



Eleonora's Falcon by Matt Pennal

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KOS Contacts – Committee Members details are available on the society website

Newsletter Editor: Norman McCanch: 01304-813208 e-mail: nvmccanch@hotmail.com

Back in the summer of 2013 I made my first attempt at editing this newsletter. It seems long ago today after the subsequent forty-eight issues, but I recall venturing my opinion that “Birding today seems to be increasingly focused on identification” rather than considering deeper questions regarding the behaviour and ecology of birds in our landscape.

Since then, we have seen a significant increase in the numbers of people out and about taking an interest in birds. Many of these newcomers have been drawn to birds through the medium of photography, enabled by the increasing sophistication of digital equipment. The results can be breath-taking but when they find their way inevitably onto social media it is clear that not only identification poses a problem to many people, but deeper understanding of the lives of birds is woefully lacking. Perhaps it does not matter, although to my jaded eye it seems extraordinary that people can see and photograph birds and not seek to develop their own knowledge and skills.

By an odd coincidence I recently came across a quote from the American Physicist and polymath Richard Feynman. As far as I can tell he was not a birdwatcher, but it seems relevant to my own train of thought. He wrote *“You can know the name of a bird in all the languages of the world, but when you are finished, you know absolutely nothing whatever about the bird itself. So let’s look at the bird and see what it’s doing, that’s what counts. I learned very early the difference between knowing the name of something and knowing something”*

We would all benefit from getting to know our birds a little better.

Good birding

Norman

News and announcements

AVIAN INFLUENZA GUIDANCE

Avian Influenza, or 'Bird Flu', is currently a major problem particularly in colonies around the North Sea, with high levels of sickness and mortality seen in many areas, including Kent.

If you find a dead or dying bird, avoid touching it directly if possible. If you have to move a dead bird please use protective gloves or a plastic bag and dispose of the bird by wrapping it and putting it in your general household waste, making sure you wash your hands thoroughly afterwards.

Any dead waterfowl, seabirds, or birds of prey, as well as other wild birds if five or more are found, should be reported to Defra.

You can contact them on 03459 33 55 77, or by email at defra.helpline@defra.gsi.gov.uk. If you have visited any of the reserves or birding sites in Kent, it is recommended that you wash or anti-bac your hands before leaving.

Finally, if you feed the birds in your garden, it is always advisable to keep your feeders clean using a mild (1:20) disinfectant/water solution. Don't leave old food on the feeders, always change water daily, and wash your hands thoroughly when finished. This helps to control other pathogens including Trichomoniasis and Salmonella

Turtle Doves, 2021 Survey - The results are in!



© Jack Farrar

Data from last year's Kent and national Turtle Dove survey have now been processed. Unsurprisingly, the results confirm that numbers are precariously low with an estimate of only 2,100 pairs in England. The sobering reality is that in the 1970s the population was estimated at 125,000 pairs. A 98% decline in such an iconic species during the lifetime of many active bird watchers makes the Turtle Dove our most rapidly declining bird species.

But there is hope.....

First, it's important to understand why we've seen this catastrophic decline. Research reveals that there are two main factors affecting Turtle Doves in the UK; the loss of suitable breeding habitat, and the unsustainable levels of hunting the birds suffer as they migrate through Southwestern Europe. Currently, however, no hunting is permitted on the Western European flyway which provides a great window of opportunity to reverse the decline.

KOS led the survey in Kent and huge thanks are due to the volunteers who stepped up to take part. The survey revealed an estimate of 700 pairs in the county which represents a third of the overall English total.

As our chairman André Farrar commented: 'Thanks to the efforts of over 120 volunteers brought together by the Kent Ornithological Society, we now know that Kent is on the front line of efforts to stop and reverse the catastrophic decline of our Turtle Doves. Despite the grim national picture, numbers in Kent give room for some optimism and should encourage farmers, landowners, advisors, volunteers, and birders to redouble our efforts. Reversing the fortunes of Turtle Doves in Kent and beyond is a great ambition and will require both targeted conservation action and landscape scale initiatives to succeed.'

Operation Turtle Dove is a partnership – between the RSPB, Fair to Nature, Pensthorpe Conservation Trust, and Natural England – aimed at reversing the decline in this beloved farmland bird. The project is driving forward the restoration and creation of Turtle Dove breeding habitat, which holds the key to securing

a future for Turtle Doves in the UK. A team of advisors is on hand to provide guidance to land managers on creating Turtle Dove habitat and providing supplementary feeding. Here in Kent, Operation Turtle Dove is led by RSPB's - and KOS member - Nicole Khan, and there is now a developing, extensive, and enthusiastic network of farmers and landowners supported by volunteers. It is encouraging that Turtle Doves are holding their own in their most important county.

The KOS Turtle Dove Survey also provided an opportunity for volunteers to record other species of conservation concern in the county. Many useful records of species such as Spotted Flycatcher, Nightingale, Yellowhammers and Corn Bunting were received, often from squares that didn't hold Turtle Doves! These records will be entered onto the KOS database and summarised, with the core Turtle Dove results, in a paper that will be published in the 2021 Kent Bird Report.

The 2021 National Turtle Dove Survey was a partnership project coordinated by the RSPB, Rare Breeding Birds Panel and Kent Ornithological Society, with support from British Trust for Ornithology (BTO). The Turtle Dove survey is part of 'Action for Birds in England,' a conservation partnership between Natural England and the RSPB.

Murray Orchard

Please Submit 2022 Survey Data Now!

– BBS/WBBS, Heronry Census, Breeding Waders of Wet Meadows, RBBP

For those that participated in the above, or any other breeding season survey in 2022, please ensure that you submit your data now.

It is particularly important to make sure that BBS/WBBS data are submitted before the end of August so that results can be included in "The Breeding Bird Survey 2022".

Please also submit any notable breeding records recorded during the year, to the KOS or BirdTrack, especially those of RBBP species such as Garganey, Shoveler, Pochard, Turtle Dove, Little Ringed Plover, Marsh Harrier, Long-eared Owl, L/S Woodpecker, Peregrine, Hobby, Bearded Tit, Black Redstart and Hawfinch.

Thank You.

Bob Knight, Brian Watmough, Murray Orchard

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

Discussion between the KOS and KWT regarding Oare Marshes

Following our meeting early this year we were encouraged by KWT's plans for Oare Marshes particularly in terms of re-establishing control of water levels. Now that the sluice is once again operational and shallow water with muddy areas is reappearing the promise of an exciting autumn beckons. Wader numbers and variety have responded with twelve wader species on show while waiting for the Night Heron to making its dusk flight into the East Flood.

We're grateful to KWT for responding so positively to KOS's approach and look forward to seeing how the planned habitat management develops. KWT's area manager, Stephen Weeks, has provided an update, detailed below.

Andre Farrer

An update on developments at Oare Marshes KWT reserve

We have found a safe way around the edge of the EA sea sluice which has made it far easier for us to play around with the wooden sluice boards within the structure. The sluice has the capacity to hold back water to approximately 300-400mm above the base level and there is space for two 200mm removable wooden boards. Over the last month or so we have been dropping the sluice levels by a half board (we've made an additional 100mm board to give us some finer control) and then monitoring how the levels react. We are down to one 200mm board and levels are still quite high across the flood so we will drop it down to 100mm on Friday and see what happens.

- The western side seems to be reacting at approximately the same rate as the east, so I think there must still be sufficient flow through the culvert under the road, despite the deepening slump in the road where it crosses. We will be chasing this up with KCC Highways, as I worry about the culvert completely collapsing and interfering with the water movement.
- The western side looked good over the winter and into spring with the Garganey hanging around for quite a while. We will be shortly allowing the cattle back in to graze the reed, as part of our work to try and slowly restore the majority of the area back to grazing marsh rather than the dense reed it had developed into.
- We have finalised plans with the RSPB to use their soil spreader to create more rills and foot drains in the Pheasant Farm fields, with the aim to hold back wetter areas longer into the spring and summer and increase the amount of muddy margins available. We are also hoping to use the same machine to rotavate some the East Flood margins to knock back the reed and sea-club rush that is dominating the margins. There are also plans for some more traditional machine dredging of some of the ditch network in September which will also include some scraping of the flood margins.
- We hope with the combination of our playing with the water levels and knocking back of the marginal vegetation, we will be in a far better position for this autumn.

Stephen Weeks KWT

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

Photo Essay – Eleonora's falcon, a new species for Kent



Eleonora's Falcon by Richard Hanman

The bird of the year so far in 2022 must be the Eleonora's Falcon found at Sandwich Bay on May 26th. Initially seen and photographed over the Restharrow scrape heading rapidly north, leaving a few stunned and bemused observers. As is often the way in East Kent it turned up at Stodmarsh later in the morning surprising a few more fortunate watchers. What happened next will become the stuff of legend as the bird returned to the coastal marshes around the Lydden Valley RSPB site, where it remained until the 4th of June. As probably the first twitchable Eleonora's in Britain it attracted large numbers of visitors from far and wide, all ably managed by the RSPB staff and volunteers.

