

KOS News

The Newsletter of the Kent Ornithological Society

Number 540 September 2022



Whinchats by Russ Blackman

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

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Autumnal weather finally arrives, after a memorable and challenging summer. In my favourite bit of the Stour valley summer drought has been a mixed blessing, bringing algal blooms and mortality of lake fish, but at the same time producing ideal conditions for a bonanza of passage waders giving the sort of views we can only dream of in a more normal autumn. It remains to be seen whether breeding birds have benefited at all, but my first impressions are that ducks, Coots, Moorhens, and Grebes have done rather well with lots of youngsters in evidence, while both Kingfishers and Bitterns continue to draw crowds of admiring lenses!

September is normally filled with anticipation for what might come along in the next couple of months. Already some of those birds which were formerly regular autumn fare have put in an appearance with multiple records of both Common Rosefinch (come back Scarlet Grosbeak!!) and Wryneck, alongside a much improved showing of Pied Flycatchers and Redstarts compared to recent years. All we need now is the right weather to get out and find them!!

Good birding

Norman

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

Oare Marshes - Update from KWT - September 2022

Steve Weeks, Area Manager for KWT, writes: -

'At Oare Marshes we are taking advantage of the unusually dry conditions to carry out some rotational ditch cleaning. The drying of the East Flood means there are less birds present, so the work will cause less disturbance than under normal conditions. The ditches at Oare support a diverse range of wildlife, including nationally important aquatic plants and invertebrates. Rotational de-silting is necessary to provide a range of successional stages from open water through to heavily vegetated ditches and ultimately to prevent the loss of the ditches through natural sedimentation. The work also allows for better movement of water through the reserve, helping us to manage the levels more effectively

We will also be partially de-silting the old drainage channel that runs through the East Flood to see if we can use the spoil to build up the chain of small islands that used to run perpendicular from the roadside viewing point. I suspect the material maybe too soft to provide any long-lasting features but given the dry conditions, it is worth experimenting with.

We will also be carrying out improvements to several of the gateways on the west side to prevent them becoming too churned up by the cattle. This will involve laying chalk in the worst areas to form a better surface. We will be storing the chalk in the cattle corral by the Watch House until the work begins.

In October we hope work will be starting on a project in partnership with the RSPB and funded by the Green Recovery Challenge Fund. This work will involve re-profiling the old remnant salt marsh channels in the Pheasant Farm fields to retain wet patches and muddy margins longer into the spring. The maximum depth of the new channels would be 300mm with shallow profile edges, suitable for wader chicks to feed. This depth is planned to allow surface water to persist into the early summer, giving the best conditions for breeding waders. The channels will be left "blind", so not connected to the drainage ditch network, allowing winter rainfall to collect and add value for wintering wildfowl and waders.'

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!

On-line entry of BBS/WBBS data should have been completed by the end of August for results to be included in "The Breeding Bird Survey 2022", but paper Count Summary Sheets can still be submitted to ensure that valuable data is not lost. Please send to Bob Knight (contact rjknight53@gmail.com)

Any outstanding data for the Breeding Waders of Wet Meadows Survey should also be entered or sent as soon as possible to Bob Knight.

Heronry Census counts should be submitted by the end of September so that results can be included in this year's national summary. Please submit on-line or send data to Brian Watmough (contact brianrwat@yahoo.co.uk)

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

Surveys Planned for 2023 – an early heads up!

KOS Nightingale Survey

Next year it is hoped to conduct a county survey of Nightingales. It is 10 years since the last survey - the national 2012 BTO Nightingale Survey. This produced a Kent population estimate of 1,450 – 1,550 males (Andrew Henderson et al). Developments and land use change continue to threaten Nightingale habitats and even our major "hot spots" are at risk. Recent habitat destruction has occurred along the Medway near Paddock Wood, proposed housing and new road construction threatens the former MoD site at Old Park, Canterbury and housing developments continue to put pressure on Chattenden/Lodge Hill SSSI. To assess the potential impact of such developments on our Nightingale population, it is important to have up to date information on numbers and distribution.

Details of next year's survey are being discussed and it is hoped to publish more details later this autumn/winter.

BTO Woodcock Survey

There will be a repeat of the national Woodcock survey in 2023. Previous surveys were conducted in 2013 and 2003. Between these survey years, several sites have been monitored annually to provide an indication of population trend, but these will be expanded to achieve a greater coverage next year to enable an updated estimate of the UK population. In 2013 the population was assessed at 55,241 males, which represented a 29% decline from 2003. It is likely that methods will broadly follow those of the previous surveys but with improvements to the on-line system and a simplified recording protocol. More details to follow.

Appeal for WeBS Counters!

The estuaries and wetlands of Kent hold internationally important passage and wintering numbers of wildfowl and waders. We only know this because of regular counting, and the most important method of collecting such data is through the Wetland Birds Survey (WeBS) which requires sites to be counted once a month from September to March, and ideally year-round. To ensure adequate cover of all areas in Kent, many volunteers are required, especially for the large estuaries. We are currently struggling to cover all sites and existing volunteers are not getting any younger! New counters are urgently needed, particularly on the Thames and Medway. One important site that currently has no counter is Cliffe/Cooling Marshes, which includes an exciting new area of managed retreat. If anyone is interested in taking on a WeBS site then please get in touch. An introductory visit to a site can be arranged as well as access if on private land, although a commitment to regular counting would be a requisite for such sites.

Contacts - 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 brianwat@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

I THINK WE OUGHT TO HAVE A LITTLE CHAT

September and October are the months when passage of several of the commoner chats reaches its peak in Kent, and for this newsletter I've chosen five of them for my series of articles on the status of birds in the county. Robin and Nightingale will have to wait for another occasion, and the species I'm covering are Black Redstart, Redstart, Whinchat, Stonechat and Wheatear.

These five species all breed or have bred in Kent, but typically only sparsely, and three of them are predominantly passage migrants. Wheatear is a classic early spring migrant, looked for keenly as the weather improves in early March, while Redstart, Whinchat and Wheatear are prominent components of the heavy falls of Scandinavian passerine migrants that occur in autumn from time to time.

I have used primarily the information presented in Kent Bird Reports but supplemented by data held in the KOS computerised database especially for the period since 2000. Information presented here extends only to 2020. Thanks to Robin Mace for producing the species files for me, and to Steffan Walton, Keith Privett, Norman McCanch and Andy Appleton for sorting out some record queries. Anyway, let's make a start.

Black Redstart



Black Redstart male by Chris Bond

In Ticehurst's time (*A History of the Birds of Kent*, 1909), the Black Redstart was a scarce but annual visitor in autumn and winter, mainly to the chalk cliffs near Folkestone and Dover and on Thanet. The same locations tended to hold birds – but typically only a couple – each year. Elsewhere in the county, very few had been seen. He did note that in the mid-nineteenth century the species was apparently even rarer but thought that this could have been because they were overlooked. However, as Harrison (*The Birds of Kent*, 1953) reported, an apparent increase began around 1913 and the first nesting pair was found at Ringwould in 1930.

More instances of breeding followed, but it did not really take off until the second world war, when the nesting habitats expanded to include chalk quarries and built-up areas, notably and famously those damaged by bombing. By 1948, at least 15 pairs or territorial males were present, a lot of them in Dover. To see an illustration of typical Dover Black Redstart habitat, visit <https://doverhistorian.files.wordpress.com/2013/06/th-3-wwii-snargate-street-five-post-lane-kent-messenger-courtesy-of-dover-library.jpg>.

Figure 1 shows the recent breeding distribution, taken from the *Kent Breeding Bird Atlas 2008-2013* (still available from all good KOS websites <https://kentos.org.uk>). This map indicates surprising amounts of gain and loss within individual tetrads (2x2 km squares) between the 1988-94 and 2008-13 surveys. Some of this will be the result of incomplete coverage but it also reflects that pairs can use a site one year and then be absent the next. It doesn't mean they're gone for good: there have been breeding pairs on Thanet since 2013, for example.

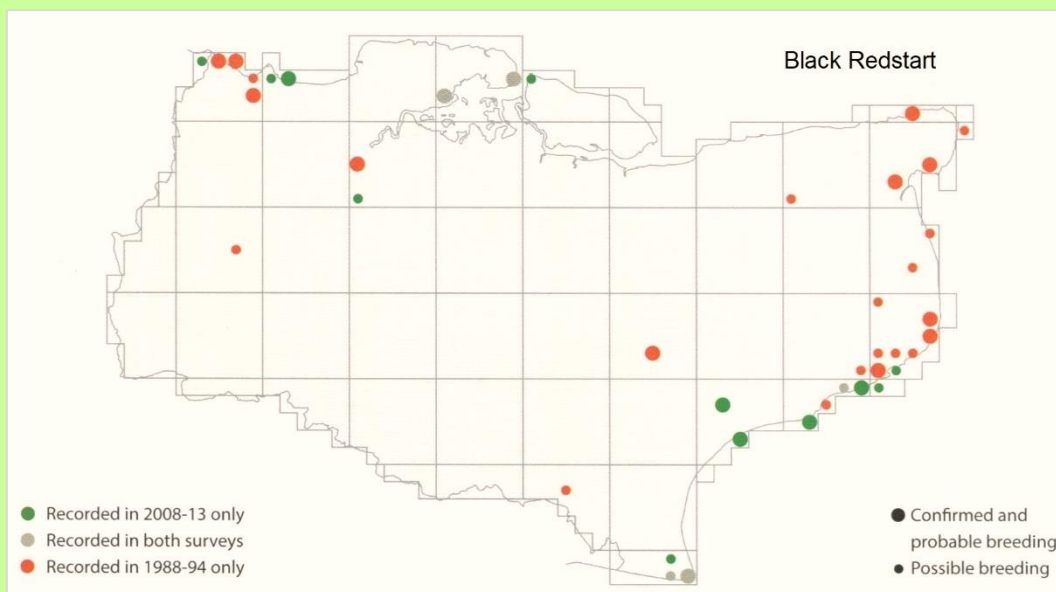
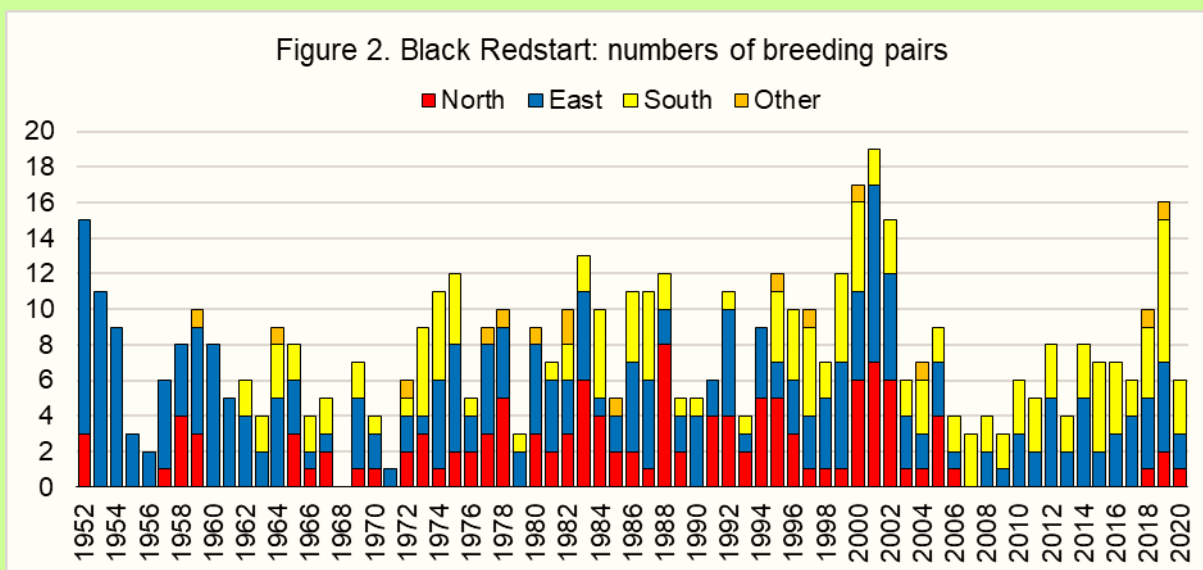


