartford, Walland Marsh, Ashford, Deal, Sandwich Bay, Brookland, Lympe, Whitfield, Ashford, Warehorne and Hacklinge. With the reintroduction scheme at Knepp Estate in Sussex it is highly probable that this is the origin of some if not all these birds.

The **Glossy Ibis** first seen at Dungeness RSPB in 2020 was still present on Apr 30<sup>th</sup> and the Haysden bird appeared again on Mar 22<sup>nd</sup>. One also flew W past Tankerton on Apr 23<sup>rd</sup>.

At the beginning of March three **Spoonbills** flew N at Bockhill, one flew W at Reculver on the 4<sup>th</sup> and there were two at Pegwell Bay on the 16<sup>th</sup> and Dungeness RSPB on the 19<sup>th</sup>. Two birds also flew E at DBO on Mar 29<sup>th</sup> whilst one flew over Blean on Apr 11<sup>th</sup> and one was recorded from Oare Marshes on Apr 29<sup>th</sup>.

Up to six **Bitterns** were reported from Dungeness RSPB with one or two at Stodmarsh/Grove, Westbere and Elmley.

In March and April up to eight **Cattle Egret** were seen at Oare Marshes, Halstow Marshes, Seasalter, Harty Marshes, Seaton, Northward Hill, Cliffe Pools, Ridham Dock, Capel Fleet, Leybourne Lakes, Cooling Marshes, Elmley and Higham Marshes.

One or two **Great White Egrets** were seen at Reculver, East Peckham, Graveney, Uplees, Folkestone, Whetsted GPs, Burmarsh, Worth Marshes, Shellness, Walmer Beach, Chartham, Seasalter, Samphire Hoe and Port Lympe.

A **Purple Heron** was seen at Westbere from Apr 21<sup>st</sup> to the end of the month.



*Purple Heron by Brendan Ryan*

During March and April up to five **Shags** were recorded from Folkestone, DBO, Kingsgate, Seabrook, Walmer, Chatham, Samphire Hoe and Dover.

#### **BIRDS OF PREY**

The first **Osprey** of the year was seen at Stodmarsh on Mar 26<sup>th</sup> after which birds were seen at Bough Beech, Folkestone, Northward Hill, Cliftonville, West Hythe, Tunbridge Wells, Godmersham, Cliffe Pools, Gillingham and Oare Marshes.



During March and April one or two **Hen Harriers** were recorded from Grove Ferry/Stodmarsh, Dungeness, Worth Marshes, Elmley, Harty Marshes, Graveney, Oare Marshes, Sandwich Bay, Pegwell Bay, Seasalter, Whetsted, Pembury, South Swale LNR, Kenardington, Kingsdown, Shellness, Hackinge, Capel Fleet, Nethergong, Conyer, Botolph's Bridge, Westbere, Warehorne, Weddington and Cooling.

A subadult male **PALLID HARRIER** flew W at Reculver Marshes on Apr 8<sup>th</sup>. If accepted by BBRC this will be the seventh record for Kent. What may have been the same bird was possibly sighted at Seasalter and Graveney Marshes on the 12<sup>th</sup>.

As many as four **Red Kites** were recorded from Wouldham, South Foreland, DBO, Reculver, Birling, Pembury, Dunorlan Park, Bishopstone, Seabrook, Broomfield, Hillborough, Tankerton, Conyer, Chestfield, Hythe, Chartham, Cheriton, Herne Bay, Walmer, Sandwich Bay, Palmarsh, Shepherdswell, Seasalter, Abbotscliffe, Kingsdown, Bough Beech, Boughton Monchelsea and Riverhead.

Single **Black Kites** flew over Worth Marshes on Mar 6<sup>th</sup> and Samphire Hoe on Apr 24<sup>th</sup>.



