KOS News

The Newsletter of the Kent Ornithological Society

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Brent Geese by Vic Booth

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

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Editorial

It was back in 2017 when I persuaded a sceptical Executive committee that we could take advantage of the new online KOS News format to increase the schedule to six issues a year. Historically it had sometimes proved difficult to gain enough material to fill four issues of twenty-four pages, but the shift to online PDF format allowed for more pages and more photographs. Thankfully my naïve optimism was somewhat justified, and we have regularly been able to fill 30 -35 pages, thanks to the regular efforts of Chris Hindle and a body of excellent and generous photographers who have given me blanket permission to use their pictures and also some good contributions. This issue is set to be the largest ever, in the latest stages of compilation it is already about forty-five pages, with a varied range of topics.

My New Year has been quite successful so far, with not too many species but some that I have not seen much of either lately or ever! I suppose top of my list must be the Hume-s Warbler (at my second attempt), made more startling when seen on the same day as a White Stork!! From a personal perspective I was also glad to see Tree Sparrows and Dartford Warbler together, and once again to find Avocets in Pegwell Bay on New Year's Day. Currently I am on 89 species, but I will be out again tomorrow. There is some sense of urgency as I may be out of action for about six weeks from late January, confined to birding in the garden. Still, odd things do turn up in gardens in East Kent in winter…….!
Keep safe!
Good birding

Norman

News and announcements

LOW-TIDE COUNTS. WANTED.

Volunteers are needed to count shore birds along the Swale from Whitstable to Shellness. Each month volunteers count the main roosts of waterbirds at hight tide. These core counts give population estimates which contribute to county, national and international monitoring programmes. Once every ten years or so we try to count the birds at low tide throughout the winter to see where the birds are feeding. This information is vital to understand and protect the intertidal areas where the shore birds feed. For example, information from low-tide counts was used this year to oppose the expansion of oyster trestles on the intertidal area at Whitstable.
The counts are straightforward. The Swale is divided into more than sixty sectors and the counts can be done two hours either side of low tide on any day in the month from September to March.
If you are interested in helping with these counts please contact me, Brian Watmough brianrwat@yahoo.co.uk

HERONRY CENSUS.

Counters were able to return to most heronries last year after many counts were missed in 2020. The good news is that at least six pairs of Cattle Egret have nested this year at two heronries in the north of the county and young birds are now being reported from around Kent. Although not all counts are in yet it seems that numbers of Grey Heron and Little Egret were down from 2019.
Thanks to all the observers who have submitted records. We received details of a heronry in the Stour Valley with nests which had not previously been recorded although the woodland owners say that it has been occupied for several years. So please keep an eye out for herons and report any colonies to me, Brian Watmough brianrwat@yahoo.co.uk

COLOUR RINGED REDSHANK-REQUEST FOR SIGHTINGS.

The Swale Wader Group Swale Wader Group - Home (swalewaders.co.uk) have started a five-year project colour ringing project on Redshank. Redshank numbers are declining nationaly 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 .

Colour ringed Redshank at Birchington (Photo by Michael Baldock)

Surveys

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

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KOS – Sightings database

The new sightings database is up and running but as expected there are a few minor glitches which are being addressed as they arise. If you encounter any gremlins please let us know.

Brendan Ryan (Honorary Secretary KOS)

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

Norman McCanch (Editor) : nvmccanch@hotmail.com

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

Valuing Young People at Sandwich Bay Bird Observatory Trust

Sandwich Bay Bird Observatory Trust (SBBOT) has a long history of education and engagement of young people. From the 1970s school groups visited the Observatory and over the years since then courses such as BTO Ringing Courses, Bee ID courses, college and university field visits, and trips from local primary schools have all taken place here.
We want to ensure young people have access to the Observatory and all the things we do, and to that end we offer free digital membership to anyone under 21, as well as free entry on guided walks to anyone under 18! We hope this can encourage more young members to join us for our events and walks and become part of our young members group. We're in the process of developing a Youth Council for our young members to have a direct say in our activities and plans.

Pond dipping

Local primary schools have visited the Observatory on a yearly basis in the past, but since January 2020, our Assistant Warden Becky, along with Trustee Sharon Irvine, have put together an Education Team and vastly increased our outreach with local schools, youth groups and young families.
Despite the setbacks that Covid-19 lockdowns brought, the Education Team, comprised of the wardening team, several trustees, and volunteers, have managed to connect with many local primary schools, Scout groups, Thanet Girl Guides, and other local youth groups.

Steven Falk leading a Bee ID course

Within primary schools we have run educational workshops based on wildlife and nature, focusing on birds where we could, and we have delivered these workshops both at schools and at the Observatory Field Centre. The main aim of these workshops is to connect young people with nature, increasing both their knowledge and hopefully intrinsic value

of wildlife. With various youth groups we have delivered both online sessions during lockdowns, and in-person sessions at the field centre and the club's own premises. These sessions have included beginner bird ID, moth trapping, wildlife treasure trails, pond-dipping, and learning about wasps!
In the past two years we have run four nature holiday clubs at the Observatory during school holidays, engaging over 100 new young people with the Observatory. We offer free nature-based sessions, particularly aiming for vulnerable children, involving a range of fun-filled activities such as bird watching, bird ringing, bug hunting, pond dipping, owl pellet dissection, woodland trails, games, storytelling, crafts, and music.

Making bee hotels

For many years, SBBOT has linked with the RSPB in the running of the Wildlife Explorers (WEX) and Phoenix groups at the field centre. These are groups for young, nature loving, budding conservationists that run once a month and focus on channelling their interest in nature and looking at local wildlife and environmental issues. The group is under the auspices of the RSPB, and all leaders are trained and managed by the RSPB, but we encourage this great working relationship and the group based at the SBBOT field centre has been woven into the wide-ranging activities we do with young people over the years, and it is continuing to develop and expand! We're currently in the process of starting a second WEX group, for 8–12-year-olds, as our current group is so successful, and re-starting our Phoenix group, for 13–19-year-olds, after a long Covid-19 induced closure.

We have several dedicated young birders who have gotten involved with many aspects of the work that we do at SBBOT, such as bird ringing and attending moth nights, and even helping out with younger children at holiday clubs! We decided to harness this young enthusiasm and begin a Young Birders Walk, and more recently a Young Birders Blog.

The Young Birders Walks are open to anyone aged 10+, if you consider yourself young (!), and are led by our Warden and Assistant Warden. We knew of these keen birders individually and thought this was a way of getting them to connect, meet one another, and create a wider network of birding friends. The Young Birders Blog gives the young people a chance to write about a topic they're interested in and can be found on our website here: Young Birders' Blog | Sandwich Bay Bird Observatory Trust (sbbot.org.uk).

Birdwatching in the bird hides

We have an abundance of other online resources for young people on our website, which has grown over the past couple of years to include a series of stop-animation videos, and educational nature videos from Countrywide Productions. Here, you can also find access to grants and awards for young birders. We have hosted winners from various awards before, including the Rare Bird Alert's Young Ornithologist Fellowship.
During lockdowns in 2020/21 we ran a Wildlife Art and Photography competition for young people, and subsequently created a "Wildlife in Lockdown" exhibit with over 100 art and photography entries in our bird hides, which were displayed for several months in 2021. The material in the hides continues to change and develop, aimed at engaging anyone who visits them, whatever their age!

Winner of the RBA Young Ornithologist Fellowship at Sandwich Bay

The Education Team has more recently engaged with several universities. We hosted a placement student from Christchurch Canterbury University during the summer and currently have a long-term placement student from University of Exeter. We are also planning a field course with University of Kent for next year, and hope these relationships continue to grow!
If you are interested in helping out in future events, or know of any local young people interested in nature, please get in touch at info@sbbot.org.uk.

Steffan Walton – SBBO Warden

BIRDING AT SHELLNESS

Shellness is one of the prime bird-watching sites in Kent. It has a large wader roost, with up to 10,000 birds; probably the best concentration of shingle nesting shorebirds, including Little Terns, in the county; and is also an excellent site for sea-watching. It is within the Swale National Nature Reserve, SSSI, Ramsar site and SPA.

The site is located within the Shellness Estate, which also includes the Hamlet of Shellness. Shellness Estate has always been supportive of the bird-watching community, while trying to preserve the privacy of Shellness Hamlet. The Estate also manages the small car park, shingle beach adjacent to the WW2 pill box) and the saltmarsh between the sea wall and the spit.

Over the last few years, the access road and car park to Shellness had become an increasing problem, not only for the residents of the hamlet, but also for Swale Council and Kent Police. The road often suffered from vehicles being left unattended and blocking passage, as well as becoming a prime location for anti-social behaviour, with about 30 incidents reported to the authorities each month. These continuing problems also impacted on our birdwatching community and led to local birders and KOS members becoming concerned about increased disturbance to the wader roost and ground-nesting birds.

To address these issues, Shellness Estate consulted with Swale Council, Kent Police, Natural England, Birdwise and other stakeholders to work out a solution. This resulted in CCTV cameras being installed, the existing track being restored back to a single lane with passing points and the car park being closed overnight. Access to the coast from the car park is now via the beach and the path at the rear of the Hamlet has been closed off. Rope barriers and signage have been introduced to discourage access to the shingle beach and spit. It appears that these combined actions have been successful and helped safeguard the wader roost and in summer 2021 there were seven territories of Ringed Plover. The measures have also significantly reduced anti-social incidents, which have dropped to one every couple of months.

Some birders were disappointed that access to the shore is no longer unrestricted. Public access remains as always, below the high- water line and the local council have now put up notices to make people aware that the land above is owned by Shellness Hamlet. However, the Estate has provided opportunities for sea-watchers to shelter beside their wall and for regular birders to monitor both the breeding birds and the wader roosts in the monthly WeBS counts. Residents from the hamlet are joining in some of the bird surveys and discouraging trespass onto the shingle beach.

The Estate is continuing to work with conservation agencies, including Natural England, Birdwise North Kent, the Elmley Conservation Trust and local KOS members, especially Ian Davidson and Derek Faulkner, to safeguard and enhance the wildlife interest.

Managing a private site is a challenge. Shellness Estate is keen to maintain and enhance the birds at Shellness. As at any nature reserve birders should follow the bird watchers code and respects landowners. If you would like to help with surveys of the birds on the estate, please contact Brian Watmough, brianrwat@yahoo.co.uk

Brian Watmough

Corvid 9

To counter the gloom brought on by reports of declining bird populations, here is an article about the corvids, several of which have been increasing strongly. These are the crows including the ones that aren't black or called crow. There are nine species on the Kent list, and those nine species comprise the whole British list of corvids too. (I am assuming that the British Ornithologists' Union Records Committee will place the recent Pied Crow in Category E as an escaped bird or ship-assisted arrival. Have any other escaped crows been recorded in Kent? I've no idea; as I said in the last article, on diving ducks, reviewing escapes is a job for someone else.)

Articles like this can be prepared only thanks to the efforts of very many birders to count birds, and record and report their sightings. I hope I don't make too many errors when collating data (it is all too easy to do) but if you notice something that looks wrong, please let me know through the newsletter editor. We are very grateful to everyone who submits records, and I'd also like to thank the people who have helped improve the accuracy of my analysis and interpretation of the crow data: Brian Watmough, Steffan Walton, Martin Sutherland, Rodney Smyth, Murray Orchard,

Simon Mount, Robin Mace, Mike Gould, Geoff Burton. Rodney Smyth has been especially helpful in providing additional counts and information for Magpie, Jackdaw, Rook and Carrion Crow on the Hoo peninsula.

Jay

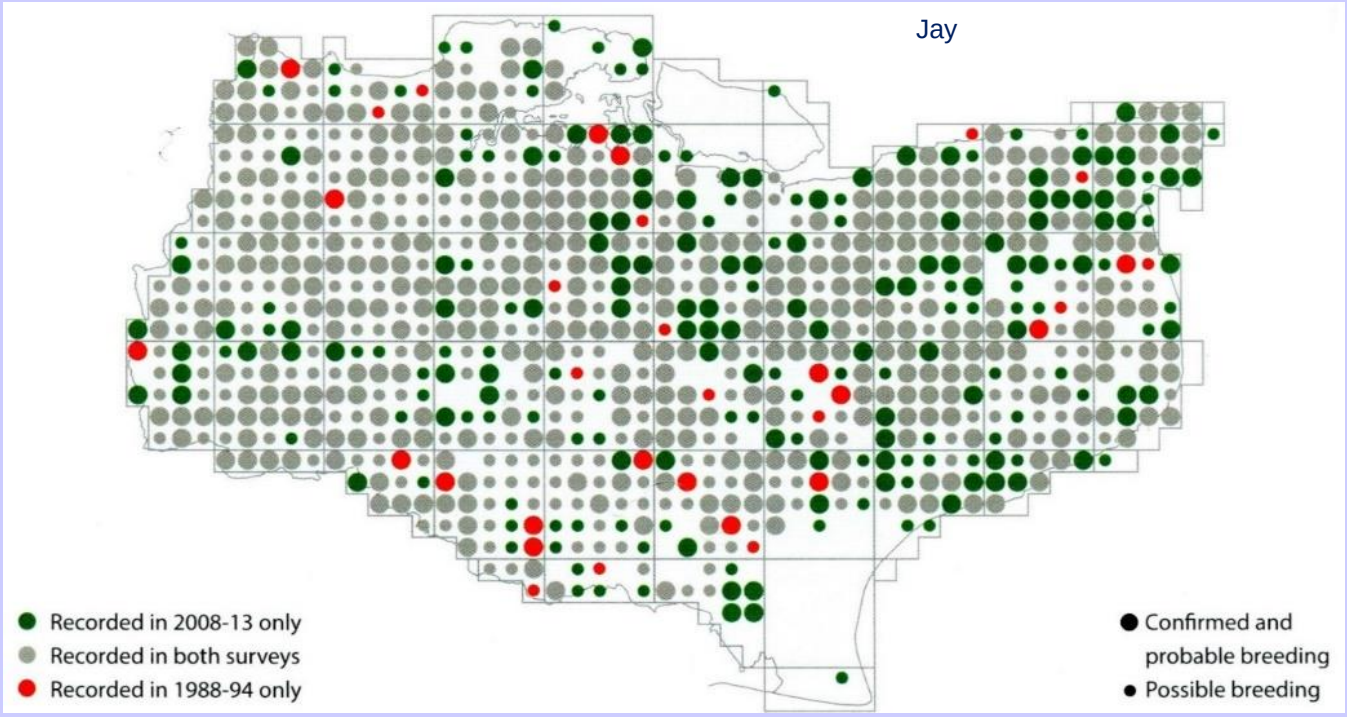
Jay (Wikicommons)

Ticehurst (A History of the Birds of Kent, 1909) said that the Jay "is resident, numerous and generally distributed throughout the wooded districts of Kent". That remains a very good summary in 2022. They are usually highly sedentary but occasionally make irruptive movements, appearing in large numbers on the coast. Some cross to or from the continent – and can you guess how many ringing recoveries there have been between Britain and the continent?

When nesting, Jays can be very silent and elusive. That is to their advantage, since they've long been a target of gamekeepers, farmers and others. To quote James Harrison (The Birds of Kent, 1953), "it is unhappily the perpetrator of many misdeeds". I suspect most KOS members now would think that those 'misdeeds' were entirely the perception of the gamekeepers, etc, rather than an indication of any underlying criminal tendency in the Jays themselves. We don't hear much about Jays being shot in KOS records today but it's not so long ago that we did. Harrison refers to organised Jay-drives in early spring, "often resulting in bags going into three figures". The KBR for 1971 mentions 70 Jays shot at Badger's Mount (near Halstead) on 3rd April that year. Are such totalitarian efforts (again I am quoting James Harrison) still made?

