



Firecrest by Steve Reynaert

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

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As we slosh wearily towards the vernal equinox this seems to be the wettest Spring I have ever encountered. Many of my local wetlands, which in a 'normal' year would be drying after winter floods, are under depressing amounts of water. High levels will impact ground nesters such as Lapwing and Redshank, and even Grebes and Water Rails, while that delight of the Kentish Spring the Garganey may well have to find new sites in which to rear a brood. Unless, that is, the wettest of winters is followed by a Spring and Summer drought! Who knows what the coming year will bring, hopefully there will still be a few birds!

This is a bumper issue of the newsletter, packed with good stuff ranging from a detailed analysis of Waxwings in the county, through some detective work leading to the unravelling of a mystery wagtail on Worth marshes, and detailed analyses of historic data covering an area of typical Wealden farmland showing population changes over more than a century. This last epic raises the profile of a true stalwart of Kent and British ornithology, Dr Norman Ticehurst and is brought to us through the diligence of one of our remaining founder members, Philip Redman. Reading the details of changes over time is fascinating, but for me largely eclipsed by the anecdote of watching two White Storks circling over the Weald in 1940 while British and German planes engaged in a dogfight above them! Not an experience many of us have or would like to have shared!!

In terms of stalwarts of Kent ornithology, our "Meet the Member" section reveals more about Murray Orchard who certainly deserves the epithet. His modesty is apparent, however, as he fails to mention that he is a recent recipient of the Tucker Medal awarded by the BTO for outstanding contributions to field ornithology. Well done Murray!

As I write this my garden Blackcap is singing outside my window, but I have yet to find a singing Chiffchaff, When I do I will feel more certain that Spring is actually here.

Good birding

Norman

News and announcements

Avian Influenza update

Avian influenza in 2023

In 2023 avian influenza devastated Black-headed Gull and Common Tern colonies during the breeding season with the disease spreading into other seabird species as the year progressed. Fortunately, in Kent the breeding colonies of Gulls and Terns in 2023 appear to have escaped the worst of the outbreak but as we enter a new breeding season we are unsure what the future holds and really need your help to monitor the situation. As a result we continue to ask you to be vigilant and report any sightings of sick or dead seabirds using the Birdtrack App to the BTO and to Defra – links and more information below.

Key symptoms of HPAI in birds

The main clinical signs of HPAI in birds are a swollen head; blue discolouration of the neck and throat; loss of appetite; respiratory distress such as gaping beak, coughing, sneezing, gurgling, rattling; diarrhoea; fewer eggs laid; increased mortality; neurological signs such as trembling, falling over, swimming or walking in circles.

Clinical signs can vary between species of bird and some species, e.g. ducks and geese, may show minimal clinical signs.

Prof. James Pearce Higgins, BTO Director of Science: *We are only able to track the spread of avian influence with the help of birdwatchers who submit their sightings, supporting the efforts of site managers and reserve wardens.*

Dawn Balmer, BTO Head of Surveys: Thank you to everyone who has submitted records of dead birds to BirdTrack which allows us to monitor the spread of Avian Influenza, and also to Defra/DAERA, which may collect the birds for testing. We urge birdwatchers to check breeding sites – and report any deaths.

How you can help

- Don't touch dead or sick birds
- Report them (details below)
- Keep dogs on leads to prevent them from finding and picking up dead birds
- Clean bird feeders and bird baths regularly

How to report dead and sick wild birds

- Record in the BTO BirdTrack app www.bto.org/our-science/projects/birdtrack. This allows researchers to follow the disease's geographical spread and rapidly assess potential impacts on populations.
- Report them as soon as possible to Defra by using the government online reporting system or call the Defra helpline (03459 33 55 77). When you report dead wild birds they may be collected and tested for bird flu or other cause of death. Not all dead wild birds will be collected.

References, links and further reading:

Defra: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/report-dead-wild-birds>

Birdtrack: <https://www.bto.org/our-science/projects/birdtrack>

Defra: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/report-dead-wild-birds> 03459 33 55 77 (call charges may apply)

<https://www.bto.org/understanding-birds/avian-influenza>

<https://www.rspb.org.uk/birds-and-wildlife/avian-influenza-updates>

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<https://www.rspb.org.uk/birds-and-wildlife/avian-influenza-updates>

The Engagement Committee would like to offer its thanks to the many members who have taken the time to complete the two surveys issued in 2023. It is over a decade since the last survey of members was carried out and so it was considered essential that firstly the Engagement Committee and ultimately the Executive Committee have a good understanding of who they represented. The results of each survey have been analysed and then discussed in depth to see how we can welcome new members of all demographics with an interest in Kent's birdlife to join and feel included within the activities and aims of the society.

Some of the more interesting findings so far have shown that 21% of members reside outside Kent (based on the 222 members who supplied the first part of their postcode) and that there are a higher proportion of members who live in the east of the county.

Less surprising is that the age profile of members shows the membership to generally be an older profile than the general population. This is a concern when considering the long-term future of the society and members will already have seen one mitigation measure being tried and that is offering free membership to under 25s.

More short and easy to complete surveys will be coming and it would be great to see higher return rates.
Many thanks

Martin Collins

KOS Nightingale Survey 2023

Results have been gathered and summarised in order that a population estimate can be produced for the county. It has taken longer than hoped, so apologies to those who volunteered for the survey and are awaiting the outcome.

A total of 200 monads (1km squares) were sampled for the survey. These were randomly selected from five categories: Recently occupied (2014-2021); Occupied in the last Nightingale survey (2012) – High occupation (5+), Medium occupation (2-4) and Low occupation (1), plus “Zero squares” (containing at least 4% scrub at or below 90m – previous surveys have shown that birds now favour areas with damp scrubby habitat at lower elevations).

Of these 200 monads, 171 were allocated to volunteer surveyors (86%). Of these, results were returned for 107 monads (63% of allocated; 54% of overall survey sample). Thus, the actual survey coverage was rather less than hoped. However, a total of 218 singing Nightingales were recorded in the 107 monads that were visited.

Separately, the known Nightingale hotspots in the county were surveyed more thoroughly. Whilst these data will not directly be used in the statistical calculation of the population estimate, they will contribute to the overall assessment of the species current status. There were some impressive totals at these hotspots, including 92 singing males in the Shadoxhurst/Orlestone Forest area; 87 in the Medway Gap (Snodland/Eccles area); 45 at Old Park (Canterbury) and 33 at Northward Hill. Unfortunately, a complete area total is not yet available for Lodge Hill, but three monads covering part of the area were included in the survey sample and produced 41 singing males.

From the above data, it seems apparent that numbers of Nightingales are holding up well in Kent and it's likely that the final population estimate will be close to that of the previous survey in 2012.

Making Space For Nature in Kent and Medway (the Kent Local Nature Recovery Strategy)

Many will have heard of Making Space for Nature in Kent and Medway. This is the Kent Local Nature Recovery Strategy; one of 48 strategies being implemented across England. These strategies have been created under the 2021 Environment Act and are a system of spatial strategies for nature and environmental improvement that will underpin England's Nature Recovery Network. Over the next 20 months, Kent County Council, as Responsible Authority, will be collaboratively developing the Strategy for Kent and Medway. Making Space for Nature will work with partners and stakeholders to establish shared priorities for the delivery of nature recovery and wider environmental goals, in order to create a network of wildlife-rich places across the county. The aim is to deliver the government's commitment to ending the decline of nature and supporting its recovery.

The KOS is onboard with this project as a member of the Technical Advisory Group for Species, and is leading on the required action for birds, working with representatives from RSPB, KWT and others. Meetings and workshops have been held and attended to discuss the requirements of the strategy and begin the process of identifying priority species and identifying the pressures facing them. This process has

begun with the compilation of a Long List of species, which will eventually be reduced to a Short List, with required actions to halt their decline. The Short List species will be based around key habitats and the intention is to ensure that the most important bird areas are identified and mapped across Kent, not just established protected areas and reserves, but non-designated areas too. The intention is that planning authorities will consider these, and associated priority species and habitats, in future local plans.

BTO/JNCC/RSPB Breeding Bird Survey (BBS)

BBS is the main scheme for monitoring the population changes of the common and widespread breeding birds in the UK. The survey involves two early-morning spring visits to an allocated 1-km square, to count all birds seen or heard while walking two 1-km lines (transects) across the square.

Thank you very much to all volunteers who completed a BBS in 2023. Thanks also to those who carried out the Waterways Breeding Bird Survey (WBBS). WBBS extends the methodology of BBS to linear waterways in the county, although carried out on a much smaller scale in terms of the number of sites surveyed.

2023 results summary for BBS in Kent:

A total of 69 one km squares were surveyed in 2023 for BBS, with 63 receiving both an early visit (April to mid-May) and a late visit (mid-May to late June).

In 2023 the total number of species recorded from all BBS squares in Kent was 116, compared to 113 the previous year.

The graph below shows the total number of individual birds recorded in both early and late visits for the 30 most abundant species. The range of species in this top 30 proved the same as that for 2022. Relative positions of individual species are also very similar to the previous year, with the exception that Herring Gull and Black-headed Gull are both ranked higher than they were before.

As in the previous year Woodpigeon was by far the most numerous species in 2023, with a grand total of 2845 individuals from both early and late visits in Kent (the line graph has been truncated in this case). However, Blackbird was equally widespread as Wood Pigeon, being recorded in all squares that were surveyed.

Of our summer visitors, Chiffchaff, with 493 recorded from both visits, was more numerous than either Blackcap or Whitethroat.

Though not featured on the graph Buzzard was the most numerous bird of prey with 72 individuals followed by Kestrel with 21 from both visits.

Winter Gull Survey – January 2024

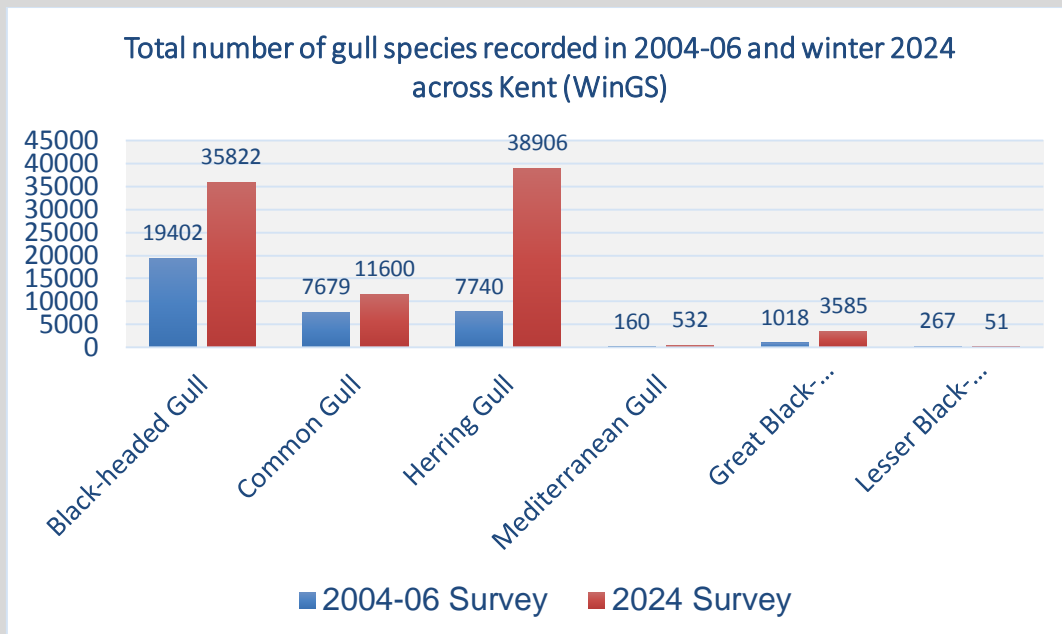
The BTO Winter Gull Survey is a long-running monitoring programme which has taken place approximately every ten years since 1953. However, the most recent survey was from 2003/04–2005/6, and a substantial gap in our knowledge of our wintering gulls has developed. This survey will also help us monitor the impact of the ongoing outbreak of [highly pathogenic avian influenza \(HPAI\)](#), helping us to understand the full implications of this disease. The project's overarching aim is to provide updated information on the numbers and distributions of wintering gulls (including many Amber- or Red-listed species) in the UK, its constituent countries, the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man. WinGS focuses on the six most numerous and widespread gull species in the UK during the winter months: Black-headed Gull, Mediterranean Gull, Common Gull, Herring Gull, Lesser Black-backed Gull and Great Black-backed Gull.

The updated information will help the BTO scientists to:

- Understand how wintering populations of gulls have changed over the last 20 years
- Identify key autumn and wintering sites for these species, and inform their conservation
- Determine how gulls have been impacted by [HPAI](#).

Despite Storm *Isha* battering the Kent coast on the core count date, we managed to get almost full coverage of all key roost sites across Kent with surveyors counting on alternative dates within the wider survey window. There was increased coverage in 2024 that in the previous national survey (2004-06) with a total of 38 sites surveyed, compared to 29 in the 2004-06 survey. Overall numbers show increases in all species, significantly in Herring Gulls and Black-headed Gulls, but declines in Lesser Black-backed Gulls. Notably, the numbers of Mediterranean Gulls has more than tripled since the last survey with numbers increasing from a total of 160 to 532. Although overall figures show increases, there were some core key roost sites which demonstrate notable declines in winter gull populations, as set out in table 1.

In total 101,720 gulls were recorded across Kent in the January 2024 WinGS. In January 2004-06 a total of 38,493 gulls were recorded. In 2004-06, 2,227 gulls were recorded as unidentified. This increased to 11,224 gulls in 2024.



	Dover Harbour		Ramsgate Harbour		Hythe and Hythe Ranges	
species	2004	2024	2004	2024	2004	2024
Black-headed Gull	3420	1000	300	8	2710	33
Common Gull	114	1600	0	0	1280	251
Herring Gull	1326	3015	150	59	0	344
Mediterranean Gull	0	268	0	0	0	0
Greater Black-backed Gull	0	221	0	8	0	6
Lesser Black-backed Gull	0	1	150	0	0	0

Table 1: total counts of key gull species from 2004 and 2024 WinGS, across three key gull winter roost sites.

The Winter Gull Survey will be repeated in autumn 2024 – the first time a national gull survey has been conducted at this time of year in the UK, which will continue to help us understand population numbers across Kent.

All regional organisers for WinGS would like to say a huge thank you to everyone who participated in the survey. Counting large numbers of gulls in low light conditions on cold evenings certainly adds to the challenge, but the part you have played in this survey is extremely valuable and we're very grateful for your commitment to this project.

Woodcock Survey 2023

The purpose of the Woodcock Survey 2023 was to provide an updated national population estimate and assessment of range change compared to the previous national surveys in 2003 and 2013. In addition, habitat use was investigated to improve our knowledge of habitat requirements, which can improve future woodland management for Woodcock.

Summary results for Kent 2023 survey

The overall results from the 2023 Woodcock survey emphasises the continuing drastic decline in the Woodcock as a breeding bird in Kent – a county where historically they were once a regular breeding bird. Ticehurst wrote in a History of Birds in Kent (1909) that Woodcock were: 'on the increase as a breeding species in Kent. It is found in greatest numbers in the Weald, where the woods consist mostly of oaks, and the undergrowth is regularly cut, the ground remains moist the greater part of the year and feeding places

are abundant at no great distance. In scattered pairs it frequents most of these large woods and nests are annually found. Over the rest of the county the pairs are much more thinly scattered, and on the higher and drier parts they are quite scarce.

