



*Crag Martin by Mike Gould*

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**KOS Contacts – Committee Members details are available on the society website**  
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Here we are in 2021 and, to quote Professor Jones in “Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade”, our situation has not improved. I hardly need to mention the concatenation of events which has restricted opportunities for birding in the past year and which now seem set to persist with some good reason. Even so, it does seem from my scrutiny of social media that not everyone in the county (and beyond) is taking the situation quite as seriously as is perhaps prudent. For my part, I have stuck to a few local sites where my efforts have been reasonably rewarded and I have gained some insight into the lives of a few of our commoner birds. My mobility issues mean that I miss the opportunity to use public hides for sketching, but with the increasing numbers of people visiting key sites, there might not be much room these days.

This issue includes an excellent piece from Steve Wood, a stalwart of the KOS at so many levels. He shares an interesting tale of two books which resonates so much with my own experience. Back in the early days of my birding career there was none of the technological wizardry that seems so indispensable to the great ranks of modern enthusiasts; no mobile phones, no digital cameras, no computers or internet, indeed none of the sophistication of modern optical equipment.

Central to a developing interest in birds and birding in those far-off days were books, often old books written in great prose by almost legendary characters not least Norman Ticehurst. Kent and Sussex seem to have been well supplied with educated and enthusiastic individuals who leave an extraordinary legacy of work and reveal how very different this part of Southern England was in the past. How far back do we have to go to find Black Grouse in Kent?? When and where, did Baillon’s Crakes probably breed in Kent? When did Little Owls start to appear here, and why? Why are male Red-backed Shrikes significantly more likely to be hosts to a specific internal parasite than their mates? All this information is available in a modest library of old books and during lockdowns these can provide absorbing information. Like Steve, I also warm to the previous owners of volumes on my shelves; I am lucky enough to have books previously owned by James Fisher and Eric Hosking among others, both names to conjure with in the bibliography of birding in Britain. Even more spine-tingling are those books signed by the author. I have a few, from the late lamented Peter Grant, to Salim Ali and Richard Pough.

I have said in the past (and been criticised for it) that birding used to be an intellectual pursuit, but nowadays it is largely a competitive one. Whether this is good, bad or of no consequence is largely down to one’s personal perspective, but for those who do not browse the writings of earlier generations of naturalists a great deal of curious information is waiting discovery, which might just lead on to the development of a deeper interest.

Finally, this issue also records some notable events in the society’s history; the passing of Geoff Orton recently, a former county BTO representative and long-time supporter of the society at many levels. A real gentleman, he will be sadly missed. We also note the retirement from onerous office of Martin Coath after seventeen years as our Chairman. Happily, he will still be a feature of birding in the county for many years to come. Finally, our current chair of the Conservation and Surveys Committee, Murray Orchard was recently awarded the prestigious Jubilee Medal by the British Trust for Ornithology in recognition of his long-time support of the Trust and its survey work both here in Kent and also in Hertfordshire. Well deserved, we hope he will be able to continue his many roles for many years to come.

Keep safe!

Good birding for 2021

Norman

## Geoff Orton 1946-2020



It is sad to have to report the death of Geoff Orton, who passed away on 26<sup>th</sup> December 2020 after a long illness with cancer. Geoff's funeral will be on 4<sup>th</sup> February at 12.00pm at the Garden of England Crematorium, Sittingbourne ME9 8GZ. Whilst attendance is limited by Covid restrictions, there is an online Memorial Page at <https://geoffreyorton.muchloved.com> where you can view photos and thoughts left by others, please feel free to add your own. Hopefully, there will be time between the receipt of this Newsletter and the funeral date for this to be possible. Donations can also be made to Prostate Cancer UK, the BTO, Kent Wildlife Trust and the Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust.

Many members may not know Geoff, but hopefully those who are members of the BTO will recall that he was the Kent Regional Representative (RR) from 2010-2019 who sent out BBS and WBBS forms each year to those participating in the schemes. Geoff was also the WeBS Regional Organiser for Kent during this time and as RR also organised BTO surveys for Kent, including House Martins, Non-Estuarine Waterbirds, Winter Thrushes and Woodcock. A member of the BTO since 1984, Geoff also carried out his own surveys including two BBS squares and WeBS counts on the South Medway from Lower Halstow, the village where he lived.

Geoff worked for Lloyds of London and Prudential, and later volunteered for the Citizens Advice Bureau, which lead to working as a Student Adviser at Canterbury University. Following retirement, Geoff was able to devote more time to his birding interests and travel. As well as his commitments to the BTO, KOS and KWT, Geoff was also a member of the African Bird Club and regularly attended AGMs. This was noted by the Chairman at the time, Keith Betton, who asked Geoff to join the Council and immediately take on the role of Secretary! This Geoff did without qualms for two years and followed up by becoming the Membership Secretary for a further year. In Keith's words: -

*For me, as Chairman at those times of need, Geoff was like a quietly spoken and very calm SAS commando. Twice I asked him to parachute into unfamiliar territory, and twice he made a perfect landing and did exactly what was needed. Every organisation needs someone like Geoff. A person who rarely says "no", and never gets into a flap.*

Geoff also volunteered for the RSPB on Sheppey and was a much-valued member of warden Nick May's task force. His all-round knowledge of both fauna and flora was imparted in his usual modest manner. Geoff also took an off-road driving course and became the volunteer's driver around the reserve – but managed to drive the truck into a ditch, which is now known affectionately as "Geoff's ditch"! In recent years Geoff was also a regular crew member on the RSPB-hired rib, which conducts WeBS counts each month on the Medway Estuary, often in poor weather conditions, until ill health prevented his continued participation.

Away from Kent, Geoff enjoyed foreign travel and explored many parts of the world, often on cruises with his wife Jan to whom he was married for 50 years. Tanzania was a favourite destination, and one holiday involved a successful trip to Ghana in 2013 with the African Bird Club.



It was not long after this, however, that Jan became ill and, a few years later, she tragically died suddenly at home in September 2017. Geoff himself was already undergoing treatment for cancer and sadly had increasing problems with his memory, which affected his ability to carry out his BTO duties. Although he retired as Kent RR in 2019, Geoff had continued to help as best he could before standing down and he helped set up the first meeting for North Kent WeBS counters. It was from this and subsequent meetings that others became more involved and enabled WeBS to be further developed across the Thames, Medway and Swale.

Geoff was a quiet and unassuming man who went about his business with minimal fuss, never wanting to trouble others. The BTO, KOS and KWT, amongst others, owe a debt of gratitude for his services and will want to pass on their best wishes and condolences to his family. Geoff leaves daughter Emily and her husband Jonathan, son Richard and his wife Laura plus granddaughter Melissa.

Murray Orchard

## Martin Coath



Martin Coath recently retired as Chairman of the KOS, a role he has diligently carried out with much humour and insight, for the last seventeen years. We are grateful for his support of the society over many years and look forward to meeting him out in the field for many years to come. Martin's diligence in surveys and counting is legendary, particularly reflected in regular counts of 'one wren' on his Birdtrack submissions. To mark his retirement, he was recently presented with a fine painting by Stephen Message of "One Wren"!

## Murray Orchard



It is pleasing to announce that Murray Orchard, chair of our Conservation and surveys committee was recently awarded the Jubilee Medal by the British Trust for Ornithology in recognition of his sustained support for the trust and especially survey work, both here in Kent and in Hertfordshire. The BTO Jubilee Medal is awarded for "devotion to the Trust", in that respect Murray has an impressive record. He has been a Member of the BTO since 1977, been Kent Regional Ambassador since last year and Herts RA since 2014. He has taken part in BBS plots in Kent since the start of project in 1994, and in Hertfordshire since 2014. He has also been active in WBBS since 1998, WeBS counts in Kent since the days of the Wildfowl & Wader Counts in 1980's, then BoEE and then WeBS, switching to covering Cliffe Pools since 2014. He recently became WeBS Local Organiser for Thames (Kent). He has also supported the Garden Birdwatch since 2008 and has been Herts Regional Organiser (RO) for the Heronry Census since 2015. In addition, Murray has frequently acted as regional organiser for species specific surveys, including Nightjars and House Martins, as well as playing key area steward roles for two national bird atlas surveys both in Kent and in Hertfordshire.

As if that was not enough for one man, we cannot overlook Murray's contributions to the KOS. He has been a member of Executive Committee, first in 1987-97 and then 2017-present. Member of Conservation & Surveys Committee since 2010, and Chairman since 2016; species writer for KBR since 1988 (Nightjar), then Owls/Nightjar and now Cuckoo/Owls/Nightjar and 13 wader species.; joint Kent RBBP report writer (with Brian Watmough, the Rep) since 2016. He was also KOS Outdoor Meetings Organiser for 16 years from the late 80's-early 00's. He has written a number of papers in KBR on a variety of subjects and was one of the authors of the Kent Breeding Bird Atlas 2008-13.

Our congratulations to Murray for a well-deserved award.

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## Annual General Meeting

The current pandemic makes holding a traditional AGM in April extremely unlikely, so we have decided to hold the meeting via Zoom on 7<sup>th</sup> April 2021 at 7.30pm.

Details and a link to the meeting will be e-mailed to members in due course. Members wishing to participate will need to download Zoom to their computers. This is free.

One of the roles of the AGM is to elect officers and committee members for the following year. There are currently two vacancies and we would be interested in hearing from anyone interested in joining the committee. We are particularly interested in members that have experience in any of the following areas; IT, data management, social media and accountancy

If you would like to find out more please contact:

**Acting Chair- Chris Roome** ( [chrisroome105@icloud.com](mailto:chrisroome105@icloud.com) )

**Hon Secretary- Brendan Ryan** ( [brendan.ryan@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:brendan.ryan@yahoo.co.uk) )

## IMPORTANT NOTICE

The British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) has announced that none of their surveys should be conducted during the current Covid-19 restrictions except those that can be done from within the boundaries of your home ie Garden Birdwatch. For full details of their most recent Covid-19 statement please see the BTO website.

## KOS TURTLE DOVE SURVEY 2021

Readers will hopefully be aware, from previous Newsletters, that the Kent Ornithological Society is planning to survey Turtle Doves in 2021, which is the year that the KOS will be celebrating its 70<sup>th</sup> year since its founding in 1951.

It has also been announced that the RSPB, in conjunction with RBBP, Natural England and BTO, intend to conduct a national survey of Turtle Doves next year.

It has been agreed with the national organiser (Simon Wotton), that the Kent survey will continue as planned. Common methodology has been employed with survey squares set by the national survey to align with sampling strategy across other core counties. Kent data will feed into the UK results. However, the Society will use its own online survey design which will also seek to gather records of additional species that are important within the county.

