



Shag by Tracey Mantle

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Editorial

As I look from my desk, I can see the first hints of Spring; Lesser Celandines in flower around my re-vamped pond and the joy of a male Siskin on my feeders. In recent years early March has always produced a small passage of these delightful birds and they never disappoint. So far, we have not had any singing Chiffchaffs in the shelterbelt beyond the garden but it cannot be too long before they brighten the day. Even so, February brought a brief but intense cold snap with some respectable snow for a few days, just to remind us that winter still clings to the calendar. As for our recent viral challenge there appears to be some cause for optimism, but all those who tell me 'there is light at the end of the tunnel' have clearly never worked on a railway!!

Circumstance and personal issues have conspired to limit my birding of late, an experience shared by many others. Perhaps we can re-assess our priorities as little, for the lockdown has seen a significant increase in human footfall in the countryside and at reserves, and by no means all of it has been beneficial or in the best interests of the natural world. There is some hope that if things return to a version of normal much of this extra footfall will disappear, but I am not wholly optimistic on that score.

The most remarkable feature of the beginning of the year was the Prescence in the county of two potential 'Firsts for Kent' during January and February, for a while both at the same time. It is a pity that circumstances prevented the dissemination of this news, but I understand that in both cases there would have been some access issues and householder concern even without the current restrictions. Next time, perhaps!

I am particularly pleased to include contributions from Geoff Burton detailing an extraordinary twitch for an unexpected bird, and from Brendan Ryan describing the results of some focused local lockdown birding which throws light on some perhaps hidden aspects of our local winter bird communities.

Keep safe!
Good birding

Norman

News and announcements

Annual General Meeting

7th April 2021 7.30pm

It's that time of year again but sadly we won't be able to meet as usual in Maidstone. However we will hold the AGM via zoom on the 7th April. All members are welcome and indeed encouraged to attend. Many members will already have zoom installed on their computers or tablets but if you haven't you can download the zoom app for free.

A link to the meeting, along with supporting papers will be e mailed to members on 1st April. The meeting will elect new committee members to serve for the following year. The existing committee members have indicated that they are happy to continue but there remain two vacancies on the committee. We would like to hear from anyone interested in serving on the committee especially if they have experience in any of the following areas: financial management /accounting; IT and database management and Social Media and communications.

If you would like more information or to have an informal discussion about joining the committee please contact Chris Roome (Acting Chair) chrisroome105@icloud.com or Brendan Ryan (Secretary) brendan.ryan@yahoo.co.uk

Nominations for the committee should be received by 31st March 2021. There will be an opportunity to ask questions of the committee. If possible, these should be e mailed to the Honorary Secretary before the 31st March

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, but the advice is to stay local where possible and keep to one or two people.

Before undertaking any BTO survey away from your own house and garden please check the latest guidance at; www.bto.org/covid19.

Thanks,

Murray, Bob and Brian



The KOS Turtle Dove Survey 2021



The Kent Ornithological Survey is conducting a survey of Turtle Doves in Kent during 2021, in collaboration with the **RSPB/RBBP/Natural England and BTO**, who are conducting a national survey.

This popular and attractive summer migrant has decreased across the UK in recent times, with a particularly marked decline in the last 10 years. It is believed that the major factor contributing to the decline in the UK is the lack of suitable foraging habitat during the spring and summer months. Sadly, the Turtle Dove has now been added to the list of species monitored by the Rare Breeding Birds Panel (RBBP). A recent RBBP enquiry has revealed that Kent is now the top county for this species in the UK and as such we have a responsibility to try and make an accurate assessment of the Kent population.

The aim of the 2021 survey is to get volunteers to visit selected 1km squares across Kent and for them to record any Turtle Doves encountered. The visits need to be within the first two hours after sunrise and should be made on two different occasions during the breeding season which is May to July. Complete survey instructions and recording form, with the ability to download and print along with a map of the selected square, are given in links on the survey home page which also describes how to select a survey square. This is accessed here <http://kosturtledoves.birdsurvey.org.uk/>

Turtle Doves typically inhabit farmland areas and have a predilection for areas with a mix of arable farmland and broad-leaved woodland, particularly scrub and young woodland. This habitat, and surrounding farmland, is also likely to hold other species that are important in Kent such as Nightingale, Yellow Wagtail, Yellowhammer and Corn Bunting. The survey aims to gather records of these species as well as Turtle Dove, so making the best use of volunteer survey visits.

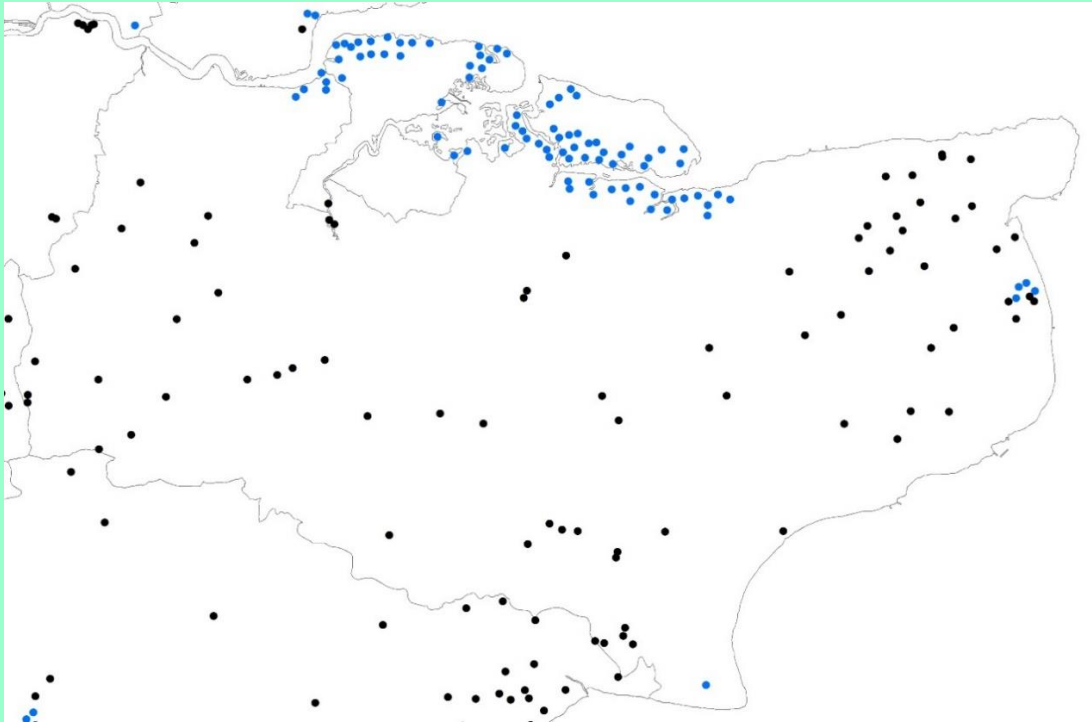


Breeding Waders of Wet Meadows Survey 2021

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

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

Look Out for Herons! – the Heronries Census

Now is the time to look out for herons.



The BTO heronry census dates back to 1928 and at more than 90 years is the longest running single species census in the world. In Kent, Grey Herons have been declining during the last ten years and we are not sure why. Looking at the 90 years of counts it is clear that heronries come and go. Maybe we have missed new heronries. So, if you see herons nesting away from the regular colonies at Northward Hill, Graveney, Swanscombe, Fordwich, Lydd, Lympne, Eccles Island, Bough Beech, Sevenoaks and Frittenden please let me know.

Another reason to look out for nesting herons is the chance of finding other heron species. Little Egret is now well established as a breeding species, but colonies can be surprisingly hard to find as they nest later in the season when trees are in leaf. Purple Heron nested at Dungeness in 2010 and apparently there are now more than 1,100 nests in the Netherlands. Cattle Egret were confirmed breeding in Kent in 2019 and increasing numbers are recorded in the county throughout the year. This winter has seen Great White Egret throughout Kent. There is a good chance that Cattle Egret will become an established nester and a possibility that they will be joined by Great White Egret and Purple Heron before the end of the decade.

If you see signs of any of these rarer herons breeding, please do not publicise it but report it, in confidence, either to me as the Kent RBBP representative and Regional Organiser of the Heronry Census, or Barry Wright as the County Recorder.

Brian Watmough
Brianrwat@yahoo.co.uk.

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

In 2018 a national survey was carried out of all seabird species nesting in “natural” locations. In Kent this covered all our breeding Gull species (Herring, LBB, Common, Black-headed and Mediterranean), Terns (Sandwich, Common and Little), plus Fulmar and Cormorant. In 2019 the survey was extended to cover our urban nesting Gulls, which comprise the large numbers of Herring and Lesser Black-backed Gulls nesting on the roofs of our coastal towns and inland, particularly on factory roofs in industrial estates.

Full details of the Seabird Count can be found at <http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/page-7413>. Please also refer to the March 2019 Newsletter for further background.

The final year of the urban Gull survey was due to be 2020, but fieldwork was curtailed due to the Corona Virus pandemic. It has been agreed that 2021 will now be the final year of the survey and the aim is to complete the work started in 2019, subject to Covid-19 restrictions. I will be contacting local organisers who previously helped, to spread the word and enlist volunteers to assist in their areas. There are two arms to the survey in Kent: a survey of 'repeat sites', which are those where Gulls were surveyed during the last seabird census, and a survey of randomly selected squares, aimed to assess the expansion of breeding ranges since the last census.

Repeat (and potentially new) Sites

In 2019 coverage was achieved for Medway Towns, Maidstone, Faversham, Canterbury, Seasalter-Herne Bay, Thanet, Kingsdown-Dover Docks, Samphire Hoe-Hythe and Dymchurch-Dungeness. Remaining areas to that need to be surveyed in 2021 are Dartford-Gravesend, Sittingbourne, Sheerness, Ashford and Dover. In essence, the survey of repeat sites will involve counting birds (AON – Apparently Occupied Nest; AOT – Apparently Occupied Territory or IND – count of individual adults) from suitable vantage points.