The KOS publication 'Birds of Kent' (1981) recorded 27 sites with confirmed breeding across the county. A significant shift seems to have occurred in the last 30 years, emphasised in the latest KOS Breeding Bird Atlas which estimated 100-300 males in 1988-94 and only 30-50 in 2008-13. Significant range contraction and the abandonment of stronghold sites is likely to be driven by changes in breeding habitat, with more areas of woodland becoming too dry to support these birds during the breeding season. Without the recovery of wet woodland areas in Kent this species will continue to remain a rare breeding birds in the county and may decline further.

Uptake for the 2023 Woodcock Survey across Kent was extremely positive and we are grateful to those who helped. Results show that since 2013 there has been a continued reduction in breeding numbers of Woodcock and a contraction in their range across the county, with only 3 sites recording any Woodcock and a total of only 4 males being counted.

	National Survey year	
	2013	2023
Total number of sites surveyed in Kent	15	35
Squared occupied with Woodcock	4	3
Percentage of squares occupied	26.7	8.57
Total males for county	14	4
Mean number of males (all sites)	0.9	0.11
Mean number of males (across all occupied sites)	3.5	1.33

If you are interested in taking part in 2024, we will be resuming our ongoing annual monitoring surveys (following on from the big national survey in 2023) at a smaller subset of sites across the UK. Please view the interactive map to see if there are any currently available squares near you by following this link
www.bto.org/woodcock

Plum Pudding and Cold Harbour breeding successes

By Jasmine Beveridge, Engagement Officer Bird Wise East Kent

Plum Pudding and Cold Harbour are two naturally occurring saline lagoons situated along the Northern Sea wall between Minnis Bay and Reculver. In 2016 work was done to reinstate these lagoons. 66,000m³ of shingle was relocated in order to build up the beach, creating a relatively undisturbed saline habitat. Natural England funded fencing to go around each of the lagoons to help protect any wildlife that was to use the pools.

Plum Pudding and Cold Harbour are used by various waders, gulls, ducks and passerines throughout the year, but in spring 2023 something exciting happened. For the first time in many years we had a pair of breeding Avocets. They successfully laid 4 eggs, with male and female both taking turns incubating the eggs. Later, all 4 eggs hatched, and at least 3 chicks successfully fledged. This is along with 2 pairs of breeding Oystercatchers with viable nests, and 3 pairs of Ringed Plover. We also had breeding Shelduck.

To see breeding waders along the Thanet coastline is somewhat of a rarity these days. Unfortunately, this is due to human recreational activities resulting in bird disturbance along with many other external factors that impact our wildlife. Plum Pudding and Cold Harbour, including the adjacent beach and farmland used to be a hotspot for roosting and breeding birds. It was once one of the UKs largest Little Tern colonies, with 80 breeding pairs recorded in 1987 (relatively low numbers recorded that year). Also in 1987, lapwings were recorded breeding on the farmland. Redshanks have previously bred here. Little Terns are now almost completely absent from our coastline. They are one of the species responsible for the designation of an SPA, but are due to be removed from this designation due to their absence over the last 10+ years.

The presence of breeding birds in the lagoon has shown that the reinstatement of the lagoons and fencing has improved the habitat, and reduced the levels of disturbance, which in turn has had a great positive effect on breeding numbers. The beach adjacent is also one of South East Kent's largest high tide roost sites for wintering waders. And could be a perfect site for breeding Ringed Plover, Oystercatchers and, with the right management, even Little Tern. However, each of these species are highly sensitive to disturbance. They are ground nesting birds, creating a small shingle 'mound' in order to lay their eggs. The birds could be scared off their nest, leaving the eggs vulnerable. The eggs are also at risk of being trampled on by people and their dogs as they are so well camouflaged within the shingle. These birds are already at risk of being predated on by foxes and crows, and any other stresses further increase the risk of nest abandonment and/or failure.

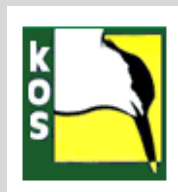
Bird Wise East Kent are working to reduce bird disturbance from recreational activities on coastline that falls within the SPA (Special Protection Area). Disturbance is detrimental because birds are forced to abandon their activities, such as feeding, roosting, or incubating eggs, as well as wasting precious energy by flying away from the potential threat. Wildlife disturbance could be caused by people walking too close to the birds with or without the presence of dogs, off lead dogs chasing birds, jet skiing, kite surfing and more. Due to the amount of people and their dogs that utilise the beaches regularly in these ways throughout the Thanet Coast SPA, breeding birds are practically non-existent. With the right management, education and cooperation from the public, we could once again have pockets of viable breeding grounds for these birds, with minimal disruption to the general public's day to day lives.

Bird Wise East Kent, and Natural England are working to reduce bird disturbance along this particular stretch of coastline. Natural England has funded the implementation of new signage, designed by Bird Wise East Kent, to be placed around the lagoons in the near future. These signs will hopefully provide the public with more information on the area, its history and the importance of these lagoons for the protection and longevity of the wildlife that can be found here.

Wildlife disturbance is an offence under the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981, and some bird species have been awarded extra levels of protection during the breeding season, including Avocets and Little Tern. Under Schedule 1 of the 1981 Act, to be found intentionally or recklessly disturbing an active nest site without a licence is a criminal offence.

And so, what can you do?

We are asking people to avoid walking along the beaches adjacent to plum pudding and cold harbour lagoons, sticking to the path along the sea wall. If you witness any wildlife disturbance please take a video if possible, and please log it on the Bird Wise East Kent website under 'reporting' and/or ring 101 and quote Operation Seabird, which will reach the Kent Rural Crime Unit. Pay attention to signage within the area, and make sure to follow us on socials to keep up to date with any information.



73rd Annual General Meeting of the Kent Ornithological Society Wednesday 10th April 2024 at 7.30pm via Zoom

Please join us via zoom for this meeting using the link below

<https://zoom.us/j/97670159925?pwd=TkZiS2lOcHlnSTg2emlPajlHSGtHQT09>

Agenda

- 1. Introduction – Chris Cox President**
- 2. Apologies for absence**
- 3. Chairman's/ Annual Report 2022**
- 4. Treasurer's Report**
- 5. Revised Rules**
- 6. Questions to the Committee**
- 7. Minutes of last meeting (26th April 2023)**
- 8. Election of Officers**
- 9. Any other business**

Nominations for Officers and Committee Members:	
President:	Chris Cox
Chairman:	Andre Farrar
Vice Chairman:	Chris Roome
Hon. Secretary:	VACANT
Hon. Treasurer:	Mike Henty
Membership Secretary:	Chris Roome
Chairman of Editorial & Records Sub-Committee:	Barry Wright
Chairman of Conservation & Survey's Sub-Committee:	Murray Orchard
Editor of Kent Bird Report	Keith Privett
Archivist:	Robin Mace
Ordinary Member:	Keiron Palmer
Ordinary Member:	Gary Howard
Ordinary Member:	Martin Collins
Other Officers	
KOS News Editor	Norman McCanch
Outdoor Meeting Organiser	Ray O'Rielly

As well as the usual AGM business, the meeting will seek members' approval of revised rules for the Society. The revision seek to update the rules to formally recognise the use of applications like zoom to conduct on line meetings and to create greater flexibility in the organisation of the committee and its sub-committees. The proposed revised rules, along with the annual accounts and minutes of last year's meeting will be sent to members by e-mail.

There remains a **Committee vacancy: - Honorary Secretary.** After 15 years on the KOS Executive Committee, Brendan Ryan is retiring at the AGM in April. This creates a vacancy for the position of Honorary Secretary.

The role involves arranging and minuting executive committee and general meetings and maintaining the non-ornithological records of the Society. As Honorary Secretary you will be involved in the discussions and decisions of the committee which is responsible for steering and developing the Society.

If you are interested in joining the committee in this rewarding role and would like more information please contact Brendan Ryan brendan.ryan@yahoo.co.uk or Andre Farrar andre.farrar57@gmail.com

MARQUENTERRE FRANCE - 14th May 2024 - a day trip to this fabulous bird reserve. This visit will be timed to see the best of the spring migrants and breeding birds including possibilities such as Bluethroats, Night Herons, Savi's Warbler, Crested Tit and many more. Price £120 includes coach transport and tunnel crossing. This trip is being organised by Sandwich Bay Bird Observatory.

TO RESERVE YOUR PLACE(S) PLEASE REQUEST A BOOKING FORM BY EMAILING ROB RACKLIFFE at robbirder@me.com OR pick up a booking form at the Bird Observatory reception. Full trip information on the booking form. Places will be confirmed on receipt of a signed booking form and payment of a deposit.

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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:

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

Articles

THE BIRDS OF HUNTBOURNE 1905-2023

Birds of a Farm in the Kentish Weald

INTRODUCTION



Dr N F Ticehurst

It is probably not unique, but it seems to be worth putting on record the ornithological story of a farm in the Weald of Kent, in the years between 1905 and 2023. It can be described as a farm whose history came about as a result of the diaries of Dr Norman Ticehurst. On more than one occasion in recent years, I have been asked 'Dr Who'? Doctor Norman Frederick Ticehurst (1873-1969), referred to here as NFT, lived all his working life in St. Leonards-on-

Sea, the family being part of the 'Establishment' in the Hastings area. He was one of the leading British ornithologists from the last decade of the 19th century to the first half of the 20th century. In Kent he is known for being the author of '*A History of the Birds of Kent*' which he published in 1909 and for the ground-breaking '*Handbook of British Birds*' (1938-1941) of which he was a co-editor. Also, as an assistant editor to his friend Harry Witherby who was the first editor of the '*British Birds*' journal, from shortly after its inception in 1907. During his lifetime he published not only books but many notes and papers on ornithological subjects.

From 1970 until 2006, in connexion with another project, I searched for the whereabouts of NFT's 'Personal Notes' which were mentioned in James Harrison's '*The Birds of Kent*' (1953). In 2006 I found that they were with his son Dr Richard Ticehurst, who very kindly allowed me to borrow them. Expecting to find notes going back to 1890 I was dismayed to find that the '*Ticehurst Diaries*' only commenced in 1921 with references to Huntbourne. The missing volumes from 1890 to 1920 were not found until the autumn of 2021.

Going through the diaries there were many entries for Huntbourne and it was clear that from a detailed examination it was worth while making a comparison between the breeding birds occurring in the 40 years of the Ticehurst occupancy of the farm with those breeding in the early 21st century.

In 2008 I made visits in mid-March and again in mid-May. I assessed the status of the breeding birds based on birds holding territory by call, song and occupied nests. With access to the Diaries for 1905-1920 a further survey was carried out in 2023 by Martin Sutherland based on similar methodology to 2008. It should be remembered that NFT's records covered 40 years whereas in the recent surveys coverage for 2008 was for two days in March and two in May while in 2023 the visits were one each in March and April and two in May. As expected, the results showed a considerable decline in the number of species from those recorded by NFT.

HUNTOURNE FARM BREEDING BIRDS

On his retirement from medical practice at Hastings Dr Augustus Ticehurst purchased the farm in 1905 and rebuilt the farmhouse in its present day site. He, with his sons, of which Norman and Claud Ticehurst were ornithologists, were very much into field sports such as shooting, hunting and fishing. At the time the estate, although not large, was about 55 hectares (134 acres), and consisted of the farmhouse, two farm workers cottages, barns and various outbuildings 9ha (24ac), mixed use farmland, consisting of arable land, grazing for a few animals, three mature orchards of plums, apples, cherries and a nuttury 3ha (7ac), pastures 30ha (74ac), woodland 14ha (34ac) and two streams. It could be described as a typical Wealden farm. It remained in the family until 1946 when it was purchased by Gilbert Rahr whose son, Christopher Rahr, continued to own the land in 2023 with a tenant farmer. The main house with grounds of 1.2ha (3ac) having been sold.

In assessing the changes that had taken place since 1944 I started with a plan of 1905 (Figure 1) which showed the layout of the farm, and judging by the aerial photograph taken in 1940 (Figure 2) little had changed; apart from rebuilding the farmhouse there were no other significant alterations in the 40 years of the Ticehurst occupancy of the farm. In 1960 two chicken houses were built which by 2008 were in disuse and in 2023 had been demolished and three houses built on the farmyard land. By 1960, the aerial photograph (Figure 3) shows that the three orchards had disappeared. The aerial photographs taken in 2008 (not included here) and 2022 (figure 4) indicate that the fields are now all pastures, where up to 500 sheep graze for most of the year while the wooded area occupy the same area as in 1905. The woods hold a variety of trees with hornbeam being predominant, others being ash, oak and lesser species being cherry and birch. Since 2008 the undergrowth in parcels 57 and 58 has been partly destroyed by the sheep gaining access while parcel 52 remains untouched.

In NFT's day the 'wild garden' in front of the house which then had a stream running through it had a variety of birds nesting there. Today there is the house and garden with its lawn, a small wild flower meadow and swimming pool. The aerial photograph of 1940 shows the farmhouse completely hidden while that of 2022 the house and garden are clearly seen. No longer is there a 'wild garden'!