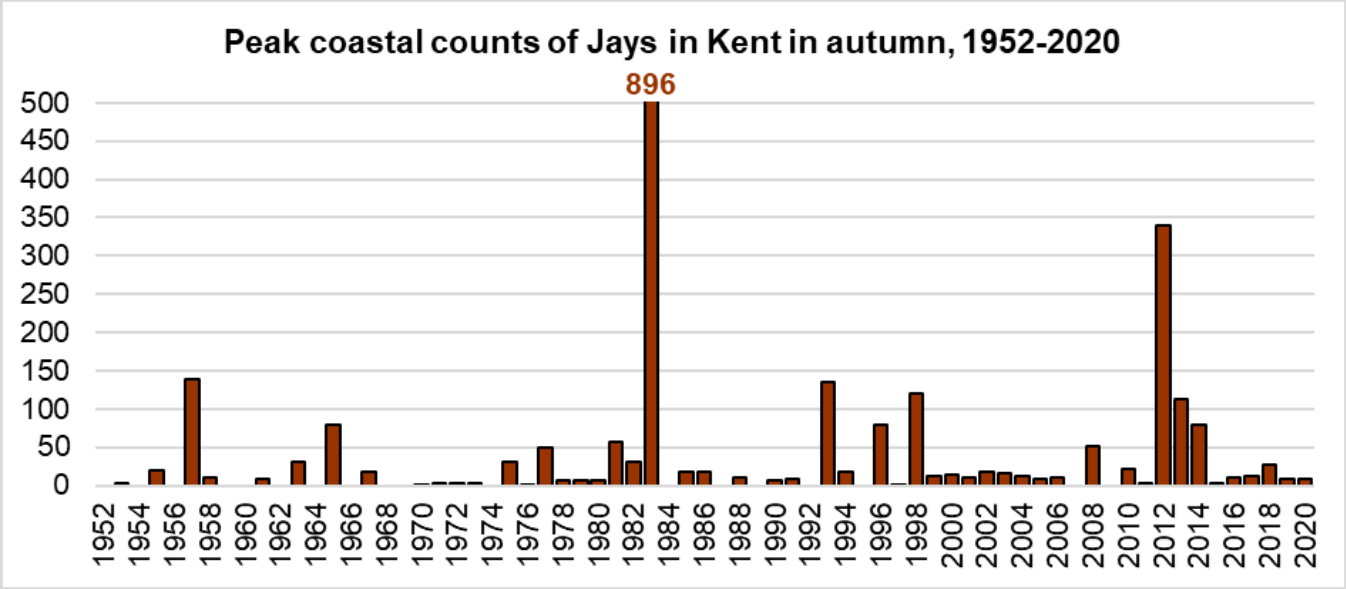
It is generally thought that, with reductions of persecution, Jay populations increased in the first half of the twentieth century. However, since systematic breeding bird surveys started in the 1960s, there have been small fluctuations in numbers but the long-term trend, nationally as in Kent, has been one of little change. A graph showing the Breeding Bird Survey (BBS) trend in Kent since 1994 will appear in the 2020 Kent Bird Report, to be published later this year.

A breeding distribution map can be seen in the Kent Breeding Bird Atlas 2008-13 (available via the KOS website) and a copy is shown here. It shows that the species occurs throughout the county with a few exceptions. The main gaps are the Isle of Sheppey and the Romney Marsh peninsula, where nesting Jays have always been absent – though the Atlas does show recent possible breeding at Warden Point and near Lydd. The Hoo peninsula also used to be Jay-free apart from at Northward Hill, but they seem now to be colonising both the Grain and Cliffe areas. There may also have been recent filling of small gaps in distribution in the eastern half of the county, though some of that 'change' could be the result of better coverage.

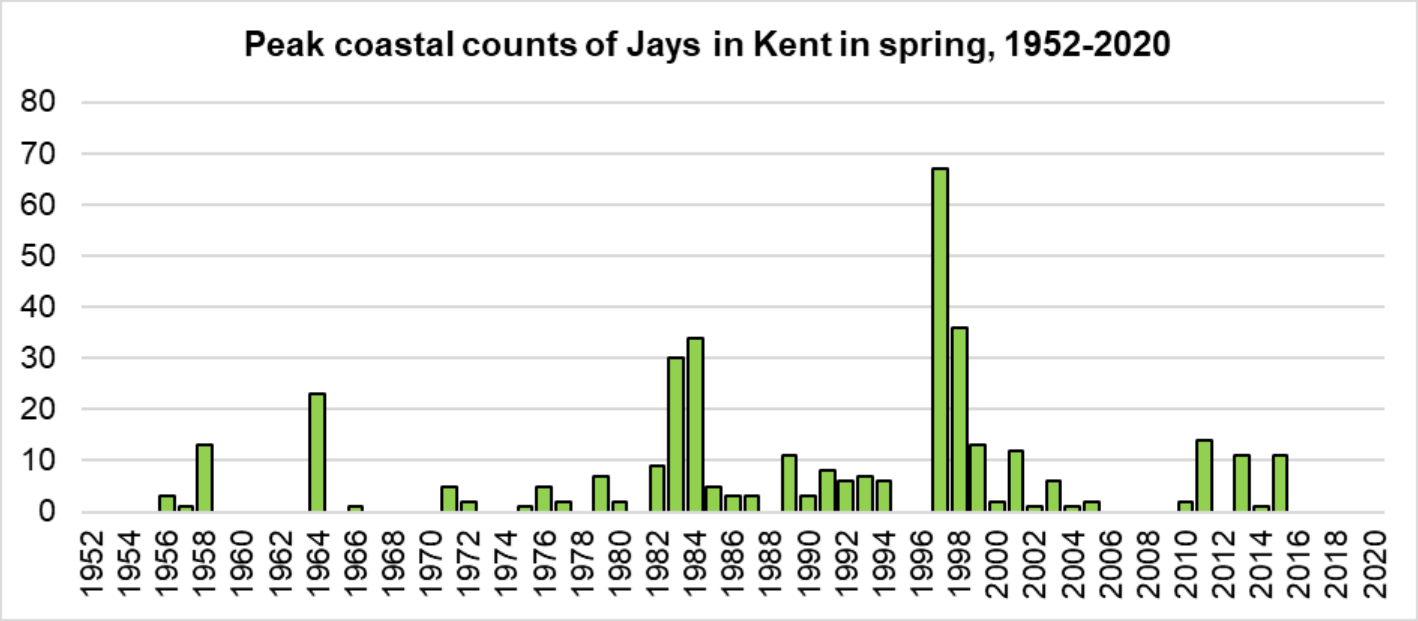


Early KBRs often listed birds that had been shot which were considered to belong to the continental race glandarius, which is greyer backed than the British rufitergum. Harrison – himself responsible for quite a few of those identifications – does point out that, in both Kent and the near continent, there are birds that are intermediate in character, and the Birds of the Western Palearctic makes clear that separation of the races is not clear-cut. While not denying that continental birds occur here, I do wonder how certain all those identifications of glandarius have been.

That brings me to the migrations or movements of Jays, occasionally noted since at least the nineteenth century. Ticehurst mentions the appearance of large numbers on the Kent coast in 1882 and 1886, for example. The pattern of autumn coastal counts from 1952 onwards is shown in the first chart below. These are simply the largest daily totals at any site. That large count is usually indicative of the overall strength of the year's movement, but not always – sometimes there's only one big count. It should also be pointed out that some totals may include some locally resident birds (but I think this always involves a minority of them).



Below, I will give more detail of the largest movements, but first here are the peak spring counts. Note that sometimes large spring counts follow large autumn ones, suggestive of a return movement to the continent of birds that arrived in the autumn, but that's not always the case.



The following table gives details of the largest movements since 1952. It includes all counts of 50 or more in autumn (shown in brown), and of 20 or more in spring (green). Most of the counts were made on the coast, but I've included notable inland ones as well. I've drawn attention to the highest counts of all by putting those of 100 or more in bold type.

Jay: largest passage movements		
Year	Season	Details
1957	Autumn	70 Broomfield, 14th Sep; **139** Broomfield & 50 S Foreland, 23rd Sep.
1964	Spring	23 Sandwich Bay, 5th May. The previous autumn had counts of up to 30.
1965	Autumn	80 Dungeness, 19th Oct.
1977	Autumn	50 S Foreland, 9th Oct.
1981	Autumn	57 Sandwich Bay, 11th Oct.
1983	Spring	30 Foreness, early May
1983	Autumn	**896** S Foreland, **168** Worth, **139** Sandwich Bay, **114** Margate, **112** West Blean Wood, **110** Dungeness, 55 Bough Beech & 52 Cliffe, 2nd Oct; **108** Foreness, 5th Oct; **157** S Foreland, 8th Oct; **274** Foreness & **199** S Foreland, 11th Oct; **197** Foreness, 13th Oct; 69 Selling, 16th Oct; **139** S Foreland, 17th Oct; **248** S Foreland & **136** Foreness, 19th Oct; 86 S Foreland, 20th Oct; 58 Foreness & 50 S Foreland, 21st Oct; **109** Foreness & 53 S Foreland, 22nd Oct; **221** Foreness & **201** S Foreland, 25th Oct; **113** S Foreland, 26th Oct; **181** Foreness, 27th Oct; 54 S Foreland, 28th Oct; **230** Foreness & **172** Sandwich Bay, 30th Oct; 95 Foreness, 9th Nov. Bird/day totals were: 2,730 at S Foreland during 1st Oct-9th Nov & 2,118 at Foreness during 1st Oct-11th Nov.
1984	Spring	26 Sandwich Bay, 13th May; 20 Foreness 20th May; 22 Foreness, 21st May, 34 Foreness, 23rd May. Some of the counts listed as Foreness may have been made at Margate; there were also unusually <30 at Margate & <45 at Foreness during January-March.
1993	Autumn	**135** S Foreland, 10th Oct.
1996	Autumn	53 Foreness, 14th Oct; 79 Foreness, 22nd Oct. Bird/day totals were: 263 at Bockhill & 212 at S Foreland during 6th-30th October.
1997	Spring	62 S Foreland, 29th Apr; 58 Foreness, 51 S Foreland & 21 Dungeness, 30th Apr; 58 S Foreland & 21 Dungeness, 1st May; 44 S Foreland, 2nd May; 67 S Foreland, 24 Bockhill, 22 Foreness & 3rd May; 22 Foreness, 4th May; 21 Aycliffe, 5th May;

		28 Dungeness, 14th May; 22 Dungeness, 16th May; 33 Dungeness, 19th May; 30 Bockhill, 24th May; 22 Bockhill, 25th May; 50 Foreness & 38 Dungeness, 26th May. Bird/day totals were: 305 at S Foreland during 24th Apr-3rd May, 271 at Dungeness during 11th Apr-26th May, 170 at Foreness during 18th Apr-29th May & 116 at Bockhill during 27th Apr-31st May.
1998	Spring	20 S Foreland, 24th Apr; 36 Foreness, 27th April.
2008	Autumn	51 Sandwich Bay, 25th Sep.
2012	Autumn	51 Minnis Bay, 28th Sep; **172** Bockhill & **125** S Foreland, 26th Sep; 71 Margate, 30th Sep; 73 Allhallows, 2nd Oct; 67 Sandwich Bay, 3rd Oct; 97 Sandwich Bay, 63 Bockhill, 54 Minnis Bay, & 51 Abbotscliffe, 4th Oct; **252** Sandwich Bay, 62 Bockhill & 57 Allhallows, 6th Oct; **340** Reculver & **113** Pegwell Bay, 7th Oct; 89 Bockhill, 9th Oct; 86 Bockhill, 13th Oct; 94 Pegwell Bay & 78 Bockhill, 14th Oct; 51 Pegwell Bay, 15th Oct; 66 North Foreland 20th Oct; 69 Sandwich Bay, 24th Oct.
2014	Autumn	80 Swalecliffe, 22nd Sep.

As mentioned earlier, there can be a spring movement following one in autumn, but the relative size of these is unpredictable. Thus, the numbers in spring 1984 were moderate despite the exceptional size of the autumn 1983 movements, while the largest spring counts came in 1997 following relatively small arrivals in autumn 1996.

British Jays are largely sedentary but those in the northern parts of the continental range migrate southwards in some years. The eruptive movements seem driven largely by failure of the acorn crop. The abundance of acorns is highly variable in Britain as well as on the continent, so birds here too will roam in search of food.

It's sometimes assumed that the big autumn movements in Britain are all of continental immigrants. For example, the 1983 KBR described that year's event as an "irruption of unprecedented size from the continent". But there is surprisingly little evidence for that. Birds are seen coming in off the sea at times (e.g. 113 at Dungeness during 18th-20th October 1965), but many of the largest counts have involved flocks moving along the coast. Might it not be that most of those big movements are of British birds searching for fresh woods and pastures new, coming up against the coast and following it, reluctant to make any crossing. That was the conclusion of the paper summarising the 1983 movements (British Birds 78: 611-637): "although some Continental birds were certainly involved, their numbers were greatly swelled by British birds moving … in search of food". A further point to make is that some birds seen arriving off the sea could be birds that have flown a short distance out but returned. For example, what were the 16 Jays seen arriving off the sea at Sandwich Bay on 13th May 1984 doing: should they not have been going the other way?

The answer to the question in the first paragraph about Jays is 'one'. The only ringing recovery between Britain and the continent, in either direction, was of a bird ringed at Dungeness on 12th October 1955 (which was the peak date for coastal records in Kent that year) and found dead in the Netherlands on 2nd June 1956. The paucity of recoveries can be regarded as more evidence that numbers of continental birds arriving here are small although, to be fair, the numbers ringed here and on the continent are not huge so there is a low chance of recoveries. That one recovery is interesting, as it provides support for the notion that some birds arriving from the continent in the autumn return there in the spring.

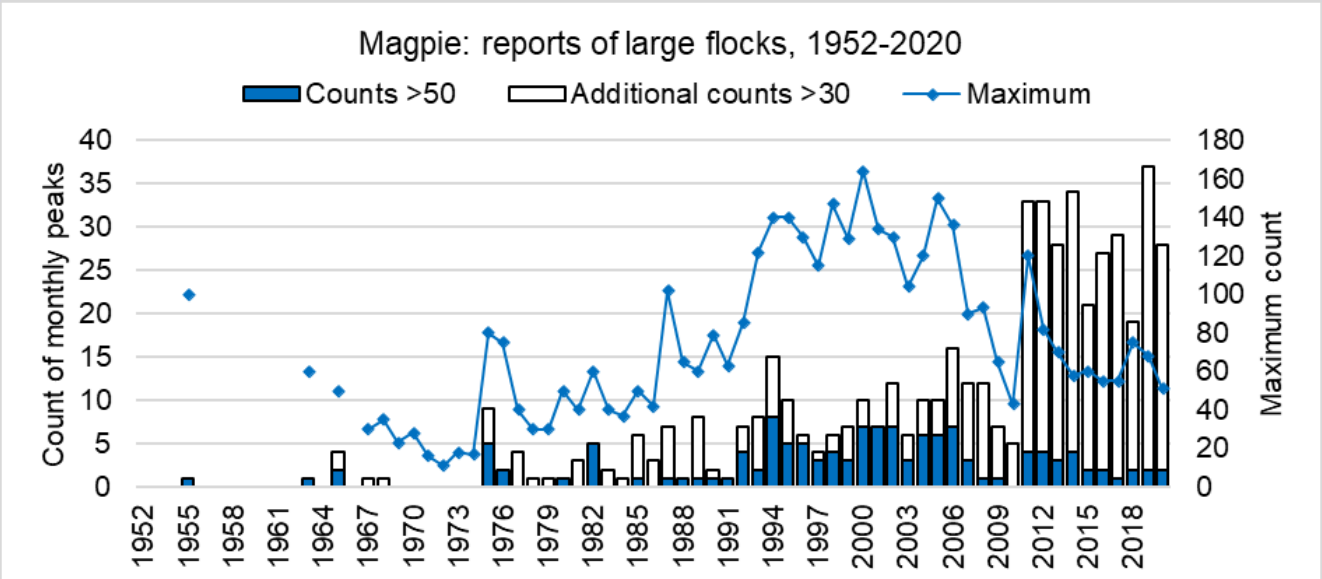
Magpie

Magpie (Wikicommons)

Ticehurst (A History of the Birds of Kent, 1909) thought the Magpie must once have been an abundant bird in Kent but, following the growth of game preserving, “its numbers are sadly reduced and in some districts it is practically extinct”. It was, though, still fairly numerous in the marshes of north Kent, the lower Stour and Romney Marsh. Harrison (The Birds of Kent, 1953) describes the species as “quite abundant and … its distribution is pretty even”. He does not explicitly claim that there had been an increase since 1909 but “it may now be said to be far too numerous”.