There are countless photographs of the bird on social media which show as many plumage details as anyone could wish for. It was clearly a pale morph bird showing a wonderful Raw Sienna ground colour to the underparts, marked with heavy streaking. It can be aged as a first year bird by the heavily marked underwing coverts, which are uniformly dark brown in adults of both morphs. Sexing the bird was less clearcut, although the blue-grey bill base and cere suggest it was a female.



Eleonora's Falcon by Matt Pennal



Eleonora's by Steve Ashton

It was wonderfully agile and fluid in flight showing long wings and a long and flexible tail. At times it reminded me of an Arctic Skua. Several of the observers present on my first visit confused the Eleonora's with the adjacent Hobbies, but it was bigger, less quick in the turns but more powerful in the swoops



Eleonora's by Alan Collins



Eleonora's by Russ Blackman

It also obliged by spending time (sometimes lots of time!!) perched on trees or fences. This gave great opportunities for close scrutiny and on at least one occasion it was on a fence quite close to a perched Hobby giving a great comparison, well captured by Nick Smith in the photo below.



Eleonora's Falcon and Hobby by Nick Smith

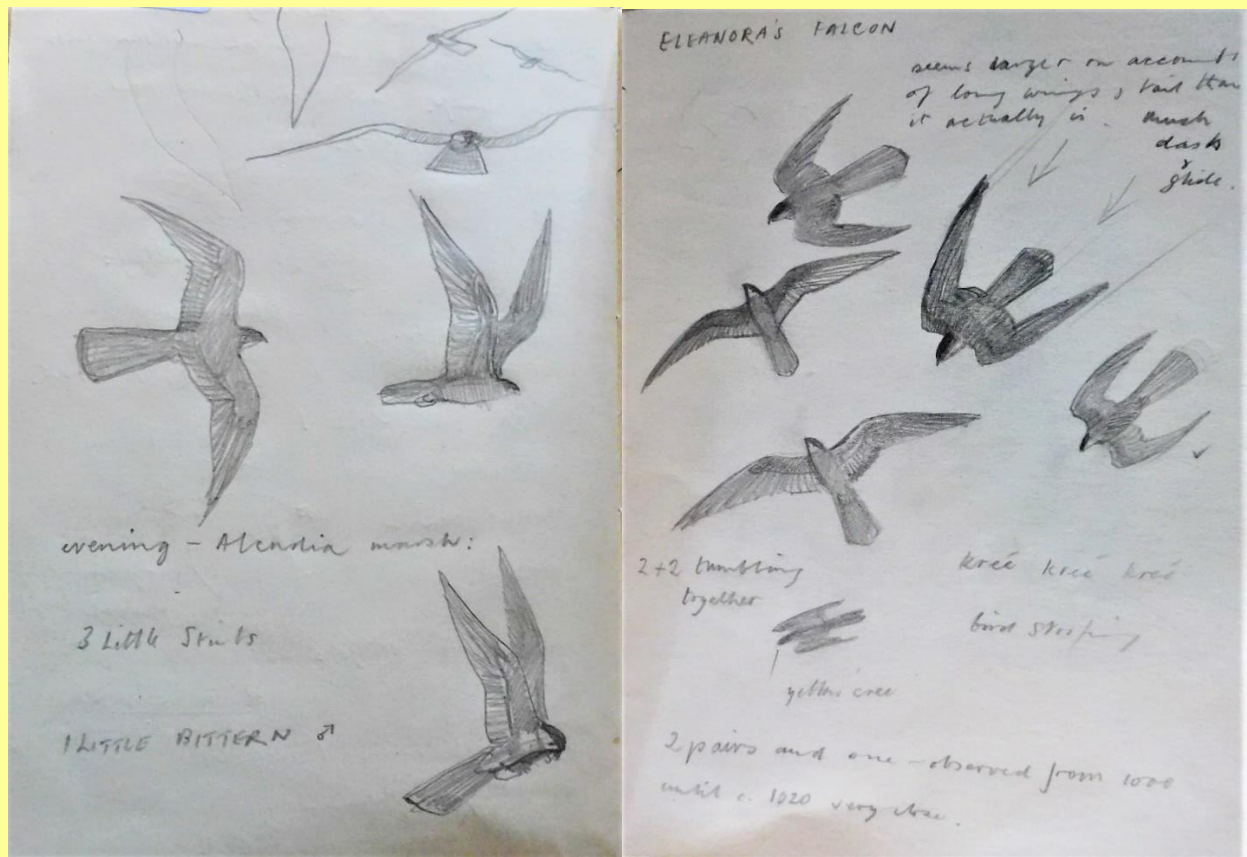
It was a delight to see and was a new bird for me. My few trips to its breeding range have been in Spring and Eleonora's is a late summer breeder so our visits never coincided!

So, who was Eleonora? **Eleonora of Arborea** was effectively the ruler of Sardinia in the late fourteenth century. She was a military leader who led her troops into battle but was also a politician who introduced a code of laws which showed great insight. These were designed to protect the honour, lives and goods of the people under her rule. The core of sanctions was based around fines. Wives and children of offenders were not punished and possessions and property were never confiscated. Most significantly from our perspective she also protected hawks and falcons by prohibiting the taking of young from nests. Eleonora's falcon was first described to science from specimens collected in Sardinia in 1833.

POSTSCRIPT

I was delighted to find out later that my friend John Hollyer, one of the few remaining founder members of the KOS, had seen the bird well. John lives in Worth village and had great views from the allotments at the end of the village and even saw it from his garden! He later showed me a collection of 50 year old notebook pages of Eleonora's Falcons hunting in Mallorca made during several visits leading bird tours in the 1970's (below)..





Norman McCanch

SOME SCARCE SANDPIPERS

This article is about five members of the genus *Calidris*, to follow on from the one dealing with stints a year ago. These five are all scarce enough to attract plenty of observers when they do turn up, and all of them are 'description species', three (Broad-billed, Sharp-tailed and Stilt) for the British Birds Rarities Committee and two (Buff-breasted and Pectoral) for the KOS.

Back in 1985, 'firsts for Kent' did not routinely have finders' notes published in the Kent Bird Report. I've made up for that a little in this article for Sharp-tailed and Stilt Sandpipers, both new in the autumn of that year, thanks to finders Steve Gale and Neil Davies.

There is a paper by Chris Bradshaw in the Kent Bird Report for 1999 (pp 156-164) which examines occurrence patterns of rare waders in Kent during 1960-1999 in more detail than I do here; it is worth a read.