Figure 1. Black Redstart breeding distribution

While Black Redstarts have a distinctive song, often capable of being heard over considerable background noise, it is likely that some nesting pairs are missed every year. Their breeding sites are often in areas not attractive to birdwatchers and in some instances, such as military areas or power stations, not readily accessible. The consequent variability of recording and reporting no doubt has led to much of the variation in the numbers of pairs reported in Kent Bird Reports. In Figure 2, I've allocated the KBR records to the KOS recording areas but note that, in this case, those shown in South are only those in coastal areas. Inland sites in South, near Ashford, are included in the Other category.

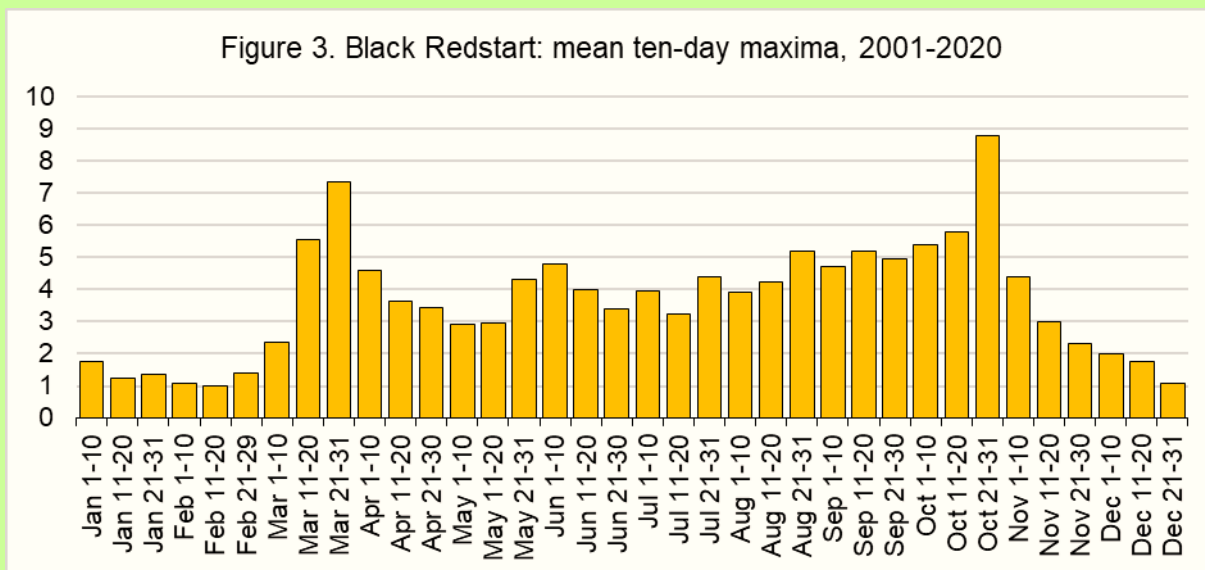


In recent years, the majority of breeding pairs have typically been found at power stations, with Dungeness generally holding more than anywhere else. The demolition of some coal-fired stations, such as at Littlebrook, Grain and Kingsnorth, which were all reliable sites at one time, mean that fewer old-style cliff-like buildings with plentiful nooks and crannies are now available for Black Redstarts. The replacement developments with cleaner lines (and less insect-rich 'wasteland' nearby for feeding) are likely to be less attractive to the birds, and the generally lower level of reports since

2005 is probably realistic. Some still nest in buildings away from Dungeness, but a higher proportion than formerly are now using crevices in the chalk cliffs.

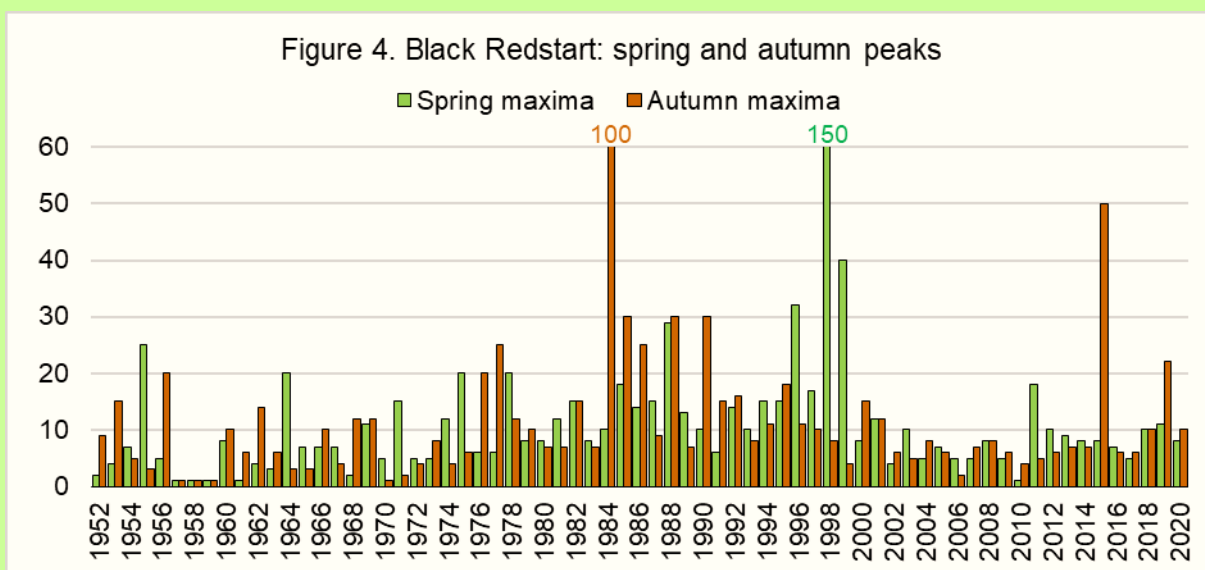
If we assume that the years with highest counts represent reasonably full recording, while the troughs are years with less coverage, the county total appears to have been typically around 10-12 pairs for many years. I suspect that this still understates reality and that, even in peak years, some pairs go unreported. If we take the maximum of each area for each decade, and sum them, the result suggests an average of about 17 pairs, and reaching 21 pairs during 2001-2010 (despite the big dip at the end of that decade). That's perhaps a bit of an over-estimate but I suggest that, even with some recent decline, the total could well still be in the range 10-15 pairs annually.

With the development of a breeding population, Black Redstart became a species present throughout the year, rather than just an autumn and winter visitor. Figure 3 shows the seasonal pattern of occurrence. The values for each ten-day period through the year are derived as the maximum count in each period, from anywhere in Kent, averaged over the twenty years 2001-2020. And yes, I know that some periods are not exactly ten days but it's as good a way of dividing the year as any!



The totals in Figure 3 understate the numbers actually present in Kent, for two reasons. First, they are derived from single site counts, so when there's a fall of migrants along the coast, only the highest count will have been used. Second, not every resident bird is repeatedly reported. Nevertheless, the pattern seems likely to reflect what actually happens. As can be seen, winter is now the time when numbers are lowest with larger numbers through the summer. Peaks occur in spring, most marked in the second half of March, and in autumn, especially in October.

The size of passage maxima varies a lot between years, no doubt due in large part to weather conditions. Figure 4 shows the single highest count in Kent each spring and autumn over the years (September counts were omitted to avoid confusion with family parties still present).



The largest arrivals of Black Redstarts happen in quite narrow periods in March and October. Table 1 lists all counts that I've traced of 25 or more birds: the very restricted timings can be seen. A quick check of all peak counts reveals that all spring counts of 10 or more fall in the period 17th March-19th April, while all autumn counts of the same size (again ignoring high September counts which probably include locally bred family parties) fall within 10th October-10th November.

Table 1. Large Black Redstart counts	
Spring counts green; Autumn counts brown.	
1955	25 at Dungeness on 25th March
1977	25 at Dungeness on 27th October
1984	100 at Dungeness on 28th October
1985	30 at Dungeness on 21st October
1986	25 at Dungeness on 20th October
1988	29 at Foreness on 31st March; 30 at Dungeness & 26 at Foreness on 18th October
1990	30 at Dungeness on 18th October
1996	32 at Dungeness on 27th March
1998	150 at Foreness & 55 at Dungeness on 28th March; 30 at Dungeness on 29th March
1999	40 at Dungeness on 25th March
2015	50 at Dungeness on 26th October

The prominence of Dungeness in these big counts is striking, with just a few coming from Foreness. The highest counts elsewhere have been 19 at Sandwich Bay on 22nd March 1997, 17 at South Foreland on 30th March 1998 and 17 at Sandwich Bay on 21st October 1984.

With only a small British breeding population, the majority of Black Redstarts seen on passage are from continental breeding populations. Most Kent ringing recoveries outside the county come from a swathe of Europe from Germany to Iberia (BTO online ringing report). The *Migration Atlas* mentions that bird observatory records show two spring peaks, in March and April. The April peak is scarcely detectable in the wider Kent records but does coincide with the arrival of birds on breeding territories in the county, though an alternative explanation (*Seasonal Movements of Summer Migrants*) is that males arrive first with females following.

