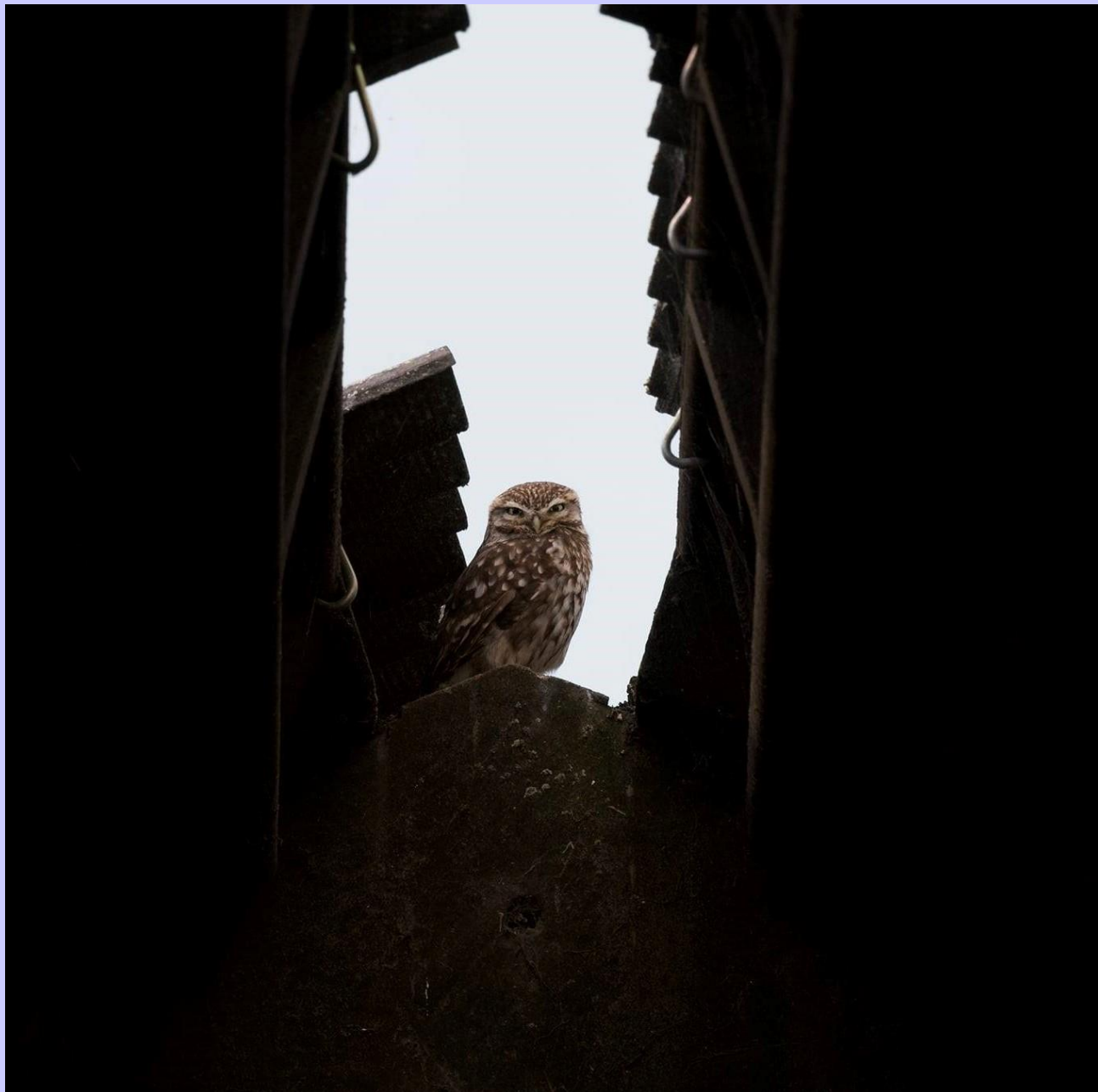




KOS News

The Newsletter of the Kent Ornithological Society

Number 538 May 2022



Little Owl by Russ Blackman

- News & Announcements •
- About Chaffinches, Bramblings, Hawfinches
(and Bullfinches) • East Kent Rookery Census 2022
- Bird Sightings – MARCH-APRIL 2022 •
- Fifty Years Ago •

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Editorial

This has been a peculiar spring so far. Just as I was looking forward to getting out and doing some catch-up birding, finding a steady flow of returning migrants. In the end, it was a slow old process with spring arrivals at no more than a trickle largely due to very unhelpful winds mostly from the north and east. By now, in mid-May I have caught up and only a few elusive individuals have yet to appear in my notebooks.

This has put me in mind of 1969, for those of a certain vintage memorable as “the spring with no Whitethroats”. In the early sixties I was an enthusiastic schoolboy birder, already a trainee ringer and doing a BTO Common Bird Census on a farm in South Surrey. Whitethroats were ever present, their cheeky, burbly song and fluttering song flight making them one of the one of the commonest farmland birds. Whitethroat numbers in Britain had been stable for several years up to 1968 but, despite a normal departure for their West African wintering grounds in the autumn of 1968, numbers crashed by around 70% between the 1968 and 1969 breeding seasons and they all but disappeared from my CBC plot.

Later it was determined by some clever and careful science that the cause was a severe drought in the Sahel south of the Sahara, where many of our migrants’ winter. Populations of most species recovered to varying degrees, but to my mind Whitethroats never regained their status and commonest farmland warbler. Mind you it did not help that farmland in Britain was undergoing radical changes as well in the same period.

Clearly we are now in a trend of climate change and disrupted weather patterns and it seems likely that we will see more declines and even losses from our bird populations in the future. However, we might also gain a few new colonists to brighten our days.

Good birding

Norman

News and announcements

BTO HERONRY CENSUS



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, heronries clearly come and go and new heronries may have been missed. So, if you see herons nesting

away from the regular colonies at Northward Hill, Graveney, Swanscombe, Fordwich, Lydd, Lympe, Eccles Island, Bough Beech, Sevenoaks and Frittenden please let me know. **Please also report the presence of any breeding Cormorants as this species is now also included in the Heronry Census.**

Another reason to look out for nesting herons is the chance of finding rarer 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, Cattle Egrets started breeding in Kent in 2019, Great White Egrets and Spoonbills regularly nest elsewhere in the UK and even Glossy Ibis are now seen widely in Kent. 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

Brianrwt@yahoo.co.uk.

IMPORTANT BIRD AREAS AND BIRDS OF CONSERVATION CONCERN

We need your records!

In the January KOS Newsletter, John Young presented work being done by the KOS Conservation & Surveys Committee, in conjunction with the Kent & Medway Biological Records Centre (KMBRC), to highlight areas in Kent that are important for farmland birds of conservation concern (BoCC) by producing summer and winter “heat maps”. These species comprise Grey Partridge, Turtle Dove, Skylark, Yellow Wagtail, Linnet, Corn Bunting, and Yellowhammer.



Farmland is the majority habitat across Kent but most of it is non-designated, leaving it vulnerable to large scale developments such as housing, solar and wind energy farms, or other major changes of land use. Knowing where important assemblages of farmland BoCC species occur will help to steer developments away from such areas. Members can easily help by recording farmland birds in their local area and/or by visiting those ‘blank and cold’ areas, as indicated on the heatmaps in the January Newsletter, and by submitting records via the KOS sightings database (using the new map function), BirdTrack or eBird. Visits can be any time within the periods May to August (inclusive) for summer and November to February (inclusive) for winter. The process of producing the heatmap is simple and only requires a ‘presence’ record of a species during the summer and winter periods mentioned earlier i.e., if you record one or twenty Yellowhammers within a 1km square then that is enough to provide a record for the heatmap but remember to include a location grid reference. The record will be most accurate if the supplied grid reference is the location of the bird(s) rather than your location. A grid reference to produce a 1km resolution is, for example, TQ 99 64, so anything longer than this will also work. It’s that simple!

RECORDING BREEDING BIRDS

Every year the KOS receives thousands of records either directly from the KOS website or from platforms like BirdTrack or eBird. Every year authors of species accounts in the Kent Bird Report try to make sense of these reports. For breeding records, the task would be a lot easier if observers gave more information on the bird's behaviour. There are nationally agreed codes for both making sure you do not disturb the birds and to determine if a bird is possibly, probably, or definitely breeding. Please use them. If you are concerned that reporting a breeding bird may lead to disturbance you can report it directly to the Kent Recorder, Barry Wright umbrellabirds66@gmail.com

BIRDWATCHERS' CODE. [Watching birds | The Birdwatchers' Code - The RSPB](#)

1. Avoid disturbing birds and their habitats – the birds' interests should always come first.
2. Be an ambassador for birdwatching.
3. Know the law and the rules for visiting the countryside and follow them.
4. Send your sightings to the County Bird Club (KOS)/Recorder (Barry Wright), Birdtrack website (www.birdtrack.net) or e-Bird website (www.ebird.org).
5. Think about the interests of wildlife and local people before passing on news of a rare bird, especially during the breeding season.

EVIDENCE OF BREEDING

The following breeding codes are used by both BirdTrack and the KOS sightings database. During the breeding season (usually taken as 1 April to 31 July, but some species breed earlier and later!), please try and add the most appropriate code, if possible, to your record submission, especially for less common species.

Non-breeding

F Flying over.

M Observed but suspected to be still on Migration.

U Observed but suspected to be sUmmerring non-breeder.

Possible Breeder

H Species observed in breeding season in suitable nesting Habitat.

S Singing male present (or breeding calls heard) in breeding season in suitable breeding habitat.

Probable Breeding

P Pair observed in suitable nesting habitat in breeding season.

T Permanent Territory presumed through registration of territorial behaviour on at least two different days, a week or more apart, at the same place, or many individuals on one day.

D Courtship and Display, judged to be in or near potential breeding habitat.

N Visiting probable Nesting site.

A Agitated behaviour or anxiety calls from adults, suggesting probable presence of nest or young.

I Brood patch on adult, examined in the hand, suggesting Incubation.

B Nest Building or excavating nest hole.

Confirmed breeding.

DD Distraction-Display or injury feigning.

UN Used Nest or eggshells found in current season.

FL Recently Fledged young or downy young. Careful consideration should be given to likely provenance of any fledged juvenile capable of significant geographical movement.

ON Adults entering or leaving nest site in circumstances indicating Occupied Nest.

FF Adult carrying Faecal sac or Food for young.

NE Nest containing Eggs.

NY Nest with Young seen or heard.

RARE BREEDING BIRDS (RBBP SPECIES) IN KENT

The following list gives the typical RBBP species recorded in Kent in recent years. It is very important to submit all confirmed or suspected breeding records of these species, using the recording systems and evidence of breeding codes detailed above. Whilst caution should be exercised when submitting breeding

records of any RBBP species, it's important to know breeding locations for the Kent and UK RBBP ornithological archives. Records giving location details (OS grid or 1km square reference) can be marked sensitive on BirdTrack and eBird, whilst there is a now a sensitive button on the KOS sightings database which will prevent public disclosure of the record on the website (although it will be visible to yourself as the record submitter). In many cases, such as broods of ducks and fledged waders, reporting locations is not an issue.

For some species, more robust breeding populations or inaccessible nest sites lessens the effect of disturbance. However, for species marked * the location of breeding birds should not be publicly disclosed or discussed, especially not on social media, as these species are particularly vulnerable to disturbance from unscrupulous birders and photographers, gamekeepers and pigeon fanciers, and egg collectors.

Please submit records of these species directly to the County Bird Recorder – Barry Wright umbrellabirds66@gmail.com or the Kent RBBP rep. Brian Watmough brianrwat@yahoo.co.uk

Common Quail
Garganey
Shoveler
Wigeon
Pintail
Common Pochard
Turtle Dove
Spotted Crane*
Black-necked Grebe*
Black-winged Stilt*
Avocet
Little Ringed Plover
Mediterranean Gull
Little Tern
Eurasian Bittern
Cattle Egret
Little Egret
Honey Buzzard*
Goshawk*
Marsh Harrier
Long-eared Owl*
Short-eared Owl*
Lesser Spotted
Woodpecker
Hobby
Peregrine Falcon*
Golden Oriole*
Bearded Tit
Woodlark
Marsh Warbler*
Savi's Warbler*
Dartford Warbler
Black Redstart
Hawfinch

COLOUR RINGED REDSHANK-REQUEST FOR SIGHTINGS.

The Swale Wader Group [Swale Wader Group - Home \(swalewaders.co.uk\)](http://swalewaders.co.uk) have started a five-year project colour ringing project on Redshank. Redshank numbers are declining nationally and the study aims to provide information on the origins of Redshank wintering in north Kent and the dispersion of our local breeding population. Please report any sightings to Brian Watmough brianrwat@yahoo.co.uk

Surveys

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

Can you help KOS to continue to grow and develop?

These are busy times for KOS with a number of exciting projects underway or in the pipeline, * in addition to our target of reaching 1,000 members by 2024.

We are looking to add new members to the executive and other committees to help us in these important tasks as well contributing to the day to day running of the Society.

There are currently vacancies on the Executive Committee which we hope to fill at this year's AGM. If you feel that you could contribute then we would like to hear from you.

We are interested in anyone who feels that they can contribute to the work of the committee especially if they have skills or experience in the following areas

- financial or accounting experience to support the work of and deputise for the Treasurer
- database experience to support the work of the archivist to collate and manage our bird records
- communications or website experience to support the membership committee to improve the way we communicate with our members and the public
- organisational skills to develop and run a programme of on line talks on behalf of the Membership Committee

If you don't feel you can help, perhaps you know someone else with the skills or experience that you might like to suggest or recommend?

If you would like more information or would like to discuss these opportunities please contact Andre Farr, Chair andre.farrar57@gmail.com or Chris Roome, Vice Chair chrisroome105@icloud.com

* Current or pipeline projects include

- replacing our master database in which all our bird records are archived
- digitalising our pre 2004 paper records so they can be incorporated into the archive
- creating a new digital Birds of Kent
- developing our website further to develop new features and provide better information to members
- creating a fund to support environmental projects and initiatives around the county
- increasing our influence so we can better represent the interests of bird watchers in the county

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

Norman McCanch (Editor) : nvmccanch@hotmail.com

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

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

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

About Chaffinches, Bramblings, Hawfinches (and Bullfinches)

For this newsletter, I've chosen four species at the beginning of current finch taxonomic order. They include three breeding species – Chaffinch and Bullfinch which breed widely across the county, and Hawfinch which does so though far more sparsely – and one regular winter visitor, Brambling. All four are also migrants, but at greatly differing scales.