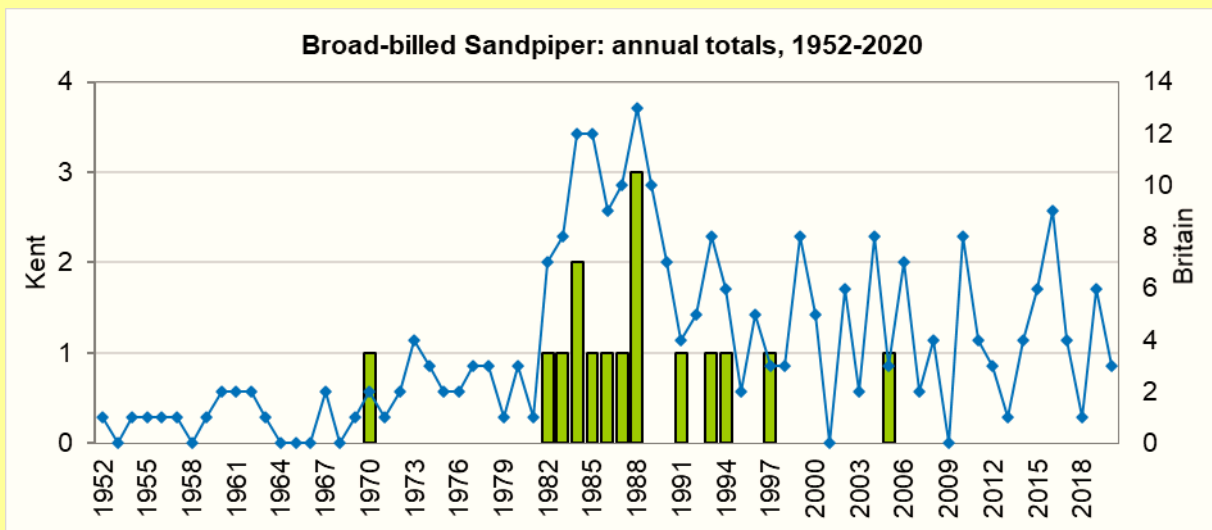
Broad-billed Sandpiper



Broad-billed Sandpiper by Hans Norelius

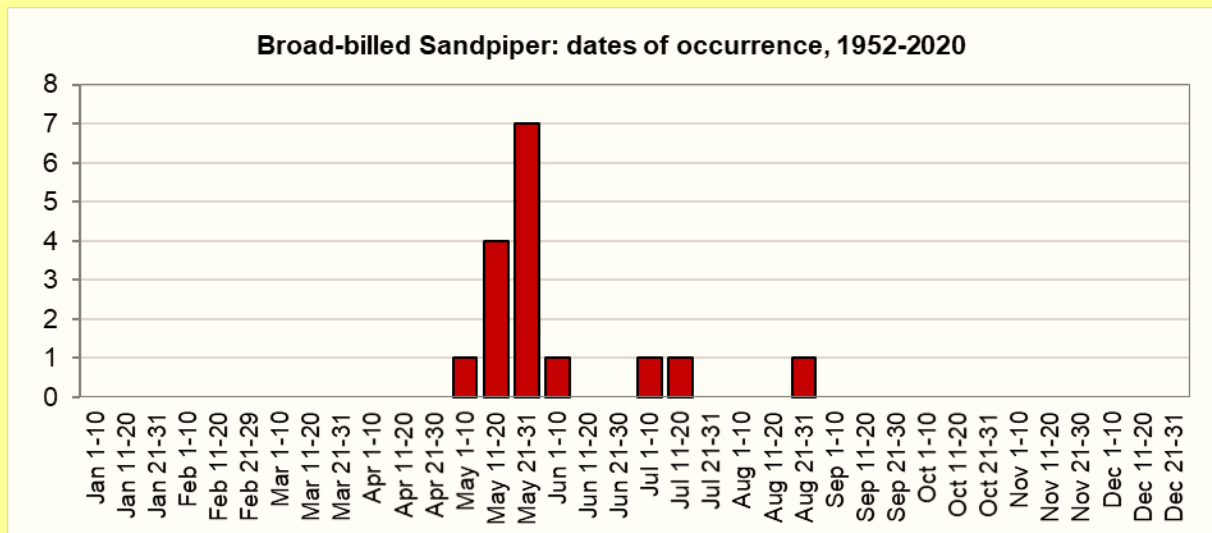
The first acceptable record of Broad-billed Sandpiper was one was trapped and ringed in a nocturnal ringing session at Harty on the Isle of Sheppey on 30th August 1970. Those present included Dave Davenport, Rod Smith and Chris Wheeler, whose photograph of the bird appears in the 1970 Kent Bird Report.

The next was not until 1982 when one was at Cliffe on 13th-16th May (the KBR says to the 17th, but BBRC have only to the 16th). That began a series of seven years with one or more each year, as shown in the first chart below. The frequency in Kent was matched by the frequency nationally (see blue line on the chart below) but, in both cases, they have dwindled since then, becoming decidedly rare. The last one in Kent (up to 2020 and, so far as I know, there wasn't one in 2021 or in 2022 so far) was at Cliffe Pools on 14th-15th May 2005.

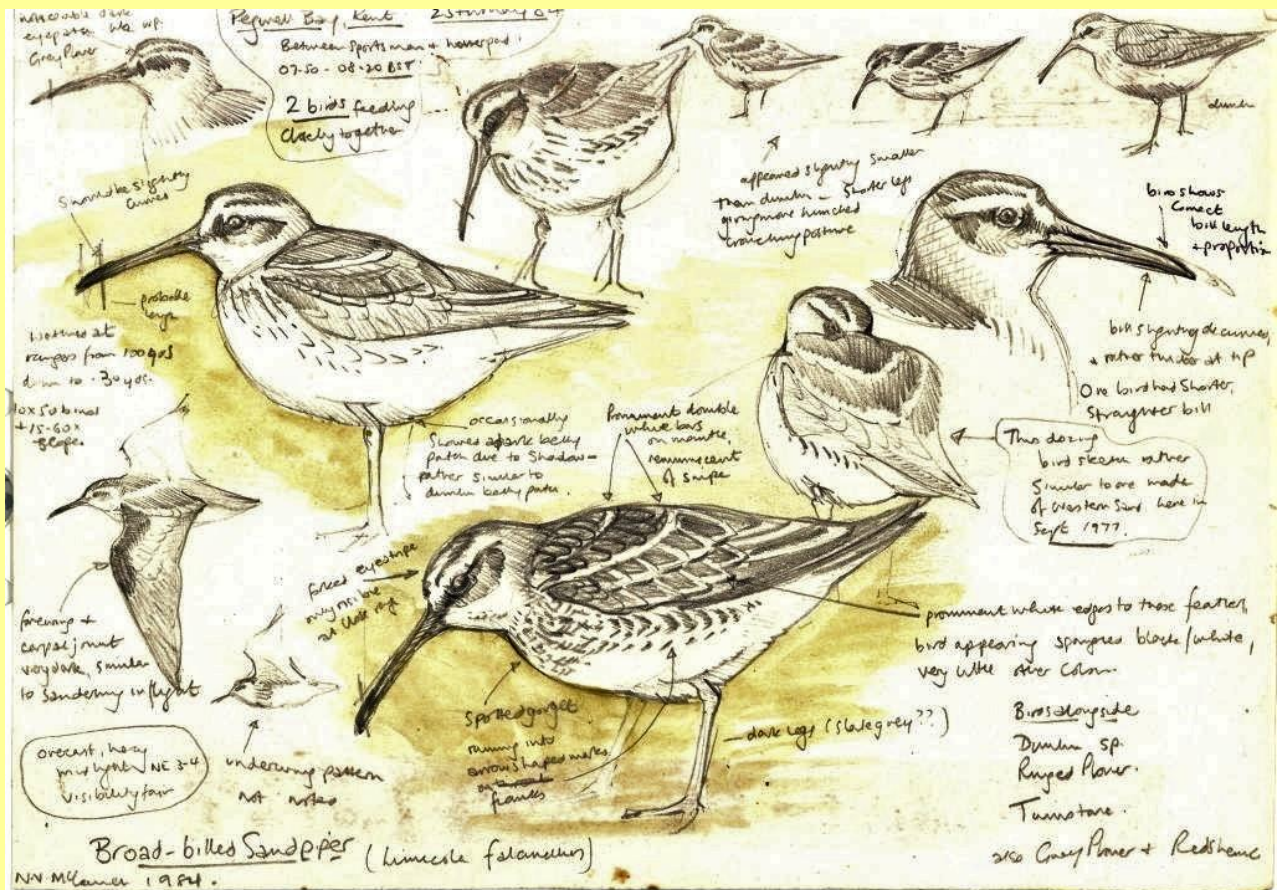


Most of the 16 Broad-billed Sandpipers recorded in Kent have been singletons but there were two together in Pegwell Bay on 23rd-28th May 1984 (with one on the Sandwich Bay shore on the 31st assumed to have been one of them) and three at Cliffe Pools on 27th May 1988 (one having been present on the 26th). Most of our records have been in the north Kent marshes: six individuals at Cliffe, four at Elmley, three in the Harty-Shellness area, with the other three at Sandwich/Pegwell Bays. Surprisingly, there hasn't been one at Dungeness yet.

That first bird, caught at Harty in 1970, is the only autumn record for Kent, though there have been a couple of, presumably, very late spring migrants or failed breeders in July. The predominance of spring records is the pattern nationally as well as in Kent, but there is a fair scattering of autumn birds. Wintering mainly in south Asia and breeding in the tundra of Scandinavia, Finland and Russia, there is – not surprisingly – an east coast bias to British occurrence.



Ticehurst (*A History of the Birds of Kent*, 1909) included two records, both immature females, shot between Littlestone and Dungeness on 6th September 1896 and at Littlestone on 31st August 1901. Both passed through the hands of George Bristow and, while for once not being adult males, they are included as Hastings Rarities and not acceptable.



Broad-billed sandpiper sketches, Pegwell Bay, 25th May 1984 N McCann

Sharp-tailed Sandpiper



Sharp-tailed Sandpiper, Australia by Tony Morris

Sharp-tailed Sandpiper is often regarded as the east Siberian equivalent of Pectoral Sandpiper (although the latter also breeds in the same area). Separation of the two is fairly straightforward but mistakes have been made in the past (see *British Birds* 73: 333-345). There have been four in Kent, few enough to list all of them.

1985	27th-28th July	An adult at Elmley. Those are the correct dates and as given in <i>British Birds</i> ; the KBR says 26th-27th, which is wrong.
1987	4th-13th September	An adult on Worth Marshes.
2001	30th August	An adult at Grove Ferry. The KBR says that it was also present on the 31st, but that's not in <i>British Birds</i> .
2007	10th-11th August	An adult at Oare Marshes.

The first one was found by Steve Gale, Steve Broyd and others at the erstwhile RSPB reserve at Elmley. Steve Gale has kindly let me see his original detailed and careful notes and provided this summary, with extracts from his description.