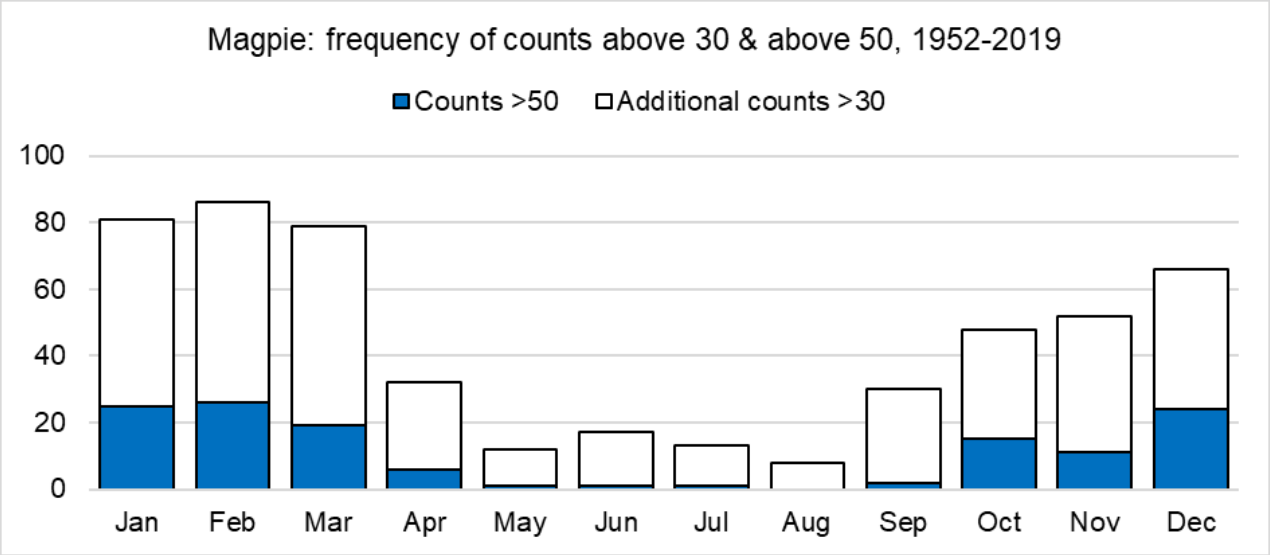
Birders’ fondness for finding and seeing rarities means that our ability to track the changing status of commoner species can be less than for scarcer ones. It is unfortunately true that KOS records for those that are “far too numerous” are especially poor and difficult to interpret. For Magpie, and for the common black corvids, the data are strongly influenced by records submitted for a handful of sites by a handful of individuals, and apparent changes in abundance may be more a reflection of changing recording emphasis than actual trends. Despite that, I will show what I have managed to extract from KOS data; there may well be underlying trends that readers will detect.

For Magpie, I noted all counts of 30 or more reported in Kent Bird Reports from 1952 to 2020. The charts below show these, year by year, and month but month over the whole period. The bars on the first chart indicate the numbers of counts of 50 or more (blue) and additional counts of 30-49 (white) while the blue line traces the size of the highest count in each year. The second chart shows simply the numbers of counts in each category.



A couple of comments on the first chart. First, the paucity of data in the 1950s and 1960s is probably partly a reflection of the fact that there were then few observers, and also of the very brief nature of KBR entries. Second, I am not sure why the number of counts of 30-49 suddenly increase in 2011. I first thought it might be when tabular data was introduced to KBRs but that was in 2004. Now I think it is connected with the introduction of the KOS online recording system in the second half of 2010, though quite why it led to more counts appearing in the KBR I am not sure.

Interpretation of the second chart is fairly straightforward, I think. Magpies are in pairs or family parties in summer but tend to form flocks in the winter, so that is when the large counts are made. Many of the largest counts have been of birds flying into roosts (though sometimes the report doesn't say what the circumstances were). For the record, the table below lists annual peaks that have been above 100.

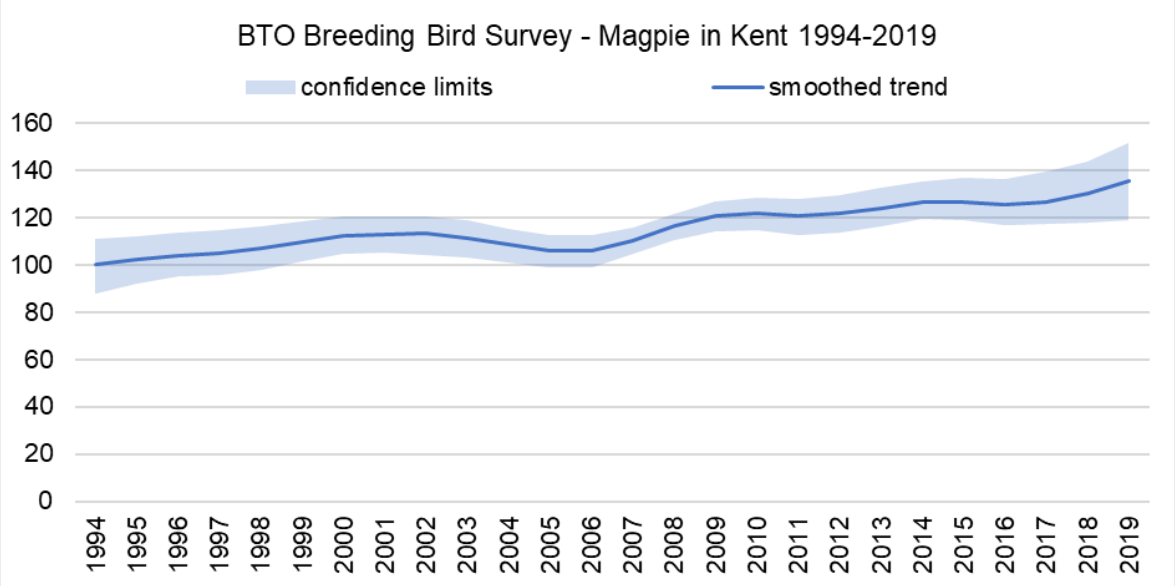


Magpie: peak annual counts of over 100			
1948	Jan	Little Murston	137
1974	Dec	Sandwich Bay	102
1993	Dec	Whitstable Downs	122
1994	Dec	Whitstable	140
1995	Feb	Great Chattenden Wood	140
1996	Dec	Duncan Downs, Whitstable	130
1997	Nov	Bell Wood, St Mary Hoo	115
1998	Jan	Duncan Downs, Whitstable	147
1999	Dec	Duncan Downs, Whitstable	129
2000	Dec	Duncan Downs, Whitstable	164
2001	Dec	Duncan Downs, Whitstable	134
2002	Jan	Cliffe	130
2003	Oct	Bell Wood, St Mary Hoo	104
2004	Mar	Bell Wood, St Mary Hoo	120
2005	Dec	Bell Wood, St Mary Hoo	150
2006	Jan	Bell Wood, St Mary Hoo	136
2011	Jan	Minster Marshes, Thanet	120

Most of these highest counts have been at winter roosts on the periphery of the north Kent marshes, and that is true of most annual peaks, though a few have come from elsewhere such as the lower Stour valley or the hinterland of the chalk cliffs in east Kent. The general increase in large counts and of maximum counts from around 1970 to 2000 may well mirror the increasing population of Magpies in Kent. The decline since then, in maxima and in counts of 50 or more (but not those of 30-49), I think is partly due to roosts shifting to new unvisited locations but may also be influenced by existing roosts no longer being counted regularly (or the counts not reaching the KOS). But might there also be some change in behaviour or even, possibly, declines?

Some roosts have definitely become less well used by Magpies. Chattenden Woods held plenty in the 1990s but is thought not to anymore. Bell Wood, not far from Chattenden, was popular in the early 2000s but no longer; there is more on this in the box. Further east, Duncan Downs was the location of the highest Kent count (164 on 29th December 2000); it is no longer counted regularly but numbers are thought to be lower.

There is not much sign of decline in the results of the Breeding Bird Survey and its predecessor the Common Birds Census. In England, the CBC/BBS found the Magpie population had more than doubled (105% increase) between 1967 and 2018. In the BBS era since 1994, in both England and the south-east region, the trend has been nearly level, but in Kent, as the next chart shows, there has been continuing increase of over 30%. I am not bothering to show the Kent breeding distribution map, as the species is all but ubiquitous, found in 98.8% of Kent tetrads (2x2km squares) in the Kent Breeding Bird Atlas 2008-13.
Migration, or at least movement, to and from the continent was first detected early in the twentieth century. The largest such movements reported by Harrison were 20 arriving (with Jays) from the NNE to Thanet on 28th September 1910 and 15 more on 14th October of the same year. Taylor, Davenport & Flegg (Birds of Kent, 1981) knew of little more recent evidence, although there were a few examples including ten that flew out to sea at Dungeness on 12th April



1975. There have been more, and larger, examples since then. The largest are listed in the following table. I have included any record that was thought by the observers to be of passage birds, whether they were arriving or departing over the sea, or following the coast. Movements have tended, unusually, to be larger in spring than in autumn, so I have selected any total of 20 or more in spring (shown in green) and 10 or more in autumn (brown).

Magpie: largest counts of migrants			
1982	20th Apr	North Foreland	21 N
1982	1st Oct	North Foreland	13 S
2006	2nd Apr	Foreness	70 W
2006	2nd Apr	Bockhill	60 W
2007	2nd Apr	Foreness	29 S
2007	18th Oct	Capel-le-Ferne	10 W
2011	16th Apr	Bockhill	20 N
2012	14th Oct	Bockhill	37 NW
2016	31st Mar	Dungeness	20 NW
2017	15th Oct	Reculver	21 W
2018	14th Apr	North Foreland	40 N
2019	24th Mar	Bockhill	22 NE

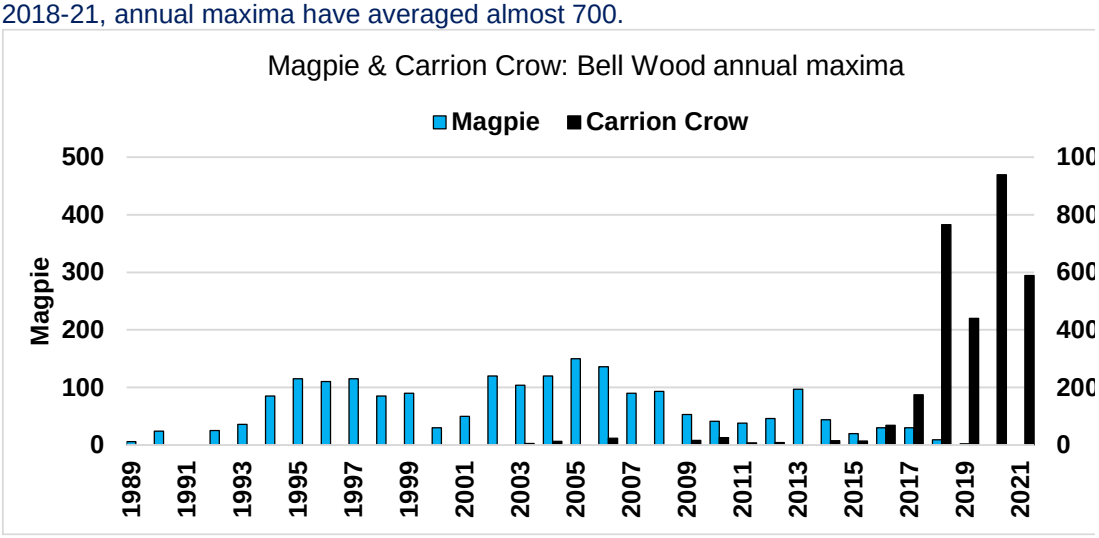
2020	3rd Apr	North Foreland	40 N
2020	10th Apr	North Foreland	50 N

Although birds are seen to fly out to sea, or come in from some way out, we cannot be certain that they have made a complete crossing. It is possible they flew out but then returned. One of my correspondents was of the opinion that Magpies are terrified of water. The BTO Migration Atlas discusses the possibility that Magpies do make sea crossings but there are, so far, no cross-channel recoveries. British Magpies are extremely sedentary. Of recoveries of Kent-ringed birds, most have been in Kent, a few in Essex, and just one further away in south Norfolk, some 130 km from its ringing location at Sandwich Bay. Continental Magpies are less extremely sedentary, however, and perhaps they do cross to Britain occasionally. Will we get a continental ring recovery eventually or will Magpie migration remain a secret never to be told?

Magpies and Carrion Crows at Bell Wood

Bell Wood has the best series of corvid counts in Kent, thanks to the efforts of Rodney Smyth. I am very grateful to him for supplying additional count data for this article and for providing more background information.

The chart below shows the highest count each year for Magpie and for Carrion Crow. Note that the scales differ between the two species. Most counts were of roosts, though a few of the smaller ones were not. No roosts of either species were noticed during 1980-88 but then Magpies started using the wood, with totals exceeding 100 in eight of the years between 1995 and 2006. Numbers then declined, with no more than nine noted from 2018 onwards. At around that time, there was a rapid build-up of the Carrion Crow roost. None had been noticed before 2003 and there were no more than 26 until 2016, when there were 68. During 2018-21, annual maxima have averaged almost 700.



It's interesting to speculate on why the shift from Magpies to Carrion Crows occurred. There are several possible reasons, and again I'm grateful to Rodney Smyth for his ideas on these.

- The Carrion Crows may have deterred use by Magpies. This is Rodney's favoured answer, and it does fit the pattern of counts better than other ideas. Magpies were already declining before the Crows reached big totals, but it is possible that some of the latter were missed before 2016.
- Habitat change within the wood could have been involved. The wood is mainly ash with understorey of hazel and other species. It hasn't been managed or changed much since 1980. Gradual, scarcely noticeable changes, such as ash becoming taller and the understorey becoming thinner, could have favoured Crows over Magpies.
- Adjoining land to Bell Wood was cleared of orchards from about 2001 onwards, eventually all becoming horse paddocks and other open land until 2016, when it was replanted with intensive orchards. Did the availability of grassland attract the Magpies? The timing of these changes doesn't align with the bird trends, though, and this seems a less likely explanation than the others.

Plenty of aspects remain unclear. For example, the highest count of Carrion Crows at Bell Wood (939 in 2020) is similar to the highest at Chattenden Woods (1003 in 2001), but – assuming they were the same population – why the time lag between those years? Chattenden has been less well counted but we do not think big numbers there were completely missed in the intervening period. Another unanswered question is: where are the Magpies roosting now? Some other sites have been used sporadically but no settled roost location is known. More information on other corvid roosts across the county would be worth collecting. They are, after all, a major element of our avifauna these days.

Nutcracker

Nutcracker (wikicommons)

Forty-four Nutcrackers are recorded acceptably for Kent: five up to 1911, three during 1958-1967, 32 in 1968-69 and four since then.

Ticehurst (A History of the Birds of Kent, 1909) listed seven records involving eight birds, but some of them – in common with many early records – are poorly documented. Three were supported by specimens, and four were sight records. Latham examined the first specimen, obtained some time prior to 1781 at an unrecorded location in Kent. The next was obtained at Darenth prior to 1816, and another was present and then shot in Strode Park, near Herne Bay on 15th-17th November 1885. The sight records, which were not listed as 'fully authenticated' by Taylor, Davenport & Flegg (Birds of Kent, 1981), included one near Margate on an unrecorded date in 1841, one at Tovil in November 1904, and two records from Riverhill, Sevenoaks: one bird in August one year and two in the following August, but with no record of which years were involved. One killed at Edenbridge in December 1907 was proved to have escaped from a collection at nearby Godstone; this is not included in the county total, and neither is a 'Hastings Rarity' at Benenden in January 1905.

In 1911, a small irruption reached Britain, including two in Kent, both at Broome Park, near Canterbury, in early October and on 18th November. The first was found dying, probably having been shot, and the second was shot. There was then a long gap until one was seen at Ashley, near Dover, on 25th December 1958. One was trapped and ringed at Northfleet on 26th August 1963 (omitted in error from Birds of Kent, 1981) and another seen at Dungeness on 5th September 1967. Then came the huge invasion of 1968.

The 1968 irruption was by far the largest recorded in Britain, totalling over 300 birds (see John Hollyer's paper in British Birds (1970) 63: 353-373). There were about 32 birds in Kent, all singles apart from four together at Dover on 24th August. Records extended from the first at Denton, near Canterbury, on 7th August through to stragglers during the summer and autumn of 1969, with the bulk of records between late August and the end of September 1968. Three were seen only in 1969. Although most were seen on single dates, several made protracted stays, including one at Maidstone from November 1968 to March 1969 and another at Bearsted from November 1968 until autumn 1969. The total of 32 makes assumptions about which birds were the same or different; there are slight discrepancies between the KBR and British Birds accounts, but I follow the latter here.

There have been three records since 1969:

1972	Two in Bedgebury Forest on 27th December
1985	One at Northward Hill on 23rd October
1998	One at Kingsdown on 6th-7th September

So far as is known, all Nutcrackers reaching Kent have been of the Siberian slender-billed race macrorhynchus. Harrison listed several individuals under the heading of the thick-billed race caryocatactes, but the only confirmed example was the Hastings Rarity.

Chough

Chough (wikicommons)

In discussing the Chough in Kent, it is obligatory to mention the reference in King Lear to the cliffs near Dover, where “crows and choughs … wing the midway air”, commemorated in the naming of Shakespeare Cliff, just to the west of the town. The breeding colony at Dover dwindled to extinction around 1700 but the species was re-established around 1776 in the same area after the escape of a pair of captive birds that had been taken from Cornwall. The small colony derived from this accidental re-introduction persisted until about 1850.

Two escaped Choughs were in Knole Park, Sevenoaks, during May-August 1952, probably originating from a free-winged colony at Nutley, Sussex (Harrison, 1953, The Birds of Kent).

As most readers will know, Kent Wildlife Trust is currently embarking on a re-introduction scheme for the Chough, centred on Dover Castle. Birds from a captive-breeding programme at Wildwood Trust are being used and the success of the scheme will depend on the continuing programme of restoration and management of chalk grassland in and around Dover. There are differing attitudes among birders to schemes like this, from the view that it is restoring an iconic species sadly lost to the area (it is assumed because of persecution and habitat change), through to the feeling that resources might better be put to conserving the many threatened species that we have managed to retain. Of course, if the re-introduction does succeed, birders will be very keen to see them and, no doubt, the promoters of the scheme will be … utterly delighted.

