

KOS News

The Newsletter of the Kent Ornithological Society

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May 2020



Juvenile Blackbird by Mark Chidwick

- News & Announcements • Have you had your 5-a-day? •
- From Siberia to Australia via the Amazon in search of a lens cap
- Mystery Bird - answer • Bird Sightings - MARCH AND APRIL •
- Fifty Years Ago • Lockdown birding 670 years ago •

Editorial

In my last editorial I was anticipating the prospect of an imminent lockdown restricting the opportunities for birding. As we all feared, that came to pass in the last week of March and since then I have been confined to garden birding for family reasons. As I mentioned at the time, the prospect was not too daunting as I am able to enjoy interesting birding in seclusion, getting to know the intimate lives of my local Robins, Dunnocks, Blackbirds, House sparrows and Magpies, all of which nest alongside Blue tits and Great tits. Close observation also produced some surprises, for the first time in twenty-five years a pair of Coal tits has nested in an adjacent tree and a few spring Willow Warblers were notable. Add to that the much-anticipated arrival of 'my' Turtle Doves and the odd flyover Red kite and Raven it has been an interesting time. Pity about the White-tailed Eagle, though!

Even so, I have found myself more engrossed in gardening and the associated invertebrates to the extent that for possibly the first time I have begun to question just how vital birding, as opposed to birds, actually is to my enjoyment of life. There is no possibility of my giving it up, (heaven forbid!!), but the lockdown has made me realise how much the wider world of natural history appeals to me. Time will tell, but as a degree of infirmity restricts my mobility in the future focussing on the near and small is good.

In the end, I was able to get out and make a brief visit today to a favourite place after fifty days at home. It was a grand feeling, apart from one or two specials and an unexpected species, the thing that struck me was the intensity and quality of the bird song. It is a long time since I experienced the sense of wonder as I stopped to listen to the rattle of a Lesser Whitethroat, the purring of Turtle Doves, the burble and chatter of several Blackcaps, the crescendo of a Nightingale, the explosive challenge of a Cetti's Warbler and the endless rattle and chatter of Reed and Sedge warblers. In recent years each one would be noted in the book and passed without too much thought, today they were to be savoured and it was as if they were reminding me of something lost, but now refound.

It also put me in mind of a piece of ancient literature, recalling impressions of another time and place when people were compelled to withdraw from society in the face of mortal danger and found solace in bird song. I have taken the liberty of including it as a tail piece to this newsletter

Keep safe!

Good birding

Norman

News and announcements

IMPORTANT NOTICE

In view of the increasing concerns over public gatherings & the Coronavirus, it has been decided to cancel this year's AGM. We will seek to conduct the business on line during April & will circulate papers to members by e mail or if necessary, by post in due course. I am sure that members will fully understand the need to take this course of action. For further information please check the society's website and Facebook page.

The British trust for Ornithology has suspended all organised survey work for the current season. However, the details of current and future surveys are shown below in case any members are able to collect relevant data safely during the lockdown. This information would still be welcome for KOS archives and can be submitted through normal channels via Local Area Recorders, details on the KOS website.

A New Lifetime Honorary Member for KOS



Professor Debbie Pain

On Tuesday 12th May, on Radio 4's regular programme "*The Life Scientific*", Jim Al-Khalili interviewed Professor Debbie Pain about her lifetime's research in Conservation.

I listened in fascination as it turned out that Professor Pain had been born in Ramsgate, educated in Kent, took her first degree - in environmental chemistry at Wye College – and then did a D Phil at Oxford on the biochemistry of lead poisoning from ammunition sources in birds.

In the course of the programme Professor Pain explained how a bird loving teacher at school had first ignited her passion for birds, and she recalled a vivid memory of her class tiptoeing out of their classroom, led by that teacher, to observe a flock of linnets feeding in the school grounds close by.

Professor Pain worked for 16 years in the RSPB's research department where she initiated the International Research section, which led her to work closely with the Indian government to examine the widespread death of vultures in the sub-continent – work which resulted in the discovery of the deadly effect of Diclofenac - a commonly used livestock anti-inflammatory drug given to cattle - on birds.

More recently Professor Pain has been closely involved with the efforts to establish an "ark" breeding population of the endangered Spoonbill Sandpiper in the UK, work which has included a visit to the Sandpiper's breeding grounds in a remote area of North Eastern Russia.

She is currently a member of the Station Biologique de la Tour du Valat Science Council, Cambridge Conservation Initiative (CCI) Collaborative Fund Selection Panel, Lead Ammunition Group and is an Ambassador for WWT and a Fellow of WWF-UK.

As the programme ended the thought struck me that such a distinguished scientist, working in conservation with an emphasis on birds, who had been born and educated in Kent should be invited to become a member of KOS.

I suggested via email to the executive committee that we should offer Professor Pain Honorary Life Membership of KOS and I received a rapid response enthusiastically agreeing with the proposal.

I duly contacted Professor Pain who was delighted to accept membership, and revealed that her early birding took place around Stodmarsh and Sandwich Bay, areas she still visits when in Kent to see her parents.

I am therefore delighted to announce that our newest Honorary Life Member is Professor Pain – and I urge all of you who have read this to listen to the programme – **The Life Scientific** – first broadcast on Radio 4 on Tuesday 12th May.

Chris Roome

RARE BREEDING BIRDS IN KENT

The Kent Ornithological Society, like other county bird clubs, coordinates records of rare breeding birds and submits them to the national Rare Birds Breeding Panel (RBBP). However, this is not straightforward. At a time when birders are being exhorted to be careful about publishing records of rare breeding birds on social media, we suspect that many observations are not reported. There are several ways in which you can help monitor rare birds and not risk publicising breeding locations.

1. Ensure you follow the bird watchers code, <https://www.bto.org/sites/default/files/u10/downloads/taking-part/health/bwc.pdf> and do not disturb the bird,
2. Always follow the RBBP guidelines for reporting on social media <http://rbbp.org.uk/>
3. Submit to the KOS database, <http://birdgroups.co.uk/kos/default.asp>, there is an automatic filter, which means that the records are not shown on the website but stored in the database,
4. Submit your records to Birdtrack, there is a similar filter and your observations will be secure.
5. You can e mail in confidence the county recorder Barry Wright umbrellabirds66@gmail.com or the county RBBP coordinator Brian Watmough brianrwat@yahoo.co.uk.

The RBBP <http://rbbp.org.uk/> collects data on the rarer species of birds breeding in the United Kingdom. Its records allow the production of annual totals of breeding pairs for each species on its list. It was formed in 1972 by representatives of the RSPB, the BTO, The Nature Conservancy Council and *British Birds*. The present Panel is made up of representatives of the Joint Nature Conservation Committee, RSPB, BTO, three independent members, and a Secretary and a report is published each year in *British Birds* and available on their website. Approximately 160 species are monitored by the RBBP, although the list is reviewed and changing so that in 2019 Cetti's Warbler will no longer be recorded but Turtle Dove is now being considered. Each year details of between twenty and twenty-five species are submitted by the KOS. Records from Kent are collated by the Kent Ornithological Society and submitted to the UK RBBP. These records form the basis for relevant sections in the annual KBR.

For more information refer back to the previous KOS May Newsletter.

Brian Watmough
ianrwat@yahoo.co.uk

COLOUR RINGED LAPWING



Picture by Richard Pope

A number of young lapwing were colour- ringed, under license, at Elmley National Nature Reserve last summer as part of a pilot research project to investigate the dispersal of young birds. If you see a colour ringed lapwing please email Brian Watmough brianrwat@yahoo.co.uk.

The number of Lapwing breeding in the UK has declined by 55% during the last 25 years and the species is red listed as a bird of conservation concern. Elmley National Nature Reserve is one of the most important sites for breeding lapwing in southern England.