It is expected that the online survey, with details of how to take part, will be up and running by early Spring, from when volunteers can select survey squares, well ahead of the first arriving Turtle Doves. Many thanks to those who have already volunteered to take part. As the survey period runs from mid-May, we should hopefully be free of Covid-19 restrictions on survey participation. Anyone wishing to help with the survey should contact:

**Nicole Khan** ([nicole.khan@rspb.org.uk](mailto:nicole.khan@rspb.org.uk))



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## 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 website <http://birdgroups.co.uk/kos/News.asp> 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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## ASSESSMENT OF COUNTY RARITIES BY THE KENT ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY

### *KOS Rarities Panel*

The Rarities Panel which is part of the KOS Editorial and Records Sub-Committee is made up of six members each of whom is an experienced and widely travelled Kent birder. **All records of rare and scarce species submitted to the Society are considered by this Panel before being accepted for publication in the Kent Bird Report.** Rarity descriptions and photographs should be sent to Chris Hindle at [christopherhindle@hotmail.com](mailto:christopherhindle@hotmail.com). There are two lists at the end of this article, the first is of the rarities and unusual birds that are assessed by the KOS Rarities Panel and the other is of the rarer birds that are assessed by the British Birds Rarities Committee. Please be aware that BBRC decisions supersede those of the KOS. Barry Wright liaises with the BBRC.

### *The KOS Assessment Process*

It is important to emphasise that each record is assessed completely independently by individual Panel members and the decisions and comments relating to each record are unknown to other members during the assessment process. For each record members of the Panel have three options:

#### *Accept*

Based on the details or good quality photographs provided there is sufficient evidence that a correct identification has been made.

#### *Not Proven*

Based on the details provided, there is insufficient evidence to confirm the identification or that other species have not been eliminated.

#### *Pend*

Based on the details provided there needs to be discussion by Panel members to determine the final outcome. Any pending records will be discussed at the next Editorial and Records Sub-Committee meeting for a final decision to be made.



Panel members return their decisions to Chris Hindle who then collates the initial decisions and comments relating to each of the records. At this stage, a decision is made on the status of the record:

Where a record has six 'accept' decisions the record is automatically accepted.

Where a record has six 'not proven' decisions the record is automatically not accepted.

All remaining records will be discussed, and a decision made at the next Editorial and Records Sub-Committee.

All accepted records will be published on the KOS Facebook and Twitter pages after this meeting.

The Panel fully understands the disappointment of a 'not proven' decision but in the vast majority of cases such a decision is based solely on the lack of detail in the description which either does not confirm the identification or fails to eliminate other species. Only in a very small number of cases does the Panel believe that a mistake has been made.

Additionally, the Panel is always willing to reconsider 'not proven' decisions but only where new information can be provided, for example a photograph that was not available at the time of the original submission.

## Editorial and Records Sub-Committee – January 2021

### Species requiring description for acceptance by K.O.S.

(January 2021)

Taiga Bean Goose	Alpine Swift
American Wigeon	Red-footed Falcon
Green-winged Teal	Woodchat Shrike
Ring-necked Duck	Chough
Surf Scoter	Hooded Crow
White-billed Diver	Willow Tit
Storm Petrel	Penduline Tit
Cory's Shearwater	Short-toed Lark
Great Shearwater	Red-rumped Swallow
Glossy Ibis	Dusky Warbler
Night-heron	Radde's Warbler
Purple Heron	Arctic Warbler
Goshawk	Greenish Warbler
Montagu's Harrier	Aquatic Warbler
Black Kite	Blyth's Reed Warbler
White-tailed Eagle	Marsh Warbler <i>in autumn only</i>
Rough-legged Buzzard	Melodious Warbler
Corncrake	Icterine Warbler
Spotted Crake	Barred Warbler
Stone-curlew	Rose-coloured Starling
Black-winged Stilt	Bluethroat
American Golden Plover	Red-flanked Bluetail
White-rumped Sandpiper	Red-breasted Flycatcher
Buff-breasted Sandpiper	Dipper
Pectoral Sandpiper	Citrine Wagtail
Red-necked Phalarope	Richard's Pipit
Lesser Yellowlegs	Olive-backed Pipit
Ring-billed Gull	Common Rosefinch
Iceland Gull	Parrot Crossbill
Caspian Gull <i>not Dungeness, Inner Thames, Pegwell</i>	Arctic Redpoll
Roseate Tern <i>not Dungeness, Pegwell/SBBOT</i>	Ortolan Bunting
White-winged Black Tern	Cirl Bunting
Black Guillemot	Little Bunting

In addition, descriptions should be submitted for rare subspecies including Black Brant, Greenland White-fronted Goose, Kumlein's Gull, Siberian Chiffchaff, Siberian Whitethroat, Grey-headed Wagtail and Northern Bullfinch.



As well as these, unusual records may require notes or details or be supplied e.g. inland records of seabirds, unusual numbers or out of season records.

## Species requiring descriptions for acceptance by B.B.R.C.

(January 2021)

Red-breasted Goose	Slender-billed Gull	Asian Desert Warbler
Lesser White-fronted Goose	Bonaparte's Gull	Western Subalpine Warbler
Blue-winged Teal	Ross's Gull	Eastern Subalpine Warbler
Black Duck	Laughing Gull	Sardinian Warbler
Canvasback	Audouin's Gull	Short-toed Treecreeper
Ferruginous Duck	Gull-billed Tern	Swainson's Thrush
King Eider	Caspian Tern	Black-throated Thrush
Hooded Merganser	Lesser Crested Tern	Dusky Thrush
Black-browed Albatross	Bridled Tern	Thrush Nightingale
Pied-billed Grebe	Sooty Tern	Collared Flycatcher
Black Stork	Forster's Tern	Rock Thrush
Little Bittern	Whiskered Tern	Siberian Stonechat
Green Heron	Tufted Puffin	Isabelline Wheatear
Squacco Heron	Pallas's Sandgrouse	Desert Wheatear
Chinese Pond Heron	Oriental Turtle Dove	Black-eared Wheatear
Brown Booby	Great Spotted Cuckoo	Pied Wheatear
Pallid Harrier	Scop's Owl	Black-bellied Dipper
Great Bustard	Snowy Owl	Alpine Accentor
Little Bustard	Tengmalm's Owl	Ashy-headed Wagtail
Little Crake	White-throated Needletail	Blyth's Pipit
Baillon's Crake	Pallid Swift	Tawny Pipit
American Coot	Roller	Red-throated Pipit
Sociable Plover	Blue-cheeked Bee-eater	Pine Grosbeak
White-tailed Plover	Lesser Kestrel	Trumpeter Finch
Pacific Golden Plover	Gyr Falcon	Arctic Redpoll
Greater Sand Plover	Acadian Flycatcher	Two-barred Crossbill
Kentish Plover	Daurian Shrike	Golden-winged Warbler
Broad-billed Sandpiper	Turkestan Shrike	Common Yellowthroat
Stilt Sandpiper	Lesser Grey Shrike	Blackpoll Warbler
Baird's Sandpiper	Steppe Grey Shrike	Pine Bunting
Least Sandpiper	Red-eyed Vireo	Rock Bunting
Great Snipe	Nutcracker	Rustic Bunting
Terek Sandpiper	Northern Willow Tit	Yellow-breasted Bunting
Wilson's Phalarope	Iberian Chiffchaff	Black-headed Bunting
Spotted Sandpiper	Western Bonelli's Warbler	Dark-eyed Junco
Marsh Sandpiper	Hume's Warbler	
Greater Yellowlegs	Great Reed Warbler	
Cream-coloured Courser	Paddyfield Warbler	
Collared Pratincole	Booted Warbler	
Oriental Pratincole	Easter Olivaceous Warbler	
Black-winged Pratincole	Savi's Warbler	
Ivory Gull	Zitting Cisticola	

### Kent Bird Atlas

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

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](mailto:nvmccanch@hotmail.com)**

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## 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/>.

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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

## A Tale of Two Books

I'm a native northerner, but I lived in London from when I was eighteen and went to university down here. After graduating and working in the NHS in London for ten years, I decided to migrate a little farther to Kent – a move I have never regretted.

I have always been interested in birds and still have my Observer's Book which I think must be at least 55 years old. In London I was a regular at West Norwood Cemetery, where Lesser Spotted Woodpecker could be seen, and Beddington Sewage Works, where I was thrilled to see several Short-eared Owls in some winters. My transfer to East Kent was at least partly motivated by the promise of even richer birding.

One of my first acts was to buy a copy of Ticehurst's 'A History of the Birds of Kent', published by HF Witherby in 1909, from an antiquarian bookseller in Rye, East Sussex. It cost me £50 and was in quite good condition.



*Norman Ticehurst*

Norman Fredrick Ticehurst, OBE, MB, BCh, FRCS, was a general medical practitioner and surgeon who was born in 1873 and died in 1969 in a St Leonard's nursing home at the age of 93. He was the third generation of Ticehurst doctors in Hastings and was succeeded by his son to constitute a fourth. Until the NHS was created in 1948 and hospitals began to develop departments of surgery, it was commonplace for GPs to carry out quite complex operations such as appendectomies on the kitchen table at the patient's home, and it was in this field that Norman Ticehurst became an

expert. Ticehurst had always been a keen amateur ornithologist, and his scientific and medical training gave him a rigorous and systematic approach to the subject. By 1930 he was regarded as the undisputed authority on the birds of Sussex and Kent.

Back to my copy of his book. After I bought it I noted a library plate stuck to the inside front cover, 'Ex Libris' and 'Arthur Walter Rickards 1899'. Ticehurst's book was published by subscription – which is to say that the publisher, HF Witherby (another notable Victorian ornithologist) managed the risk of a turkey by collecting promises of a purchase beforehand. The list of subscribers is printed in the initial pages of the book, but there is no Arthur Walter Rickards, so it seemed that he was not the first owner of the volume.

The 'History of the Birds of Kent' is printed on cloth, and the pages were not cut or guillotined as in a modern book. Instead, the pages are simply folded and have to be carefully ripped open. It seems very odd to the modern reader! The pages of my copy had been opened by a previous owner, perhaps Mr Rickards, but several remained sealed, and when I gingerly set about tearing them, I was surprised to find a hand-written letter folded inside!

The letterhead is 'Westbroke House, Lydd, Kent', but the handwriting is very difficult to decipher. On consulting my OS map I found that Westbroke House is still there, lying about 1km north of Lydd Church along Denge Lane. I had driven past it scores of times on my way to Dungeness, and could see it in my mind's eye – a big, brooding farmhouse surrounded by untidy hedges and rather dilapidated walls. I had thought it was semi-derelict.

The letter is dated December 1909 – the year Ticehurst's magnum opus was published - and seems to begin 'My dear Nick', or perhaps 'Rick', and goes on to wish the recipient a happy Christmas and new year. The next passage seems to say that the sender 'ventures to think that' the book will contain much about the birds 'of this particular area'. The rest is more-or-less incomprehensible except for the signature, which I think is 'Arthur Finn'.

So, who was Arthur Finn, and who was Arthur Walter Rickards - presumably the 'Rick', to whom the book was donated and the letter was addressed? Arthur Finn appears in the list of subscribers and was relatively easy to track down. I googled 'Lydd Church' and after the usual multiple blind alleys, I found a list of tombstones in the churchyard. Sure enough, the Finn family was well-represented, including an Arthur.