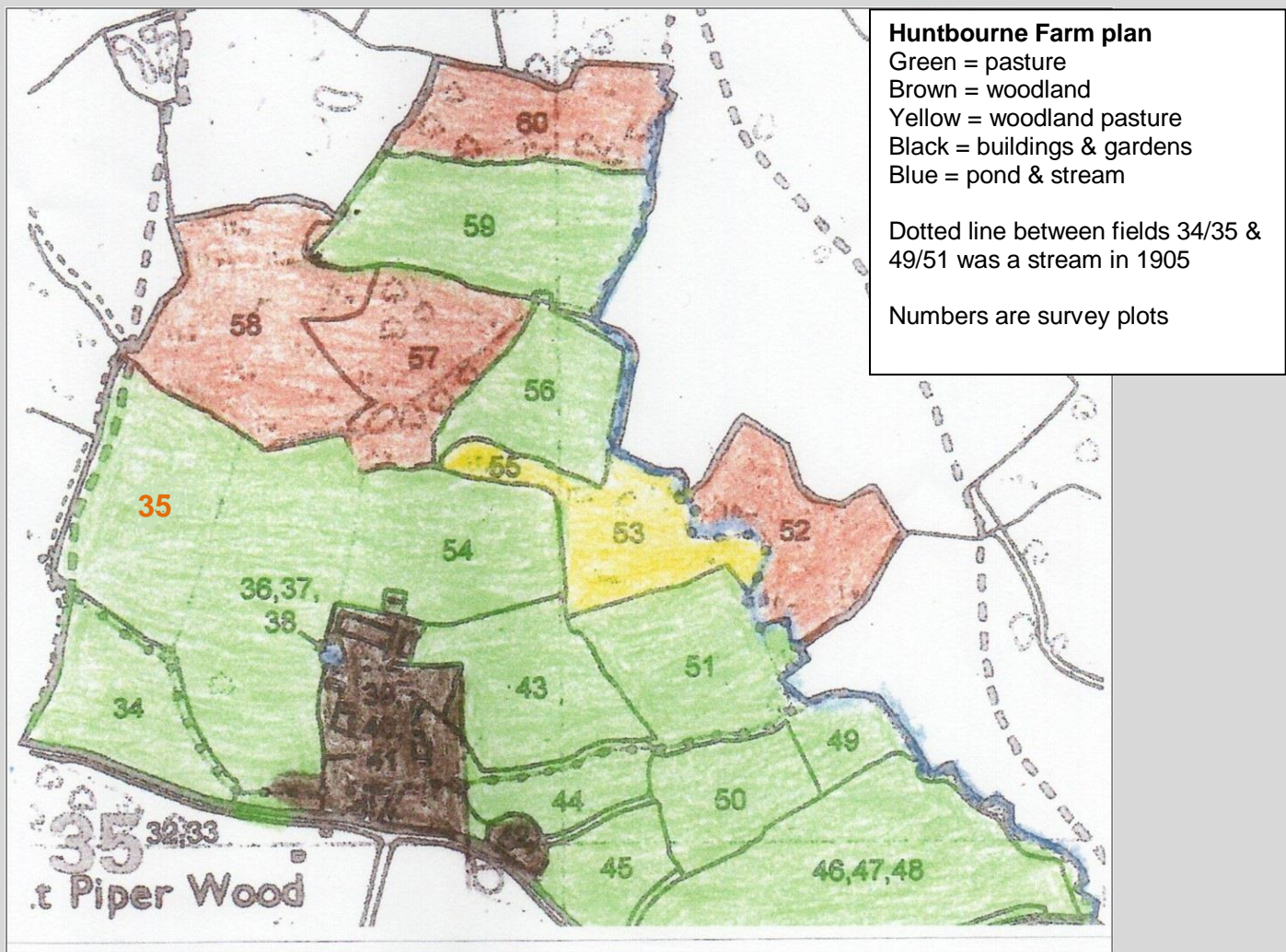


Figure 1. Plan of layout of Huntbourne farm fields and woods



Figure 2. Aerial view of Huntbourne, 1940

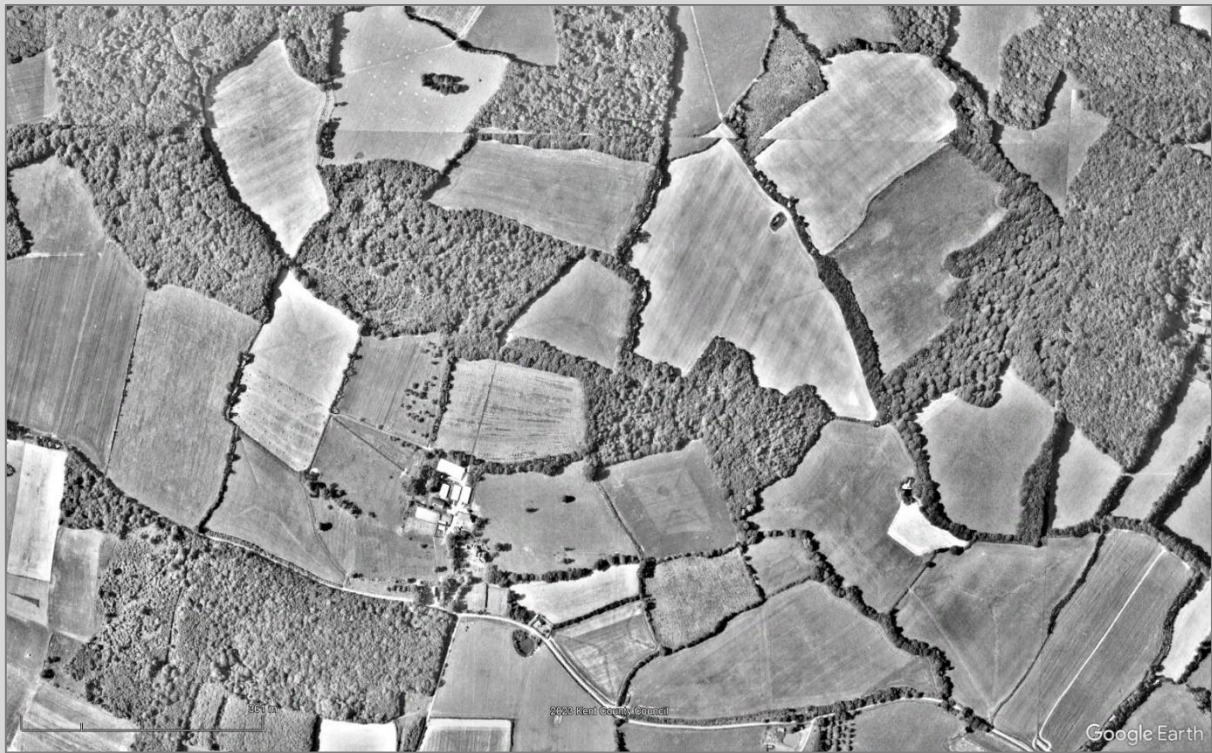


Figure 3. Aerial view of Huntbourne, 1960



Figure 4. Aerial view of Huntbourne, 2022

Between 1905 and 1944, mainly NFT, with contributions from other members of the family, were responsible for some 613 days of entries in his Diaries. During the two wars of 1914-1918 and 1939-1945, NFT was fully occupied, he being Surgeon to the Hastings Hospital. Annually the number of days vary considerably 1944 being from less than five days to more than 30 days in the mid-1930s. The first three months of the year saw little activity until the end of March after which the months of April, and particularly May and June, saw the peak in the number of days. There was a lull in July and August. The shooting season was in full swing in September, there were fewer days in October while the months of November and December saw few visits except over the Christmas and New Year periods which were also the time of annual shoots.

Table 1 gives the numbers of days for which there are NFT diary entries between 1905 and 1944, plus the numbers of breeding bird survey visits made in 1908 and 2023.

Table 1. Numbers of visits to Huntbourne Annual totals are shown of NFT recorded visits during 1905-1944, and for the breeding bird surveys in 2008 and 2023.										
1905	1906	1907	1908	1909	1910	1911	1912	1913	1914	1915
4	13	29	17	8	32	18	32	6	7	19
1916	1917	1918	1919	1920	1921	1922	1923	1924	1925	1926
4	12	15	18	27	18	4	13	0	9	3
1927	1928	1929	1930	1931	1932	1933	1934	1935	1936	1937
1	8	7	16	29	31	34	52	32	22	24
1938	1939	1940	1941	1942	1943	1944		2008		2023
21	15	4	4	0	2	3		4		4

Table 2 provides the results of the surveys in 2008 and 2023 in comparison with NFT's records for 1905-1944.

Table 2. Breeding birds at Huntbourne in 1905-1944, 2008 and 2023						
<p>X = species recorded by Ticehurst during 1905-1944</p> <p>For 2008 and 2023, the estimated numbers of pairs are given</p> <p>T = species holding territory in 2008 and/or 2023</p> <p>B or N = species with breeding or nesting evidence in 2008 and/or 2023</p> <p>P = present but no evidence of breeding</p> <p>Species names in Red = Birds of high conservation concern</p> <p>Species names in Amber = Birds of medium conservation concern</p> <p>The conservation status is repeated using a coloured dot in the penultimate column.</p> <p>Notes in Blue = breeding gains</p> <p>Notes in Brown = breeding losses</p>						
Species	1905-1944	2008		2023		Notes
Mandarin Duck				T	1 pair	Gain since 2008
Mallard	X	T	several pairs	T	c4 pairs	●
Teal	X					● Only bred 1939
Grey Partridge	X					● Loss since 1944
Pheasant	X	T	2-3 pairs	T	c4 pairs	
Red-legged Partridge	X					Loss since 1944
Cuckoo	X	T	1 pair	T	1 pair	●
Feral Pigeon				T	c4 pairs	Gain since 2008
Stock Dove	X	T	1 pair	T	c7 pairs	●
Woodpigeon	X	B	c10 pairs	T	c25 pairs	●
Turtle Dove	X					● Loss since 1944
Collared Dove		T	c1 pair	T	n/a	Gain since 1956
Moorhen	X	B	3 pairs + one juv.	T/N	1 pair	●

Species	1905-1944	2008		2023			Notes
Lapwing	X					●	Loss since 1944
(Snipe)	*						* In adjacent wet pastures
(Redshank)	*						* In adjacent wet pastures
Sparrowhawk	X			T	?1 pair	●	
Buzzard				T	1 pair		Gain since 2008
Little Owl	X						Loss since 1944
Tawny Owl	X			T	1 pair	●	
Kingfisher	X			T	1 pair		Along eastern boundary
Wryneck	X					●	Loss since 1944
Lesser Spotted Woodpecker	X					●	Loss since 1944
Great Spotted Woodpecker	X	T	1-3 pairs	T/N	1 pair		
Green Woodpecker	X	T	2 pairs	T	2 pairs		
Kestrel	X	T	1 pair	T	1 pair	●	
Red-backed Shrike	X					●	Bred 1906
Jay	X	P	1 bird	T	c3 pairs		
Magpie	X	B	1 nest	T	c4 pairs		
Jackdaw	X	P	P	T	c12 pairs		Breeding in woods in 2023
Carrion Crow	X	T	c3 pairs	T	c4 pairs		
Coal Tit	X			T	c3 pairs		
Marsh Tit	X					●	Loss since 1944
Blue Tit	X	T/N	c3 pairs	T	c30 pairs		
Great Tit	X	T	c12 pairs	T	c15 pairs		
Skylark	X					●	Loss since 1944
Swallow	X	N	1 pair nest	T	1 pair		
Long-tailed Tit	X	T	1 pair	T	c4 pairs		
Willow Warbler	X					●	Loss since 1944
Chiffchaff	X	T	c1 pair	T	c11 pairs		
Blackcap	X	T	c13 pairs	T	c6 pairs		
Garden Warbler	X	T	2 pairs	T	1 pair		
Lesser Whitethroat	X	T	1 pair				Loss since 2008
Whitethroat	X		1 bird			●	Loss since 2008
Goldcrest	X			P			
Wren	X	N	6 pairs	T	c12 pairs	●	
Nuthatch	X	T	1 pair	T	c3 pairs		
Treecreeper	X	N	1 pair nest	T/N	c8 pairs		
Starling	X	N	1 pair nest	T	c5 pairs	●	
Song Thrush	X	N	2 nests + 1 pair	T	2 pairs	●	
Mistle Thrush	X	T	1 pair	T	2 pairs	●	
Blackbird	X	T	c10 pairs	T	13 pairs		
Spotted Flycatcher	X	T	1 pair	T	1 pair	●	
Robin	X	T	c16 pairs	T	c24 pairs		
Nightingale	X	T	1 pair			●	Loss since 2008
House Sparrow	X		not assessed	T	c10 pairs	●	Not mentioned by NFT
Duncock	X		not assessed	T	c5 pairs	●	
Grey Wagtail				T	1 pair		Gain since 2008
Pied Wagtail	X	N	3 pairs	T/N	2 pairs		Male White Wagtail present

Species	1905-1944	2008		2023		Notes
Tree Pipit	X					● Loss since 1944
Chaffinch	X	T	c14 pairs	T	c10 pairs	
Hawfinch	X					● Loss since 1944
Bullfinch	X	T	1 pair			● Loss since 2008
Greenfinch	X	T	1 pair			● Loss since 2008
Linnet	X					● Loss since 1944
Goldfinch		T	1pair	T	c3 pairs	● Gain since 1944
Yellowhammer	X	T	1 pair			● Loss since 2008

DISCUSSION

Looking at Table 2 above, no fewer than 32 of the 59 species listed by NFT are of conservation concern, 20 (11.8%) of which are of high national conservation concern while the other 12 (7.0%) as being of moderate concern (Stanbury *et al.* 2021). Today of the 20, both Wryneck and Red-backed Shrike are regarded as no more than casual breeders in the British Isles. NFT considered both species in Kent as not uncommon (Ticehurst 1909) while Harrison (1953) described concern for both species in the County.

By 2023 a total of 21 species (12%) no longer bred on the farm an increase of 5 (3%) over the fifteen years since 2008. It should be noted that all five rely on seed and insects as their main source of food.

Whilst it is not possible to assess the overall numbers of each species in the years between 1905-1944 there were natural fluctuations from year to year, e.g., Swallow between one and sixteen pairs being noted.

In 1908 NFT hung 30 nest boxes in the orchards which were a success for in that the same year “15 pairs of Blue Tits and two pairs of Marsh Tits nested in the boxes hung in the orchard. 134 Blue Tits and 14 young Marsh Tits were reared”. In 1925 on 01 May he found ‘six Magpies and five Moorhens nests and one or two Blackbirds, Thrushes, Robins and Chaffinches’; in 1934 on 03 June there was a total of 16 Swallows nests, from which 84 young were later ringed between 13 June and 15 August.

Although there are records of the number of nests found each year, they are not sufficiently detailed for analysis over the period 1905-1944. They can be separated into four groups, ground nesting, woodland and hedgerows, pastures and buildings.

Three areas of the farm appear worth further comment. The first is the garden in front of the house which consisted of a small lawn the rest being ‘wild’. Figure 5 shows the garden with the stream indicated; indistinctly in the middle distance the framework of the bridge can be seen. The species mentioned are Song Thrush, Mistle Thrush, Willow Warbler, Linnet, Chaffinch, Great Tit, Little Owl, Lesser Spotted Woodpecker, Whitethroat, Nightingale, Swallow, Stock Dove, Long-tailed Tit, a total of 13 species.



Figure 5. Huntbourne ‘wild garden’ (date unknown)

The three orchards were equally prolific with the following being mentioned. Wryneck, Starling, Marsh Tit, Blue Tit, Great Tit, Coal Tit, Treecreeper, Mistle Thrush, Song Thrush, Tree Pipit, Chiffchaff, Green Woodpecker, Lesser Spotted Woodpecker, Mallard, Carrion Crow, Great Spotted Woodpecker, Jackdaw, Little Owl, Nuthatch, a total of 19 species.

Ground nesting birds of the fields were Grey Partridge, Pheasant, Red-legged Partridge, Mallard, Teal, Moorhen, Lapwing, Kingfisher, Skylark, for a total of nine.

Woodland and hedgerow species accounted for the remaining 24 species. Several of the foregoing groups occurring in this group too.

During the years between 1944 and 2008 the Goldfinch and Collared Dove were additions and in the years 2008-2023 three more species, Mandarin Duck, Buzzard and Grey Wagtails were added. All five being due to the general extension of their range in Britain; the Mandarin Duck being an introduced species. Reading NFT's Diaries which are very extensive I consider that the Goldfinch which was scarce during the years under review would have been mentioned (see Harrison 1953). In addition, Feral Pigeons had colonised the farm buildings by 2023.



Figure 6. Huntbourne Farm: looking SW from plot 54 (May 2023)

The causes of the decline in the total number of species and the numbers of individual species recorded is dramatic. In both 2008 and 2023 the absence of ground nesting birds in the pastures, there being no arable land, shows the decline of birds such as Lapwing and Skylark. The disappearance of the orchards, buildings and 'modernising' of the garden with its swimming pool and only a small flower meadow are all in line with the general trends in South-east England and elsewhere. The changes in farming practice over the years have been well documented (PNAS 2022).

Fortunately, the plan of 1905 shows the layout of the land and as mentioned earlier apart from the elimination of the orchards, arable land and farmyard agricultural use, was today pasture and woodland. By 2008 the farmyard had changed and consisted of an old barn, chicken houses, and outbuildings. The chicken houses had been constructed in 1960 but were no longer in use. In 2023 the farmyard had been replaced with two houses and the barn converted into a house. The rest of the farm still consisting of pasture and woodland.

THE CHANGES IN CONTEXT

Compared with industry's advances in the 19th century, modernisation of farming was slow and even after the 1914-1918 War the change was only gradual. The 1939-1945 War changed the face of farming completely. Britain had, since the late 19th century, depended on buying cheap cereals from North America but in the wars supplying Britain with essential foodstuffs was severely affected by attacks on shipping. The 1939-1945 War was responsible for a campaign to grow more food which resulted in the first wave of ploughing land which had been neglected for many decades. This needed improved drainage, the elimination of scrubland etc. With these improvements there was a need for chemicals to improve crop yields and the 1950s saw further improvements to land use such as grubbing out

of hedgerows and draining wetlands. This in turn enabled larger fields to be created so improving crop yields. In addition the use of herbicides and pesticides greatly increased with detrimental results on the fauna and flora.