I was sitting with Steve Broyd and Bob Hibbert in the double-decker hide when another birder alerted us to a 'Little Stint'. We asked him to point that out to us, which he did. It was certainly no stint! We could not immediately specifically identify the bird (which was distant, maybe 250m away) but started to talk through its plumage details and structure.

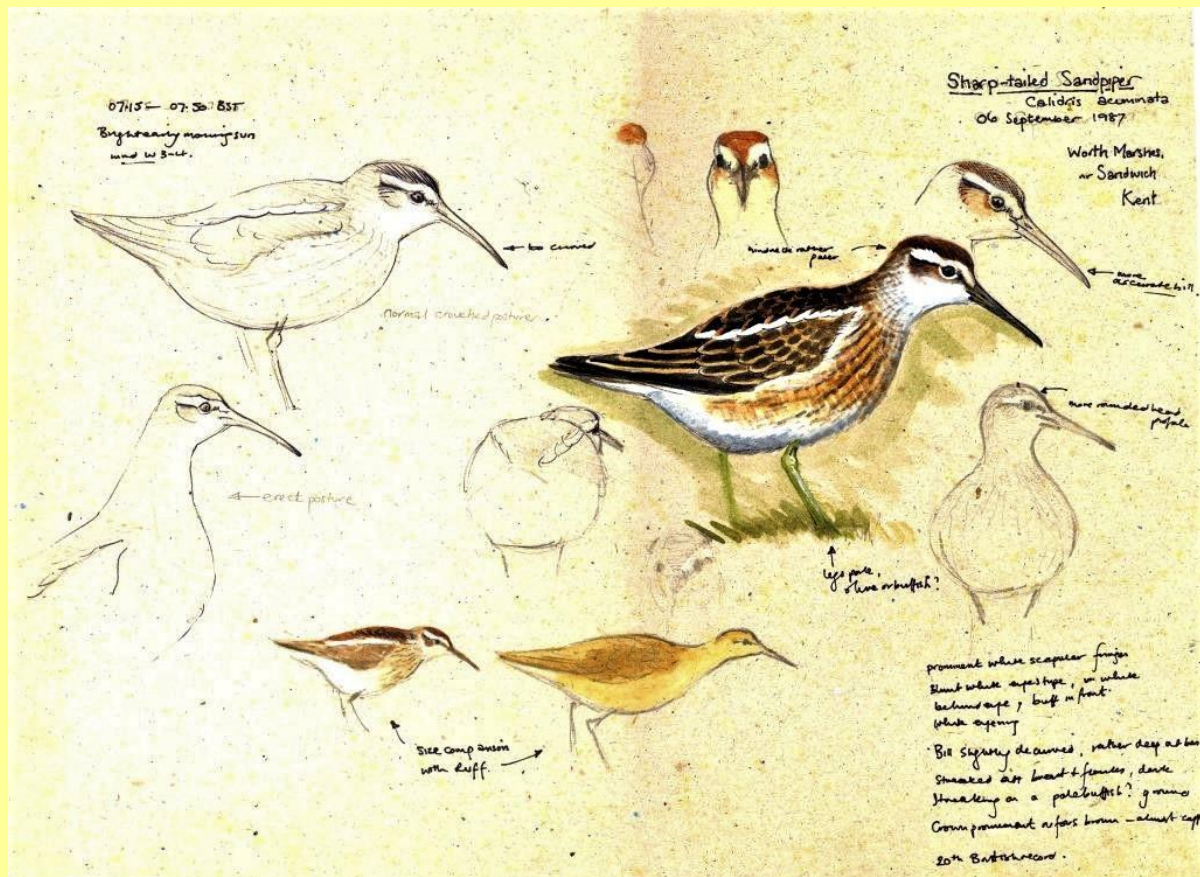
I was struck by the birds 'capped' appearance, and, having some recollection of Sharp-tailed Sandpipers apparently appearing as such, said out loud, "this bird is showing a well demarcated cap, and there is one wader species that I can think of that is said to exhibit one... it couldn't be, could it?"

Steve Broyd, far more confident, experienced and proficient than I, replied "It's a Sharp-tailed!" We started to gather a full description, but the bird was still distant. Between 10.45 and 12.15hrs we observed the bird, always distant, and during the observation a crowd of birders (including RSPB staff) had gathered, having been alerted of our suspicions. After looking elsewhere on the reserve, we returned to be greeted by many happy birders who were by now watching a much closer Sharp-tailed Sandpiper, in front of the Wellmarsh Hide. We left at 16.30hrs, knowing that beyond doubt our initial identification at distance had been vindicated.

Size roughly that of a Curlew Sandpiper, but a fairly squat wader with low horizontal carriage; flat headed, short-necked, pot-bellied, with an attenuated rear end. Wing tips reached tail tip. Bill fairly straight and short, dark. Legs short, colour not discernible but did not seem particularly dark. The bright chestnut brown capped appearance of the crown was striking and contrasted with the white supercilium. Lores and ear coverts brown, forming a dark area contrasting with the supercilium and the whitish-buff lower cheeks. The upper breast was streaked brown, merging with brown barring on the lower breast, which then faded towards the white lower belly. Upperparts were a colder brown, contrasting with the crown. Mantle and scapular feathers edged whitish; covert edgings more brownish. White scapular line present but not obvious.

There are 32 accepted records in Britain up to 2020 (BBRC) of which 28 have occurred from 1956 onwards. Most have appeared in August or September, with a very few in July or later in the autumn, and I think just one in spring (in Dorset in 1978).

There is also one earlier unreliable Kent record. A specimen thought to be a Buff-breasted Sandpiper (and included by Ticehurst, *History of the Birds of Kent*, 1909, as such) was later identified as Sharp-tailed (see Harrison, *Birds of Kent*, 1953). The bird was said to have been shot "on the Kent coast" but the details are so few that all authorities have treated it as unacceptable. As Ticehurst and others make clear, most references to it suggest it was obtained before 1826 but the exact year isn't known, and a later mention in 1844 could refer to the same or a different bird.



Sharp-tailed Sandpiper Worth Marshes 6th September 1987 N McCanch

Stilt Sandpiper



Stilt Sandpiper by Nick Smith

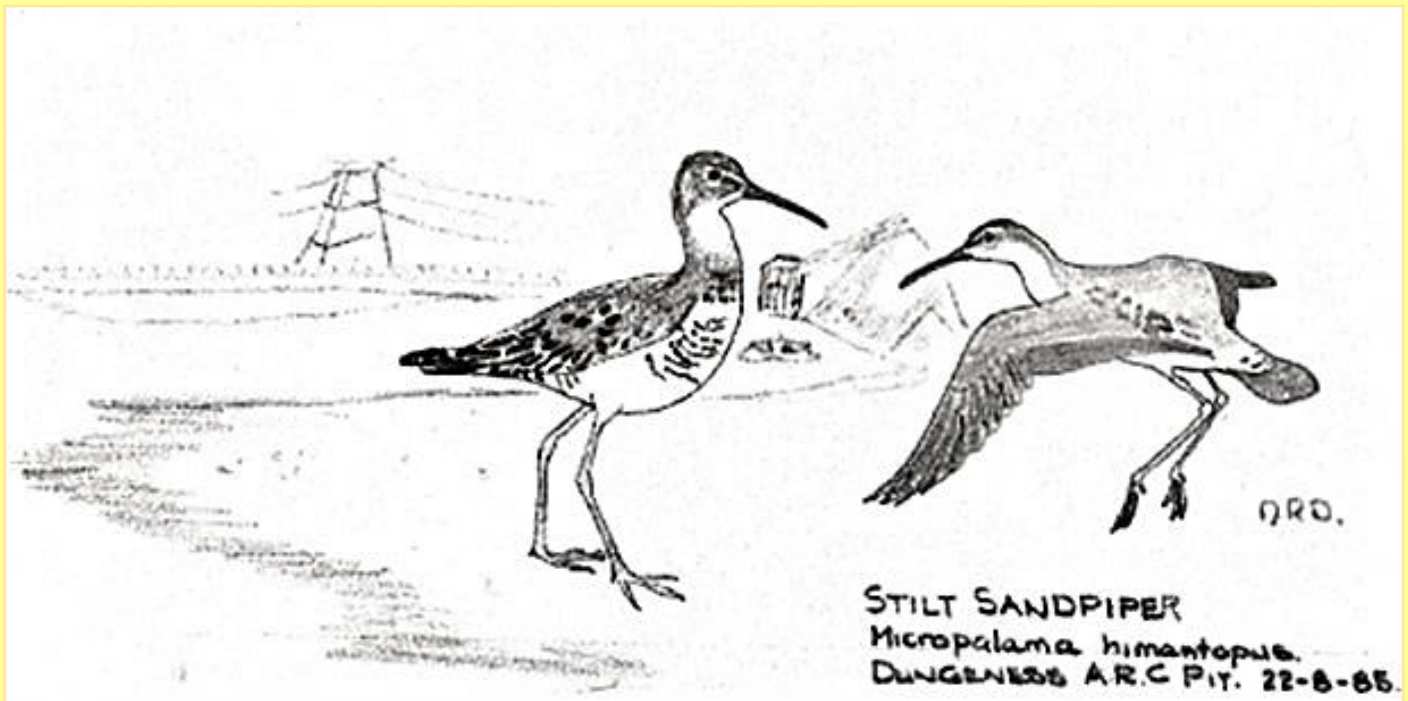
There are just three records of this distinctive sandpiper in Kent.