Jackdaw

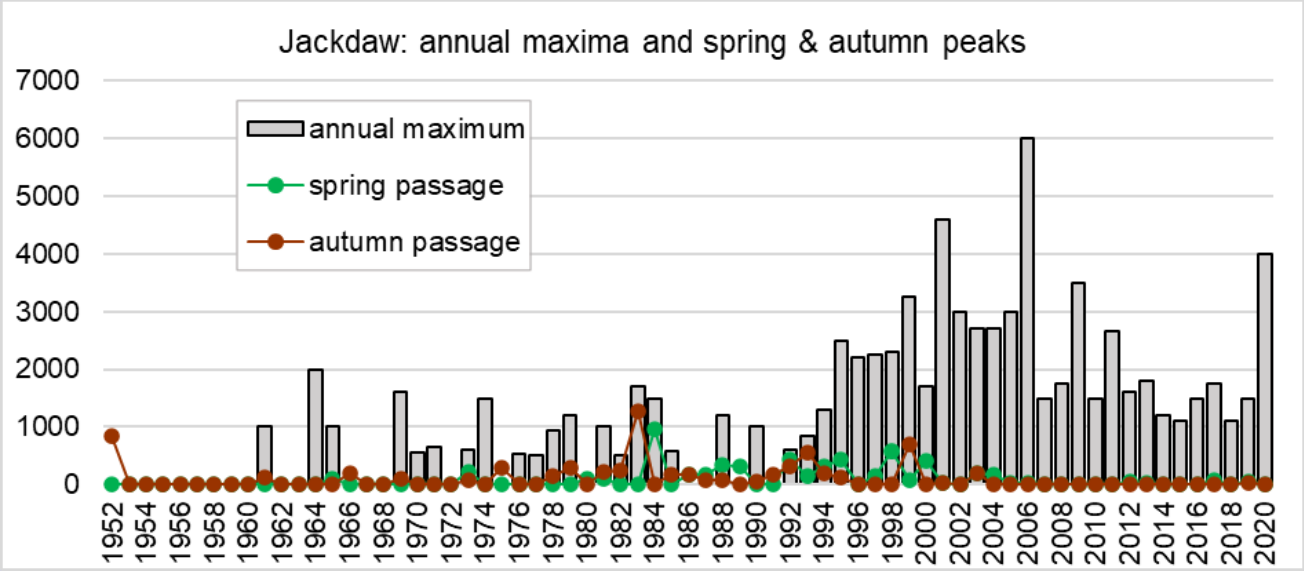
Jackdaw (wikicommons)

The long-term trend for Jackdaws in England has been one of increase. The population was fairly stable in the 1970s but since then it has been almost continuously steeply rising. A trend for Kent is available from when the BBS started, and in that period the county's rate of increase has been higher than for the country as a whole: numbers appear to have almost trebled since 1994 (see the trend chart in the 2019 Kent Bird Report).

These fifty or more years of increase built on what was already a widespread and common species. Both Ticehurst (A History of the Birds of Kent, 1909) and Harrison (The Birds of Kent, 1953) say that it was both abundant and increasing then. What they would make of its current numbers, I don't know. Even Ticehurst, generally less anti-corvid than Harrison, thought that Jackdaws, because of their numbers, must be responsible for more egg-robbery than Magpies. Harrison considered that "incalculable harm is wrought" by their "thieving propensities".

KOS data (see chart below) support the recent continuing increase, though – as noted earlier for Magpie – the unsystematic nature of the records, influenced by observer numbers and behaviour, make it difficult to regard the results as wholly reliable. The chart also shows the largest day-count for passage birds each year; these are discussed later on. Large counts tended to become more regular and the maxima higher until about 2000 but then appear, on average, to have fallen.

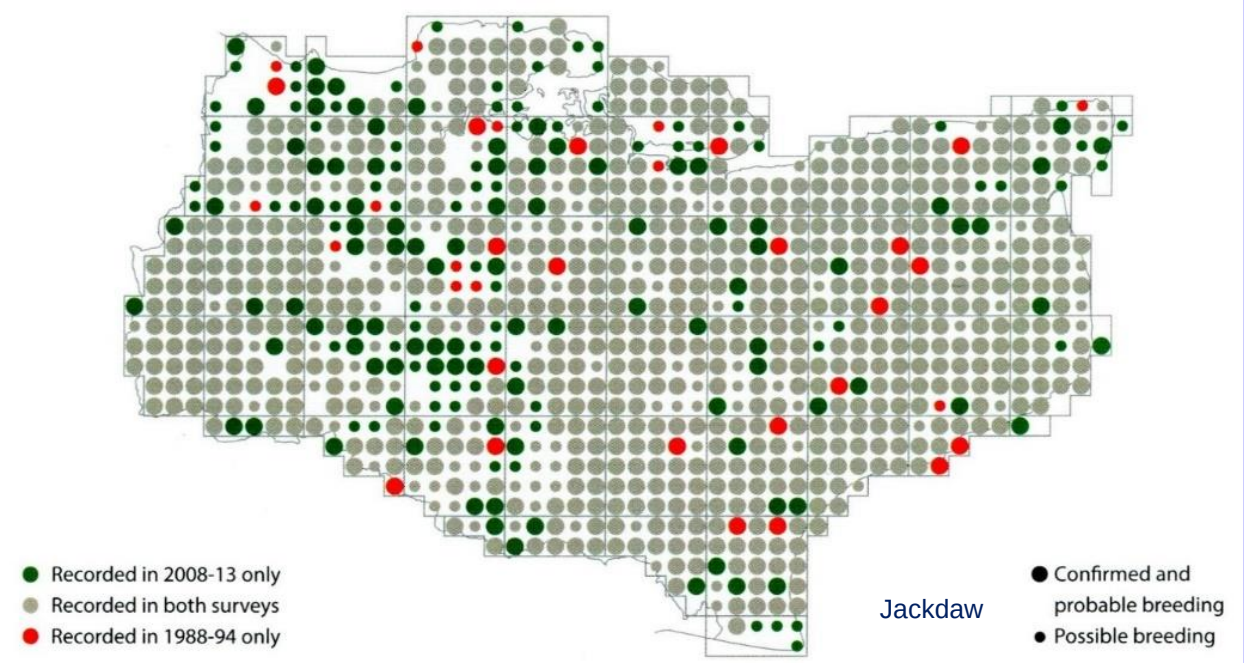
The records from 1980 onwards are dominated by Rodney Smyth's counts on the Hoo peninsula. Jackdaws undoubtedly are numerous there, and it is interesting that numbers appear to have fallen in recent years; that could be related to the closure of landfill sites at St Mary Hoo and across the Thames at Mucking. However, the wider picture is unclear, and I don't think we can rely on the chart as support for a general decline. Jackdaws (and Rooks) travel widely in search of food and the St Mary Hoo data may well reflect a local redistribution. Even within a single season, the numbers of both species using that area fluctuate considerably, as birds select different feeding sites.



The table below lists all counts of 3,000 or more mentioned in Kent Bird Reports or in additional data collected for this article. Quite a few of the large counts come from roosts (or pre-roost gatherings) but there can also be concentrations of feeding birds in fields and at rubbish tips. There was also a combined Rook and Jackdaw roost at Waldershare in 1962 of about 10,000, but without estimates of proportions. The concentration of these counts and many others of 2,000 or more at Northward Hill and St Mary Hoo is due, in large part, to the efforts of one or two observers. It is likely that some other substantial roosts exist which are seldom, if at all, counted.

Jackdaw: counts of 3000 or more			
1999	Jan	St Mary Hoo	3250
2001	Dec	St Mary Hoo	4600
2002	Jan	Northward Hill	3000
2005	Dec	Headcorn	3000
2006	Aug	High Halstow	6000
2009	Feb	High Halstow	3500
2020	Jan	Southborough	4000
2020	Nov	Southborough	3000

Jackdaws nest in a wide variety of natural and artificial sites and in the Kent Breeding Bird Atlas 2008-13 were found in over 90% of Kent tetrads (2x2km squares). The atlas map, shown below, suggests that some spread, or filling of gaps, had occurred since the previous atlas in west Kent, but some of that may have been the result of better coverage.



Jackdaw movements are, as for other corvids, a bit of a mystery. Ticehurst thought that a lot of inland-nesting birds moved to coastal areas in winter, and – rather confusingly – that there was passage to and from the continent in both directions in autumn and spring. Ringing evidence and observations suggest that there is some movement within Britain, towards milder areas in winter, and also variable amounts of immigration from the continent.

There are a few foreign ringing recoveries for Jackdaw involving Kent. Three ringed in each of the Netherlands and Belgium (some as nestlings) have been found in Kent, and one went from Kent to the Netherlands. Elsewhere in Britain there have been recoveries to/from Denmark, Sweden and Norway. The earliest observation in Kent of cross-channel passage was by Norman Ticehurst himself, seeing a mixed flock of Rooks and Jackdaws arriving from the south-east at Dungeness on 20th October 1900.

The following table lists coastal passage movements involving 400 or more birds recorded in Kent. Those in spring are shown in green, those in autumn in brown. Many of these and similar smaller movements are of coasting birds but a few, identified by the indicated direction of flight or “in” (meaning coming in off the sea), appeared to be birds crossing to/from the continent.

Jackdaw: passage movements of 400 or more				
1952	26th Oct	Dymchurch	835	S
1983	22nd Oct	Foreness	841	S
1983	30th Oct	Foreness	516	S
1983	30th Oct	St Margaret’s	1282	in
1984	22nd Mar	Foreness	611	SE
1984	27th Mar	Foreness	954	SE
1992	5th Apr	Foreness	434	E
1993	29th Oct	Reculver	560	W
1994	11th Mar	Foreness	428	NE
1998	20th Mar	Foreness	580	W
1999	16th Oct	Bockhill	700	in
2000	11th Mar	North Foreland	411	NE

A couple of points in the table are worth drawing attention to. First, almost half of the records relate to the winter of 1983/84, suggesting that it was a year in which continental immigration was particularly heavy. That year was also the one with the heaviest Jay movements seen in Kent, as mentioned earlier in this article. Some of those Jays may not have been immigrants, but rather coasting British birds, but it does seem possible that more of these Jackdaws are immigrants. The second point is to make is that there have been no big counts since 2000. The last three-figure count reported in KBRs was 170 E at Foreness on 17th March 2004; since then no more than 55, spring or autumn. It is possible larger counts have been made but not reported in KBRs, but perhaps it hints at reduced continental

immigration, which could be another consequence of milder European winters. Could this be another reason for reduced winter Jackdaw counts in recent years?

Over the years, there have been quite a few birds claimed as belonging to the northern and eastern European races monedula and soemmerringii, which – especially the latter – have pale collars. They have mostly been at passage times of year, or in winter. Presumably some of these, particularly monedula, do occur here but pale-ish collars can be found on British bred birds and certainty is seldom possible.

Rook

Rook (wikicommons)

The Rook is hardly a scarce bird these days but not so long ago it was much more numerous. It was the subject of one of the first co-ordinated bird censuses, in 1948-49, when about 40,000 nests were counted in Kent, contrasting with about 9,000 nests in 1996. More on that later, but the abundance of Rooks in the early-mid twentieth century led to worries about their effect of agricultural production and game interests. Ticehurst (A History of the Birds of Kent, 1909) said that “if Rooks are allowed to increase beyond bounds, they develop several objectionable habits”, such as crop damage and egg-robbing. Harrison (The Birds of Kent, 1953), never a great fan of corvids as you may have noticed, thought it “something of a menace to agricultural effort” and “a wary and systematic egg-thief”. However, even Harrison hinted that the species might have some ‘beneficial’ behaviour, and Ticehurst said that “from an agricultural point of view the Rook is one of the most useful of birds”.

Today, we hear less about egg robbing by Rooks than by other corvids, and crop damage seems less complained about too. This may be partly because the beneficial activities such as eating leatherjackets (cranefly larvae) are better understood, but perhaps it also is because the Rook population is far less than it was, and that they are less prone to resort to the perceived objectionable habits. Retribution is still practised, though. In 2007, 47 nests on the Allhallows Marshes were lost through tree-felling to “protect wildfowl”.

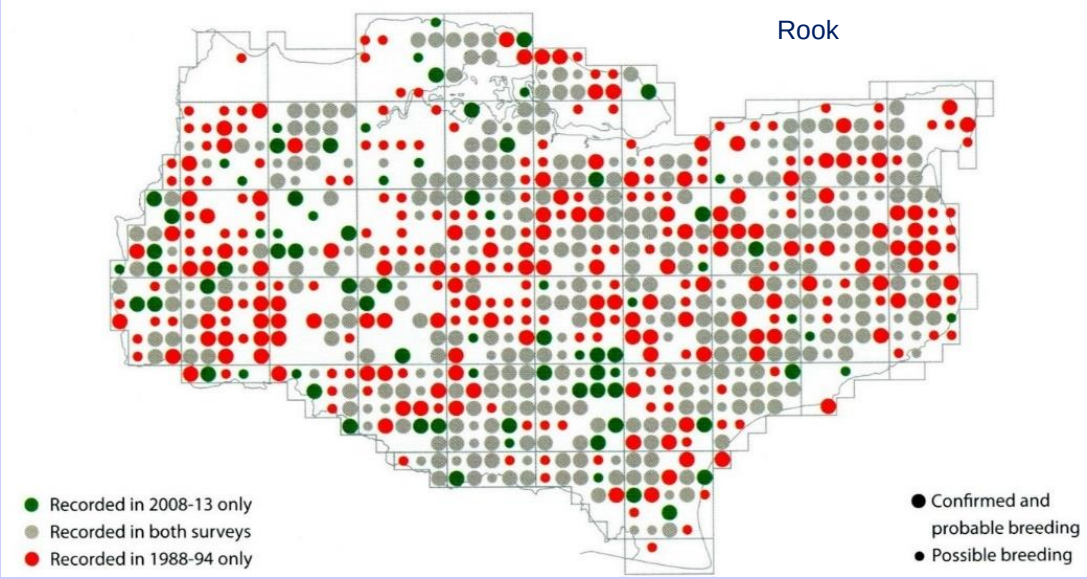
The 1948-49 survey found 39,696 nests in 509 colonies. There have been two further complete rookery surveys. That in 1975 found 12,826 nests in 536 colonies while in 1996 there were 8,929 nests in 355 colonies. One interesting statistic to emerge from those counts is that there were on average 78 nests per rookery in 1948-49 but only 24 in 1975 and 25 in 1996.

Some sample survey work was carried out in 1980 and some nest counts have been made in other years, though usually very limited in extent. However, over the past ten years or so, many colonies in east and south Kent have been counted by John Websper. I hope that, in due course, John will present all his data, showing if any trends are apparent, to follow up his preliminary account in Kent Bird Report 2015 p.184. Colony size can vary surprisingly from year to year. Here are some examples of the minimum and maximum counts for a few colonies during seven years (2013-2018): Hacklinge 15-22; Monkton 29-81; Sarre 12-22; Stodmarsh 45-55.

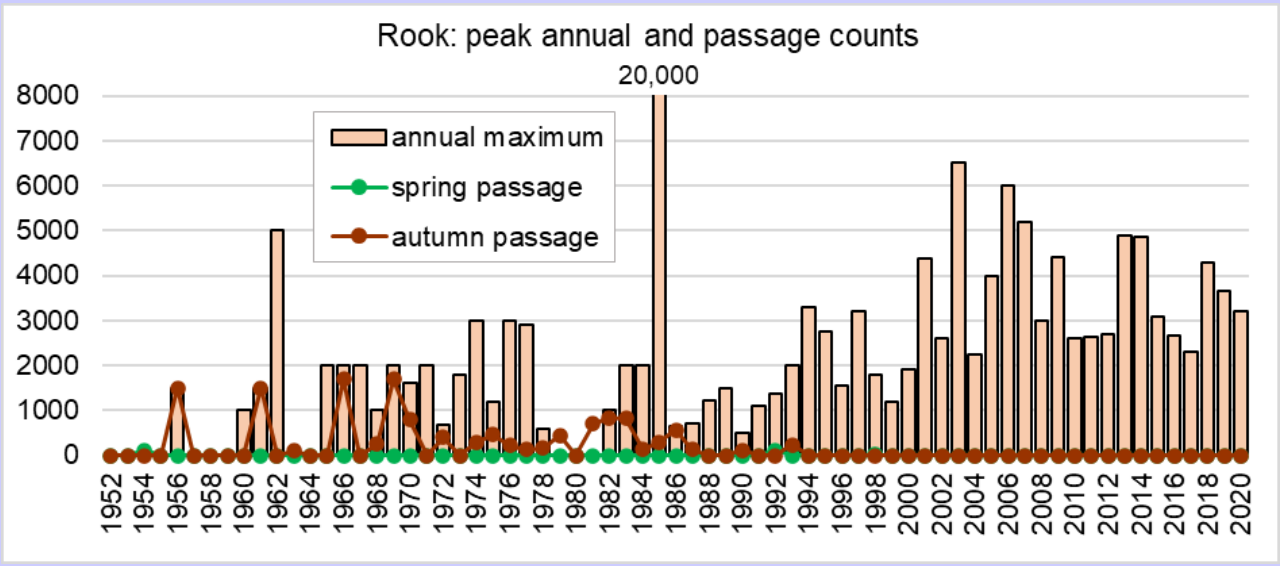
The largest rookery in Kent for many years was that at Elbridge, close to Stodmarsh, which had 650 nests in 1949, though ‘only’ 296 in 1975 and 302 in 1980. That has declined greatly more recently and the largest is now at

Northward Hill. That held around 200 nests in 1980 but reached 370 in 2006 and 400 by 2012. In 2017, 412 nests were counted in just half of the wood, giving an estimated total of 800. I'm not aware of a count being attempted since.