By 1960 alarms were being sounded due to the rapid decline of raptors such as the Peregrine where toxics in their prey led to infertility. It was the first signs, at least to the scientific community, of what was to come. By 1980 it was clear to many that, in the case of birds, declines in the numbers across nearly all species was alarming but it was to be another decade before it became generally accepted that the use of nitrates, housing and road construction was having a detrimental to the environment.

The second factor being climate change which can be traced back more than 150 years. The Industrial Revolution which dates back to the last years of the 18th century saw the beginning of developments in the world which have been more rapid than ever before. From being an agrarian society it became an industrial one with the movement of people from the land to the town to fill the jobs which were created by machines. Innovations in the 19th century, such as the railways and heavy industry came rapidly and the demand for coal and other raw materials increased resulting in the pollution of the air not only in urban areas but worldwide. Better health care and nutrition population benefitted from advancements in health care and nutrition to the extent such that the world population which was 1 billion in 1800, 1.6 billion in 1900 and 6.1 billion in 2000. Also, today as people have become more prosperous they demand better food and consumer goods such as washing machines and motor cars. It has also brought about more leisure time which with the motor car and aeroplanes has enabled travel to distant lands more easily.

Up to 70 years ago there were few visible signs that the climate was changing – the extent of ice at the two Poles and glaciers throughout the world were stable. In the last forty years the pace of change has been rapid with the ice cap receding at the Poles and glaciers shrinking at an alarming rate. Relative to this has been the increasing desertification of Africa and the warming of the European continent.

To illustrate the impact of climate change that has occurred I take as an example, the Sahara Desert which, since records began in 1920, has increased in width by 50 kms (30 miles) each decade. This means that in the ten decades since 1920 the distance between the mild Mediterranean coast of North Africa and the savannah belt to the south of the Sahara is no less than 500kms (300 miles) wider added to the distance that a Palearctic migrant in autumn and spring must travel between its breeding grounds in the Northern Palearctic and the Sahel or further south. In either direction the Mediterranean coast of North Africa is the first or last chance to 'refuel'. Additionally, there is the loss of habitat which they find en route due to the desert becoming drier coupled with man's destruction of forests. Climate change has also had an impact in other important areas. Records show that milder weather in Europe has advanced the outset of spring by some 10 days and in turn this has changed the distribution of birds by moving their optimum breeding habitat northwards adding further distance they have to travel to breeding grounds. To give this some perspective it represents, as the crow flies, the distance from Hastings, Sussex to Newcastle-on-Tyne in northern England.



Figure 7. Huntbourne Farm: within Seven Acre Wood, plot 57 (May 2023)

With these facts as a background, I looked at the effects on the changes to the birdlife of Huntbourne in relation to national and more local trends.

The largest losses concern the eight Trans-Saharan species, namely, Turtle Dove, Wryneck, Red-backed Shrike, Willow Warbler, Whitethroat, Spotted Flycatcher, Nightingale and Tree Pipit. Of these the Wryneck and Red-backed Shrike are now only occasional breeders in the British Isles. All are dependent on insects as a primary food source. So, not only are they subjected to crossing the Sahara twice a year but when they arrive on their breeding grounds they find that food for themselves and their progeny is diminished. Likewise in their wintering quarters apart from the Saharan effect there is the destruction of habitat be it wetlands, savannah or forests.

Of the eight species mentioned as of National Concern only the Turtle Dove is considered of International Concern. The other seven, although of Least Concern at International level are noticeable for declines not only in the British Isles but other Western European countries such as France, Belgium, Netherlands. The primary causes of these declines are believed to be climate change and the expansion of farming land not only in the European countries but in the sub-Sahara (www.birdsoftheworld.org/bow/species/).

Three other warblers occur at Huntbourne, Chiffchaff, Blackcap and Lesser Whitethroat. The first two are abundant and mainly winter in the Mediterranean area and increasingly so in Western Europe while the Lesser Whitethroat is a Trans-Saharan migrant wintering mainly in east Africa.

Turning to the grain or seed eating species these are resident or short distant migrants, namely, Hawfinch, Bullfinch, Greenfinch, Linnet and Yellowhammer and, during the summer months, Turtle Dove no longer breed at Huntbourne. The evidence is that the use of herbicides, the grubbing of hedgerows, more efficient harvesting of grain crops and the planting of winter cereals there is far less seed available.

The introduction of strips of land ('set asides') alongside agricultural crops has been of some benefit to Greenfinch, Linnet and Yellowhammer. The Goldfinch is one species which, since NFT's time, has increased due mainly to the banning of trapping for the cage bird trade (see Ticehurst p.143 and Harrison 2:243.)

The other losses since 1944 are Grey Partridge and Red-legged Partridge both game birds which NFT shot regularly each autumn. The Teal is only mentioned once when it bred in 1939. They certainly bred more widely in the past but whether or not this is true today is uncertain due to the lack of observations in inland areas. Lapwings were certainly common on pastures and arable and NFT mentions that in 1935 at nearby Ingleden there were 6-8 pairs which, because of ploughing, 40 eggs were collected. The Little Owl has disappeared since 1944. Turning to other species lost since 1944 the Lesser Spotted Woodpecker and Marsh Tit were both regular breeders in NFT's day. Not only have they gone from Huntbourne but are of National concern. Two other species of medium National concern are Skylark and Swallow. The absence of the former, which NFT recorded on several years as breeding is not surprising bearing in mind its current National status. The Swallow was far more common, than the single pair found in 2008 and 2023 (see Ringing).

The two thrushes, Song and Mistle, are clearly less common, particularly the Song Thrush where NFT would find more than two nests regularly while Robins are still as common. The Spotted Flycatcher, another Trans-Saharan migrant, like the Swallow is still 'hanging on'. One other species lost and of National concern is the Tree Pipit which nested along the edges of the orchards.

On a happier note a look at the list of gains since 1944 indicates some eight proven or probable gains. They are, Mandarin Duck a pair being present in 2023, Collared Dove which only arrived in the British Isles in the mid-1950s. Another species which has expanded its range rapidly in Kent is the Buzzard. The Tawny Owl is never mentioned by NFT but a bird noted in 2023 may indicate the presence of a pair as does a pair of Ravens. In 2008 the absence of Coal Tit and Goldcrest was unexpected and were 'found' again in 2023. The stream along the eastern boundary of the farm seems a likely breeding site for Kingfisher having nested in NFT's time and Grey Wagtail, while Goldfinch is a likely gain from the days of NFT.

Comparing the breeding assessments for 2008 and 2023 the Stock Dove and Woodpigeon show considerable increases but perhaps the most striking concerns the Jackdaw. In 2008 birds were present in Piper's Wood on the opposite side of Swains Road but there was no indication of breeding at Huntbourne. The return of the Coal Tit and increases in the other tits in the period appear to be as favourable as the Diary records Chiffchaffs would seem to have increased dramatically along with Wren and Robin. The decline in the number of Chaffinches may be associated with loss of availability of seed which would agree with the loss of Bullfinch, Greenfinch and Yellowhammer.

PHOTOGRAPHY

NFT was a very keen photographer from the end of the 19th century. His first record for Huntbourne is in 1906 and continued until 1939. During this period he photographed a total of 22 species. The first being a Blackbird's nest in 1906. There followed Coal Tit 1910; Hawfinch & Nuthatch 1911; Grey Partridge & Whitethroat 1912; Kingfisher 1915; Green Woodpecker 1920; Lapwing & Little Owl 1921; Long-tailed Tit & Jay 1930; Red-legged Partridge 1931; Jackdaw & Pied Wagtail 1932; Turtle Dove 1933; Stock Dove & Greenfinch 1934; Lesser Spotted Woodpecker & Bullfinch 1936; Sparrowhawk 1938; Teal 1939.

He was particularly proud of the Teal, for which he commented "I have waited 30 years for this." The Hawfinch nest with parents and young are reproduced here (Figure 8) and to which he made no reference in his Diaries.



Figure 8. Hawfinch at nest (1911)

NESTS, NEST BOXES AND RINGING

Nests. NFT and his sons were very expert at finding nests – a talent not encouraged today. Among the many nests they found were Cuckoos' eggs being hosted by Pied Wagtail, Robin and Dunnock; also, an egg in an empty Blackbird's nest.

Nest Boxes Between 1907 and 1920 he erected and maintained between 19 and 30 nest boxes in the orchards and old trees and these hosted a variety of species in the following years. The value of this habitat has been mentioned above. Reading through the Diaries it appears that more than one pair of Wrynecks nested annually. There is a delightful quote from those days "on many occasions Wrynecks usurped the tits, emptied the box even up to the time of the first 2-3 eggs, Invariably the Wrynecks went off and laid in a tenantless one".

Ringing NFT joined the Ringing Scheme from its inception in 1908 and in the years following reported ringing more than 20 birds annually. At Huntbourne, the Diaries only show that he ringed a few birds occasionally until 1934 and 1935, (probably his sons were involved). In 1934, 243 birds were ringed and in 1935 60 were ringed. This makes a total of 303 birds of 16 species. Nearly all were pulli. The number of Swallow nests recorded annually varied from one or two to 16 in 1935, so it is not surprising that 117 were ringed in the two years 1934-35. In 2008 I checked with the B.T.O. regarding recoveries but no significant records were found. Checking again in 2023 for any further information drew a blank except for a photograph of an attic full of old ringing records! Too many to computerise?

MIGRATION

There is little of importance in the spring records. Each year the first Cuckoo, Wryneck, Chiffchaff, Willow Warbler, Nightingale, Swallow etc. were noted. Judging by the number of Willow Warblers seen in late April and early May there was a regular annual passage of significant numbers at this inland site.

Turning to the autumn, from mid-August to mid-September there are several entries when Willow Warblers, Spotted Flycatchers and Mistle Thrushes were prominent. To take three entries as an indication of the volume passing through this inland site: 25 August 1925, "the kitchen garden was full of migrants in the afternoon, Willow Warblers, Whitethroats and Blackcaps which had all gone by the next day". 02 September 1931, the hedges were swarming with Willow Warblers, while the next two days saw large numbers of Spotted Flycatchers passing through. Also on 14 September, many Mistle Thrushes were all over the fields and which were evidently passing as practically none seen

previously and there were none the following day. In every year that NFT was at Huntbourne at this period he mentions the same pattern of migration.

There are few references to other migrants of which, 5-6 Redstarts on 01 September 1930, a Honey Buzzard at the end of August 1918 and two White Storks in late August 1940 the latter circling high in the sky during a battle between British and German fighter aircraft, deserve mention.

NON BREEDING BIRDS 1905-2023

The full list of non-breeding birds from 1905-2023, is much as would be expected and the addition of Canada Goose, Herring Gull, Lesser Black-backed Gull, Cormorant, Raven and Siskin in 2023 reflect the changes which take place over the years. Certainly there must be more species which have occurred, particularly of birds seen over flying.

Looking at the list of other birds recorded between 1905 and 1944, the Common Scoter in 1938 and the Kittiwake of 1936 are worthy of note as are the Corncrake and White Stork, the last two being not uncommon in Western Europe at the time. Clearly, Hooded Crows were regular each winter and occurred up to 1937 at least, a species rarely seen in the County these days.

Table 3. Non-breeding birds at Huntbourne, 1905-2023	
Species	Years recorded
Canada Goose	Only recorded 2023
Greylag Goose	Only recorded 2023
Wigeon	1906 & 1938
Common Scoter	1938
Nightjar	1910, 1921, 1935
Common Swift	1909, 1910, 1932, 1935
Corncrake	1926 (first for some years) & 1934
Golden Plover	1937 & 1940
Curlew	1933
Woodcock	Regular
Green Sandpiper	1939
Kittiwake	26/09/1936, picked up warm
Black-headed Gull	1910
Lesser Black-backed Gull	Only recorded 2023
Herring Gull	Only recorded 2023
White Stork	1940
Cormorant	Only recorded 2023
Grey Heron	Regular
Honey Buzzard	1918
Golden Plover	1937 & 1940
Barn Owl	09/11/1905
Merlin	16/12/1905
Peregrine Falcon	1907
Rook	Regular
Hooded Crow	1906-07, 1919, 1921; usual pair 1937
Raven	New 2023
Woodlark	04/10/1935 was the first for Huntbourne
Sand Martin	1938
House Martin	1918, 1931-32, 1936
Redwing	1906
Fieldfare	Regular
Redstart	1910, 1918, 1930, 1937; all early September
White Wagtail	Only recorded 2023
Meadow Pipit	1908
Brambling	1933
Lesser Redpoll	1935
Crossbill	1910 & 1928
Siskin	Only recorded 2023
Reed Bunting	1907, 1908

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Philip S. Redman

WAXWINGS



Waxwing by Ian Stewart

The winter of 2023/24 has been quite a good one for Waxwings, with more than for the previous six winters. The species always attracts lots of attention and, while I wonder whether we really need any more photographs of them, I thought I'd respond by summarising their status in Kent.

This is an irruptive species. The birds visiting Britain nest in open forests in northern Scandinavia, Finland and western Russia. They move south in winter, but the distance moved depends on the size of the crop of berries of Rowan and other species. If it is poor, large flocks move, or erupt, further afield, seeking what they may devour.

This article has been created using AI. Sources included the published county bird books, the Kent Bird Reports, and the Waxwing records in the KOS database, kindly provided by Robin Mace. Thanks also to Barry Wright for checking a notable Dartford record. For the most recent period, 2023 and 2024 up to 15th March (so there may be a few more still to come), I have extracted data from BirdGuides and from the KOS online database, plus some cursory searches of other sources. These may omit some records, though perhaps not many, as people seem keener to submit Waxwing records than almost any other! As usual in looking at multiple sources, a few errors and omissions have come to light; what I've included here is based on my own judgement but it's unlikely that other interpretations would alter conclusions much, as the discrepancies involve a minority of records.

Before 1952

The first really authoritative Kent avifauna is that by Norman Ticehurst, who features in another report in this newsletter. The *History of the Birds of Kent* (1909) described the Waxwing as an irregular winter visitor to our county, commenting that a number of years could pass without any, but when they did appear

it was generally in some numbers. That is much as things stand today, of course. The first record for Kent was of one shot at Eltham in the winter of 1781 (it's not clear if this means 1780/81 or 1781/82) but, as that's now within Greater London, the first for Kent as defined by KOS is one shot at Sandwich after 1781 but prior to 1792. The bird was obtained by William Boys and recorded by John Latham, the double act responsible for the naming of Sandwich Tern and Kentish Plover. The largest influxes to Kent in the nineteenth century appear to have been in 1849/50, 1879/80, 1880/81 and 1892/93, though the numbers recorded were small by more recent standards. The largest group reported was eight near Dover in March 1893 (bear in mind that people did not then habitually count birds).

Ticehurst doesn't say much about the habitats used by Waxwings in Kent, though he mentions gardens, an orchard and woodland. The slightly earlier, and somewhat less authoritative, book (Balston, Shepherd & Bartlett, 1907, *Notes on the Birds of Kent*) states, rather oddly from today's perspective, that the species was difficult to see because of "its secluded habits of keeping to the thicker forests of fir trees and large woods". BSB also says that it is "the most beautiful bird that visits this county" – a contentious statement when we also have such species as the Coot and Nightingale.