1985	22nd August	An adult at Dungeness.
1987	18th-25th August	An adult at Cliffe Pools.
1990	11th-22nd July	An adult at Cliffe Pools, trapped and ringed on the 12th. The dates given are those in British Birds; the KBR says that it stayed until the 23rd.

The first one was found by Neil Davies, who recalls the event well, including the balance between protecting wildlife and encouraging visitors that reserve managers have to achieve when a rarity appears!

I found the Stilt Sandpiper on the ARC Pit at Dungeness and the second person to see it was Peter Grant, who was then the BBRC chairman. The record couldn't get better credentials than that! It was then seen by all and sundry. If I remember correctly Peter Makepeace (the RSPB warden) needed to be pacified by Peter so that the news could be broadcast. Nothing changes.

Here are some extracts from my description of the bird: It was about two-thirds of the size of a Knot that was also present, with long legs and a long slender neck when extended. Uniform grey crown, with a broad white supercilium. The lores and a thick line through the eye and over the ear coverts were dark. There was a faint white moustachial streak below the lores. Hind neck and mantle uniform grey with some dark streaks. This was obviously winter plumage, while the coverts were transitional, most being dark centred, probably chestnut, with pale fringes. Flight feathers dark, and a white rump like that of Curlew Sandpiper but with a few rows of black barring at the base. Underparts mostly white, with regular black barring across the breast, boldest in the upper part. On the flanks and ventral area, the barring was replaced by distinctive 'v' markings. Dark eye and bill, which was about 1½ times the head length. The bill shape was very distinct: it was thick and did not taper to a point, giving it a tube-like quality. It had a downward kink at the top and perhaps a bit of a blob on the lower mandible. The very long legs appeared pale yellow. In flight, the wings had a dark rear edge, with flight feathers contrasting with mantle and coverts. The only call heard was a soft but penetrating 'glee-up'.



Stilt Sandpiper, Dungeness sketch by Neil Davies

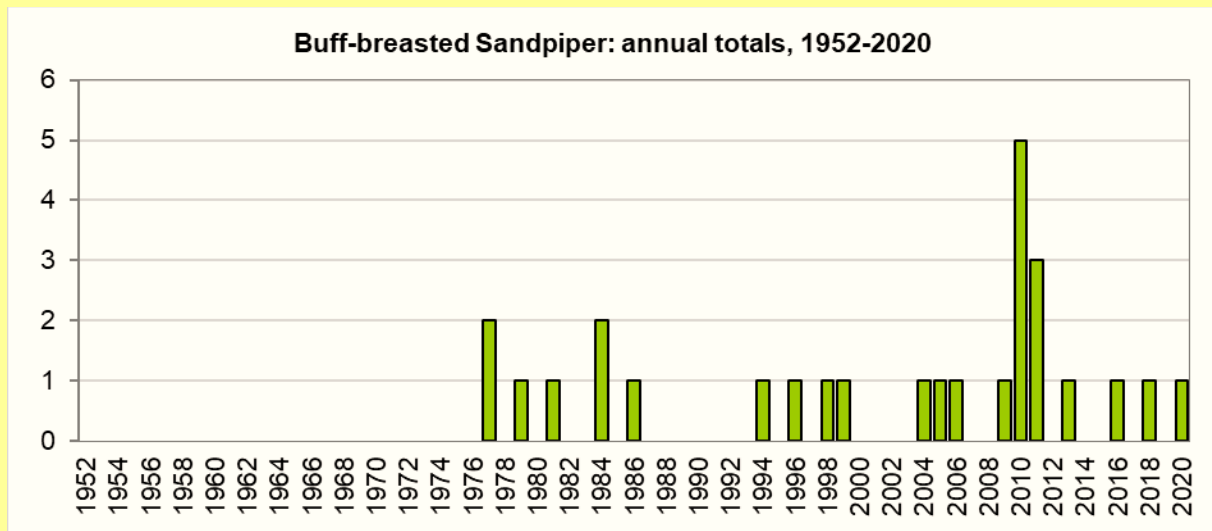
Up to 2020, there have been 40 British records, all from 1954 onwards. July-September is the typical time of year for this American species to be found in Britain, though spring records do occasionally occur.

Buff-breasted Sandpiper



Buff-breasted Sandpiper by Mike Hook

The first for Kent was one seen “near Deal” (quite likely Cottington Marsh) by T.C. Gregory on 1st August 1943. Details are given in Harrison (*Birds of Kent*, 1953). The next was not until 1977, when two appeared: one at Cliffe Pools from 10th September to 9th October (thirty days – still the longest stay of any in Kent) and one at Dungeness on 14th September. Since then, it has been fairly regular, as the first chart shows.

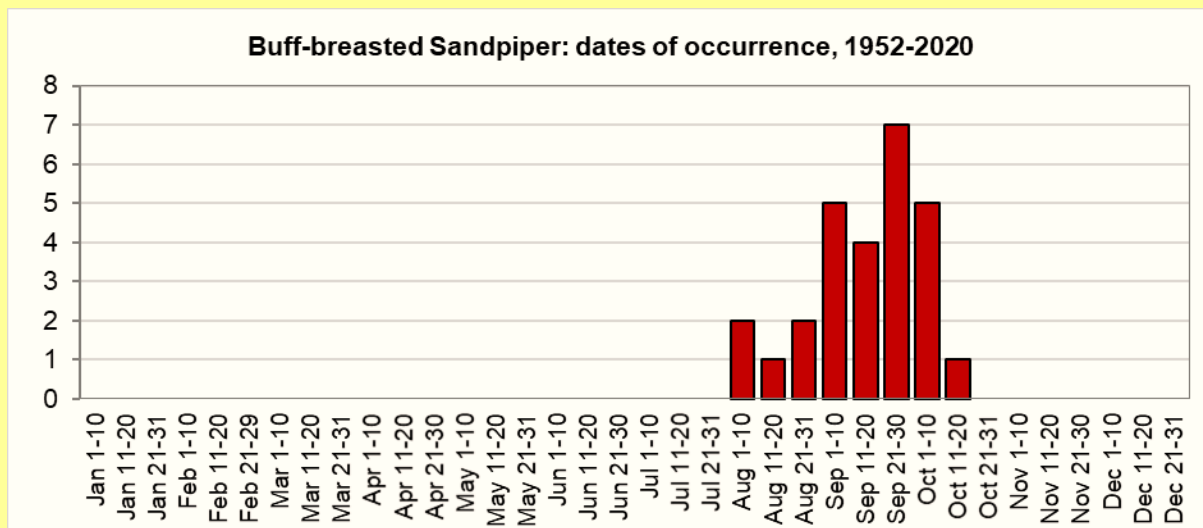


One or two per year has been usual and the total of five in 2010 was noteworthy. That began with an adult at Dungeness RSPB Reserve on 15th-16th August, followed by two juveniles that arrived at Scotney Court gravel pits on 28th September and were joined by a third on 6th October, all three remaining until the 10th. There was also one at Reculver on 3rd October, the only record there. The only other occasion when more than one occurred together was when two were on Royal Cinque Ports golf course between Deal and Sandwich Bay during 24th-30th September 2011.

Of the 28 individuals recorded, 12 have been at Dungeness or nearby, with six on the Swale, four in the Sandwich Bay area and three on the Thames marshes. The only inland records have been singles at Bough Beech on 13th-14th October 1981 and at Grove Ferry on 2nd-25th October 2004 (the second longest stay). I don't have the full details of 2021 records yet; I know of two reports but not whether they've been documented.

Those inland records also were the latest in the year recorded in Kent. As the next chart shows, Buff-breasted Sandpiper has been, so far, wholly an autumn visitor to the county. The earliest was the very first, on 1st August 1943, but there

has also been one on 3rd-5th August 2013 at Elmley and one on 5th August 1986 at Sandwich Bay. Those were presumably all adults (we don't know for the one in 1943) as was the one at Dungeness on 15th-16th August 2010. Most of the rest were likely to have been juveniles, though the records do not always specify the birds' age.



Buff-breasted Sandpipers breed in the north American tundra and winter in south America. It was once very abundant, but the population was reduced to fraction of its former size by the 1920s, it is thought by a combination of hunting, habitat loss and pollution in breeding grounds, migration staging areas and winter quarters (BirdLife International). Numbers are continuing to decline.