As ever, I have relied on many people for help in pulling material together. First and most important are the many observers who have submitted records over the years. Robin Mace, the KOS archivist, has again efficiently provided me with files of records from the society's database. The books describing birds in Kent in 1909, 1953 and 1981 obviously are essential when looking at long-term changes in birds' status. We are grateful to the British Trust for Ornithology for providing KOS with Breeding Bird Survey data (BBS is a partnership jointly funded by the BTO, RSPB and JNCC, with fieldwork conducted by volunteers). Thanks also to BTO for clarification of details of a supposed Dutch-ringed Bullfinch. Don Taylor, one of the 1981 *Birds of Kent* authors, carried out some of the extraction of data that I have used here. Rod Smith helped by describing the history and habitat of the amazing Newington roost of Chaffinches and other species. Ian Roberts, Brendan Ryan, Ian Hodgson and Simon Mount improved my understanding of Chaffinch movements in spring and autumn, and Martin Sutherland provided an extra high count for 2018. Alastair Henderson provided information on Bullfinch control methods in the 1960s and 1970s, and English Nature and Defra kindly provided data from Bullfinch licence returns.

Chaffinch

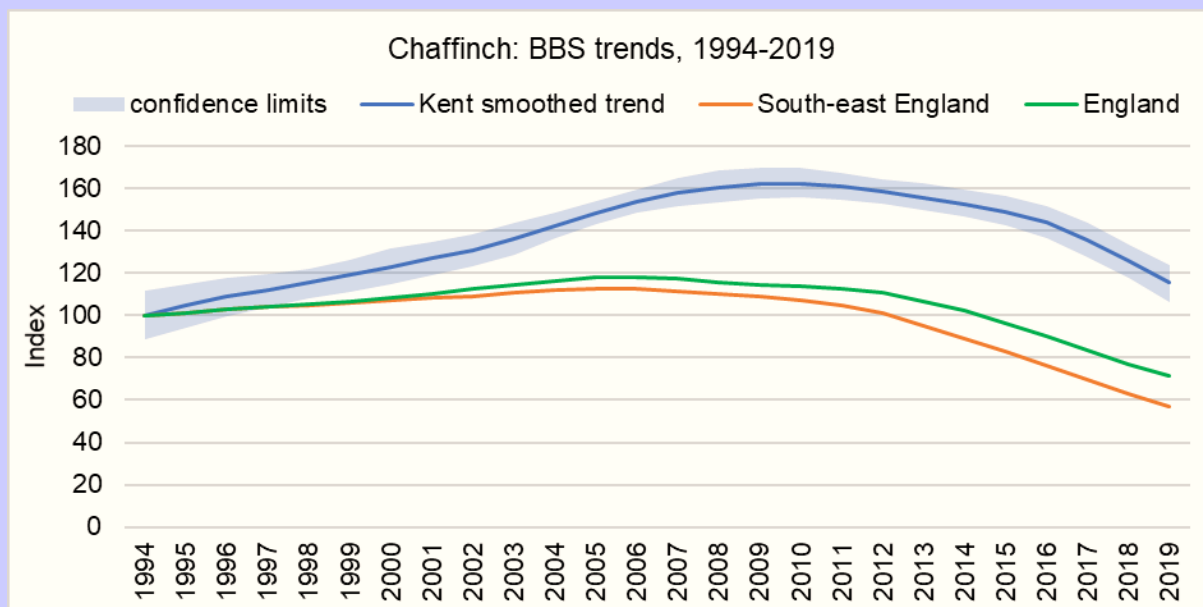


Chaffinch by Nick Smith

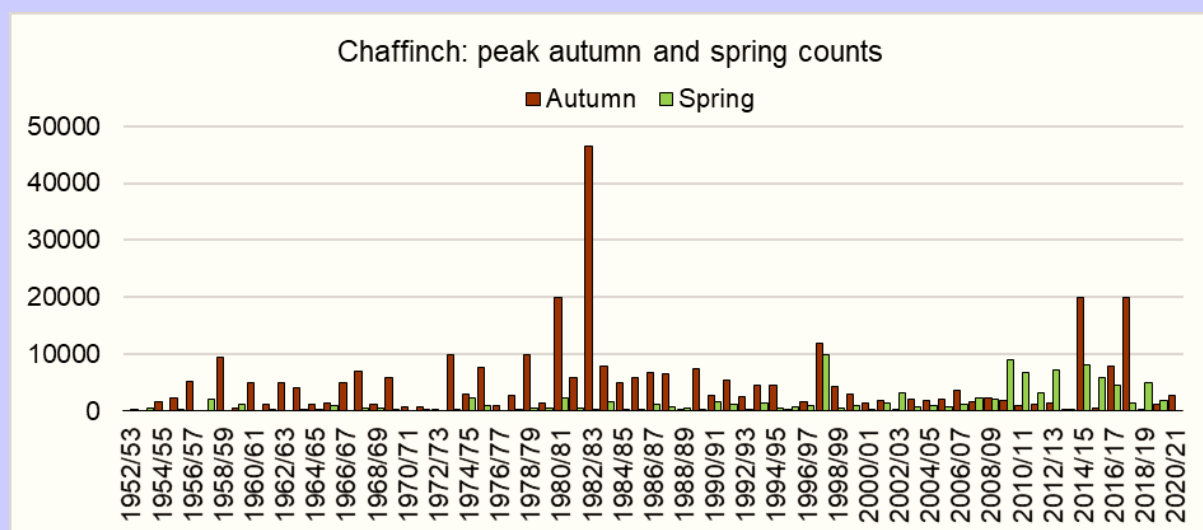
Historically, Chaffinch has always been recognised as a widespread and abundant resident, and as a winter immigrant in large numbers (Ticehurst 1909, Harrison 1953). The conspicuous autumn passage, in October, has been recorded from at least 1843, and was a notable feature of the studies at lightships early in the twentieth century. However, although huge numbers clearly were involved, those early reports were largely descriptive, and few counts were made prior to the growth of regular coverage at observatories and elsewhere in the second half of the century.

As a breeding bird, Chaffinch is close to ubiquitous in Kent, being found in 98% of tetrads (2x2 km squares) in the Kent Breeding Bird Atlas 2008-13. That atlas showed a few newly occupied tetrads in more open landscapes such as parts of north Kent, Thanet and Romney Marsh. It can nest wherever there are tall shrubs or trees: woodland, scrub, hedgerows, gardens, even isolated clumps of bushes. Although it is possible some apparent gains were the result of

better coverage, numbers were until recently rising in line with those gains. The Common Birds Census and Breeding Bird Survey combined data recorded a steady rise in numbers in England of over 50% from 1970 to around 2006, but then began a steep decline. The overall change between 1967 and 2018 is a decline of 11%. The Kent BBS results, see chart below, suggests that the increase persisted here until 2010 but that there has been fall of some 30% since then. The recent trend is believed to be associated with the protozoan disease trichomonosis, as has affected Greenfinches even more severely. The Kent population estimate in the 2008-13 atlas was 100,000-120,000 pairs but that may now be optimistic given the decline.



British-breeding Chaffinches, of the race *gengleri*, are highly sedentary. Migrants belong to the nominate race *coelebs* from continental Europe; those breeding in Scandinavia winter mainly in Britain and Ireland whereas other populations migrate as far south as North Africa. Coastal passage of Chaffinches on spring or autumn mornings can be impressive. The chart below shows the highest count at each season for each year from 1952 to 2020. As can be seen, numbers vary greatly between years, depending on weather conditions (and whether someone was in the right place to count them).



Spring passage usually extends from late February until mid April, though the numbers observed vary considerably and small parties, perhaps of young birds, sometimes continue to be seen throughout May. The highest counts are most often made as flocks move NE along the chalk cliffs between Folkestone and Deal (where they may be more visible than in lower-lying places) into NE winds, and in similar circumstances there can be movement either N or S at Sandwich Bay or W at Foreness, and smaller numbers may be seen moving on a broad front right across the county. From 1952 to 2007, there were quite a few counts of 1,000 or more in a day, but the largest movement by far was 10,000 flying W at Foreness on 15th March 1998 – and that remains the highest spring total. From 2008 onwards, however, the spring maxima have generally exceeded 2,000 and have reached 9,000. I have therefore split Table 1, which lists the highest counts, into two sections as shown. Why that increase has occurred, I do not know and no-one that I've asked has come

up with an explanation. We don't think that it's connected with changes in patterns of observer coverage, but could it be something to do with weather patterns?

Table 1. Large spring Chaffinch movements		
<i>1952-2007 – counts of 2,000 or more</i>		
1958	30th March	2,200 ESE at West Hythe.
1975	23rd March	2,150 ENE at Allhallows and 2,300 N at Sandwich Bay.
1981	2nd April	2,300 NE at Pegwell Bay.
1998	15th-16th March	10,000 W at Foreness on the 15th and 3,300 W on the 16th.
2003	12th March	3,300 at St Margaret's.
<i>2008-2020 – counts of 6,000 or more</i>		
2010	21st March	9,000 at Dungeness and 4,063 N at Bockhill.
2011	19th March	6,752 at Bockhill and 3,035 at Abbotscliffe.
2013	6th April	7,300 NE at Bockhill.
2015	18th March	8,190 E at Abbotscliffe.

The first autumn migrants may arrive in late September but the peak numbers usually occur in mid October. Depending on weather conditions, the birds may arrive from the northeast, or move further south along the continental littoral before crossing the channel at its narrowest point. On reaching Kent, they may continue high inland or move W along either or both of the north and south coasts. Large movements most commonly occur when the wind is NW, in either overcast or clear conditions. Table 2 summarises all autumn counts of 7,000 or more.

Table 2. Large autumn Chaffinch movements		
1958	18th-23rd October	1,600 SW Lower Halstow, 1,000 W Sheerness, 1,000 W at Reculver and 9,500 NW at Dungeness on the 19th; 7,000 N at Sandwich Bay on the 22nd and 3,000 N there on the 23rd.
1973	20th-22nd October	10,000 W per hour at Eastchurch on the 20th; 874 W at Allhallows and 1,000 W at Graveney on the 22nd.
1975	18th October	7,608 W at Allhallows.
1978	18th & 27th October	10,000 W at Minnis Bay on the 18th; 7,100 W at Allhallows and 2,350 W at St Margaret's Bay on the 27th.
1980	12th October	20,000 NW at Dungeness plus 300 W at Warden Point, 200 W at Langley and 806 NW at the Isle of Grain.
1982	21st-23rd October	15,600 W at Foreness on the 21st; 46,500 W at Foreness, 10,700 NE at Cliffsend, 8,000 N and W at Sandwich Bay, 10,000 W or SW at St Margaret's Bay and 10,000 NW at Dungeness on 22nd; 26,300 W at Foreness on the 23rd.
1983	29th October	8,000 NW at Dungeness, 667 SW at St. Margaret's and 500 W at Allhallows.
1989	12th October	7,564 W at Minnis Bay.
1997	13th October	12,000 W at Whitstable, plus 4,189 NW at Capel-le-Ferne, 5,792 N at Bockhill, 5,000 W at Grain, 500 NW at Cliffe and 485 NW at Dungeness.
2014	23rd October	3,200 W at Minnis Bay in one hour (estimate of 20,000 in the day).
2017	18th-31st October	3,000 S at Dungeness on the 18th; 1,357 in off the sea and N at Bockhill on the 23rd; 20,000 W at Swalecliffe, 4,321 N at Sandwich Bay and 2,172 in off/N at Bockhill on the 25th; 1,255 at Bockhill on the 28th; 1,478 W at Swalecliffe, 2,870 W at Pegwell Bay and 2,664 at Sandwich Bay on the 31st.

It is worth noting that many migrating Chaffinches evade observation even at the premier watchpoints; for example, on the day of the 1997 movement, an estimated quarter of a million birds flew out to sea from Cap Gris Nez in France, heading for Kent. In contrast to spring passage, autumn migrants can be hard to locate on the Kent coast. When it is clear, the birds fly at great height, where they are barely or not visible, yet can be heard calling. When visibility is poor, in fog or drizzle, birds move through lower down, but the conditions can make counting difficult.

It is thought that it is the immigrant Chaffinches that form the larger feeding and roosting flocks in winter, though resident birds may join smaller mixed flocks of finches and buntings feeding on beech mast or weed seeds on the edges of woodland or near hedgerows (Newton, 1972, *Finches*). The highest counts in Kent mostly have been associated with roosts, and the largest counts during December-February are given in Table 3. Because wintering numbers have declined, the list is split into two sections, as shown. High counts have been highly unusual since 1995 and it's worth noting that the high counts in 2017/18 were on wild bird cover and fallow arable areas.

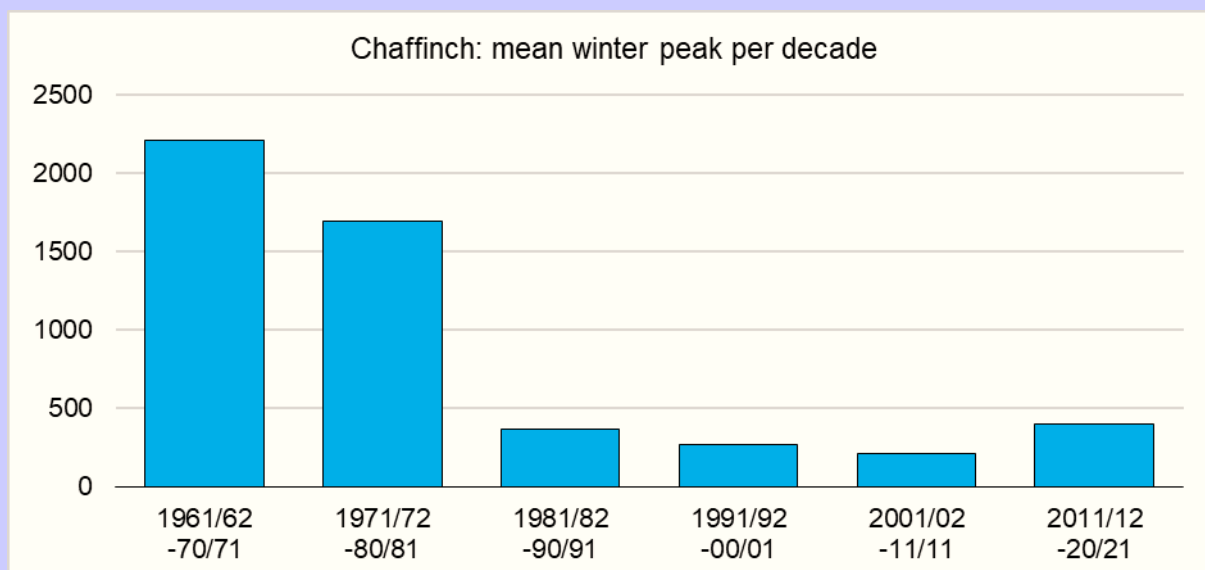
Note the frequent appearance of Newington in the table. The wood there, which held roosting thrushes and other species as well as Chaffinches, was counted for many years by Rodney Smith. It was, and remains, a mixture of mature ancient

woodland with much understory, and hornbeam coppice, adjacent to a mixed rather neglected orchard. While Rod hasn't counted it since the 1990s, even by then numbers were far lower than previously, yet the wood looks much the same although even more neglected. A lot of the orchards where many of the birds fed have been grubbed up, the area now managed as intensive arable land.