Random Square Survey

The random square survey involves making ground-based counts as above. Obviously, it may not be possible to determine counts of AON from ground level and so assessments will largely be AOT and more likely IND. Only single visits are required but volunteers may wish to make repeat visits to confirm or otherwise previous observations. There are 52 squares remaining that need to be covered which have a reasonable chance of holding breeding Gulls, and some will certainly do so ([see list of squares below](#)). If people could look through the list and plan a couple of late spring/early summer drives or bike rides to take in a couple of squares near to them, that would greatly help to complete the coverage.

1KM SQ	LOCATION	1KM SQ	LOCATION
TQ5174	Crayford	TR3370	Westbrook (Margate)
TQ5478	Rainham (Essex)	TR3670	Cliftonville
TQ5472	Dartford	TR3967	Broadstairs
TQ5372	Dartford	TR3863	Ramsgate
TQ5272	Dartford	TR3664	Pegwell
TQ6175	Northfleet	TR3259	Sandwich
TQ6275	Northfleet	TR3754	Deal
TQ6173	Northfleet	TR3651	Deal
TQ6473	Gravesend	TR3144	Whitfield
TQ6272	Gravesend	TR2943	Whitfield
TQ5972	Bean	TR3041	Dover
TQ6176	Swanscombe	TR2140	Hawkinge
TQ7268	Strood	TR0041	Asford
TQ7867	Gillingham	TR0241	Ashford
TQ7058	Larkfield	TR0044	Ashford
TQ6960	Snodland	TR0341	Ashford
TQ7060	Leybourne/New Hythe	TR0043	Ashford
TQ9063	Sittingbourne	TQ6655	Kings Hill (West Malling)
TQ9165	Sittingbourne	TQ6744	Paddock Wood
TQ9265	Sittingbourne	TQ5946	Tonbridge
TQ9075	Sheerness	TQ5846	Tonbridge
TQ9472	Minster (Sheppey)	TQ5947	Tonbridge
TQ9961	Oare	TQ5842	Southborough
TR0864	Seasalter	TQ5942	Southborough
TR1066	Whitstable	TQ5739	Tunbridge Wells
TR1866	Herne	TQ5938	Tunbridge Wells

For both surveys the recording period is end-April to mid-June (although later records are acceptable if young haven't fledged).

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

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 <http://rbbp.org.uk/>

3. Submit your records to BirdTrack (www.birdtrack.net), there is the ability to mark records as sensitive, and there is a filter so that records of rare and scarce birds will not be shown online. Your observations will be secure.
4. You can e-mail in confidence the county recorder Barry Wright umbrellabirds66@gmail.com or the county RBBP coordinator Brian Watmough brianrwat@yahoo.co.uk.

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

In Kent there are between 20 and 25 species for which KOS collates the records and submits to the national RBBP. This monitoring is based on records submitted to KOS database, from BTO surveys especially BirdTrack and Heronries Census, from RSPB reserve staff and from a network of observers with a special interest in a particular species. Monitoring rare birds is inherently challenging. The table 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.

RBPP SPECIES	KENT 2018	KENT ATLAS 2008-13	UK POPULATION
Eurasian Bittern	7	4	191
Black-necked Grebe	1	0-10	55
Wigeon	3	0-10	200
Pintail	2	0-5	27
Garganey	6	10-20	105
Shoveler	102	50-100	1100
Common Pochard	94	150-200	720
Little Egret	149	100-150	1100
Black-winged Stilt	1	-	3
Avocet	240	150-300	1950
Little Ringed Plover	13	10-15	1250
Little Tern	11	0-10	1450
Mediterranean Gull	161	300-500	1200
Common Quail	2	0-50	355
Spotted Crake	0	-	27
Honey Buzzard	4	0-2	33-69
Marsh Harrier	41	80-100	590-695
Peregrine Falcon	20	30-40	1750
Hobby	34	250-300	2050
Turtle Dove	158	2000-3000	3600
Long-eared Owl	7	5-10	1800-6000
Short-eared Owl	3	0-5	620-2200
Lesser Spotted Woodpecker	29	150-200	600-1000
Marsh Warbler	3	0-2	8
Savis Warbler	0	0-1	5
Black Redstart	10	2-15	58
Bearded Tit	50	100-500	695
Woodlark	1	2-10	2300
Hawfinch	5	50-70	500-1000

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

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

APPEAL FOR 2020 BREEDING RECORDS

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

BTO RBBP Online event 24th March 2021

Monitoring rare breeding birds in the UK, by Dr Mark Eaton

The Rare Breeding Birds Panel was established in 1972 as independent body to collate data and report on the status of the country's rarest breeding birds. Mark will give an overview of the work of the RBBP, share some of its most recent findings on rare breeding birds across the UK and in southeast England in particular, and show how birdwatchers can help the work of the Panel.

This talk is a joint event organised by the RBBP with the Hampshire, Kent and Sussex Ornithological Societies and the Surrey Bird Club

To participate you need to register for the event in advance, go to the Eventbrite site using the link below:

[Monitoring rare breeding birds in the UK, by Dr Mark Eaton \(eventbrite.co.uk\)](https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/monitoring-rare-breeding-birds-in-the-uk-by-dr-mark-eaton)

Surveys

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

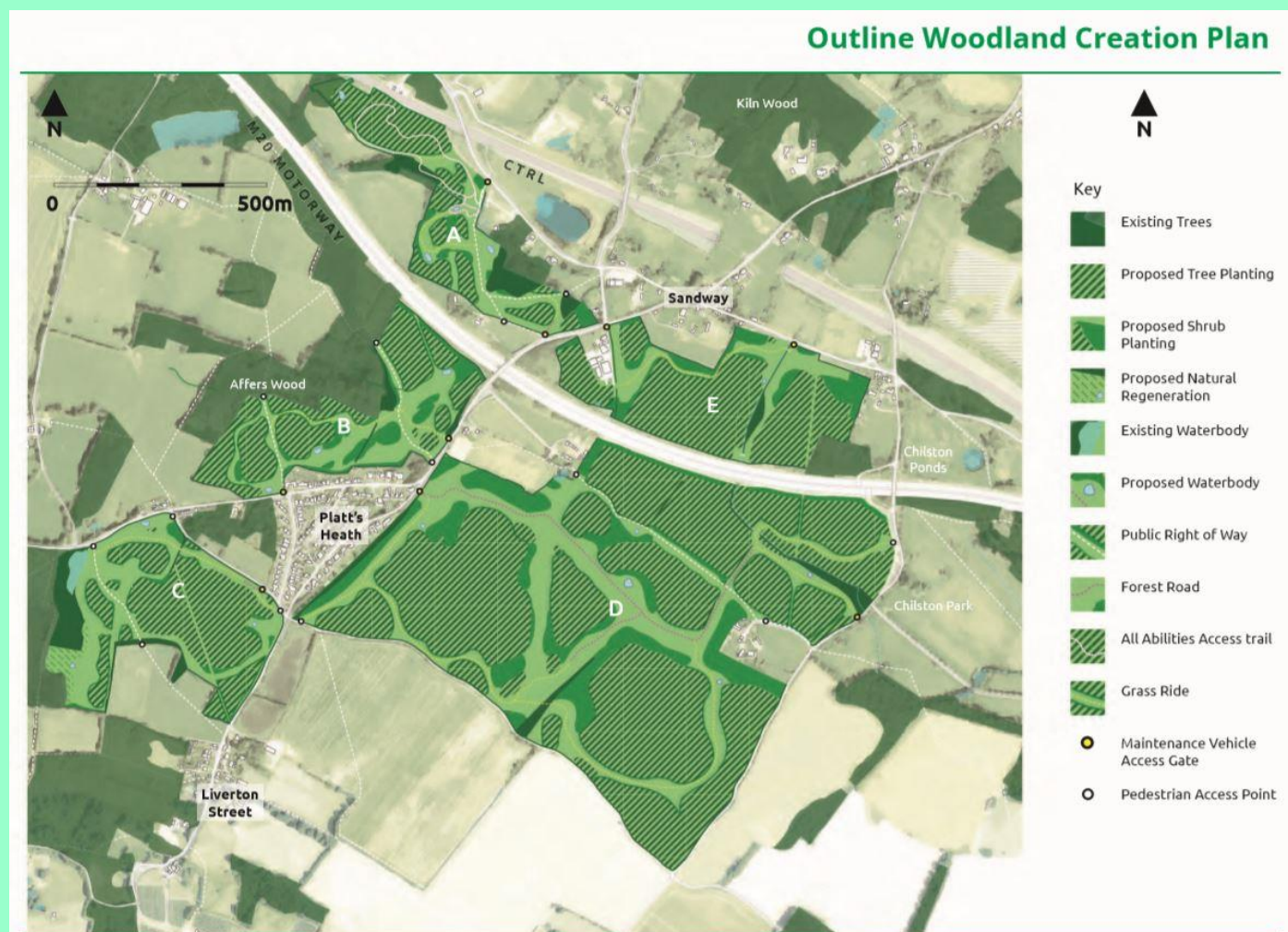
Pleasant Forest – a new Kent woodland

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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 users' personal data was potentially vulnerable, we sought advice from the Information Commissioner (the regulator of GDPR) and as a result decided that the safest option was to disable access to the database. The sightings database is a popular way for people to report their sightings to the Society. These sightings are very important to us and help build a picture of the county's avifauna which is reported annually in the Kent Bird Report. We have already commissioned work to create a new reporting tool but this could take some time develop and put in place.

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

We apologise for the inconvenience that this may cause observers.

Brendan Ryan (Honorary Secretary KOS)

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

Norman McCanch (Editor) : nvmccanch@hotmail.com

EVENTS AT SANDWICH BAY BIRD OBSERVATORY

The observatory runs a regular series of talks and presentations which, since Corona virus, have been made available on-line via Zoom. Please see the link below to see what is available. <https://www.tickettailor.com/events/sandwichbaybirdobservatory/>.

