



White-tailed Eagle by Robin Elliott

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Editorial

Although I have always been more of an autumn/winter kind of birder, there is little doubt that May is the premier month for the anticipation of unusual avian visitors. I tend to creep through the early season arrivals from March and through April, always mindful of the potential for the spectacular. This year Spring has been a dragging disappointment with wet weather, cold winds from the north and a landscape generally flooded or muddy, but the past few days have seen the spectacular; Purple Heron at Worth marshes, followed by two at Stodmarsh, these followed by a Red-footed Falcon and then two Whiskered terns the very next day! Predictably I only managed to connect with one of the Purple Herons!

Fortunately for my sanity rarer birds are only a minor part of my obsession. At this time of the year I am drawn to the arrivals of local birds after their epic journeys from Africa. Top of my personal list is the Turtle Dove. I have lived in my current home for 29 years and in the first decade Turtles bred in my garden every year. The loss of their favourite tree in a storm led to them moving to the shelterbelt next door but they still visited my garden to forage and look for twigs in my vegetable garden. As we all know numbers have dwindled so that at best there are three pairs within earshot of home each Spring. This year they were very late, and I began to wonder if this might be the year we lost them for ever. Thankfully today, the thirteenth of May, two birds were purring mid-morning. The reasons for their decline are many and varied, but along with many of our summer visitors a proximate cause is the degradation of the environment by human development.

By a strange coincidence editorial work often leads to KOS related discoveries, the latest of which was a single sheet of printed information included in the KBR 1957. This was a flyer written by George Shannon, then President of the KOS. It was promoting the newly formed Kent Naturalists Society, which through various iterations became the KWT we know today. George wrote a piece in that document that, although sixty-seven years old, puts into words the state of play today. I include it here to highlight the long-term nature of the destruction of the world we all value so much.

Dear Member,

I am sure that you are fully aware of the increasing threats to all forms of wildlife in Kent. Super grids, nuclear power stations and many other forms of development are daily proposed. The areas in which plants, birds, insects and mammals can live unmolested are already seriously depleted, are being subjected to continuing pressure and are threatened with destruction. WE have a clear duty to our successors to see that they are not the inheritors of a Bleak Age and condemned to live in a countryside stripped of its natural beauties.

George Shannon President KOS 1957

Good birding

Norman

News and announcements

KOS Newsletter May 2024

Avian Influenza and BirdTrack

Please continue to be vigilant and look out for sick or dead birds in circumstances where bird flu is suspected, especially around the coast and inland wetlands and water bodies.

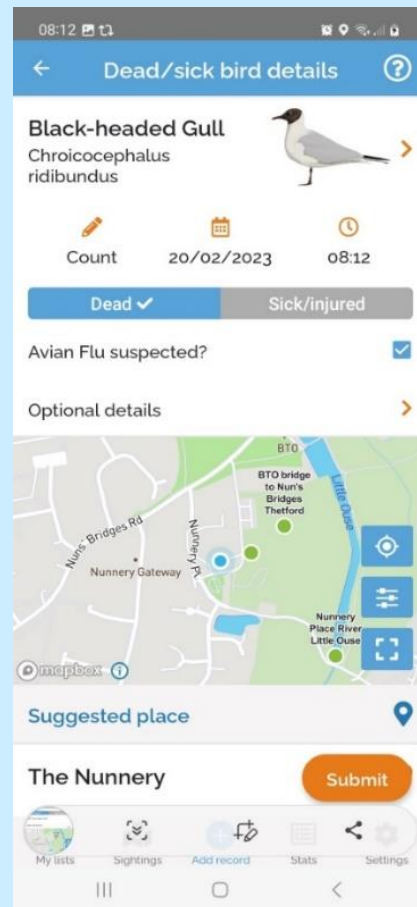
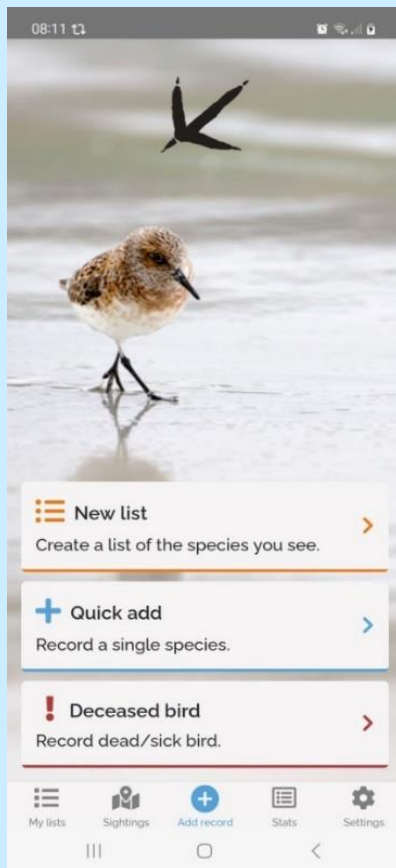
Defra guidelines for reporting have recently changed and you should report to Defra if you find:

- **One or more dead bird of prey, gull, swan, goose or duck in the same place**
- **Five or more dead wild birds of any other species in the same place**

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

The BirdTrack 'Deceased bird' tool on the phone app provides a quick and easy way for you to report dead or sick birds which are not on the Defra priority list for reporting. An example could be a single as Grey Heron or Woodpigeon, or if you find fewer than five of the priority species, such as three Black-headed Gulls.

The additional data collected through BirdTrack complements information collected through the Defra scheme and the Epicollect system used by site managers working for country agencies. Thank you very much for taking the time to submit these records.



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>

Reporting Breeding Birds

Please use breeding codes when submitting bird records during the breeding season. This greatly improves the value of the record both nationally and at county level. Every year the KOS receives thousands of records either directly from the KOS website or from platforms like BirdTrack or eBird which get downloaded to the KOS database at the end of each year. Authors of species accounts in the Kent Bird Report have to try and interpret these records when it comes to documenting the breeding status. The task would be a lot easier if observers gave more information. There are nationally agreed codes to determine if a bird is possibly, probably, or definitely breeding. The breeding codes used by BTO BirdTrack can be found here [Recording breeding evidence | BTO - British Trust for Ornithology](#) These codes are now also incorporated in the KOS sightings database. Similar codes are available in eBird.

During the breeding season (usually taken as 1 April to 31 July, but some species breed earlier and later!), please try and add the most appropriate code, if possible, to your record submission, especially for less common species.

If you are concerned that reporting a breeding bird may lead to disturbance you can report it directly to the Kent Recorder, Barry Wright umbrellabirds66@gmail.com

Rare Breeding Birds (RBBP species) in Kent

The following list gives the typical RBBP species recorded in Kent in recent years. It is particularly important to submit all confirmed or suspected breeding records of these species, using the recording systems and evidence of breeding codes detailed in the "Reporting Breeding Birds" article. Whilst caution should be exercised when submitting breeding records of any RBBP species, it's important to know breeding locations for the Kent and UK RBBP ornithological archives. Records giving location details (OS grid or 1km square reference) can be marked sensitive on BirdTrack, whilst there is a now a sensitivity button on the KOS sightings database which will prevent public disclosure of the record on the website. In many cases, such as broods of ducks and fledged waders, reporting locations is not an issue. For others, more robust breeding populations or inaccessible nest sites lessens the effect of disturbance. However, in most cases, the location of rare breeding birds should not be publicly disclosed or discussed, especially not on social media, to avoid disturbance from unscrupulous birders and photographers, gamekeepers and pigeon fanciers, and egg collectors.



Quail
Garganey
Shoveler
Wigeon
Pintail
Pochard
Turtle Dove
Spotted Crake
Black-necked Grebe
Black-winged Stilt
Avocet
Little Ringed Plover
Mediterranean Gull
Little Tern
Eurasian Bittern
Cattle Egret
Little Egret
Honey Buzzard
Goshawk
Marsh Harrier
Long-eared Owl
Short-eared Owl
Lesser Spotted Woodpecker
Hobby
Peregrine Falcon
Golden Oriole
Bearded Tit
Woodlark
Marsh Warbler
Savi's Warbler
Dartford Warbler
Black Redstart
Hawfinch



Please submit records of these species directly to the County Bird Recorder – Barry Wright umbrellabirds66@gmail.com or the Kent RBBP rep. David Smith DavidSmith@epr.uk.com

Seabird Monitoring Programme (SMP)

The Seabird Monitoring Programme (SMP) is a partnership between BTO and JNCC (Joint Nature Conservation Committee), in association with the RSPB. BTO took over the organisation of the programme in July 2022 and the survey is under the leadership of Sarah Harris, former organiser for BBS/WBBS.