Table 3. Large winter Chaffinch flocks	
<i>1952-1977 – counts of 1,000 or more</i>	
1964/65	2,500 at Littlebourne on 7th February.
1966/67	1,000 at Bedgebury in December; 1,000 at Stockbury 21st-31st January.
1968/69	2,000 at Northward Hill in January.
1969/70	1,000 at Newington on 27th December.
1970/71	10,000 at Newington on 1st December.
1971/72	8,000 at Newington on 17th December & 5,000 there on the 19th.
1973/74	2,000 at Newington on 9th December.
<i>1978-2020 – counts of 500 or more</i>	
1977/78	1,000 at Wormshill on 21st January.
1978/79	1,000 at Newington in November-December.
1979/80	1,050 at Bedgebury on 26th December.
1985/86	1,500 at Newington on 1st December.
1989/90	550 at Newington on 22nd December.
1993/94	700 in Bell's Wood, St Mary's Hoo, on 13th February.
1994/95	600 at Chattenden Woods on 1st December.
2017/18	500 at Marden on 22nd-30th December. 1,870 at Hoo in January.

Table 3 contains no high counts for the 1950s or early 1960s. This wasn't because large flocks didn't form but because no-one thought to count such common birds in those days. The Kent Bird Reports in fact mention no winter records of the species for the first ten years, though there is one cold weather movement count (150 flying out to sea on 2nd February 1956) in a Dungeness Bird Observatory report within the KBR.

Once people started to make counts, the reports are more helpful, even though no doubt only a small proportion of big concentrations were seen and counted. But even though numbers of observers continued to increase, the numbers of Chaffinches did not. The chart below shows the averages of the annual Kent maxima for each ten-year period from the 1960s onwards. This illustrates more dramatically than Table 3 just how big the decline in wintering birds has been. Even those of us old enough now have difficulty in remembering just how full of birds the countryside was fifty years ago – but this is evidence that it was indeed so.



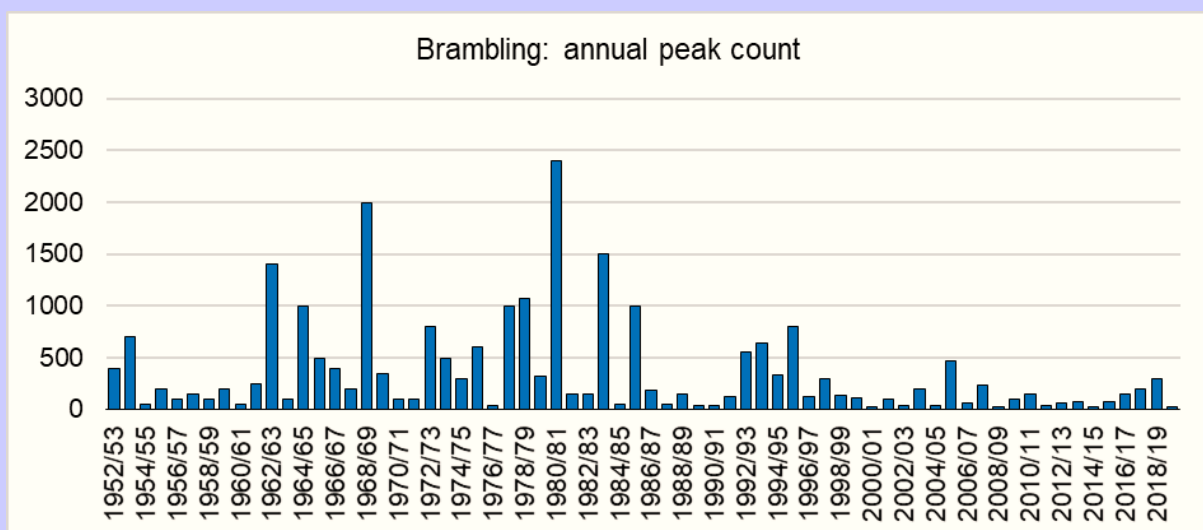
Brambling



Brambling by Terry Laws

Brambling is a fairly common autumn passage migrant, a winter visitor in variable numbers, and less common on spring migration. In Kent as elsewhere, both distribution and numbers are highly variable from year to year. This is as true now as previously noted by Ticehurst in 1909, Harrison in 1953 and in the *Birds of Kent* in 1981. Wintering flocks can be found in stubbles, weedy fields and woodland, especially beech woodland, where they feed on the beechmast. The species' abundance in any one area of its European range is believed to be dependent particularly on the availability of beechmast and the depth of snow cover. The birds, migrating south from Scandinavia and other breeding areas, will stop wherever there is sufficient beechmast and where snow cover is not too deep. As good crops of beechmast are irregular, the birds may winter in different areas from one year to the next and often move on once the crop has gone. They also tend to move further in more severe winters. Unlike Chaffinches, which often return to winter in known areas, Bramblings trapped in Britain one year have been caught in the following winter hundreds of kilometres to the east or south, in the Low Countries, France or Italy (*Migration Atlas*).

The first chart below shows, simply, the peak count made in each year from 1952 onwards. As Brambling is a winter visitor, I have used July-June years here. As can easily be seen, the numbers fluctuate greatly between years. The relatively low counts in the 1950s probably reflect the low numbers of birdwatchers then and the fact that often they did not count birds so assiduously as we do now. The decline in numbers later on, and especially from about 2000, is a genuine trend.

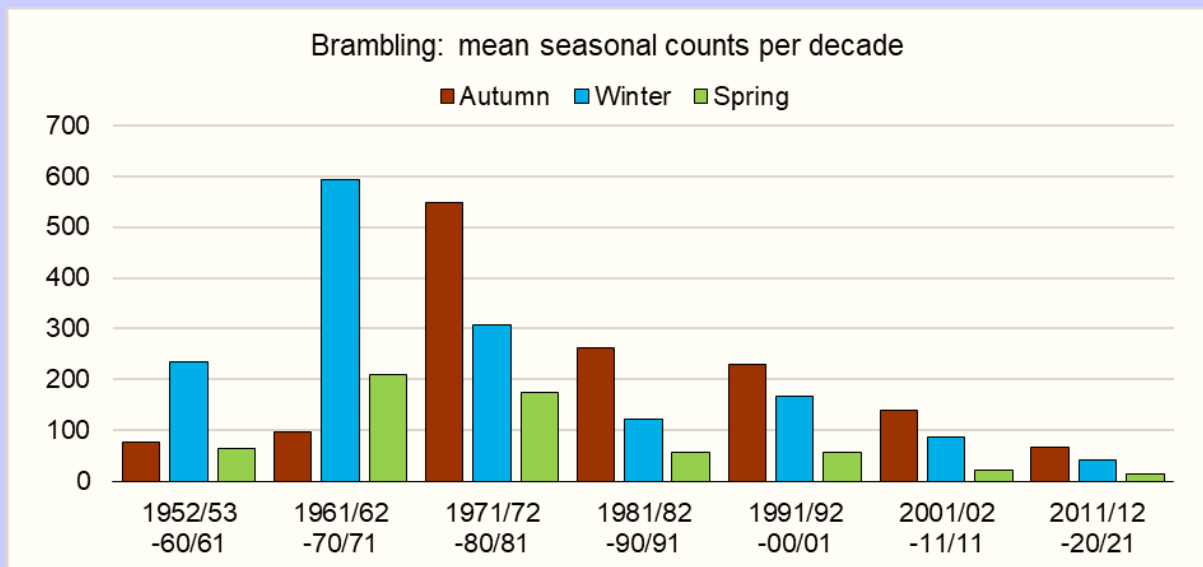


It's worth pointing out that when the peak count is high, this can mean that numbers generally were high, with sizeable flocks widespread, but that is not always so. Sometimes just a single big flock is found, with only small numbers

elsewhere. Table 4 lists all counts of 500 or more up to 1999 and then counts of 200 or more, with a little context in some instances. Records are colour-coded according to season. As can be seen, most high counts have been in winter or on autumn passage, though there are no high autumn counts prior to the mid 1970s, probably because visible passage counting was seldom undertaken before then. High spring counts are quite rare; both of those listed involved build-ups of inland flocks rather than coastal passage. That contrasts with the high autumn counts, all of which are of visible passage.

Table 4. Large Brambling counts Autumn counts brown ; Winter counts blue ; Spring counts green .	
<i>1952-1999 – counts of 500 or more</i>	
1954	700 or more in the Swale area (about 1,200 across north Kent marshes) in February.
1963	1,400 at Sandwich Bay on 20th January; four other flocks of 100-300 in the first quarter.
1965	1,000 at Littlebourne on 13th February; low numbers elsewhere.
1966	300-500 in Shorne Woods in March; elsewhere three flocks of 250-425 in January-February and two flocks of 200-250 in March.
1968	1,000-2,000 at Yelsted in December; no other flocks of over 100 that winter.
1973	800 at Shoreham-Kemsing on 8th April; three other inland flocks of 200-300 between mid February and mid April.
1974	500 in Trenleypark Wood in February.
1975	600 at Dungeness and 449 W at Allhallows on 18th October.
1977	500 at Dungeness on 18th November.
1978	1,000 at Hollingbourne on 12th January; no other counts over 100 in January-February. 1,075 W at Allhallows on 27th October.
1979	500 at Plaxtol on 10th February; five other flocks of 100-150 that month.
1980	2,400 W at Dungeness on 12th October; no more than 50 at other locations that day.
1983	727 SW at Foreness on 21st October & 1,500 W at Dungeness on 29th October.
1986	500 (possibly 1,000) near Rainham on 18th February; six other flocks of 150-400 during January-February.
1993	639 W at Abbotscliffe on 14th October.
1995	500 near Bough Beech on 30th November; no more than 10 at other inland sites in November-December.
1996	800 near Bough Beech on 5th January; no more than seven elsewhere in January-February.
<i>2000-2020 – counts of 200 or more</i>	
2004	200 at Bedgebury on 16th January.
2005	420 SW at Foreness on 15th October; 469 W at Reculver on 2nd November; 230 at Bough Beech on 11th November (but few after early December).
2007	230 at Dungeness on 30th October.
2008	210 at Edenbridge on 1st January; also 100 at Bough Beech on the 2nd.
2017	200 at Marden on 22nd December.
2018	200 at Bedgebury on 9th January.

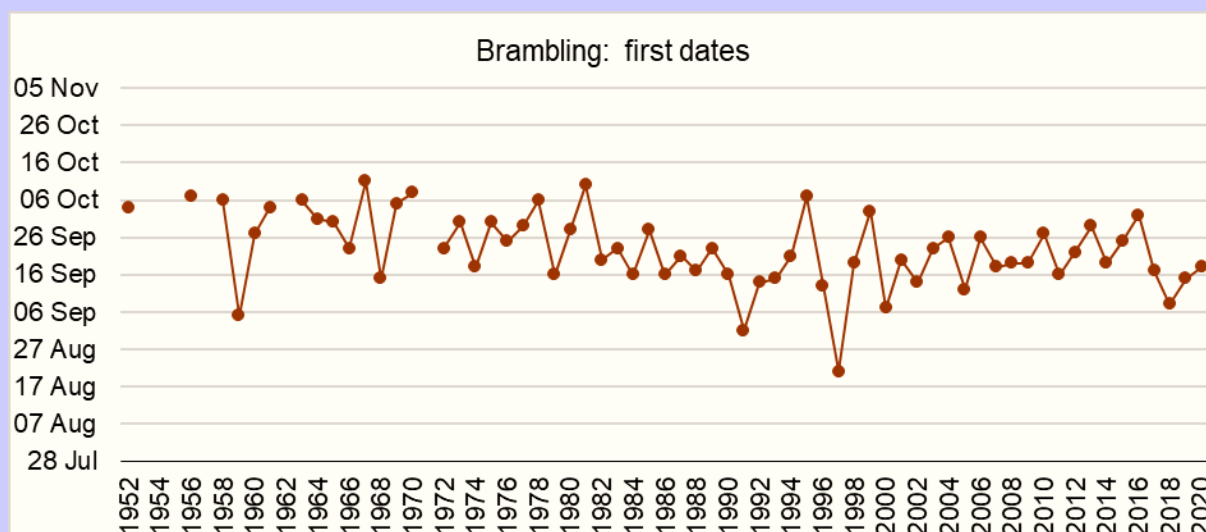
Table 4 and the peak annual count chart demonstrate how there have been few high counts since the 1980s. The next chart summarises seasonal peaks by showing averages per decade. Bearing in mind that data for early years are unreliable because of limited coverage, it seems that for all three seasons there has been a trend of strong decline. The similarity of the pattern for winter counts to that for Chaffinch above is striking.