Brian Watmough

BTO BREEDING BIRD SURVEY IN KENT

The BTO/JNCC/RSPB Breeding Bird Survey (BBS) is the main scheme for monitoring the population changes in breeding bird species of the UK. For volunteers in the project BBS is a great way to become familiar with a small area of local countryside whilst contributing valuable data to aid bird research and conservation.

Participation in BBS involves two early-morning visits in the spring to a local 1-km square site, to count all the birds seen and heard whilst walking two 1-km lines across the square. Prior to this there is an initial visit to recce the site and record the habitat of the square, while volunteers also have the option to make later visits in summer to survey for butterflies. Recording forms are sent out to each volunteer or can be downloaded from BBS online, and results of bird counts can also be submitted on the website.

If you can identify common birds by sight and sound then please consider taking on a BBS square – it is very rewarding! There are 135 1-km squares pre-selected for BBS in Kent, the vast majority already mapped with transect lines, though many sites require new volunteers for surveys.

Please take a look at the BBS webpages and use the map to find a square near you: <https://www.bto.org/volunteer-surveys/bbs/taking-part>. Complete the online form that will appear and as regional organiser I will then get in contact to allocate the square to you. Alternatively, just send me an email (rjknight53@gmail.com) to register your interest in BBS for Kent, and suitable squares in your location can then be discussed.

You might carry out a survey in a location such as Boxley Warren which was a vacant site when I signed up for BBS in 2019, and though not all squares are as beautiful as this area

they are of equal importance for monitoring breeding birds. I look forward to hearing from you!



Boxley Warren

Bob Knight

KENT TURTLE DOVE SURVEY 2021

Next year the Kent Ornithological Survey will be running a survey of Turtle Doves in Kent. This species has decreased across the UK in recent times with a particularly marked decline in the last 10 years. Sadly, the Turtle Dove has now been added to the list of species monitored by the Rare Breeding Birds Panel (RBBP). A recent RBBP enquiry has revealed that Kent is now the top county for this species and as such we have a responsibility to try and make an accurate assessment of the Kent population. A lot of important work is being performed by Operation Turtle Dove and there is an active network of RSPB/farmer collaboration in place which involves feeding plots and site monitoring. However, a full and wider survey across Kent is required. This year will involve publicising the survey and the setting up of the survey methods and techniques.

Full details will be available in due course but if you would like to take part in this hugely important survey then please contact either:-

Bob Knight rjknight53@gmail.com
Brian Watmough brianrwat@yahoo.co.uk
Murray Orchard murray.orchard@live.co.uk



BREEDING WADERS OF WET MEADOWS SURVEY 2020

A repeat of this survey, last performed in 2002, will be carried out this year, organised by the BTO/RSPB. The purpose is to assess the importance of both existing and new wet grassland and other breeding wader habitats in England. Volunteers will be required to visit allocated sites on three occasions between mid-April and end of June. Visits should be at least a week apart and be made between dawn and midday – avoiding cold, wet or windy weather.

A map will be provided showing the boundary of your site.

In Kent there are a total of 139 sites to be covered. Of these, coverage of 62 is being arranged by the RSPB and its network of volunteers. Of the remaining 77 sites, 30 are classed as Priority 1 sites and 47 as Priority 2 sites. It is hoped to get KOS and Kent BTO members (and other volunteers) to cover all the Priority 1 sites and as many Priority 2 sites as possible.

The Priority 1 sites comprise all those previously surveyed in 2002 and those included in a partial re-survey in 2009/10. Coverage of these sites is essential to be able to compare the earlier data with the 2020 survey. Also included in the Priority 1 sites are several Agri-Environment Scheme (AES) fields which comprise Lapwing plots and areas of newly created/improved wet grassland.

All remaining sites, which comprise areas last surveyed pre-2002 and AES fields, are classed as Priority 2 sites.

The full breakdown of Kent sites is given below: -

Priority 1 Sites (30)

12 surveyed in 2002

3 surveyed in 2009/10

15 AES sites (5 Lapwing plots; 10 new/improved wet grass)

Priority 2 Sites (47)

18 surveyed pre-2002

29 AES sites (17 Lapwing plots; 12 new/improved wet grass)

The greatest priority is to cover all wet grassland sites previously surveyed in 2002 and 2009/10. These are given in the table below. It is hoped, however, to also get coverage of the priority 1 AES sites and as many of the Priority 2 sites as possible.

Region	Coord_org	Priority	Site_name	Code_2020	Central OS GR	10 km sq	Site_type
KENT	BTO	1	Lingfield-Edenbridge	6600	TQ416448	TQ44	Surv_2002
KENT	BTO	1	Penshurst Bridge/Collie	3958	TQ528420	TQ54	Surv_2002
KENT	BTO	1	Stilthead-Eldridges Lock	3952	TQ635471	TQ64	Surv_2002
KENT	BTO	1	Pinkham To Stilthead (Medway)	3951	TQ663476	TQ64	Surv_2002
KENT	BTO	1	Tillingham Valley	10255	TQ900207	TQ92	Surv_2002
KENT	BTO	1	Palmarsh G.P.	4040	TR130330	TR13	Surv_2002
KENT	BTO	1	Puxton Marshes	4023	TR199603	TR26	Surv_2002
KENT	BTO	1	Wickhambreaux To Bokesbourne	4011	TR219583	TR25	Surv_2002
KENT	BTO	1	Preston Valley	4010	TR240611	TR26	Surv_2002
KENT	BTO	1	Wantsum Marshes (Wantsum)	4017	TR249662	TR26	Surv_2002
KENT	BTO	1	Hacklinge (North Stream)	4004	TR338544	TR35	Surv_2002
KENT	BTO	1	Sandwich Bay	4000	TR344604	TR36	Surv_2002
KENT	BTO	1	Cheyne Court/Walland Marsh	10540	TQ982233	TQ92	Surv_200910
KENT	BTO	1	Walland Marsh / Woolpack Inn Area	4051	TQ984240	TQ92	Surv_200910
KENT	BTO	1	Walland Marsh / Cheyne Court	4050	TQ991225	TQ92	Surv_200910

This is an on-line survey and volunteers will be able to select a site to cover from the BTO website and download instructions, maps and recording forms. Please visit the BTO website for further details

<https://www.bto.org/our-science/projects/breeding-waders-wet-meadows>

Interested volunteers should contact the Regional Organiser – Bob Knight rjknight53@gmail.com

JNCC SEABIRD COUNT 2015/20

– Survey of Urban Gulls in Kent 2020

In 2018 a national survey was carried out of all seabird species nesting in “natural” locations. In Kent this covered all our breeding Gull species (Herring, LBB, Common, Black-headed and Mediterranean), Terns (Sandwich, Common and Little), plus Fulmar and Cormorant. Last year the survey was extended to cover our urban nesting Gulls, which comprise the large numbers of Herring and Lesser Black-backed Gulls nesting on the roofs of our coastal towns and inland, particularly on factory roofs in industrial estates. Full details of the Seabird Count can be found at <http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/page-7413>. Please also refer to the March 2019 Newsletter for further background. 2020 is the final year of the Seabird Count and the aim is to complete the work started in 2019.

My thanks to all those who agreed to act as local organisers last year and who arranged surveys in their regions. A special word of thanks to Ian Roberts, who surveyed every roof top in Folkestone and Hythe and mapped the locations of 877 Herring Gull nests! An extraordinary effort beyond the call of duty!

I will be contacting last year’s local organisers to help again, and to spread the word and enlist volunteers to assist in their areas. There are two arms to the survey in Kent: a survey of ‘repeat sites’, which are those where Gulls were surveyed during the last seabird census in 2000, and a survey of randomly selected squares, aimed to assess the expansion of breeding ranges since the last census. For the random squares, a total of 182 1km squares was originally selected across Kent, using a stratified random sampling approach. This means that all squares contain potential nesting habitat but not necessarily breeding Gulls. Covering such a large number of squares for the national survey is proving to be a challenge, but I would like to ensure that we get good coverage of all known sites in the county so that the Kent population estimates of our breeding Herring and Lesser Black-backed Gulls (combined with the 2018 survey of natural sites) are as accurate as possible.