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

Lockdown Garden Rarities

Lockdown birding has encouraged many people to focus more closely on the birds visiting their gardens. Recent spells of wintery weather brought interesting birds such as Snipe and Woodcock into gardens, while many people are ever watchful in the hope of Waxwings brightening their days.

This winter we saw an extreme manifestation of this close focus on the garden with the arrival of two potential firsts for Kent in rural gardens almost simultaneously. The first was a **White-throated Sparrow** (*Zonotrichia albicollis*) photographed by a novice birder in a garden south west of Ashford. It may not have stayed long, as reports suggest it may have relocated to a site in Sussex. The second of these was a first winter **Eye-browed thrush** (*Turdus obscurus*) which arrived in a garden in rural East Kent in mid-January and remained into February.



White-throated Sparrow, Kent 2021



Eye-browed Thrush, Kent 2021

Circumstances meant that neither bird was accessible to visiting birders; Covid restrictions clearly precluded any travelling or gatherings of birders, while rural localities and a lack of parking and access made it unlikely that crowds could be accommodated even under more normal conditions. In addition, families involved were working from home and/or home-schooling children, with limited access to gardens to provide views of the birds. Sadly, for most of us, these will be 'the ones that got away'!

In both cases some photographic evidence is available to support the identification. In the case of the sparrow these are good 'record shots', but the householder playing host to the thrush produced some excellent, almost mouth-watering images which allow both age and possibly gender determination.

These are the stuff of dreams; indeed, I have spent the past twenty-five years searching through thrush flocks in winter orchards with no luck so far. Perhaps this will spur me on to greater efforts.

Norman McCanch

Mistle Thrush at Miramichi

It was a Sunday afternoon (10th December 2017) and, when I checked my e-mails, the name Peter Gadd appeared. A reminder that we had met in 2013. Peter lives in New Brunswick on the eastern seaboard in Canada but his sister, Jenny, lived in our village. Peter and his wife Deana were visiting his sister and as they are both keen birders, it was arranged that I should take them to Oare Marshes.

In his e-mail Peter explained:

“attached are three photos of a bird that was in our garden yesterday. It is causing quite a stir. Others have determined it is either a Song Thrush or a Mistle Thrush. The former has only been reported in North America once and the latter never. I am wondering what your thoughts are. I believe these two are quite common in Europe. Quite a few people are trying to make the same determination.”



Mistle Thrush – Peter Gadd

There was no doubt it was a Mistle Thrush!

With the identity confirmed, Peter promptly released the news to an unsuspecting, and then shocked, Canadian and North American birding community. Local birders, birders from the rest of Canada and from all over the United States were to gravitate to this somewhat remote, and often winterish, corner of their Continent. Peter could surely not have envisaged the extent to which this bird was to play a central role in his life for the next three months (it was last definitely seen on 21st March 2018). In addition to daily, even hourly, updates as to the sightings of the bird and exact locations, there were weather warnings, travel advice, even “moose” warnings. Peter has shown me many of the hundreds of e-mails he received from birders. They follow a pattern; is it still there, where exactly will it be at what time, can you keep me informed, what is the weather likely to be, which route should I take, is the crop of berries sufficient? This was then followed by excited confirmation that the bird had been seen and effusive thanks for the kindness and hospitality of the Gadds.

The weather in the winter in Miramichi seems to be very variable and to include storms, rain and severe temperatures. On one day it was commented that temperatures were down to -22 degrees C (-31 degrees with the windchill factor). It is interesting to note that Miramichi is further south than Canterbury but, of course, has no Gulf Stream. The Gadds hospitality at times included the provision of umbrellas and hand warmers to waiting birders. A local hotel offered discount rates for those on the hunt for the Mistle Thrush. Birders were surprised to find that the US border guards new of the bird.

Amongst the vanguard was Yve Morrell, a birder from Florida who was nearing the end of a record-breaking “Big Year” in which she saw 817 species in the ABA area (includes all of North America and Hawaii). I will leave her to describe the adventure as recounted on her blog.

"Have you ever gone on a chase that was so ridiculous that if you told your "normal" friends about it, they would think you were completely insane? The chase for the Mistle Thrush was one of those.

If you recall, I was in the desert in Arizona on Sunday morning chasing the Nutting's Flycatcher, when the alerts started coming in rapidly that the Mistle Thrush—a European bird that had appeared in New Brunswick and was a first sighting for the ABA Region, was still being seen at the home of Peter and Deana Gadd, the homeowners who found it in their back yard. I was in the middle of a very difficult chase and still had to drive 4 hours to an airport and try to find a flight to a remote area if I even wanted to chase this new rarity. After many permutations, I decided to fly 2300 miles to Boston and rent a car and drive the rest of the way. I caught a red-eye (a red-eye flight is a flight scheduled to depart at night and arrive the next morning) on Monday night which put me in Boston at 6:30 a.m. on Tuesday. I was joined at the airport by a local Boston area birder, Steve Moore. Steve was crazy enough to drive the 550 miles to New Brunswick with me, a complete stranger.*

We got on the road with the anxiety that precedes any chase. The first storm of the season was predicted for the Miramichi area, in New Brunswick. Snow started falling in New Hampshire. By the time we were in Maine, it was hard to see the lines on the road or the cars 50 feet in front of us. As soon as we crossed the border into Canada, our rental car started having issues. We couldn't go above 40 and the closest Enterprise was 100 miles away and there was nothing but boreal forest around. Driving those 100 miles at 30-35 mph was a white-knuckle experience I will never forget. The first Enterprise dealership took our car to the mechanic while we waited, and supposedly fixed the problem. We got back on the highway and the problem was even worse! We had to somehow drive another 60 miles to the next town and arrive before Enterprise closed. After much haggling, they gave us a second car. At this point, the back roads were pretty rough and we were basically alone out there. A trip that should have taken about 9 hours, took us 13.

I was so tired when we arrived that I forgot to even turn the heat on in my room. We woke to a dreary, rainy day and headed to the Gadds, the homeowners who found this precious bird and opened up their property to the world. The local news had already picked up the story of this rarity and over 100 birders had already visited in the previous days, including other Big Year birders. We were a slim crew, in the pouring rain, waiting for the bird to appear. Besides Steve and I, there was a couple from Florida that I knew by name only, the Gadds and a few local birders. An hour later, we were rewarded when the bird flew into a Spruce. Shortly thereafter, it moved to the Mountain Ash where it has been feeding on the abundant berries since it arrived. Deana Gadd brought out umbrellas for all of us. It was such a kind gesture and I think I would have frozen without it. I was already soaked but the sight of this remarkable visitor warmed me right up. We all had great looks!

Even though we had an 1100 mile round-trip in 24 hours, the ride home felt amazing. Steve and I had been through hell to get his lifetime #811 in the ABA Region and ironically, my #812 for the year including Hawaii (756 in the old ABA Region). What a beauty of a bird too. We were smiling all the way back to Boston."

I calculated that the bird was closer to Kent than it was to the deserts of Arizona!

In total, Peter and Deana logged 540 visitors, and a few may have been missed. There were 90 from other Canadian provinces and 140 from 28 US states. Very few dipped!

Where might this bird have come from? British Mistle Thrushes are predominantly sedentary. 98% of recoveries of British ringed birds have been within the British Isles. However, the NE European and central Asian populations desert their breeding grounds in winter (for obvious reasons). So, it is more likely that the Miramichi bird came from these migratory populations. We might look to Iceland for an indication of what is going on. There had been a total of 46 records of Mistle Thrush (up to 2006), mostly in the SE of the country and predominantly in late Autumn (October and November).

Perhaps ironically, this legend of a bird had chosen, as its wintering quarters, an area probably similar in habitat and weather to that which it would have experienced if it had not left its natal grounds. Fieldfare and Redwing have both been recorded in New Brunswick whilst the first Song Thrush for North America was seen in Quebec in 2006. Another was found in Alaska last October.

It is interesting to hear mention of the bit players in this drama. There was concern expressed about the possibility of local Cooper's or Sharp-shinned Hawks being a threat to the thrush, concern about competition for the food supply from Bohemian Waxwings (a flock of 441 was counted on one occasion), American Robins and our own dear European Starlings. And an honorary mention goes of a Pileated Woodpecker in the same tree.

After the thrush departed, Peter and Deana Gadd reflected on their experience "a very rewarding time for both of us and we don't wish we had done anything differently. It was a wonderful opportunity for us to meet so many interesting and pleasant fellow birders from far and wide". With more hyperbole, one satisfied visitor opined "Thank you Mr Gadd, you are an angel sent to keep watch on that bird".

Geoff Burton

Water treatment works: A haven for insectivorous birds in cold weather.



Brendan Ryan

Chiffchaff by Brendan Ryan

I recall reading an article many years ago in *British Birds* about wintering Chiffchaffs at water treatment works in Cornwall. Since then and with the prospect of finding a wintering Yellow-browed Warbler or Siberian Chiffchaff, checking local sewage works has always been on my “to do list” but somehow I never seem to get round to it. This year with its associated foreign and local travel restrictions has created new opportunities for me to explore new sites closer to home.

In recent months I visited local water treatment works along the Stour Valley at Wye, Chartham, Newnham Valley, Westbere and Minster. I also visited the works at Herne Bay but couldn't find a way to view the works or their surroundings, although I did flush four Woodcock while attempting to find a viewing point. A Yellow-browed Warbler had spent at least a week at the Wye treatment works in the late autumn and so this was my starting point and I made a couple of visits in the early part of winter. Sadly the warbler had not stayed on and I was never able to find more than a single Chiffchaff on subsequent visits.

Then, as the weather turned cold, I was alerted by fellow Canterbury birder John Cantelo to a concentration of Grey Wagtails at a small treatment works at Chartham. This is an area that I had occasionally birded during lockdown one, but I wasn't even aware that the works even existed. I visited the site with John and encountered an amazing 24 Grey Wagtails feeding on the filter beds along with 53 Pied Wagtails. The surrounding bushes held four Chiffchaffs and two Firecrests.