The Seabird Monitoring Programme monitors population changes of our internationally important breeding seabird species at **coastal** and **inland** colonies across the UK. Scheme participants, both non-professional and professional surveyors, visit sites to count numbers of breeding seabirds and where possible, their young, to monitor breeding success. Details of how the programme will be modified going forward are still being worked on but there is scope for wider participation than has been the case in the past. For further details please see www.bto.org/our-science/projects/seabird-monitoring-programme

Within Kent it is now possible for volunteers to register and sign up to count sites with breeding Gulls, Terns, Fulmars or Cormorants. These can be coastal or inland sites and all are marked on the Map of Seabird Monitoring Sites which can be accessed via the above link. This shows the current sites registered in Kent and for which data has been submitted in the past or as part of the recent JNCC Seabirds Count. By zooming in to view the master sites, any component ones will be revealed. Clicking on a site will start the process of requesting to become a counter. Once registered and allocated the site, you can then enter breeding data from visits you make. Hopefully this is something that you would continue to do each year, in much the same way as volunteers do for schemes such as the Heronry Census. You will be making a valuable contribution to our knowledge of the state of UK seabirds!

The following sites are currently marked as vacant. It would be great if someone could register as a counter for one or more of these sites and supply records each year. One or two visits are all that's required with a count of breeding birds present. The expected/likely species are given against each site and details of when and how to count each species are provided in the link above. Please note that the cliff sites pose obvious hazards and counting should not be undertaken without appropriate risk assessment and local guidance.

The Warren & Abbots Cliff - **Fulmar**
Samphire Hoe - **Fulmar**
Langdon Cliff & Bay – **Fulmar, Herring Gull**
Crab & Fan Bay Cliffs – **Fulmar, Herring Gull**
Hope Point – **Fulmar, Herring Gull**
Castle Coote (Swale) – **Little Tern**
Stodmarsh – **Common Tern, Cormorant**
Seaton Pits – **Common Tern**

If you would like to get involved with the Seabird Monitoring Programme, please let me know
murray.orchard@live.co.uk. Thanks.

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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:

Chris Roome, Rowland House, Station Rd., Staplehurst TN12 0PY

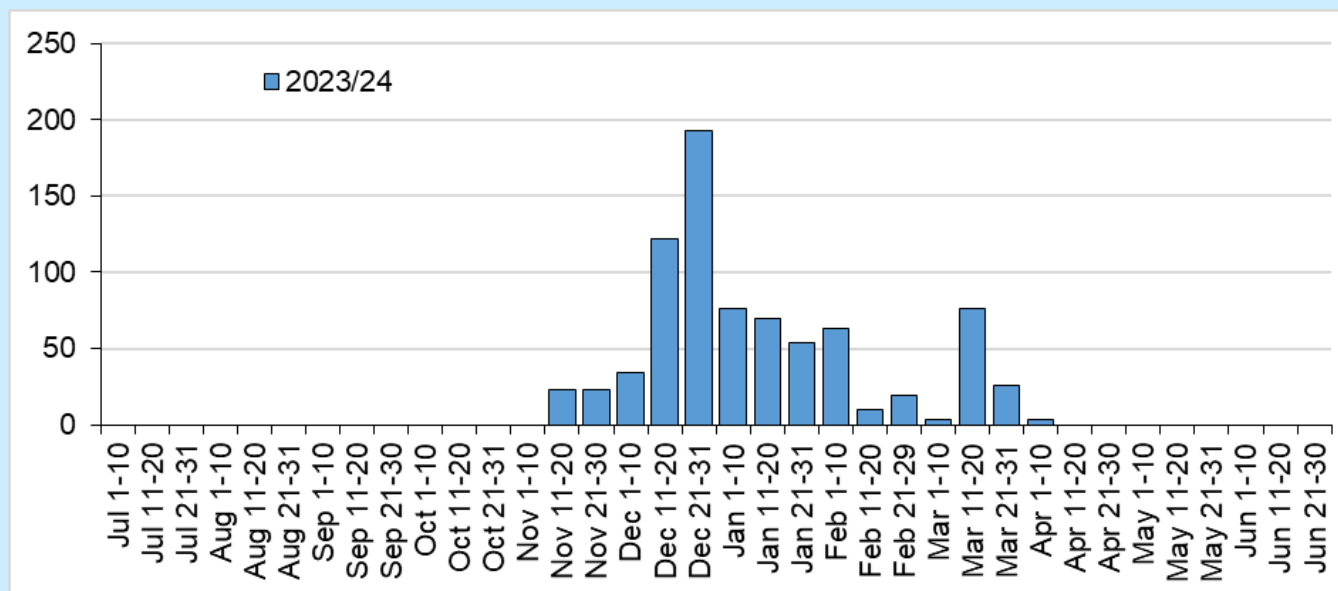
Tel: 01580 891686 e-mail: chrisroome105@icloud.com