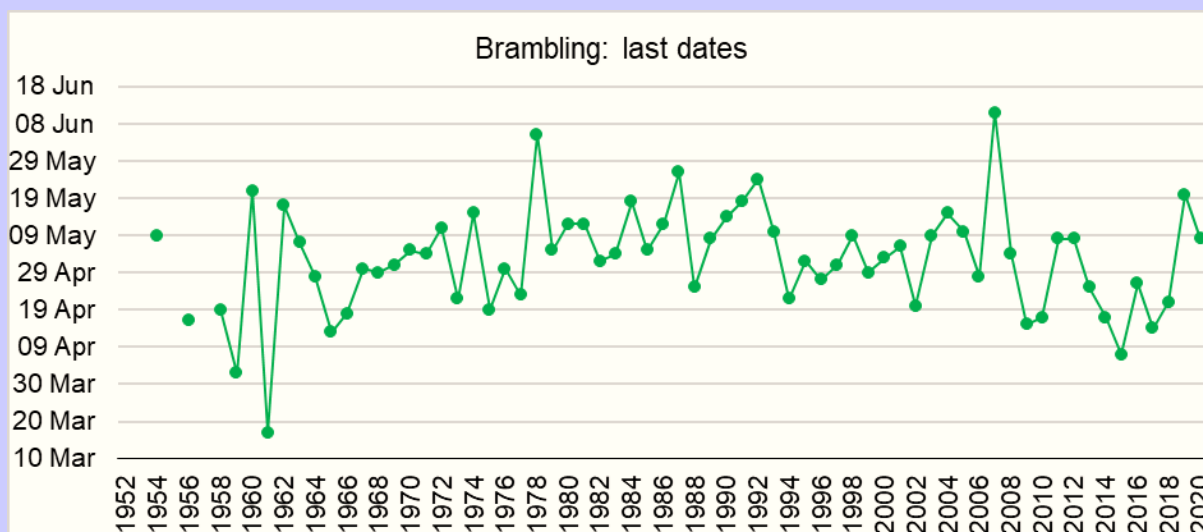
The largest concentrations in winter can be at roosts or in feeding areas. Roosts are typically in evergreens such as rhododendrons and various conifers. Bedgebury Pinetum has long been favoured, with a peak there of 340 on 12th February 1995, and a count of 200 on 9th January 2018 was one of only two three-figure counts in Kent in the last ten years. The largest roost recorded during the most recent thirty years was at Winkhurst Wood, Bough Beech, where numbers rose from 500 in late November 1995 to a peak of 800 on 5th January 1996. The largest winter flock in Kent, however, was recorded before the period covered in this article, of “several thousands, perhaps as many as 3,000” near Westerham on 28th March 1951 (Harrison, 1953, *Birds of Kent*). Roosts containing millions of Bramblings have been recorded on the Continent. The largest recorded roost count in Britain was of about 20,000 in Merseyside in early 1981 (*BTO News*, 1981, 114: 9). Remarkably, however, retrapping of ringed birds indicated that around 150,000 used the area over a six-week period.

So far as feeding flocks are concerned, it isn't always recorded what they were feeding on, but one notable concentration involved about 1,000 feeding on unharvested oilseed rape at Hollingbourne on 12th January 1978. The only three-figure count in Kent in the last ten years, other than the Bedgebury roost mentioned above, was of up to 200 feeding on a wild bird cover crop at Marden in late December 2017.

As for many summer and winter migrants, there have been changes in arrival and departure dates over the years, as illustrated in the two charts below (gaps are where the KBRs fail to give the dates). The dates of first sightings in autumn have become progressively earlier. In the first twenty years of the sequence, the average first date was 29th September; in the most recent twenty years, the average first date was 20th September – i.e. nine days earlier. For last dates, there is not such a clear shift, but they appear to have become later and then moved earlier again; the average for the recent twenty years is 1st May.



The earliest of all arrival dates was one at Quarry Wood, Yalding, on 22nd August 1997, which remains the only August record for Kent, the next earliest being one at Bishopstone on 2nd September 1991. Last dates are more variable, and two in the chart stand out: one was a male that lingered in Canterbury from 27th May to 12th June 2007, the other was one trapped at Dungeness on 1st June 1978 and seen again on the 5th and 6th. Note, though, that the charts omit one summer record, of two at Sandwich Bay on 11th July 2012.



One final point. In common with most species, the first (and last) birds seen are usually singletons or in very small groups. However, there was a notable exception to that in 1973 when the first autumn record was of no less than 100 at Dungeness on 1st October. There have been other occasions when there have been substantial early flocks of immigrants, such as 150 at Bredgar on 28th September 1972 and 175 at Foreness on 27th September 1986, respectively five and ten days after the first dates in those years.

Hawfinch



Hawfinch by Denis Tayler

Ticehurst's (*A History of the Birds of Kent*, 1909) account of the Hawfinch is almost incredible. In the early nineteenth century, it was thought to be only a winter visitor, although Ticehurst suggests that may not have been accurate because of the bird's shy nature. By the end of that century, it was known to be numerous. Some examples will show why I find my mind boggled. Earl Darnley, at Cobham, found 42 nests in 1867 by 6th May. In a single orchard in the Darenth valley, 14 nests were destroyed on one day in 1905. A fruit grower near Swanley shot over 50 in 1906. Col. Hardy, at Chilham,

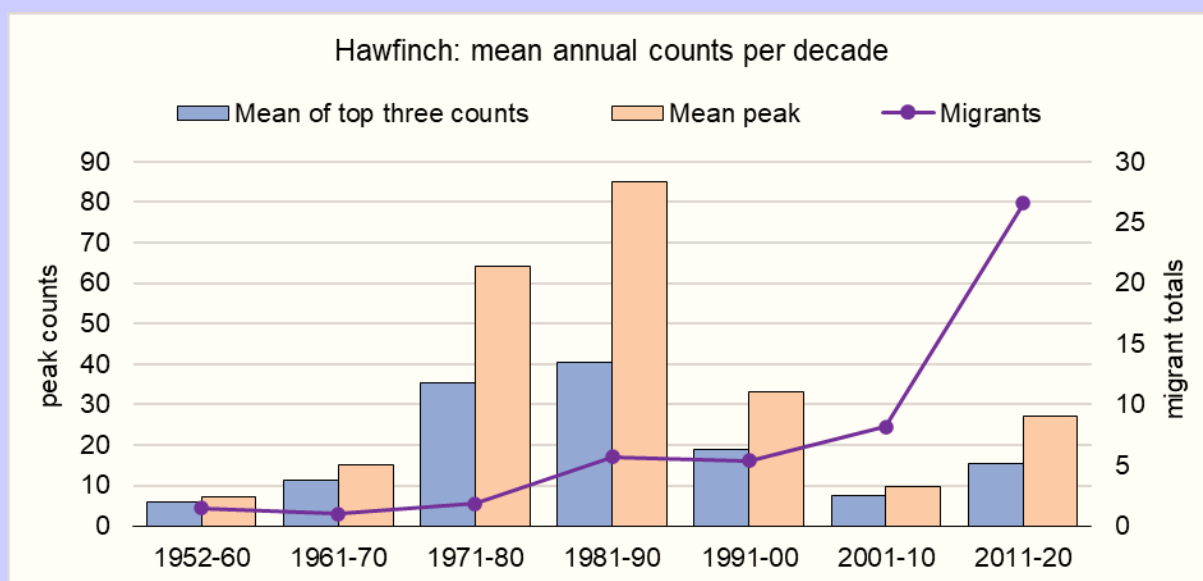
saw 23 feeding on his lawn on 12th February 1906. Several hundred visited orchards near Linton to feed on fallen fruit stones. If only half of those reports are true, nature's recovery has got quite a long way to go.

Everyone who writes about Hawfinches comments on how difficult it is to locate them and to establish accurately how many are present in an area. Two who have done so in Kent Bird Reports are John Norie (KBR 1967 p.74) describing nest-finding in the Gravesend area, and Rob Clements (KBR 2013 pp.177-180) describing surveys in the 10km square TQ95 and making an estimate for the Kent population. Rob thought that TQ95 was a stronghold (although he did far less survey work in other areas) and that it held 25-50 pairs, while other parts of the county may have had a further 20-30 pairs. That was ten years ago now, and things may have changed – but we don't know.

Hawfinch is a bird of mixed broad-leaved woodland, most often associated with hornbeam. Tree seeds, especially hornbeam, and the large hard stones of cherry and damson form the staple diet in the autumn and winter; buds, particularly of beech, and new shoots in spring; and insects, especially the larvae of the oak roller moth, in summer. The loss of cherry and damson orchards may in part be responsible for the decline, as may be predation by the Grey Squirrel, but the relative importance of these factors is unknown. In Rob Clements's studies in TQ95, winter flocks used varied semi-natural woodland, including hornbeam, beech, wild cherry and yew. They fed on the ground under hornbeam, often amongst Chaffinches, foraged in the tops of mature yew, and picked off beech buds.

The two places where birders tend to go to see Hawfinches these days are Bedgebury and TQ95. It may be that those are genuinely strongholds, but I do wonder whether better coverage of other areas such as the Downs west of the Medway or the High Weald away from Bedgebury might locate a few more groups.

Anyway, bearing in mind always that it's not an easy bird to count, here is some material garnered from KOS records. The first chart shows mean annual peaks for successive decades from the 1950s onwards, and also the decade means of the three highest site-counts made each year (to dampen the effect of single very high counts). The chart also shows average migrant numbers, and we'll come to them later, but note that the peak counts used for the bar charts do include a few migrant counts.



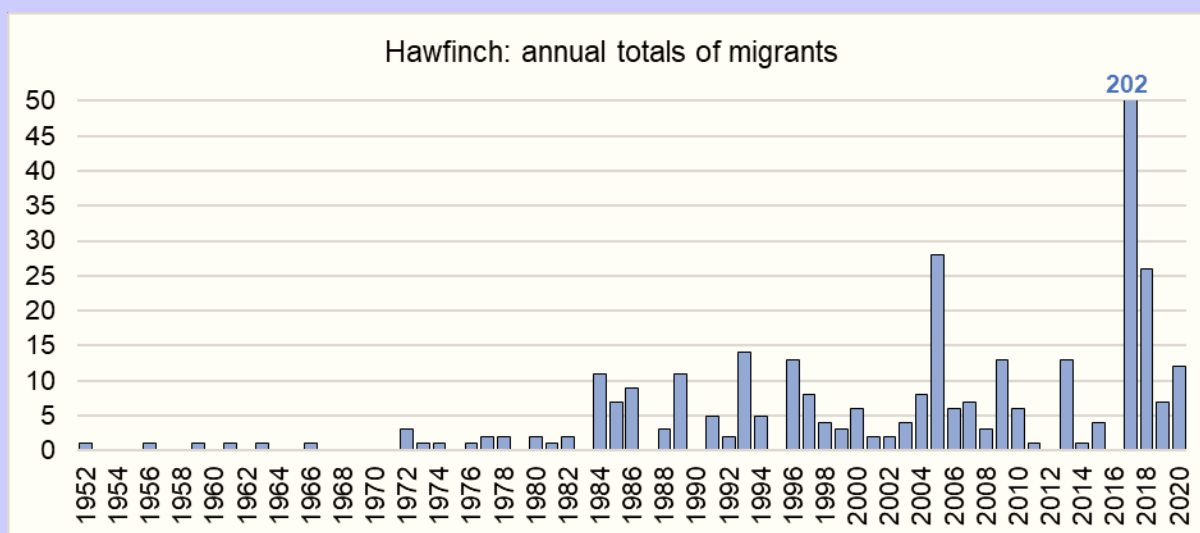
I am not confident about this but suggest that the rise in mean counts from the 1950s to the 1980s is an artefact of the data; in the earlier years there were fewer birders and, perhaps, there was less incentive to count numbers of what was a difficult but still a widespread species. There were very few counts reported in the 1950s. The more recent decline seems much more likely to be genuine, as there were plenty of people looking for them, including two atlases, yet not finding the numbers that had been present. (But could that just be an easy explanation? Is it possible that there was – for some reason – a boom in numbers from the 1950s to 1980s followed by decline...?)

Table 5 lists the largest counts over the years. I have split them into three sections, with the two periods with relatively low numbers separated by the period with higher numbers (in which listing all counts of 20 or 25 or more would occupy too much space). The table speaks for itself – but note the predominance of Bedgebury, especially in the 1970 and 1980s.

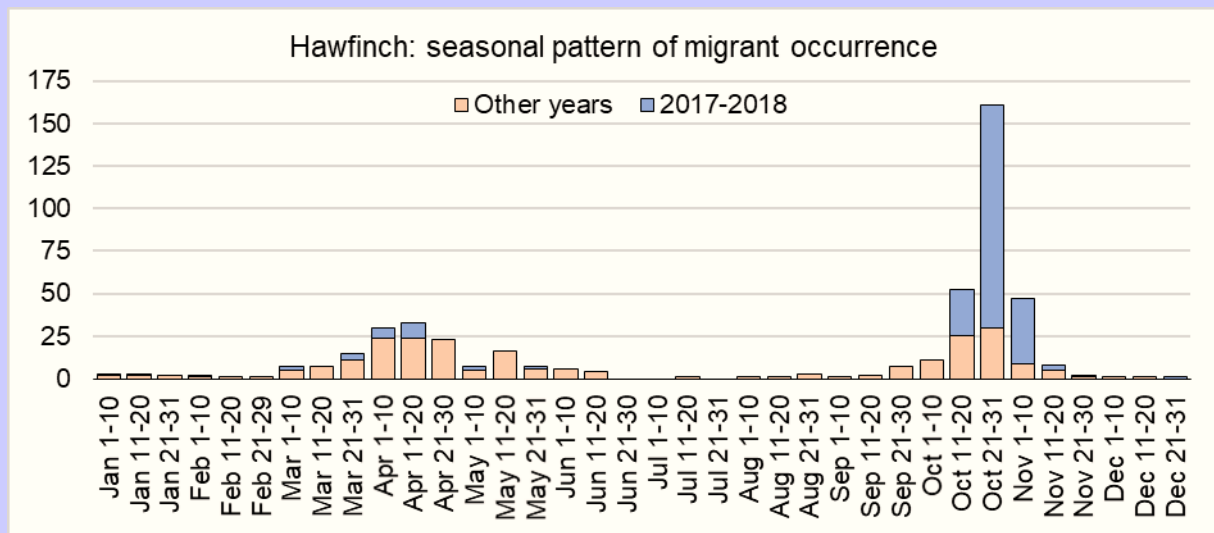
Table 5. Large Hawfinch counts	
1952-1970 – counts of 20 or more	
1966	30 at Bedgebury in January-March.
1967	20 at Burham in March.
1969	10 pairs bred at one site in Central; 20 in Lyminge Forest on 19 th April.