At about this time I was lucky to make the acquaintance of the late Bob Scott, who was the leader of a birding trip that my wife and I went on to Bulgaria. Bob, was a tall man with a bushy beard and a predilection for khaki shorts and sleeveless jackets with about fifty pockets, which immediately identified him as a birder among the tee-shirts and crop-tops of the departure lounge of Gatwick Airport. He had been the first warden of both the Dungeness RSPB reserve and the Observatory and was an important figure in the RSPB for several decades. He also knew a great deal about the history and inhabitants of the Romney Marsh. During dinner one night (which consisted mainly of cucumbers) in our Bulgarian hotel, I told him about the letter I had found and he asked to see photos of it.

After our trip I sent Bob the pictures, and he passed them on to Edward Carpenter, a local historian of Lydd and the Romney Marsh. Mr Carpenter immediately identified both 'Rick' and Arthur Finn and kindly supplied the following information. Arthur Finn was born at Westbroke House in 1857 and died in 1929. He was an important landowner, chairman of the Romney Sheep Breeders' Association, Mayor of Lydd and a Bailiff of Romney Marsh. In other words, a Big Cheese!

Arthur Walter Rickards was a close friend and business partner of Mayor Finn, and upon the death of the latter his land was sold off to repay Mr Rickards. Westbroke House passed to a nephew, Gerald Frank Finn, and after his death, to John Paine, a prominent local farmer, councillor, and one-time chairman of the Kent Police Authority. At the same time, Finn's book collection was also sold off, and volumes bearing his book plate occasionally turn up in local book sellers. Whether my copy of Ticehurst had found its way back from Rick to Mayor Finn and was sold off with rest, I shall never know. A tragic post-script to this part of the story is that in 2003 John Paine was shot and killed by his son Michael, who then committed suicide. It was stated at the Inquest that Michael had been frustrated by his 78-year-old father's reluctance to hand over the running of the farm business.

Unfortunately, a hundred and ten years has taken its toll on Mr Finn's copy of Ticehurst. I have always found the book to be the best and most reliable sources of historical information about Kent's birds and I have referred to it many times a day when writing my contribution to the 'Kent Breeding Bird Atlas 2008-13', and more recently the 'KOS Checklist'. The covers have become semi-detached from the spine and threaten to fall off altogether. Something had to be done! Enquiries at a local book restorer were disappointing – it would cost around £150 to repair. I decided not to bother. Next stop was Abe Books ([www.abebooks.co.uk](http://www.abebooks.co.uk)), a wonderful on-line repository of second-hand book sellers all over the world. If you can't find the book you are looking for on Abe, it probably doesn't exist. Usually there are many copies available of differing quality and price and a choice of first editions, copies with and without a dust jacket and many other attributes.

In the case of Ticehurst (first ed, no jacket, hardback), Abe found nine copies from £40 to £92. Seven were from UK booksellers and two in Australia. Postage costs ruled out the Australian copies straightaway (how the hell did they get to the other side of the world anyway?), and after a careful comparison of the remainder, I decided to buy a £75 copy from a book seller in Northumberland. It arrived three days later.

This copy proved to be in remarkably good condition compared to that of poor old Arthur Walter Rickards, and surprise, surprise it also had a library plate. In this case, we seem to have stepped up a flight or two of the social scale, for the

plate read 'Herbrand, Eleventh Duke of Bedford KG' and 'Woburn Abbey'. Sure enough, the subscription list shows 'Bedford, Her Grace the Duchess of (2 copies)'. Presumably, this is one of the two! Herbrand Russell, 11<sup>th</sup> Duke of Bedford (1858-1940) was a soldier, diplomat, and President of the Zoological Society of London. He was instrumental in saving Pere David's Deer and the Himalayan Tahr from extinction. However, his personality appears to have been unattractive, and according to his grandson, the 13<sup>th</sup> Duke, he was "A selfish, forbidding man, with a highly developed sense of public duty and ducal responsibility, he lived a cold, aloof existence, isolated from the outside world by a mass of servants, sycophants and an eleven-mile wall"

Herbrand's wife Mary Du Cauroy Russell (1865-1937, according to Wikipedia 'The Duchess was a collector and watcher of birds, and took an interest in bird migration. Between 1909 and 1914 she spent much time on Fair Isle, often in the company of William Eagle Clarke. Her journal, *A Bird-watchers Diary*, was privately published in 1938 after her death. In later life the Duchess took up aviation, and at the age of 71 took off in a De Havilland Moth from Woburn and apparently crashed into the North Sea. Her body was never recovered.

So, now I have two copies of my favourite Kent bird book, each with its century or so of history. Quite apart from the unique mine of information which Norman Ticehurst accumulated, each volume has its own fascinating history which draws me back time and time again.

Stephen Wood

## SCARCE GREBES IN KENT

There have already been quite a few this winter, but January is one of the best times to find one or other of the scarcer grebes in Kent. This article summarises the status of Red-necked, Slavonian and Black-necked Grebes over the past 60 years. But before getting on to that, yes, there has been another, rarer, grebe in the county. That was a Pied-billed Grebe that chose, of all places, the Singleton Lake on the outskirts of Ashford to spend around a month from at least 27th February to 23rd March 1999.

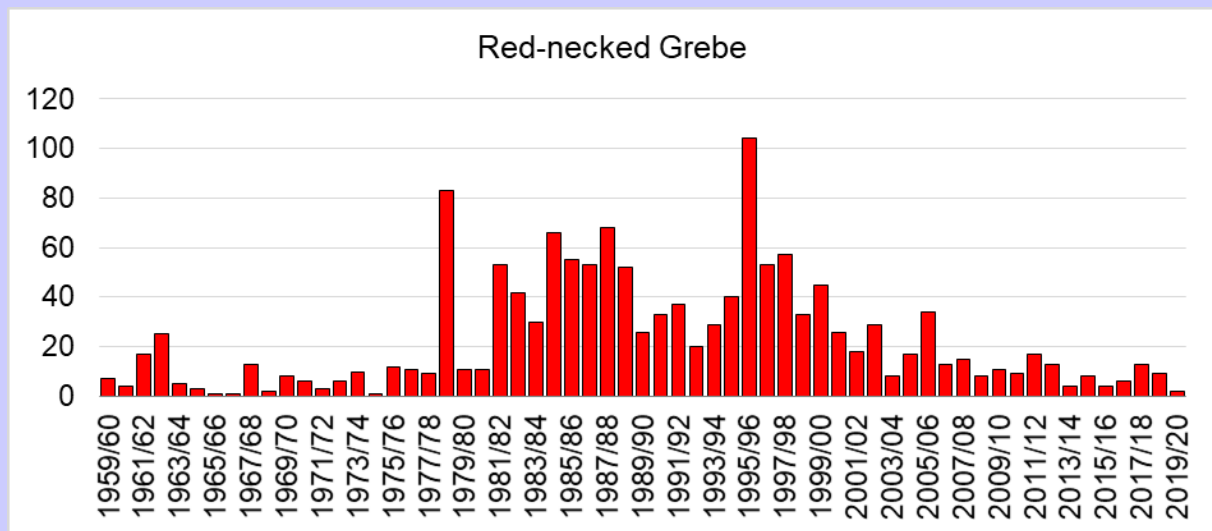
In the past, Black-necked Grebe was the rarest of the three scarce species. Ticehurst, writing in 1909, knew of only twelve occurrences, all in autumn or winter. Red-necked and Slavonian Grebes, however, appear to have occurred at similar frequencies to modern times. It's worth remembering, in passing, that Great Crested Grebe was once far scarcer than now. Ticehurst says that it was "solely an autumn and winter visitor" and that there was "no record of this bird ever having bred in Kent or, indeed, ever having been seen in summer". Little Grebe, though, was a widespread breeding species.

In the modern era, the three species have, on average, occurred at roughly similar frequencies, with between 23 and 27 individuals of each reported per year over a sixty-year period. But there have been changes through that time, and some differences between the species. The first three charts show the annual (July-June) totals for each.