WAXWING UPDATE



Waxwing (Wikicommons)

Following the appearance of the Waxwing article in the March newsletter, there were quite a few more records for winter 2023/24. As mentioned in the article, a return passage is sometimes detectable and this year it was stronger than usual. The chart here shows the seasonal pattern of counts for the whole winter.



The data remain provisional at this stage but the estimated total for 2023/23 is now 412, placing the winter at the lower end of irruption years.

Andrew Henderson

A FIRST FOR KENT

A Black-tailed Godwit, ringed on The Swale, was the first UK ringed Black-tailed Godwit recorded in Norway. Typically, Black-tailed Godwits wintering in Kent nest in Iceland. EY97683 was an adult female,

ringed at Harty on October 8th, 2018, when she was also fitted with colour rings which meant she could be individually identified.

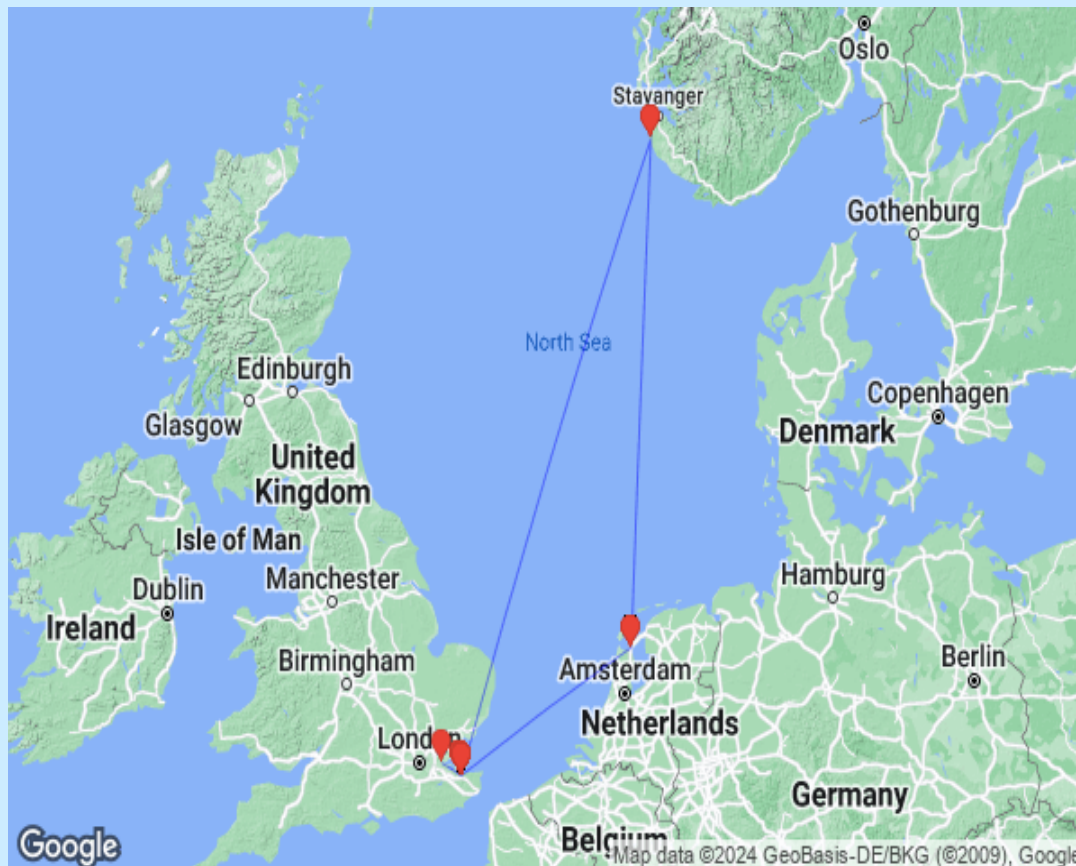
She was first reported a few days after ringing at Oare. In 2019 she was seen again at Oare on April 5th and returned on June 30th and stayed until November 13th.