Harrison (*Birds of Kent*, 1953) recognised that Waxwings did occur in most winters, though usually in very small numbers. More irruptions were noted, especially in 1913/14, 1946/47 and 1949/50. The largest flock seems to have been 45 in Ramsgate on 27th December 1946. Harrison also raised the possibility that some birds came from far to the east in Russia. He noted that several British specimens including two from Kent matched the race *centralasiae*, distinguished by paler colouration, originating east of the Urals. Some recent syntheses including the *Birds of the Western Palearctic* (vol 5, 1988) regard this race as doubtfully distinct (and IOC do not recognise it), noting among other things that some birds to the west can be pale in some plumages.

1952 to 2024



Waxwing by Mike Gould

Before looking at recent status in Kent, it's worth mentioning that there is now evidence that birds reaching Britain can be from areas east of the Urals. Most ringing recoveries, however, suggest origins further west, in Norway, Finland and Estonia, though as most Waxwings are ringed when they are already away from breeding areas, we can't be sure of that. I'll come back to ringing information later.

To examine recent trends and patterns of occurrence, I have used mainly the KOS digital database. For the period up to the mid 1990s, this includes simply information transferred from Kent Bird Reports. As a result, it omits some details (for example by lumping several counts of one or two birds in irruption years) and for 1965/66 contains only an estimate for the whole winter (and a misleading one at that – I did correct it from the KBRs). It is still not possible to examine the scanned record cards, despite that process having been completed many months ago. However, while some errors and omissions remain, I believe that these are insignificant. It is likely that a greater loss of accuracy arises from the difficulty of determining whether flocks seen over a period or at different locations were the same or different. The problem is greatest when lots of birds occur, and the smaller totals are likely to be relatively more accurate than larger ones. By the

way, while some duplication between areas totals may be included in my annual totals, I dare say that there were flocks that did not get recorded.

I have used my judgement over what was most likely, but typically have treated counts at the same location as the same birds unless a gap of at least a month occurred between records. Occasionally, I counted birds in nearby locations as the same when similar numbers were reported during sequential periods. An example of the latter was the north Tunbridge Wells flock of up to 54 in the first three weeks of January 2024, which largely vanished to be replaced by a flock of up to 54 (coincidence or what?) in south Tonbridge.

Figure 1 shows the estimated annual totals (using July-June years as this is a winter visitor) from 1952/53 onwards. Because there is such disparity between irruption years and others, it is impossible to make out the pattern of the smaller totals, even with the y axis truncated at 2,000. Figure 2 therefore repeats the information, truncating the y axis at 110 to enable the size of the smaller counts to be seen. The annual totals in Figure 2 are separated into three groups (up to 100, between 101 and 500, and over 500), with different colouring.

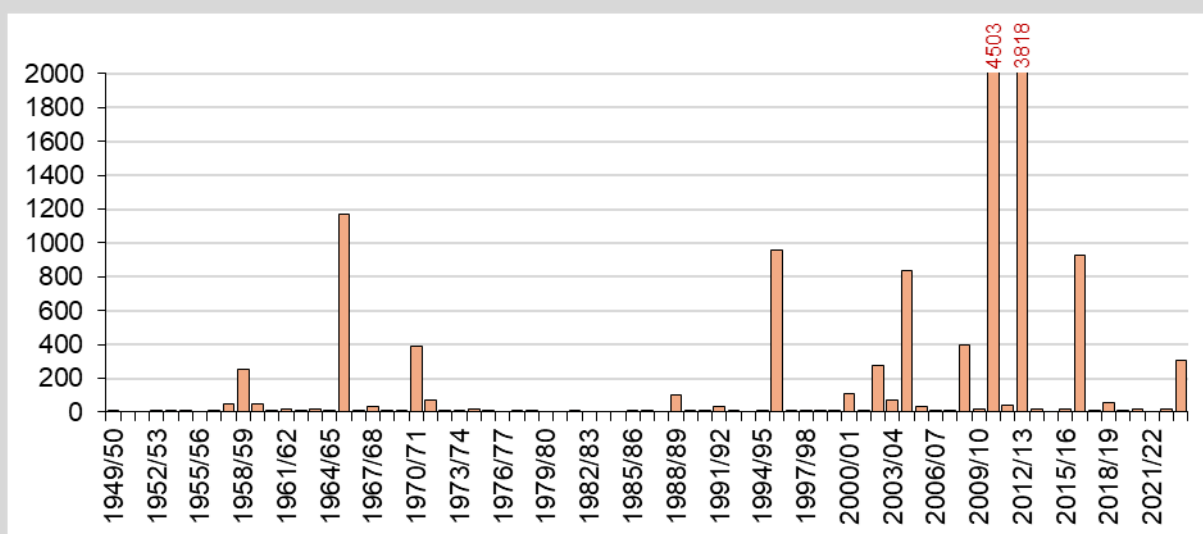


Figure 1. Waxwing: annual totals

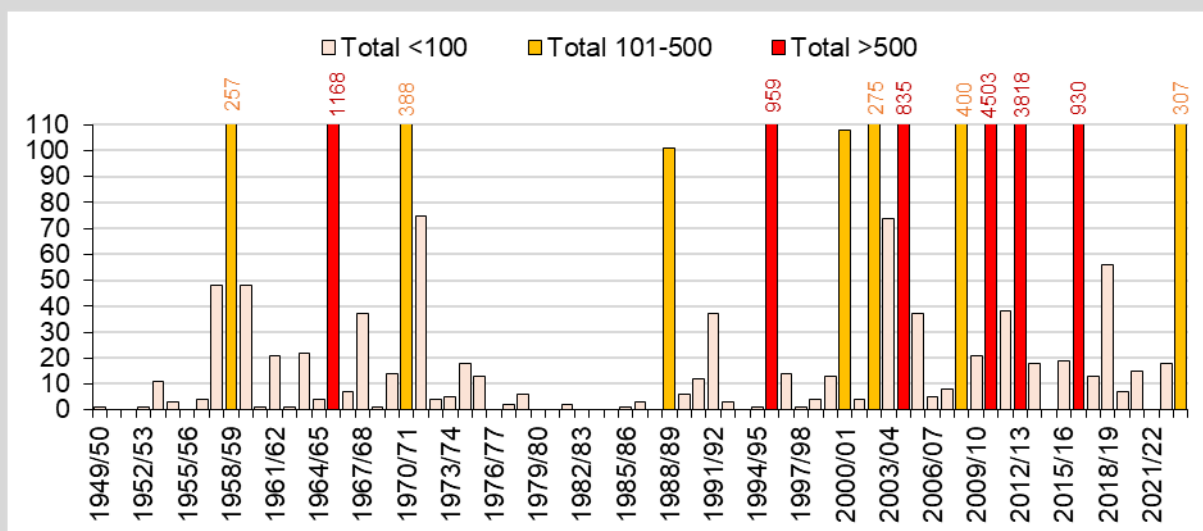


Figure 2. Waxwing: annual totals in three categories

See text for explanation

At the time, it was considered that the 1965/66 irruption (my estimate is 1,168) was the largest known in Kent, and that remained the case until 2010/11. Because of the increased number of observers, with an associated increased likelihood of duplication between area totals, complicating matters, it is probably not sensible to say definitely that the 2010/11 (4,503) and 2012/23 (3,844) irruptions were really three to four times larger. It's possible that the true number arriving in 1965/66 was more than the estimate, and the

recent big year estimates may exaggerate totals. It remains likely, though, that those two recent irruptions were indeed considerably larger than 1965/66's as the single flock sizes were so much larger.

The apparent increase in frequency of irruptions is interesting. As mentioned above, there were four known sizeable irruptions to Kent in the nineteenth century, three in the first half of the twentieth, five of at least 100 birds in the second half of the twentieth, and eight (so far) in the first quarter of the twenty-first century. Is this the result of better recording or a real trend, and if the latter, why?

Table 1 lists peak area counts of 100 or more, mentioning also associated counts of that size in the same general areas around the dates of the maxima. The astonishing total of about 1,400, seen by Phil Milton around Ebbsfleet Lane just inland from Pegwell Bay in December 2010, will take some beating.

Table 1. Waxwing: counts of 100 or more			
1959	16th February	100	Boughton under Blean
1965	3rd December	150	Whitstable
1996	8th February	103	Folkestone
2005	20th February	110	Maidstone
2005	7th March	150	Greenhithe; also other counts of 100-140 in Dartford/Greenhithe area during 17th February-8th March
2010	10th December	118	Dymchurch; possibly part of Folkestone flocks (next entry)
2010	11th December	500	Folkestone; also other counts of 100-310 in Folkestone/Cheriton area during 9th-13th December
2010	15th December	1,400	Ebbsfleet Lane; also other counts of 100-650 in area between Stonelees and Cliffsend during 12th December-1st January
2010	30th December	380	Frindsbury; also 200 at Gillingham on 26th December
2011	2nd January	100	Sittingbourne; possibly part of the Frindsbury flock (above)
2011	20th January	154	Dartford; also other counts of 100-154 around Dartford during 11th January-20th February
2012	11th December	500	Stonelees; also other counts of 199-424 in and around Stoneless during 1st-10th December
2012	16th December	100	Ash (near Canterbury); possibly birds from Stonelees (above)
2013	19th January	108	Dartford

The dates when Waxwings have first been seen each winter haven't shown any trend towards becoming earlier or later. In contrast, last dates have perhaps got later, especially in years when large influxes have occurred (though 2023-24 has been an exception to that, unless some more are yet to come). Figure 3 illustrates this. The red bars indicate the range of dates during which birds were recorded each winter, with small squares representing the relevant dates in years when there were only single date records. Note that birds were not necessarily present throughout the periods shown, especially in years with small totals.

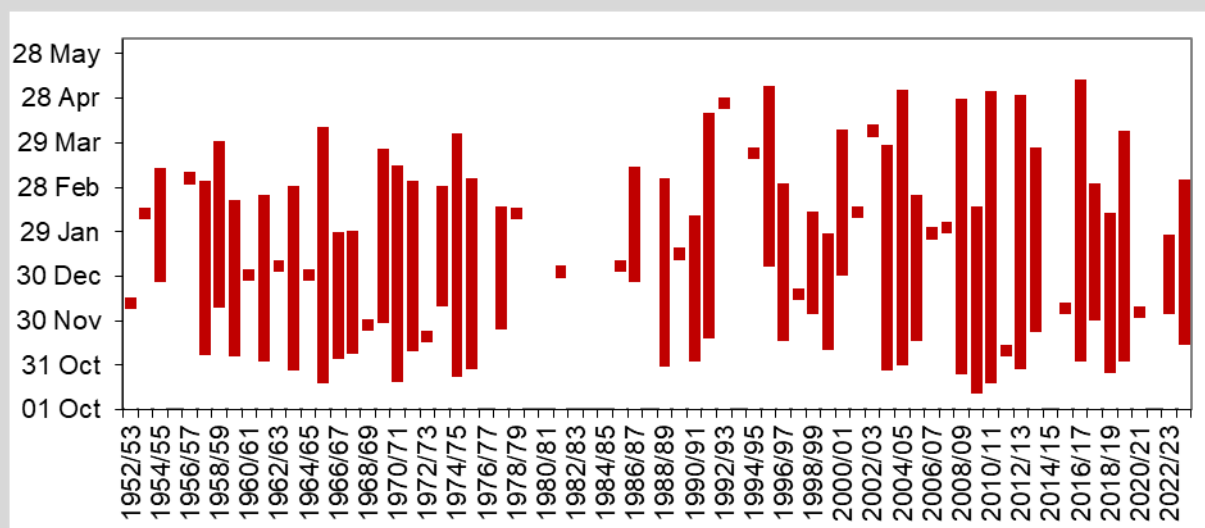


Figure 3. Waxwing: annual periods of occurrence
See text for explanation

There was a report very early in autumn 1903 (see Ticehurst 1909) of one seen at Hole Park, Rolvenden, in the first week of September by Dr W A Montgomery, of whom I know nothing. I wouldn't rule it out from being genuine. It was an irruption year, and late September records are not unknown in more recent years, for example 13 in Argyll on 22nd September 1965 and one in Norfolk on 21st September 1967 (Taylor *et al.*, *Birds of Norfolk*, 1999).

The earliest in the recent era, from 1952 onwards, was one seen flying over at Benenden on 13th October 2009. The next earliest were singles at Dungeness on 20th October 1965 (and there were 36 at Ramsgate on the 21st) and three at Pegwell Bay and one at Dungeness on 20th October 2010.

Last dates in spring have included five in May, all from 1996 onwards. The latest of all was one at Chartham Hatch on 12th May 2017, but not far behind were one at Tunbridge Wells on 6th May 1996 and no fewer than 23 at Dartford Marshes on 5th May 2005.

Figure 4 illustrates the seasonal pattern of occurrence during 2000/01-2023/24. The Kent totals (discounting any assumed duplicates) in each ten day period, averaged over the 24 years, are shown. The spike in mid December results from that Kent record count of about 1,400 at Ebbsfleet Lane on 15th December 2010.

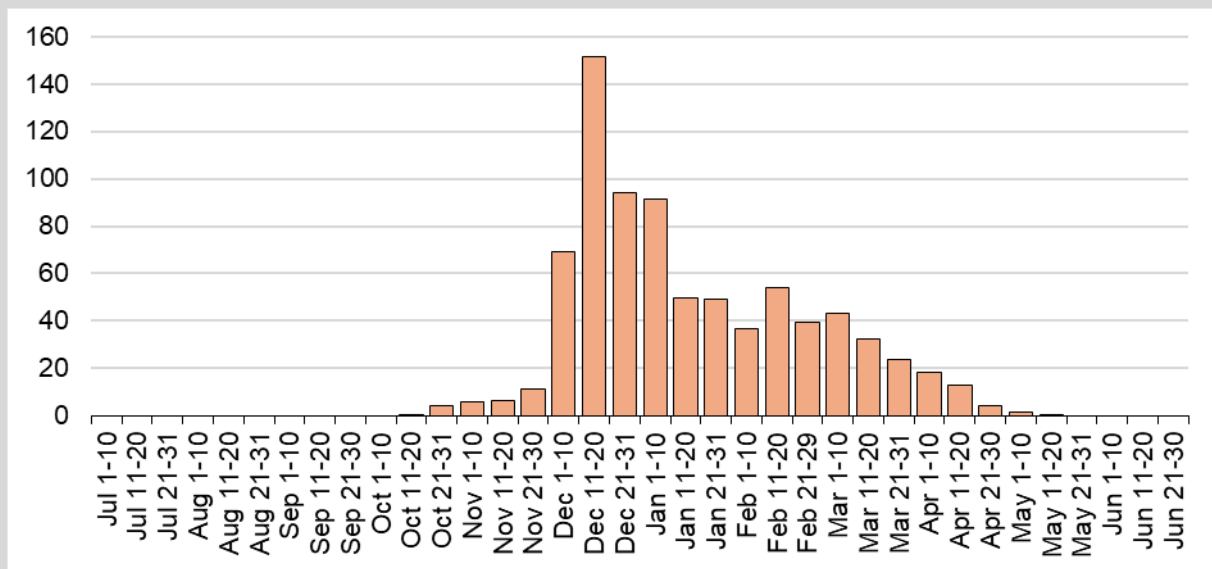


Figure 4. Waxwing: seasonal pattern of occurrence 2000/01-2023/24

October counts are usually small (the largest during this period was 21 at Dungeness on 25th October 2010) and typically there is a slow build-up in November, with the largest arrivals generally taking place in early December. From January, on average, numbers progressively diminish but there is much variation in patterns from year to year (see below).