Grey Wagtail by Brendan Ryan

Knowing from an informal survey I had done during lockdown one that the area along the Stour Valley around Canterbury supported at least 14 pairs of breeding Grey Wagtails, I set about visiting all the other local treatment works in the valley in the next few days to see if they also held Grey Wagtails. This coincided with the onset of the snow and freezing conditions. The table provides a summary of the peak counts seen during these visits.

	Grey Wagtail	Pied Wagtail	Meadow Pipit	Chiffchaff	Reed Bunting	Other notable sightings in surrounding area
Wye	2	6	2	1	2	Jack Snipe Hen Harrier
Chatham	24	53	24	4		Firecrest (2)
Westbere	2	5	2	3	4	Green Sandpiper
Newnham Valley	2	21	18	22	3	Green Sandpiper (2)
Minster	1	20		5	4	Firecrest. Dusky Warbler

Apart from Minster where it is not possible to view inside the works, the counts shown mostly refer to birds feeding on the filter beds during the cold weather.

I only visited Minster during the early part of the winter as the lockdown restrictions put it outside what could be considered local. It is interesting that the Dusky Warbler that was over wintering at the site was reported to have disappeared with the onset of the cold weather. I suspect that along with the local Chiffchaffs, it simply moved onto the filter beds to feed.



Dusky Warbler Minster Sewage Works- Brendan Ryan

Dusky Warbler by Brendan Ryan

As well as the species highlighted in the table, other species seen feeding on the filter beds during the cold weather including several Robins, Song Thrushes, Blackbirds, Wrens, Dunnocks and Chaffinches. I visited the Newnham Valley site on three occasions between 11th & 14th February during the period of freezing temperatures and snow and saw 19, 14 & 22 Chiffchaffs on the respective visits. I returned to the site two days after the thaw and not a single Chiffchaff remained. Presumably they had returned to their preferred winter habitat of willow in the nearby Great and Little Stour Valleys.

One of the main problems with birding at water treatment works is that there is no access to these sites and one is usually restricted to staring through gaps in the fence. Occasionally the gates are open when an operative is on site and there is an opportunity to sneak in for a better view but there is the associated risk of being thrown out or even worse being locked in! These sites are surrounded by fences that would keep out even the most determined birder. The old style sewage farms had pretty much been phased out by the time I started birding and their loss was much lamented by the older generation of birders. Places like Wisbech and Perry Oaks were part of the folklore of birding at the time. In the same way that these traditional works were phased out, the treatment works with open filter beds with which we are now familiar, have an uncertain future. A number of smaller local works have been abandoned. I visited one marked on the OS map at Hoath only to find that it was long gone and had reverted to scrub. While local plants are disappearing, larger plants are being modernised using activated sludge processing, doing away with traditional clinker filter beds. So make the most of these threatened habits while they remain and check your local sewage works in the next cold snap.



Newnham Valley water treatment works

Brendan Ryan

RUDDY SHELDUCKS IN KENT



wikicommons

The British Ornithologists' Union's Records Committee (BOURC) is currently reviewing the status of Ruddy Shelduck *Tadorna ferruginea* on the British List. Ruddy Shelduck is currently in Categories B, D, and E of the British List but is potentially also occurring in Britain as a vagrant from established naturalised populations on the near continent and must therefore be treated as a candidate for Category C5 (vagrant naturalised species from outside Britain). More information on the BOURC request is at

<https://bou.org.uk/british-list/recent-announcements/ruddy-shelduck-request-for-records/>

BOURC is gathering records of Ruddy Shelduck in Britain to aid the review and to help determine whether a change of category for this species is justified. Specifically they want records for 1994 (a year in which there was a clear movement of this species within northern Europe), and in all years between 1999 and 2020 inclusive, including proven or suspected escapes, known releases, and any records of breeding in Britain.

KOS has taken the opportunity of this review to collate all records (not just in the specified years) of the species in Kent, and including records of birds believed to be hybrids or closely related species such as South African (Cape) Shelduck *Tadorna cana*. This article summarises what we know about the occurrence of Ruddy Shelducks and similar species in Kent. Note that we have accepted the identification of birds as reported, but cannot guarantee that some records are allocated to one species when they were really another, or hybrid!

We are seeking any records that have not previously been submitted, and corrections to our list. A list of Kent records of Ruddy Shelduck (excluding hybrids and other species) has already been posted on the KOS Facebook page, and an updated list of Kent records of Ruddy Shelduck plus hybrids and other species can be found at

[Ruddy-Shelduck-records-in-Kent.pdf \(kentos.org.uk\)](#)

Please email details of additions or corrections to the County Recorder
Barry Wright at umbrellabirds66@gmail.com

Historical records

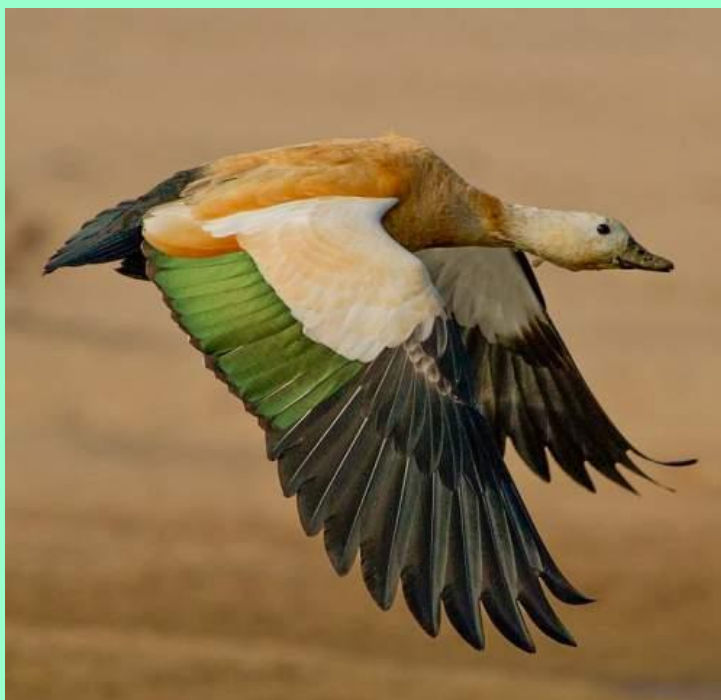
The old books on the Birds of Kent, by N F Ticehurst in 1909 and J M Harrison in 1953, contain nine records – but over half of these no longer are included on the Kent list, because they were included in the now discredited Hastings

Rarities, or because they were in that part of Kent (The Midrips and Jury's Gap) transferred to Sussex over one hundred years ago (the latter category ignored here).

The first acceptable record for Kent is of one that was shot at Newenden on a date in April 1885, though another shot somewhere in Kent (and probably in the North Kent marshes) around the turn of the century may have been only a few years later. The date of Newenden bird preceded the period (1895-1954) analysed for Hastings Rarities, but it was handled by the taxidermist George Bristow (associated with many of the discredited records). One supposedly shot near Cranbrook in March 1903 is listed among the Hastings Rarities. Two further historic records were a female shot in the North Kent marshes on 17th August 1943 and an adult male present (and the first not to be shot) at Cliffe for a month from 30th April 1950.

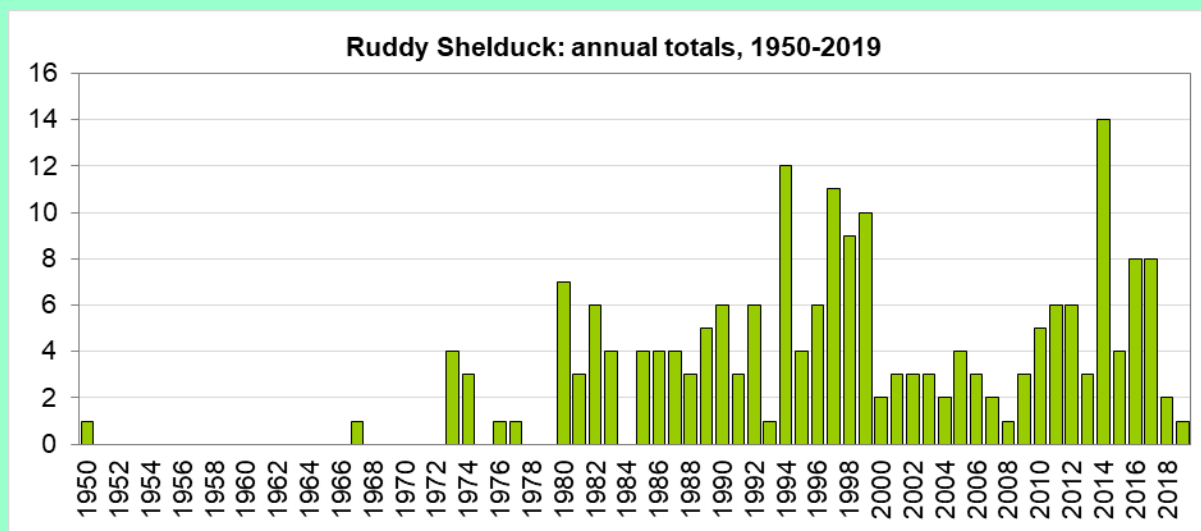
Then as now, there was uncertainty over the status of these birds. Ticehurst, for example, says "although the Ruddy Shelduck is frequently imported and kept in a state of semi-captivity in this country, and some of these birds may from time to time escape and get shot, there is no doubt that the species has also occurred as a genuine migrant". He goes on to say that it's up to the reader to decide whether to accept any individual or not, but contends that most likely as migrants are those "taken generally in autumn or early winter, after an especially hot and dry summer on the Continent".