Buff-breasted Sandpiper Grove Ferry 16th October 2004 N V McCanch

Pectoral Sandpiper

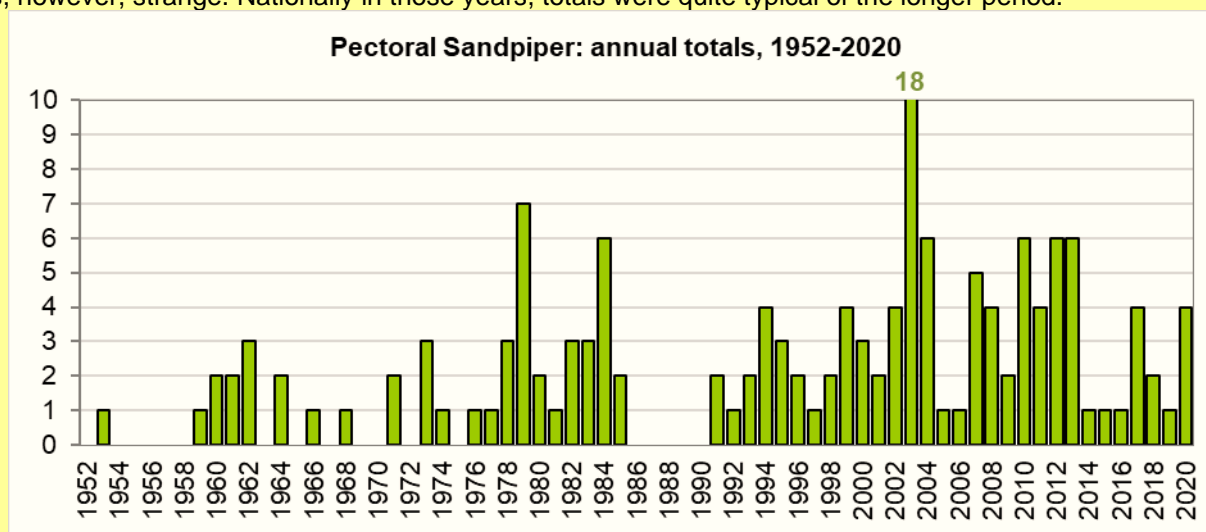


Pectoral Sandpiper by Nick Smith

Setting aside a Hastings Rarity of 1898 that was probably in Sussex anyway, the first for Kent was one found by M.J. Nicoll and Mary Russell, Duchess of Bedford, in “one of the Romney Marsh fleets” on 14th July 1908. Michael Nicholl’s reputation has become tangled up in the Hastings Rarities affair, but he was evidently a fine observer, as indeed was the Duchess of Bedford, who often visited Fair Isle, sometimes with that early student of bird migration, William Eagle Clarke. One day I may return to consider Her Grace’s record of a Solitary Sandpiper...

The next were a series of reports from T.C. Gregory at Cottington Court near Deal: two in August 1935, one in July-August 1936 and one in August 1937. Perfectly reasonable dates – but didn’t he see a lot of rarities, some (such as a “small flock” of dowitchers) stretching credibility; that also is all for another day. Then one at Shellness on Sheppey on 21st May 1950, the first spring record, and we reach the modern era beginning in 1952.

In the period from 1952 to 2020, there have been 151 Pectoral Sandpipers, so – with the six up to 1950 – a total of 157 in all. The annual totals are shown in the first chart below; there is a lot of variation between years but, from the late 1970s onwards, there is not any clear trend of increase or decrease. The absence of records for the five years 1986-1990 is, however, strange. Nationally in those years, totals were quite typical of the longer period.

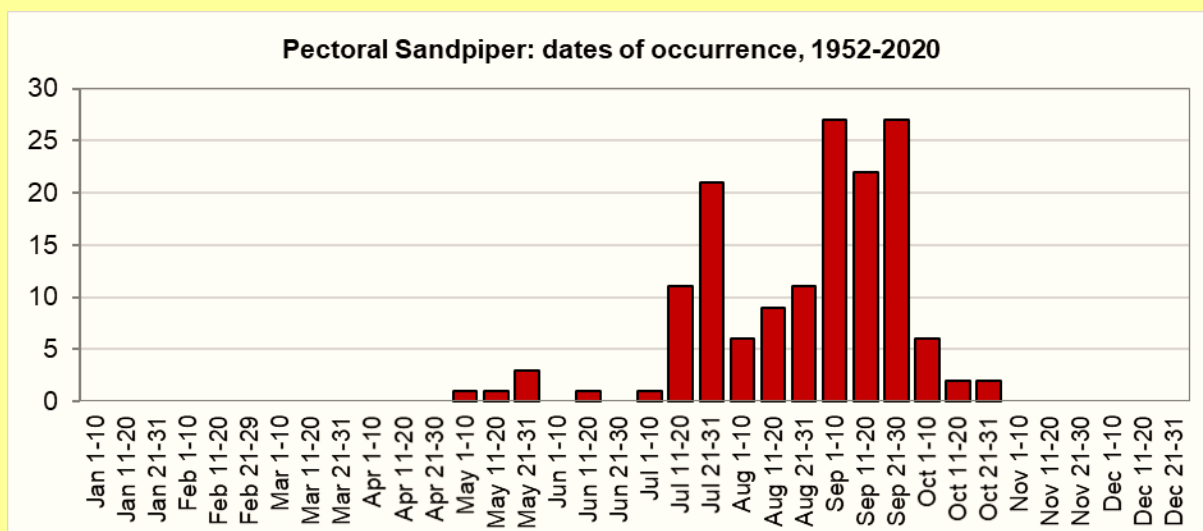


The majority of records have involved singletons but there have been two together on eight occasions including in 1935 and twice in both 1978 and 2003, and also four at Dungeness RSPB Reserve on 25th-26th September 2003 (two staying to the 27th and one to the 28th). As can be seen from the chart, 2003 was a remarkable year, with a total of 18 individuals, 11 of them at Dungeness reserve. Most have been seen beside pools and broad dykes in coastal areas or

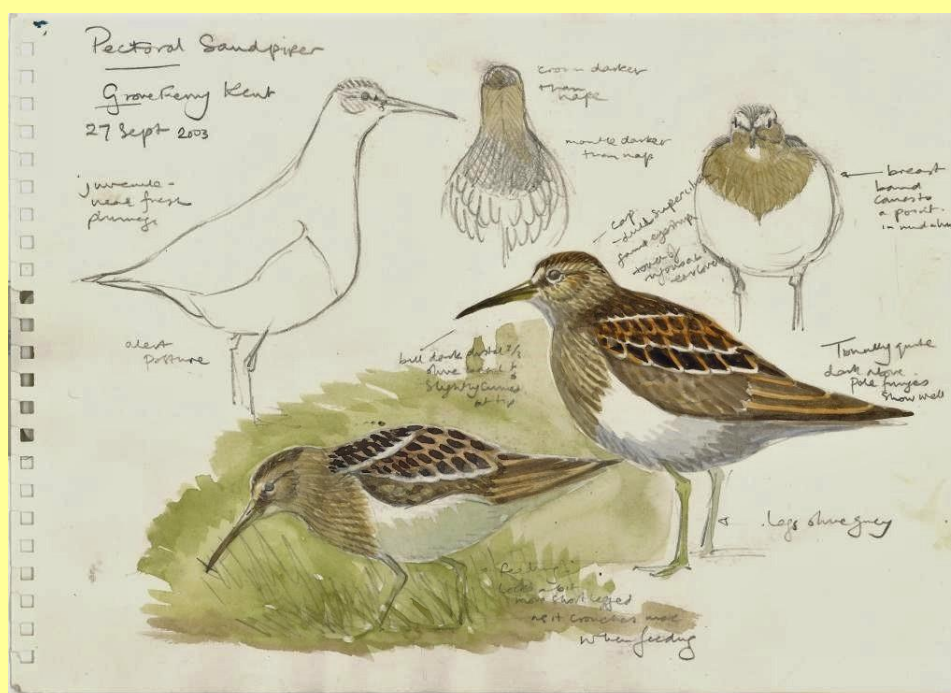
inland, though a few have been on tidal mud or saltmarsh. Some 55 (35%) of the total of 157 birds have been at Dungeness or nearby parts of Walland and Romney Marshes. Other favoured areas have been the Swale marshes (20%), the Thames marshes (16%) and the wider Sandwich Bay area (15%). About 11% have been found inland, a lot of those at Grove Ferry but including a few as far west as Sevenoaks and Bough Beech.

Pectoral Sandpipers breed in the North American and Siberian Arctic (overlapping with Sharp-tailed in the latter), with most wintering in South America, though some go to Australasia (where all of the Sharp-tailed Sandpipers go). While most that appear in Britain have probably come across the Atlantic, it seems likely that some arrive from the east. Lees & Gilroy (*British Birds* 97: 638-646) discuss the possibility that an alternative migration strategy exists, involving some birds passing through Europe to winter in Africa.