The Kent Breeding Bird Atlas 2008-13 recorded a substantial range contraction since 1988-94. The red dots in the map reproduced below are where breeding activity was noted in the first of those surveys but not in the second, implying a reduction of 35%. The Atlas suggested that this was an over-statement of reality, because surveyors may have been more reluctant to claim possible breeding in the second survey; if only probable and confirmed breeding were considered, the reduction was 14%. That aligns more closely with the decline recorded by the Breeding Bird Survey (see chart to be published in the 2020 Kent Bird Report). Nevertheless, the map does show a marked 'hollowing-out' of the distribution and, in particular, large patches of west Kent are now without a single rookery.



Outside the breeding season (and sometimes even during it) huge counts of Rooks can be made, of birds at colonies, feeding in fields and at winter roosts. The chart below tracks the largest annual counts reported to KOS over 69 years. As for other corvids, I think this is more a measure of observers' keenness to stand and count Rooks than of a real trend (or lack of it!).



There have been five counts – or estimates – of 5,000 or more. The largest was 20,000 at Bishopsbourne on 12th January 1985. That was included without comment in the Kent Bird Report, and I have not been able to check the record card, but it is a remarkable total. It was presumably a count of birds heading for the traditional roost at Charlton Wood; that used to hold Jackdaws as well as Rooks, but the Kent Bird Report does not mention them for that date. (It would be interesting to know whether that roost still exists.) The other high counts were at Waldershare Park in January 1962 where there was a mixed roost of 10,000 Rooks and Jackdaws (and the majority were likely to have been Rooks), 6,500 at St Mary Hoo in December 2003, 6,000 at High Halstow in August 2006 and 5,200 at High Halstow in October 2007. Beyond the period covered by this review, there has also been a roost count of 11,000 mixed Rooks and Jackdaws (but thought to be mainly Rooks) at Northward Hill on 27th October 2021. As for Jackdaw, counts within an area can vary greatly even within one season, presumably as birds change their feeding and perhaps also roost locations.

The chart above also summarises the highest counts each year of birds thought to have been on passage, in spring and autumn. This typically involves relatively small numbers and perhaps they don't always get mentioned in KBRs, but it may well be significant that there have been no reports of movements since 1993. Certainly during 1952-1993, there is a clear reduction in the size of the peak counts. The following table gives the highest autumn passage count in each decade (note that there was a second count of 1,700 at Shellness in the 1960s, also on 30th October, in 1969). Note the narrow span of the dates: late October is clearly the peak passage period. Spring movements are less frequently seen and tend to be far smaller. They have included 116 N at Deal and Sandwich Bay on 27th March 1954 and 125 W at Foreness on 12th April 1992.

Rook: high autumn passage counts				
1950s	27th Oct 1956	Thames area	1500	W
1960s	30th Oct 1966	Shellness	1700	NW
1970s	22nd Oct 1970	Shellness	800	W
1980s	27th Oct 1982	St Margaret's	835	in
1990s	27th Oct 1993	St Margaret's	236	in

Relatively few Rooks are ringed or recovered but two foreign-ringed birds have been found in Kent (British-bred birds are very sedentary). A Dutch nestling of 1932 was found at Broadstairs in November 1934, and a first-year Belgian bird ringed in March 1979 was found dead at Deal in October 1983. Ringing recoveries for Britain as a whole show that birds wintering here reach us from northern Europe extending to Scandinavia, Finland and Russia. The BTO Migration Atlas notes that the frequency of ringing recoveries has fallen in recent decades, backing up wider reports of reduced immigration to Britain including, it seems, the Kent data. The species is declining across Europe; the changing amount of passage may be related to that and perhaps also to climate change.

Carrion Crow

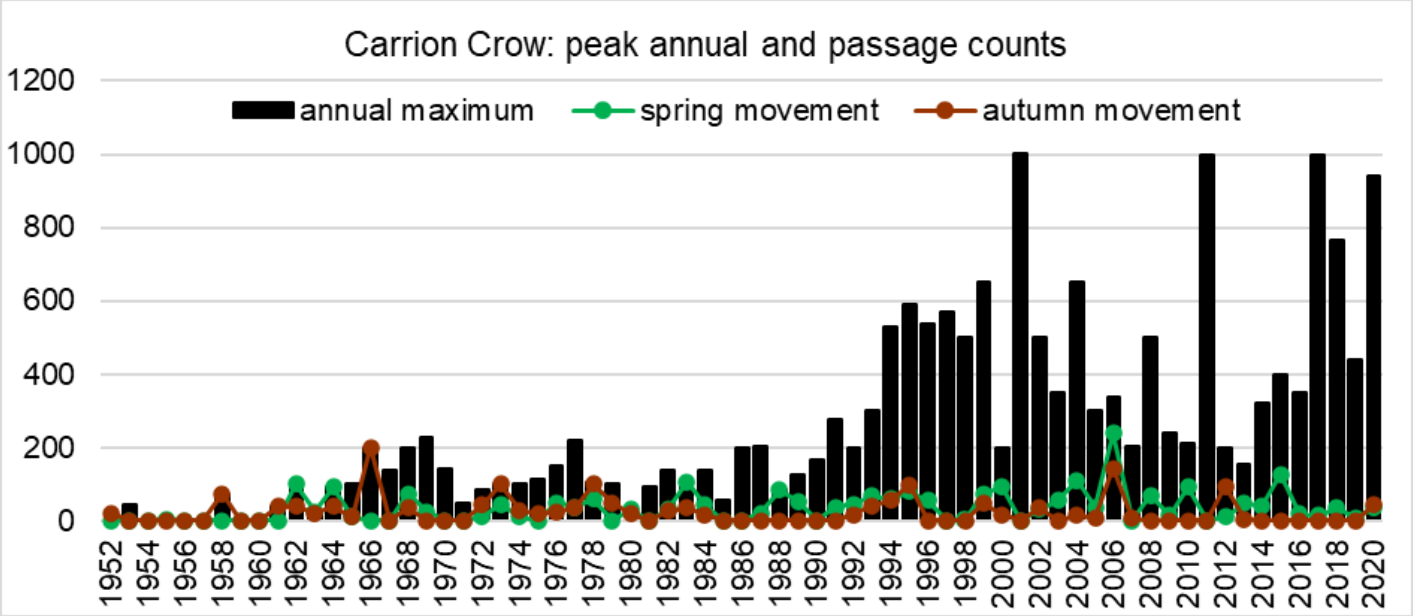
Common Crow (BBC Naturewatch)

Ticehurst: "there is no doubt that the Carrion-Crow is very destructive to all forms of bird-life in the nesting season". Harrison: "this is a bad species"; at Dungeness in 1950, he saw "no fewer than nine Carrion-Crows on the shingle together, surely as evil a band of egg-stealers as ever was". Even today, you will find plenty of land managers, whether gamekeepers, farmers or even nature reserve staff, who do not have a much more favourable opinion of the species. But Carrion Crows have the answer to persecution – they just keep increasing!

Remarkably, to modern readers, Ticehurst (A History of the Birds of Kent, 1909) begins his account by saying "This species is the least numerous of the Corvidae that breed regularly in Kent. It is nowhere numerous and is steadily decreasing…". Less than fifty years later, though, Harrison (The Birds of Kent, 1953) described it as "a very abundant breeding bird" and suggested that the change in status began around 1919. This is perhaps support for the oft-

repeated assertion that increases in species such as Carrion Crow were made possible by reductions in gamekeeping in the first world war.

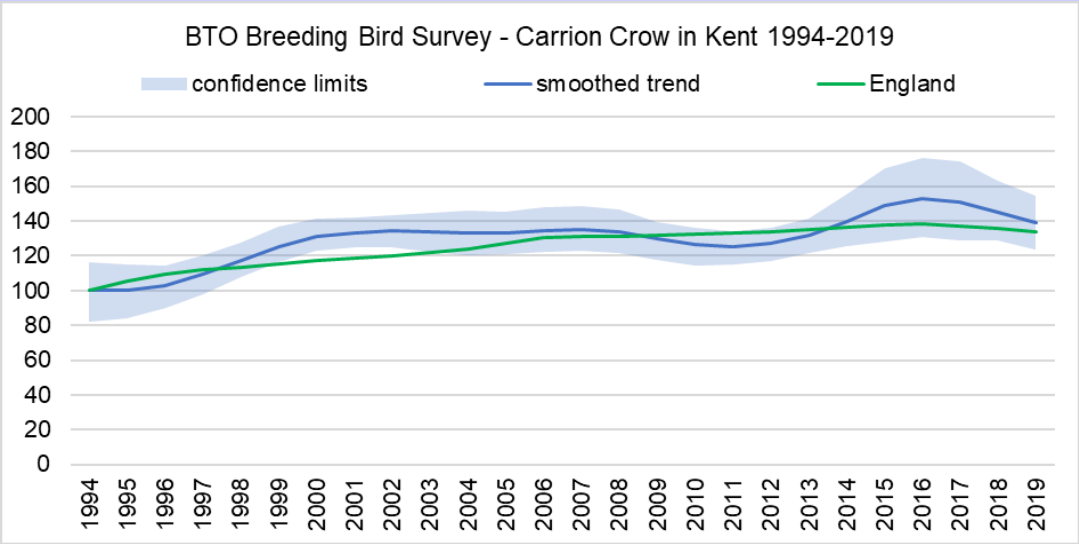
The chart below shows the annual reported peak counts of Carrion Crow in Kent since 1952. Up to 1990, there was no count of over 250; since then, only six years with peaks below 250. No longer can one rely on the old adage: a Crow in a crowd is a Rook, a Rook on its own is a Crow.



The four counts (or estimates) of above 750 are as follows. The Chattenden, Bell Wood and Sandwich Bay counts were at or near roosts. There is more on the Bell Wood roost in the box (click to go to it) earlier in this article. I am not sure what the South Swale birds were doing, but many birds in that area feed in the intertidal zone, while concentrations of feeding birds on grassland are quite frequently seen, there and elsewhere.

Carrion Crow: highest counts in Kent			
2001	23rd Dec	Chattenden Woods	1003
2011	March	South Swale LNR	1000
2017	January	Sandwich Bay	1000
2020	2nd Dec	Bell Wood, St Mary Hoo	939

In the Kent Breeding Bird Atlas 2008-13, Carrion Crows were found in 998 out of 1001 tetrads (2x2km squares) in the county – more than any other species. The Breeding Bird Survey recorded a 39% increase in Kent during 1994-2019, a trend similar to that in England as a whole. The rate of increase during this period has been less than earlier, however. The combined CBC/BBS index for England rose by 137% between 1967 and 2017. There has been range expansion, or filling-in, over the same period; in the first Kent atlas, in 1967-73, it was found in only 679 tetrads. There is a slight hint of a downturn in the BBS index at the end of these periods, from about 2015, and it is interesting to note that this is more apparent further north; in Scotland, Carrion Crows have been declining for about 20 years.



Some movement is noted in most years, mostly of birds moving along the coast or sometimes flying over the sea but including a few inland movements thought to relate to 'passage' rather than local birds. The spring and autumn peaks each year are shown on the peak count chart above. The average peak over the last 30 years has been around 60 in spring and 45 in autumn (but note these figures are based on counts reported in the Kent Bird Report, and in years with lower peaks they may not be mentioned). The table below shows all movements of 100 or more; where the direction is not known, the last column is left blank.

Carrion Crow: movements of 100 or more				
1962	9th Apr	Dungeness	100	N
1966	29th Oct	Egypt Bay	200	W
1973	29th Oct	Folkestone	100	in
1978	15th Oct	Dungeness	100	
1983	29th Mar	Foreness	106	
2004	4th Apr	Dungeness	110	
2006	1st Apr	Dungeness	100	
2006	2nd Apr	Foreness	240	NW
2006	24th Sep	Grove Ferry	143	E
2015	17th May	Bockhill	128	NW

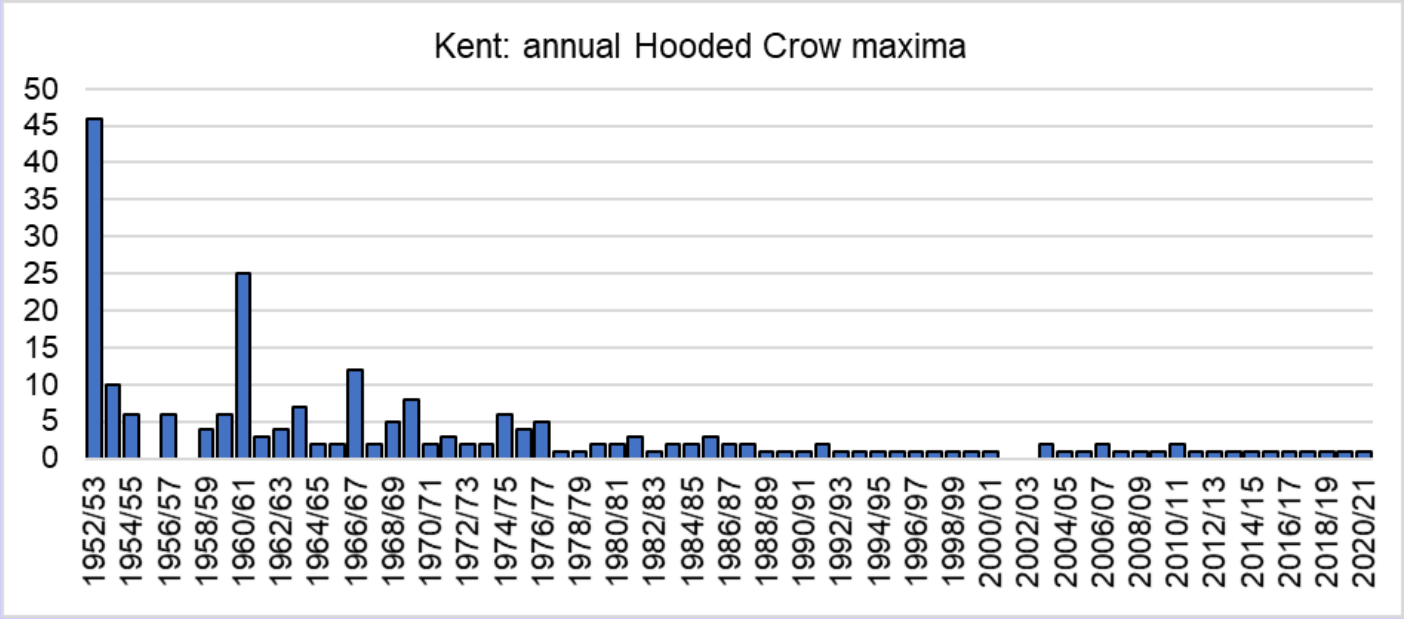
The dates in the table are generally typical of periods in which movements have been noted, but the Bockhill count was later than usual (it was the only reported peak in May). Carrion Crows are regarded as highly sedentary, with a median ring recovery distance of just 3 km (BTO Migration Atlas). There is no suggestion in the BTO Atlas that any form of migration occurs in Britain, and there are no foreign ringing recoveries. Relatively few Carrion Crows are ringed, however, and there are fewer than 50 ringing recoveries affecting Kent. Most of those were ringed and recovered in Kent, with a handful in East Sussex and Suffolk. The BTO online ringing report includes one bird ringed at High Halstow in 1953, recorded there again in 1955 and found dead in Cumbria in 1957. Given that the circumstances in 1955 were that the bird was freshly dead (shot), I am not sure I believe it then got to Cumbria! The significance of the coastal movements in spring and autumn remains unclear, but it seems likely that some cross-channel movement really does take place.