Finally, there are two accepted records of eastern Black Redstarts belonging to one of the Asian subspecies *phoenicuroides/rufiventris/xerophilus*. Both were first winter males.

Dungeness, trapped and ringed, 7th-8th November 1981
Walpole Bay, 11th-17th November 2011



Walpole Bay
Margate Kent
16 November 2011
Eastern Black Redstart ♂
P. phoenicuroides

Eastern Black Redstart, Walpole Bay, Kent by Norman McCanch

The first one was, at the time, quite a puzzle but was quickly realised to be an unusual, orange-bellied Black Redstart. It was initially accepted as belonging to an eastern race, most likely *phoenicuroides* – but that decision was overturned in 2002 when the possibility of a hybrid origin was thought more likely. Fortunately, with more information, and better knowledge of the races, the original decision was later upheld. The Dungeness bird is currently the first accepted for Britain (but note there are earlier records which could have been eastern birds). The Thanet record met with fewer hurdles; seen and photographed well, and with DNA analysis of a faecal sample supporting its provenance, it was quickly accepted along with the readmission of the 1981 record. A paper describing this saga is in *British Birds* 109: 211-219. All 17 British records have been of males – females may be as hard to identify specifically as female Green-winged Teals.

Common Redstart



Common Redstart by Nick Smith

I only call this Common Redstart when I need to make clear I'm not talking about a Black Redstart, so from now on, it's Redstart. This has always been a species of western, rather than eastern, Britain and it's never been a common breeding bird in Kent. Ticehurst (*History of the Birds of Kent*, 1909) says of the Redstart that "though fairly numerous as a breeding bird in one or two localities, it is exceedingly local and nowhere common" and makes clear that it was much more numerous as a passage migrant in spring and (in larger numbers) in autumn.

That general summary has remained pretty accurate for over one hundred years but there have been reductions in the numbers seen on passage and, regrettably, it seems to have been lost to Kent as a breeding species. Numbers nesting here declined throughout the twentieth century but there were still populations in many areas, especially in the Greensand and Blean woodlands. During 1960-1965, for example, there were up to 11 pairs/territorial males at Knole Park, 10 pairs at Thornden Wood and, in 1965, a total of at least 54 in the county including 32 in Mereworth Woods. The *Kent Breeding Bird Atlas 2008-2013* suggests that there haven't been more than 15 pairs since 1965; that is probably an under-estimate, since not every pair was found or reported each year, but clearly totals were declining. There were still ten territories in 1995, by when Knole Park and Church Wood/Blean Woods RSPB reserve had become the only reliable locations. The last pair at Church Wood was in 1998 but birds hung on at Knole Park, with the last evidence of successful breeding in 2012 and the last singing male in mid May 2017.

So, Redstart is now just a passage migrant through Kent. Birds can appear anywhere in the county, but larger concentrations are invariably on the coast. The numbers arriving each year vary considerably, depending on weather conditions, and on the size of the originating populations. Figure 5 shows the single highest count, from anywhere in Kent, each spring and autumn from 1952 to 2020 (note that in the early years, counts were not always made or reported and blanks do not mean none occurred).

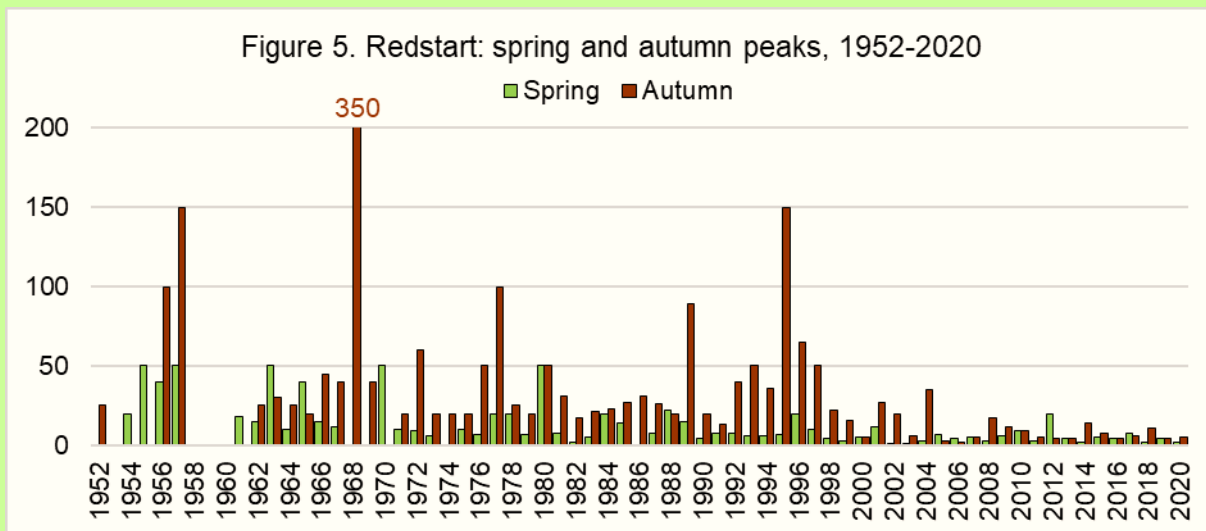


Figure 6 shows the average values for each ten day period for just the last twenty years (and therefore indicates lower values than would have been the case for comparable earlier periods). The general pattern is typical of many passerine migrant numbers, rising and falling around peaks in late April-early May and in the first three weeks of September, and with the autumn peak higher than that in spring.

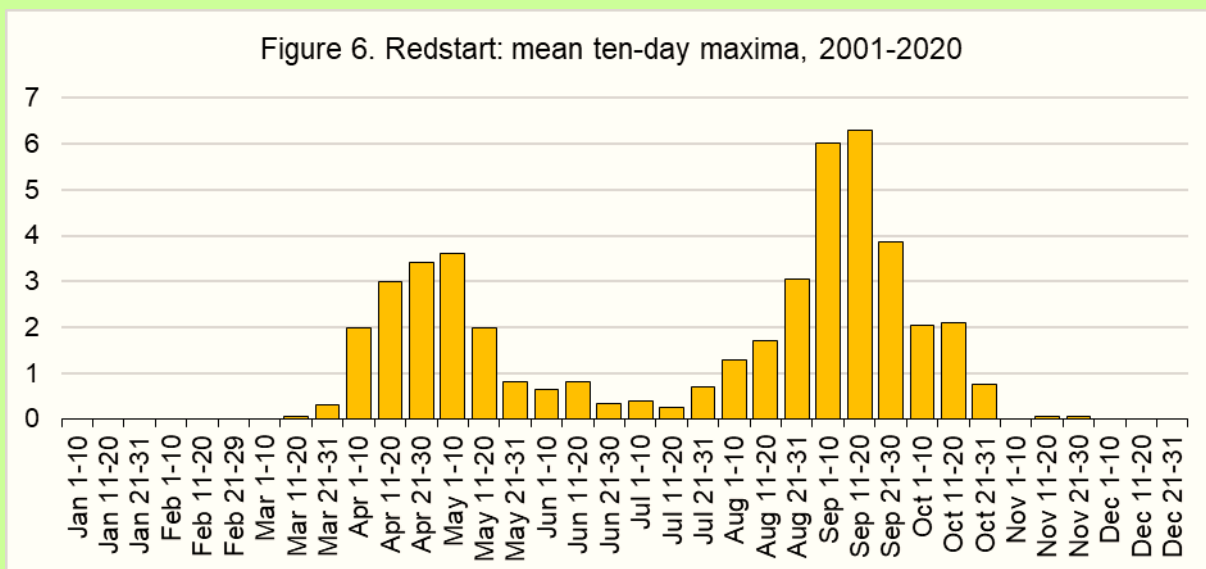


Table 2 gives average first and last dates for each decade and, for the period 2001-2020, I have also calculated the average last dates for spring migrants and first dates for autumn migrants (ignoring the few birds in assumed breeding areas). There is a lot of year-to-year variation in the latter categories.

	First in spring	Last in spring	First in autumn	Last in autumn
1952-1960	24 March			19 October
1961-1970	02 April			26 October
1971-1980	07 April			30 October
1981-1990	30 March			27 October
1991-2000	02 April			30 October
2001-2010	02 April	21 May	26 July	27 October
2011-2020	01 April	13 May	16 July	17 October

Regarding extreme dates, in spring there have been three occasions when birds were seen on 15th March, in 1952, 2000 and 2017, but the earliest of all was at Hythe on 12th March 1960. In autumn the latest have been one at Stodmarsh on 19th November 1977, two at Reculver on 19th November 2000 and one at Sandwich Bay on 29th November 2002.

Some late autumn Redstarts may come from breeding populations further east than the usual west European source of our migrants. There have been two instances where the Kent Bird Reports have mentioned birds possibly belonging to

the Asian subspecies *samamisticus*, known as Ehrenberg's Redstart, at Dungeness on 12th November 1977 and at Grain on 29th October 1997. However, neither is officially accepted as belonging to Ehrenberg's and indeed the taxon is not currently on the British list (*British Birds* 102: 84-97, *Ibis* 154: 213).

As Figure 5 shows, there are occasional spring or autumn arrivals much larger than average. Table 3 shows all spring counts of 30 or more, and all autumn counts of 75 or more.

Table 3. Large Redstart counts Spring counts green; Autumn counts brown.	
1955	50 at Dungeness on 13th April
1956	40 at Dungeness on 14th April; 100 at Dungeness on 11th September
1957	50 at Dungeness on 5th May; 150 at Dungeness on 25th September
1963	50 at Dungeness on 29th April
1965	40 at Dungeness on 3rd May; 30 at Dungeness on 8th May
1968	350 at Sandwich Bay & 95 at Reculver on 15th September; 150 at Shellness on 16th September
1970	50 at Dungeness on 16th April
1977	100 at Dungeness on 26th September
1980	50 at Dungeness on 7th May
1989	89 at Minnis Bay on 10th September
1995	150 at Foreness on 19th September; 90 at Foreness on 21st September

Both Figure 5 and Table 3 show lower peak counts in recent years. From 1990 onwards, there have been only four years in which spring counts of ten or more have occurred. Autumn counts held up for slightly longer but, from 2005 onwards, there have been just four peaks of ten or more. The mean and maximum peaks in each decade are given in Table 4.