Post 1950 records



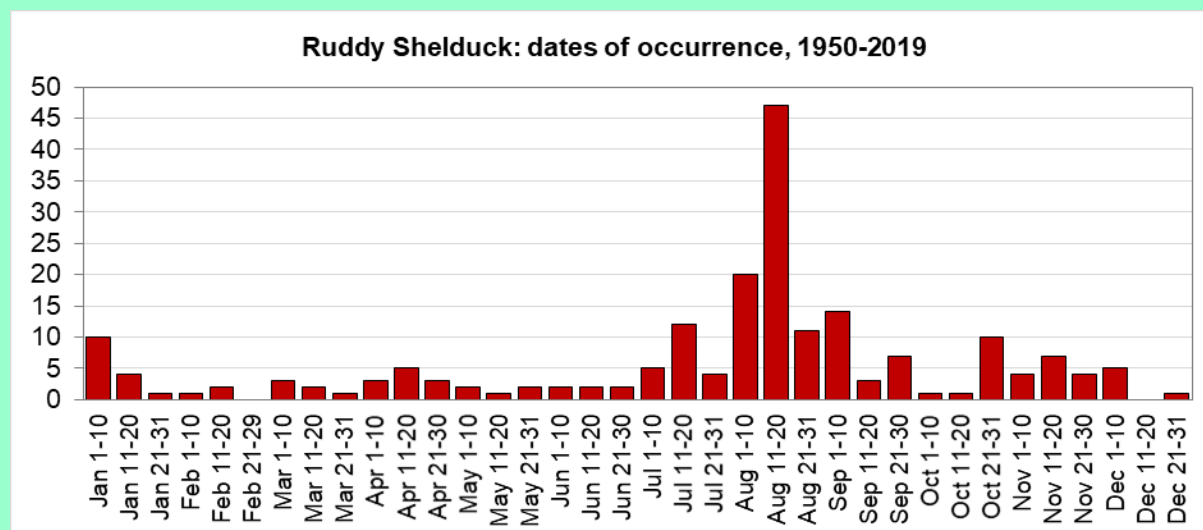
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The first record of the recent era was of a female seen at Swanscombe Marsh on 28th April 1967, with presumably the same bird seen at Chetney, Stoke and High Halstow over the next month. They were reported more frequently during the 1970s, and became all but annual from 1980 (see the first chart). The average annual total during the thirty years 1990-2019 was 5.1.



The majority of birds are seen as singletons or in small groups. There have been only a few flocks of more than five, the largest being seven at Sandwich Bay on 14th August 1980, seven at Cliffe and Chetney on 16th and 31st August 1997, and nine at Scotney Court GP on 18th August 2014.

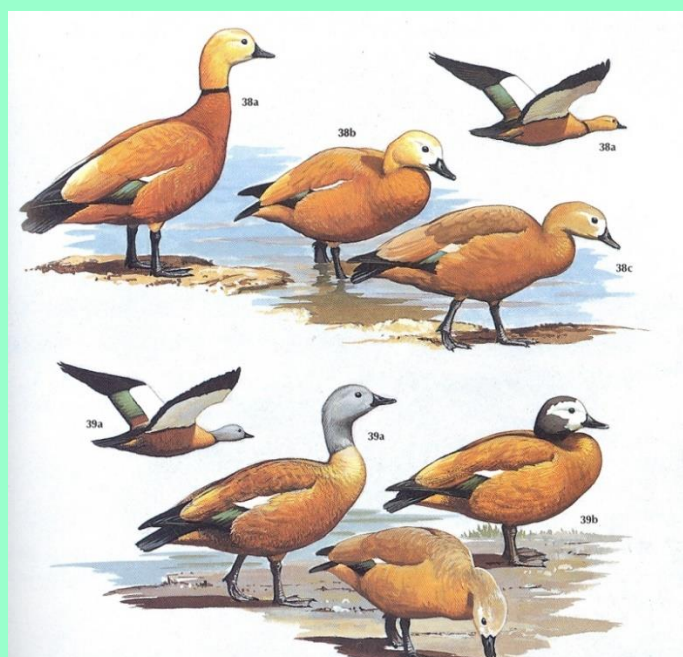
The coincidence of the dates of the larger flocks is obvious, and indeed this is apparent in the seasonal pattern of occurrence (based on first recorded dates when birds stayed for a period) shown in the second chart. The marked spike for the ten day period in the middle of August accounts for 23% of all individuals, and August as a whole accounts for 39% of birds.



The predominance of August arrivals accords with post-breeding dispersal – but from where? A widespread assumption now is that the large feral population in the Low Countries is the origin of many seen here, rather than the far more distant range of the natural population in south-east Europe and beyond. No doubt in due course we shall hear the outcome of the BOURC deliberations on this matter.

Ruddy Shelducks have been seen on wetlands throughout Kent, but almost 50% have occurred in the North Kent marshes. Between 15% and 19% have appeared in each of three other broad zones: the east Kent lowlands, Dungeness and Romney Marsh, and the rest of the county. This distribution of occurrence differs from that of other exotic Shelduck records.

Other species and hybrids



Ruddy Shelduck (above) Cape Shelduck (below)

Illustrations by Hilary Burn, from Helm guide Wildfowl



Australian Shelduck (above) New Zealand Shelduck (below)

There are (or were) six species in the genus *Tadorna*. In addition to our native Common Shelduck *Tadorna tadorna* and the Ruddy Shelduck, there are the South African (formerly Cape) Shelduck *T. cana*, Australian Shelduck *T. tadornoides*, Paradise (formerly New Zealand) Shelduck *T. variegata*, and Crested Shelduck *T. cristata*. Good luck with getting the last one on your list: it's been extinct for a century.

Half of exotic Shelducks, other than Ruddy, reported in Kent have been South African Shelduck. One of those was shot in east Kent in 1944, and more seen since 1971, with a grand total of 31 by the end of 2019. They have included a flock of nine at Bough Beech reservoir on 26th July 1977 and four on Dungeness RSPB Reserve on 14th September 2005.

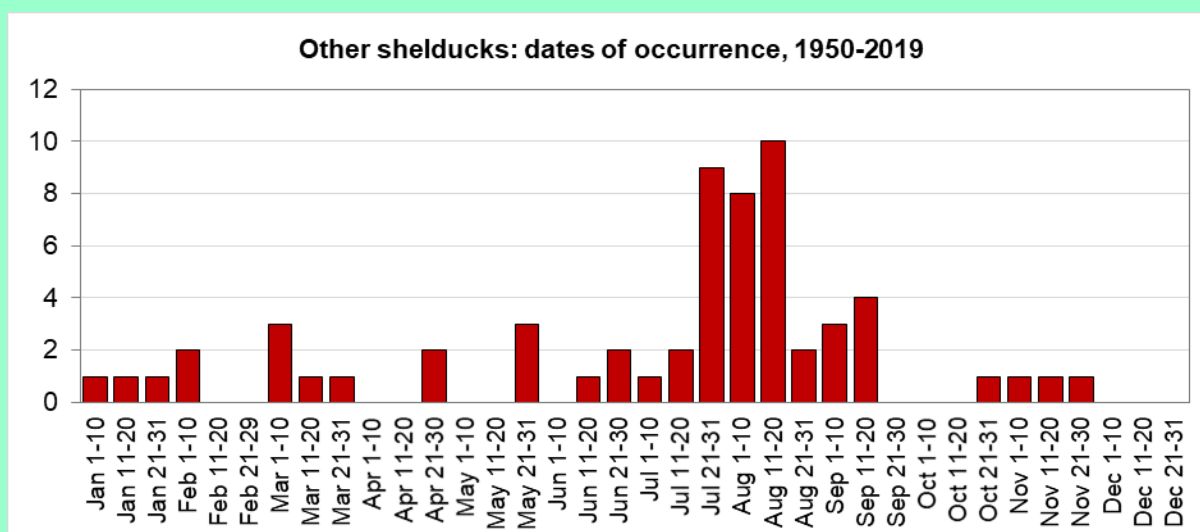
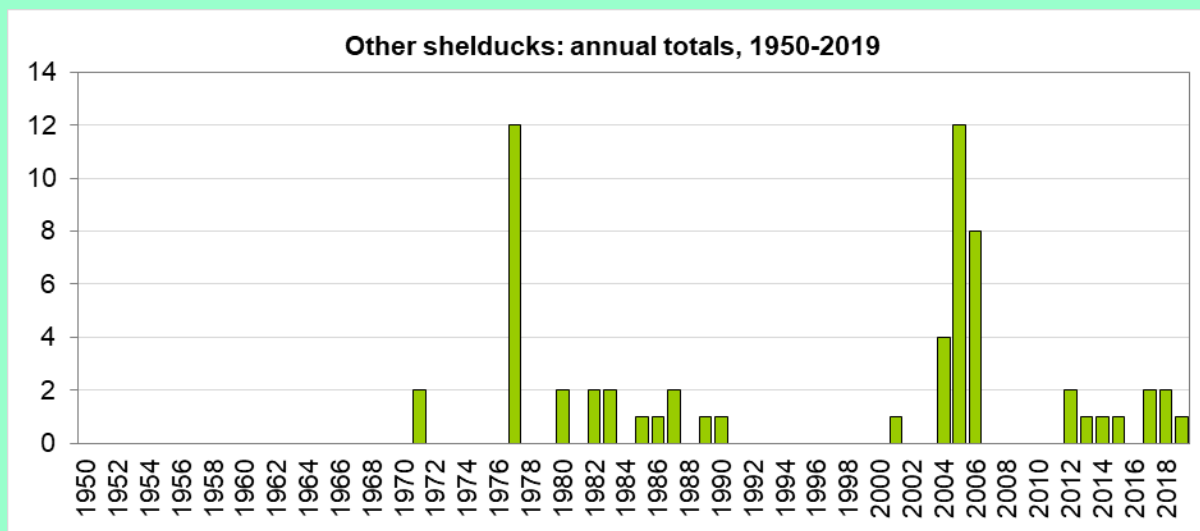


Cape Shelduck, female Grove Ferry, Kent August 2004 by Norman McCanch

Three birds have been reported as “Australian or Paradise Shelduck” – one at Sevenoaks on 4th-5th July 1986 and two at Westbere on 4th March 1987. The remaining exotics have been reported as hybrids, most as Common Shelduck x Ruddy Shelduck, but one as Ruddy Shelduck x South African Shelduck and one as Ruddy Shelduck x unknown species. The Common x Ruddy records have included eight juveniles seen at the Dungeness pits on 14th August 2005, with seven of unspecified age at the same place on 6th-7th August 2006.