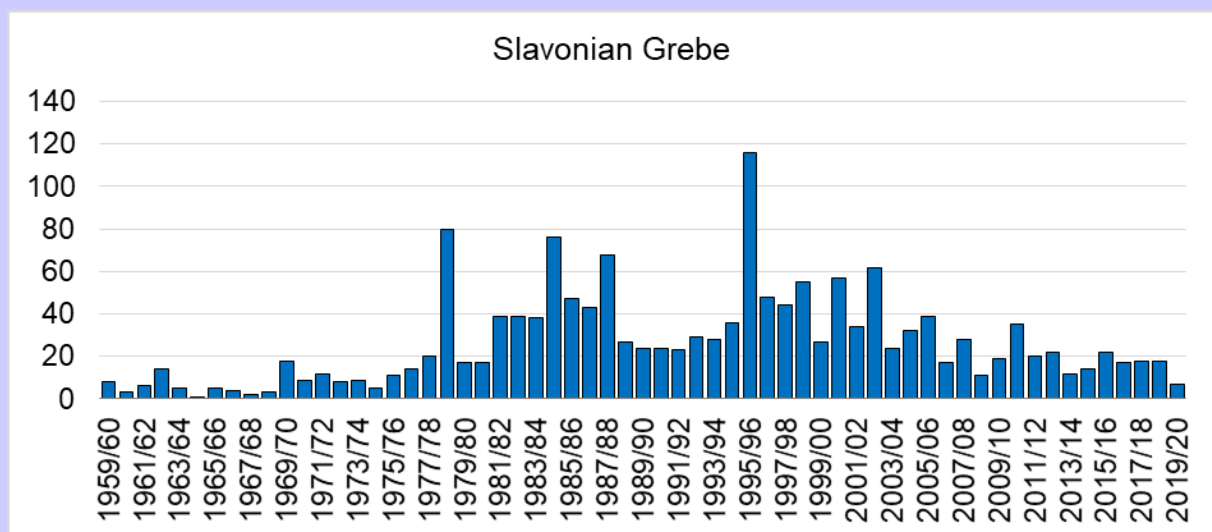


Red-necked Grebe by Alan Fossey



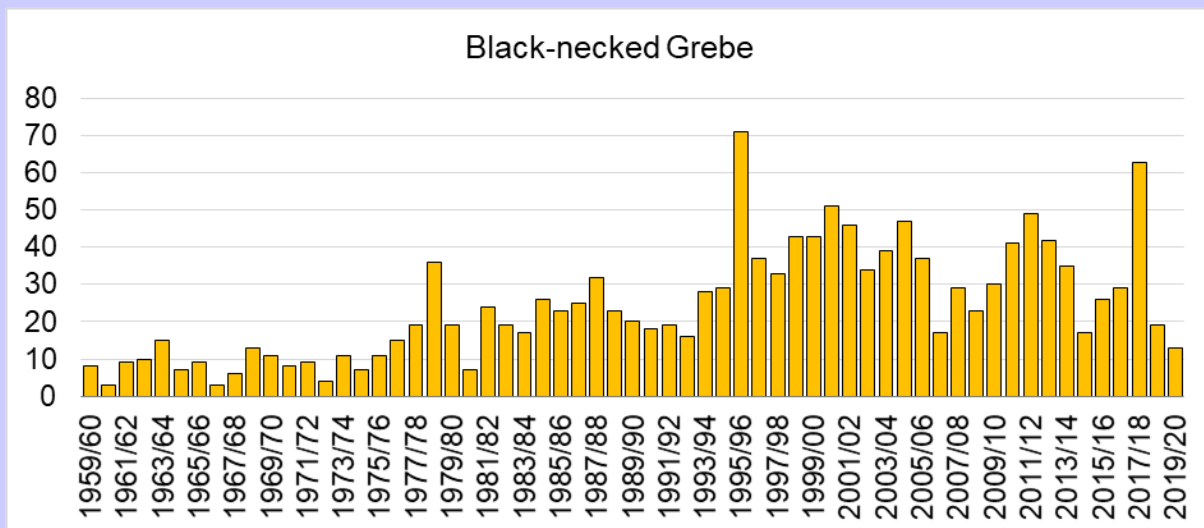


Slavonian Grebe by Terry Laws





Black-necked Grebe by Terry Laws

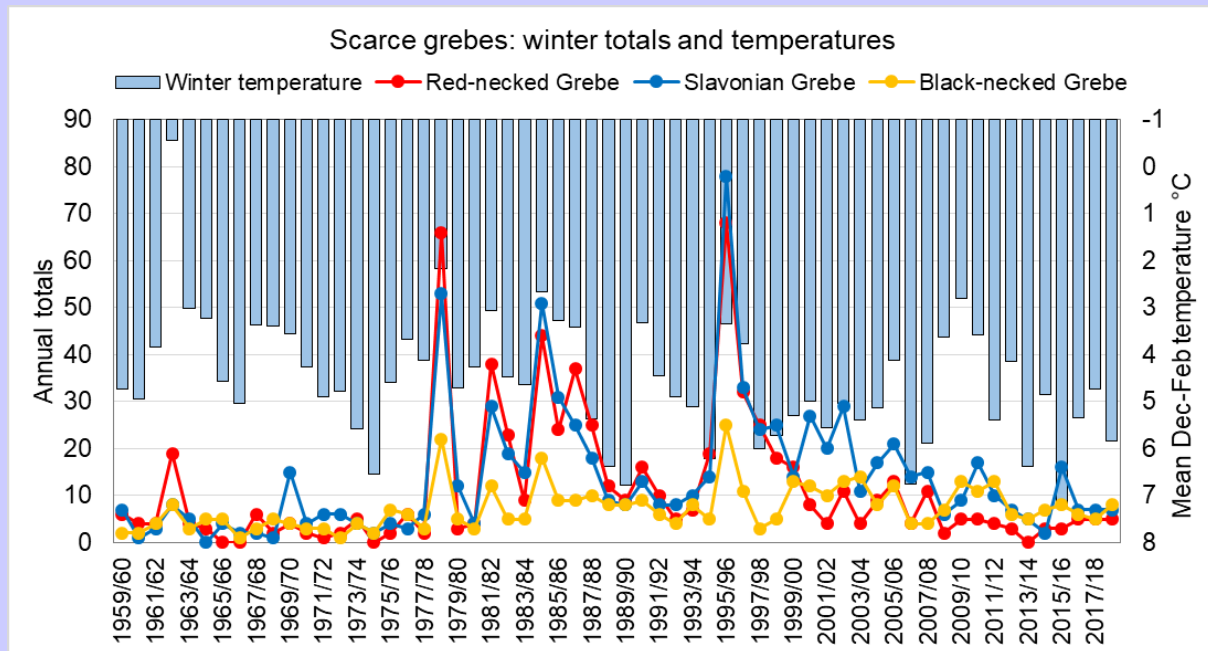


Back in the 1960s, all three were decidedly scarce. That is thought to be genuine though probably influenced by there being fewer observers then, and exaggerated to a small extent by the fact that a few records (excluded from analysis) were not distinguished between Slavonian and Black-necked. Even the extended severe weather of early 1963 did not produce hugely elevated numbers (but see below). The cold winter of 1978/79, however, was amazing, with four times as many Red-necks and Slavs, and about twice as many Black-necks, as ever seen before. The following two winters seemed to return to normal but then a period with generally high numbers began, lasting for at least 20 years in the case of Red-necked Grebe, and longer for the others. Those years did include some cold winters, though nothing like as cold as 1962/63 or even really 1978/79.

From about the turn of the century, there was a trend towards smaller totals for Red-necked and Slavonian Grebes, both of which (and especially Red-necked) are now back close to the levels of before 1979.

I've had a look at the relationship between winter (December-February) totals of the three grebes and mean winter temperatures (using the mean air temperature for South-East and Central Southern England from the Met Office National Climate Information Centre). The chart below shows the temperature data with values reversed on the axis. During 1975-2000, there did seem to be a correlation, with biggest grebe counts in winters 1978/79, 1981/82, 1984/85 and 1995/96, all of which were relatively cold, and smaller counts when it was milder, such as in 1989/90 and 1994/95. There are anomalies, though. Why was

1990/91 so different from 1995/96 for grebes, when the temperatures were so similar? Maybe continental conditions differed between those years, or perhaps the precise timing of the cold weather played a part.



There are some indications of a similar pattern in earlier years, with slightly raised grebe numbers in 1962/63 and 1969/70. In early 1963, with all inland water frozen for about three months, and even coastal waters frozen in places (have a look online for John Clague’s film of the frozen sea at Herne Bay at [bfi.org.uk](http://bfi.org.uk) if you don’t believe that), most grebes moved away if they could. In fact, quite a few were found dead, including 11 Red-necked.

The correlation between grebes and cold seems to have broken down since 2000, with few seen in the relatively chilly winters around 2010 and slightly elevated numbers of Slavonians in the warm winter of 2015/16. Why there were such markedly elevated numbers during that earlier twenty-year period is not clear.

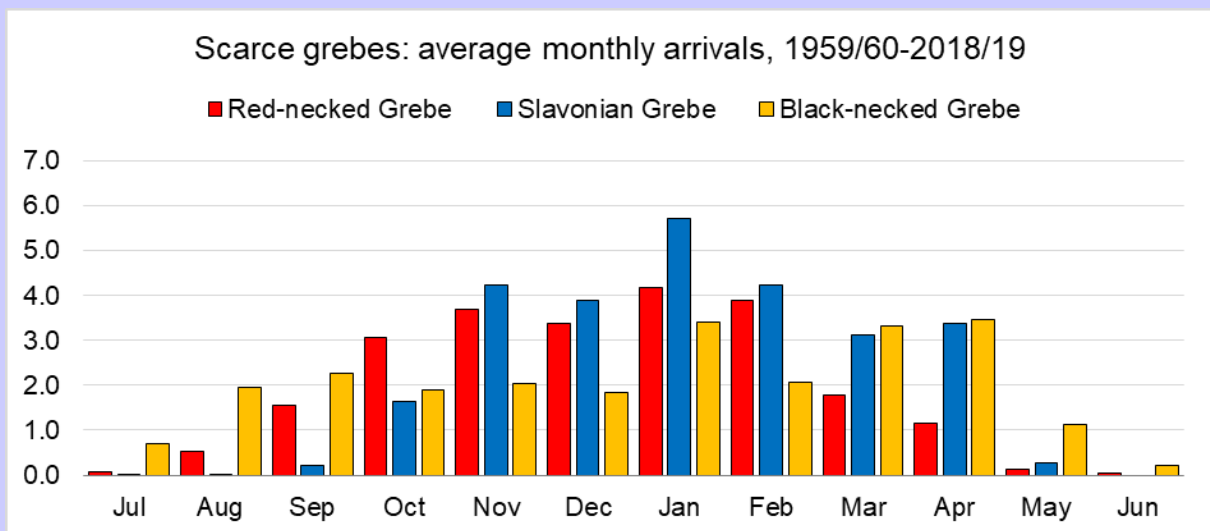


*Red-necked Grebe, summer plumage by Terry Laws*

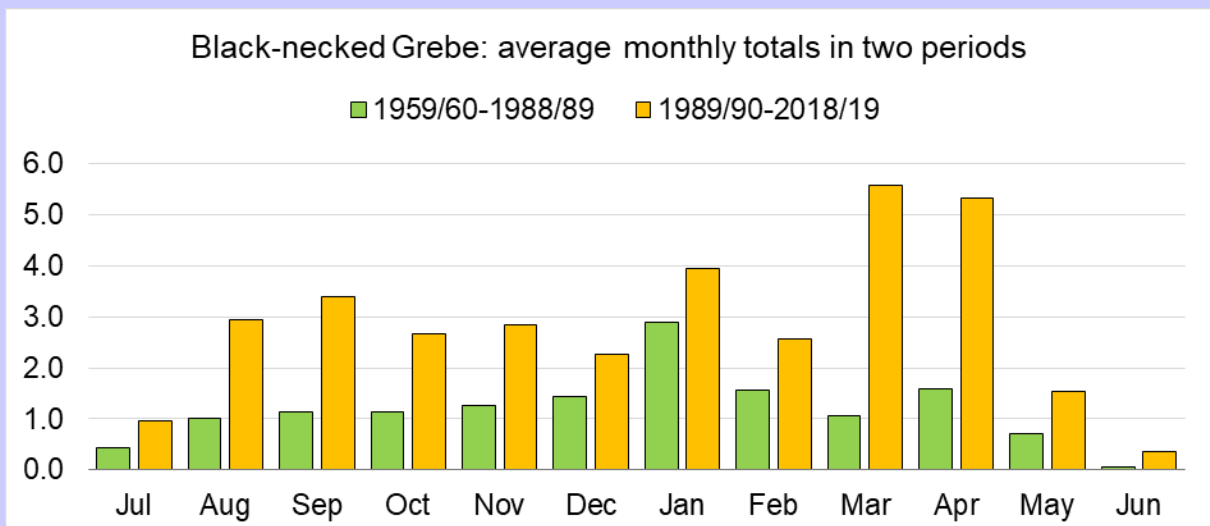
Red-necked and Slavonian Grebes are primarily winter visitors, as shown in the next chart of *arrival* dates (note that plenty of individuals stay for prolonged periods). Both species have peaks in January, but do show some indication of passage in November and – for Slavonian – in April. There have been a few years when sizeable numbers of Slavonians have passed Dungeness in spring: in 1979 a total of 13 flew E on 8th-9th April, while in 1988 42 flew E during Apr 3rd-May 1st including 14 on Apr 15th.



*Slavonian Grebe, summer plumage by Alan Fossey*



Black-necked Grebe shows a distinctly different pattern. There are fairly even arrivals through autumn and early winter, followed by a peak in January and then another peak in March-April. That pattern has changed over the years, with the spring arrivals, and to a lesser extent autumn arrival, much more prominent recently, as illustrated by this chart covering 1959/60-1988/89 and 1989/90-2018/19.