Table 4. Redstart: mean and maximum passage counts				
	Spring		Autumn	
	mean	max	mean	max
1952-1960	40.0	50	91.7	150
1961-1970	26.3	50	71.9	350
1971-1980	15.4	50	38.5	100
1981-1990	10.9	22	30.5	89
1991-2000	7.7	20	44.7	150
2001-2010	5.1	12	13.6	35
2011-2020	5.4	20	6.5	14

The scale of these declines will be familiar to anyone who has regularly visited the coast, in Kent or elsewhere, at passage times. They are, of course, depressingly common to many passerine migrants – but why have they happened? The breeding population trend in Britain has involved a sharp decline in the 1960s and 1970s, followed by a substantial recovery with some setbacks (BTO Bird Trends). However, the British range, which contracted sharply from the 1960s, has continued to do so subsequently. More widely in Europe, the population is believed to be increasing (BirdLife International).

It seems likely that many of the birds seen in spring arrivals in Kent belong to the British breeding population, while those occurring in autumn are predominantly of Scandinavian origin. That is supported by information gathered by trapping and ringing birds (BTO online ringing report, *Migration Atlas*). The earlier decline of spring (as opposed to autumn) passage counts in Kent fits with that, in that there is a correlation between the sharp declines circa 1970. However, spring passage counts have certainly not recovered in line with the British breeding population, and the autumn passage counts have declined despite the European population apparently being in good shape.

One could explain the differing trends, of breeding and passage numbers, by hypothesising for example that we were less likely to see large numbers because of habitat change on the Kent coast making it less suitable, or because of changes in weather patterns resulting in smaller arrivals, but I consider those to be implausible. I'm afraid that I wonder whether the current assessments of wider population trends, in Britain and Europe, are really accurate.

15th September: A SBBOnnet

They say, about the sixties: if you can
Remember them you were not really there.
The years have passed, almost a lifetime's span,
But one day stands out in my memory clear.
A low was passing by well south of Kent,
East winds did shake the willows at the Bay,
But ere mid morn the rain its time had spent
And birds began to tumble from the grey.
The day was lit by flashing Redstart tails,
The bushes filled with warblers and flycatchers.
Red-throated Pipits, Wrynecks and Ring Ouzels
Were some of those that made this day so matchless,
With Corncrake, Red-backed Shrike and eight Bluethroats.
Yet, for that date ... there's nothing in my notes.

Whinchat



Whinchat male by Robert Todd

At the beginning of the twentieth century in Kent, the Whinchat was a local breeding bird of gorse-covered heaths, rough grass and bramble-covered railway cuttings, and similar vegetation (Ticehurst, 1909, *History of the Birds of Kent*). It was also, as now, a migrant through the county, in April-May and August-September. In autumn, small parties were seen throughout the county. At Dungeness and Romney Marsh, where they did not breed, "its presence from the end of August is striking, and at times the birds are there in hundreds". When Harrison wrote (*Birds of Kent*, 1953), autumn passage continued to be strong, with one estimate of over 1,000 around Lydd on 21st August 1946. The only clear change was that the breeding distribution in Kent had widened with considerable increase in numbers.

It is difficult to reconcile Harrison's assessment of breeding status with the records collected by KOS in the 1950s. No doubt it was under-reported but, even so, totals seem small. The only location mentioned as having more than three pairs was Sandwich Bay, with up to six, and none were reported in central or west Kent away from the Thames estuary. In any case, Whinchats were clearly soon declining fast as a breeding bird in Kent. The last year with ten pairs reported was 1966 and subsequently numbers were in low single figures apart from six pairs in 1977, none of which was confirmed to have bred. After 1978, only two pairs are known to have bred, both successfully, at Lydd in 1984 and at Cliffe in 1990, when there was also possible breeding at Sandwich Bay. Incidentally, the *Kent Breeding Bird Atlas 2008-2013* gave the last breeding date as 1974, having overlooked the later instances.

Whinchat has now been lost as a breeding bird throughout most of southern and eastern England and is largely a species of the upland fringes in the north and west. It continues to appear in Kent as a migrant but in greatly reduced numbers. The average first and last dates are shown in Table 5, together with the dates of the last spring migrants and first autumn migrants for the period since they ceased to breed here.

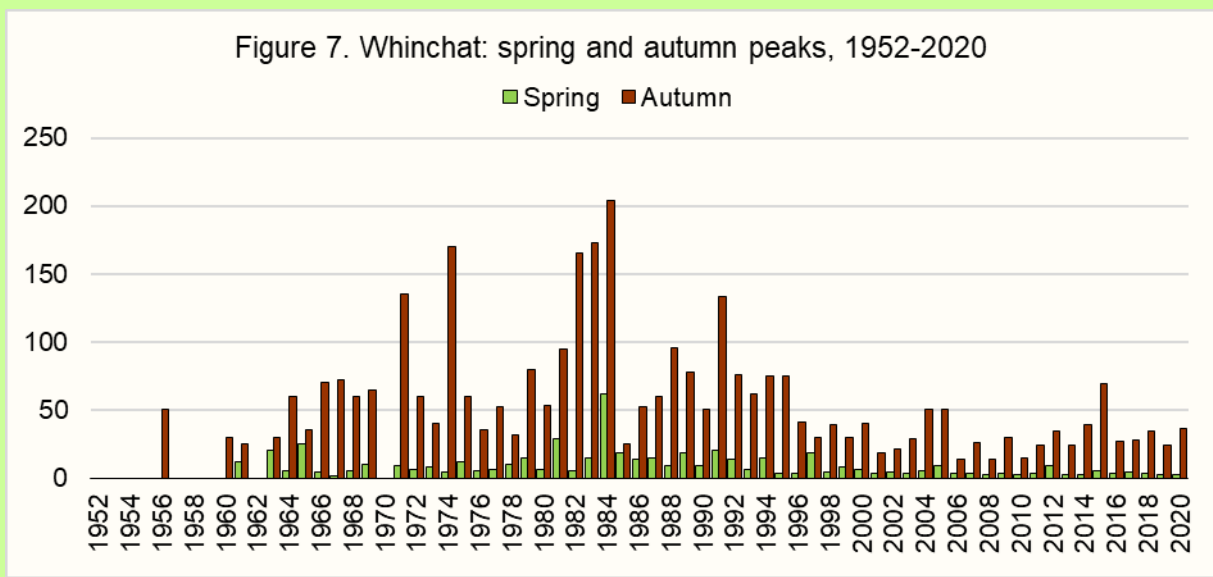
	First in spring	Last in spring	First in autumn	Last in autumn
1952-1960	23 Apr			14 Oct
1961-1970	16 Apr			01 Nov
1971-1980	11 Apr			06 Nov
1981-1990	15 Apr			28 Oct
1991-2000	14 Apr	29 May	17 Jul	27 Oct
2001-2010	12 Apr	01 Jun	20 Jul	03 Nov
2011-2020	12 Apr	21 May	19 Jul	30 Oct

There is a hint of earlier arrival now than fifty years ago, but with much year-to-year variation in arrival dates there isn't any convincing trend. The earliest of all spring records were of one at Foreness on 25th March 1974 and one at Grove Ferry on 27th March 2011, and there have also been birds on the first two days of April in three years. Last dates have been even more variable. There have been some very early departures, including 28th September 1957 and 3rd October 1965, and at the other extreme five records in the last ten days of November plus the latest which was one at Minnis Bay on 3rd December 1976.

There have also been several records of Whinchats occurring in winter (I've counted anything after mid December as a winter record). There is a risk of Stonechats with slight supercilia being mistaken for Whinchats but, so far as we know, all the winter records in Table 6 are genuine.

1958	High Halstow, 16th February
1960	Minnis Bay, 11th-31st December
1961	Stodmarsh, 17th December
1982	Bough Beech, 20th November-28th December
1989	Seasalter, 26th December-4th March 1990
1994	Whitstable, 19th February; Seasalter, 3rd-26th December; Cliffe, 20th-21st December

As mentioned above, the size of peak counts has declined considerably. Figure 7 shows the highest count, from anywhere in Kent, each spring and autumn from 1952 to 2020 as reported in Kent Bird Reports. Note that, as usual, relatively few counts were reported in the 1950s; that's partly because entries were kept to a minimum but also because there were fewer observers and there wasn't the same tendency to count everything as we do now. The general lack of records in the 1950s is certainly misleading. The decline after the 1980s, however, is believed to be genuine. I've summarised the results of this analysis in Table 7, showing the mean and maximum counts for each decade.

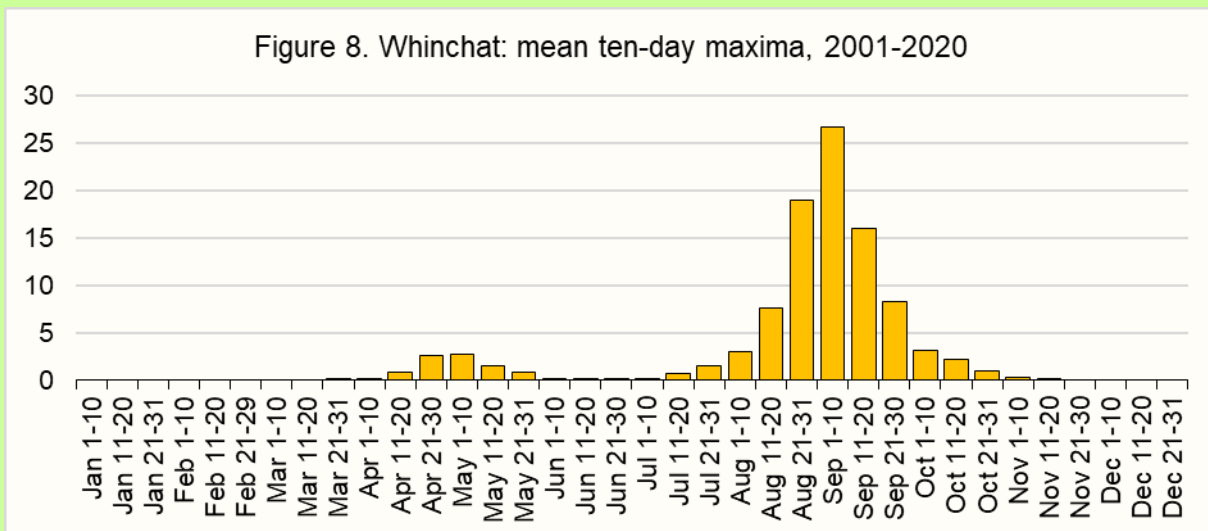


	Spring		Autumn	
	mean	max	mean	max
1952-1960	n/a	n/a	40.0	50
1961-1970	10.3	25	52.1	72
1971-1980	8.1	15	71.7	170
1981-1990	19.4	62	99.8	204
1991-2000	9.7	20	60.1	133
2001-2010	3.7	9	26.7	50
2011-2020	3.5	9	33.9	69

Figure 7 and Table 7 demonstrate the severity of the recent decline of Whinchat passage. In Table 8, I have listed all spring counts of 25 or more during 1952-2020, and all autumn counts of 125 or more. In the most recent 25 years, from 1996 onwards, the highest spring count has been 18 and there has been nothing in double-figures since 1998. In autumn, there have been just three counts of 50 or more. The days of the birds being “there in hundreds” are long gone.