*White-tailed Eagle by Brendan Ryan*

A juvenile **White-tailed Eagle** (not from the Isle of Wight reintroduction scheme) spent the day in the Stodmarsh area on Mar 21<sup>st</sup>. There was another sighting of a bird in the Dungeness and Lade area on Mar 27<sup>th</sup> whilst a juvenile at Reculver, Hillborough and the Stour Valley on the Mar 28<sup>th</sup> was from the Isle of Wight reintroduction scheme and wearing ring no. **G461**. There was another juvenile from the Isle of Wight with ring no. **G463** seen at Dover, Samphire Hoe and Worth Marshes on Apr 5<sup>th</sup> and at Bockhill and Dungeness the next day before flying across the Channel and into France. Yet another bird, ring no. **G405**, flew over Southborough Common on Apr 8<sup>th</sup> and was also reported from Luddenham Marshes on Apr 11<sup>th</sup> whilst a bird was seen at Westbere on the 14<sup>th</sup>. Ring no. **G461** was seen again at Dungeness on Apr 18<sup>th</sup> and at South Foreland, Stonar and Nethergong on the 19<sup>th</sup> and at Littlebourne on the 20<sup>th</sup> and at Alkham Valley next day.

With the significant increase in reports of White-tailed Eagles with most if not all being birds from the Isle of Wight reintroduction scheme it has been decided to remove the species from the list of birds requiring descriptions for acceptance by the KOS Rarities Panel as of January 2021.

The **Rough-legged Buzzard** reported in the Swale area in January was reported again from Elmley on Mar 6<sup>th</sup>. Single birds were also seen at South Foreland and Stonar on Apr 19<sup>th</sup>, at Weddington on the 22<sup>nd</sup> and at Bockhill on the 30<sup>th</sup>.

#### RAILS TO WADERS

A **Spotted Crane** was sound recorded flying over Sandwich Bay on the night of Apr 13<sup>th</sup>.



A **Common Crane** was seen on Minster Marshes on Mar 14<sup>th</sup>, at Grove Ferry on the 16<sup>th</sup> and flying over Graveney on the 22<sup>nd</sup>. Two birds were also seen at Elmley on Apr 12<sup>th</sup> before they flew N.

Single **Stone-curlew** were sound recorded at Stonar on Mar 30<sup>th</sup>, at Walmer on Apr 18<sup>th</sup> and at Sandwich Bay and DBO on the 19<sup>th</sup> and two **Dotterel** were found in a field at Wilmington on Apr 25<sup>th</sup>.

Two **Black-winged Stilts** were reported from Elmley on Apr 30<sup>th</sup>.

During March and April up to 17 **Purple Sandpipers** were seen at Foreness, North Foreland, Hampton, Ramsgate, Hythe and Dover with the last 10 birds reported from Dover Harbour on Apr 13<sup>th</sup>.

A **Curlew Sandpiper** was identified at Higham Marshes on Apr 17<sup>th</sup> and up to three **Little Stints** were seen at Cliffe Pools during these two months.

During March single **Jack Snipe** were reported from DBO, Sandwich Bay, Kennington, Weddington and Hythe.

The first **Wood Sandpiper** of the year was seen at Dungeness on Apr 25<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> with one seen at Lade on the 27<sup>th</sup> with four at Westbere on the 30<sup>th</sup>.

During March and April one or two **Spotted Redshanks** were seen at Otterham Quay, Riverside CP, Higham Marshes, Reculver Marshes, Cliffe Pools, Donkey Street and Milton Creek.

#### AUKS TO GULLS

A **Little Gull** was seen at Dungeness RSPB on Mar 17<sup>th</sup> and 25 flew E past DBO on the 24<sup>th</sup> with four at Dungeness RSPB on the 24<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup>, two at Lade on the 25<sup>th</sup> and one at Scotney on the 30<sup>th</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup>. On Mar 31<sup>st</sup>, there were also 33 at Reculver Marshes and three at DBO. During April up to five birds were recorded from Stodmarsh, DBO, Sandwich Bay, Foreness, Cliftonville, Bough Beech, Dartford Marshes, Weddington and Scotney. There were also 34 at DBO on the 24<sup>th</sup>, 178 on the 25<sup>th</sup> and 39 on the 27<sup>th</sup>.

A second calendar year **Glaucous Gull** was seen at DBO from Mar 13<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup>, a third calendar year bird was seen there on the 16<sup>th</sup> and the second year bird was seen again from Mar 26<sup>th</sup>-30<sup>th</sup>.



*Iceland Gull by Peter Maton*

The juvenile **Iceland Gull** at Dover Harbour remained there until Apr 14<sup>th</sup> and the second calendar year bird at Dungeness was still present to the end of April and seen at Lade Bay on the Mar 17<sup>th</sup>. A bird was also reported from Singleton on Apr 6<sup>th</sup>.