The next chart shows the seasonal occurrence. Only 4.5% of Pectoral Sandpipers in Kent have occurred in spring, the earliest at Dungeness on 10th May 2009 and the latest one at Grove Ferry on 12th June 2008. Autumn records show two clear peaks, mainly related to the ages of the birds involved (although their origins, see above, may play a part). The first peak in late July is of adults, with one at Cliffe on 1st-4th July 1984 being the earliest of these. Juveniles form the bulk of the broader peak centred on September. The records latest in the year were singles at Murston on 24th-25th October 1959 and at Elmley on 25th October 1979.



I am aware of three individuals being seen in 2021 – two on Worth Marshes in September and one at Dungeness in October – but records for that year are not yet fully collated.



Pectoral Sandpiper Grove Ferry 27th September 2003 NVMcCanch

KENT BIRD SIGHTINGS FOR MAY-JUNE 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 much of **May** was mostly quiet and uneventful and rather unsettled for some of the time but there were a few warmer and brighter days. Temperatures were mostly above average, especially at night, but the latter part of the month was cooler. Rainfall in the south-east was below average with 42mm recorded at Bishopstone but there were some heavy thundery showers on the 23rd and 24th.

The weather during much of **June** was mostly quiet and uneventful, though with a warm spell in mid-month which peaked on the 17th giving temperatures of over 30°C on the warmest day of the year so far. It was showery at times, especially just after the warm spell, and again in the closing days of the month giving an overall monthly total at Bishopstone of 22.75mm.

PARTRIDGE TO WILDFOWL

A **Quail** was recorded calling as it flew over Broomfield at 0327 on May 5th whilst one was heard singing at Uplees Copse on May 11th. During June one or two were reported from Worth Marshes, Seaton, Chislet Marshes, Hope Point and Bockhill

Two **Barnacle Geese** were seen briefly at Sandwich Bay on May 1st, the **Pink-footed Goose** was still present at Chartham Mill on May 6th and an immature **White-fronted Goose** flew E at Reculver on May 20th whilst two flew out to sea at DBO on the unexpected date of June 10th.

Up to six **Egyptian Geese** were recorded from Sevenoaks WR, Knole Park, Dunorlan Park, Stodmarsh, Dungeness RSPB, Godmersham, Chatham Mill, Bough Beech, Cliffe Pools and Tonbridge and up to eight **Mandarins** were seen at Bough Beech.

One or two **Garganey** were reported from Stodmarsh/Grove Ferry, DBO, Worth Marshes, Oare Marshes, Cliffe Pools, Pegwell Bay, Elmley, Sevenoaks WR and Dungeness RSPB. In addition, ten were reported from Dungeness RSPB on June 25th.

A male **Ring-necked Duck** was found at Dungeness RSPB on May 7th and was still there on the June 10th.

A drake **Scaup** was seen in Pegwell Bay between May 2nd and 5th, four **Velvet Scoter** flew E past DBO on May 1st with one on the 6th and two male **Goosanders** were seen at Bough Beech on May 1st whilst one flew E past DBO on May 2nd.

Three **Black-necked Grebes** were seen at Dungeness RSPB between June 13th and 19th and there was one at Lade on June 24th.

NIGHTJAR TO WADERS

A **Stone Curlew** was recorded calling at Stonar on the night of May 2nd and a **Black-winged Stilt** was seen at Worth Marshes on May 3rd and was still there on the 4th whilst two arrived together there on May 8th. A bird was also heard flying over Hythe at 2335 on May 22nd and in June there were two at Stodmarsh on the morning of the 3rd.



Kentish Plover by Russ Blackman

A female **KENTISH PLOVER** was identified at Pegwell Bay on May 5th and a male was seen there on May 25th whilst two **Dotterel** flew N over Langdon Hole and two were seen at Old Romney on May 13th.

Single **Curlew Sandpipers** were recorded at Dungeness RSPB on May 2nd and Lade on May 7th, a **Temminck's Stint** was seen at Worth Marshes on May 13th and four **Little Stints** were reported from Cliffe Pools on May 4th.

A **Jack Snipe** was seen at Oare Marshes from May 2nd-5th and a **Red-necked Phalarope** was recorded from Elmley on June 13th and 14th.

In May one or two **Wood Sandpipers** were recorded from Worth Marshes, North Foreland, Oare Marshes and Stodmarsh. One was also reported from Bough Beech on June 5th but the first two returning birds were seen at Worth Marshes on June 29th and 30th with also two at Dungeness RSPB on the 30th.

Up to four **Spotted Redshanks** were seen at Elmley, Dungeness RSPB, Worth Marshes, Funton Creek and Stodmarsh.

GULLS TO SHEARWATERS

During May as many as 18 **Little Gulls** were recorded from DBO with smaller numbers seen at Scotney GPs. In June one was reported from North Foreland on the 15th.

A **Caspian Gull** was identified at Deal on May 4th and a **Yellow-legged Gull** was seen at DBO on June 9th.

An adult summer plumaged **CASPIAN TERN** flew SE at Swalecliffe at 0620 on May 18th and was seen again at Swalecliffe on the morning of the 20th and later in the day at Tankerton. It was refound at Pegwell Bay on the evening of 23rd and was still present there intermittently until the 27th. It was also seen at Stodmarsh on the 26th and South Foreland on the 27th. In addition, another summer plumaged adult spent fifty minutes at Dungeness RSPB on the morning of June 25th. It then flew towards Lade and was next seen in the afternoon at Minsmere in Suffolk, 96 miles NNE, where it was still present the next day.



Caspian Tern by Johnathan Dodds

During May up to six **Black Terns** flew past DBO between the 1st and 10th with a higher count of 48 flying E on the 9th.

14 **Great Skuas** flew past DBO on May 1st with one on the 8th and during the first two weeks of the month there were daily counts of up to 23 **Arctic Skuas** from the same site. A **Great Skua** was also seen off Swalecliffe on June 30th.

A **Pomarine Skua** flew E past Mill Point on May 9th.

Easterly passage of Pomarine Skuas at Dungeness

May 1 st	20
May 2 nd	8
May 3 rd	4
May 4 th	2
May 5 th	-
May 6 th	-
May 7 th	-
May 8 th	5
May 9 th	86
May 10 th	1

The **Black Guillemot** that wintered off Swalecliffe was seen again, this time in summer plumage, on the sea at Whitstable and Swalecliffe between May 4th and 7th and a **Puffin** flew past DBO on May 2nd.

Four **Black-throated Divers** were seen at DBO on May 1st and 9th with one on the 10th and four **Great Northern Divers** were recorded at DBO on May 1st with one on the 2nd.

A **Sooty Shearwater** was reported flying S at North Foreland on June 4th whilst five **Manx Shearwater** flew E past DBO on May 2nd with single birds on the 3rd, 24th and 25th and June 6th and with nine there on June 25th.

WHITE STORK TO WOODPECKERS

The regular **Glossy Ibis** remained at Dungeness RSPB until the end of June but was joined by up to three others between June 13th until the end of the month whilst there were others seen at Elmley on May 6th, at Seasalter on May 17th and at Cliffe Pools from June 13th-23rd.



Glossy Ibis by Russ Blackman

One or two **Spoonbills** were recorded from Dungeness RSPB, Swalecliffe, Elmley, Cliffe Pools, Sandwich Bay, Pegwell Bay and Worth Marshes and one or two **Bitterns** were seen or heard at Stodmarsh/Grove Ferry, Lade, Halstow Marshes and Dungeness RSPB whilst as many as 13 **Cattle Egrets** were seen at Elmley, Dungeness RSPB, Bough Beech, Stodmarsh and Cliffe Pools.

A **Purple Heron** was reported flying in off the sea at Foreness on May 1st whilst the bird seen at Stodmarsh in April was still there on May 7th. Another bird was found at Dungeness RSPB between May 15th and 25th. One or two **Great White Egrets** were seen at Dungeness RSPB, Stodmarsh, Sandwich Bay, Pegwell Bay and Mill Point.



Purple Heron by Martyn Wilson

Single **White-tailed Eagles** were seen at Pegwell Bay on May 5th and at Sandwich Bay on the 23rd and during these two months single **Ospreys** were seen at Sandwich Bay, Worth Marshes, Dymchurch, Kingsdown Lees, Stodmarsh, Tankerton, Seasalter, Foreness, Conyer, Walmer, Whitstable, Bough Beech, Hillborough and Deal.



Honey Buzzard by Jamie Partridge

The first **Honey Buzzard** of the year was seen at Sandwich Bay on May 1st after which one or two birds were reported from Cliftonville, Walmer, St Margarets-at-Cliffe, Ramsgate, Wickhambreaux, Knockholt, Dungeness, Tenterden, North Foreland, Collard's Lake, River, Worth Marshes, Samphire Hoe, South Foreland, Foreness and Teynham. Three females arrived in off the sea at South Foreland and one was seen at Bockhill on June 28th.