Hooded Crow

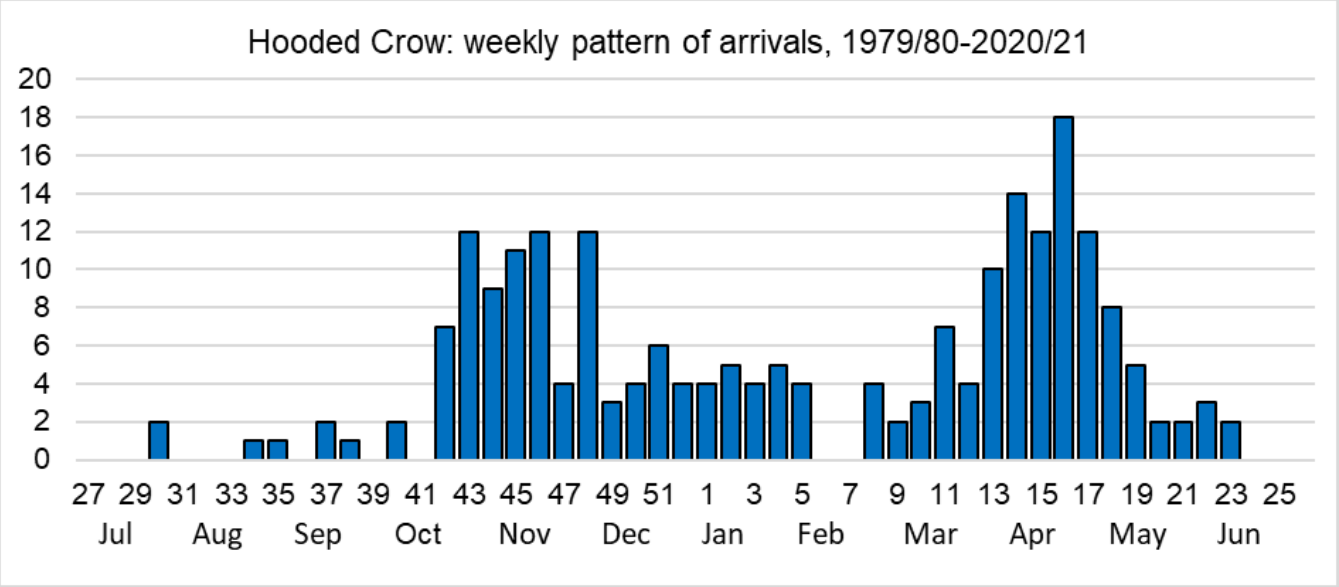
Hooded Crow by M Holland

There was a long article in the 2018 Kent Bird Report, dealing with the history of the Hooded Crow in Kent, so I won't say much about them here, other than to repeat a couple of the key charts.

In the nineteenth century and until about 1930, the Hooded Crow was an abundant passage migrant to Kent. Numbers were not reported but probably in the hundreds. At least in coastal areas, it was more numerous than Carrion Crow. Terms such as 'exceedingly common' were used to describe their status at the time. The largest numbers were found in coastal areas but smaller concentrations were found inland, especially in open farmland. By the 1950s, a decline was well under way. The highest count from 1952 onwards was 46 near Deal in February 1953, and the annual total has not exceeded seven at any time in the last 25 years.



The seasonal pattern of occurrence has changed little from early times. Despite the small numbers now occurring, it is still possible to detect higher numbers during the passage periods of October-November and March-April. Summer records are rare. Also as before, the majority of Hooded Crows are found along the coasts or estuaries, with far smaller numbers inland.



In Britain and Ireland, crows of both species* are highly sedentary, and the Hooded Crows occurring along the east coast of England in winter are believed to come from the more migratory populations of Scandinavia. The decline in numbers here may be due to birds remaining in continental Europe rather than crossing the North Sea to Britain.

* Both Ticehurst and Harrison treated Hooded Crow and Carrion Crow as separate species, but for most of the twentieth century most authorities regarded them as races of a single species. In 2002, they were split by the British Ornithologists' Union and others, but some still treat them as subspecies. Fortunately, even if there are some hybrids, the two (sub)species are quite easy to distinguish, and they have been recorded separately by KOS since it was formed.

Raven

Raven by Russ Blackman.

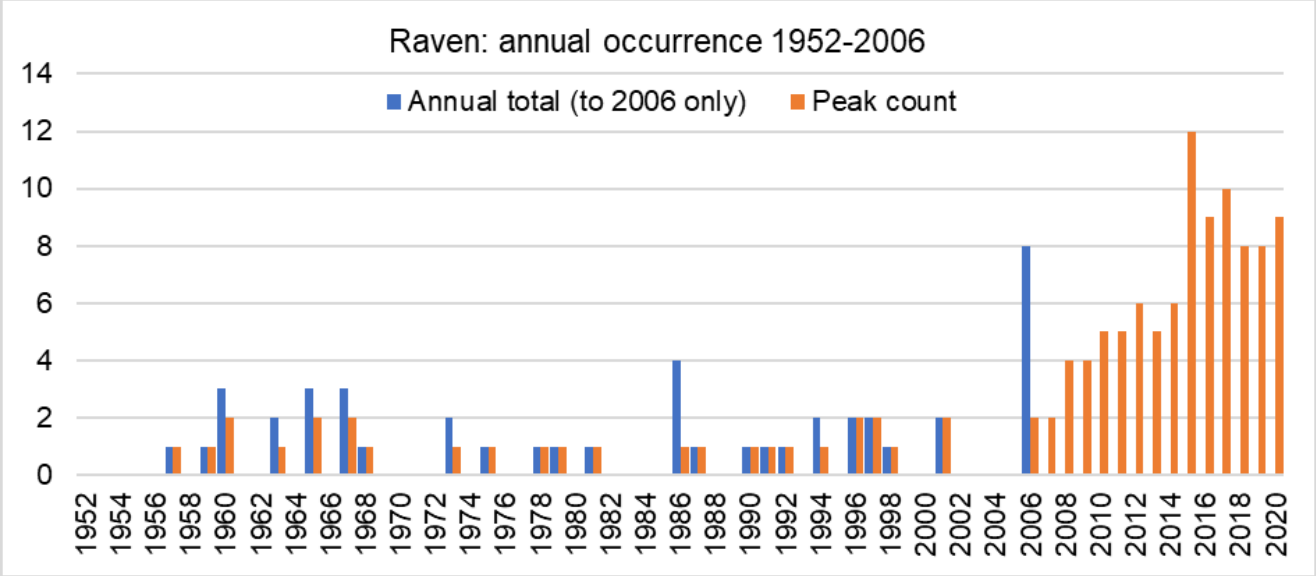
Given the poor view of most of the corvids taken by Ticehurst and especially Harrison, it comes as a bit of a surprise to read their accounts of the Raven, particularly against the modern background of concerns by sheep farmers over their increase and proposals for culls. Ticehurst (A History of the Birds of Kent, 1909) does say that marshland shepherds "proclaim eternal war" on the few autumn visitors that appeared but, in referring to a possible breeding attempt in the 1880s, comments that "if only protection were given to this fine bird, it might once more re-establish

itself". Harrison (The Birds of Kent, 1953) begins his account "The disappearance of this fine bird from our county is one of those sad events consequent upon man's multifarious influence on the course of nature". Well, yes. I suppose it's a case of "you don't know what you've got 'til it's gone".

The Raven disappeared as a breeding species in Kent towards the end of the nineteenth century. Nesting was recorded inland at Lullingstone Park until about 1844 and at Cobham Park until some years prior to 1868, and closer to the coast at Saltwood Park in about 1855. On the coast, there were three nests on the South Foreland in 1841 and breeding probably continued in that area and on the cliffs between Dover and Folkestone until about 1890. Much earlier, it had been a relatively numerous breeding bird. Ticehurst (1920, British Birds 14: 34-37) records that payments for killing 198 Ravens, many of them probably nestlings, appear in the Tenterden churchwarden's accounts for the 14 years from 1676.

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, there were occasional reports of birds in the north and south of the county. The majority were on or close to open marshes and in autumn, suggesting that these were birds dispersing from breeding populations elsewhere in England or on the continent*. Between 1907 and 1957, however, the only documented record was of one seen flying over the Medway estuary on 17th October 1948.
* But note that there are no ringing exchanges between Britain and the continent, though one Shetland nestling was later found on a ship halfway to Norway.

The chart below shows the numbers of Ravens recorded in Kent each year from 1952 to 2006, after which it became impossible to know how many individuals were present, and also the peak counts each year.



From 1952 to 2005, Ravens were mentioned in Kent Bird Reports in 22 of the 54 years. There were up to four in a year, and the total was about 37 birds. They were well spread around the county, though with noticeable clusters, such as at Sevenoaks, Hildenborough, Northward Hill and Dungeness. There was often a comment in the KBR along the lines that "the possibility of it being an escape cannot be ruled out". For one at Foreness on 8th March 1986, it was more of a certainty: the bird "started talking when captured". However, almost half of individuals in this period were first seen during June-September, which is similar to the pattern around 1900 and could suggest dispersal from breeding areas rather than captive origin. Most records were of single birds but occasionally two were seen together and there were two, possibly three, Ravens at Dungeness and elsewhere in south Kent during much of 1997 and the early part of 1998, the first prolonged stay for many years.

Having been pushed by persecution to the western and northern parts of Britain, Ravens started to expand their range eastwards again late in the twentieth century. The records in 1997-98 were perhaps the first Kent saw of this re-colonisation. From 2006, birds became resident in the county and the first successful nests were on the chalk coast and in a chalk quarry in north Kent in 2009. Expansion continued briskly, and the Kent Breeding Bird Atlas 2008-13 records nesting in at least ten tetrads (2x2km squares), on chalk cliffs, at Dungeness, in the north Kent marshes and in the far west of the county.

Ravens have become so well-established that there is no longer an effort to record all nests; it's not possible from the records submitted to know how many pairs are now breeding in Kent. My guess is that there are at least twenty – but I don't really know. The highest single count up to 2020 was 12 at Samphire Hoe on 2nd October 2015.

Andrew Henderson

Important Bird Areas and Birds of Conservation Concern

Farmland Birds Heatmaps a Work in Progress

Skylark by Martin Casemore

A conversation with Ralph Todd regarding a local proposed development concluded that if the development gained approval, it will likely result in a significant reduction of Skylark as a breeding species within his local area. The creation and management of Skylark plots is one solution for mitigation against the loss of Skylark territories however, the mitigation for the loss of suitable habitat to support Skylark as a result of development is generally difficult for a variety of reasons. As a result many ecological assessment reports recommend enhancements for other red or amber listed birds of conservation concern (Eaton et al, 2021) i.e. Song Thrush, Dunnock, House Sparrow and Starling to compensate for the loss of habitat that supports the red listed Skylark. At a national level Skylarks are still a common (albeit declining) farmland bird and it is too easy for this fact to dilute any argument in respect of their local status. However, when the resolution of Skylark distribution is focused at a county, district or borough level impacts through development could dramatically affect the status of the species. Ralph and I agreed that development resulting in the loss of habitat that supports not only Skylark but assemblages of other farmland birds was akin to ‘death by a thousand cuts’ and there didn’t seem to be a way of measuring and monitoring what was happening.

Meetings of the KOS Conservation and Surveys sub-committee (C&S) in 2020 and early 2021 discussed this topic in respect of Kent within a wider subject regarding the proposed new planning system and concern was expressed about the potential of reduced environmental impact assessments and species specific surveys. Alan Johnson of the RSPB put forward that determining ‘Important Bird Areas’ ahead of any planning proposal (i.e. those areas that are likely important for birds of conservation concern and are outside of protected sites), as a potential approach to the concerns raised. The committee considered that initially the development of heatmaps, (a graphical representation of data where values are depicted by colour), may provide some answers or at least possibly lead to another approach. The RSPB, KWT, KCC, AONB, NE, EA et al. are developing a Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) for Kent and are considering, as part of the strategy, the data ‘layers’ needed for a map that shows the most important places for nature in Kent. The Local Nature Recovery Strategies are a new, England-wide system of spatial strategies and part of the measures being introduced by the Environment Bill. According to DEFRA, LNRS will establish priorities and map proposals for specific actions to drive nature’s recovery and provide wider environmental benefits.

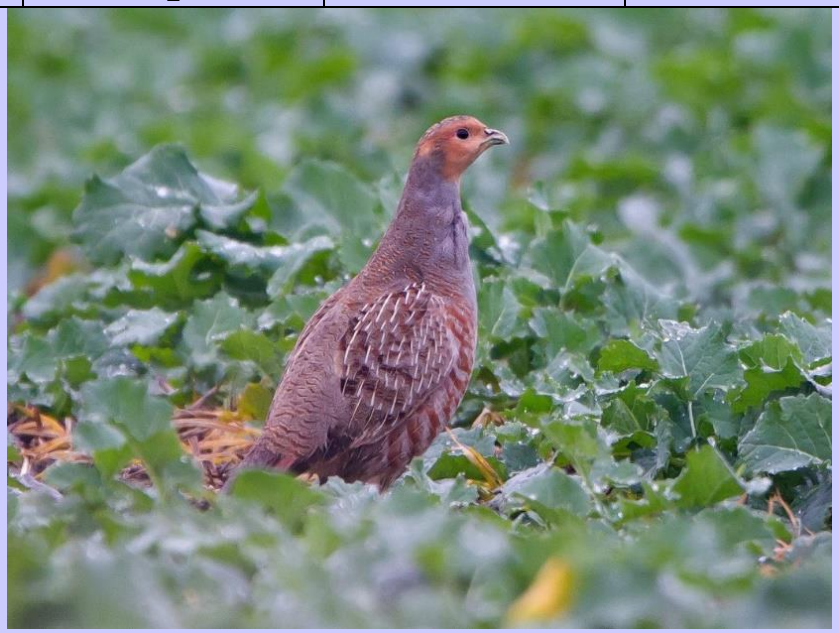
Yellow Wagtail by Martin Casemore

Farmland areas within Kent support nationally important populations of farmland birds especially Corn Bunting, Yellow Wagtail and Turtle Dove however, a missing but important data layer within the emerging Kent LNRS was one that covered farmland bird assemblages. Therefore, the KOS C&S sub-committee decided to focus on producing a data layer for this bird assemblage using records held within the KOS database. The output of the data layer whilst contributing to the LNRS map will also be used to produce a heatmap for farmland bird assemblages within the county.

A robust method for deriving a set of farmland birds relevant to Kent was required to ensure a defensible audit trail. Therefore, a set of farmland birds was selected based on those listed in the national farmland bird index, which is a government indictor of sustainable development and also from a list of RSPB priority species. In order to provide the necessary values required to produce the heatmap, the Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) designation criteria for deriving a species index (weighting) was used to obtain a species score. The species score was derived using the breeding figures given in the latest KOS breeding atlas (2015).

The table below provides the calculation results to derive the scores of seven farmland bird species using the SSSI species index and the breeding atlas figures.