Repeat (and potentially new) Sites

In 2019 coverage was achieved for Medway Towns, Maidstone, Faversham, Canterbury, Seasalter-Herne Bay, Thanet, Kingsdown-Dover Docks, Samphire Hoe-Hythe and Dymchurch-Dungeness. Remaining areas that need to be surveyed in 2020 are Dartford-Gravesend, Sittingbourne, Sheerness, Ashford and Dover.

The survey of repeat sites requires counting and categorising all birds present at the site (AON – Apparently Occupied Nest; AOT – Apparently Occupied Territory or IND – count of individual adults) from suitable vantage points.

Random Square Survey

The random square survey involves making ground-based counts as above. Obviously, it may not be possible to determine counts of AON from ground level and so assessments will largely be AOT and more likely IND. Only single visits are required but volunteers may wish to make repeat visits to confirm or otherwise previous observations.

Many of the 182 1km squares randomly selected across Kent were inland rural or suburban areas highly unlikely to hold breeding Gulls, and by checking through the map links 100 squares have been removed from the list and will be scored 0. There are still 52 squares remaining that need to be covered which have a reasonable chance of holding breeding Gulls, and some will certainly do so ([see list below](#)). If people could look through the list and plan a couple of late spring/early summer drives or bike rides to take in a couple of squares near to them, that would greatly help to complete the coverage.

For both surveys the recording period is end-April to mid-June (although later records are acceptable if young haven’t fledged).

If anyone wishes to help with either the Repeat Site or Random Square surveys, please contact Murray Orchard at murray.orchard@live.co.uk

Kent Random Squares:-

1KM SQ	MAP LINK	LOCATION
TR0041	http://www.geograph.org.uk/showmap.php?gridref=TR0041	Ashford
TQ5372	http://www.geograph.org.uk/showmap.php?gridref=TQ5372	Dartford
TQ9063	http://www.geograph.org.uk/showmap.php?gridref=TQ9063	Sittingbourne
TQ9165	http://www.geograph.org.uk/showmap.php?gridref=TQ9165	Sittingbourne
TQ7058	http://www.geograph.org.uk/showmap.php?gridref=TQ7058	Larkfield
TQ6175	http://www.geograph.org.uk/showmap.php?gridref=TQ6175	Northfleet
TQ5942	http://www.geograph.org.uk/showmap.php?gridref=TQ5942	Southborough
TQ5946	http://www.geograph.org.uk/showmap.php?gridref=TQ5946	Tonbridge
TQ5472	http://www.geograph.org.uk/showmap.php?gridref=TQ5472	Dartford
TQ5174	http://www.geograph.org.uk/showmap.php?gridref=TQ5174	Crayford
TQ5846	http://www.geograph.org.uk/showmap.php?gridref=TQ5846	Tonbridge
TQ6655	http://www.geograph.org.uk/showmap.php?gridref=TQ6655	Kings Hill (West Malling)
TQ5272	http://www.geograph.org.uk/showmap.php?gridref=TQ5272	Dartford
TQ9472	http://www.geograph.org.uk/showmap.php?gridref=TQ9472	Minster (Sheppey)
TQ6275	http://www.geograph.org.uk/showmap.php?gridref=TQ6275	Northfleet
TQ7060	http://www.geograph.org.uk/showmap.php?gridref=TQ7060	Leybourne/New Hythe
TR3863	http://www.geograph.org.uk/showmap.php?gridref=TR3863	Ramsgate
TQ6176	http://www.geograph.org.uk/showmap.php?gridref=TQ6176	Swanscombe
TQ5947	http://www.geograph.org.uk/showmap.php?gridref=TQ5947	Tonbridge
TQ9265	http://www.geograph.org.uk/showmap.php?gridref=TQ9265	Sittingbourne
TR3259	http://www.geograph.org.uk/showmap.php?gridref=TR3259	Sandwich
TR1866	http://www.geograph.org.uk/showmap.php?gridref=TR1866	Herne
TQ9075	http://www.geograph.org.uk/showmap.php?gridref=TQ9075	Sheerness
TQ6173	http://www.geograph.org.uk/showmap.php?gridref=TQ6173	Northfleet
TR3370	http://www.geograph.org.uk/showmap.php?gridref=TR3370	Westbrook (Margate)
TQ7867	http://www.geograph.org.uk/showmap.php?gridref=TQ7867	Gillingham
TQ7268	http://www.geograph.org.uk/showmap.php?gridref=TQ7268	Strood
TR3041	http://www.geograph.org.uk/showmap.php?gridref=TR3041	Dover
TQ5739	http://www.geograph.org.uk/showmap.php?gridref=TQ5739	Tunbridge Wells
TR1066	http://www.geograph.org.uk/showmap.php?gridref=TR1066	Whitstable
TR2140	http://www.geograph.org.uk/showmap.php?gridref=TR2140	Hawkinge
TQ5478	http://www.geograph.org.uk/showmap.php?gridref=TQ5478	Rainham (Essex)
TR3664	http://www.geograph.org.uk/showmap.php?gridref=TR3664	Pegwell
TR2943	http://www.geograph.org.uk/showmap.php?gridref=TR2943	Whitfield
TQ6744	http://www.geograph.org.uk/showmap.php?gridref=TQ6744	Paddock Wood
TR0043	http://www.geograph.org.uk/showmap.php?gridref=TR0043	Ashford
TR3967	http://www.geograph.org.uk/showmap.php?gridref=TR3967	Broadstairs
TQ6960	http://www.geograph.org.uk/showmap.php?gridref=TQ6960	Snodland
TR3651	http://www.geograph.org.uk/showmap.php?gridref=TR3651	Deal
TR0864	http://www.geograph.org.uk/showmap.php?gridref=TR0864	Seasalter
TQ9961	http://www.geograph.org.uk/showmap.php?gridref=TQ9961	Oare
TR3670	http://www.geograph.org.uk/showmap.php?gridref=TR3670	Cliftonville

TR0241	http://www.geograph.org.uk/showmap.php?gridref=TR0241	Ashford
TQ5842	http://www.geograph.org.uk/showmap.php?gridref=TQ5842	Southborough
TR0044	http://www.geograph.org.uk/showmap.php?gridref=TR0044	Ashford
TR3144	http://www.geograph.org.uk/showmap.php?gridref=TR3144	Whitfield
TQ6272	http://www.geograph.org.uk/showmap.php?gridref=TQ6272	Gravesend
TR3754	http://www.geograph.org.uk/showmap.php?gridref=TR3754	Deal
TQ5972	http://www.geograph.org.uk/showmap.php?gridref=TQ5972	Bean
TR0341	http://www.geograph.org.uk/showmap.php?gridref=TR0341	Ashford
TQ5938	http://www.geograph.org.uk/showmap.php?gridref=TQ5938	Tunbridge Wells
TQ6473	http://www.geograph.org.uk/showmap.php?gridref=TQ6473	Gravesend

Surveys

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

Kent Breeding Bird Atlas

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

Editorial and Records sub-committee

The KOS Editorial & Records Committee would like to hear from any individuals within the membership that would like to join the county rarity panel. Contact Barry Wright or Alan Fossey, (details above)

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

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.

Have you had your 5-a-day?

Not vegetables or fruit, but birds of prey.

I started birdwatching as a callow youth, joining the KOS in 1959. Birds of prey were few and far between and if one saw a Kestrel, that was likely to be the only species of raptor on the list for that day. Now any day out holds the potential of seeing several species and I aim to find five, sometimes even within a couple of hours in the field. Research for this little article has emphasised the population changes during my time and as far back as Ticehurst's History of the Birds of Kent of 1909, when most of his bird of prey records are a sad list of specimens "collected" throughout the county. The long sequence of KBR's, The Birds of Kent of 1981, the three BTO Atlases and the Kent Breeding Bird Atlas of 2015 make for fascinating comparisons of the status of the county's raptors.