A second calendar year **THAYER'S GULL** was seen at DBO on between Feb 15<sup>th</sup> and Mar 15<sup>th</sup>.

During March and April up to five **Caspian Gulls** were identified at DBO with single birds recorded from Dover Harbour, Dartford, Langdon Bay and Nethergong whilst one or two **Yellow-legged Gulls** were identified at DBO, Walmer Beach and Samphire Hoe.

Four **Roseate Terns** flew past DBO on Apr 28<sup>th</sup>.

The first three **Black Terns** of the year flew E past DBO on Apr 23<sup>rd</sup> after which single birds were recorded from DBO and Swanscombe. In addition, an impressive total of 84 birds flew past DBO on Apr 28<sup>th</sup>.

During March and April as many as 10 **Great Skuas** were seen at DBO with smaller numbers at Walmer Beach and Samphire Hoe.

The first two **Pomarine Skuas** of the spring flew past DBO on Apr 20<sup>th</sup> and three flew past Samphire Hoe on the 22<sup>nd</sup> with four at DBO and one at Mill Point on the 23<sup>rd</sup>. On the 24<sup>th</sup>, 29 birds flew past DBO with two seen at Sandwich Bay and on the next day there were single birds at DBO and Deal whilst on the 26<sup>th</sup> there were two at St Margarets Bay and one at Deal. Three also flew past DBO on the 27<sup>th</sup> and one on the 30<sup>th</sup> with one on the latter date at South Foreland.

After the first **Arctic Skua** of the spring was seen at DBO on Apr 2<sup>nd</sup> as many as 11 were recorded there during the rest of the month with one or two birds also seen at Samphire Hoe and Mill Point.

#### DOVES TO RING-NECKED PARAKEET

Single **Long-eared Owl** were seen at Sandwich Bay on Mar 19<sup>th</sup> and Apr 2<sup>nd</sup>, at Elmley on the Mar 31<sup>st</sup> and at Reculver Marshes on Apr 18<sup>th</sup>.

During March and April up to three **Short-eared Owls** were seen at Sandwich Bay, Elmley, Reculver Marshes, Cliffe Pools, Swanscombe Marshes, Oare Marshes, Harty Marshes, Northfleet, Dartford Marshes, Stodmarsh, Greenhithe, Foreness, Lympne, Samphire Hoe and Nickoll's Quarry.

A **Hoopoe** was seen at Stelling Minnis from Apr 27<sup>th</sup> to the end of the month and a **Wryneck** was seen at St Margarets-at-Cliffe on Apr 8<sup>th</sup>.



*Hoopoe by Peter Maton*

One or two **Merlins** were recorded from DBO, Sandwich Bay, Reculver, Willop Basin, South Foreland, Swalecliffe and Cooling.

A white phase, adult **GYR FALCON** was photographed and videoed on prey at Walmer Green on April 21<sup>st</sup>. If this bird is accepted by BBRC it will only be the second record for Kent, the first also a white phase bird recorded from Folkestone on a similar date of 28<sup>th</sup> April 1979.



*Raven by Russ Blackman*

During March and April up to 11 **Ravens** were recorded from Sissinghurst, Sandwich Bay, North Foreland, South Foreland, Westbere, Birling, Swalecliffe, Seasalter, Dover, Walmer, Burmarsh, St Mary's Bay, Tudeley Woods, Wouldham and Pett Dane.

Two "continental" **Coal Tits** were identified at Bockhill on Apr 21<sup>st</sup>.

In March, a **Woodlark** was trapped and ringed at DBO on the 4<sup>th</sup>, one was seen at South Foreland on the 5<sup>th</sup> and others were recorded from DBO on the 14<sup>th</sup>, flying N at Walmer on the 19<sup>th</sup> and at Worth Marshes on the 27<sup>th</sup>. One was also seen at Sandwich Bay on Apr 30<sup>th</sup>.

A **Shorelark** spent the day at North Foreland on Mar 29<sup>th</sup>.