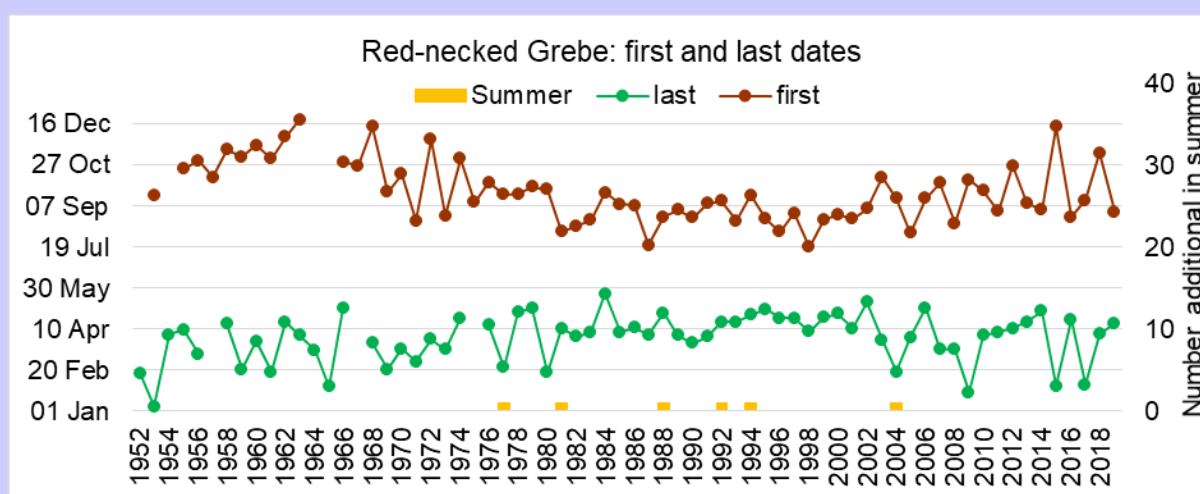
The development of the spring arrivals of Black-necked Grebes has been associated with occasional breeding records in the county. Single pairs bred in 1964, 1966 and possibly 1969, but then there were none until 2001 when a single pair again bred. One or two pairs bred each year during 2004-2006, followed by breeding most years from 2010 onwards. Peak numbers occurred during 2011-2013, with 14-19 adults present, but only in the first of those was nesting successful: six or seven broods totalling 10-12 young were seen. Large groups were also seen in 2018, including a flock of 13 at Bough Beech reservoir, but no nesting was reported that year.

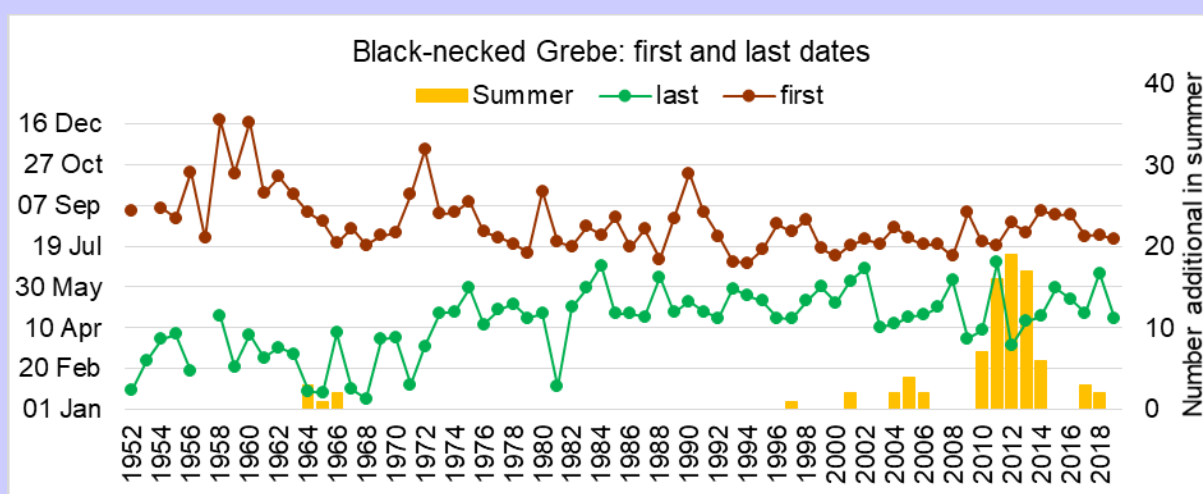
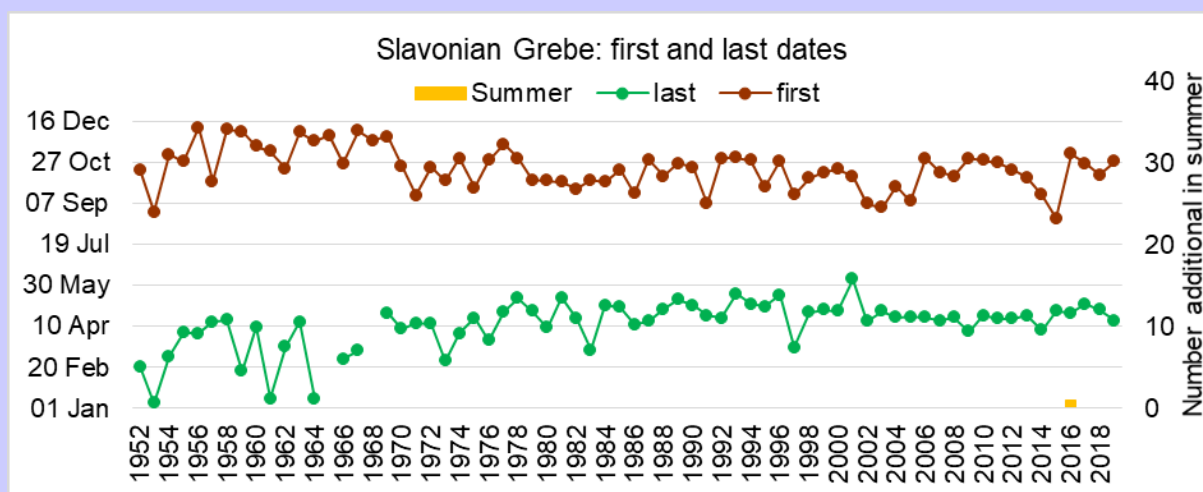
Susceptible to disturbance and egg-collectors, nesting locations should not be publicised, and it is possible that some breeding attempts have not been reported to ensure the birds' safety.



*Black-necked Grebe, summer plumage by Terry Laws*

One additional little bit of analysis that I've done for these three species is to extract from Kent Bird Reports the dates of the last in spring and the first in autumn each year. Charts showing these are shown below, with some records (six for Red-necked, one for Slavonian and lots for Black-necked) indicated as 'summer' records because they couldn't sensibly be allocated to spring or autumn.





When only a few individuals occur each year, there is a lot of variation from year to year. That's true for all three species in the 1960s, and for Red-necked again in the most recent years. However, the patterns for all three species are similar: as more birds occurred, departure dates in spring got later and arrival dates in autumn got earlier. For Red-necked and Slavonian Grebes, for which annual totals have fallen again, there is some indication that the trend has reversed, certainly for Red-necked. For Black-necked Grebe, with the presence of a small breeding population, it's become difficult to distinguish departures and arrivals.

For the most recent twenty years (2000-2019), the average departure and arrival dates are as follows:

	Last	First
Red-necked Grebe	31st March	20th September
Slavonian Grebe	25th April	10th October
Black-necked Grebe	7th May	3rd August

As mentioned above, the long-term average totals for the three species are very similar to one another. That is not true of the most recent period. For the ten years from 2009/10 to 2018/19, the average numbers of individuals of the three species have been:

Red-necked Grebe	9.4
Slavonian Grebe	19.7
Black-necked Grebe	35.1

All birds are equally interesting, but some are more interesting than others. These grebes are attractive birds to look at, often found in scenically satisfying sites, and scarce enough to make a birding outing special. Let's hope they continue to appear.

This article has been based on data extracted from Kent Bird Reports, augmented in a few places by material from KOS computerised records and other sources. I would like to mention particularly the KBR entries written for many years by David Davenport. They are a model of clear and concise presentation of the information necessary for analyses such as these. His loss – thirteen years ago now – is much regretted.

**Andrew Henderson**

## **Curious Curlews**

The Curlew is a familiar bird of the shore around the Kent coast in autumn and winter, but it seldom receives more than a passing glance from most birdwatchers. Maybe a quick scan to make sure it is not a Whimbrel or something more 'interesting', but seldom any real sustained observation. This might in part be a consequence of it being rather wary and unapproachable, but whatever the reason it tends to fall into the category 'tick it and move on'.

This is a pity, for watching Curlew can be both rewarding and entertaining. The way they use that extraordinary bill to extract crabs from under boulders is a revelation, add to this powerful flight and possibly the most haunting call of any bird on the shore and they become objects of wonder and delight.

For my part, they were one of the first waders I came to know as a kid in West Wales, where they were usually found on the boulder strewn shore on a dropping tide in winter, or up on the rough pastures of the Preseli hills in summer when I was lucky enough to find their big blotchy eggs and gangly chicks on several occasions. Sadly, they are in serious decline as a breeding species in Britain, mostly due to improvements in grassland and changes in land use. Mind you, in my early days a Curlew was sometimes a key component in a winter hotpot cooked by my Granny, but not so frequently that it could have made a major contribution to the declines.

Recently Dean Macey took an interesting photo of a couple of Curlew flying over Pegwell Bay. (below)



*Curlew by Dean Macey*

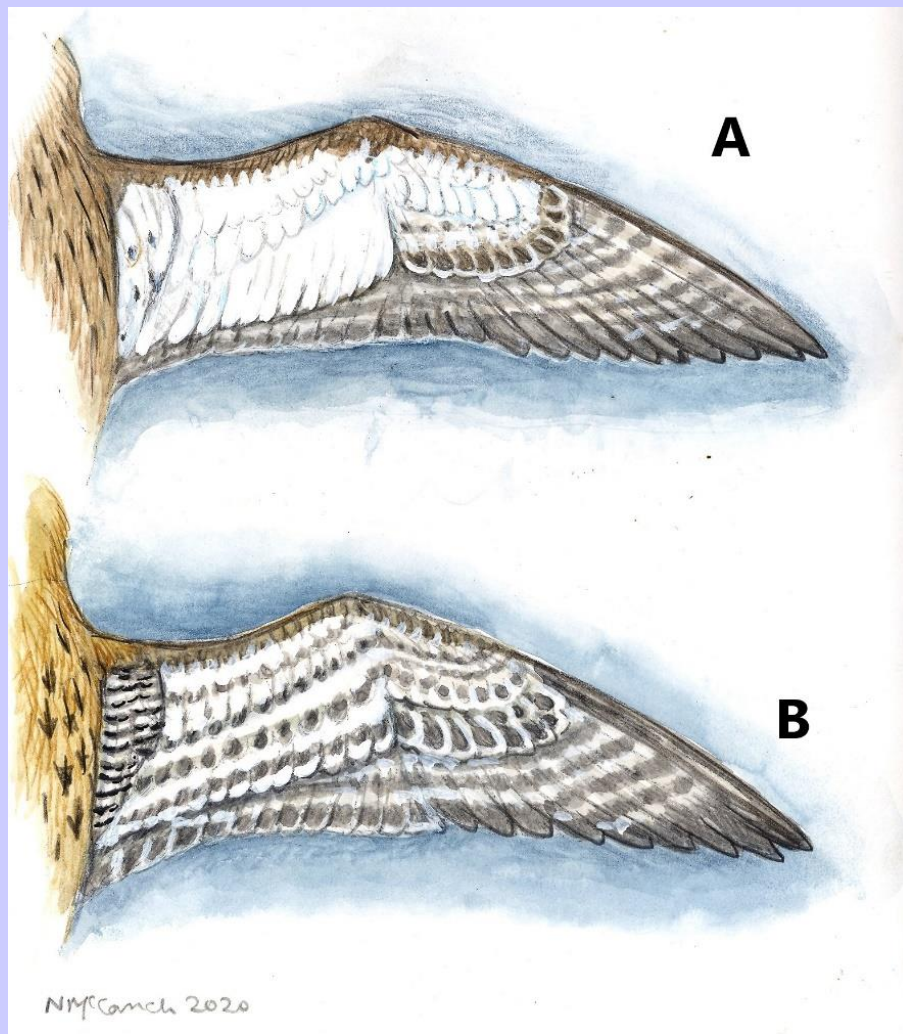
The lower bird caught my eye due to its incredibly white, unmarked underwing. Although Curlew can be a bit variable in underwing pattern, most birds are distinctly more marked than this individual. This type of underwing pattern, allied to reduced dark barring on the flanks, is generally indicative of birds of the eastern race *Numenius arquata orientalis*. This bird has been extracted from the image and enlarged in the picture below.