This has been a remarkable turnaround from my early experience so whilst there is an undeniable drop in the numbers of common birds and especially of sub-Saharan migrants, the increase in birds of prey in the Southeast should be celebrated.



Sparrowhawk by Mike Gould

Ironically Kestrel numbers have declined more recently. They appear to have been replaced as the bird of the motorway by Buzzards, just as in France. Sparrowhawks were not recorded as breeding in Kent between 1953-74 so my young self struggled to see one then but The Kent Breeding Atlas suggests a population of over 1000 pairs by the period 2008-13, in spite of a more recent BTO Breeding Bird Survey assessment of a 30% decline nationally since 1995. They are now frequently reported from gardens throughout the county, being a secondary beneficiary of all the bird feeders provided.

Buzzards are now a familiar sight throughout the county, whereas years ago they were rarely seen outside the West Country. The change in their range between the first BTO Atlas of 1968-72 and the Kent Breeding Bird Atlas of 2008-13 is spectacular and matched by several other raptor species.



Buzzards by Andrew Finney

Peregrines have recovered from wartime persecution and the effects of widespread use of toxic chemicals in agriculture to colonise inland sites rarely if ever used previously. Now no self-respecting cathedral is without a pair of Peregrines, although the pair at Canterbury have not bred successfully recently. Nick Tardivel, who has ringed the chicks in the past, surmises that the female is now infertile but still well able to defend her territory.



Peregrine by Andrew Finney

Red Kites used to be so rare and I recall hitch-hiking into the wilds of mid-Wales in 1963 in search of the relict population there. Now they are moving outwards from the Chilterns release area and can be seen throughout the county, sometimes with large numbers seen moving through in spring. Breeding records in Kent are so far either sparse or well suppressed but the species has the potential to rival the Buzzard in familiarity.



Red Kite by Martyn Wilson

Marsh Harriers, from the single pair at Minsmere in 1970, are now common across any suitable habitat in the county and perhaps benefitted from the Foot-and-Mouth footpath ban of 2001 by nesting at an undisturbed Stodmarsh in that year. I doubt that William Birch, the keeper at Stodmarsh when it was a duck shoot, would appreciate the current situation. They used to be a summer migrant but now the adults appear not to dare leave their territories or is that another effect of global warming? On my most recent visit to Stodmarsh in early March there were four males displaying. The winter roosts are quite a spectacle, although local numbers of up to 40 have not yet reached the three figures recorded at Titchwell in Norfolk.

Hen Harriers are still wintering in the county but in reduced numbers compared with some of the harder winters of the 1980's and '90's. To watch them drift in to roost of a winter's evening is a treat but requires sharp eyes and warm clothes. The new tower hide at Stodmarsh provides an excellent vantage point and shelter, as the birds come in from ranging widely around east Kent.



Hen Harrier by John Shilling

Hobbies are now returning from Africa and it is to be hoped that their numbers will recover further after the losses caused by the appallingly cold and wet May of 2012. A spring visit to Stodmarsh, when permitted, can provide as many as forty in the air over the reserve and there could be as many as 350 pairs in the county.

As I write an unknown number of White-tailed Eagles of either continental or Isle of Wight origin have been circulating in the county causing alarm to local Buzzards and excitement to birders. It would have been interesting to see how the Stodmarsh Marsh Harriers reacted had Roy Dennis selected the Stour valley for the latest release scheme. If the continental White-tailed Eagle population continues to increase they may be a more frequent visitor, especially to east Kent.



White-tailed Eagle by Andrew Lipczynski

Other raptors such as Osprey and Merlin, Black Kite, Montagu's Harrier, Red-footed Falcon and Rough-legged Buzzard would always be a bonus and I hardly dare to mention Honey Buzzard and Goshawk. If necessary, I recruit some "honorary" predators to fill a gap, such as Short-eared or Barn Owls or at a push, Raven. These last bred on the cliffs east of Dover in 2009 and have now become widespread, being encountered inland, as predicted in the Kent Breeding Bird Atlas.

Other groups of birds could also be collected in the same way; grebes, geese and herons to mention just a few. It just adds a little more entertainment to a day's birding. Does anyone else have similar personal targets?

Chris Cox

From Siberia to Australia via the Amazon in search of a lens cap

I'm not often seduced by rare birds these days but there are exceptions. It was Saturday 15th October 2016. Martin Warburton and I rendezvoused with Brendan Ryan and headed off to Spurn. We saw the Siberian Accentor without any trouble and a supporting cast that included Pink-footed Geese, Woodcock, Shore Lark, Pallas's, Yellow-browed and Dusky Warblers, and fields full of thrushes, made for an excellent day out. A minor disappointment for me came when I moved my stuff from Brendan's car to mine and I dropped my camera on the road. The camera was fine but the lens cover was caput!



Siberian Accentor by Brendan Ryan

A search online and a new cap arrived from Amazon in short order. However, although it looked to be the part online, it didn't fit. No problem! I tried the old and trusted method and went shopping in Canterbury. I bought a generic cap in Jessops which fitted well although the cord to attach it to the camera did seem a bit flimsy. Nevertheless, it was just in time to head off to Australia with the Abrams and TP Laws.

It is now Tuesday 1st November and the first day of my first visit to Australia. We headed for the Royal National Park to the south of Sydney. Wow! On the lawns by the visitor centre there was a large flock of grazing Sulphur-crested Cockatoos looking like pure white feathery sheep with equally 15 incongruous Purple Swamphens strutting amongst them. We were soon immersed in a fantastic procession of new and amazing birds which included Variegated Fairy Wren, Sacred Kingfisher and Topknot Pigeon. The camera (a Canon SX 50) was getting full use but my new lens cap was nowhere to be seen. The cord had proved a bit too flimsy!



Rainbow Bee Eater by Terry Laws

Moving on, it is Monday 7th November. We were now in the breathtakingly beautiful Blue Mountains. We'd met up with Ross Crates, a Ph D student at Canberra University who was studying the critically endangered Regent Honeyeater. Ross comes from Herne near Whitstable but had been studying in the Blue Mountains for the last two years. He had already found us a seemingly endless supply of Honeyeater species when we stopped along a dirt track to admire our first Rainbow Bee-eater (the only Bee-eater to occur in Australia) and have a coffee break. We were standing at the back of the Ute when Chris Abrams picked up something out of the dirt. It was a lens cap. A Canon lens cap. In apparently pristine condition and complete with attachment cord. It fitted perfectly and I've still got it! So, on a remote dirt track in the Blue Mountains about 60 miles inland from Sydney, what were the chances?