There are only two conventional ringing recoveries (BTO online ringing report) affecting Kent, neither very significant: one killed by a car at the ringing site at Aylesford after one day, the other taking a month to travel from Basildon, Essex, to Chatham. Not many are ringed in Kent – only ten in the big winter of 2010/11, for example. However, colour-ringing, notably in Aberdeen, has provided more knowledge about Waxwing movements. I haven't come across any up-to-date synthesis of the findings, but the blog of Grampian Ringing Group is worth a look, e.g. the post of 17th January 2017:

<https://grampianringing.blogspot.com/>

The general pattern is that birds arrive on the Scottish east coast and progressively move south as they deplete berry stocks. Similar but more local movements can occur. In Kent in 1965/66, there was an initial concentration in east Kent from mid October to late November, after which central and west Kent held most.

The unpredictability of occurrence and the huge variability in numbers from year to year are part of Waxwing's attractiveness, along with their crazy hairstyles and plumage. Figure 5 contrasts the seasonality of Kent records in two of the winters used to compile Figure 4. These – 2004/05 and 2012/13 – were among the larger Waxwing influxes to Kent. In 2004/05, there was a slow build-up from the end of October, with numbers peaking rather late in the winter, during February and early March. In the larger arrivals of

2012/13, also starting in late October, a more rapid increase led to the very high peak during December, after which the decline set in. The early, but not sustained, peak of 2012/13 was also seen in the other big influx, in 2010/11.

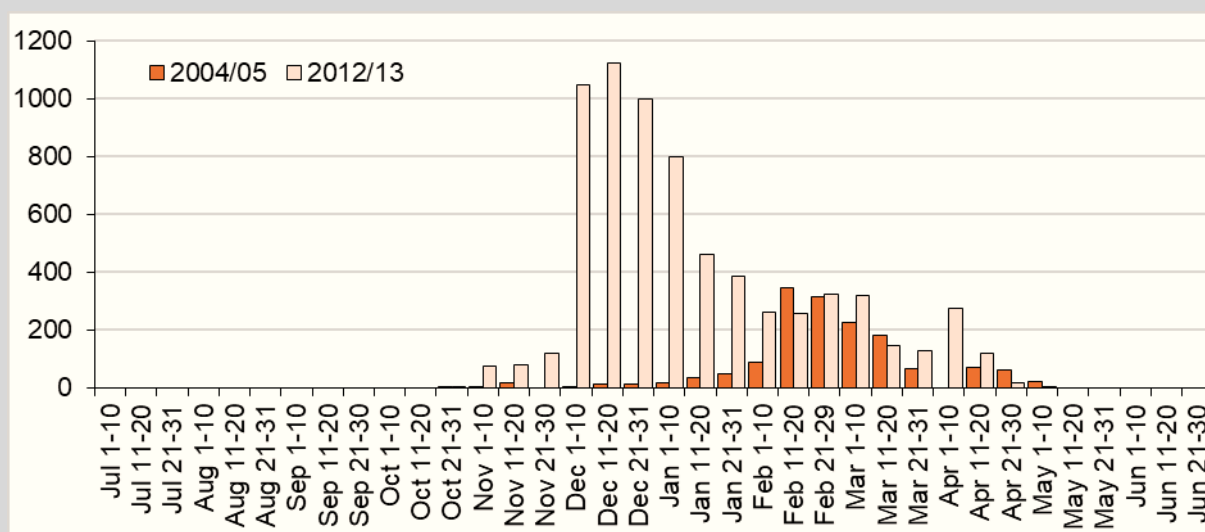


Figure 5. Waxwing: Seasonal pattern of occurrence in two winters
Showing differing patterns in 2004/05 and 2012/13

Birds in the large December concentrations move on, it is thought mainly further west in Britain or south on to the continent (*Migration Atlas*, 2002). There is sometimes a hint of spring passage back through Kent (e.g. the mid April numbers in 2012/13 in Figure 5) but it is never very strong. There are, though, ringing recoveries showing that Waxwings do return to the east (BTO online ringing report), with birds ringed in Britain as far away as central Russia (up to 3,567 km away) in following years. It is still not known exactly where birds reaching Britain breed, as few are ringed (or indeed recovered) within the boreal forests across Scandinavia, Finland and Russia.

They really do get about a bit. There is one ringing recovery between Hungary and far-eastern Russia, on almost the same longitude as Vladivostok, a distance of 7,150 km (<https://migrationatlas.org/node/1730>).

In contrast to Balston, Shepherd & Bartlett's 1907 suggestion that Waxwings were difficult to see because of their secluded habits, birds in recent irruptions have tended to concentrate in highly public areas. I've not analysed this in detail but, just glancing through the records for 2023/24, I think the majority of location details refer to urban street names or similar. There are a few records of birds "in off the sea" or in open farmland or scrub but the cliché that they turn up in supermarket car parks is borne out. Just for this one winter, I noted Aldi, B&Q, Costa, Jewson's, McDonald's, Tesco and Waitrose in the directions to flocks. This sort of detail, by the way, is really helpful in working out whether records relate to the same or different flocks, so I encourage people to provide it; after all, every little helps.

The reason they are found in such places is, of course, because of the street plantings of berry-bearing trees and shrubs such as Rowan and Cotoneaster. The tendency to congregate at retail parks and in residential streets does have a downside. Waxwings, coming from their remote northern homes, are not very streetwise and quite a few are killed by cars or by flying into windows. The Grampian Ringing Group link given above provides some advice on reducing window collision risk.

Andrew Henderson

A Dark-Headed Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla flava ssp.* RSPB Lydden Valley Nature Reserve, Worth Marshes, Kent

Introduction

Early on the chilly but sunny morning of 26th May, 2023, Andrew Lipczynski (AML) and Neil Davies (NRD) walked down to survey the flooded areas of the RSPB's Worth Marshes Nature Reserve, known colloquially as Lydden and Minnis Floods (or Flashes). Although it had been a relatively cold and dismal spring, one benefit had been the large number and variety of wading birds using the area, the numbers increasing as northward migration appeared to have stalled due to the persistent cold north easterly winds. Interest had been heightened with the arrival of Black-winged Stilts, two pairs of which (three pairs later) settled to breed, displaying Black-tailed Godwits and an exceptional passage of Temminck's Stints (at least six).

We started to record the birds present: Ringed Plover (39), Turnstone (one), Dunlin (two), Little Stint (one), Grey Plover (one), Greenshank (six), Black-tailed Godwit (32 increasing to 60), Avocet (eight, for pairs sitting), Little Ringed Plover (two), Common Sandpiper (two) and Black-winged Stilt (four, two pairs sitting) plus a male Garganey and House Martins (120-140), Swallows (six) and Swifts (40) hawking low over the flooded areas.

Watching the pair of Black-winged Stilts sitting on the central island/strip (directly in front and about 100m from where we stood) we were recording the number of 'change-overs' at the nest site when we noticed a Yellow Wagtail feeding close-by to the Stilts and were immediately struck by its dark blue head and cheek with a distinct white/pale supercilium, consistent with e.g. Blue-headed *Motacilla f. flava* and Iberian (Spanish) Wagtail, *Motacilla f. iberiae*. However as I reached for my camera, the bird was lost from sight behind dense vegetation and NRD suspected it may have flown. It was never seen again and this individual is not discussed further.

We started to scan/search the area and (at about 09.42) almost immediately found another Yellow Wagtail, this time a little closer over on our right, feeding on 'Hawthorn Island' where the second pair of Stilts were nesting. However this second Yellow Wagtail was dark-headed and very obviously a different bird.

AML and NRD watched the wagtail for about 40 minutes, during which time we were joined by Keith Ellis (KBE) as we worked through the bird's features. For much of the time it was partially hidden and obscured as it fed and rested in the long damp grass on the island. AML took a series of photographs when the opportunity arose and at this time the conditions were overcast and the light was poor. At about 10.22, the bird flew up and towards us, overhead and NRD noted a harsh flight call, reminiscent of the Eastern Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla tschutschensis* found in November 2020 and was not seen again.

Note: on Monday 22nd May a dark-headed Yellow Wagtail was seen briefly by AML in the company of three other Yellow Wagtails on nearby Minnis Flood before they all flew north.

Description of the 'Dark-headed' Yellow Wagtail (26th May)

- Head: uniformly dark-grey/black-head, ear-coverts, nape and cheek with no visible supercilium or markings on the lores or ear-coverts.
- At times the head appeared all dark/black, at other times the crown appeared (to AML) a shade lighter (dark grey) relative to darker (black) ear-coverts and nape, depending on the light and posture. NRD and KBE considered the head to be uniformly dark / black at all times.
- Underparts: distinct white throat and upper breast, blending to a dirty white/pale grey lower breast, blending into a dirty pale yellow belly and undertail-coverts.
- Upperparts: brown/brown-grey mantle and back.
- Remiges (wing feathers): closed - all brown/brown-grey with no visible wing-bars i.e. formed by pale edges to coverts. No visible pale edges to tertials.
- Rectrices (tail feathers): as Yellow Wagtail, white-sided.
- Legs and Bill: dark
- Vocalisations: a single harsh/rasping call as it flew overhead

All of the features described above are apparent to some extent in a montage of the photographs taken at the time and appended below. All the photographs are heavily cropped and of relatively poor quality. Consequently, in order to better illustrate the bird, Norman McCanch (NVM) kindly volunteered to sketch the bird based on our experience and description and this is also appended.

Discussion

The identification of scarce migrant and vagrant Yellow Wagtail taxa (subspecies) in the UK is fraught with difficulties and is complicated due to the presence of hybrids (or more correctly intergrades). Acceptance of records by the relevant county and national rarities committees is invariably of well-marked male birds in breeding plumage and even so usually requires detailed photographs, preferably in a variety of good light conditions and supported ideally with high quality sound recordings and sonograms (see Rowland).

In an initial report, AML considered that in this case the situation was further complicated by a description which suggests that the bird is probably a female (or male in non-breeding plumage) plus there were (at the time) some puzzling features. Consequently, it was considered that further analysis was probably redundant and no conclusion was drawn as to identification of taxon other than to document the event. However encouraged by NVM) we decided to re-examine the details and persevere!

First the all-dark head without visible supercilium and markings on the ear-coverts point towards either Black-headed Wagtail *M. f. feldegg*, Grey-headed Wagtail *M. f. thunbergi* or possibly Ashy-headed Wagtail *M. f. cinereocapilla*. At this stage one can discount British Yellow *M. f. flavissima*, Blue-headed *M. f. flava* and Iberian *M. f. iberiae* Wagtails plus Eastern Yellow Wagtail *M. tschutschensis*.

For the sake of completeness, the all dark-headed feature could encompass Egyptian Yellow Wagtail *M. f. pygmaea* and Manchurian Wagtail *M. f. macronyx* but perhaps they can be dismissed on the basis of extreme unlikelihood i.e. with no known records in Western Europe.

The distinct white throat, neck and upper breast merging with dirty white/grey lower breast merging with the pale yellow/grey belly and undertail-coverts all point toward a female. The lack of visible wing-bars and pale-edged tertials on the closed wing while the pale edged outer tail was readily apparent was a puzzle until NVM suggested a worn adult (or possibly first winter) before pre-breeding moult. The new edition of Svensson pp 330-331 and also Jenni & Winkler p.76 describes a pre-breeding moult that only affects the body feathers and not the remiges and rectrices. This would also explain the normal tail. A quick search through the literature and on-line photo-libraries do not readily show this plumage state although Shirihi and Svensson do include a photograph of male *M. f. pygmaea* taken in Egypt in May with strong feather wear.

So at this stage we can recap and conclude that we are probably looking at a worn female, possibly adult, 'dark-headed' *flava* subspecies. Concentrating on the all dark-head, recent detailed texts describe the heads of females as follows:

Duivendijk describe the heads of females as follows;

- *thunbergi*: a dark greyish head with at most a faint supercilium
- *cinereocapilla*: like *iberiae* (i.e. narrow supercilium, darker ear-coverts without pale centre) but supercilium faint or absent
- *feldegg*: dark head with or without only indistinct supercilium.

Shirihi and Svensson describe the heads of females as follows:

- *thunbergi*: sometimes possible to recognise by lack of whitish supercilium and a rather dark head but most are inseparable from *flava*.
- *cinereocapilla*: not described in the text but there is a photograph of a presumed 1stS female shows plumage typical of the race with no whitish supercilium, head tinged lead-grey and white throat distinctly separated from yellowish breast
- *feldegg*: varies extensively, many being distinctive with blackish cap and 'some females strongly mirror males with all-black but less glossed cap'.

The single rasping flight call heard would suggest that the bird is not one of the north western European taxa (i.e. not *thunbergi*) and hence point towards either *feldegg* or *cinereocapilla*. The white/whitish underparts also steer one away from *thunbergi* but the difficulty in distinguishing between *feldegg* and *cinereocapilla* remains. Indeed Shirihi and Svensson write that many female *cinereocapilla* are inseparable from *iberiae*, *feldegg* and even *thunbergi*.

Consulting the extensive work of Alström and Mild, they describe and depict female *feldegg* as (in summary) highly variable showing variation from *flava*-like to ones readily separated from other subspecies by their dark heads with many looking like very pale and washed-out males with either pure black (but not glossy) or dull greyish-black heads. The majority show grey upperparts and whiter underparts than e.g. *flava* and *thunbergi*. Their selection of photographs illustrate this variability. Female *cinereocapilla* are not described and depicted in such equal detail other than to state they are closely similar to *iberiae* but generally either lack a supercilium or show a narrow and ill-defined one behind the eye.

Perhaps it is at this stage that one resorts to 'the bible' and opens up the BWP. I was immediately struck by the illustrations of another Norman, this time Norman Arlott and his plate of Yellow Wagtails and especially the depictions of adult female breeding *cinereocapilla* and *feldegg*. The plate (appended) shows a *feldegg* (fig. 17) remarkably similar to the bird in question (albeit with worn upperparts) with an all dark head and essentially identical underparts pattern. Whereas the plate depicts a *cinereocapilla* (fig. 13) with a paler dark head, faint supercilium and the yellow on the underside is stronger and extends up onto the upper breast.

So in conclusion, thanks to prompting and assistance from NVM, it has been certainly personally instructive and hopefully worthwhile in pursuing the identification and while it may not convince the wise 'rare men and women' I think one can venture to say that, on a balance of probabilities, the bird was a worn (prior to its pre-breeding moult) female, possibly adult, Black-headed Wagtail *M. f. feldegg*.

Records/Reports of Scarce Migrant and Vagrant Yellow Wagtails in Kent

BBRC states there are six subspecies of Yellow Wagtail on the British List. British Yellow Wagtail *M. f. flavissima* is a common, albeit declining, breeding summer visitor to Britain. The subspecies Blue-headed *flava* and Grey-headed *thunbergi* Wagtails are scarce migrants while Black-headed *feldegg*, Iberian *iberiae* and Ashy-headed *cinereocapilla* Wagtails are vagrants. Central Asian forms White-headed *leucocephala* and Sykes's *beema* Wagtails were formerly on the British list but have been removed, considered to be variants or intergrades while birds resembling Yellow-headed Wagtail *lutea* have been recorded but are now generally considered to be variant *flavissima*.

I have extracted from the archives of the Kent Ornithological Society (KOS) a listing of all reports and records of scarce migrant and vagrant Yellow Wagtails in Kent from 1889 up to the end of 2022 and these are tabulated below. I have excluded records of the nominate Blue-headed Wagtail *flava* as it is seen on an annual/near-annual basis in Kent at least. Also as Worth Marshes were in the past generally regarded as a 'hot spot' for Yellow Wagtails the reports from Sandwich Bay are emboldened.