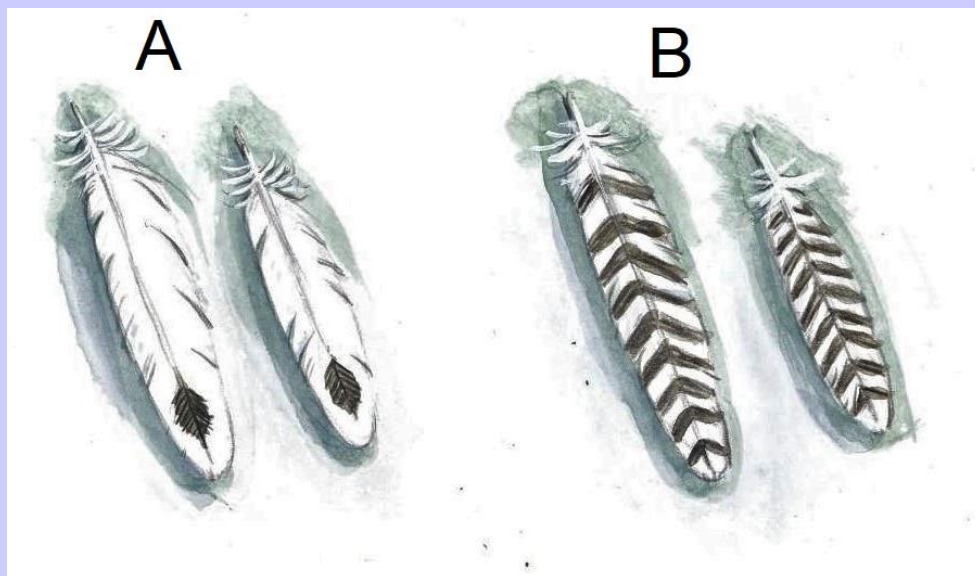
*Enlargement of lower bird in photo above, by Dean Macey*

My interest in this taxon goes back as far as 1984, when a friend gave me a bird that he had found dead below power lines at Richborough. I prepared this bird as a study skin, now in the National Museum of Wales and noted that it too was a bird 'showing characters' of *N.a orientalis*. This bird, (Fig1A) although very white on the underwing coverts when compared with typical bird found dead in West Wales (Fig 1B) when compared to the bird pictured above, showed characteristic white axillaries with dark sub-terminal spots (Fig 2A)





**Figure 1** Underwing sketches of *orientalis* type from Richborough, Kent (A) and *arquata* type from Pembrokeshire (B)



**Figure 2** Axillary feather sketches of *orientalis* type from Richborough, Kent (A) and *arquata* type from Pembrokeshire (B)



*Enlargement of second bird by Dean Macey*

The second bird in Dean's photograph (above) shows more dark markings on the underwing coverts, but is still rather paler than typical British birds, such as the one in the picture below, compared with a typical *orientalis* from Hong Kong.



*N.a arquata*, England by Charles Sharp (wikicommons)



N.a *orientalis*, Hong Kong by Martin Hale (OBC)

### Migration

Migration through Balkans includes both races and intermediates. Early 20th century records show no *orientalis* in Hungary, and all *orientalis/arquata* intergrades in Bulgaria, whereas records from 1950s and 1960s show c. 50% *orientalis* or *orientalis/arquata* in Albania, Hungary, and Rumania (but all birds in Austria and southern West Germany are nominate *arquata*). Hence migration of *orientalis* and intergrades is believed to extend further west now than 40–80 years ago

Typical *orientalis*, is believed to winter in part on east Mediterranean and Red Sea (where it certainly occurs on passage) also across southern Asia from Persian Gulf to Philippines and Japan, and in Afrotropical and Malagasy regions. In Africa, *orientalis* occurs west to Gulf of Guinea, south to Cape Province. Peacock (2016) suggests that numbers wintering in South Africa have declined in recent years.

**BWP on CD-ROM: © Oxford University Press.**

### Geographical variation

Variation is clinal, nominate *arquata* and *orientalis* are western and eastern extremes respectively of continuous cline of increasing bill and tarsus length, less heavy marking, and paler ground-colour towards the east. Variation in bill length appears on average to involve an increase of c. 2 mm for every 10° east. No sharp boundary exists between these extremes, but there is a zone of intergrade between *arquata* and *orientalis* around Ural Mountains.

Axillary pattern forms the best character for racial recognition, if age differences are accounted for, as the number of blobs and boldness of marks on the body parallels number of markings on the axillaries. Marks in juveniles of both races are relatively narrower, body and axillaries appearing paler.

Nominate *arquata* from Britain, Norway and continental western Europe have shorter bill and tarsus, rather broad streaks on upperparts and chest, back and rump usually streaked, belly and upper tail-coverts often marked with black blobs, **flanks distinctly barred and often with large dark blobs, axillaries barred (bars sometimes broken) and often with black subterminal blob, and under wing-coverts partly barred or spotted, especially primary coverts;**



Typical *orientalis* from the eastern part of the range has longer bill and tarsus; narrower and less deep black streaks on the head, neck, upperparts, chest, flanks, and upper tail-coverts; **flanks and Upper tail-coverts are less heavily barred and usually lacking black blobs; belly, back, rump, and underwing almost immaculately white; tail with fewer and narrower bars; axillaries white, with a few thin dusky sub-terminal shaft-streaks at most.**

BWP on CD-ROM: © Oxford University Press.

So where does all this leave us, faced with a Curlew on the Kent coast in winter? The clinal nature of the variation in these birds means that it is not really possible to say with any confidence where in the global range one individual originates from. However, we do know that birds with the most heavily marked underwings are representative of the population breeding in Britain and north-western Europe, while those with the palest, most pristine white underwings are from the most easterly population, typical of birds in eastern Siberia. If we consider for a moment that birds such as Radde's Warbler, Yellow-browed Warbler and others originate from the same areas inhabited by *orientalis* Curlew, while a Chinese ringed Redpoll was recaptured in Denmark a few years ago, such movements across the continent are feasible for a bird of Curlews size and endurance.

The intermediate birds, such as the second bird in Dean's photo, probably originate from somewhere in the general area of the Ural Mountains, or slightly to the east, but we may never know, unless it is possible to arrange a stable isotope analysis on a suspect bird. Sadly, that technology was not available when I prepared the specimen of the bird from Richborough, but the specimen is still in the National Museum of Wales, if anyone cares to stump up the cash required!!

#### Bibliography

BWP on CD-ROM: © Oxford University Press  
Peacock, F (2016) Chamberlain's Waders Pavo Publishing, Cape Town, S.A.

**Norman McCanch**

## **KENT BIRD SIGHTINGS FOR NOVEMBER AND DECEMBER 2020 - 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

**November** began mild, wet and windy but it briefly turned colder and more settled around the 4<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> with a ridge of high pressure. Southerly and south-westerly winds blew frequently from the 7<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup>, bringing mild weather until the 25<sup>th</sup>, with a very brief northerly blow on the 19<sup>th</sup>. It turned settled and colder from 26<sup>th</sup> to 29<sup>th</sup> with high pressure and widespread fog with variable amounts of cloud and then rain spread southwards on the 30<sup>th</sup>.

The first week of **December** was unsettled and turned increasingly cold, with low pressure becoming slow moving and giving spells of rain. It turned milder from the 8<sup>th</sup> while remaining generally wet. A south westerly air flow dominated from the 13<sup>th</sup> to 23<sup>rd</sup> with strong winds at times. It became colder during the last week with widespread wet and windy weather from Storm Bella on the 26<sup>th</sup> and cold and unsettled weather continuing during the last few days. 85.25mm of rain fell at Bishopstone during the month.

### WILDFOWL

A **Pale-bellied Brent Goose** flew past DBO on Nov 8<sup>th</sup> and one was identified at Swale NNR on Dec 12<sup>th</sup>.





*Barnacle Geese by Phil Smith*

Six **Barnacle Geese** flew S at North Foreland on Nov 10<sup>th</sup>, nine flew W at Hythe on the 11<sup>th</sup> and there were seven at Worth Marshes on the 28<sup>th</sup>. One or two were seen on Reculver Marshes between Nov 30<sup>th</sup> and Dec 7<sup>th</sup> and there were 32 at Worth Marshes on the 2<sup>nd</sup>, and three at Swale NNR on the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup>, two at Chartham on the 6<sup>th</sup> and one at North Foreland and two at Potman's Heath on the 7<sup>th</sup>. During the rest of December up to 14 birds were then seen at Shuart, Sandwich Bay, Haysden, Bough Beech, Elmley and Worth Marshes.

A **Pink-footed Goose** flew past Samphire Hoe on Nov 8<sup>th</sup> and was seen at Seabrook the next day whilst three were seen at Cooling Marshes on Nov 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> and at Northward Hill on the 17<sup>th</sup>. Eight flew south at Reculver Marshes with an adult White-fronted Goose on Nov 23<sup>rd</sup>. There was a marked arrival of birds on Nov 29<sup>th</sup> with 130 at Sandwich Bay, 110 at Walmer and smaller numbers at Bridge and Weddington. On Dec 2<sup>nd</sup>, there were 170 at Worth Marshes with one at Seaton on the 8<sup>th</sup>. Following this single figure counts came from Worth Marshes, Reculver, Shuart, Halstow Marshes and Grove Ferry.