1970	20 at Bedgebury in December.
<i>1971-1995 – counts of 50 or more</i>	
1971	60 at Shorne Woods in March.
1975	100 at Bedgebury in January.
1977	70 at Bedgebury in February
1979	90 at Bedgebury in December.
1980	86 at Bedgebury in January.
1981	100 at Bedgebury in January.
1982	80 at Bedgebury in November.
1983	98 at Bedgebury in December.
1984	150 at Bedgebury in February; 62 at Tunbury Wood in March.
1985	140 at Bedgebury in January.
1986	60 at Bedgebury in January.
1987	95 at Bedgebury in March.
1989	62 at Bedgebury in March.
1992	72 at Bedgebury in February.
<i>1996-2020 – counts of 25 or more</i>	
1996	15 pairs bred near Upper Halling; 40 Bedgebury in December.
2013	46 Eastling in April.
2017	23 W at Pegwell Bay on 19th October; 32 W there on both 23rd & 31st October, and 27 W there on 7th November; 29 at Bockhill on 22nd October; 21 in Benenden/Hemsted Forest area on 1st November.
2018	41 at Godmersham on 6th January; 71 at Eastling on 20th January with 60 still there in February; 31 at Bedgebury on 22nd January.

The movements of Hawfinches in 2017 were the largest ever, in Kent and elsewhere. To examine this, I have extracted all records in KBRs of birds on the coast or other locations in which I was sure they would not be breeding. The first chart below shows annual totals – that in 2017 was about seven times larger than the next highest in 2005 when the highest single count was 11 SW at St Margaret's on 22nd October. The Kent totals weren't as high as in some counties (there were counts of 200 in Bedfordshire and 125 in the Scillies for example) but, interestingly, counts in the usual areas were higher than normal early in 2018 and that year saw the largest ever spring movements. That was presumably the return movement of some of the irrupting birds of autumn 2017. I'm not aware of much definitive information on the reasons for the irruption or the origin of those arrivals, though there was one bird ringed in Switzerland in early October 2017 that was in Dorset in March 2018 (BTO online ringing report).



I also noted the dates of migrants, allowing the preparation of the next chart, showing their seasonal pattern. Generally, they have been fairly evenly divided between spring and autumn (but note the odd bird can turn up on the coast at almost any time of year). Excluding 2017 and 2018, 41% of migrants occurred in the second half of the year but in those two years combined 88% were in autumn.



Bullfinch



Bullfinch by Ian Stewart

Historically, this was not a popular bird in the Garden of England. As Ticehurst (*A History of the Birds of Kent*, 1909) says: “there is perhaps no species which is more cordially detested by the fruit-growers of Kent”. He mentions the rewards offered for their heads – up to 3d per head at Sissinghurst in 1895 and some growers offering as much as one shilling per head. Striking photographs of their removal of pear flower buds appear in Ian Newton’s *New Naturalist Finches* (1972). Ticehurst, in addition to the information in the *Birds of Kent*, researched payments made for Bullfinches in the Tenterden area in the 1600s (*British Birds* 14: 87). The going rate was then one penny per head (the same as for Jays). I’ll return to this subject later.

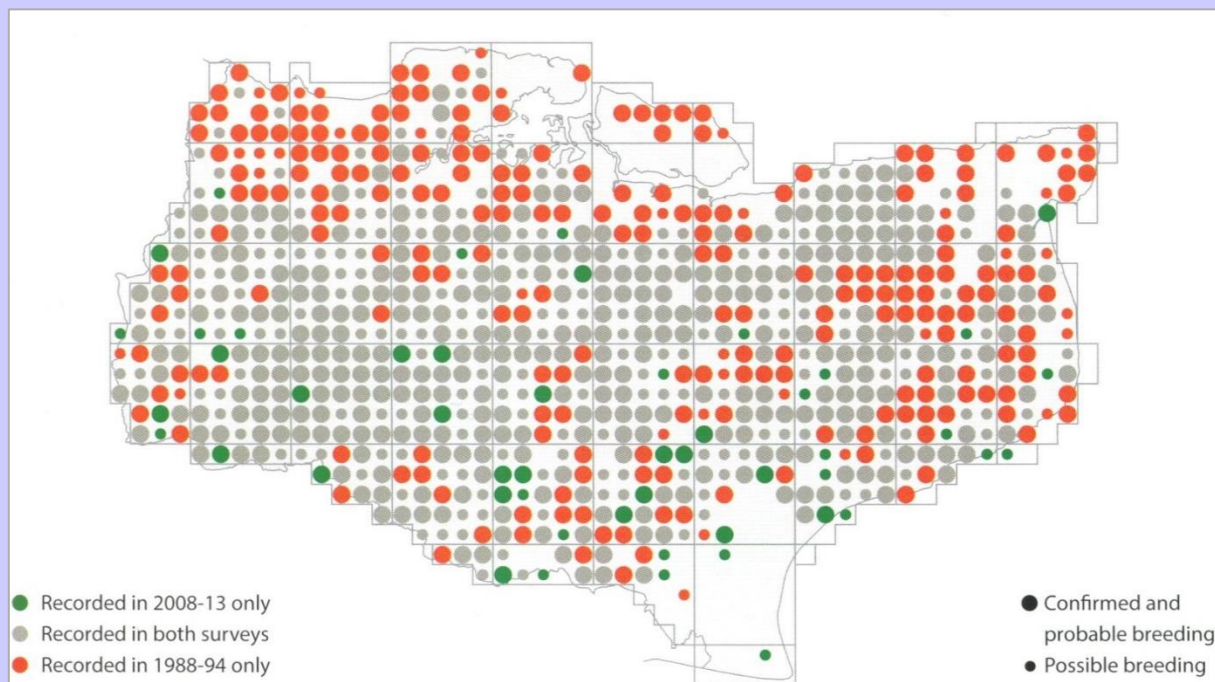
Ticehurst described Bullfinch as common and increasing in some areas, though rare on Thanet. Harrison (*The Birds of Kent*, 1953) confirmed that status, though mentioning that it was also scarce in the open parts of north Kent and unknown on Sheppey. Ticehurst knew of no evidence of migration, but Harrison reported two (male and female) that had been shot in Quex Park in June 1924 and identified as belonging to the race *coccinea* (now usually treated as part of the race *europaea*, formerly spelled *europoea*, of mainland western Europe). He also mentioned a record of seven at Hayes Common (just outside the KOS area in Greater London) in December 1948 that were noticeably large and bright; potentially they were of the northern race *pyrrhula*.



Northern Bullfinch by Nick Smith

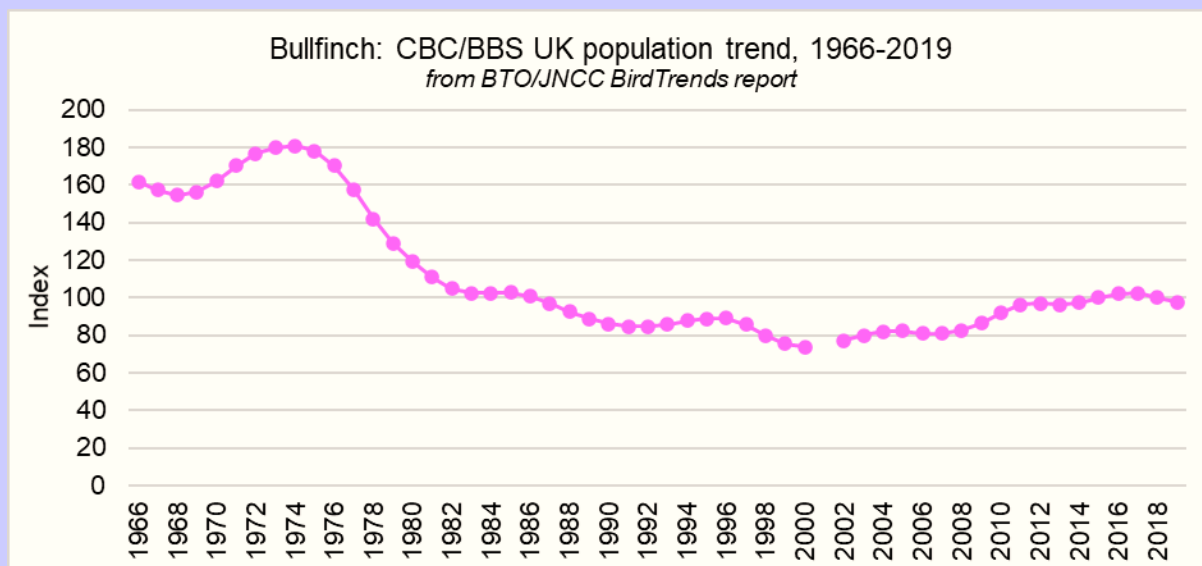
British breeding birds belong to the race *pileata*, which is non-migratory. Throughout the year Bullfinches are closely associated with dense scrub, coppice and hedgerows. In the breeding season, they are seen on their own or in pairs but in autumn and winter may form flocks of up to 10 or more. Ash seeds are one of their more important natural food sources, and it is especially when the supplies of these are insufficient to last through the winter that the birds turn to eating buds in the orchards and thereby become pests (Newton, *Finches*, 1972). It remains to be seen whether loss of Ash to die-back will accentuate Bullfinch's decline.

By the 1960s, Bullfinches were well-established on Thanet and Sheppey wherever there was suitable cover, but still absent from Romney Marsh. However, a considerable retreat had occurred by the time of the recent Kent Breeding Bird Atlas 2008-13, from which the map below is taken. Not only had they been lost again to Thanet and Sheppey, but they had also gone from large swathes of the rest of the county, especially in the east and north.



There are too few Bullfinches in Kent now to support a reliable BBS index for the county but, in any case, Bullfinch numbers have been at a low level since the BBS began in 1994. To illustrate how they have declined we need to go further back. The combined CBC/BBS trend shown below is taken from the BTO/JNCC BirdTrends 2020 report (Woodward *et al.*, 2020, BTO research report). The steepest decline took place between the mid 1970s and about 1990;

the trend continued more gently until 2000 since when, nationally at least, there has been a slight increase. The BBS for England shows a 19% rise for the ten years 2008-2018.



Until late in the twentieth century, Bullfinch numbers were high and their damage to fruit buds reduced crops of pears and occasionally other fruit, with serious commercial implications for some growers. Many thousands were killed annually, and a lot of research into the effects and their control went on (see Newton *Finches*, and also the box for a local perspective). Attempts at reducing damage had persisted for centuries, as indicated by Ticehurst's research (see first paragraph above) and a correspondent of his early in the twentieth century who had requested shot birds to examine the stomach contents, and was overwhelmed by the supply, finding "buds, buds, buds".

Bullfinch control in east Kent

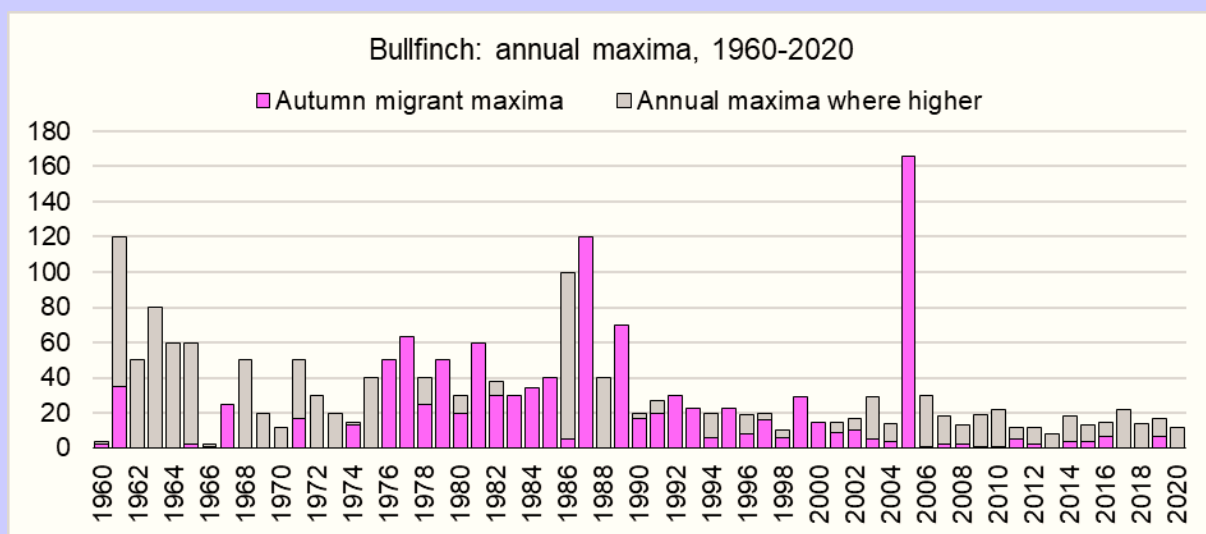
With my brother Alastair, I was brought up on a farm where top fruit (largely apples and pears) were the main crop. During our childhood, Bullfinches were slaughtered in large numbers. Alastair remembers being offered half-a-crown by our father for each nest (2/6, now 12.5p but a lot of money to a child then: not much more than a couple of nests and you could afford a new copy of *The Observer's Book of Birds*) – but, after pointing one out, he did not do so again. In the 1960s, one of the men on the farm used to walk round, shooting Bullfinches, and Alastair's recollection was that he got about 100 per year. By the end of the sixties, there was less shooting, and the main control method was Chardonneret traps (look it up if you don't know what these are, named from the French word for Goldfinch). Something like 50 per year were caught and despatched. These numbers were being killed in a very small area. The whole farm was not much more than 150 acres (it varied a bit) and, of that, only 40 acres were pear orchards. There was some Bullfinch damage to apples and plums, but it was a commercial problem only for pears, and for them severe only where the trees stood close to the thick hedgerows and woodland shaws that were the Bullfinches' main habitat. In fact, there were only really about three acres next to one particular shaw, where, in some years, a few rows of Conference trees lost almost every flower bud. By the mid 1970s, by which time pear bud-eating was already declining, all shooting and trapping stopped. Briefly the farm tried using black cotton thread strung through the trees as a deterrent. That was abandoned when birds (and not just Bullfinches) occasionally were caught in the thread (and also after one member of the farm staff tried to drive a tractor through at right angles to the alleys and nearly garrotted himself).