As mentioned above, and partly a result of the two records of flocks at Dungeness, the distribution of non-Ruddy records differs from that of Ruddy Shelduck. The combined list of other species & hybrids comprises 62 individuals. Of those, 37% were at Dungeness or nearby, 16% in the east Kent lowlands, 13% in north Kent and 34% elsewhere in the county.

The final two charts show the annual totals and seasonal pattern of these other Shelducks, again with all records lumped together. As can be seen, the broad patterns are broadly similar to those for Ruddy Shelduck, with again a marked peak in late summer/early autumn.



To conclude, we'll just repeat the request to have a look at the existing Kent records at

[Ruddy-Shelduck-records-in-Kent.pdf \(kentos.org.uk\)](https://kentos.org.uk/Ruddy-Shelduck-records-in-Kent.pdf)

Please email details of additions or corrections to the County Recorder
Barry Wright at umbrellabirds66@gmail.com

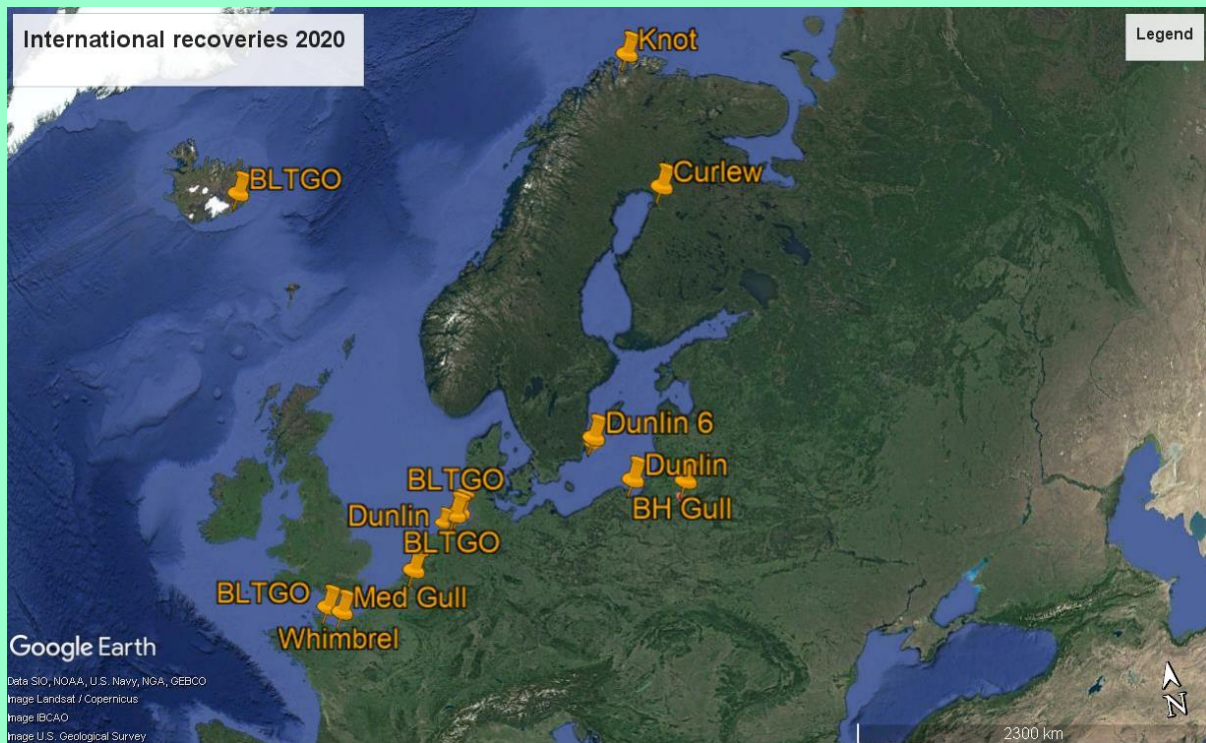
Andrew Henderson and KOS Editorial & Records Committee

SWALE WADERS 2020

This report summarises ringing recoveries in 2020 of birds ringed by the Swale Wader Group. Although COVID-19 restrictions limited activities we were still able to do some ringing whilst complying with legislation and guidelines. For more information, please visit swalewaders.co.uk

The map shows international encounters or waders ringed on the Swale and reported in 2020. Of particular note are a remarkable record of six Swale ringed Dunlin which were recaptured during a three week period between 12 and 29 July at Ottenby in Sweden. The Ottenby website gives an indication of where the birds may breed [Återfynd - Ottenby fågelstation](https://www.ottenbyfagelstation.se/). The other Dunlin were on North Sea and Baltic. The Mediterranean Gull was found dead at Elmley, having been predated by a Peregrine, it was ringed as an adult in Antwerp in 2015. The Knot was the eighth Swale ringed bird recorded in Finmark in northern Norway. The Whimbrel was the second recovered in northern France on autumn migration. The Curlew was the third Swale bird in Finland.

MAP 1. International encounters of Swale birds in 2020



Recoveries also give information on the age of birds. The Bar-tailed Godwit retrapped at Harty on December 12th was ringed at Shellness on 9 March 1997 and, at 23 years, 9 months and 3 days is the oldest wader retrap on the Swale, beating a Curlew and a Grey Plover both also 23 years plus. The Dunlin caught at Ottenby were between one and seven years since ringing on the Swale. The Curlew was identified by colour rings at Elmley and had been ringed in Finland six years earlier. Another Curlew ringed at Shellness in 2007 was caught on breeding ground in Germany in 2011 when it was colour ringed and the bird was then reported from Pett Level 12 years and 5 months since it was ringed.

Brian Watmough (Swale Wader Ringing Group)

KENT BIRD SIGHTINGS FOR JANUARY AND FEBRUARY 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

general rain on the 7th and 8th. It turned milder and wetter in the south from the 10th and Storm Christoph brought very wet and windy weather between the 19th and 21st. It was colder from the 22nd to the 25th but the rest of the month was milder and rainy. It was a very wet month with south-east England having twice its normal amount of rain and 114.5 mm of rain recorded at Bishopstone.

The first five days of **February** were mild but were followed by a very cold easterly spell with heavy snowfall and extremely low temperatures. It turned much milder for the second half of the month before quieter anticyclonic weather arrived for the last few days.



Barnacle Goose by Mark Chapman

A **Black Brant** was reported from Hoo on Jan 7th and at Chetney Marshes on the Jan 12th and what may have been the same bird was recorded from Swale NNR on Feb 19th. Two were seen together at Leysdown-on-Sea on Feb 21st. Three **Pale-bellied Brent Geese** were reported from Leysdown-on-Sea on Feb 21st and 22nd with one still present on the 23rd and during January and February as many as eight **Barnacle Geese** were seen at Brooksend, Worth Marshes, Burham, Swalecliffe, Swale NNR, Foreness and Sandwich Bay.



Pink-footed Goose by Chris Powell

A **Pink-footed Goose** was still present at Grove Ferry on Jan 1st with one at Bough Beech on the 2nd and one or two at Seaton between Jan 12th and 16th. One was seen at Chartham from Jan 30th-Feb 2nd and there were 18 at Seasalter and South Swale LNR on Feb 10th. There were also 23 recorded at Sandwich Bay on Feb 12th and 25th with one at Swale NNR on Feb 19th.



Tundra Bean Geese by Brendan Ryan

As many as four **Tundra Bean Geese** were seen on Sandwich Bay/Worth Marshes area between Jan 4th and 22nd and during February there were five recorded at Burmarsh on 8th and five at Reculver Marshes and single birds at Sandwich Bay from the 10th-25th and Lower Hayesden from the 17th-25th. Two were seen at Ash Levels on the 23rd and there was a bird at Shorne Marshes on the 27th.

It was an excellent winter for **Russian White-fronted Geese** with up to 850 counted at Swale NNR area and peaks of 435 in the Dungeness area, 200 at Worth Marshes and 110 Walland Marsh with smaller counts at Grove Ferry/Stodmarsh, Haysden Lake, Swalecliffe, Lydd, Northward Hill, Cliffe Pools, Collard's Lake, Conyer, New Hythe, Whitstable, East Malling, Warehorne, Scotney, Seaton, Reculver Marshes, Higham, Dartford Marshes, Whitstable, Shuart, Coxheath, Foreness, Whetsted GPs, Nethergong and South Swale LNR.



White-fronted Geese by Steve Reynaert

In January and February up to 35 **Bewick's Swans** were seen at Walland Marsh, Romney Marsh and Dungeness RSPB with as many as five recorded from Capel Fleet, Harty Marshes, Dartford Marshes and Oare Marshes and there were also two **Whooper Swans** seen at Walland Marsh or Dungeness RSPB from Jan 1st-9th.

Up to 12 **Egyptian Geese** were reported from Tonbridge, Sevenoaks WR, Bough Beech Reservoir, Stodmarsh/Grove Ferry, Sandwich Bay, Reculver Marshes, Seaton, Haysden Lake, Dartford Marshes, Chartham, Whetsted GPs, East Peckham, Penshurst, Postern Park, Nickoll's Quarry, Lullingstone, Kennington, Conningbrook, Willop Outflow, Singleton Lake, Whetsted GPs and Sutton-at-Hone and up to 32 **Mandarins** were recorded at Bough Beech with smaller numbers at Haysden, Penshurst, East Peckham, Herne Bay, Furnace Pond and Whetsted GPs.

A wintering male **Garganey** reported from Stodmarsh/Grove Ferry on Feb 8th was unexpected.

Single male **Red-crested Pochards** were recorded from Singleton Lake and Mote Park on Jan 11th with four reported from New Hythe on Jan 23rd.