*Tundra Bean Geese by Richard Hanman*

On Nov 29<sup>th</sup>, there were 10 **Tundra Bean Geese** at Worth Marshes and two at Sandwich Bay and on the 30<sup>th</sup> there were four at Sandwich Bay and two at Sevenoaks WR. During December there were as many as 13 birds recorded from Sandwich Bay, Swale NNR, Seasalter, Ramsgate, Chartham, Shuart, Capel Fleet, Boughton Lees, Eastwell Park, Kennington, Grove Ferry, Faversham, Naccolt, Godmersham, Walland Marsh and Wye.



*White-fronted Goose by Phil Smith*

The regular wintering flock of **Russian White-fronted Geese** seen at Swale NNR increased to 192 birds during December.

One flew S at Reculver Marshes and six were seen at Sandwich Bay on Nov 23<sup>rd</sup> and on the 28<sup>th</sup> seven were seen at Cliftonville with 10 at Worth Marshes. Between Nov 29<sup>th</sup> and Dec 2<sup>nd</sup> there was an exceptional arrival of birds mainly in east Kent but spreading out after arrival with peak counts during the rest of December of 550 at Worth Marshes, 480 at Reculver Marshes, 230 at Fairfield, 205 at Swale NNR, 150 Northward Hill, 146 at Dungeness/Lydd, 118 Minster, 110 at Grove Ferry/Stodmarsh with smaller numbers at over 40 sites throughout Kent.

The first two **Bewick's Swans** of the winter flew W past Swalecliffe on Nov 21<sup>st</sup> and then six flew W at Reculver with four at Swalecliffe and Sittingbourne and three at Dungeness RSPB on the 30<sup>th</sup>. During December there were up to five birds seen at Lydd, Nonington, Capel Fleet and Godmersham and a peak of 35 birds at Walland Marsh.

One of the four **Whooper Swans** first seen at Allhallows on Sept 28<sup>th</sup> was still there on Nov 4<sup>th</sup>. Two birds were seen at Dungeness RSPB/Lydd between Nov 20<sup>th</sup> and Dec 9<sup>th</sup> with one at Capel Fleet on Dec 2<sup>nd</sup> and up to four at Walland Marsh from Dec 4<sup>th</sup> until the end of the month.

Up to 14 **Egyptian Geese** were seen at over 20 sites throughout Kent and as many as 43 **Mandarins** were seen at Bedgebury, Littlebourne, Reculver, Benenden, Bough Beech, Sevenoaks WR and Chartham.

A drake **Green-winged Teal** was reported from Kearsney on Nov 20<sup>th</sup> and a **Red-crested Pochard** was seen at Bough Beech on Nov 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup>.

Two **Scaup** were reported from Sevenoaks WR on Nov 8<sup>th</sup> and three flew W at DBO on Nov 9<sup>th</sup> whilst single birds were seen on the Swale at Oare Marshes on Nov 17<sup>th</sup> and Nov 21<sup>st</sup>. During December one or two birds were recorded from Swalecliffe, Reculver, Cliffe Pools, South Swale NNR, Tankerton, Scotney and Murston.

During these two months up to 10 **Velvet Scoter** were seen at Walmer, DBO, Sandwich Bay, Cliftonville, North Foreland, Foreness, Seasalter, Minnis Bay, Swalecliffe, Tankerton and Reculver and single **Long-tailed Ducks** were seen at St Margarets-at-Cliffe on Nov 13<sup>th</sup> and at Scotney intermittently from Nov 13<sup>th</sup>-Dec 18<sup>th</sup> whilst one flew W at Cliftonville on Dec 24<sup>th</sup> and one was seen on Christmas Day flying E at Reculver.





*Goosander by Keith Cutting*

During November and December up to 11 **Goosanders** were recorded at Bough Beech, DBO, Wouldham, Sevenoaks WR, Finberry, Sandwich Bay, Furnace Pond, Deal, Conningbrook, Walmer Beach, West Hythe, Cliftonville, Minnis Bay, Lade, DBO, Hythe, Haysden Lake, Chatham, Preston Court, Faversham Creek and Oare Marshes.

#### PARTRIDGE TO CORMORANT

Up to four **Black-throated Divers** were reported from Dungeness, Sandwich Bay, Botany Bay, Foreness, Walmer, Grenham Bay, Reculver, Hythe, Deal, Stodmarsh, Samphire Hoe, Folkestone, Swalecliffe, Whitstable, DBO and Tankerton.

As many as five **Great Northern Divers** were seen at Foreness, Cliftonville, Ramsgate, Sandwich Bay, DBO, Shellness, Grenham Bay, Sandgate, Samphire Hoe, Walmer, Reculver, Deal, Herne Bay, Whitstable, Tankerton and Swalecliffe.

A **Storm Petrel** was seen being harassed by gulls at Swalecliffe on Nov 16<sup>th</sup> and a **Leach's Petrel** flew E at DBO on Dec 21<sup>st</sup>.

A **Sooty Shearwater** flew past DBO on Nov 3<sup>rd</sup> with two on the 14<sup>th</sup> and there was one seen at Deal on Nov 15<sup>th</sup> whilst single **Manx Shearwaters** flew past DBO on Nov 1<sup>st</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup>.

As many as four **Slavonian Grebes** were seen between Seasalter and Swalecliffe and at Lower Halstow during November and December. In addition, one flew E at Minnis Bay on Dec 11<sup>th</sup> and single birds were seen at Samphire Hoe on the Dec 12<sup>th</sup>, at Cooling Marshes on the 13<sup>th</sup> and at Riverside CP on the 17<sup>th</sup>.



*Black-necked Grebe by Terry Laws*

During November and December, single **Black-necked Grebes** were recorded at Dungeness RSPB, Cliffe Pools, Sandwich Bay, Tankerton, Oare Marshes and Murston with two at Cliffe Pools on Dec 31<sup>st</sup>.

A **Red-necked Grebe** was seen at Seasalter on Nov 8<sup>th</sup>, one flew E at DBO on Nov 12<sup>th</sup> and one was seen at Swalecliffe on Nov 16<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup>. During December single birds flew past DBO on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> and N at Sandwich Bay on the 21<sup>st</sup> with another record from Seasalter on Dec 30<sup>th</sup>.

The **Glossy Ibis** first seen at Dungeness RSPB in October remained there until the end of the year. Four other birds were also seen at Dungeness RSPB on Nov 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> and single birds were seen at Wouldham on Nov 5<sup>th</sup>, at Cliffe Pools on the 11<sup>th</sup> and Haysden Lake on the 13<sup>th</sup>.



*Glossy Ibis by Martin Garwood*



Up to three **Spoonbills** were found at Bough Beech between Nov 9<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> and one was seen at Dungeness RSPB on Nov 20<sup>th</sup> and there was also one at Lydd Ranges on Dec 6<sup>th</sup> and Scotney on Dec 11<sup>th</sup>.

A **Bittern** was seen at Elmley on Nov 18<sup>th</sup> and two were reported from Rushenden on Nov 19<sup>th</sup> and there was one at Oare Marshes on Dec 9<sup>th</sup>, two reported from Sevenoaks WR on Dec 16<sup>th</sup> with one at Lade on Dec 18<sup>th</sup> and another at Stodmarsh on the 31<sup>st</sup>.



*Cattle Egrets by Brendan Ryan*

During November and December up to six **Cattle Egrets** were seen at Dungeness RSPB, Collard's Lake, Sandwich Bay, Worth Marshes, Leysdown-on-Sea, Seaton, Westbere, Grain and Stodmarsh/Grove Ferry and as many as six **Great White Egrets** were seen at 24 sites throughout the County.

Up to four **Shags** were seen at DBO, Reculver, Swalecliffe, Foreness, Dover, Folkestone Harbour, Walmer Beach, Mill Point, South Foreland, Bockhill, Sampire Hoe, Ramsgate, Higham, Cliftonville, Tankerton and Chatham.

#### BIRDS OF PREY

A **Goshawk** was reported from Pegwell Bay on Nov 25<sup>th</sup>.

As many as four **Hen Harriers** were recorded from Dungeness, Grove Ferry/Stodmarsh, Seasalter, Oare Marshes, Sandwich Bay, Harty Marshes, Minnis Bay, Northward Hill, Swalecliffe, Capel Fleet, Walland Marsh, Acol, Dartford, Naccolt, Potman's Heath, Chetney, Shellness, Shuart, Shelvingford, North Foreland, South Foreland, Swale NNR, Hoo St Werburgh, Lade, Littlestone-on-Sea, Wye, Luddenham Marsh, Minster, Pegwell Bay, Rusheneden, Cliffe Pools, Scotney, Fairfield, Wye, Lenham, Whitstable, Brooksend, Funton Creek and Conyer.

In November and December up to three **Red Kites** were seen at Westerham, Edenbridge, Darent Valley, Throwley Forstal and Goathurst Common and a **Black Kite** flew slowly NW at DBO on the morning of Nov 12<sup>th</sup> and one was reported from Chillenden on the 17<sup>th</sup>.

#### RAILS TO WADERS

During November and December up to 17 **Purple Sandpipers** were seen at Foreness, Cliftonville, Broadstairs, Botany Bay, Margate, Reculver Marshes, Hampton, Samphire Hoe, Dover, Hythe, Leysdown-on-Sea, Shellness and DBO.

A **Little Stint** was seen at Cliffe Pools on Nov 3<sup>rd</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> whilst during November and December up to three **Jack Snipe** were seen at Wouldham, Sandwich Bay, DBO, Egypt Bay, Grove Ferry, Bough Beech, Dartford Marshes and Kennington.

A **Red-necked Phalarope** was found near Folkestone on Nov 29<sup>th</sup> and a **Grey Phalarope** was seen at DBO on Nov 3<sup>rd</sup> with another near Margate Harbour on Dec 24<sup>th</sup>.

A first winter **Lesser Yellowlegs** was identified at Capel Fleet on Nov 9<sup>th</sup> and remained there until at least the 12<sup>th</sup>.

During November and December as many as five **Spotted Redshanks** were seen at Oare Marshes, Sittingbourne, Cliffe Pools, Otterham and Lower Halstow with 17 reported from Murston on Nov 1<sup>st</sup>.

#### AUKS TO GULLS

A juvenile **Sabine's Gull** flew past Reculver on Nov 19<sup>th</sup> and others were reported from Kingsdown on Nov 25<sup>th</sup> and at St Margarets-at-Cliffe on the 30<sup>th</sup>.

During November and December up to 17 **Little Gulls** were seen at DBO, Minnis Bay, Reculver, Swalecliffe, Bough Beech, Foreness, Chillenden, Willop Basin and Sandwich Bay, however on the Nov 14<sup>th</sup>, 90 flew past DBO and there were also 87 reported from Shellness on Nov 19<sup>th</sup>.



*Glaucous Gull by Phil Smith*

A juvenile **Glaucous Gull** was seen at Hythe on Nov 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> with others recorded from Foreness on Dec 16<sup>th</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> and at DBO between Dec 18<sup>th</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup>.

An adult **Iceland Gull** flew E at Foreness on Dec 6<sup>th</sup> and a second winter bird was seen at DBO on Dec 10<sup>th</sup> and a juvenile was seen there on Dec 24<sup>th</sup>. On Dec 26<sup>th</sup>, however, there were four birds on the Patch at Dungeness comprising three second year birds and one juvenile with one or two birds being seen there until the end of the year.