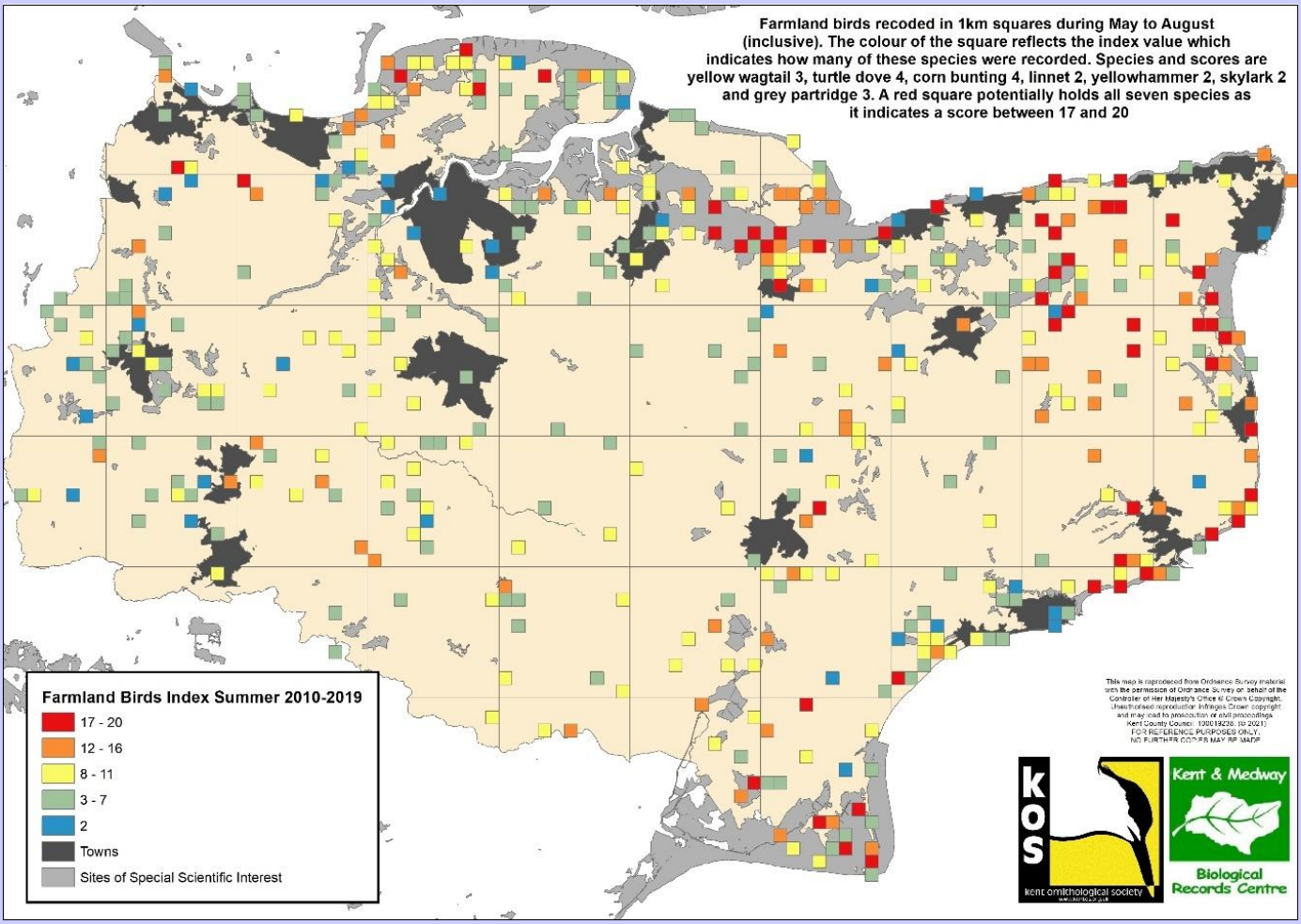
Species	Heatmap score	Species	Heatmap score
Corn Bunting	4	Skylark	2
Linnet	2	Grey Partridge	3
Turtle Dove	4	Yellow Wagtail	3
Yellowhammer	2		



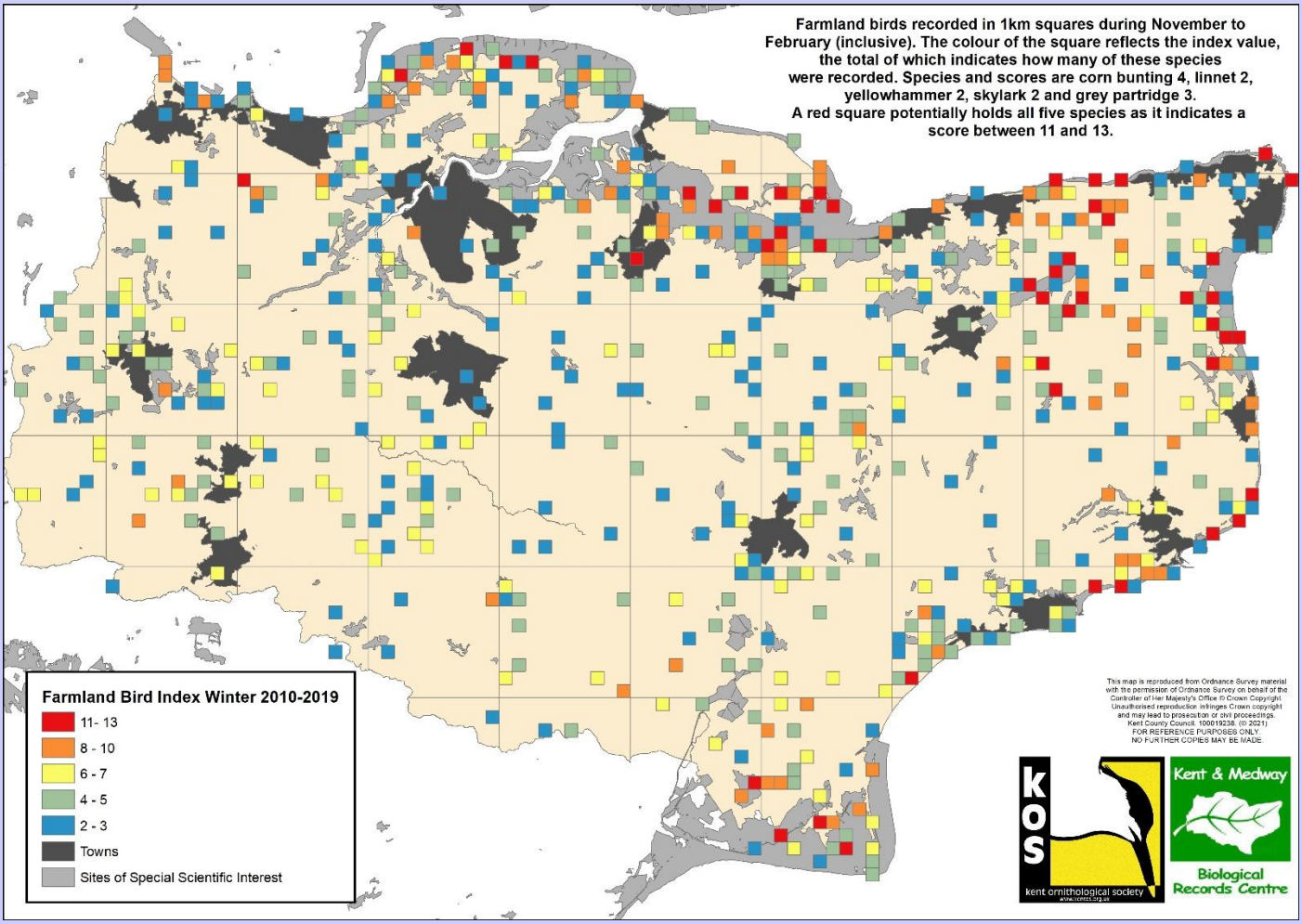
Grey Partridge by Martin Casemore

Given the different land use of certain farmland birds in the summer and winter periods, it was decided to produce two heatmaps. One would cover the summer period (May, June, July and August) the other would cover the winter period (November, December, January and February). Therefore the summer heatmap would cover all seven selected species whereas the winter heatmap would cover five species (with Turtle Dove and Yellow Wagtail being summer migrants).
Using the bird records held within the KOS database it has been possible to produce the heatmaps at a 1km square resolution covering a 10 year period 2010 to 2019. The score and therefore, the corresponding heat colour for any 1km square, is calculated by totalling the heatmap score from the number of species that have been recorded in that square.
The species scores and method of creating a heatmap was discussed with Tony Witts of the Kent and Medway Biological Records Centre (KMBRC) who considered that it could be done. Tony then went on to produce the heatmaps and data layer for the Kent LNRS and deserves special thanks along with the rest of the KMBRC team for their excellent support.

The maximum heatmap score for the summer map is 20 with all seven species having been recorded in a 1km square during the 10 year period.



The maximum heatmap score for the winter map is 13 with all five species having been recorded in a 1km square during the 10 year period.



A first impression of both heatmaps is the amount of blank areas across the county. It is likely that many areas supporting farmland birds, especially inland, are infrequently or never visited by birders and therefore, records are scarce. Most of the hot areas are biased towards those locations that are likely most visited by birders i.e. coastal and inland reserves or designated sites. Therefore, any interpretation of the heatmap needs to be carefully considered. Important areas for farmland birds – colder squares or blank squares do not denote unimportant or less important areas as these could be squares with limited or no access and may have never had any bird records submitted from them within the ten year period and/or months covered by the dataset.

Certainly the blank and colder squares require visits to provide records of farmland birds; contribute to building a more complete view of their distribution; help to locate the 'important areas' and also inform decision making on the creation of new and linking areas.

All of this is very much 'work in progress' and given the species listed in the national farmland bird index and those RSPB priority species other farmland birds i.e. Tree Sparrow could be included for future heatmaps. However, thanks to KOS records the Kent LNRS now has a baseline data layer indicating the distribution of farmland birds across the county and a potential method of determining important areas for farmland birds.

Going forward uses of the heatmap could include:

- Establishing a view of important areas for birds prior to these areas becoming threatened by development or other potentially damaging proposals;
- Ecological consultancies using the heatmap to provide a farmland bird baseline for further ecological surveys and impact assessments within areas of proposed development;
- Recording the gain or loss of farmland species over time within Kent;
- Aid land owners in understanding the distribution of declining farmland birds within Kent and encourage them to manage suitable habitats to support breeding and wintering farmland birds;
- Inform initiatives such as the Volunteer and Farmer Alliance to help deliver targeted land management and impact monitoring; and
- Promote discussion amongst birders, ecologists, landowners, planning authorities etc. about the birds, the process, the maps and the future of farmland birds.

However, an important point is that what the heatmap shows will only ever be as good as the quality and quantity of the underpinning bird records.

Yellowhammer by Martin Casemore

Members can easily help by continuing to record farmland birds in their local area but also by visiting those 'blank and cold' areas as indicated on the heatmaps and by submitting records via the KOS database, BirdTrack or eBird. Visits can be any time within the periods May to August (inclusive) for summer and November to February (inclusive) for winter. The process of producing the heatmap is simple and only requires a 'presence' record of a species during the summer and winter periods mentioned earlier i.e. if you record one or twenty Yellowhammers within a 1km square then that is enough to provide a record for the heatmap but remember to include a location grid reference. The record will be most accurate if the supplied grid reference is the location of the bird(s) rather than your location. A grid reference to produce a 1km resolution is, for example, TQ 99 64, so anything longer than this will also work.
It's that simple!
More information on Local Nature Recovery Strategies can be found at: -
Local Nature Recovery Strategies: how to prepare and what to include - Defra - Citizen Space
Shaping the future of Nature Recovery: Developing Local Nature Recovery Strategies - Natural England (blog.gov.uk)
Local Nature Recovery: more information on how the scheme will work - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

John Young

KENT BIRD SIGHTINGS FOR NOVEMBER AND DECEMBER 2021 - Chris Hindle

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

WEATHER

The weather during **November** was on the mild side, with many areas seeing some settled spells, however the last ten days were much colder and unsettled with Storm Arwen of note on the 26th and 27th. Temperatures were above average for much of the time with few frosts. Most parts of the UK saw less rainfall than average with less than 20% for much of the south-east and only 20mm falling at Bishopstone during the month.

The early part of **December** was rather unsettled and chilly, though towards the middle of the month we entered a quieter spell and it turned milder. Unsettled conditions returned in time for Christmas but after this milder weather arrived with the last three days of the month being unusually mild. Overall, it was a mild and dull month with rainfall near average.

A **Black Brant** was reported from Scotney on Nov 7th with an adult at Seasalter and then Swalecliffe on Nov 24th where it was also seen on the 25th. In December an adult was seen on Reculver Marshes between the 4th and 31st whilst a bird was identified at Funton Creek on the 11th and remained there until the 13th and a bird was also seen at Seasalter on Dec 17th.

Black Brant by Chris Hindle

A **Pale-bellied Brent Goose** was seen at Tankerton on Nov 6th and 13th, at Reculver on Dec 22nd and 23rd and Muswell Manor on the 28th.
30 **Barnacle Geese** were seen at Bough Beech between Nov 1st and 10th. During December there were 17 at Sandwich Bay and Worth Marshes on the 18th whilst 42 flew E at Reculver and were then seen at Pegwell Bay on the 19th and at Worth Marshes on the 20th increasing to 70 there on the 24th. 47 were counted at Cliffe Pools on the 23rd when there were also 42 at Dungeness RSPB.

During November 15 **Pink-footed Geese** flew N at Sandwich Bay on the 2nd, 35 flew S on the 14th, 11 were seen on the 15th with one on the 22nd. There was one seen at Dungeness RSPB on Dec 20th and 21st, 11 at Sandwich Bay on Dec 24th and one at Bockhill from Dec 24th-28th.
Three **Tundra Bean Geese** were reported from Minster in Thanet on Nov 20th whilst one was seen at Worth Marshes on Dec 18th with two at Pegwell Bay on the 19th. There were five at Worth Marshes on the Dec 20th and 21st with five also reported from Dungeness RSPB from the 20th-25th and at Bockhill from the 22nd-28th.

White-fronted Geese by Johnathon Dodds

Nine **Russian White-fronted Geese** were seen at Swale NNR from Nov 9th-11th and one flew in off the sea at Reculver on the 22nd. During December there were up to 165 at Swale NNR with as many as 100 at Worth Marshes and smaller numbers at Dungeness RSPB, West Hythe, Scotney, Bockhill, Walmer, Seaton, Fordwich, North Foreland, Ash Levels, Scotney, Cliftonville, Reculver, Swalecliffe, Whitstable, Pegwell Bay, DBO, Stodmarsh and Samphire Hoe.

During December, 12 **Bewick's Swans** came in to roost at Dungeness RSPB on the 2nd and one was seen at Elmley on the 12th with 18 on Walland Marsh from 15th-19th. After this as many as 14 were recorded from Walland Marsh, Dungeness RSPB, Conningbrook, Littlebrook, Cliffe Pools and Reculver.

Bewick's Swan by Paul Trodd

A **Whooper Swan** was found at Reculver on Nov 6th and there were single birds at Old Romney on the Dec 4th, at Walland Marsh on the Dec 6th and Capel Fleet on Dec 17th and 18th. Five birds were on Walland Marsh on Dec 20th.

Up to 25 **Egyptian Geese** were recorded from Romney Marsh, Bough Beech, Dunorlan Park, Sandwich Bay and Stodmarsh and during November and December up to 21 **Mandarins** were seen at Bough Beech, Swalecliffe and Furnace Pond.

A male **Red-crested Pochard** was seen at Lade on Dec 29th. A **Scaup** was seen at North Foreland on Nov 5th and female/immature males were reported from the Swale on Nov 13th, Seasalter on the 16th, Sandwich Bay on the 23rd and a male was seen at New Hythe GPs from Nov 27th-Dec 31st, with females seen at Cliffe Pools on the Dec 1st and Collard's Lake on the 26th.

Scaup by Terry Laws

Up to nine **Velvet Scoters** were seen at Sandwich Bay, Reculver, Cliftonville, Tankerton, Swalecliffe, Seasalter, Shellness, Ramsgate, Whitstable, Foreness, Deal, Walmer Beach, North Foreland, Dymchurch and DBO.

An adult male **Long-tailed Duck** flew past DBO on Nov 23rd and one was reported from North Foreland on Nov 28th and a female/immature was seen at Sandwich Bay on Dec 30th whilst the first **Smew** of the winter was a redhead seen at Oare Marshes between Dec 12th and 18th.

During November and December up to 24 **Goosanders** were recorded from Bough Beech with smaller numbers at Reculver, Swalecliffe, Walpole Bay, Lower Hope Point, Tankerton, Samphire Hoe, Castle Coote, Cliffe, Oare Marshes, Deal, Walmer, DBO, Warehorne, Easwell Park and Botolph's Bridge.

NIGHTJAR TO WADERS

A **Common Crane** flew W over Ramsgate on Nov 12th and was seen at Worth Marshes and Stodmarsh on the 13th and at Sandwich on the 14th.

Red-necked Grebes were recorded at Seasalter on Nov 4th, at Swalecliffe on the 15th and 23rd, at DBO on the 23rd and in the Swale on the 27th whilst in December single birds were seen at Scotney on the 11th, at Swalecliffe on the 20th and at Whitstable and Tankerton on the 24th.

Single **Slavonian Grebes** were seen at Otterham Creek on Nov 4th, at Scotney on the 19th, Seasalter on the 23rd and Swalecliffe on the 26th. In December one was reported from Grenham Bay on the 8th with others at Swalecliiffe on the 9th and 29th, Riverside CP and Seasalter on the 16th, Lade on the 21st, flying E at DBO on the 22nd and 23rd and at Cliffe Pools from the 23rd-28th.

During these two months one or two **Black-necked Grebes** were seen at Dungeness RSPB and Bedlam's Bottom.

Up to 15 **Purple Sandpipers** were seen at Ramsgate Harbour, Margate, Reculver, Foreness, North Foreland, Grain Outfall and Hythe. A **Little Stint** was identified at Riverside CP on Dec 2nd. During November and December up to six **Jack Snipes** were seen at Sandwich Bay, Worth Marshes and DBO. A **Grey Phalarope** was reported flying E at Cliftonville on Nov 21st.

GULLS TO SHEARWATERS

During November **Sabine's Gulls** were reported from Shellness on the 4th, with one reported from DBO on the 6th and two adults reported at North Foreland and one at Grenham Bay on the 14th. One was also reported flying S past Sandwich Bay with three at North Foreland on the 15th and another reported from Shellness on the 21st.

Up to 15 **Little Gulls** were recorded from DBO, Reculver, Swalecliffe, Walmer, Tankerton, Sandwich Bay, Lower Hope Point, North Foreland, Cliffe and Oare Marshes. In addition, 126 flew W at DBO on Dec 14th.