1965	25 at Dungeness on 9th May
1971	135 at Sandwich Bay on 11th September
1974	170 at Dungeness on 16th September
1981	29 at Sandwich Bay on 10th May
1982	165 at Foreness on 18th September
1983	173 at Sandwich Bay on 31st August; 130 at Foreness on 23rd September
1984	30 at Dungeness on 17th April; 62 at Foreness on 18th April; 204 at Foreness on 6th September
1991	133 at Reculver on 1st September

To complete coverage of Whinchat, Figure 8 shows the recent seasonal pattern of occurrence. This is broadly similar to that for Redstart (see above) but with greater disparity between spring and autumn. It's not clear why numbers in autumn are so much larger than in spring, but there are indications that Whinchats undertake a loop migration, with autumn passage through Iberia and around the western edge of the Sahara Desert, while spring migration follows a more easterly route (*Ibis* 162: 1292-1302).



Stonechat



Stonechat male by Steve Ashton

Stonechats are present in Kent throughout the year, and there is also passage through the county. Ticehurst (*History of the Birds of Kent*, 1909) thought that, even when there were birds at the same locality summer and winter, it was quite likely that different individuals were involved. To an extent, that has been borne out by ringing studies, which have shown that some British Stonechats remain close to breeding sites, but others move well away (*Migration Atlas*). Many of those migrants winter in southern Iberia but some from the north remain in southern England.

The breeding Stonechats of Britain and Ireland belong to the race *Saxicola rubicola hibernans*. On the near continent, breeding birds are placed in *S. r. rubicola*. The two subspecies are similar, and both are variable in their plumage, which makes certain identification tricky. So far as I know, there are still no accepted records of *rubicola* in Britain although, as the BOU Records Committee said in 2013, “it seems probable that the subspecies is a regular migrant and casual breeding bird at least in the southeast of England” (*Ibis* 156: 236-242). Indeed, there have been repeated suggestions that birds in the Dungeness area include some of continental origin and, for example, most of the 12 pairs breeding in the observatory area in both 2019 and 2020 were considered to belong to *rubicola* (DBO Reports).

There are also stonechats in Asia, formerly treated as subspecies of ‘our’ Stonechat but now separated as Siberian and Stejneger’s Stonechats. I am not dealing with them here but may include them in discussion of rare chats (if I ever get around to it).

Our breeding Stonechats are found in rough grassy areas, with or without small bushes. This is similar to what Ticehurst knew, as he found them in “gorse commons and waste land”, the latter I think meaning unfarmed land rather than the modern sense of derelict urban land. In those days, they were found along the Downs, especially near Dover and Folkestone, and in gorsy places like Hothfield Common and Dartford Heath. This is rather different from the modern distribution (see Figure 9, taken from the *Kent Breeding Bird Atlas 2008-2013*). They have become predominantly coastal (but note that Ticehurst did record that some nested in the dunes at Sandwich), where they use rough areas along sea walls and tracks, temporarily ungrazed fields and the like.

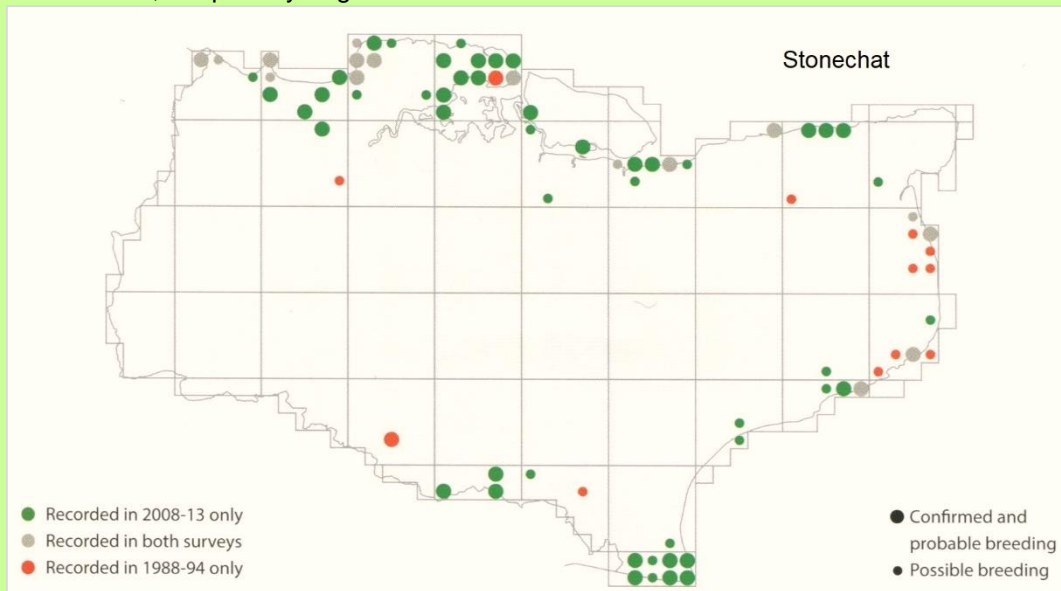


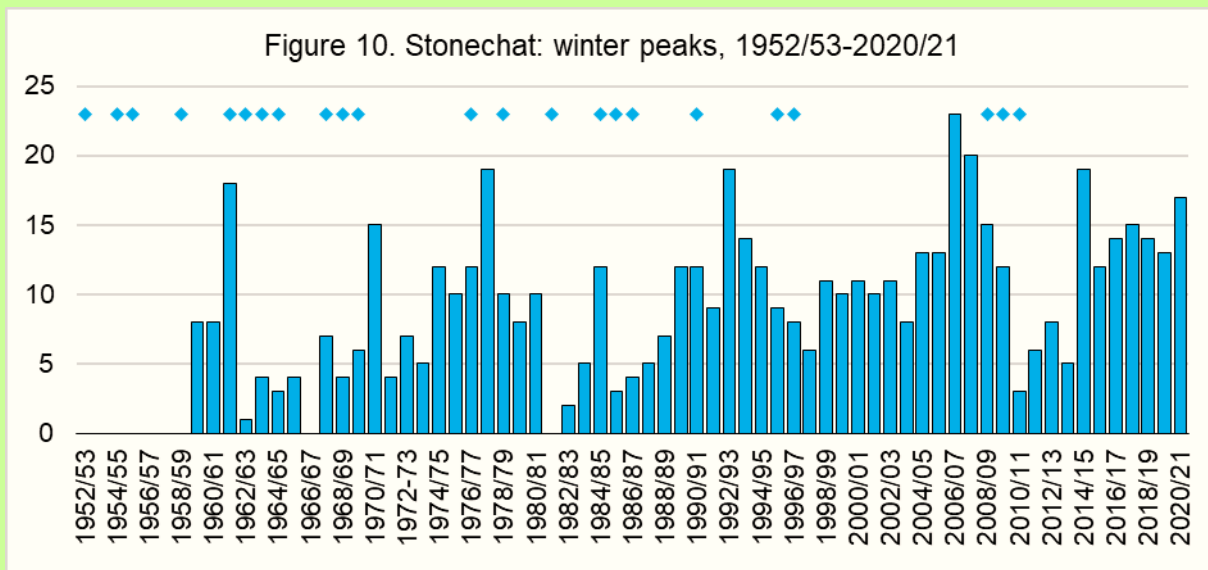
Figure 9. Stonechat breeding distribution

A striking feature of the map is the spread of Stonechat's distribution in Kent since the 1990s. It seems likely that the county population is now greater than it has been for nearly one hundred years. Seventy years ago, Harrison (*Birds of Kent*, 1953) reported that the species was merely a scarce autumn visitor to Romney Marsh and the Dungeness area, and Gillham & Homes (*Birds of the North Kent Marshes*, 1950) found it a local and irregular breeding bird in their area.

The *Kent Breeding Bird Atlas 2008-2013* estimated the Kent population at that time to fall within the range 50-100 pairs, a big increase from the 10-15 pairs estimated for the previous atlas in 1988-94. The number of breeding pairs actually reported seldom exceeds 20 but, given the concentrations in some areas such as at least twelve pairs in the Dungeness Bird Observatory area and eight pairs at Samphire Hoe in 2020, the estimate still seems reasonable.

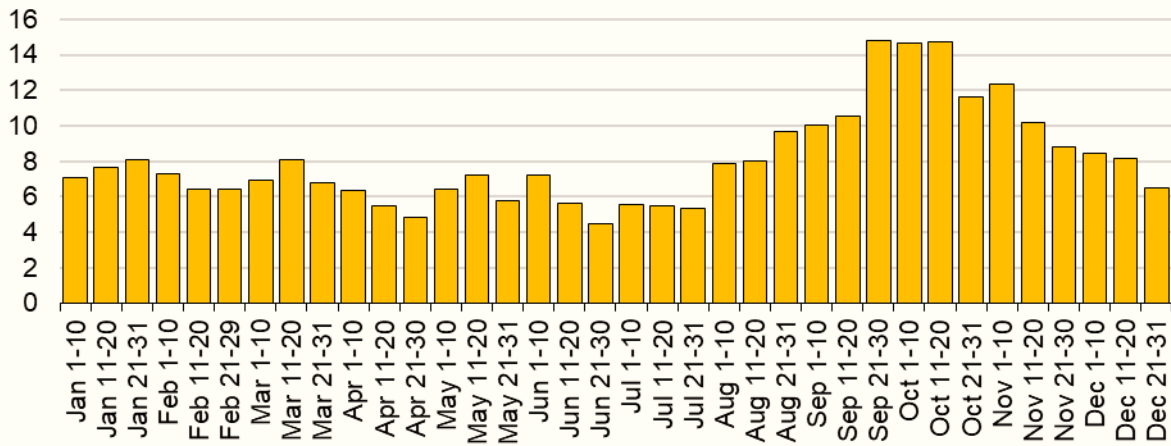
The loss of the inland populations may have resulted from scrub and woodland growth on the rough grassy areas of downs and heaths, making them no longer suitable, while increased public access to commons may not have helped either. But one would have thought that there must be some suitable inland areas now, such as motorway verges or railway embankments. The spread up the Rother Levels, shown on the map, is interesting; are there other river valleys that might be colonised?