Geoff Burton

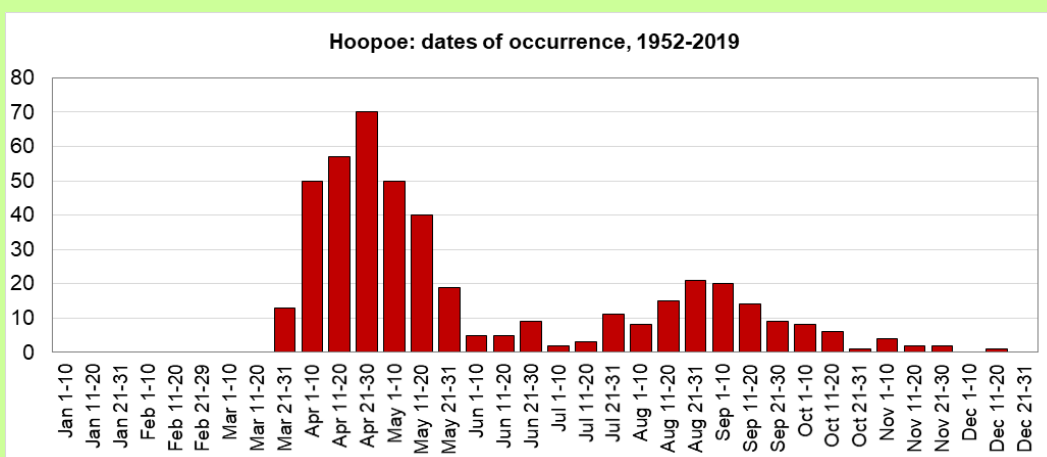
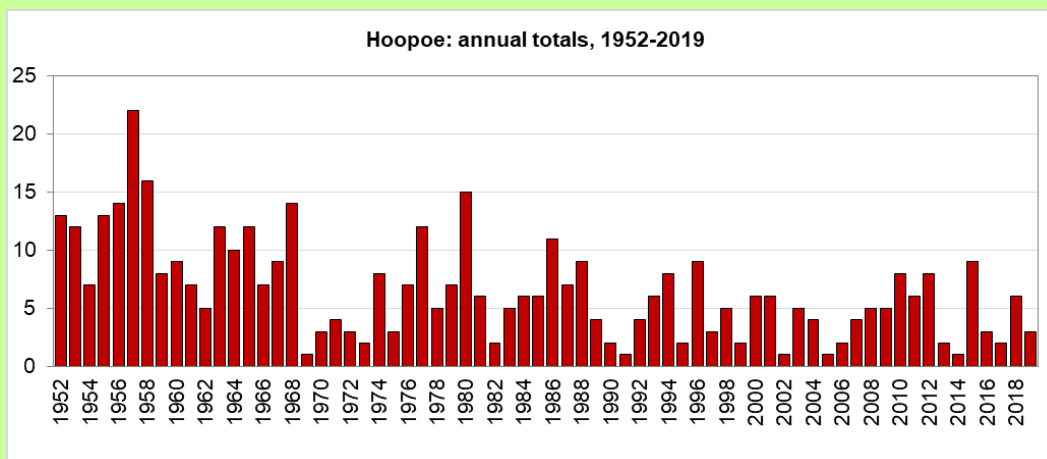
Mystery Bird

A History of Hoopoes in Kent



The last newsletter included a couple of charts showing annual and seasonal patterns of occurrence for a mystery species. Congratulations if you worked out or guessed that it was Hoopoe.

Below, I've shown the same charts, but now extended back a bit further in time, to 1952, when the KOS was formed. The long-term trend remains very similar to that shown previously for 1969 onwards: it is one of slow but steady decline, masked to a degree by moderate year-to-year fluctuations. The seasonal pattern has changed little over the years, with the majority (51%) appearing in spring between late March and late May, smaller autumn arrivals during August-October, and a few in summer or later in the autumn.



There may be a few small errors in the data used to create these charts. I used partly computerised KOS data and partly Kent Bird Reports. Some KBRs contain imprecise summaries of occurrences, such as “one at three localities on Thanet in the second half of April 1959”. That could mean anything from three separate individuals to just one individual seen in three places, and of course it doesn’t allow exact dates to be entered. In that case, I made the judgement that there had been one bird, and gave it the notional arrival date of 20th April. Another example concerns a record at Barfreston on 15th August 1964: that isn’t in the systematic list of that year’s KBR but is mentioned in the ‘Aspects of the Year’ section, so I have included it. Some of these discrepancies and imprecisions might be resolvable by looking at the paper record cards, but they are currently in deep storage and not readily available for review; the hope is that that situation will improve before too long. The number of uncertain records is small in proportion to the total, and it’s unlikely that the problem makes much difference to the overall patterns shown here.

There have been thirteen March records, all singles, with the earliest in the year being one at Littlestone on 23rd March 1959. At the end of the year, there have been eight birds first seen in November, and one in December, the latter being at Dumpton (Ramsgate) on 13th December 1996. Two of the November arrivals were wintering birds: one at Higham from 22nd November 1985 to 1st March 1986, the other at Snodland from 24th November 2013 to 20th April 2014. Those were by far the longest stays of any Hoopoes, and there were only two other records involving birds remaining for more than 50 days. They were a pair near Canterbury from “June/July to the end of August” in 1956, and at least one and possibly a pair at “a N.W. Kent village from early June to 29th July” in 1959.

During 1952-2019, there has been no evidence of Hoopoe breeding in Kent, although records such as those mentioned above for N.W. Kent and Canterbury suggest that possibly it has been attempted. There were a number of occurrences of two birds together at suitable locations in the earlier years, and one of four together at Chegworth, near Leeds, on 30th May 1967, but multiple occurrence has become increasingly rare. The last instance of two together was at Foreness on 25th-26th September 1994.



Hoopoe, Sandwich Bay, August 2013 by Norman McCanch

Talk of occurrences of groups of Hoopoes reminds me to mention (again) a favourite excerpt from Norman Ticehurst's 1909 *Birds of Kent*. Listing records of Storm Petrel, he says "Another ... was shot at Margate in a storm of wind among a flock of Hoopoes in January 1793". His view of this account is hinted at merely by his rare use of an exclamation mark.

Ticehurst listed several instances of Hoopoes being thought to nest in the county, from the late eighteenth century onwards, but they were all presumptive rather than definite. James Harrison, in his 1953 *Birds of Kent*, described the one fully authenticated nesting, near Hythe in summer 1948 when W. S. (Tommy) Nevin recorded four young being reared. It seems that the birds returned to attempt breeding in 1949 but, by then, access was not possible as the property had become a convent and Mr Nevin remained, personally, nun the wiser. However, the gardener reported that nesting was again attempted but, because the tree was to be felled, he removed the eggs, leaving them abandoned on a wall.

A lot of the early records of Hoopoe concerned birds that were shot. Ticehurst knew of "upwards of ninety birds, most of which have been killed within the last seventy years"; he described it as "a lengthy and shameful list of acts of wanton destruction". Harrison thought that the proportion being shot had declined in the first half of the twentieth century, but it did continue. At least three of those occurring in the 1950s were noted as being shot, the last one at Chiddingstone in August 1957. Note, though, that the decline of Hoopoe numbers in Kent has continued after the period when shooting of anything eye-

catchingly different was so prevalent, and is presumably driven by wider effects of habitat change and pollution, as for so many species.

One aspect of the Hoopoe records is that many more of them than of other scarce migrants are found inland. It's very likely this is the result of them being somewhat unusual in appearance and prone to feeding on short turf such as lawns and playing fields where they are readily seen and reported by non-birders. As Bill Oddie noted forty years ago, an unusual bird seen on a vicar's lawn will inevitably be a Hoopoe. The table below shows the percentages of Hoopoes found in four broad zones of the county, with similar data for Icterine Warbler, another scarce migrant from the near continent, for comparison.

	Hoopoe			Icterine Warbler
	1952-1970	1971-2019	1952-2019	1849-2019
	n=194 %	n=251 %	n=445 %	n=245 %
North	5.7	9.2	7.6	6.1
East coastal	23.2	41.4	33.5	58.0
South coastal	23.7	21.5	22.5	33.1
Inland	47.4	27.9	36.4	2.9

Over the whole period 1952-2019, 36.4% of Hoopoes were found inland – a striking contrast with just 2.9% of Icterine Warblers (all Kent records for them are included). The pattern for Icterine Warbler is probably typical for an inconspicuous scarce migrant passerine. It was noticeable, though, that coastal records for Hoopoe became relatively more frequent as time went on. Thus, looking at the records for 1952-1970, over 47% were inland, whereas during 1971-2019, that figure had fallen to 27.9%. At the same time, the proportion occurring around the east Kent coast (essentially Reculver-Dover) had increased substantially. It's my belief, although I don't think it can be proved, that this is a result of changing patterns of observer coverage, and especially the growth of intensive recording at places like Foreness and St Margaret's Bay, rather than a genuine decline in birds reaching inland parts of the county. Perhaps the fact that the proportion of sightings on the south coast has changed little supports my theory, since coverage of the key site there – Dungeness – has been relatively uniform over the period.