A juvenile **Glaucous Gull** was reported flying E at Seasalter on Nov 27th and a juvenile flew W at Cliftonville on Dec 5th and was recorded at North Foreland on Dec 11th whilst an adult **Iceland Gull** was reported flying S at North Foreland on Nov 28th.

Up to 12 **Caspian Gulls** were seen in the Dungeness area with as many as six reported from Pegwell Bay, Langdon Cliffs, Bough Beech, Dover Harbour, Bockhill, St Margarets-at-Cliffe, Shakespeare Beach and Cliftonville and one or two **Yellow-legged Gulls** were seen at Dungeness RSPB, DBO, Pegwell Bay, Dover Harbour and Sandwich Bay.

As many as eight **Great Skuas** were seen at DBO, Reculver, Minnis Bay, Shellness, Bockhill, Tankerton and Swalecliffe.

A juvenile pale phase **Pomarine Skua** flew W at Reculver on Nov 21st and other birds were seen at Oare Marshes and Reculver the next day and at Tankerton on the 27th. One was also reported from North Foreland on Dec 13th with two on the 26th.

Three **Arctic Skuas** flew past DBO on Nov 14th.

Single **Little Auks** were reported from Oare Marshes, Allhallows and Shellness on Nov 4th and at Swalecliffe and North Foreland on the 5th with others reported from Tankerton on Nov 21st with two at Walpole Bay and four at Deal Pier on Nov 28th and one at North Foreland on the 29th.

A **Black Guillemot** was seen at Swalecliffe on Nov 4th, 11th and 20th whilst one was also reported from North Foreland on the 15th.

Black Guillemot by Andy Taylor

A **Puffin** flew W past DBO on Nov 20th and another was seen well at Reculver and Seasalter on the 21st with a further bird recorded at Swalecliffe on Dec 1st. Others were reported from the Medway at Gillingham on the 5th, from Swalecliffe on Dec 22nd and at North Foreland on the 25th.

During November and December as many as three **Black-throated Divers** were reported from North Foreland, Shellness, Bockhill, Swalecliffe, Reculver, Samphire Hoe, Minnis Bay, Minster, Ramsgate, Hythe Ranges, Cliffe Pools, Kingsdown, Grenham Bay, Deal, Walmer, Seaton and Tankerton and single **Great Northern Divers** were recorded from Reculver, Swalecliffe, Tankerton, Bockhill, Cliftonville, North Foreland, DBO, Samphire Hoe, Sandwich Bay and Allhallows.

There were a number of sightings of **Leach's Petrels** in the northerly wind on Nov 22nd with two at Reculver and single birds reported from Kingsdown, Herne Bay, Oare Marshes, Cliftonville and Tankerton

.During November single **Sooty Shearwaters** were reported off Shellness on the 4th, flying W past DBO on the 12th with two reported from North Foreland and Tankerton on the 14th. One was also reported from North Foreland on Dec 20th.

A **Manx Shearwater** seen at DBO on Dec 2nd was on a particularly late date.During November and December as many as five **Shags** were seen at Dover Harbour, Folkestone Harbour, Sandwich Bay, Bockhill, Samphire Hoe, Swalecliffe and Reculver.

WHITE STORK TO WOODPECKERS

An unringed **White Stork** flew over Higham Marshes on Nov 28th and then remained at Worth Marshes from Nov 30th until the end of the year.

r. 

White Stork by Russ Blackman

The two long-staying **Glossy Ibises** remained at Dungeness RSPB until Dec 31st. Single birds were also seen at Cliffe Pools on Nov 9th, Faversham on the 14th, Allhallows intermittently between the Nov 19th and Dec 29th with two there on the Nov 29th and one flew over Scotney on Dec 30th and one was seen at Cliffe on the Dec 31st.

A **Spoonbill** was seen at Swanscombe Marshes from Dec 26th-28th whilst during November single **Bitterns** were only reported from Dungeness RSPB.

Up to 16 **Cattle Egrets** were seen at Dungeness RSPB, Lydd, Higham, Kingsgate Castle, Northward Hill, Stodmarsh, Elmley, Seaton, Littlebourne, Stoke and South Foreland.

During November and December one or two **Great White Egrets** were seen at Dungeness DRSPB, Willop Sewage Works, Sandwich Bay, Worth Marshes, Elmley, Fordwich and Stodmarsh.

An **Osprey** was reported from Fordwich on Nov 15th and 16th.

On Nov 10th a **White-tailed Eagle** from the Isle of Wight reintroduction scheme flew in off the sea at Dover and then flew over Kent to Swale NNR. It had spent the winter in northern Europe travelling as far as Denmark.

White-tailed Eagle by Jamie Partridge

One or two **Hen Harriers** were recorded from Dungeness RSPB, Worth Marshes, Sandwich Bay, Stodmarsh/Grove Ferry, South Foreland, Elmley, Pegwell Bay, St Margarets, Lydd, Swalecliffe, Dargate, Cliffe Pools, Minster, Swale NNR, Fairfield, Bockhill, North Foreland, Stoke Lagoon, Shellness, Capel Fleet, Oare Marshes, Seasalter, Leysdown-on-Sea, Ashford, Reculver, Northward Hill and Gillingham.

As many as seven **Red Kites** were seen at Bough Beech during November and December whilst one was seen at Godmersham on the Dec 8th and Knockholt on Dec 28th.

A **Rough-legged Buzzard** was reported from Brookland on Nov 4th and a juvenile flew W at Reculver on Nov 8th. On Nov 22nd birds were reported from Samphire Hoe and Chetney Marshes.

During November up to 15 **Short-eared Owls** were recorded from Sheppey with up to 28 in December. As many as five were also seen at Reculver, Graveney, Dungeness RSPB, North Foreland, Conyer, Walmer, Minster and Sandwich Bay.

As many as three **Long-eared Owls** were seen on Sheppey during November and December with two at DBO on Nov 16th.

FALCONS TO HIRUNDINES

Single **Merlins** were recorded from DBO, Reculver Marshes, Leysdown-on-Sea, Elmley and Sandwich Bay.

A **Hooded Crow** flew in off the sea at North Foreland on Nov 4th whilst as many as four **Ravens** were recorded from Dunorlan Park, Cheriton, Seaton, North Foreland, Aldergate Bridge, Bough Beech, Reculver, Knole Park, Scotney, Southborough, Elmley, and Nethergong.

Single **Woodlarks** were seen at DBO on Nov 2nd, Otterham Creek on the Nov 4th, at DBO and Sandwich Bay on the Nov 8th and at South Foreland on the Nov 9th. Up to seven **Shorelarks** were counted at Leysdown-on-Sea between Nov 6th and 18th and eight were also reported from there on Dec 19th with seven from Dec 26th-30th. Two were also seen at Swalecliffe on Nov 10th.

Shore Lark by Chris White

WARBLERS TO WHEATEARS

A **Yellow-browed Warbler** was seen at Langdon Bay on Nov 6th and a **HUME'S WARBLER** was identified at South Foreland on Nov 3rd and was still there the next day whilst another bird was found at Bockhill from Dec 22nd-31st. A **Pallas's Warbler** was trapped and ringed at DBO on Nov 2nd and others were seen at South Foreland on the 15th and from Nov 24th-26th.

Hume's Water by Brendan Ryan

A **Radde's Warbler** was found at South Foreland on Nov 3rd and remained there until the 5th whilst a **Dusky Warbler** was discovered at Fordwich on Dec 13th and remained there until the end of the year.

Dusky Warbler by Brendan Ryan

It was a very good autumn for **Siberian Chiffchaffs** with birds seen at DBO on Nov 1st where there were two the next day and one from the 11th-16th. Single birds were also seen at Swalecliffe from Nov 12th-Dec 11th, at Higham on the Nov 14th and Dec 28th, at Foreness on the Nov 16th and Margate Cemetery on the Nov 24th. During December single birds were seen at Sevenoaks WR and Berengrave NR on the 4th, at Fordwich from 14th-31st and at Broadstairs on the 24th.

A **Lesser Whitethroat**, showing characteristics of one of the eastern races, was trapped and ringed at Sandwich Bay on Dec 6th and seen again there on the 19th.

During November and December one or two **Dartford Warblers** were recorded from Sandwich Bay, Samphire Hoe, Oare Marshes, DBO and Reculver Marshes.

Dartford Warbler by Alex Perry

Up to four **Firecrests** were seen at DBO, Bockhill, Sandwich Bay, Eastbrook Park, Orlestone Forest, Denge and Eggringe Woods, Canterbury, Berengrave NR and South Foreland.

During November as many as five **Ring Ouzels** were seen at South Foreland, Abbotscliffe, Pegwell Bay, Copt Point, Samphire Hoe, Lower Hope Point, Orlestone Forest and Langdon Hole with the last report from Fan Bay on the 17th.

A **Red-breasted Flycatcher** was trapped and ringed at DBO on Nov 20th.

During November and December up to eight **Black Redstarts** were seen at Dungeness, Reculver, Dover Harbour, Ramsgate, Staplehurst, Kingsdown, Samphire Hoe, Bough Beech, East Malling and Langdon Bay.

A female **PIED WHEATEAR** was found on the rocks at the car park at Reculver on the afternoon of Nov 11th and performed well for visiting birders but could not be found the next day. This is only the fourth record for Kent but the second for Reculver

Pied Wheatear by Matt Hindle

SPARROWS TO BUNTINGS

During November and December up to 12 **Water Pipits** were seen at Stodmarsh/Grove Ferry with smaller numbers at Dungeness RSPB, Worth Marshes, Cliffe Pools, Capel Fleet, Swanscombe Marshes, Sandwich Bay, Fordwich, Cliffe Pools and Dartford Marshes.

During this period up to five **Hawfinch** was seen at Sevenoaks, Bedgebury Pinetum, Hemsted Forest, Orlestone Forest, Shadoxhurst and South Foreland. A **Serin** flew W over Shuart on Nov 9th.In November and December one or two **Lapland Buntings** were seen at Reculver Marshes, DBO, Minnis Bay, Sandwich Bay, Oare Marshes and Lydd.

Snow Bunting by Barry Wright

As many as 22 **Snow Buntings** were seen at South Foreland, Leysdown, North Foreland, Seasalter, Conyer, Pegwell Bay, Hythe, South Swale LNR, Dumpton, Walmer, Reculver, Dungeness, Grain, Shellness, Bockhill, Tankerton, Folkestone, Swalecliffe, Sandwich Bay, Minnis Bay, Samphire Hoe, Abbotscliffe and Langdon Cliffs.

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, N. Burt, G. Burton, F. Cackett, J. Cantelo, J. Carnell, P. Carr, R. Carr, M. Casemore, J. Chantler, P. Chantler, M. Chidwick, J. Childs, G. Coultrip, K. Cutting, DBO (per D. Walker), A. Dunstan, B. East, P. Edmonson, A. Edwards, D. Faulkener, Folkestone and Hythe Birds (per I. Roberts), Foreness Bird Group, C. Gibbard, M. Gould, R. Heading, A. Hindle, C. Hindle, M. Hindle, M. Hollingworth, S. Huggins, M. Kennett, J. King, R. Knight, O. Leyshon, A. Lipczynski, K. Lord, R. Mace, 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, 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), Sevenoaks WR (per S. Clerici), I. Shepherd, D. 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, M. Watts, C. White, M. Wilson, T. Wilson, J. Woolgar, B. Woolhouse, B. Wright and M.Wright.

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

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

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

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

Black Brant	Seasalter	October 12th-19th
Black Brant (adult)	Seasalter & Swalecliffe	Nov 24th-25th, Dec 17th
Black Brant (adult)	Reculver Marshes	December 4th-31st
Montagu's Harrier	Harty Ferry, S.Swale, Conyer	June 5th & 6th
Stone-curlew	Pegwell Bay	June 25th
Buff-breasted Sandpiper (adult)	Elmley	August 23rd
White-winged Black Tern (juvenile)	Bough Beech	August 23rd
Barred Warbler	Worth Marshes	September 7th-10th
Rough-legged Buzzard (juvenile)	Reculver Marshes	November 4th
Black Guillemot (flying E)	Grenham Bay	October 11th
Arctic Warbler	Shuart	October 9th
Melodious Warbler	DBO	May 17th
Rose-coloured Starling	DBO	June 5th
Rose-coloured Starling	Dungeness RSPB	June 10th-13th
Rose-coloured Starling (adult)	Palmarsh, Hythe	Sept 28th-Oct 28th

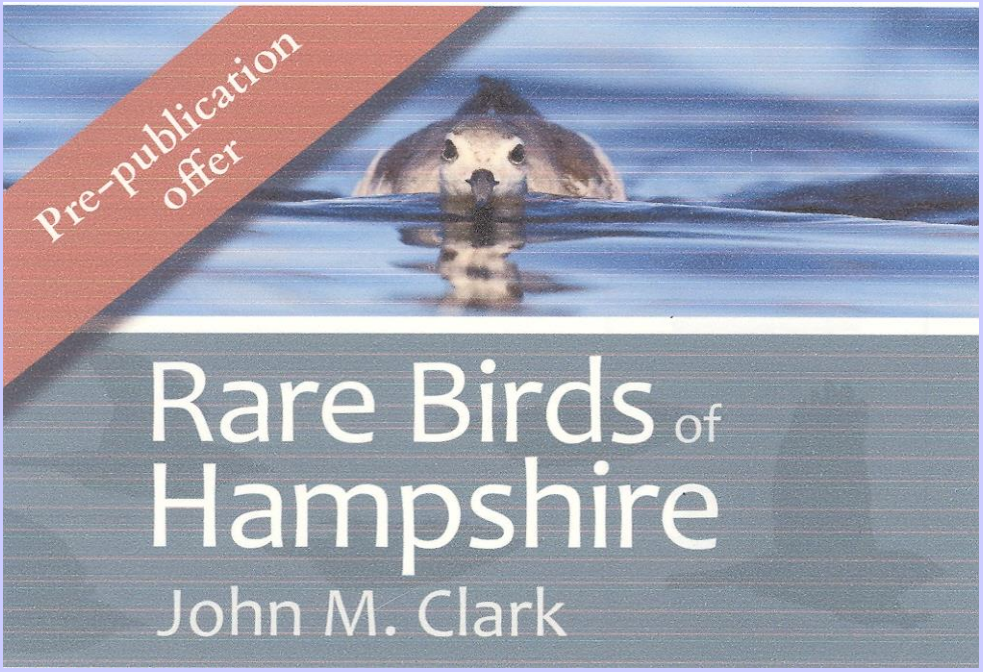
Fifty Years Ago

Twite

Twite by H Gronvold (PDI)

The high numbers of late 1971 remained throughout January-February. There were 250 at Harty on Jan. 9th, 200 at Sandwich Bay on the 10th and 21st and 600 at Cliffe on Feb. 23rd. Flocks of 20-60 frequented several other Medway and Thames localities until Mar. 18th.

Norman McCanch
KBR 1972



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The book, approximately 500 pages, includes:

A Brief History of Rare Bird Recording in Hampshire.

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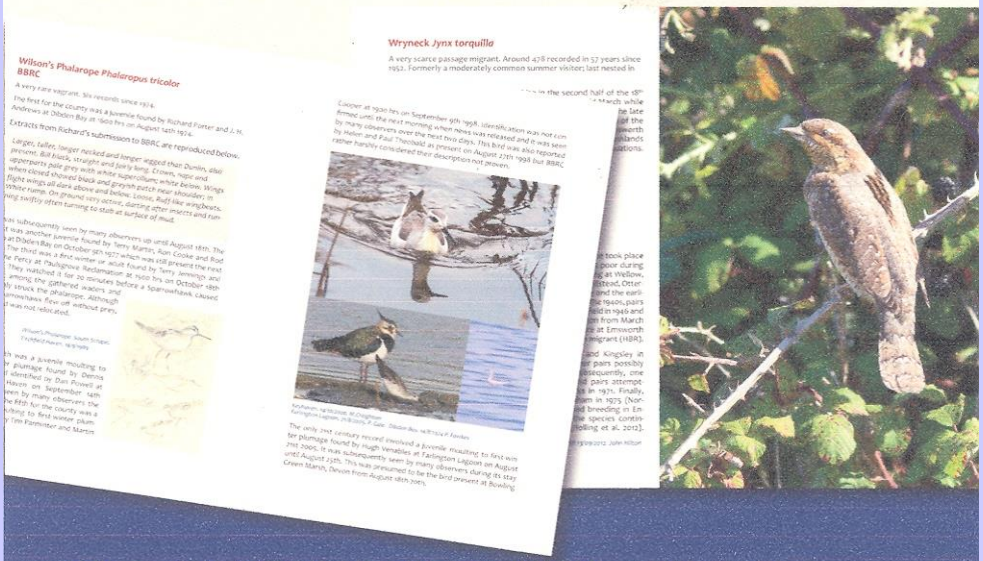
Appendices listing escapes, 'the ones that got away', ship-assisted birds, historic records from parts of Hampshire now in Dorset and non-proven records.



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