The recent colonisation of coastal areas is surprising, in that they were at best only local there in the old days. But the growth of numbers generally is probably related to the decreased frequency of cold winters. Stonechat, as an insectivore of open habitats, is particularly prone to suffer in severe weather. Figure 10 shows the annual maximum count, from any one site in Kent, each winter from 1952/53 to 2020/21. The blue diamonds above the bars indicate winters in which the mean temperature during December-February was below 4°C (Met Office data from www.metoffice.gov.uk/research/climate/maps-and-data/uk-and-regional-series) in south-east and central southern England. It isn't a precise correlation (other factors such as recording intensity and the scale of immigration will be involved) but there is a tendency for numbers to be depressed in the years following cold winters.



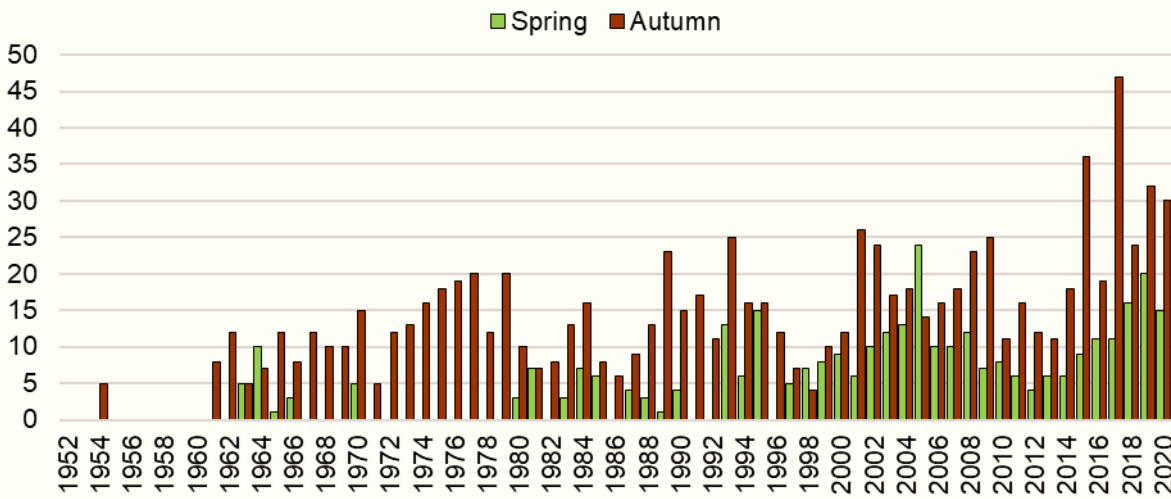
Using only data from the most recent twenty years, Figure 11 illustrates the seasonal pattern of Stonechat numbers in Kent. In contrast to Redstart and Whinchat, this is less dominated by spring and autumn passage peaks. Indeed, although there is a pronounced increase in numbers during August-November, there is no apparent spring peak. There is little doubt that migrants do pass through Kent at both seasons, as described in the *Migration Atlas* which notes that there are indications that migrants from northern Britain heading to and from Iberia orient their movement towards the short crossing of the Dover Strait. However, with a substantial breeding population now present in Kent, it's often difficult to distinguish migrants from those derived from local pairs.

Figure 11. Stonechat: mean ten-day maxima, 2001-2020



It is also the case that we do not get large falls of Stonechats, as we can get (or used to get) of other chats with Scandinavian populations that regularly pass through Kent and south-east England. Only small numbers of Stonechats breed in Scandinavia. Nevertheless, I have produced Figure 12, which shows the annual spring and autumn maxima from 1952 to 2020. As usual, and this applies also to the winter chart above, I have to issue a health warning that the absence of data for the early years is the result of lack of recording and reporting rather than absence of birds.

Figure 12. Stonechat: spring and autumn peaks, 1952-2020



The underlying trend of increase in Figure 12 reflects the growth of the Kent population and probably also the increase in the British population more generally. The trend throughout Britain since 1994 has been one of steep increase, though tempered by a marked decline (since reversed) during 2006-2012 due partly to snowy winters (BTO Bird Trends).

The highest counts in spring have been 24 at St Margaret’s Bay on 18th March 2005 and 20 at Dungeness on 12th May 2019. The latter count was of breeding birds, but the former were largely migrants – there was only a single bird there on nearby dates. A count of 18 at Samphire Hoe on 18th March 2019 also probably included migrants, as the total was well above those of nearby dates.

In autumn, there have been some larger counts. Again, these could have involved some local birds but presumably a substantial proportion of them will have been migrants. Counts of over 25 during September-November are as follows: 26 at Bockhill on 30th September 2001, 36 at Sandwich Bay on 28th September 2015, 47 at Sandwich Bay on 14th October 2017, 32 at Sandwich Bay on 23rd September 2019, and 30 at Dungeness on 21st September 2020.

After the somewhat unusual excitement of a bird that’s increasing, we now turn to the last species in this article, the Wheatear, and it’s back to decline, I’m afraid.

Wheatear



Wheatear male by Mark Chidwick

In broad terms, the status of the Wheatear has changed little since the days of Ticehurst (*History of the Birds of Kent*, 1909) and Harrison (*Birds of Kent*, 1953). It is a localised breeding species, commonest near Dungeness, and a spring and autumn migrant with the greatest numbers at Dungeness and on Thanet. However, even though those books give little detail about the numbers that occurred, it is clear that totals are now far smaller. For example, Ticehurst says that, as birds accumulate along the south coast, “their numbers reach huge proportions” and “about Romney Marsh and Dungeness on the days before they leave, they literally swarm”. Harrison mentions sightings of “flocks of a hundred or more lining the roadway between Dover and Deal” on 25th August 1938 and “a party of two hundred” at Reculver on 1st September 1947.

Figure 13 shows the recent breeding distribution. The spread of dots in some ways exaggerates their occurrence. Only in the Dungeness area are they regular; elsewhere, as indicated by presence being recorded in only one or other of the atlas surveys, nesting tends to be a one-off at any particular location.

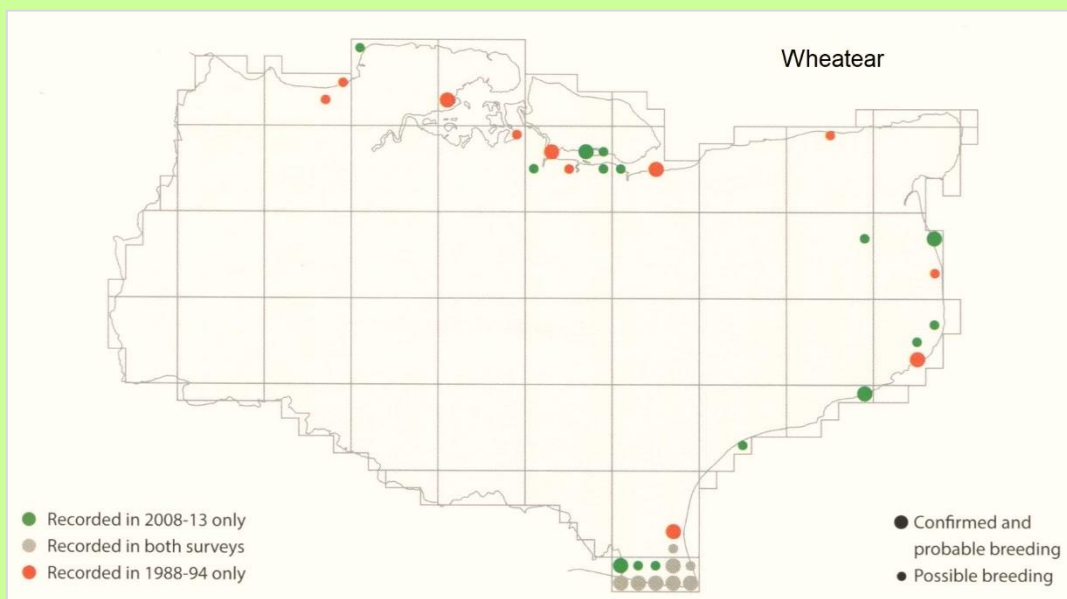


Figure 13. Wheatear breeding distribution

The *Kent Breeding Bird Atlas 2008-2013* estimated the county population to be 20-30 pairs. That is probably still about right; the total reported in the last ten years has seldom exceeded 20 pairs but coverage of the whole of the Dungeness-Lydd Ranges area is not often possible. Numbers are falling even there, though: there were about 38 pairs in 1996 and a total of 70-80 pairs was estimated to be present in 1954.

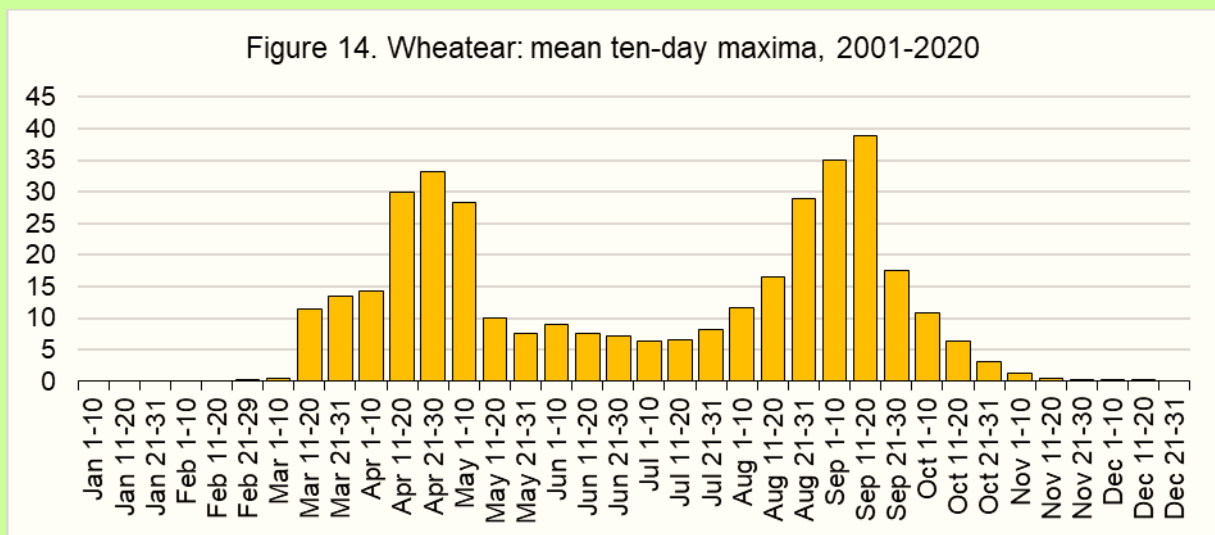
Going back further in time, Wheatears bred regularly around much of the Kent coast (though probably always in greatest numbers at Dungeness). Ticehurst mentions that it was abundant in the Sandwich Bay dunes and locally numerous in the north Kent marshes between Whitstable and Gravesend. It was also then found inland in isolated pairs along the North Downs and in such areas as Eastwell Park, Hothfield Common and the Darent valley.