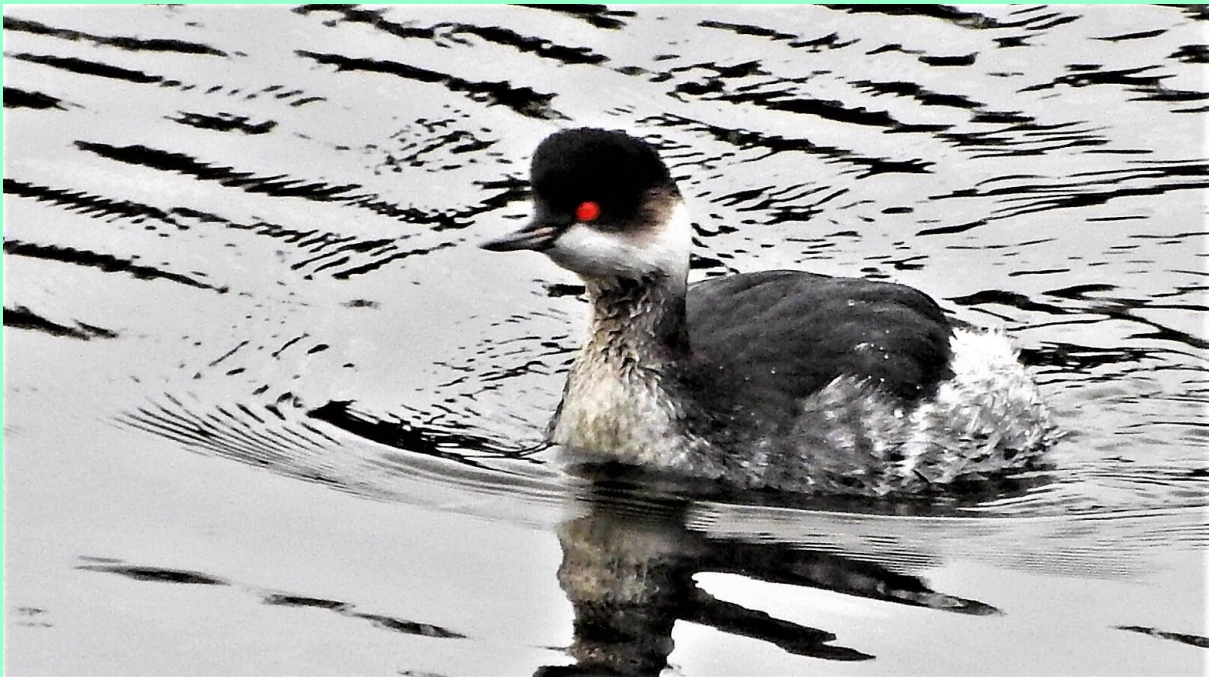
In January and February up to three **Scaup** were recorded from Lade, Scotney, Murston, Stonar Lake and Cliffe Pools with as many as seven **Velvet Scoter** seen at DBO, Walmer, Willop Basin, Swalecliffe and Deal.

The **Long-tailed Duck** first seen at Scotney in December was still there on Feb 1st whilst the first **Smew** of this winter were seen during the snow on Feb 8th when there were six, two males and four red-heads, on Worth Marshes before they flew north and single red-heads at Nickoll's Quarry and Willop Outfall. After this, up to three birds were recorded from New Hythe between Feb 13th and 20th.

During January and February up to 25 **Goosanders** were recorded at Bough Beech with lesser numbers at Sevenoaks WR, Dungeness RSPB, Lade, New Hythe, Richborough, Tonbridge, Furnace Pond, Conningbrook, Foreness, Walmer Beach, Worth Marshes, Oare Marshes, Haysden, Lullingstone and Swalecliffe.

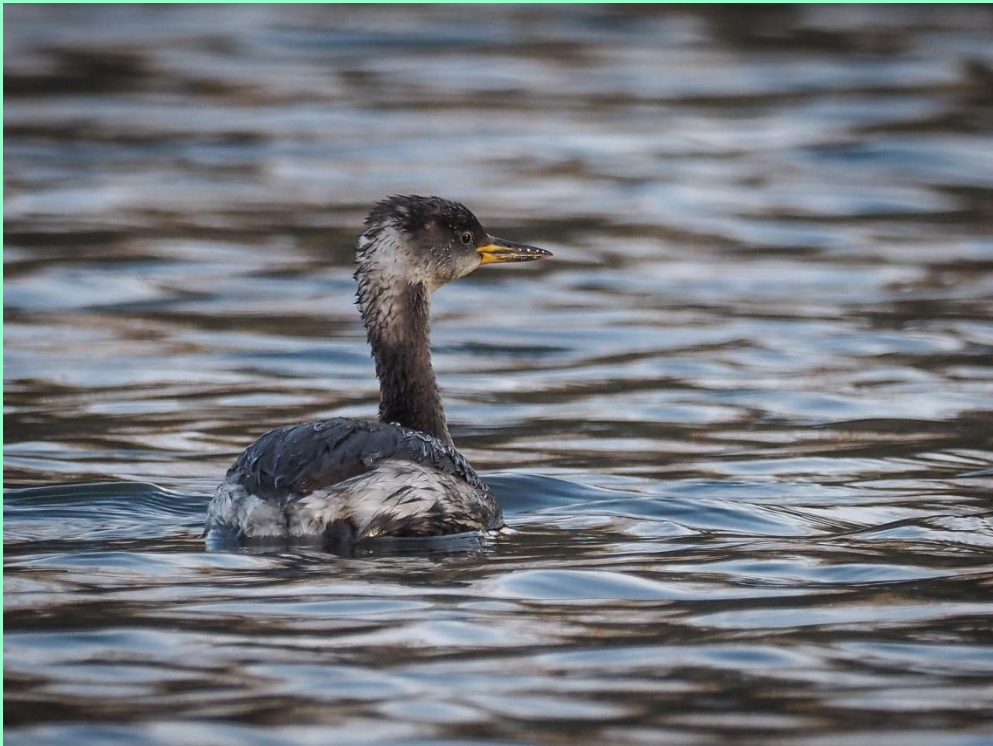
PARTRIDGE TO CORMORANT

One or two **Black-throated Divers** were recorded at DBO, Dungeness RSPB, Hythe, Folkestone, Whitstable, Tankerton, Dumpton and Swalecliffe and one or two **Great Northern Divers** were seen at Ramsgate Harbour, Sandwich Bay, Foreness, Minnis Bay, Swalecliffe, Cliftonville, Tankerton, Whitstable, Walmer, Sandgate and Hythe.



Black-necked Grebe by Keith Cutting

During January and February, one or two **Black-necked Grebe** were seen at Cliffe Pools and single **Slavonian Grebes** were seen at Swalecliffe on Jan 2nd with two at Stonar Lake from Feb 2nd-4th, one at Cliffe Pools from Feb 21st-26th and another at Riverside CP on Feb 26th. A **Red-necked Grebe** flew past DBO on Jan 8th and single birds were seen at Seabrook on Jan 27th and New Hythe from Feb 11th-21st.



Red-necked Grebe by Terry laws

The **Glossy Ibis** first seen at Dungeness RSPB on August 9th 2020 was still there on Feb 23rd and the bird seen at Lower Haysden on Dec 13th was seen intermittently until Feb 23rd. One was also reported from Grove Ferry on Feb 3rd.

A **Spoonbill** was reported from Swale NNR on Feb 12th and during January and February single **Bitterns** were seen at Dungeness RSPB, Stodmarsh/Grove Ferry, Capstone Park, Shuart, Northward Hill and Oare Marshes.

Up to four **Cattle Egrets** were seen at Stodmarsh/Grove Ferry, Sandwich Bay, Worth Marshes, Seaton, Wingham, Higham, Finberry, Hart Marshes, Horsmonden and Swale NNR and as many as six **Great White Egrets** were recorded at Dungeness and New Hythe with smaller numbers at Grove Ferry/Stodmarsh, Shuart, Dartford Marshes, Conningbrook, Chartham, Donkey Street, Seasalter, Wouldham, Faversham Creek, Hayesden, Higham, Reculver Marshes, Chislet Marshes, Seabrook, Worth Marshes, Bough Beech, Mote Park, South Swale LNR and Kenardington.

During January and February as many as eight **Shags** were recorded from Foreness and Samphire Hoe with one or two also seen at DBO, Chatham, Ramsgate, Dover, South Foreland.



Shag by Tracey Mantle

BIRDS OF PREY

Up to three **Hen Harriers** were seen at Grove Ferry/Stodmarsh, Bishopstone, Reculver Marshes, Dungeness RSPB, Capel Fleet, Oare Marshes, Naccolt, Pegwell Bay, Weddington, Swale NNR, South Swale LNR, Graveney, Uplees, South Foreland, Seasalter, Romney Marsh, Harty Marshes, Benenden, Warehorne, Ash Levels, Sandwich Bay and Worth Marshes.



Hen Harrier by Russ Blackman

As many as three **Red Kites** were seen at Benenden, Barham, Chevening, Throwley Forstal, Brasted, East Malling, Sellindge, Penshurst, Sandwich Bay, New Hythe, DBO, Lade, Broomfield, Riverhead, Langdon Cliffs, Hythe, Leigh, Dover, Boughton Monchelsea, Whetsted GPs, Wouldham, Birling Gap, Lydd and Haysden.

A fourth year **White-tailed Eagle** was seen at Worth Marshes and Pegwell Bay between Jan 5th and 7th and a **Rough-legged Buzzard** was reported flying W at Sittinbourne on Jan 10th and another was photographed at Swale NNR on Jan 28th and seen at Conyer on the 31st.

RAILS TO WADERS

Up to 17 **Purple Sandpipers** were seen at their regular winter haunts at Foreness, Reculver, Hampton, Swalecliffe, Dover Harbour, Hythe and Minnis Bay and a **Little Stint** was identified at Cliffe Pools on Feb 15th.

Following the heavy snow on Feb 7th and the subsequent sub-zero temperatures there was a significant arrival of **Woodcock** and **Snipe** into the County. During the freezing weather there were regularly double figure counts of Woodcock and three figure counts of Snipe particularly near the north and east coasts. There also appears to have been a significant mortality of Woodcocks with many found dead and washed up on the beaches.