The average number of Hoopoes seen in Kent each year between 2000 and 2019 was 4.4. This is in contrast to the twenty years from 1952 to 1971 when the average was 9.9. The last year in which the total was in double figures was 11 in 1986. There have been five years in which only a single bird was recorded, the first surprisingly as early as 1969, then four more from 1991 onwards. There hasn't been a blank year yet, but it must now be on the cards.

Andrew Henderson

KENT BIRD SIGHTINGS FOR MARCH AND APRIL 2020 - Chris Hindle

Where necessary the acceptance of records within this report is subject to ratification by the "British Birds" Rarities Committee (species in capital letters) or the KOS Rarities Committee. The results of their deliberations are regularly published on the KOS Website.

Species that fall into these two categories and therefore need descriptions or good quality photographs to be accepted are highlighted in red.

WEATHER

March began with a cool and showery westerly air stream bringing sunshine and showers and occasional longer spells of rain. It was generally milder and more unsettled from the 7th to the 15th, with belts of rain crossing the country at regular intervals. High pressure then built across the British Isles and a spell of dry, sunny weather followed. There was a cold northerly wind on the 28th with the remainder of the month dry and relatively cloudy. During March, 44mm of rain was recorded at Bishopstone.

Much of **April** was fine and settled with high pressure located in the vicinity of the UK for much of the time, often to the north, and so easterly winds were a regular feature. Less settled spells came from 1st to the 6th, 11th to the 13th and most notably in a cyclonic spell from the 27th. Plenty of sunshine allowed daytime temperatures to rise well above normal. It was generally a dry and sunny month with 40% of average rainfall and 151% of average sunshine making it the sunniest April since records began in 1929.

EARLIEST SPRING MIGRANTS IN 2020

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

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

Garganey – males were seen a Northward Hill and Stodmarsh on Mar 16th **(+6)**
Osprey – single birds were seen at Ashford and Pegwell Bay on Apr 4th **(+10)**
Little Ringed Plover – one flew W at Egypt Bay on Mar 14th **(-2)**
Whimbrel – one was recorded flying over DBO on the night of Mar 17th **(-15)**
Common Sandpiper – three were seen at Sandwich Bay on Apr 16th **(+9)**
Greenshank – one was reported from Dungeness RSPB on Mar 18th **(-18)**
Wood Sandpiper – one was seen at Sandwich Bay on Apr 24th **(+3)**
Black Tern – three flew past DBO on Apr 17th **(0)**
Little Tern – there were seven at DBO and one at Lade on Apr 17th **(+6)**
Sandwich Tern – three were seen off DBO on Mar 14th **(+10)**
Common Tern – one was seen off Seabrook on Mar 28th **(+1)**
Arctic Tern – 47 flew past DBO on Apr 17th **(+5)**
Turtle Dove – one was seen at Godmersham Downs on Apr 11th **(0)**
Cuckoo – one was recorded from Staplehurst on Apr 5th **(+6)**
Common Swift – two at Finberry and three at Kennington on Apr 18th **(+3)**
Hobby – one was reported from Worth Marshes on Mar 25th **(-10)**
Sand Martin – one flew N at Lade GPs on Mar 9th **(0)**
Swallow – one was reported from Staplehurst on Mar 6th **(-5)**
House Martin – one at Ashford and three at East Malling on Apr 5th **(+15)**
Tree Pipit – one was seen at Benenden on Apr 1st **(0)**
White Wagtail – two were seen at Allhallows on Mar 3rd **(-7)**
Yellow Wagtail – a male was recorded at Dungeness RSPB on Mar 21st **(+2)**
Nightingale – birds at West Hythe, Blean, Whetsted GPs, Snodland on Apr 6th **(0)**
Black Redstart – single birds were seen at Epple Bay and Dungeness on Mar 1st **(0)**
Common Redstart – a male was recorded at Stuart on Apr 6th **(+3)**
Whinchat – one was reported from Dartford Marshes on Apr 18th **(+7)**
Northern Wheatear – two were found at Foreness on Mar 14th **(+8)**
Ring Ouzel – one was seen at North Foreland on Mar 19th **(-12)**
Grasshopper Warbler – one was heard “reeling” at Stonelees on Apr 12th **(+1)**
Sedge Warbler – one was found on Worth Marshes on Mar 30th **(+2)**
Reed Warbler – one was singing at Chartham on Apr 6th **(0)**
Lesser Whitethroat – one was heard at Conyer on Apr 7th **(-4)**
Common Whitethroat – one was reported from Hillborough on Apr 4th **(0)**
Garden Warbler – a single bird was heard at Seasalter on Apr 16th **(+4)**
Blackcap – there were two migrants at Bockhill on Mar 14th **(-5)**
Chiffchaff – three migrants were seen at DBO on Feb 29th **(-8)**
Willow Warbler – there was one at Whetsted GPs on Mar 22nd **(-2)**

WILDFOWL

A **Pale-bellied Brent Goose** was identified at Reculver Marshes between Mar 11th and 16th and one flew past DBO on Apr 23rd whilst the two **Tundra Bean** Geese remained at Seaton GPs until Mar 22nd and two were seen at Sandwich Bay on Mar 11th and also a **Pink-footed Goose** was identified at Stodmarsh on Apr 27th and at Seaton the next day.



Pink-footed Goose by Brendan Ryan

Russian White-fronted Geese reached a peak of 220 at Swale NNR on Mar 2nd with 186 still there on Mar 16th. During March up to three birds were also seen at Greatstone-on-Sea, Sandwich Bay and Whetsted GPs.

A **Bewick's Swan** was seen at Walland Marsh until Mar 12th and six **Whooper Swans** remained at Appledore until Mar 8th.

Up to six **Egyptian Geese** were seen at Dungeness, Sevenoaks WR, Halstow Marshes, Sandwich Bay, Cliffe Pools, Lade, Singleton, Furnace Pond, Brokes Mill Farm, Horsmonden, Grove Ferry, Conningbrook, Edenbridge, Seabrook, Otford, Kennington, East Peckham, Northward Hill, Penshurst Estate, Postern Park and Bough Beech.

A female **Ruddy Shelduck** was seen at Oare Marshes on Mar 20th and at Sandwich Bay on Mar 24th, at Stodmarsh on the 25th and at Worth Marshes between the 26th and 31st when it was filmed mobbing a White-tailed Eagle!

Up to four **Mandarins** were seen at Bough Beech, Hothfield, Ashford, Brokes Mill Farm, Penshurst Estate, Furnace Pond, Worten Mill, Stodmarsh, East Peckham, Brasted, Goudhurst and Whetsted GPs.

After the first male **Garganey** were seen at Northward Hill and Stodmarsh on Mar 16th up to nine birds were recorded at Dungeness RSPB with one or two seen at Stodmarsh/Grove Ferry, Sandwich Bay, Worth Marshes, Cliffe Pools, Higham Marshes and Oare Marshes. In addition, four migrants flew E past DBO on Mar 23rd with one on 25th.

A **Velvet Scoter** was seen at Swalecliffe on Mar 2nd, there were four at DBO on Apr 17th, 12 at Mill Point the next day and one at Walmer on the 23rd.

The five **Long-tailed Ducks** first seen at Scotney GPs on Jan 1st were still present on Mar 8th.

A female **BUFFLEHEAD** was seen and photographed at Nickoll's Quarry on Apr 19th. It remains to be seen whether it is considered a genuine wild bird because if it is it will be a new species for Kent.