*Red-rumped Swallow by Howard Vaughan*



A **Red-rumped Swallow** was reported from Dungeness on Apr 4<sup>th</sup> and another was reported from Swalecliffe on the 6<sup>th</sup> whilst there were two seen at Hoo St Werburgh on the 7<sup>th</sup> with at least one still there the next day. One seen at Westbere on Apr 13<sup>th</sup> succumbed to the cold weather and was taken into care but died on the 14<sup>th</sup>. Another bird was found at Dengemarsh on Apr 26<sup>th</sup>.

#### CETTI'S WARBLER TO WHEATEARS

A **Siberian Chiffchaff** was seen on Worth Marshes from Mar 18<sup>th</sup>-Apr 8<sup>th</sup>. Other birds were reported singing at Stodmarsh on Apr 17<sup>th</sup> and at Sandwich Bay on the 21<sup>st</sup>.

A **Wood Warbler** was seen at Scotney GPs on Apr 27<sup>th</sup>.

After the first **Grasshopper Warbler** of the year was heard at Reculver Marshes on Apr 8<sup>th</sup> three or four birds were seen and heard there during the rest of the month with birds also reported from Grove Ferry and Swanscombe Marshes.

A **Dartford Warbler** was seen at DBO on Mar 1<sup>st</sup> whilst another was seen intermittently at Swanscombe Marshes from Mar 7<sup>th</sup>-30<sup>th</sup>.

Up to four **Firecrests** were seen at DBO, Lade, Sandwich Bay, Reculver, Shuart, West Hythe, South Foreland and Nickoll's Quarry.



*Ring Ouzel by Mike Puxley*

After the first **Ring Ouzel** was seen at Foreness on Mar 30<sup>th</sup> up to seven birds were recorded from Reculver Marshes, Abbotscliffe, Margate, Lade, Aycliff, Langdon Bay, Sevenoaks WR, Samphire Hoe, Stodmarsh, Wraik Hill, Foreness, Shadoxhurst, Dungeness RSPB, Hothfield, Nethergong, Lympne, East Malling, Seasalter, Swalecliffe, South Foreland, Challock, Sandwich Bay and Elmley.

The **EYE-BROWED THRUSH** first seen in East Kent in January remained until Mar 3<sup>rd</sup>.

A male **Pied Flycatcher** was found at Singleton on Apr 5<sup>th</sup> and remained there until the 13<sup>th</sup>. In addition, on Apr 10<sup>th</sup>, three birds were found at North Foreland and there was one at Northdown Park whilst from the 13<sup>th</sup> to the 16<sup>th</sup> there was a male at Greatstone-on-Sea. A bird was also reported from Blean Woods on Apr 16<sup>th</sup> with a male seen at DBO on the 22<sup>nd</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> and another bird at Dover on the 28<sup>th</sup>.

During March and April up to nine **Black Redstarts** were recorded from DBO, Lade, Reculver, North Foreland, Foreness, Langdon, Samphire Hoe, Kingsdown, Church Hougham, Walmer, Cliftonville, Hadlow, Bockhill, Hythe, Dover, Conningbrook, Ramsgate, Staplehurst, East Malling, Collard's Lake, Hope Point, Cliffe Pools, Sevenoaks, Finberry, South Foreland, Horsmonden, Folkestone, Abbotscliffe, Pegwell Bay, Cheriton and Sandwich Bay.

#### DUNNOCK TO BUNTINGS

A **Richard's Pipit** was seen at Samphire Hoe on Apr 29<sup>th</sup>.



During March and April up to eight **Water Pipits** were recorded from Grove Ferry/Stodmarsh and Worth Marshes with one or two seen at Dungeness RSPB, Grain, Uplees, Swanscombe Marshes, West Hythe and Donkey Street.

During these two months up to 17 **Hawfinches** were seen at Pett Dane, Dover, Saltwood, Eastling, Cuxton, Shadoxhurst, West Kingsdown and Hawkhurst.

A **Twite** was reported from Graveney Marshes on Mar 20<sup>th</sup> whilst during March single **Crossbills** were seen at Reculver and South Foreland.

A **Serin** was reported flying E at Swanscombe Marshes on Apr 2<sup>nd</sup> and another flew over Abbotscliffe on Apr 19<sup>th</sup>.