In 2020 she moved to Conyer on January 16th and then to Mucking in Essex on 21st. She was next reported at Oare on June 30th and recorded there on November 13th.

In 2021 May 2nd she was seen at Orreosen in SW Norway on May 2nd, 2021, for a few days with a flock of *islandica* godwits and by July 21st she was seen at the Waddensea coast in the Netherlands and stayed until August 17th. By August 30th, she was back on the Swale, being reported from Oare and Conyer until February 2022.

In July 2022 she was back on the Swale in July and stayed until November, returned again in July 2023 and last seen at Conyer on December 12th, 2023.

These repeat sightings of colour ringed birds build up a picture of the journeys of these birds. This bird typically spent the late summer and early winter at Oare before moving to Conyer at the end of the year. It presumably spent the summer in Iceland. The Norway sighting was an exceptional record, and it is remarkable although it may have been blown off course on migration it was able to reorientate itself and get back to its regular wintering ground on The Swale.



This history is only possible by reporting of colour ringed birds and thanks especially to Damon Smith, Dudley and Carol Hird on The Swale, Bjorn Mo in Norway and Wim Tijssen in the Netherlands and members of the Swale Wader Group.

Please report sightings of colour ringed birds, regular sightings help draw a picture of its movements

For more information on ringing <http://swalewaders.co.uk> For more information on **Black- tailed Godwit** <https://wadertales.wordpress.com/2016/02/01/godwits-and-godwiteers/>

Brian Watmough
Brianwat1@gmail.com

DABBLING DUCKS, part 2

In the November 2023 newsletter, I presented summaries of the status in Kent of dabbling ducks in the genera *Spatula* and *Mareca* and threatened to deal with *Anas* at a later date. Having received an unprecedented total of two compliments on part 1 (though disappointingly nothing from Mrs Trellis of north Wales), I decided to hasten the appearance of part 2. Here I am dealing with Mallard, Pintail and Teal among the regularly occurring species, plus Black Duck and Green-winged Teal, with brief mentions of various hybrids and escapes (in short entries between the main accounts, the species in current IOC order).

Mostly, my series of articles present count data for the period from 1952 to the present. In this case, as for Dabblers part 1, the charts concentrate on 1977 to 2022. Before that, counting of wildfowl numbers was patchy and using what there is in charts would be misleading.