During March and the beginning of April one or two **Goosanders** were seen at Dungeness RSPB, Bough Beech, Conningbrook and Hayesden with the final female at Conningbrook on Apr 5th.

PARTRIDGE TO CORMORANT

Single **Black-throated Divers** were seen at Sandwich Bay on Mar 2nd, Walmer Beach on Mar 8th, Hythe on the Apr 5th, Foreness on Apr 17th with one at DBO on Mar 31st and up to three there on eight dates during April. A **Great Northern Diver** was also seen at Walmer Beach on Mar 8th with another at DBO on Apr 29th.

A **Manx Shearwater** flew S at Sandwich Bay on Mar 31st and others flew past DBO on Apr 14th, 19th, 22nd and 25th with three on the 15th and 18th, two on the 17th and 29th and 12 on the 30th. One also flew past Lade Bay on Apr 20th whilst six flew past Hythe on the 29th.

The **Red-necked Grebe** first reported at Dungeness RSPB on Feb 26th was still present on Mar 18th and the long staying Cliffe Pools bird remained there until Apr 1st. Single birds also flew E at DBO on Mar 6th and Apr 2nd.

A **Slavonian Grebe** was seen at Lower Halstow on Mar 11th and a **Black-necked Grebe** was seen off Sandwich Bay on Mar 20th and there was one at Dungeness RSPB on Mar 21st with two on the 23rd.



White Stork by Jackie Russell

Two **White Storks**, one of them wing-tagged, were reported from Cliffe on Mar 12th and were seen at Dartford Marshes on Mar 13th and 14th. One or two birds were also seen at Kearsney, Bekesbourne, Faversham, Dover and Dymchurch on Apr 5th at St Mary's Bay on the 6th, at Hothfield on the 7th, Goudhurst on the 10th, Harbledown on the 15th, Longfield on the 22nd, Leeds Castle on the 23rd, Nonnington on the 24th and Lympne on the 26th.

A **Glossy Ibis** was seen at Dungeness between Apr 7th and 22nd and two **Spoonbills** flew W at Oare Marshes on Mar 17th.

In March and April single **Bitterns** were seen or heard at Stodmarsh/Grove Ferry, Dungeness RSPB and Elmley.

An adult **Night-heron** flew SW and inland at Stonelees on Apr 24th.

The two long staying **Cattle Egrets** at Worth Marshes and Sandwich Bay were still there on Mar 23rd, whilst five stayed at Grain from Mar 4th-8th and single birds were reported from Bough Beech on Mar 8th and at Oare Marshes from Mar 14th-23rd. There were also two at Dungeness on Mar 21st and flying past

Copt Point on Apr 27th and single birds were seen at Cliffe Pools from Apr 1st-18th, Sandwich on the Apr 8th, Dungeness RSPB on Apr 21st and Conyer on Apr 27th. Four were seen at Luddenham Marshes on Apr 30th.

Up to five **Great White Egrets** were recorded at Dungeness RSPB, Walland Marsh, West Hythe, Wittersham, Swalecliffe, Hamstreet, Lade, Worth Marshes, Pegwell Bay, Appledore, Wouldham, Dartford Marshes, Fairfield, Swale NNR, North Foreland and Stodmarsh/Grove Ferry.

During March and April up to four **Shags** were seen at North Foreland, Ramsgate, Deal, Sandgate, Seabrook and Dover.

BIRDS OF PREY

In March and April up to three **Hen Harriers** were recorded from Stodmarsh/Grove Ferry, Elmley, Shellness, Reculver Marshes, Sandwich Bay, Worth Marshes, Oare Marshes, Conyer and Pegwell Bay.

A female **Montagu's Harrier** was reported flying W at Oare Marshes on Apr 16th and was seen again at Conyer on the 20th.

As many as six **Red Kites** were recorded daily from over 40 sites throughout the County whilst single **Black Kites** were reported from Sittingbourne on Apr 8th, Dungeness on Apr 10th, Whitstable on the 16th and Walmer on Apr 26th.

A **Rough-legged Buzzard** was seen at Worth Marshes on Mar 21st and another was reported flying east at Broadstairs on Apr 23rd.

A probable pale phase **BOOTED EAGLE** flew from Worth Marshes to Pegwell Bay and then NW on Apr 27th. This species would be new for Kent and the UK.

The following was written on the Sandwich Bay Bird Observatory daily sightings blog.

At all times, the bird was clearly larger than the Buzzards mobbing it. It was not a huge eagle but one of intermediate size. It was mostly pale below on the body and on the underwing but with a thick dark trailing edge. There were well-marked pale contrasting patches above on the upperwing and on the rump. It had a sharp squared-off tail and clearly square-ended flat wings with distinct fingering. It is a shame the bird was always distant. The bird was seen by three different observers with experience of pale Buzzards and Eagles on the Continent and including a few White-tailed Eagles over our Recording Area in the last month.

The first **Ospreys** were recorded at Ashford and Pegwell Bay on Apr 4th after which birds were seen at Pegwell Bay, Bishopstone, Benenden, Gillingham, Boughton Monchelsea, Edenbridge, Foreness, Stodmarsh, Strood, Walderslade and Cliffe Pools.

An immature **White-tailed Eagle** flew N at Sandwich Bay in the company of five Common Buzzards and one Red Kite on Mar 25th and then single birds were seen flying from Greatstone-on-Sea to Hythe on Mar 30th, at Worth Marshes on 31st and Littlestone-on-Sea and New Romney on Apr 1st, whilst on Apr 2nd a bird was seen at Fowlmead and then, during the day, at Pegwell Bay, Westgate, Manston, Blean, Herne and finally Dunkirk. Two birds were also reported between Worth Marshes and Deal on Apr 3rd.

In addition to these records one flew N from Pegwell Bay to Ramsgate on Apr 15th.



Isle of Wight re introduced White-tailed Eagle movements in late March and early April - published by the Roy Dennis Foundation

The only individual that passed through Kent was G274 over the period 1st to 3rd April and recorded over Worth/Sandwich/Pegwell Bay on the 2nd April. This means the sightings at Sandwich Bay on 25th and 31st March are not from the Isle of Wight scheme and correspond to bird(s) of presumably Continental origin. (per SBBOT)

RAILS TO WADERS

Two **Black-winged Stilts** spent the day at Dengemarsh on Apr 16th whilst **Stone-curlews** were recorded calling as they flew over DBO on the nights of Apr 3rd and 4th and at Stonar on Apr 6th.

During March and April up to six **Purple Sandpipers** were seen at Broadstairs, Reculver Marshes, North Foreland, Hampton, Hythe and Dover with the last two at Foreness on Apr 28th.

In March and April one or two **Jack Snipes** were seen at Finberry, Worth Marshes, Sandwich Bay, Dungeness RSPB and DBO.

After the first **Wood Sandpiper** was seen at Sandwich Bay on Apr 24th up to three birds were recorded from Grove Ferry/ Stodmarsh, Ham Road Farm and Dungeness RSPB.

One or two **Spotted Redshank** were seen at Dungeness RSPB, Sittingbourne, Pegwell Bay, Kemsley, Eastborough, Riverside CP, Sandwich Bay, Grove Ferry, Lower Halstow, Worth Marshes and Cliffe Pools.



Little Ringed Plover by Richard Hanman

AUKS TO GULLS

Two **Little Gulls** were seen at Folkestone on Mar 24th and one was at Worth Marshes on Mar 24th and 27th with another at DBO on 25th and 26th. During April up to 106 were recorded at DBO from the 17th with as many as six during the month at Collard's Lake, Egypt Bay, Foreness, Dungeness RSPB, Mill Point, Hythe, Walmer, Ham Road Farm, Tankerton and Cliffe Pools.

A juvenile **Glaucous Gull** was still to be seen at DBO between Mar 1st and the 28th and the juvenile **Iceland Gull** first seen at DBO on Feb 10th stayed there until Mar 8th.