In these two months, but particularly during the snow at the beginning of February, up to five **Jack Snipes** were seen at Benenden, Wouldham, Sandwich Bay, Reculver Marshes, DBO, Dungeness RSPB, Broad Oak, Finberry, Walmer, Chartham, Foreness, Conningbrook, Kearsney, Minster, Samphire Hoe, Botolph's Bridge and Kennington.



Jack Snipe by Chris Powell



Woodcock by Jonathan Dodds

Four **Spotted Redshank** were seen at Sittingbourne on Jan 15th with one or two at Cliffe Pools during February and one at Westbere on Feb 15th.

AUKS TO GULLS

On Jan 4th, 12 **Little Gulls** flew past Cliftonville and Foreness with one seen at Reculver whilst another bird was seen at Sandwich Bay on Jan 28th. During February single birds were recorded from DBO, Sandwich Bay, Deal, Swalecliffe, Mote Park and Foreness.

A **Glaucous Gull** was reported from Chatham Maritime on Feb 1st whilst a second year **Iceland Gull** that had been seen at DBO at the end of December was still present at the end of February and a juvenile frequented Dover Harbour between Jan 6th and Feb 25th. Another bird was reported from Stodmarsh Feb 14th.

During January and February as many as 11 **Caspian Gulls** were identified at DBO with up to three birds also seen at Sandwich Bay, Worth Marshes, Pegwell Bay, Shorne Marshes, Burmarsh Road and Deal and one or two **Yellow-legged Gulls** were also seen at DBO, Sandwich Bay, Foreness, Hythe and Reculver.

A **Sandwich Tern** flew past DBO on Feb 8th.

During January and February up to three **Great Skuas** were seen at Sandwich Bay, Foreness, Minnis Bay and DBO.

DOVES TO RING-NECKED PARAKEET

During these two months Long-eared Owls were recorded from Reculver Marshes and Bishopstone whilst during January up to seven **Short-eared Owls** were seen on Sheppey with up to four there in February and as many as three recorded at Reculver, South Foreland, Lympne and Stuart.

Single **Merlins** were seen at Reculver, Sandwich Bay, DBO, South Swale LNR, West Hythe, Chislet Marshes, Worth Marshes, Seasalter, Burmarsh and Egypt Bay.

SHRIKES TO HIRUNDINES

There were widespread reports of as many as six **Ravens** from at least 35 sites throughout the County. Ten **Waxwings** were reported from Borough Green on Feb 13th. A **Woodlark** was seen at Foreness on Feb 9th and others were recorded at Sandwich Bay on Feb 19th and 20th, Lade on the 20th and Cooling Marshes on the 23rd. A very early **Swallow** was seen at Pegwell Bay on Feb 26th.

CETTI'S WARBLER TO WHEATEARS

Two **Siberian Chiffchaffs** were reported from a garden in Dover on Feb 8th with another at Chartham on the 10th whilst the **Dusky Warbler** found at Dungeness RSPB on Dec 11th was still there on Jan 4th and the bird found at Minster, Thanet remained there until Jan 26th. A **Yellow-browed Warbler** was reported from Sittingbourne on Jan 8th. In January and February one or two **Dartford Warblers** were seen at Egypt Bay, Sandwich Bay, Worth Marshes, Lade and Grove Ferry/Stodmarsh.



Dartford Warbler by Brendan Ryan

Up to three **Firecrests** were recorded at DBO, Dungeness RSPB, Sandwich Bay, Lade, South Foreland, Netherhale, Nonnington, Gillingham, Stodmarsh, Pett Dane Forest, Westenhanger, Shuart, Benenden and Folkestone.

A first winter **EYE-BROWED THRUSH** was found in a rural garden in East Kent on 14th January. The bird remained into late February and if accepted would represent the first record for Kent.



Eye-browed Thrush (observer withheld)

In January and February up to three **Black Redstarts** were seen at DBO, Sandwich Bay, Reculver, Dover, Lydd, Tankerton, Lympne, Ramsgate, Epple Bay, Willop Basin, Tenterden, Samphire Hoe and South Foreland.

An extremely early male **Wheatear** was seen at Lydd on Feb 21st.

DUNNOCK TO BUNTINGS

The **Richard's Pipit** found at Halstow Marshes on Dec 12th was still there on Jan 31st and another was reported flying over at Oare Marshes on Jan 15th.

As many as 11 **Water Pipits** were seen at Grove Ferry/Stodmarsh with smaller numbers recorded from Wouldham, Worth Marshes, Swanscombe Marshes, Willop Outflow, West Hythe, Riverside CP, Pegwell Bay, Uplees, Foreness, Faversham Creek, Donkey Street and Dartford Marshes



Water Pipit by Mark Chidwick

As many as four **Hawfinches** were recorded from Southborough Common and Pett Dane Forest and there was a **Common/Mealy Redpoll** identified at Benenden on Jan 24th with two seen at Shorne on Feb 1st and up to 30 **Crossbills** were seen at Shuart, Elham Woods, Benenden, Southborough, Abbotscliffe, Penshurst and Tudeley Woods.

Single **Lapland Buntings** were seen at Langdon Cliffs on Jan 10th and on Reculver Marshes on Jan 19th, Feb 4th and 20th with up to six at South Foreland between Jan 26th and the end of February. There was also one at Swale NNR on Feb 12th.

During January and February up to three **Snow Bunting** were seen at Reculver, Sandwich Bay, Foreness, South Swale LNR and Seasalter.



White-throated Sparrow by A. Holbrook

An unexpected surprise came in the form of a **WHITE-THROATED SPARROW** found in a garden near Orlestone Forest at a bird feeding station. It was first reported on Jan 10th but had apparently been present

and unidentified for several days before. It remained there until at least Jan 13th and is the first record of this American Sparrow for Kent. Later, it was also photographed in a garden at Barcombe in East Sussex during February.

DBO = Dungeness Bird Observatory **BBRC** = British Birds Rarities Committee
RSPB = Royal Society for the Protection of Birds **BOU** = British Ornithological Union
"The Patch" = the warm water outflow from Dungeness Nuclear Power Station
NNR=National Nature Reserve **NR**=Nature Reserve **LNR**=Local Nature Reserve
FC = Field Centre **WR** = Wildlife Reserve **GP** = Gravel Pits **CP** = Country Park

CONTRIBUTORS

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

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Please send records for this review to:
Chris Hindle at christopherhindle@hotmail.com

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

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

Fifty Years Ago.



Starling by JG Keulemans (PDI)

Late February and early March were cold, with snow on the 6th and again on the 14th and 15th, caused by high pressure over Scandinavia and the North Sea. On the 14th 1,000 Fieldfares flew east at Canterbury. During this period a Starling bearing a Finnish ring and a Greenfinch from Heligoland were trapped near Staplehurst and a Blackbird, also from Heligoland, was trapped at Bredgar.

KBR 1971

Norman McCanch

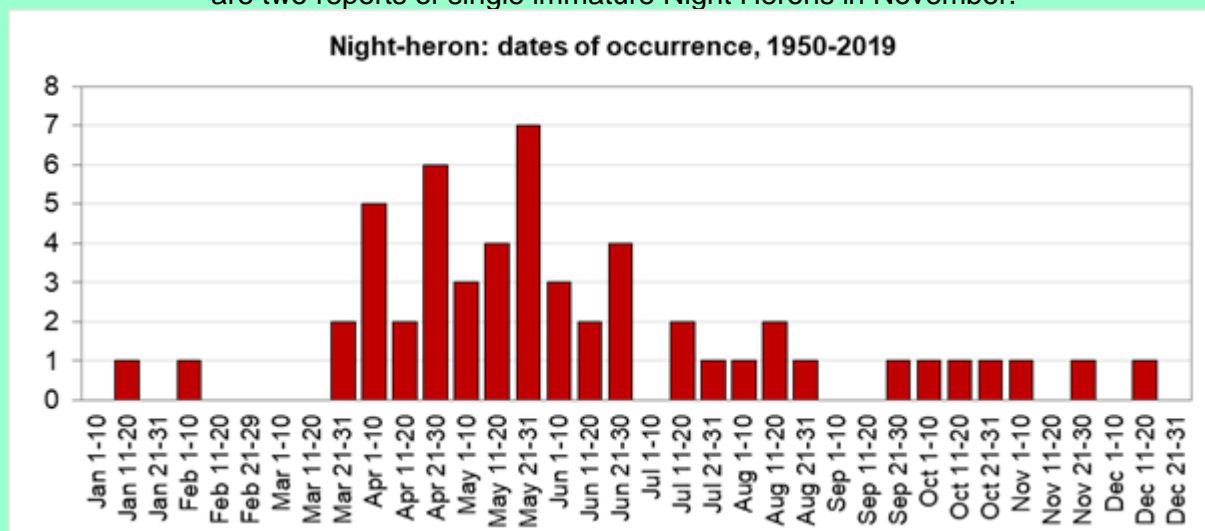
Sixty Seven Years ago (but strangely topical!)

36 Night Heron



Night Heron by Archibald Thorburn (PDI)

An immature present at Sheerness between Oct. 16 and Nov. 11. Roosted by day in low trees in suburban gardens and probably fed in the Sheerness canal and adjacent ditches which are much favoured by herons. Bird caused quite a stir locally and LT.-COL. SHRIVE had good views of it on Oct. 18. On Nov. 5, H.H. had good views at 12 to 15 feet as the bird perched in a tree. After noting details he was able to check with the Handbook and then take another look at the roosting bird. Details as follows :-much smaller than "common" heron .and more thick-set ; upper parts dark brown with light flecks of " Nutcracker " plumage clearly visible; much lighter on breast with vertical dark flecks which were very clear on upper breast. Legs yellowish green, not so dark as in Handbook illustration. Eye large; tail short, the folded wings covered tail to give rounded shape. These details are taken from the notes by H.H. It was indifferent to human beings while at its roosts which included gardens in Sheerness High Street. We are informed that on one occasion a police officer had to disperse a small crowd gathered to watch it. In the Essex Bird Report for 1953 there are two reports of single immature Night Herons in November.



Andrew Henderson