A juvenile bird found roosting at Pegwell on Dec 19<sup>th</sup> was identified by the observers as a **Kumlein's Gull**.

During November and December up to eight **Caspian Gulls** were seen in the Dungeness area with as many as three reported from Pegwell Bay, North Foreland, Sevenoaks WR, Chillenden, Dover, Willop Basin, Dartford Marshes and Walmer and as many as three **Yellow-legged Gulls** were seen at Pegwell Bay, Sandwich Bay, Dartford Marshes, Willop Basin and DBO.

During these two months up to 24 **Great Skuas** were seen at DBO, Minnis Bay, Mill Point, Reculver, Deal, Swalecliffe, Tankerton, South Foreland, Walmer Beach and Foreness.

A **Pomarine Skua** was seen at DBO on Nov 3<sup>rd</sup> and two adults flew past there on Nov 13<sup>th</sup> whilst another bird flew past Cliftonville on Nov 20<sup>th</sup>. In December two flew W at DBO on the 16<sup>th</sup> and one was seen on the 23<sup>rd</sup>.

In November single **Arctic Skuas** were seen at DBO, Deal and Foreness.

A **Little Auk** was seen off DBO on Dec 5<sup>th</sup> and one flew S at Sandwich Bay on the 11<sup>th</sup> with one flying S at Deal the next day. Four were seen at Foreness on Dec 24<sup>th</sup>.

A first winter **Black Guillemot** flew E past Reculver on Nov 18<sup>th</sup> and was seen later that day offshore at Minnis Bay.

A **Puffin** was reported from Swalecliffe on Nov 5<sup>th</sup> and single birds were seen at Cliftonville on the 9<sup>th</sup> and DBO on the 22<sup>nd</sup>.

#### DOVES TO RING-NECKED PARAKEET

During November and December one or two **Long-eared Owls** were recorded from DBO and Shuart and up to nine **Short-eared Owls** were seen on Sheppey with as many as five at Sandwich Bay, Reculver Marshes, Dungeness, Conyer, Foreness, Dartford Marshes, Oare Marshes and Bockhill.

A **COMMON NIGHTHAWK** was photographed on the afternoon of Nov 6<sup>th</sup> at Burham Marshes but not seen subsequently. If accepted by BBRC this will be a new species for Kent.

During November and December up to four **Merlins** were seen at DBO, Sandwich Bay, Bough Beech, Rushenden, Bearsted, Harty, Shellness, Hythe, Riverside CP, Cliffe Pools, East Peckham, Foreness, Stodmarsh, Seabrook and Reculver.

#### SHRIKES TO HIRUNDINES

The **Great Grey Shrike** first seen in the Capel Fleet area on Oct 19<sup>th</sup> was still there on Nov 1<sup>st</sup> and the bird seen at Worth Marshes on Oct 17<sup>th</sup> remained there until Nov 4<sup>th</sup>.

Up to four **Ravens** were recorded from Dungeness RSPB, Foreness, Samphire Hoe, Darent Valley, Conyer, Lympne, Kingsdown, Tonbridge, Elmsted, Broomfield, Grove Ferry/Stodmarsh, Seaton, Chartham, Chillenden, Reculver Marshes, Pett Dane, Ide Hill, South Foreland, Whetsted GPs, Marden and Nonington.

A **Waxwing** was reported from Strood on Dec 1<sup>st</sup> and there were four at Stonelees on Dec 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup>. From then until the end of the month up to six birds were recorded from Canterbury and Cliftonville.

Single **Woodlarks** were seen at Copt Point and Shuart on Nov 4<sup>th</sup> with others at DBO on the Nov 5<sup>th</sup> and at Sandwich Bay on Dec 11<sup>th</sup>.

A late **Swallow** was recorded from North Foreland on Dec 2<sup>nd</sup> and there was also one at Botolph's Brie on Dec 6<sup>th</sup>.



*Crag Martin by Mike Gould*



A **EURASIAN CRAG MARTIN** was discovered at the chalk cliffs of Kingsdown on Nov 21<sup>st</sup> and remained in the area until the Dec 4<sup>th</sup> regularly visiting Samphire Hoe. This is another new species for Kent making four potential new County species recorded in 2020.

#### CETTI'S WARBLER TO WHEATEARS

A **Siberian Chiffchaff** was ringed at Sandwich Bay on Nov 23<sup>rd</sup> and another was seen and heard at Sevenoaks WR on Dec 16<sup>th</sup>.

A **Dusky Warbler** was ringed at DBO on Nov 5<sup>th</sup> and others were reported from Sandwich Bay and Dungeness on Nov 7<sup>th</sup>, Dartford Marshes on Nov 23<sup>rd</sup> and North Foreland on Nov 30<sup>th</sup>. During December birds were identified at Minster Marshes, Thanet on Dec 11<sup>th</sup> where it remained until the 31<sup>st</sup> and at Dungeness RSPB also found on the Dec 11<sup>th</sup> and staying to the end of the year. One was also reported from a private site at Weddington on Dec 15<sup>th</sup>.

A **Pallas's Warbler** was seen at Sandwich Bay on Nov 5<sup>th</sup> with another at DBO on Nov 20<sup>th</sup> whilst single **Yellow-browed Warblers** were recorded from Dover and South Foreland on Nov 4<sup>th</sup> and from Tunbridge Wells and Samphire Hoe on the 6<sup>th</sup>.

A **HUME's WARBLER** was identified at DBO on Nov 5<sup>th</sup> and an eastern **Lesser Whitethroat** was seen at Dungeness RSPB on Dec 10<sup>th</sup>.



Dartford Warbler by Martyn Wilson

During November and December up to three **Dartford Warblers** were seen at Grove Ferry, Dungeness RSPB, DBO, Sandwich Bay, Cooling Marshes, Swanscombe Marshes, Scotney, Dartford Marshes and Abbotscliffe.

Up to 12 **Firecrests** were seen at DBO with smaller numbers at Tunbridge Wells, Bockhill, Folkestone, Nickoll's Quarry, Abbotscliffe, Sandwich Bay, Brasted, Rede Common and South Foreland.

In November **Ring Ouzels** were seen at Nonington, Langdon Cliffs, Burham, Abbotscliffe and Bockhill.

As many as 10 **Black Redstarts** were seen at DBO with smaller numbers at Reculver, Margate, Beneneden, Foreness, Ramsgate, Bough Beech, Sandwich Bay, Grove Ferry, Dartford, North Foreland, South Foreland, Deal, Kearsney, St Mary's Bay, Samphire Hoe, Seaton, East Barming, Kingsdown and Dover.

#### DUNNOCK TO BUNTINGS

An **EASTERN YELLOW WAGTAIL** (*Motacilla tschutschensis*) was identified at Worth Marshes on Nov 20<sup>th</sup> and remained there until the 25<sup>th</sup>. Eastern Yellow Wagtail was given full species status from Western Yellow Wagtail (*Motacilla flava*) in 2018 and would therefore be a new species for Kent if accepted by the BBRC.

A **Richard's Pipit** flew E at Abbotscliffe on Nov 5<sup>th</sup> and another bird was seen at Halstow Marshes from Dec 12<sup>th</sup>-29<sup>th</sup>.



As many as 17 **Water Pipits** were seen at Grove Ferry/Stodmarsh with smaller numbers at Wouldham, Cliffe Pools, Dartford Marshes, Swanscombe Marsh, Oare Marshes, Burham, Westbere, Swale NNR, Donkey Street, Worth Marshes, West Hythe and Dungeness RSPB.

Single **Hawfinches** were seen at High Halstow on Nov 10<sup>th</sup> and at Worth Marshes on Nov 27<sup>th</sup> with four at Easry on Dec 30<sup>th</sup> and six **Twite** were reported from Seasalter on Nov 30<sup>th</sup>.

As many as 13 **Common/Mealy Redpoll** were recorded at DBO and Sandwich Bay with smaller numbers identified at Bough Beech and Furnace Pond.

During November and December up to 18 **Crossbills** were seen at Sandwich Bay, DBO, Sevenoaks, Chillenden, Southborough, Tudeley Woods, Westerham, Bossenden Wood, South Foreland, Doddington, Lympne and Nonington.

A **Serin** flew over DBO on Nov 4<sup>th</sup> and one was seen at Lade on the 22<sup>nd</sup>.



*Lapland Bunting by Steve Reynaert*

During November and December up to five **Lapland Buntings** were seen at Worth Marshes, Sandwich Bay, Swale NNR, Egypt Bay, Reculver Marshes, Dartford Marshes, Oare Marshes, Weddington and Hillborough whilst up to four **Snow Buntings** were seen at Reculver Marshes, Minnis Bay, Sandwich Bay, Foreness, North Foreland, Cliftonville, Seasalter, South Swale LNR, Tankerton, Conyer, Herne Bay, DBO, Bockhill, and Abbotscliffe.



*Snow Bunting by Peter Maton*

**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. Bailey, B. Benn, D. Bentley, P. Beraet, J. Bloor, Bockhill Birders, Bough Beech (per A. Ford), E. Brown, N. Burt, G. Burton, F. Cackett, J. Carnell, R. Carr, M. Casemore, J. Chantler, P. Chantler, D. Chesterman, K. Cutting, P. Dale, DBO (per D. Walker), D. De Silva, D. Eade, B. East, H. Farrow, D. Faulkner, D. Feast, Folkestone and Hythe Birds (per I. Roberts), Foreness Bird Group, M. Garwood, C. Gibbard, R. Gomes, M. Gould, V. Green, J. Guiver, P. Hawkins, J. Headley, A. Hindle, C. Hindle, M. Hindle, M. Hollingworth, R. Jenkinson, J. Jones, M. Kennett, J. King, O. Leyshon, A. Lipczynski, K. Lord, R. Mace, D. Mairs, T. Manship, J. Massey, B. Matlock, N. McCanch, D. McGuire, S. McMinn, S. Message, J. Metcalfe, S. Mount, M. Norman, P. North, D. Oates, A. Pavey, R. O'Reilly, M. Orchard, A. Pavey, R. Peters, K. Privett, M. Puxley, R. Rackliffe, B. Ring, M. Roser, K. Ross, Samphire Hoe (per L. Collins, P. Holt, D. Smith, and P. Smith), J. Savill, SBBO (per A. Lipczynski and S. Walton), G. Scheller, E. Scott, Sevenoaks WR (per S. Clerici), I. Shepherd, D. Smith, South Foreland (per Ian Hodgson), W. Stoneham, M. Sutherland, Swale NNR (per R. Smith, D. Faulkner, I. Davidson), A. Swandale, C. Tedder, S. Tilley, P. Trodd, D. Tutt, N. Upton, M. Watts, M. Wilson, J. Woolgar, B. Woolhouse, D. Wrathall, B. Wright and M. Wright.

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.**

## Fifty Years Ago.



*White-fronted Geese, East Kent by Brendan Ryan December 2020)*

On Sheppey, there were over 1,000 White-fronted Geese in February, with a maximum count of 1120 during the month.

**KBR 1971**  
**Norman McCanch**