As the population declined, the scale of damage to orchards decreased although some trapping and shooting continued at least into the 1990s. A general licence to kill or take Bullfinches in fruit-growing districts was issued for certain counties, with Kent being the last county from which this was removed in 1999, although individual licences could still be sought. When Bullfinch numbers were at their highest in the 1960s, many thousands were killed each year in Kent, and yet all the evidence is that this activity did not affect populations (Newton *Finches*; Summers *British Birds* 72: 249-263). Licence returns indicating numbers reported as killed or taken in Kent are shown below in Table 6, the total representing almost 90% of those taken under licence throughout England. The sharp step down after 1997/98 marks the point from which individual licences were required. By 2006, no more licences had been issued for Kent since 2001; I have not checked again since then, but it seems unlikely that anyone will have thought it necessary to kill Bullfinches.

Table 6. Numbers of Bullfinch trapped and killed in Kent, 1990-2000										
Information from English Nature and Defra										
1990/91	1991/92	1992/93	1993/94	1994/95	1995/96	1996/97	1997/98	1998/99	1999/00	2000/01
1024	341 ¹	567 ²	312	262	317	547	345	49	4	8
(1) includes 31 trapped & released; (2) includes 33 trapped & released										

Bullfinch has always occurred as a widely dispersed species, only rarely occurring in more than small groups, and thus does not feature strongly in records submitted to KOS. However, I have extracted data from the records of larger counts; the chart below shows the maximum count in Kent each year and also, where the peak was not of migrants, the maximum of migrants. By migrants, I mean concentrations or movements of birds at coastal locations; I'll return to the question of Bullfinch migration later.

1



The underlying trend of the peak count chart is clearly one of decline, albeit interspersed by occasional spikes, usually associated with coastal movements. I also tried a second way of displaying the trend, by counting the number of sites at which large groups were reported each year. This is shown in the chart below. In both of these charts, and especially the second, there is the suggestion that numbers were lower in the 1960s, but this is presumably because they were then so common that people did not bother to report anything than the largest groups (and this is why I have not bothered to show data for the 1950s, when almost no counts were reported). Both analyses agree with the UK CBC/BBS trend shown above: a steep decline from the 1970s to the early 1990s, and continuing reductions to about 2000.

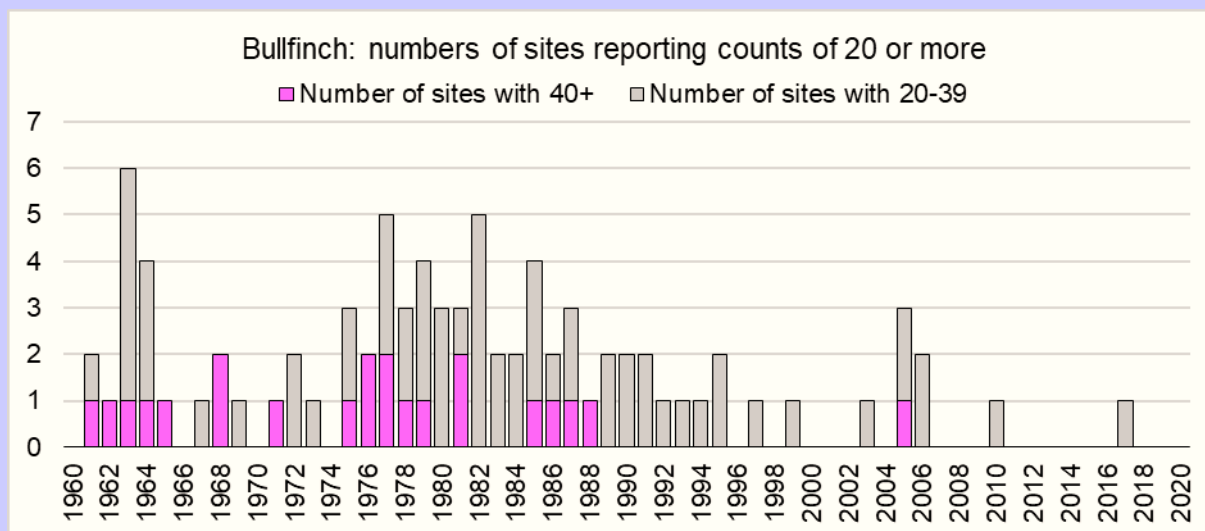


Table 7 lists all counts of 50 or more reported in Kent. With the exception of 2005, which we'll come to in a while, these were all made before 1990 and, excluding 2005, there has been no count of over 30 since 1990.

Table 7. Large Bullfinch counts, 1960-2020	
1961	120 at Barming on 29th October.
1962	50 at Dungeness on 1st January.
1963	80 at Stockbury during 29th October-10th December.
1964	60 at Appledore on 28th March.
1965	60 at Northward Hill on 28th November.
1968	50 W at Hythe on 11th January.
1971	50-100 in small groups at Elmstone in March.
1976	50 at Dungeness on 30th October.
1977	63 at St Margaret's on 13th November.
1979	50 at St Margaret's on 10th October.
1981	50 at Folkestone Warren on 25th January; 60 at St Margaret's on 21st October.
1986	100 in the Darent valley between Horton Kirby and South Darenth on 7th February.
1987	120 (including 107 NE) at St Margaret's on 28th October.
1989	70 (including 50 SW) at St Margaret's on 15th October.
2005	166 SW at Minnis Bay on 5th November.

A few points about these big counts. A lot of them come from coastal sites, but that's to be expected because that is where they group together more than in breeding areas. However, I did notice that the record of 120 at Barming in 1961 was on the same date as the highest coastal count that year, of 35 at Dungeness. Large coastal counts tend to be in autumn, but there are three oddities: the 1962, 1968 and 1981 records at Dungeness, Hythe and Folkestone – what those winter gatherings/movements were about is not clear, but could they be associated with food failure? High coastal autumn counts are lacking before the 1970s; that could be because irruptive behaviour has increased but my guess is that it is at least partly because they have been noticed more by the increased numbers of observers.

The two largest events of Bullfinch passage were in 1987 and 2005. That in 1987 lasted from 23rd October to 14th November. It included the peak of 120 at St Margaret's on 28th October when there were also 14 at Dungeness, and four dates on which between 15 and 32 moved S or W at Foreness. Even more remarkable, given the population decline, were the events of 23rd October-12th November 2005. The outstanding count was of 166 birds at Shuart, near Minnis Bay, arriving high from the ENE and continuing WSW. But there were also 34 at Dungeness on 4th November, 27 SW at Shuart on 7th November and 22 at Bockhill on 12th November, and four other counts of 10-18.

Summers (1979, *British Birds* 72: 249-263) found that, compared to earlier years and especially the 1950s, the 1960s and 1970s saw an increase in the migratory activities (of an invasive type) of a small proportion of the British Bullfinch population. Ringing showed a marked increase in recoveries at 25 km or more distance. However, he concluded that Bullfinches wintering here were not of continental origin. Severe damage to fruit buds and larger movements coincided with local low ash seed production.

That conclusion – that most birds involved in coastal movements are of local origin – has been supported by most of the subsequent ringing information (see the *Migration Atlas* and the BTO online ringing report). There have, though, been earlier hints of foreign birds being seen here (see my second paragraph above) and one cross-channel recovery:

a first-winter female ringed at Stockbury in November 1960 found at Versailles, France, in November 1961 (unfortunately we do not know where the bird was hatched).

For the record, here's a correction of information published in the 1961 KBR and the 1981 Birds of Kent. They both mentioned an adult male ringed in the Netherlands in November 1954 and found at Mereworth in February 1960 (it was also mentioned in the *Migration Atlas*, though there said to have been found in Essex). In fact, the bird carrying the ring number H31109, reported as a Bullfinch when found, had been ringed as a Chaffinch. We don't know where the error arose, but both BTO and I think it was most likely at the finding stage, with either the wrong species reported, or the wrong number reported.

There have now been more birds identified as, or thought to be, continental (see Table 8). Note however that none were reported during the big movement of October 1987; indeed, the KBR for that year says, "the birds involved were doubtless Kentish, given the absence of continental immigration of other species on that day". A lot of the larger movements are of birds moving along the coast, but the events of 2005 appear to have been genuine arrivals and there have been other smaller ones, such as seven coming in off the sea at South Foreland on 25th October 1991 and three at Abbotscliffe on 7th November 2004.

Table 8. Records of continental Bullfinches in Kent, 1952-2020	
1966	One belonging to <i>coccinea</i> (= <i>europaea</i>) trapped at Bicknor on 9th January. Other 'large and bright' birds seen at St Margaret's in January.
1990	One showing characters of <i>pyrrhula</i> seen at Grain on 25th October.
1994	Two of the northern race (<i>pyrrhula</i>) trapped at Sandwich Bay and one at Reculver on 17th October, and a female seen at Sandwich Bay on 19th October (the latter mentioned in SBBO report not KBR).
2004	Birds possibly of the northern race (<i>pyrrhula</i>) were seen at Grain (one) on 17th October and at Fagg's Wood (six) on 11th-12th December, though in neither case was it confirmed.
2005	Four of the total of 34 at Dungeness on 4th November gave the 'toy trumpet' call associated with birds believed to originate somewhere in western Russia (thus probably part of <i>pyrrhula</i>). However, ten of the 166 seen at Minnis Bay on 5th November were trapped and considered to belong to <i>europaea</i> .

Some of the earlier coastal movements may have involved some continental Bullfinches but the 2005 movement was the first for which there is evidence that large numbers were involved. It is puzzling that birds seen on successive days in 2005 were identified as belonging to different subspecies. However, the inclusion of the two types in that year's irruption was noted also in Denmark (Fox, 2006, *Bird Study* 53: 294-302). To read more about the irruptive behaviour of Bullfinches, have a look at that paper and others by Tony Fox and colleagues, on the correlation between irruptions of Northern Bullfinches with poor rowanberry years (2009, *Ornis Fennica* 86: 51-60) and on the origins of those birds (2010, *Bird Study* 57: 125-127). Analysis did not extend to 2005 but both 1990 and 1994 were among the four years in which the rowanberry crop failed in both Norway and Finland.

Evidence of spring passage, in March and April, is very limited. There have been counts of up to five at Dungeness at that time, and occasional coasting birds are seen at St Margaret's, with two in off the sea there on 16th April 1984.

To complete my coverage of Bullfinch movements, I'd like to mention a letter I received from Defra when I sought Bullfinch licence data back in 2006. The information provided was just what I wanted (allowing me to complete Table 6). However, the letter contained the following: "*The Defra Wildlife Adviser who undertook the site visits in Kent has also commented that at the time of the site visits it appeared that the Kent population of bullfinches was declining. She suspects this was due to natural fluctuations as the birds had initially spread to Kent from Europe and it appears that spread has retracted. Also many orchards have been grubbed up and there has been a lot of development.*" So, there we have it, the official government view: they invaded from the continent, quickly changing subspecies, before – anticipating Brexit – going back to where they came from. The notion that, until the 1990s, Bullfinches had always been common in Kent is apparently rubbish.

The truth of the matter is that, in common with so many seed-eaters, numbers of Bullfinches have decreased dramatically from a previous high level. In Europe as a whole, as well as in Britain alone, the species has been declining (BirdLife International). There is not scientific proof of the causes of every species' decline but, in the case of Bullfinch, it seems probable that a fall in adult survival has been the key factor. In the old days, orchards were full of tall weeds including species such as docks and nettles, the seeds of which are favoured Bullfinch foods. Now, the ground beneath the trees is clinically clean and the windbreaks are not thick hedgerows but thin lines of trees that provide neither food nor cover for the birds.

Andrew Henderson

East Kent Rookery Census 2022



Rookery (wikicommons)

This year's Rook census took place between the 8th & 31st March. The final counts taking place in near blizzard like conditions across the Romney marsh. The total number of nests at 47 sites was 1,064 which represents a drop of 8% (1159) from 2021. There was a substantial reduction of some 65% , 144 compared with 222 the previous year, in the Lydd town site whereas numbers at Stodmarsh, the second largest site that we visit remained virtually unchanged at 78 nests , 75 the previous year. Although the reduction this year at Lydd is considerable the total of 144 is only just below the annual average of 152 based on seven earlier years.

The situation in this part of Romney marsh is further complicated by the interchange between neighbouring rookeries. For example there are currently at least four active sites along the A259 between Brenzett (TR006269) & the turn to Lydd, B2075(TR051246). In addition there are two colonies close to Snave and a further two at Ivychurch. This becomes less of a problem on the higher ground in the North of our census area as there are fewer swathes of large open agricultural areas and certainly a greater choice of nesting sites.

The major rookery at West Hythe(TR125343) with 82 nests when first counted in 2016 and still with 44 nests as recently as 2019 has completely disappeared this year. A neighbouring site at Shepway Cross(TR125360) has also declined from 26 nests in 2019 to fifteen currently. To close on a more encouraging note the site at the former Richborough Power Station first monitored in 2004 with just nine nests has steadily grown and at least 51 nests were occupied this spring. The only new site in 2022 was a small group of six nests (TR336635).