In brief, Grey-headed Wagtail *thunbergi* is by far the commonest with 45 records (six at Sandwich) with a recent well documented pair at Reculver in 2022, followed by Ashy-headed Wagtail *cinereocapilla* (three, one at Sandwich). As far as I am aware the three reports of Iberian Wagtail *iberiae* are non-proven; indeed Iberian Wagtail was only added to the British List as recently as 2015. Similarly the single report of Yellow-headed Wagtail *lutea* is not acceptable for reasons described above.

There are also listed ten (three at Sandwich) reports of Sykes's Wagtail *beema* however I understand these are now all considered to be intergrades of British Yellow Wagtail *flavissima* and Blue-headed Wagtail *flava* otherwise known as 'Channel Wagtail' or *perconfusus* (see photo) which is seen in Kent on a near-annual basis. There is only the single record of Black-headed Wagtail *feldegg* but it is described as no longer accepted.

Records/reports of Yellow Wagtail subspecies in Kent (from KOS 01/01/24)

Grey-headed Wagtail *Motacilla flava thunbergi*

1889	Dover, subspecies type, killed, end of April
1906	Romney Marsh, pair bred, adults shot and eggs taken, 20th June.
1961	Grove, subspecies type, 23rd April.
1965	Sandwich Bay, subspecies type, 15th May, and again 30th May.
1971	Broadstairs, subspecies type, 5th May.

	Chetney, subspecies type, 22nd May.
	Dungeness Reserve, subspecies type, 29th May.
1974	Cooling, subspecies type, male, 10th May.
1975	Sandwich Bay, subspecies type, 12th May.
1977	Sevenoaks, subspecies type, male, 29th April.
	Sevenoaks, subspecies type, two females, 10th May.
	Sandwich Bay, subspecies type, male, 28th May.
1980	Stodmarsh, subspecies type, male, 11th May.
1981	Sandwich Bay, subspecies type, male, 9th May.
	Motney Hill, subspecies type, male, 12th-15th May.
1984	Foreness, subspecies type, male, 17th May.
	Foreness, subspecies type, three, 18th May.
1985	Egypt Bay, subspecies type, 5th-6th May.
	Elmley, subspecies type, 14th May.
	Reculver, subspecies type, 18th May.
1987	Foreness/Minnis Bay, subspecies type, four dates between 25th April and 23rd May.
1988	Reculver, subspecies type, male, 2nd and 7th May.
	North Foreland, subspecies type, male, 12th May.
	Foreness, subspecies type, male, 15th May.
1989	Reculver, subspecies type, 9th May.
	Foreness, subspecies type, 19th May.
1990	Walmer, subspecies type, male, 1st June.
1992	Foreness, subspecies type, 20th May.
	Swale NNR, subspecies type, 24th May.
1993	Dungeness, subspecies type, male, 8th May.
1994	Foreness, subspecies type, singles, 21st and 27th May.
1995	Sandwich Bay, subspecies type, 18th May.
1996	Allhallows, subspecies type, 10th June.
2001	Hawthorn Corner, Walland Marsh, subspecies type, 10th May.
2002	Sandwich Bay BO, subspecies type, 21st April.
2006	Dengemarsh, subspecies type, male, 2nd May.
2009	Grove Ferry, two birds, subspecies type, 13th May. One remained until 15th.
2011	Reculver, subspecies type, 7th May.
2021	Reculver, male subspecies type, 9th-10th May.
2022	Plumpudding Stables (Reculver), adult male, 13th-14th May.
	Plumpudding Stables (Reculver), first-summer male, 14th May.

Ashy-headed Wagtail *Motacilla flava cinereocapilla*

1973	Bough Beech, subspecies type, 5th May.
1986	Oare Marshes, subspecies type, male, 26th April.
1991	Sandwich Bay, subspecies type, 31st May.
1998	Elmley, male showing characteristics between Ashy-headed/Spanish (Iberian), present between 25th May and 30th June.

“Sykes’s Wagtail *Motacilla flava beema*” - now considered ‘*flava x flavissima*’

1970	Sandwich Bay, subspecies type, 20th-22nd May
1973	Sandwich Bay, subspecies type, male, 13th May.
1977	Chartham, subspecies type male bred with nominate female.
1990	Sandwich Bay, subspecies type, two birds, 15th April.
	East Sheppey, subspecies type, 8th May and 11th-20th May.
1991	Murston, subspecies type, 27th May.
1992	Swale NNR, subspecies type, 25th May.
1993	Kingsnorth, subspecies type, 13th April.
	Stodmarsh, subspecies type, 21st April.
	Northward Hill, subspecies type, 16th May.

Iberian (Spanish) Wagtail *Motacilla flava iberiae* - not proven

1977	Sevenoaks, subspecies type, male, 21st April
1986	Boughton Park, subspecies type, male, 7th May.
1998	Elmley, male showing characteristics between Spanish (Iberian) and Ashy-headed Wagtails, present between 25th May and 30th June.

Black-headed Wagtail *Motacilla flava feldegg*

1908	Romney Marsh, subspecies type, adult male, shot, 3rd June. No longer accepted
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Yellow-headed Wagtail *Motacilla flava lutea* - now considered *flavissima* variant

1977	Minster, subspecies type, 27th May
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Appendices
Photomontage of the 'dark-headed' Yellow Wagtail (AML)

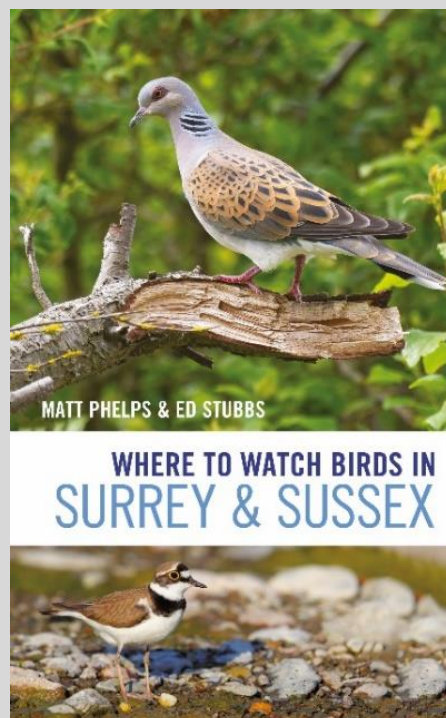


The 'dark-headed' Yellow Wagtail. watercolor by Norman McCanch (based on descriptions).



Yellow Wagtail Plate 28 (p, 328) by Norman Arlott from HBW

Book Review: Where to watch birds in Surrey & Sussex,
by Matt Phelps and Ed Stubbs Helm ISBN: 978-3994-0423-5 £27.99



Back in 1964 I was dragged reluctantly from South Wales to an unknown part of “England” by my parents. All I knew of “England” was derived from television and the proximity to London suggested endless urban sprawl and a marked lack of birds, very different from Glamorgan and Pembrokeshire. We pitched up on the Surrey/Sussex border just south of the Greensand Ridge. On my first day out on my bike exploring this lush green landscape I met an extraordinary bird unlike any I had seen before, my first cock Pheasant!!

I lived in this band of country straddling the border for ten years, probably the formative years of my birding career. Aided by a cohort of supportive teachers, local birdwatchers and friendly farmers I learned to ring, complete nest record cards and carry out surveys and censuses. After a few years back in West Wales as a lighthouse keeper I returned to the South-East, but this time in Kent. Apart from four years on the Isle of Man, the region has been home ever since.

1967 brought a notable treasure, the publication of the first “Where to Watch Birds” written by John Gooders. It fuelled my enthusiasm for new places especially as Surrey was only represented by four sites. Sussex fared rather better and about this time I acquired my first motor bike making the exploration of darkest Sussex a real possibility.

Reading this new edition of **Where to Watch Birds in Surrey & Sussex** has been a voyage of nostalgia, reviewing many sites I knew well all those years ago and discovering some I was unaware of as a youngster. Of course, much has changed in the intervening fifty years, but I was pleased to find that this book is a comprehensive celebration of an extraordinary and much under-rated region with lots to delight the birders mind.

So how does the book present its information? The three counties (Surrey, East & West Sussex) are divided into nine regions, each with a range of “main sites” and “other sites”. Surrey presents 34 main sites and 49 other sites; the two Sussexes combined have 60 main and 50 other sites.

The format for each is re-assuringly familiar, beginning with **Ordnance Survey Map details** and **Post Codes**. Next comes a useful summary of the **Habitat** of the site, often including details of plants, butterflies, Odonata and even some historical and cultural information which may well be of wider interest. There is then a comprehensive analysis of the likely **Species** which may be encountered, often with a useful grid reference to likely sites. This is followed by details of the best **Timings** to visit the site in search of special birds and includes the likelihood of other users who may not be entirely compatible with birding! **Access** gives clear information about how to find the site and where best to focus attention, followed by a short note on **Facilities** covering such necessities as parking, toilets and snack bars.

Finally, a **Calendar** provides a catalogue of birds of interest throughout the year. Every site has a relevant and useful map. These vary from the simple to the highly detailed, but all are sufficient to the needs of the visiting birder and often locate car parks and viewpoints. I would suggest that linking these to the relevant OS Map would be advantageous when visiting an unfamiliar area. As a birder of a certain age, it is great to find key measurements in yards, miles and acres and an emphasis on Ordnance Survey grid references rather than a system which relies on the imposed linking of a small sequence of arbitrary words! There is a good deal of additional information beginning with “**How to use this book**” and including “**Thirty species to see in Surrey & Sussex**” (I have seen twenty-six in the region!); a listing of **useful organisations and links**; A **Glossary**; listing of **Habitat terms**, A list of **Acronyms** and a **Checklist**. I was most impressed by listings of “**twelve top reserves for disabled access**” and “**twelve top reserves for access by public transport**”, both reflecting the growing awareness of the need for inclusivity and access to the countryside.

It is sobering to think of the birds which were a feature of my adolescence, but which are very rare or absent in the region now. Red-backed Shrikes bred a lunchtime walk from my school, Wrynecks were regular in the older orchards and gardens near home, Wood Warblers, Willow Tits and Tree pipits could be found a bike ride away and Cirl Buntings bred at the limit of my motor bike excursion! Lapwings, Grey Partridges, Turtle Doves and Yellowhammers bred on the mixed farmland where I did most of my birding, but the story is not all doom and gloom. Hobby was very rare in those days, there were no Buzzards or Kites nearer than South Wales, Goshawks, Honey Buzzard, Dartford Warbler and Little Egret were the stuff of dreams, but we probably could have done without the Rose-ringed Parakeets!

There are still wonderful birds to be found in the region and many more accessible sites to visit as well as a growing network of like-minded people to share them with. This outstanding book gives a wide range of valuable information and advice which will inform and assist users and encourage access to more birds for many more people, that can only be a good thing. I might even try to locate some of the sites from my past to see if their special birds have really gone, or simply slipped below the radar, it would be fun to find out and this book will certainly make the challenge more achievable. Thoroughly recommended!!

Members can obtain this book at a discount using code: **KENT30** on the website at (www.bloomsbury.com) entering the code at the checkout .

Norman McCanch

KENT BIRD SIGHTINGS FOR JANUARY and FEBRUARY 2024 - 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 in this newsletter.*

WEATHER

January began mild, wet and unsettled with the eighth named storm of the winter, Henk, on the 2nd bringing strong winds and rain. By the 5th, south-east England had received two-thirds of the whole monthly average rainfall. After this the weather changed dramatically with high pressure becoming established across the UK and bringing dry and sunny conditions with a marked drop in temperature. The cold but dry conditions persisted through the middle of the month before they were brought to an abrupt end on the 21st and 24th with the arrival of Storms Isha and Jocelyn with milder conditions then continuing to the end of the month. During the month 37.25mm of rain fell at Bishopstone.

February was a mild but wet month with generally unsettled weather. Mild conditions in the south persisted until the 24th when temperatures dipped just below average for a few days. It was the UK's second warmest February on record and was also very wet. During the month 74.25mm of rain fell at Bishopstone.

PARTRIDGE TO WILDFOWL

The **Black Brant** seen at Grenham Bay during December was still there on Jan 6th and seen at Reculver on the 19th whilst six **Barnacle Geese** were seen at Worth Marshes on Jan 9th with 39 at Dungeness RSPB during February.

11 **Pink-footed Geese** were seen at Dungeness RSPB on Jan 15th with six there from Jan 27th-29th and there were also three reported flying N at North Foreland on Jan 23rd whilst two **Tundra Bean Geese** were seen at Walland Marsh from Jan 12th-18th.

The wintering flock of up to 260 **Russian White-fronted Geese** was seen at Swale NNR during January and February and as many as 118 were seen at Reculver Marshes, Swalecliffe, Northward Hill, Harty Marshes, Sandwich Bay, Worth Marshes, New Hythe, Naccolt, Halstow Marshes, Conningbrook, Elmley NNR, Northward Hill, Nethergong, Eastwell Manor, Oare Marshes and Deal.



Lesser White-fronted Goose by Peter Maton

The adult **LESSER WHITE-FRONTED GOOSE** first seen in the Oare Marshes and Sheppey areas from 15th Dec 2023 was still to be seen in the area on Feb 20th.

During these two months up to 59 **Bewick's Swans** were seen at Walland Marsh and Dungeness RSPB with smaller numbers at Reculver Marshes, Capel Fleet, Harty Marshes, Swale NNR, High Halstow, Coombe Bay, Lydd and Nethergong.

Up to five **Whooper Swans** were seen at Walland Marsh until Feb 1st and up to four were reported from Oare Marshes, Harty Marshes, Capel Fleet and Marden.

As many as 22 **Egyptian Geese** were seen at Dungeness RSPB, Walland Marsh, Stodmarsh/Grove Ferry, Reculver Marshes, Godmersham, Haysden, Whetsted GPs, Penshurst Place, Furnace Pond, Bough Beech, Sevenoaks WR, Chartham, Chilham and Stonelees.



Ruddy Shelduck by David Hale

The **Ruddy Shelduck** was still to be seen at Sevenoaks WR on Jan 15th.

As many as 43 **Mandarins** were seen at Bough Beech with up to 13 at Chesterfield Woods, Sellindge, Kiln Wood, Reculver, Nethergong and Brokes Hill Farm.

A female **Scaup** was seen at Riverside CP on Jan 13th and a female was seen at Cliffe Pools from Jan 14th-30th with one or two reported from Motney Hill from Jan 21st-Feb 27th. A male arrived at New Hythe GPs on Jan 25th and remained there until the end of February.

During these two months as many as seven **Velvet Scoters** were seen at DBO, St Margarets-at-Cliffe, Reculver, Allhallows, North Foreland and Willop Outflow.

Single **Long-tailed Ducks** were seen at Tankerton from Jan 1st-7th and at Pegwell Bay from Jan 1st-19th whilst one flew E at Foreness on Jan 6th and one was seen at Joss Bay on the 15th. One was also seen at Elmley NNR from Jan 19th-31st and on Feb 19th.



Long-tailed Duck by Martyn Wilson

As many as 22 **Goosanders** were seen at Bough Beech with single figure counts at Seabrook, Oare Marshes, Minster Marshes, Pegwell Bay, West Hythe, Botolph's Bridge, Sandwich Bay and Sevenoaks WR.

NIGHTJAR TO WADERS

A **Common Crane** was reported flying S over East Peckham on Feb 25th.

A **Red-necked Grebe** was seen at Swalecliffe from Jan 31st to Feb 17th and single **Black-necked Grebes** were seen at Lade on Jan 5th and at Rochester on Jan 14th.

Two **Slavonian Grebes** were reported from St Mary's Island from Jan 19th-21st with one at Riverside CP on the Jan 27th, one or two at Motney Hill from Feb 1st-15th and one at Oare Marshes on Feb 17th and 18th.