Turning to passage, Table 9 shows the average first and last dates each decade from the 1950s onwards. In contrast to many trans-Saharan migrants, there is not any clear trend towards earlier arrival and last dates also have not changed much.

	First in spring	Last in autumn
1952-1960	05 Mar	19 Nov
1961-1970	14 Mar	11 Nov
1971-1980	11 Mar	12 Nov
1981-1990	09 Mar	20 Nov
1991-2000	05 Mar	13 Nov
2001-2010	08 Mar	11 Nov
2011-2020	10 Mar	13 Nov

Most of the first dates, typically involving males, fall between 25th February and 22nd March, but there has been one earlier record, involving one at Lower Rainham on 15th February 1958. (A record in the Kent Bird Report of two at Haysden on 5th February 2011 was an input error.) Last dates are generally more variable, falling between late October and early December. The latest of all was one at Pegwell Bay on 11th December 2014. In addition, there have been two occasions when birds have seemed to be over-wintering, at Kingsnorth (Medway) from 31st December 1982 to 4th January 1983 and at Sandwich Bay from 19th December 1994 to 1st February 1995.

Figure 14 shows the average ten-day means for the twenty year period to 2020. This is much as we would expect. There are a few outliers then an abrupt start to passage in mid March, spring passage peaking in the second half of April and early May, small numbers through summer, and autumn passage with a slightly higher peak than in spring, centred on late August and September, plus a tail of late migrants through to December.



As with so many passerines that migrate between Europe and Africa, there is a definite trend towards smaller numbers passing through Kent. Figure 15 shows the single maximum count each year from any site in the county, in spring and autumn each year. The Kent Bird Reports are particularly sparing in details of Wheatear numbers in the 1950s and early 1960s, so we can ignore the lack of records then. From 1970s onwards, however, the chart is considered to show a realistic trend.

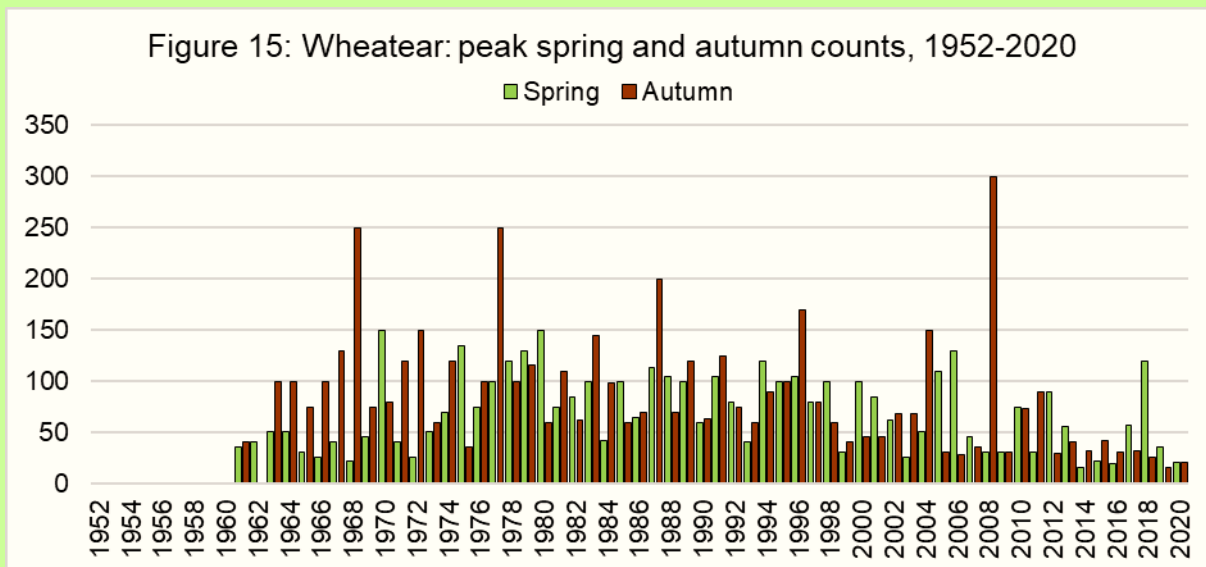


Figure 15 shows spring and autumn peaks mostly to be fairly similar though fluctuating from year to year. There are occasional much larger arrivals, presumably related to weather conditions, and those have been more pronounced in autumn – it is that causing the average size of peaks to be larger in autumn than in spring. To summarise the scale of the decline, the average spring peak during 1971-1995 was 87.3, while during 1996-2020 it was 60.9. The equivalent values for autumn peaks are 102.3 during 1971-1996 and 63.1 during 1996-2020.

Table 10 lists all counts of 125 or more between 1952 and 2020. It's a small irony that, despite the decreasing size of annual peaks, the highest count of all is the most recent of those listed. However, the only count greater than 100 since 2008 was 120 at Dungeness on 3rd May 2018.

1967	130 at Dungeness on 29th August
1968	250 at Shellness on 15th September
1970	150 at Dungeness on 16th April
1972	150 at Foreness on 19th September
1975	Up to 160 Foreness on 19th April
1977	250 at Dungeness on 17th August
1979	130 at Dungeness on 7th May
1980	150 at Dungeness on 3rd-6th May
1983	144 at Foreness on 23rd September
1987	200 at Foreness on 26th August
1996	170 at Foreness on 20th September
2004	150 at Foreness and 140 at Pegwell Bay on 7th September
2006	130 at Foreness on 30th April
2008	200 at North Foreland on 15th September; 300 at North Foreland on 17th September

Most of the large counts, now as in Ticehurst's day, have come from Dungeness and Thanet. It is almost certain, from the descriptions of the 'swarms' of birds at Dungeness or the flocks along the Dover-Deal road, that numbers before the 1950s were a lot higher than at any later date, and that the decline seen since 1952 is just a continuation of this sad and all too common trend. I'm pretty sure, too, that in former times many more were seen inland. Ticehurst mentions them travelling in small parties throughout the county before accumulating at the coast. The majority of inland records are now of only one or two birds, though admittedly there are still occasional records of concentrations. Examples of those are 21 at Jeskyn's Farm, Cobham, on 30th April 2012 and 10 at Longfield on 31st August 2016, but these are exceptional. Table 11 gives the average annual peak in each of the KOS recording areas (see Kent Bird Reports for the extent of these) over the recent twenty years.

A lot of the Wheatears migrating through Kent are birds that breed further north in the UK, or in Greenland and Canada (see below). However, some larger arrivals at least in autumn are assumed to be of Scandinavian breeders, though there is surprisingly little ringing evidence for this (BTO online ringing report, *Migration Atlas*). An example is the arrival of 250 at Shellness on 15th September 1968, a day when there were major arrivals of various Scandinavian migrants around the east Kent coast; there were also 70 Wheatears at Reculver that day, and 40 at Sandwich Bay.

Table 11. Wheatear counts by area Mean annual maxima during 2001-20	
Thames	18.2
Medway	4.9
Swale	12.3
East	63.9
South	45.0
Central	1.9
West	5.4

Birds belonging to the Greenland subspecies *leucorhoa* are recorded mainly in spring, when the large size and bright plumage of the males is most obvious, but there are also some noted in autumn. In spring, their passage peaks in late April and especially in May, later than nominate race birds. KOS records do not always specify when Greenland birds are seen but some of the later big influxes probably consist mainly or wholly of them. Instances when arrivals have been said to be *leucorhoa* include 75 at Dungeness on 20th April 2010 and 120 there on 3rd May 2018.

Andrew Henderson

KENT BIRD SIGHTINGS FOR JULY - AUGUST 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 **July** was dominated by dry weather and generally above average temperatures. The south-east was particularly dry and there were record breaking temperatures from the 18th to the 20th. On the 20th the temperature approached 40°C in parts of Kent whilst in Lincolnshire, there was the highest UK temperature ever recorded of 40.3°C. In some parts of Kent rainfall was almost non-existent and at Bishopstone only 0.25mm of rain fell in the month until 8.00pm on the 31st when a cloudburst deposited 14.5mm.

The weather during **August** was dominated by high pressure during the first half of the month and in the second week it became very hot. The high pressure eventually moved away leaving more unsettled conditions. It was a drier than average month with plenty of sunshine early on. It was warmest in the south-east where maxima temperatures were 4°C above average in places.

PARTRIDGE TO WILDFOWL

A **Quail** was recorded flying over Nethergong at 0142 on July 10th.

As many as 105 **Egyptian Geese** were seen at Bough Beech with smaller numbers at Worth Marshes, Seasalter, Dunorlan Park, Scotney, Dungeness RSPB and Ashford with up to six **Mandarins** recorded from Bough Beech, Ashford, Penshurst Place and Nethergong.

In July and August up to five **Garganey** were seen at Dungeness RSPB, Oare Marshes, Stodmarsh/Grove Ferry, Worth Marshes, Reculver and Cliffe Pools.

An eclipse plumage, male **Red-crested Pochard** was seen at Dungeness RSPB between July 6th and the 9th and a drake **Scaup** was reported from Riverside CP on Aug 16th whilst two were reported E close inshore at Minnis Bay on Aug 22nd.

NIGHTJAR TO WADERS

A **Black-necked Grebe** was seen at Cliffe Pools on Aug 29th.



Stone Curlew by Barry Wright

A **Stone-curlew** was recorded at Dungeness RSPB on July 7th whilst another was present at Cliffe Pools from July 16th-27th. One was also seen at Cliffe Pools between Aug 10th and 17th with three there from Aug 25th to the end of the month. Another was heard at Sandwich Bay at 0400 on Aug 27th.

A **Dotterel** flew NW at Reculver on Aug 23rd, one was seen at Langdon Hole from the 24th to the 26th, one also flew in off the sea at DBO on the 25th and there were single birds at Nagden on the 29th and Dungeness RSPB on the 31st.

After the first returning adult **Curlew Sandpiper** was seen at Dungeness RSPB on July 7th as many as 20 birds were then recorded from Cliffe Pools, Pegwell Bay, Sandwich Bay, Dungeness RSPB, Shellness, Walmer Beach and Oare Marshes.