Rookery Survey Results 2010 - 2022

Ref.	Site name	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	21	22
306670	Quex Park, Birchington	48	12	20	3	18	10	16	12	13	10	7	13
313663	Cleave Court (Acol)										17 \$	25	30
310646	Minster village	15	10	3	8	5	7	2	2	8	6	6	13
329642	St Augustines G C			8	16	12	16	14	9	8	\$	n.v	10+
336635	Stone Lees G C												6 \$
333618	A256Richboro. Nr. (Electrical Depot)	16	29	20	31	42	33	27	21	25	15	36+	51+

333602	A256 Thanet Waste							8	13	21	19	28	24
230632	Upstreet	4	3	5	6	12	12	9	12	16	12	17	15
217601	Stodmarsh village	30	55	49	45	50+	58	48	55	55	76	75+	78
242578	Wingham Village(West)			5	0	4	nv	11	6	4	5	n.t	3
245576	Wingham Village (East)					60 \$	43	25	30	28	34	42	44
244607	Preston (nr church)	22	20	18	18	19	23	14	11	14	11	9	11
258651	Sarre	7	20	18	22	11	18	13	12	17	19	22+	22+
280653	Monkton Village	79	57	61	18	58	32	22	40	56	46	48	27
271651	Gore Street(Monkton)	0	0	10	51	5	5	7	5	3	n.t.	8	13
286657	Monkton R`bout				8	15	20	18	18	25	35	29	27
263524	Nonington (nr Nonington Court)	nv	42	31	27	35	35	44	29	28	15	11	5
255518	Nonington Cricket club								5	8	18	38	34
268566	Staple (Church)		6		10	7	9	11	9	19	9	12	2
273568	Staple (Rowen Close											13	20
283491	Eythorne Village	6	15	18	22	21	14	20	21	22	23	28	22
		10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	21	22
300445	Whitfield(A2 Rbout)	9	14	10	11	0	11	15	10	16	11	8	12
314458	Church Whitfield	20	28	28	27	28	35	35	25	35+	32+	20+	25
327580	Sandwich Town Centre							6	7	6	4	8	9
350577	Sandwich Bay Toll				7	8	9	8	7	6	4	n.t	n.t
358576	Sandwich Bay Estate									8	4	n.t	n.t
340545	Hacklinge	25	24	22	14	17	20	18	16	15	18	23	18
60498	Bilting						30+ \$	32	28	25	30	35	25+
TR0030													
013 294	Snave (church)					11 \$	16	10	22	27	31	16	13
013 296	Jct A2070/Ivychurch					16	22		Nt	13 B	15	6	4
19259	A259/Prospect Farm												20+
23284	Nr Ivychurch					19 \$	17	18	16	40	26	22	16
29277	Ivychurch					6 \$	12	9	17	A	9	6	9
34252	Old Romney (church)	26	nv	nv	nv	25	22	21	8	10	9	7	10
35253	Old Romney					8 \$	8	28	28	30	29	50	25
040 249	East of Old Romney												9
41210	Lydd Town		126	nv	nv	170+	120+	135	145	180	193	222	144
68250	New Romney	nv	23	nv	nv	4	Nt	6	4	4	4	6	10
78261	New Romney(Nr. KNT visitor centre)	nv	17	nv	nv	18	11	19	17	13	18	32	33
88269	St Mary`s Bay		23	nv	nv	23	18	12	8+	6	2	3	6
123342	West Hythe							82 \$	83+	70	44	8	n.t
125350	Shepway Cross									30+ \$	26	24	15
128357	Lympe							30 \$	23+	18	20	35	42+

139371	M20Service Area										✕	29	30
140368	Sandling Park area					26 \$	35	35	46	25	38	22	23
149368	Sandling Station								20 \$	24	25	28	26
177436	Elham village								6 \$	28	24	17	30
198477	Barham Vineyard					23 \$	32	29	31	40	29	33	29
143602	Kent Uni (Cbury)	42	42	43	29	30	35	30	47	39	39	32	20
Totals		470	646	421	312	746	816	917	939	1097	1062	1159	1064
Totals		308	278	260	251	260	239	211	202	266	162	236	

\$\$ Cleve Court was a large Rookery many years ago. Covid 19 restrictions prevented a census in 2020.
n.t. = no trace of any nests

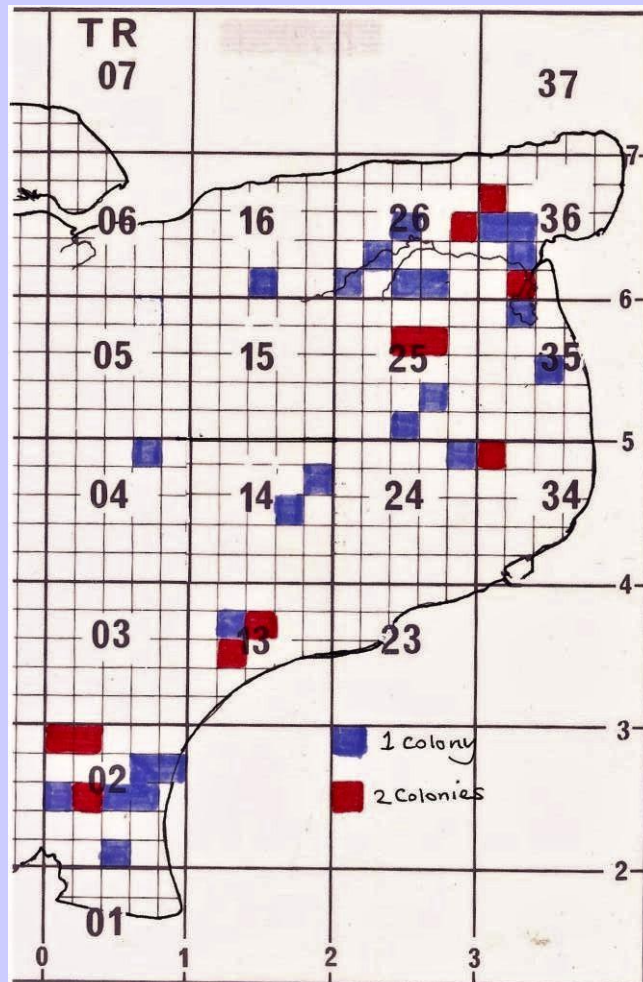
A new site on the old A20 East of M20 Services Area & a second site in the village of Staple.
The Old Romney site includes two groups on the RHside (from Brenzett) of the A259 (1) in the area of Bush Farm & (2) immediately before the turning to old Romney.

Locations where Rookery has disappeared 2010 -2022

	YEAR	2010	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	2021	22
6271	Brenzett	0	nv	nv	nv	Nt	Nt						
12283	Brenzett	16	nv	nv	nv	Nt	Nt						
12283	Brenzett	nv	nv	nv	nv	Nt	Nt						
13264	Brenzett	10	14	nv	nv	Nt	Nt						
260671	St Nicholas-at-Wade				3	nv	nv						
242574	Wingham Church	nv	0	0	0	0	0						
331560	Worth village			4	0	v	Nt						
327580	Sandwich RopeWalk	17	16	9	9	0	0	0	nt	nt	nt	nt	
284499	Eythorne/Elvington	30	5	Nv	0	0	0	nt	nt	nt			
298482	Eastry bypass(High & Dry Pub)	11	14	11	11	9	4	[5]	Nt	nt			
119314	Dymchurch						\$ 9	nt	nt	nt	nt		
315696	Westgate-on-Sea	20	23	15	8	6	5	3	6	4	0	n.t	
307672	Acol	13	8	13	8	15	10	22	19	15	8	n.t	
14605	A2 Fav-Ospringe	0	0	0	0	0	Nt	nt					
930631	Bapchild	n	nv	nv	nv	nv	nv	nv	nv	nv	nv	nv	
998611	Ospringe			0	0	0	nt	nv	nv	nv	nv	nv	
977598	Nr Newington (M2)						nv	nv	nv	nv	nv	nv	

Nt = No trace of a Rookery

NT = no trace of a Rookery; nv = no visit



Rookery survey - Distribution of occupied tetrads.

John Websper

KENT BIRD SIGHTINGS FOR MARCH-APRIL 2022 - Chris Hindle

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

WEATHER

The weather during the first half of **March** was rather unsettled and the first week was cold. The second week was milder and after mid-month there were some notably mild days with cold frosty nights as high pressure took control with plenty of sunshine. The last four days were rather unsettled and noticeably colder with a strengthening NE wind. Rainfall was 58% of average with only 28 mm falling at Bishopstone but sunshine was above average.

The weather during the early part of **April** was rather unsettled, especially from the 3rd-6th. The first ten days were also rather cold, although it became warmer than average through the middle part of the month. Towards the middle of April it became more settled with high pressure and with a cool north easterly breeze dominating. Clear skies ensured that sunshine totals were above average but rainfall was significantly below the monthly average with only 20.75 mm measured at Bishopstone.

EARLIEST SPRING MIGRANTS IN 2022

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

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

Garganey – three birds arrived at Dungeness RSPB on Mar 15th. **(+5)**
Osprey – one flew N at Whitstable on Apr 5th. **(+11)**
Little Ringed Plover – there was one at East Peckham on Mar 5th. **(-11)**
Whimbrel – two were seen at Oare Marshes on Apr 9th. **(+8)**
Common Sandpiper – one was recorded in Faversham Creek on Apr 9th. **(+1)**
Greenshank – five were counted at Cliffe Pools on Mar 26th. **(-10)**
Wood Sandpiper – a bird arrived at Dungeness RSPB on Apr 17th. **(-4)**
Black Tern – there was one at Scotney GPs on Apr 12th. **(-5)**
Little Tern – seven were seen at DBO with one at Seabrook on Apr 11th. **(0)**
Sandwich Tern – one was recorded at Lydd on Feb 19th. **(-13)**
Common Tern – eight birds flew E past DBO on Apr 8th. **(+12)**
Arctic Tern – 24 flew past DBO on Apr 11th. **(-1)**
Turtle Dove – one was found at Marden on Apr 12th. **(+1)**
Cuckoo – one was seen at Naccolt on Apr 12th. **(+13)**
Common Swift – two flew over Dartford Marshes on Apr 19th. **(+4)**
Hobby - one was reported flying over Gillingham on Apr 11th. **(+8)**
Sand Martin – a single bird flew past Swalecliffe on Mar 30th. **(+21)**
Swallow – one flew over Kennington on Mar 16th. **(+5)**
House Martin – one as seen at DBO with three at Nickoll's Quarry on Apr 4th. **(+15)**
Tree Pipit – a male was singing at Challock on Apr 10th. **(+9)**
White Wagtail – one was seen at Worth Marshes on Mar 2nd. **(-8)**
Yellow Wagtail – a bird flew past Swalecliffe on Apr 4th. **(+16)**
Nightingale – one was heard at Kingsnorth on Apr 10th. **(+4)**
Black Redstart – a bird was recorded at Dungeness on Mar 3rd. **(+2)**
Common Redstart – a single bird was seen at Milton Creek on Apr 11th. **(+8)**
Northern Wheatear – five birds arrived at DBO on Mar 15th. **(+9)**
Whinchat – one was seen at Tankerton on Apr 12th. **(+1)**
Ring Ouzel – one was reported from Bough Beech on Mar 23rd. **(-8)**
Grasshopper Warbler – one was heard at DBO on Apr 15th. **(+5)**
Sedge Warbler – one was singing at Dungeness RSPB on Mar 20th. **(-8)**
Reed Warbler – one was recorded from DBO on Apr 11th. **(+5)**
Lesser Whitethroat – one was heard at Uplees on Apr 14th. **(+3)**
Common Whitethroat – there was a widespread overnight arrival on Apr 12th. **(+8)**
Garden Warbler – one was heard at Seaton on Apr 19th. **(+7)**
Blackcap – a male was heard singing at Seabrook on Mar 22nd. **(+3)**
Chiffchaff – single birds were seen at Kingsdown and Hope Point on Feb 26th. **(-10)**
Willow Warbler – one was heard singing near New Romney on Apr 3rd. **(+10)**

An excellent day's seawatching at Dungeness Bird Observatory on April 11th

With winds coming from the south-east all the interest was offshore and where 13 hours of coverage was achieved. A spectacular passage occurred and of particular note were 13 **Garganey** (taking the spring total to remarkable 111 individuals so far), 72 **Velvet Scoters**, two **Avocets**, 14 **Little Gulls**, 29 **Mediterranean Gulls**, seven **Little Terns**, 24 **Arctic Terns** and 23 **Arctic Skuas**. Numbers were provided by 40 **Shelduck**, 315 **Shovelers**, 47 **Gadwalls**, 123 **Pintail**, 202 **Teal**, 1,672 **Common Scoters**, 30 **Red-breasted Mergansers**, 1,194 **Gannets**, 277 **Whimbrels**, 124 **Kittiwakes**, 2,898 **Sandwich Terns** (a new spring day record), 235 **Common Terns** and 687 **auks** species.

PARTRIDGE TO WILDFOWL

The wintering **Quail** was seen again at Sandwich Bay on Mar 9th.

The **Black Brant** seen in the Reculver/Minnis Bay area was still present on March 7th and one was also seen at Seasalter on Mar 18th and 20th whilst single **Pale-bellied Brent Geese** flew E past DBO on Mar 9th and 20th with one seen at Minnis Bay on the Mar 10th.

During March, 215 **Russian White-fronted Geese** were recorded at Capel Fleet on the 5th with 240 at Swale NR on the 17th and 78 remaining there on the 20th. There were also single birds seen at North Foreland, Dungeness RSPB, Seaton and Oare Marshes. In April two were seen at Whetsted GPs and there were single birds at Dungeness RSPB from the 3rd-13th, at Seaton on the 9th and at Sandwich Bay on the 26th.

A **Pink-footed Goose** was seen at Shalmsford Street from Mar 10th-13th and on Apr 17th whilst one flew over North Foreland on Mar 18th and a **Whooper Swan** was reported from Cheyne Court on Mar 9th.

During March and April up to 12 **Egyptian Geese** were seen at Sevenoaks WR, Bough Beech, Cliffe Pools, Clowes Wood, Seaton, Folkestone, Conningbrook, Gravesend, Bluewater, Shorne Marshes, Whetsted GPs, Eastborough, Grove Ferry, Reculver and Dungeness RSPB and as many as five **Mandarin Duck** were seen at Bough Beech, Penshurst Place, Reculver, Finberry, Aldington, Furnace Pond, Seaton, Naccolt, Whetsted GPs and Willop Basin.

The first **Garganey** of the year arrived at Dungeness RSPB on Mar 15th.

After this there was an impressive series of spring movements at DBO making a total of 114 birds culminating with 13E on Apr 11th and three on the 17th.

March 16 th	31E
March 17 th	-
March 18 th	-
March 19 th	2E
March 20 th	-
March 21 st	32E
March 22 nd	25E
March 23 rd	-
March 24 th	-
March 25 th	-
March 26 th	4E
March 27 th	-
March 28 th	-
March 29 th	2E

At other sites during March and April there were as many as 11 birds recorded from Dungeness RSPB with smaller numbers seen at Bough Beech, Sandwich Bay, Stodmarsh/Grove Ferry, Motney Hill, Pegwell Bay, Cliffe Pools, Swalecliffe, Seasalter, Higham, DBO, Chartham Mill, New Hythe, Elmley, Brooksend and Oare Marshes.

369 **Pintail** flew E at DBO on Mar 21st with 159 recorded the next day.

A male **Green-winged Teal** was seen at Oare Marshes from Mar 5th-15th and a male and female **Red-crested Pochard** were seen at Ham Pits on Mar 29th and 30th.

The male **Scaup** first seen at New Hythe in 2021 was still present on Mar 12th and there was also a report of one at Little Murston on Mar 4th whilst another flew E at DBO on the 20th.