A wintering **Dotterel** was picked out from a flock of 3,000 Golden Plover at Scotney GPs on Jan 3rd and was still there on the 7th.

During these two months as many as 18 **Purple Sandpipers** were recorded from Margate Harbour, Dover Harbour, Ramsgate Harbour, Leysdown, Broadstairs, Hampton, Hythe, Swalecliffe, Joss Bay, Foreness, Grain, North Foreland and Swalecliffe.



Purple Sandpiper by Peter Maton

A **Little Stint** was identified at Worth Marshes on Jan 16th.

As many as five **Jack Snipe** were seen at DBO, Dungeness RSPB, Romney Marsh, Chamber's Wall, Nethergong, Worth Marshes, New Hythe, Finberry, Elmley NNR, Bough Beech, Oare Marshes, Beachborough and Willop Basin.

During these two months one or two **Spotted Redshanks** were recorded from Oare Marshes, South Swale LNR, Otterham Creek and Pegwell Bay.

GULLS TO SHEARWATERS

An adult **Sabine's Gull** was reported flying E at Tankerton on Jan 9th.

During January and February up to three **Little Gulls** were seen at DBO, Donkey Bridge, Reculver, Seasalter, Swalecliffe, Herne Bay, Oare Marshes, Dover Harbour, Bololph's Bridge, Nickoll's Quarry and Minnis Bay.

A "**Russian**" **Common Gull** was identified at Dover on Feb 18th and a second winter **Ring-billed Gull** was seen at Foreness on Jan 1st before it flew E. If This is accepted by the KOS Rarities Panel it will be only the 18th Kent record of a Ring-billed Gull.

A second or third winter **Glaucous Gull** flew S at Kingsdown on Jan 6th and a juvenile **Iceland Gull** was seen at St Margarets-at-Cliffe on Jan 7th and 8th, one was reported from Dover Harbour on the 12th and with a north-easterly gale blowing on Feb 26th a second winter bird flew E at Reculver and an immature bird was seen at DBO.



Iceland Gull by Jamie Partridge

As many as 14 **Caspian Gulls** were seen at DBO with smaller numbers at St Margarets-at-Cliffe, Dover Harbour, Deal, Kingsdown, Foreness, Reculver, North Foreland, Swale NNR, Sandwich Bay, Pegwell Bay, Dartford Marshes, Sevenoaks WR and Greenhithe and up to three **Yellow-legged Gulls** were seen at DBO, Pegwell Bay, Bough Beech and Reculver.

The occasional **Great Skua** seen at DBO, North Foreland, Shellness and Minnis Bay, a juvenile **Pomarine Skua** was seen flying W at Tankerton on Jan 6th, off Herne Bay on the 7th and at Grenham Bay on the 8th. One was also reported from Cliffe Pools on Feb 4th and an **Arctic Skua** was seen at Sandwich Bay on Jan 21st.

A **Little Auk** was reported flying N at North Foreland on Feb 27th and a **Puffin** flew E at Tankerton on Jan 2nd, whilst another flew S at St Margarets-at-Cliffe on Jan 22nd and there was one at DBO on the 27th.

During these two months single **Black-throated Divers** were seen at Dungeness RSPB, DBO, North Foreland, Foreness, Sandwich Bay, Oare Marshes, Seasalter and Grenham Bay and as many as three **Great Northern Divers** were recorded from Dungeness RSPB, DBO, Sandwich Bay, Oare Marshes, Foreness, Joss Bay, The Swale, Swalecliffe, Reculver, Motney Hill, Westbere, Allhallows, Seabrook, Broadstairs, Dover Harbour, Hythe, Scotney and Hoo.

A **Leach's Petrel** was seen five kilometres off Dover from a cross-channel ferry on Jan 12th and a **Sooty Shearwater** flew W at DBO on Jan 2nd with two seen flying W on Jan 6th and one was seen and photographed flying S at St Margarets-at-Cliffe on Feb 11th.

WHITE STORK TO WOODPECKERS

18 **White Storks** flew over Boughton Monchelsea on Feb 23rd and there were eight recorded from Stilebridge and one was seen at Lintern Hill on the 25th.

One or two **Shags** were recorded at North Foreland, Sandwich Bay, Dover, Ramsgate Harbour and Foreness.



Shag by Mike Gould

Up to four **Glossy Ibises** were still at Dungeness RSPB with one at Faversham Creek on Jan 3rd and at Ham Marshes on Jan 8th and up to five **Spoonbills** were seen at Oare Marshes, Shellness, Harty Marshes, Pegwell Bay and Faversham Creek.



Spoonbills by Peter Maton

During these two months one or two **Bitterns** were recorded from Oare Marshes, Grove Ferry/Stodmarsh, Elmley, Seaton and St Nicholas-at-Wade and as many as 28 **Cattle Egrets** were seen at Stodmarsh, Lydd, Collard's Lake, Netherhale, Worth Marshes, Shalmsford Street, Chartham and Sandwich Bay.

Up to three **Great White Egrets** were seen at Dungeness RSPB, Bough Beech, Oare Marshes, Collard's Lake, Whetsted GPs, Nickolls Quarry, Donkey Street, Westbere, Haysden, Samphire Hoe, West Hythe, Nethergong, Haysden, Lympe and Sandwich Bay.

During these two months a maximum of four **Hen Harriers** were recorded from Grove Ferry/Stodmarsh with smaller numbers at Oare Marshes, Capel Fleet, Dungeness RSPB, Shuart, Walland Marsh, South Swale LNR, Pegwell Bay, Seasalter, Swalecliffe, Nethergong, Godmersham, Fairfield, Swale NNR, Minster Marshes and Elmley NNR.



Red Kite by Kieron McDonell

Up to eight **Red Kites** were reported from Oare Marshes, Knockholt, Bough Beech, Knole Park, Haysden, Mystole, Chartham, Bishopsbourne, Barham, Leigh, Brokes Mill Farm, Godmersham, Lynsore Bottom, Downe and Leigh Green.

A **Rough-legged Buzzard** was reported from Minnis Bay on Feb 28th.

Two immature **White-tailed Eagles G542** and **G471** from the Isle of Wight reintroduction scheme wandered around the County during January and February when single birds were recorded at Bough Beech, Hever, Lydd, Littlestone, Fowlmead, Sandwich Bay, Dover, Westbere, Canterbury, Elmley NNR, Teynham, Goathurst and Staplehurst.



White-tailed Eagle by Bruce Rolls

OWLS TO HIRUNDINES

During January and February one or two **Long-eared Owls** were recorded from Elmley NNR, Reculver Marshes, Bishopstone and Foreness.

A peak of 16 **Short-eared Owls** was seen at Elmley NNR and there were nine at Shellness on Feb 9th with up to six at Sandwich Bay, North Foreland and Northward Hill.

There was an unconfirmed report of a wintering **Hoopoe** on Romney Marsh on Jan 18th.

Single **Merlins** were recorded at DBO, Sandwich Bay, Pegwell Bay, Stodmarsh, Oare Marshes, Swale NNR, Nethergong, Elmley NNR, Brooksend and Shorne Marshes.



Waxwing by Kevin Reynolds

Up to 54 **Waxwings** were seen at Tunbridge Wells with smaller numbers recorded from West Malling, Southborough, Marden, Stodmarsh, Pegwell Bay, St Margarets-at-Cliffe, Ebbsfleet, Tonbridge, Boughton Monchelsea, DBO, Tudeley Woods, Blean, Horsmonden, New Hythe, Sevenoaks and Stonelees.

During February a **Woodlark** flew E at DBO on the 10th, single birds flew over Foreness on the 12th, 17th, 25th and 29th and two flew in off the sea North Foreland on the 16th with others seen there on the 17th and 19th.

A **Sand Martin** was reported from Brooksend on Feb 10th, a **Swallow** was seen at Worth Marshes between Feb 21st and 24th with birds also seen at Foreness on the 23rd, 28th and 29th and Barham on the 27th whilst a **House Martin** was seen at the cliffs at Foreness from Feb 22nd-24th.

WARBLERS TO WHEATEARS

A **Siberian Chiffchaff** was identified at Worth Marshes on Feb 19th and was last seen on the 23rd.

During January and February single **Dartford Warblers** were only seen at DBO and Sandwich Bay.

As many as four **Firecrests** were seen at DBO, Reculver, Shuart, Tankerton, Denge Woods, Enbrook Park, Sandwich Bay, Quex Park, Margate Cemetery, Lympne, Ramsgate Cemetery, Stonelees, Cliffe Pools, Clowes Wood, Blean Woods, Lullingstone and Shorne CP.

Single **Black Redstarts** were seen at DBO, Dover Harbour, Chatham, Hythe, Brooklands, Minnis Bay and Netherhale.

SPARROWS TO BUNTINGS

During these two months up to eight **Water Pipits** were seen at Oare Marshes, Swale NNR, Stodmarsh/Grove Ferry, Swanscombe, Westbere, Elmley NNR and Sandwich Bay.

A **Hawfinch** was seen in Denge Woods on Feb 9th and the two **Twite** first seen at Pegwell Bay in November were still there on Jan 28th.

During January and February as many as three **Mealy Redpolls** were reported from Horsmonden, Northward Hill and Charing and up to 40 **Crossbills** were recorded from Denge Wood and Covert Wood.



Crossbill by Mark Chidwick

A **Serin** was seen at Sandwich Bay on Feb 2nd and up to seven **Snow Buntings** were seen at Foreness, Shellness, Dover and Minnis Bay.



Little Bunting by Barry Wright

A **Little Bunting** was discovered at Godmersham on Feb 3rd and remained there until the end of the month. If accepted by the KOS Rarities Panel it will be the twelfth record for Kent.

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, Bockhill Birders, R. Bonsor, Bough Beech (per A. Ford), E. Brown, N. Burt, G. Burton, F. Cackett, J. Cantelo, J. Carnell, P. Carr, J. Chantler, P. Chantler, M. Chidwick, R. Collins, G. Coultrip, K. Cutting, DBO (per D. Walker), B. East, A. Farrar, D. Faulkener, Folkestone and Hythe Birds (per I. Roberts), N. Frampton, C. Gibbard, S. Ginnaw, R. Gomes, M. Gould, S. Haughie, R. Heading, J. Headley, A. Hindle, C. Hindle, M. Hindle, G. Hollamby, M. Hollingworth, P. Holt, J. Hunter, M. Kennett, S. Kennett, J. King, G. Lee, O. Leyshon, A. Lipczynski, M. Longdon, K. Lord, R. Mace, A. Malone, J. Massey, P. Maton, N. McCanch, S. McMinn, S. Message, S. Mills, R. O'Reilly, M. Orchard, J. Partridge, A. Pavey, K. Privett, C. Powell, M. Puxley, R. Rackliffe, B. Ring, M. Roser, K. Ross, B. Ryan, Samphire Hoe (per P. Holt and P. Smith), SBBO (per A. Lipczynski and S. Walton), I. Searle, G. Segelbacher, Sevenoaks WR, I. Shepherd, D. Smith, P. Smith, R. Smith, W. Stoneham, M. Sutherland, Swale NNR (per R. Smith, D. Faulkner, I. Davidson), A. Swandale, P. Trodd, C. Turley, D. Tutt, J. Warne, M. Watts, C. White, M. Wilson, T. Wilson, J. Woolgar, B. Woolhouse, D. Wrathall, B. Wright, M. Wright and J. Young.

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

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

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

Fifty Years Ago

Ferruginous Duck



Ferruginous Duck by Archibald Thorburn (PDI)

Ferruginous Duck

A bird seen on Cliffe Pools on Jan. 23rd and Mar. 16th (TEB, LFW) was considered to be this species, but the possibility of a hybrid could not be completely excluded, although no black tip to the bill was seen

MEET THE MEMBER – Murray Orchard



1. Tell us about the role you play in the KOS and describe what it involves.

I've been a member of the KOS since 1974 and have regularly submitted my bird records to the Society since then. As time went on I gradually became more involved, taking on the role of outdoor meetings organiser for 16 years, joining the Exec Committee (twice) and writing for the Kent Bird Report.

I'm now chair of the Conservation & Surveys Committee, a role I very much enjoy as it involves liaison with like-minded folk from other organisations such as RSPB, KWT, BTO and SBBO, as well as people actively involved in Kent birding.

2. What first drew you into the world of birds?

What first drew me into birds was feeding them in my parent's back garden in Strood. I gradually started to recognise them, although the pictures in my Ladybird books were rather confusing! Later on, Waxwings in the garden probably sealed my fate! - I recall seeing seven, shoulder to shoulder, drinking from a shallow water tray on the wall of a flower bed near the house. Marvellous!

I joined the RSPB's Young Ornithologists Club (YOC), and an invitation from Ann Taylor (later Scott) to join a local group in Rochester meant I established a group of young birding friends (who became life friends), mentored in birding by the leaders.

3. How are you involved with birds in Kent?

Early birding comprised trips out with my birding pals by bike to local sites like Cliffe and Allhallows, then by train and bus to places further afield. Then one of us learnt to drive....

I gradually got more interested in local birds and the areas where they occurred. Once I joined the BTO in 1977, my interest in studying birds more seriously took hold. In subsequent years, with one friend in particular, we conducted our own surveys of local woodlands and marshes. My particular species of interest were Nightjar and Hawfinch.

I started "WeBS" counting back in the early 80's (the scheme has had several names), then BBS in 1994 and have supported, and recently organised, several single species surveys for the BTO (for which I'm now Kent Regional Representative) and the KOS. Having enjoyed many years of general birding, and largely failed twitching!, I've increasingly felt that I want to "put back" into birds and birding in a more meaningful way.

4. What has been your biggest birding blunder?

In my very early years I remember seeing a Crow in thick fog that looked huge - so I ticked Raven in my Observers Book of Birds! I also talked myself out of Common Gull when I read that they didn't breed south of the Tweed. I didn't realise that they were widespread in winter and as non breeding birds. Of course, my most consistent birding blunders have been the many dips from failed twitches. Too slow me!

5. What's your top tip for people who are interested in learning more about birds or getting more involved?

The best way to learn more about birds, and get more involved, is to join a local group and bird club, such as an RSPB members group and, of course, the KOS! Being with other birders to chat with and hear about their experiences, good places to visit, what's around and what's happening etc has no substitute. Listening to talks and reading local newsletters etc will aid the learning experience and open opportunities to get more involved.

Of course, I'll advocate joining the BTO and taking advantage of their bird identification courses and opportunities to get involved with surveys such as BBS.

6. What is the bit of kit that you take with you when out and about birding?

Apart from my binoculars and telescope/tripod, my most valuable bit of kit is my trusty clicker! When counting birds it's easy to lose track of the 100s...and I'm often counting birds!

7. How do you feel we can improve the future for birds in Kent and birdlife on a larger scale?

The challenges facing birds and other wildlife in Kent are huge, and bigger now than they've ever been. There are excellent people working within RSPB, KWT, BTO, etc. trying to improve the landscape for birds, by procuring land, improving habitats and providing scientific data upon which to base conservation measures. What's needed is grass roots support. This can be from membership of these organisations but, even more valuably, by volunteering for some of the many surveys that are ongoing or periodically organised. Without the data generated from these, we're really in the dark about what's happening to our birds and why, and how best to change things for the better.

8. Tell us about a species, place or project that interests you.

I would say my greatest interest at the moment is our breeding seabirds. In Kent, we have important but threatened colonies of terns and gulls....and Fulmars! Having the opportunity to get out into the Medway and see breeding Med Gulls and our only breeding Sandwich Terns at close range is just fantastic...but there are so many issues facing them.



Terns and Gulls by Murray Orchard