During March as many as three **Lapland Buntings** were seen at South Foreland, Capstone Farm and Langdon Bay. One was also found at Worth Marshes on Apr 13<sup>th</sup>.



*Snow Bunting by Chris Hindle*

Two **Snow Buntings** were recorded from Capstone Farm CP on the Mar 1<sup>st</sup> and there were one or two recorded from Reculver Marshes until the last report of one there on Mar 29<sup>th</sup>.

**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](http://www.kentos.org.uk), KOSForum, Twitter and the RBA Hotline.

Records have been contributed by A. Appleton, R. Blackman, Bockhill Birders, Bough Beech (per A. Ford), E. Brown, N. Burt, G. Burton, F. Cackett, J. Cantelo, M. Casemore, J. Chantler, P. Chantler, D. Chesterman, G. Coultrip, K. Cutting, S. Davies, DBO (per D. Walker), A. Dunstan, K. Duvall, D. Eade, B. East, J. Elliott, D. Faulkener, Folkestone and Hythe Birds (per I. Roberts), Foreness Bird Group, C. Gibbard, R. Gomes, M. Gould, V. Green, J. Guiver, J. Headley, A. Hindle, C. Hindle, M. Hindle, M. Hollingworth, G. Honey, G. Howars, 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, C. Powell, K. Privett, M. Puxley, R. Rackliffe, B. Ring, M. Roser, K. Ross, B. Ryan, Samphire Hoe (per L.

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Please send records for this review to:

Chris Hindle at [christopherhindle@hotmail.com](mailto: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.**

## KOS Rarities 2021

**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.**

Black Brant (adult)	Reculver Marshes	March 14th-15th
Glossy Ibis	Haysden	intermittent to 22/3/21
Rough-legged Buzzard (juvenile)	Swale NNR/Conyer/Elmley	January 28th-Mar 5th
Iceland Gull (video)	Dover Harbour	Jan 6th-Apr 14th
Caspian Gull (first winter)	Burmarsh Road	February 19th
Caspian Gull (first winter)	Nethergong	March 6th
Caspian Gull	Dover Harbour	March 7th
Caspian Gull (first winter)	Dover Harbour	March 19th
2 Red-rumped Swallows	Hoo St Werburgh	April 7th one on 8th
Red-rumped Swallow (into care-died)	Westbere	April 13th
Red-rumped Swallow	Dengemarsh	April 26th
Dusky Warbler	Dungeness RSPB	Dec 11th 2020-Jan 4th
Dusky Warbler	Minster Marshes, Thanet	Dec 11th-Jan 29th
Richard's Pipit	Halstow Marshes	Dec 12th 2020-Jan 31st

## Fifty Years Ago. Pine Grosbeak



*Pine Grosbeak, by Archibald Thorburn ( PDI)*

A male seen near Maidstone on May 15th (CVS) was the first record since 1957 and only the third record in recent years.

KBR 1971  
Norman McCanch

## Eighty-nine Years ago



*Alpine Accentor by Archibald Thorburn (PDI)*

I thought you might like this, a note about Kent's first Alpine Accentor in British Birds vol 26 p 275:

#### ALPINE ACCENTOR SEEN IN KENT.

ON May 1st, 1932, at Leathercote Point, St. Margarets-at-Cliffe, I came across a bird which I identified as an Alpine Accentor (*Prunella collaris*). It remained for some considerable time in the same area around some small low-lying bushes on the cliff edge and I was able to watch it at close quarters. The points which seemed to strike me particularly about it were firstly, its only slight superficial resemblance to our Hedge-Sparrow (*P. modularis occidentalis*). As far as the size was concerned it was obviously a slightly larger bird, not very much so but distinctly more bulky, while its movements were considerably slower. In general coloration it was definitely brighter, the lightish throat was easily seen, as were also the white wing markings and the brighter brown flanks. The legs were definitely pinkish. It uttered a few notes, but I could not correctly give details of them in view of my general inability to describe accurately any of the less obvious bird notes.

G. E. TOOK.

In respect of the last sentence, I've checked Lars Svensson's description in the Collins Guide, and he says "On rising, gives muffled lark-like rolling calls, e.g. 'drrü drrü, drrip', 'tschirr'. May also utter stifled click like a chat". I think we can sympathise with Major Took.

Andrew Henderson