A male **Hen Harrier** was seen at Langdon Cliffs on May 11th and a female flew W at Reculver on May 12th with another seen at South Foreland on the 22nd and a female **Montagu's Harrier** was reported flying S from Weddington on May 13th.

Up to 20 **Red Kites** were seen at many sites throughout the County but on the May 24th, there were 105 moving along the Stour Valley, 80 at Sandwich Bay and 53 at Nethergong flying around heavy thundery showers whilst 102 flew through at Worth Marshes on the May 27th.



Black Kite by Tom Hanson

It has been an exceptional spring for **Black Kites** and after eight sightings in April numbers continued to be recorded during May and June. One flew N at Worth Marshes on May 1st and single birds were also seen at Dungeness on May 3rd and 9th, flying NW at Bishopstone on May 5th, flying SW at Pegwell Bay on the 11th and flying S at Margate Cemetery

on the 12th. On May 16th what was probably the same bird flew over New Romney, Worth Marshes and Stonar Lake and on the 21st one was seen at Grove Ferry. Birds also flew out to sea at DBO on June 6th and 13th whilst single birds were recorded from Ash on June 8th, New Romney on the 10th, DBO on the 13th and 15th and at Appledore on June 18th.

During May one or two **Short-eared Owls** were still to be seen at Seasalter, Worth Marshes, Reculver Marshes, Luddenham and Elmley.

A **Hoopoe** was seen at Foreness on May 9th with others at Sandwich Bay the next day, in a garden at Hawkinge on the 14th and reported from Oare Marshes on the 30th.

A **Bee-eater** was seen at South Foreland on May 16th whilst two were reported from Longfield on May 19th with one at flying N at Bockhill on the 20th. A flock of eight birds spent the morning in the South Foreland and Bockhill area on May 22nd and were seen again briefly on the 25th whilst one was also heard at Worth Marshes May 22nd. One was seen flying E at Bockhill on June 4th and there was one at Kingsdown on the 23rd.

FALCONS TO HIRUNDINES

Single **Merlins** were seen at DBO on May 3rd and at Elmley on the 14th and a female **Red-footed Falcon** was recorded from Worth Marshes on May 26th and remained there until June 4th.



Red-footed Falcon by Nick Smith

A falcon flying NE over Worth Marshes at 0930 on May 26th was initially reported as a Hobby but subsequent examination of photographs taken at the time proved that it was a **second summer, female, pale morph ELEONORA'S FALCON**, a new species for Kent and only the ninth for the UK. It remained in the area until June 4th and was seen by hundreds of visiting birders. It was also reported on the 26th flying from Stodmarsh towards Collard's Lake.



Eleonora's Falcon by Steve Ashton

It was an excellent spring for **Golden Orioles** beginning with one singing at dawn at Worth on May 12th whilst on the next day there were two at Bockhill and singles at Worth Marshes and North Foreland. Two males were also seen at Foreness on May 16th and 18th with birds recorded from Walmer and Sandwich Bay on the 18th, Folkestone on the 19th and 20th and Bockhill also on the 20th. On May 21st, there was an early morning arrival of birds in **East** with two males at Nethergong, one female at Shuart and single birds at Foreness, North Foreland and Margate Cemetery. One was also seen at Worth Marshes between May 29th and June 2nd whilst others were recorded from Kingsdown on June 5th and Postling on the June 7th.

As many as four **Ravens** were seen at Dungeness, Bough Beech, Bedgebury, New Romney, the Stour Valley and Reculver.

A "**Continental**" **Coal Tit** was identified at DBO on May 2nd and a **Woodlark** was seen there on May 4th.

Single **Red-rumped Swallows** were reported from Bough Beech on May 7th- 9th and 11th whilst on May 21st one flew W at Shuart and another was seen at Bockhill with probably the same bird at South Foreland a little later.

WARBLERS TO WHEATEARS

A **Wood Warbler** was singing at DBO on May 4th and a **Marsh Warbler** was heard singing at Abbotscliffe on June 1st but had gone the next day.

An **Icterine Warbler** was trapped and ringed at DBO on June 2nd and a **Melodious Warbler** was heard singing at Dungeness RSPB on June 16th.

Single **Grasshopper Warblers** were recorded from Plumpudding, Chislet Marshes, Swanscombe Marshes, Belle Isle and Dungeness RSPB.

A male **SARDINIAN WARBLER** was heard singing and calling but only seen occasionally at South Foreland from May 28th-30th. This is only the seventh Kent record of what is a common Mediterranean species.

Up to five **Firecrests** were recorded from Denge Wood, Riverhill, Knowlton, Otford, Petham, Challock, Faversham and Folkestone.

An adult **Rose-coloured Starling** was seen with a flock of Starlings at Seasalter on June 12th.

During May up to three **Ring Ouzels** were seen at DBO, Sandwich Bay, Samphire Hoe, Chamber's Wall, Reculver, Cliffe Pools, Stodmarsh, St Mary's Bay, New Romney and Langdon Hole with the last record of one at DBO on the 23rd.

The first **Spotted Flycatchers** of the year were seen at DBO and Sandwich Bay on May 11th. This was 12 days later than the mean arrival date for Kent. A **Pied Flycatcher** was seen at Warden Point on May 1st.

One or two **Black Redstarts** were seen at Dungeness, Sandwich Bay, Conningbrook, Abbotscliffe, Langdon Hole, Palmarsh, Hillborough, Hythe, North Foreland, Dover, Frogholt, Ashford and Samphire Hoe.

SPARROWS TO BUNTINGS

An adult male **Grey-headed Wagtail** was found at Plumpudding Stables, Minnis Bay on May 13th and was joined by a first summer male the next day.



Grey-headed Wagtail by Alex Perry

A male **Brambling** was an unexpected sighting at Sandwich Bay on June 12th as was a first summer male or female **Common Rosefinch** seen at North Foreland on June 18th.

A **Hawfinch** was seen at DBO for five minutes on May 17th and there were four at South Foreland on May 28th, one at East Peckham on June 2nd, three at Bockhill on the June 5th and one at Ightham on the 7th.

Two **Crossbills** flew N at South Foreland on May 30th and subsequently up to nine were recorded at New Hythe, Dover and South Foreland.

On May 7th, single **Serins** were seen at Langdon Hole and New Romney whilst on the 22nd there were five at South Foreland early in the morning. During June a male sang briefly at Sandwich Bay on the 14th before it flew N whilst another spent most of the day at Dungeness on the 23rd with one also seen there on the 27th.

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.

Records have been contributed by A. Appleton, B. Benn, Bockhill Birders, R. Bonsor, Bough Beech (per A. Ford), E. Brown, D. Bunney, N. Burt, G. Burton, F. Cackett, J. Cantelo, J. Carnell, P. Carr, M. Casemore, J. Chantler, P. Chantler, M. Chidwick, S. Clancy, C. Cox, K. Cutting, DBO (per D. Walker), J. Dodds, R. Drew, B. East, A. Edwards, D. Elliott, J. Elliott, A. Farrar, D. Faulkener, Folkestone and Hythe Birds (per I. Roberts), Foreness Bird Group, C. Gibbard, M. Gould, T. Hambrook, R. Heading, A. Hindle, C. Hindle, M. Hindle, M. Hollingworth, G. Howard, S. Huggins, M. Kennett, S. Kennett, J. King, A. Lawson, O. Leyshon, A. Lipczynski, K. Lord, R. Mace, A. Malone, J. Massey, B. Matlock, N. McCanch, S. McMinn, S. Message, S. Mills, S. Morton, S. Mount, R. Newman, M. Norman, R. O'Reilly, M. Orchard, J. Partridge, A. Perry, J. Perry, K. Privett, C. Powell, M. Puxley, R. Rackliffe, B. Ring, M. Roser, K. Ross, B. Ryan, Samphire Hoe (per L. Collins, P. Holt, D. Smith, and P. Smith), SBBO (per A. Lipczynski and S. Walton), I. Shepherd, A. Skiffinton, D. Smith, D. W. Smith, P. Smith, W. Stoneham, M. Sutherland, Swale NNR (per R. Smith, D. Faulkner, I. Davidson), A. Swandale, P. Trodd, D. Tutt, N. Upton, J. van der Dol, R. Watkins, M. Watts, C. White, M. Wilson, T. Wilson, J. Woolgar, B. Woolhouse, D. Wrathall, B. Wright, M. Wright and J. Young.

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
4 Rose-coloured Starling	Sandwich Bay	June 3rd
Rose-coloured Starling	Dungeness RSPB	June 17th-19th

2022

Black Kite (flying NW)	Bishopstone	May 5th
Grey-headed Wagtail (adult male)	Plumpudding Stables	May 13th-14th

Fifty Years Ago

Black-headed Bunting A male was seen at Sandwich Bay on June 1st (DLD et al). The date is consistent with a natural origin and this constitutes the first record for Kent



Black-headed Bunting by Henrik Gronvold (PDI)

KBR 1972