During March up to four **Velvet Scoter** were recorded from DBO, North Foreland and Swalecliffe. There were also counts of 14E at DBO on Mar 21st and 15E on the 22nd. In April, at DBO, six flew E on the 4th with 11 on the 6th, 10 on the 10th, 72 on the 11th, 15 on the 12th, 28 on the 17th, six on the 18th, one on the 23rd, three on the 25th, 10 on the 26th and four on the 30th.

Two **Long-tailed Duck** flew E at DBO on Mar 21st and a drake was reported on the sea off North Foreland on Apr 13th whilst the red-head **Smew** first seen at Dungeness RSPB in January was still there on Mar 20th and during March single **Goosanders** were seen at Bough Beech and New Hythe.

NIGHTJAR TO WADERS

A **Red-necked Grebe** flew E at DBO on Apr 27th whilst single **Slavonian Grebes** were seen at Sandwich Bay on Mar 5th and at DBO on Mar 18th.

During March, single **Black-necked Grebes** were seen at Dungeness RSPB with two on the sea at Hythe on Mar 9th, two on the sea at DBO on the 22nd and one on the sea at Reculver and then at Birchington on the 31st. Two also flew past DBO on Apr 10th.

Single **Stone Curlews** were recorded overnight at Chamber's Wall on Apr 14th and Stonar on the 15th and a female **Black-winged Stilt** was seen briefly at Cliffe Pools on Feb 3rd.

Easterly Whimbrel and Bar-tailed Godwit passage at Dungeness during April

	Whimbrel	Bar-tailed Godwit
April 20 th	-	7
April 21 st	31	2491
April 22 nd	111	1576
April 23 rd	72	2507
April 24 th	150	709
April 25 th	140	611
April 26 th	684	1171
April 27 th	247	637
April 28 th	66	329
April 29 th	67	142
April 30 th	71	84



Bar-tailed Godwits by Phil Smith

A very early **Temminck's Stint** was identified at Cliffe Pools from where it stayed from Mar 26th-Apr 3rd. This is the second earliest recorded in Kent following one in 1977 at Westbere on March 18th.

During March one or two **Purple Sandpipers** were seen at Hythe and Grain whilst 20 were seen at Foreness on the 26th.

One or two **Little Stints** were seen at Cliffe Pools between Mar 26th and Apr 22nd whilst another two flew W at Reculver on Apr 11th and two others were seen at Dungeness RSPB on the 30th.

Single **Jack Snipes** were seen at Dungeness RSPB, DBO, Stodmarsh, Donkey Street, Cliffe Pools, Oare Marshes and Worth Marshes and one or two **Spotted Redshanks** were recorded from Cliffe Pools, Worth Marshes, Little Murston, Dungeness RSPB, Riverside CP, Stodmarsh, Milton Creek and Pegwell Bay.



Wood Sandpiper by Chris Bond

The first **Wood Sandpiper** of the year was seen at Dungeness RSPB on Apr 17th and then one or two were subsequently found at Reculver, Oare Marshes, Cooling Marshes, Bough Beech and Worth Marshes

GULLS TO SHEARWATERS

During March and April at DBO up to 23 **Little Gulls** were recorded but there were higher counts of 155E on Apr 10th, 77E on the 23rd, 140E on the 25th, 131E on the 26th and 131E on the 26th. Smaller numbers were also reported from Cliffe Pools, Bough Beech, Dover, Oare Marshes, Swalecliffe, Dungeness RSPB, Leybourne CP, Scotney and Worth Marshes.

A juvenile **Glaucous Gull** was seen at Deal on Mar 9th whilst another was reported from North Foreland on Mar 20th and from Foreness and North Foreland on the 26th and the second winter **Iceland Gull** first seen at Dungeness in January was still there on Mar 17th. An immature was also reported from Seasalter on Mar 14th.

Up to three **Caspian Gulls** were recorded from Langdon Bay, Stodmarsh, Walmer Beach, Dungeness RSPB, DBO, Pegwell Bay, Deal, Sandwich Bay, North Foreland, Foreness and Dartford Marshes and single **Yellow-legged Gulls** were seen at DBO, Walmer Beach, Ham Marshes and Sandwich Bay.

The first **Black Tern** of the year was seen at Scotney GPs on Apr 12th followed by up to four at DBO and Bough Beech.

In March and April up to 13 **Great Skuas** were seen at DBO with one or two at Sandwich Bay and Mill Point.

The first **Pomarine Skua** of the spring flew E at DBO on Apr 13th with others seen on the 18th, 21st and 26th and with two on the 25th. On Apr 27th three were reported from North Foreland with one at Sandwich Bay and

the next day 18 flew past DBO in the afternoon with three on the 29th and four on the 30th when one was also reported from North Foreland with three seen at Deal.

The first **Arctic Skua** of the spring was reported from Samphire Hoe on Mar 16th with two at DBO on Apr 6th and then up to 34 were recorded there during the rest of the month. Two were also seen from Mill Point on Apr 11th with one at Higham on the 21st and others at Sandwich Bay on the 26th and 29th.

The **Black Guillemot** first seen in 2021 was seen again at Swalecliffe on Mar 8th whilst single **Puffins** flew E at DBO on Apr 18th and 25th.

During March and April one or two **Black-throated Divers** were seen at Sandwich Bay, Walmer, Bockhill and up to six were counted at DBO and there were one or two **Great Northern Divers** recorded from DBO, Tankerton, North Foreland, Deal, Walmer and Shellness.

A **Sooty Shearwater** was reported from DBO on Apr 7th and a **Manx Shearwater** flew past DBO on Apr 6th with seven the next day and four on the 12th and with singles on the 23rd, 24th and 30th and two on the 26th and 27th.

In March and April single **Shags** were recorded from Bockhill and North Foreland.

WHITE STORK TO WOODPECKERS

The **White Stork** first seen on Worth Marshes in 2021 was still there until Apr 11th. One was also seen circling over Shorne Marshes on Mar 15th with 12 over Bough Beech on Mar 18th and three at Appledore and Snargate on Mar 26th. In April one flew NE over Tenterden on the 1st, three circled over Chartham on the 10th and singles were seen at Hothfield on the 11th, at Wingham and Seaton on the 13th and at Ash on the 14th. In addition, 24 flew over Bough Beech on Apr 18th.

The two Dungeness **Glossy Ibises** were still present on the Mar 20th and were joined by another nine birds on 18th and 19th with up to six remaining until the Apr 27th. In addition, single birds were seen flying over West Hythe on the Mar 12th, at Cliffe Pools on the Mar 13th and 15th and intermittently until the end of April and at Stodmarsh from Mar 22nd-29th. Eight also flew over Scotney GPs on Apr 14th.

A **Spoonbill** was seen at Dungeness RSPB between Mar 14th and 19th with four on the Swale at Sheppey on Mar 24th. During April one was seen at Elmley on the 11th and 23rd with one at Oare Marshes on the 25th.

Up to three **Bitterns** were recorded from Dungeness RSPB, Stodmarsh/Grove Ferry, Oare Marshes and Elmley. During March and April as many as seven **Cattle Egrets** were seen at Stodmarsh/Grove Ferry, Littlebourne, Allhallows, Lydd, Seaton, Cooling Marshes, Dungeness RSPB, Swalecliffe, Seasalter, Grain and Elmley.



Purple Heron by Martyn Wilson

A **Purple Heron** was discovered at Stodmarsh on Apr 18th and stayed there until the 24th whilst another was reported from Minster Marshes on the 20th.

In March and April one or two **Great White Egrets** were recorded from Dungeness RSPB, Stodmarsh, Worth Marshes, Sandwich Bay, Whetsted GPs, Holborough Marshes and Aldington.

The first **Osprey** of the spring flew N at Whitstable on Apr 5th after which single birds were seen at Lade, DBO, Dunorlan Park, Marden, Sandwich Bay, Collard's Lake, Paddock Wood and Oare Marshes.

Single **Hen Harriers** were recorded from DBO, Mill Point, Oare Marshes, Elmley, Harty, Worth Marshes, Sandwich Bay, Romney Marsh, Seasalter, Godmersham, Walmer and Capel Fleet.

An immature **White-tailed Eagle** was seen flying S over Chatham on Mar 13th and then seen again on the 15th at Sandwich Bay and Elmley. Birds were also reported from White Horse Wood on Mar 20th, at Worth Marshes and Port Lympne on the 23rd, at Kingsdown on the 24th and at Aycliffe and Northward Hill on Apr 3rd.

In March and April as many as eight **Red Kites** were seen at widespread sites throughout the County with a higher count of 17 flying N at Sandwich Bay on Apr 17th.



Black Kite by Tom Hanson

A **Black Kite** was reported flying NW at Grove Ferry on Mar 22nd whilst another flew N from DBO to Bockhill and North Foreland on Apr 17th. One was also reported from Broadstairs on Apr 19th and another flew W at Whitfield on Apr 20th followed by single birds in the Dungeness area on Apr 24th and 26th.

During March up to four **Short-eared Owls** were seen at Elmley, Reculver, Oare Marshes, Conyer, Grenham Bay, Cliftonville and Sandwich Bay. In April there were still one or two birds seen at Shellness, Sandwich Bay and North Foreland.

A **Long-eared Owl** was seen at Sandwich Bay on Mar 2nd with another at Botolph's Bridge on the 8th.



Hoopoe by Perdix birder

A **Hoopoe** was recorded at South Foreland on Apr 13th, another was reported from Cliffe Pools on the 14th and one was seen briefly at Reculver on Apr 19th.

FALCONS TO HIRUNDINES

Single **Merlins** were recorded from DBO, Donkey Street, Bough Beech, Sandwich Bay, Reculver and Chamber's Wall.



Hooded Crow by Mark Chidwick

A **Hooded Crow** was seen at Swalecliffe on Apr 9th and 10th and up to four **Ravens** were seen at DBO, North Foreland, Dunorlan Park, Thurnham, Brokes Mill Farm, Hillborough, Southborough, Conyer, Reculver, Stodmarsh, Bockhill, Seabrook and Folkestone.

Two **Woodlarks** were seen at North Foreland on Mar 1st and 2nd with a single bird there on the 3rd and others at DBO also on the 3rd and at Foreness on the 9th. On Mar 11th there were three at North Foreland and two at Reculver and on the 12th there was still one at North Foreland with four reported from there on the 14th.

Single birds were also seen at Langdon on the 15th, Sandwich Bay on the 16th, North Foreland on the 18th and flying NE at South Foreland on the Mar 22nd and Apr 18th.

As many as eight wintering **Shorelarks** were last reported from Leysdown-on-Sea on Mar 26th.

WARBLERS TO WHEATEARS

A **Wood Warbler** was singing at DBO on Apr 29th.

The **HUME'S WARBLER** first seen at Bockhill on Dec 22nd was still present there on Apr 17th whilst the **Dusky Warbler** first seen at Fordwich in 2021 was last reported on Apr 9th.

The first **Grasshopper Warbler** of the year was heard at DBO on Apr 15th after which up to three birds were recorded from Reculver Marshes with single birds at Grove Ferry and Seasalter.

A **Dartford Warbler** was seen at Broadwater Warren on the Mar 30th.

Up to four **Firecrests** were seen at DBO, Sandwich Bay, North Foreland, South Foreland, Reculver, Shuart, Lade, Oare Marshes, Dunkirk, Hythe, Nethergong, Hemsted Forest and Enbrook Park.



Ring Ouzel by Jonathan Dodds

After the first **Ring Ouzel** was reported from Bough Beech on Mar 23rd the next records were of single males at Chamber's Wall and North Foreland on Apr 5th after which up to seven birds were seen at Dungeness, Swalecliffe, Minster Marshes, Bockhill, Reculver, Shuart, Uplees, Oare Marshes, Stodmarsh/Grove Ferry, Romney Marshes, Nethergong, Worth Marshes, Abbotscliffe, Seasalter, Dunkirk, Conyer, Chamber's Wall, Sandwich Bay, Conningbrook, Folkestone, Beachborough, Foreness and Charing.

Up to 18 **Black Redstarts** were recorded at DBO and Dover Cliffs with smaller numbers at North Foreland, Sandwich Bay, Hythe, Reculver, Pegwell Bay, Capel Fleet, Walmer, Folkestone, Langdon, Dover, Abbotscliffe, Hillborough, Higham, Lympne, Hythe, Romney Marsh, Weddington, Kingsdown, Lydd, Broomfield, Worth Marshes, East Malling, Capel-le-Ferne, Samphire Hoe, Whitfield, High Halden, St Mary's Island, Swalecliffe, Ramsgate, New Hythe, South Foreland and Foreness.



Red-breasted Flycatcher by Ian Stewart

A female **Red-breasted Flycatcher** spent the day in a garden at Dungeness on Apr 13th and single **Pied Flycatchers** were seen at DBO on Apr 19th and Cuxton on Apr 29th.

SPARROWS TO BUNTINGS

As many as 15 **Water Pipits** were seen at Stodmarsh/Grove Ferry with smaller numbers at Worth Marshes, Oare Marshes, Bockhill, Otford, Westbere Marshes and Dungeness RSPB.

Up to four **Hawfinch** was recorded from Folkestone, DBO, Denge Wood and Godmersham.

Five **Common Crossbills** were seen at Little Farthingloe on Mar 8th with 20 flying past Bockhill on the 26th.

A **Serin** was found singing at South Foreland on Mar 22nd and there was another at Foreness on Apr 14th whilst a **Lapland Bunting** was seen at Foreness on Mar 16th.

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

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

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

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

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

CONTRIBUTORS

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

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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 and they are then entered onto the KOS database.

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

The following 2021 and 2022 KOS Rarities have recently been accepted by the KOS Rarities Panel based on published photos or from descriptions submitted.

2021

Radde's Warbler	Sandwich Bay	October 16th-17th
Radde's Warbler	South Foreland	November 3rd-5th

2022

Black Brant	Seasalter	March 18th & 20th
Green-winged Teal (male)	Oare Marshes	March 5th-15th
Ring-necked Duck (male)	Little Murston NR	February 19th-23rd
Eastern Lesser Whitethroat	Sandwich Bay	2021 - Jan 3rd

Fifty Years Ago

Ortolan Bunting



Ortolan Bunting by JG Keulemans (PDI)

Of two males seen at Reculver on May 1st (CHH,MJP) one was seen at very close range and appeared weary. This is the first record since 1968 and the first spring occurrence since 1952. There were reports of several others along the east coast north to Fair Isle between the 1st – 6th.

KBR 1972