A **Temminck's Stint** was recorded from Sandwich Bay on July 29th whilst a juvenile was seen at Stodmarsh on Aug 21st whilst a **Little Stint** was seen at Pegwell Bay on July 20th with others seen at Cliffe Pools from the 22nd-30th and Elmley on the 24th. During August up to four birds were seen at Cliffe Pools, Pegwell Bay, Oare Marshes, Stodmarsh and Yantlet Lagoon.

A **Pectoral Sandpiper** was identified at Dungeness RSPB on July 15th where it remained until the 18th and another was seen at Worth Marshes on July 28th. In August an adult was found at Cliffe Pools on the 22nd and was still there on the 30th and another was found at Dungeness RSPB from 29th to the 31st.

During July and August up to 13 **Wood Sandpipers** were recorded from Dungeness RSPB with as many as five at Reculver, Minnis Bay, Stodmarsh/Grove Ferry, DBO, High Halstow, Worth Marshes, Sandwich Bay, Pegwell Bay, Northward Hill, Otterham Creek and Elmley and as many as five **Spotted Redshanks** were seen at Pegwell Bay, Stodmarsh, Elmley, Dungeness RSPB, Little Murston, Cliffe Pools, Riverside CP, Swalecliffe and Worth Marshes. There was also an impressive flock of 82 **Greenshank** in Pegwell Bay on July 20th.

GULLS TO SHEARWATERS

During August up to four **Little Gulls** were seen at DBO, Dungeness RSPB, Reculver, Shellness and Stodmarsh.

During these two months one or two **Caspian Gulls** were reported from Deal, Walmer, Oare Marshes, Herne Bay and DBO and up to 18 **Yellow-legged Gulls** were seen at DBO and Dartford Marshes with one or two seen at North Foreland, Minnis Bay, Ham Marshes, Stodmarsh and Foreness.



Bonaparte's Gull by Steve Ashton

The regularly returning **BONAPARTE'S GULL** was at Oare Marshes on July 7th and remained there to moult until Aug 31st. This was the tenth year running it has been seen at Oare Marshes.



Gull-billed Tern by Mark Chidwick.

A **GULL-BILLED TERN** flew over Oare Marshes on July 20th and was seen there again on the 28th and in the Swale on the 30th and 31st.

Two **Roseate Terns** were seen in Pegwell Bay on July 24th and 25th.



Roseate Terns by Johnathan Dodds

A **Black Tern** flew E at Foreness on July 20th and 10 flew SSE at Oare Marshes on Aug 11th after which as many as 13 birds were seen at DBO, Oare Marshes, Tankerton, Pegwell Bay, North Foreland, Bough Beech and Foreness.

A **Great Skua** flew past Swalecliffe on Aug 30th and there was one at Reculver and two at North Foreland the next day whilst a **Pomarine Skua** was reported from Grenham Bay on Aug 28th.

An **Arctic Skua** was seen at Swalecliffe on Aug 10th after which up to 14 birds were seen at DBO, North Foreland, Reculver, Foreness, Seasalter, Oare Marshes, North Foreland, Walmer and Tankerton.

A juvenile **Long-tailed Skua** flew W at Foreness and E at Swalecliffe on Aug 18th and others were reported from Cliftonville and North Foreland on the 31st.

A **Black Guillemot** was seen offshore at Dungeness on Aug 2nd and a **Sooty Shearwater** was reported flying N at North Foreland on Aug 30th.

Three **Manx Shearwaters** were seen at DBO on July 3rd, one was seen at Walmer on Aug 19th and three were reported flying past North Foreland on Aug 31st whilst a single **Balearic Shearwaters** was reported flying E at Foreness on July 22nd and at DBO there were single birds on Aug 18th, 21st, 25th and 28th with three on the 19th. There were also two at Walmer on Aug 19th.

WHITE STORK TO WOODPECKERS

Two **White Storks** were seen at Hever on July 24th whilst between August 13th and 21st up to 25 birds, from the Knepp reintroduction scheme in East Sussex, were seen at various sites mainly in the **East** and **South**.



Glossy Ibis by Tim Gutsill

There were up to nine **Glossy Ibises** at Dungeness RSPB, Stodmarsh, Elmley, Oare Marshes and Cliffe Pools and up to five **Spoonbills** were seen at Dungeness RSPB, Bough Beech, Worth Marshes, Oare Marshes, Seasalter and Cliffe Pools with one or two **Bitterns** recorded from Stodmarsh/Grove Ferry, DBO, Stonar and Elmley.

A first summer **Night-heron** was found at Oare Marshes on the evening of July 6th and was still present there on the Aug 19th whilst in addition it was seen at Ham Marshes on the July 24th.

Up to 15 **Cattle Egrets** were seen at Dungeness RSPB, Elmley, Oare Marshes, Cliffe Pools, Walmer, Stodmarsh/Grove Ferry, Worth Marshes, Seasalter, Sheerness and Nethergong and a flock of 20 flew W past Swalecliffe on Aug 22nd.

One or two juvenile **Purple Herons** were seen in the Stodmarsh/Grove Ferry area between July 23rd and Aug 30th. Single birds were also reported from Pegwell Bay on July 27th, Oare Marshes on Aug 8th and Seasalter on Aug 27th.



Purple Heron by Gary Rigden

One or two **Great White Egrets** were seen at Dungeness RSPB, Capel Fleet, Bough Beech, Grove Ferry/Stodmarsh, Swale NNR, Foreness, Tankerton, Oare Marshes and Worth Marshes.

Single **Ospreys** were seen at Stodmarsh, Pegwell Bay, DBO, Dungeness RSPB, Oare Marshes, Walmer, South Foreland, Snodland, Selling, Grain, Riverside CP and Cheriton.

In July and August **Honey Buzzards** were seen at Worth Marshes, Sandwich Bay, Samphire Hoe, South Foreland, Canterbury, Dungeness, Littlestone, North Foreland, Tankerton, Langdon Bay, Broadstairs and Stodmarsh/Grove.



Honey Buzzard by Jamie Partridge

A male **Hen Harrier** was seen at Old Wives Lees on July 24th whilst ring-tails were identified at South Foreland area on Aug 13th and 14th and DBO on Aug 23rd and a male **Montagu's Harrier** was reported from Oare Marshes on July 23rd.

One or two **Red Kites** were seen at Dungeness, Edenbridge, Grove Ferry, Sevenoaks, New Romney, Donkey Street, Richborough, Reculver, Swalecliffe, Bishopstone, Abbotscliffe, Conyer, Seasalter, Sandwich Bay and Shuart and a **Black Kite** flew over Sandwich Bay on July 15th with another reported from Grove Ferry on Aug 18th.

A **White-tailed Eagle** was seen flying S between Sevenoaks and Tonbridge on Aug 22nd.

Up to three **Long-eared Owls** were seen on Sheppey during July and August and one was seen at Sandwich Bay on Aug 8th and 21st whilst a **Short-eared Owl** was seen at Dartford Marshes on July 5th and others were seen at Graveney on Aug 22nd and flying in off the sea at Cliftonville on Aug 31st.

Single **Bee-eaters** were found at DBO on July 9th and at Kingsdown on the 10th and a **Wryneck** was discovered skulking at Oare Marshes on Aug 18th and another was seen at Langdon Cliffs on the 26th.

FALCONS TO HIRUNDINES

A **Merlin** was seen at DBO on July 3rd and a **Red-backed Shrike** was found at Sandwich Bay on Aug 29th.

As many as five **Ravens** were recorded from Dungeness, Reculver, Oare Marshes, Bockhill, Stodmarsh, Cliffe Pools, Worth Marshes, Seasalter, Sevenoaks and Nethergong.

A **Red-rumped Swallow** was reported from Sevenoaks WR on Aug 24th.

WARBLERS TO WHEATEARS

Single **Wood Warblers** were recorded at Stodmarsh on July 30th, Bough Beech on Aug 8th, Foreness on Aug 15th and ringed at DBO and seen at Sandwich Bay on the 20th.



Wood Warbler by Phil Barton

Two **Grasshopper Warblers** were ringed on Reculver Marshes on July 15th after which one or two were recorded at Shuart, Reculver, Hope Point, Stodmarsh/Grove, DBO, Little Farthingloe, Oare Marshes, Nethergong and Sandwich Bay.

Two **Firecrests** were seen at South Foreland on Aug 31st whilst an early **Redwing** was seen there on Aug 29th.



Pied Flycatcher by Phil Smith

The first **Pied Flycatcher** of the autumn was seen at Foreness on Aug 8th after which as many as six birds were seen at Ramsgate, Reculver, Chamber's Wall, Minnis Bay, Shuart, DBO, Foreness, North Foreland, South Foreland, Langdon Bay, Stodmarsh, Swalecliffe, Cliftonville, Bockhill, Bough Beech, Dartford Marshes, Whitstable, Walmer, Folkestone, Oare Marshes, Sandwich Bay and Dungeness RSPB.

Up to four **Black Redstarts** were seen at DBO, Reculver, Langdon Cliffs, Seabrook, Samphire Hoe, North Foreland and Dover.

SPARROWS TO BUNTINGS

A **Common Rosefinch** was trapped and ringed at Sandwich Bay on Aug 30th.

A **Crossbill** flew over DBO on Aug 21st and there were 12 at Lympe Castle on the 22nd.

A **Serin** flew W at Foreness on July 1st and another was heard at Sandwich Bay on Aug 29th and at Worth on the 31st.

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

Ring-necked Duck (male)	Dungeness RSPB	May 7th-June 10th
Black-winged Stilt	Worth Marshes	May 3rd-4th
2 Black-winged Stilts	Worth Marshes	May 8th
Red-necked Phalarope	Elmley NNR	June 13th
Black Kite (flying N)	DBO	April 17th
Black Kite (flying N)	Bockhill	April 17th
Black Kite	North Foreland	April 17th
Black Kite	Dungeness	April 24th
Black Kite (flying N)	Worth Marshes	May 1st
Purple Heron	Stodmarsh	April 18th-May 7th
Purple Heron	Dungeness RSPB	May 15th-25th
Red-footed Falcon (female)	Worth Marshes	May 26th-June 4th
Red-rumped Swallow (flying W)	Shuart	May 21st
Red-rumped Swallow	South Foreland	May 21st
Common Rosefinch (female/2nd cy)	North Foreland	June 18th

Fifty Years Ago

Barred Warbler



Barred Warblers by JG Keulemans (PDI)

One was trapped at Sandwich Bay on Sept. 15th (SVC, CHD) and another seen at Dungeness on Sept. 26th (DEC, KR)

KBR 1972