During March and April up to seven **Caspian Gulls** were seen at DBO with one or two birds reported from Pegwell Bay, Sandwich Bay, Dartford Marshes and Sevenoaks WR and as many as three **Yellow-legged Gulls** were recorded at DBO, Sandwich Bay, Foreness, Dartford Marshes and Pegwell Bay.

After the first three **Black Terns** were seen at DBO on Apr 17th up to 41 birds were recorded there with single birds at Lade, Allhallows, Westbere, Ham Road Farm and Cliffe Pools.

Single **Great Skuas** were seen at DBO on Mar 6th and at Reculver on Mar 20th. In April up to 22 were recorded from DBO with one at Hythe on the 29th.

The first **Pomarine Skuas** of the spring were six that flew past DBO on Apr 25th and there were seven there on the 26th with two at Hythe on Apr 28th and three more at DBO on the 30th.

The first six **Arctic Skuas** of the spring flew past DBO on Apr 5th after which up to 16 were seen there during the rest of the month. One or two birds were also reported from Walmer Beach, Hythe and Mill Point.

DOVES TO RING-NECKED PARAKEET

One or two **Long-eared Owls** were seen at Elmley, Reculver Marshes, Nickoll's Quarry, DBO and Stodmarsh/Grove Ferry.

Up to five **Short-eared Owls** were recorded at Oare Marshes, Uplees, Conyer, Dartford Marshes, Dungeness, North Foreland, Grain, Halstow Marshes, South Swale LNR, Allhallows and Reculver Marshes. During March, 28+ were recorded roosting on Sheppey.

A **Hoopoe** was reported from Aylesham on Apr 27th.

Single **Merlins** were seen at DBO, Sandwich Bay, Pegwell Bay, Dartford Marshes, Crundale, Reculver Marshes, Horsmonden, Conyer, North Foreland, Oare Marshes and Elmley.

SHRIKES TO HIRUNDINES

Up to six **Ravens** were seen at over 25 widespread locations throughout these two months.

Birders at Swalecliffe had a surprise on Apr 6th when a calling **Waxwing** flew over them going W.

Two “**Continental**” **Coal Tits** were reported from Walmer Beach on Mar 25th with one at Cliftonville on 30th.

Two **Woodlarks** were seen at North Foreland on Mar 1st and single birds were seen at DBO Mar 1st, 2nd and 6th, Egypt Bay on Mar 8th and Foreness on Mar 14th. Two birds also flew S at Lade on Apr 5th.



Red-rumped Swallow by Chris Powell

A **Red-rumped Swallow** was identified and photographed at Dengemarsh on Apr 10th and other birds flew W there on the 18th, N at DBO on the 23rd and was seen at Chartham on Apr 28th.

CETTI'S WARBLER TO WHEATEARS

The **Siberian Chiffchaff** first seen at Worth Marshes during February was still present on Mar 13th and the bird on Thanet, at Minster Water Works, stayed there until at least Mar 7th.

A **Wood Warbler** was seen at Swalecliffe on Apr 27th.

After the first **Grasshopper Warbler** was heard “reeling” at Stonelees on Apr 12th one or two birds were recorded from Chamber's Wall, Seasalter and Dartford Marshes.

A **Dartford Warbler** was seen at Sandwich Bay on Mar 2nd and 3rd.

During March as many as ten **Firecrests** were seen at DBO with smaller numbers at Knowlton, Bockhill, Faversham, Mill Point, Challock, Little Farthingloe, Shuart, Langdon, Reculver, South Foreland, Nickoll's Quarry, Shingleton, Goathurst Common, Chamber's Wall, Lade, West Hythe and Samphire Hoe.

A **SHORT-TOED TREECREEPER** was identified in a private garden at Dungeness on Mar 17th but did not remain long before it flew south west although it was found in the lighthouse garden on 19th and 20th. Another bird was found at DBO on Apr 2nd and yet another on Apr 14th.

The wintering **Ring Ouzel** was still at Samphire Hoe on Mar 16th. After the first migrant was seen at North Foreland on Mar 19th as many as five birds were seen at Lydden Downs, DBO, Herne Bay, North Foreland, Preston, Bekesbourne, Abbotscliffe, Godmersham, Sandwich Bay, Conyer, East Malling, Cliftonville, Walmer, Kingsdown, Finberry, Sissinghurst, High Halstow, Temple Ewell, Worth Marshes, Hothfield, Reculver Marshes, Swalecliffe, Pegwell Bay, Foreness and Ashford.

A **Pied Flycatcher** was recorded calling overnight on Apr 11th as it flew over Stonar.



Common Redstart by Jonathan Hart

During this period as many as seven **Black Redstarts** were seen at over thirty mainly coastal sites throughout the County.

DUNNOCK TO BUNTINGS

The **Richard's Pipit** first recorded in 2019 remained at Halstow Marshes until Mar 7th.

During March and April up to 17 **Water Pipits** were seen at Stodmarsh/Grove Ferry and Dungeness with smaller numbers reported from Oare Marshes, Allhallows, West Hythe, Sandwich Bay, Dartford Marshes and Worth Marshes with the last, a summer plumaged bird, seen on the beach at Dungeness on Apr 18th.

A **Hawfinch** was found at Burmarsh on Mar 3rd and one flew over at Pegwell Bay on Apr 1st whilst another visited a bird feeder in a Sandwich garden on Apr 23rd and 24th and a bird flew NE over Pegwell Bay on the 25th with another at Burham on the 29th and 30th.



Hawfinch by Martyn Wilson

Two **Crossbills** flew in off the sea at South Foreland on Mar 13th, 15 flew N at North Foreland on Mar 22nd, 26 were seen at South Foreland with four at DBO on Mar 27th, there were two at Shingleton Farm and five at Sandwich Bay on 30th and 22 flew N at Kingsdown on 31st. During April up to 15 were reported from Pegwell Bay, DBO, Clowes Wood and Ramsgate. Single **Serins** were seen at DBO on Mar 25th and 27th and Apr 1st.

DBO = Dungeness Bird Observatory **BBRC** = British Birds Rarities Committee
RSPB = Royal Society for the Protection of Birds **BOU** = British Ornithological Union
"The Patch" = the warm water outflow from Dungeness Nuclear Power Station
NNR=National Nature Reserve **NR**=Nature Reserve **LNR**=Local Nature Reserve
FC = Field Centre **WR** = Wildlife Reserve **GP** = Gravel Pits **CP** = Country Park

CONTRIBUTORS

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

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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 as I forward them to the appropriate Area Recorders who enter them all onto the KOS database.

Fifty Years Ago

278. Golden Oriole



Golden Orioles by Henrik Gronvold (PDI)

From one to three males and up to three females were present in the East in the period Apr. 18th – June 7th. The first to be recorded was a male bird at Barham on Apr 18th (DFP), then at Sandwich Bay either two or three females were seen on May 19th, one of which was trapped, followed by either one or two on 20th, and probably single females on 17th and 25th (SBBO). On the last date a possible male bird was heard calling at dawn at Chilham (MLe) and on June 7th three was a male calling in the early morning at Stodmarsh (AJS, MJS).

KBR 1970
Norman McCanch

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Lockdown 670 years ago.

In a secluded villa near Florence, ten people settled in to escape the Black Death in 1348. They passed the time telling improbable stories. Included amongst the details of drunkenness, fornication and intrigue, some of them noticed the birds:

Here ends the sixth day of the Decameron and the seventh day begins;

"The sun was only peeping over the horizon when they in turn set out; never before, it seemed to them, had the nightingales and other birds sung so merrily as they did that morning; their song accompanied them to Ladyglen, where they were greeted by a great many more songsters, as if their arrival occasioned an outburst of joy."

The Decameron, by Giovanni Boccaccio (1353)