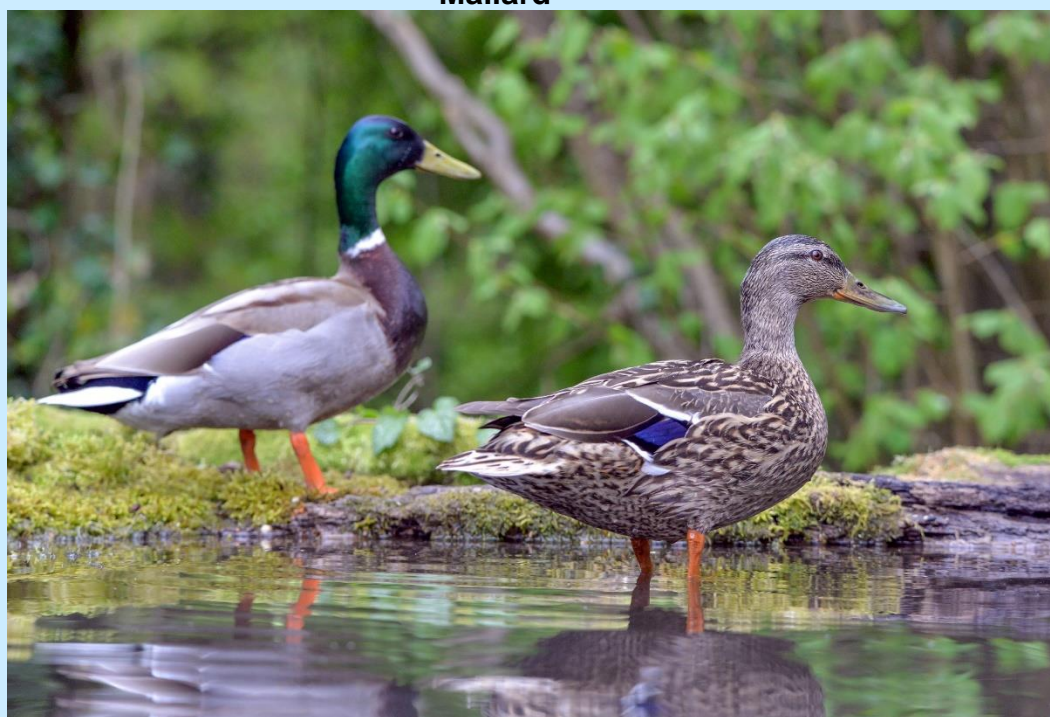
Thanks to the following for help with this article: Brian Watmough, Bob Knight and Murray Orchard for assistance with north Kent WeBS data; Chris Hindle for more details of a cold weather Mallard movement. The bulk of the data have been extracted over the years from the KOS archives and Kent Bird Reports (KBRs). In this case I have not undertaken any recent analysis of the KOS digital database. There are, inevitably, some errors in KBRs; in some instances, these may be significant – for example, I discovered that the table of Mallard counts in the 2002 KBR was a copy of that for 2001. I did correct that one for my own dataset, but I took the view this time that the improved accuracy derived from recalculating all totals was unlikely to make a great difference within the grand scheme of things.

These articles on dabbling ducks benefit greatly from data compiled by the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO). The WeBS smoothed index data for England, used here for Mallard, Pintail and Teal, were downloaded from the BTO website. Breeding Bird Survey (BBS) data for Mallard were supplied by BTO to KOS for use in the KBRs. Both WeBS and BBS are partnerships jointly funded by the BTO, RSPB and JNCC, with fieldwork conducted by volunteers. More volunteers are always welcome. If you'd like to help, talk to one of the Kent local organisers, if you know who they are, or go via the BTO website:

BBS <https://app.bto.org/bbs/public/request-square.jsp>

WeBS <https://www.bto.org/our-science/projects/wetland-bird-survey/taking-part> and 'find a vacant site'.

Mallard



Mallard pair by Paul Turner

The general status of Mallard as a common resident and winter visitor has changed little since the times of Ticehurst (*History of the Birds of Kent*, 1909) and Harrison (*Birds of Kent*, 1953), although there has been a decline in winter numbers since the 1980s. However, because the species is so familiar and well-distributed, we probably know less about the population size and trends for this species than for many wildfowl.

As a breeding species, Mallards occur wherever there are wet areas (Figure 1, copied from the *Kent Breeding Bird Atlas 2008-2013*). They are the least tied to extensive wetlands of our wildfowl, breeding in urban areas and farmland with scattered ponds as readily as in marshland. Some pairs also breed in dry habitat up to 2 km from the nearest water. They are, however, noticeably absent from much of the chalk landscape of the North Downs and Thanet (although even there they can be found where there are ponds). The species was found in 488 tetrads (2x2 km squares) in 1967-73, 627 in 1988-91 and 754 in 2008-13. Those figures suggest range expansion but it's more likely that the gains are due to better coverage.

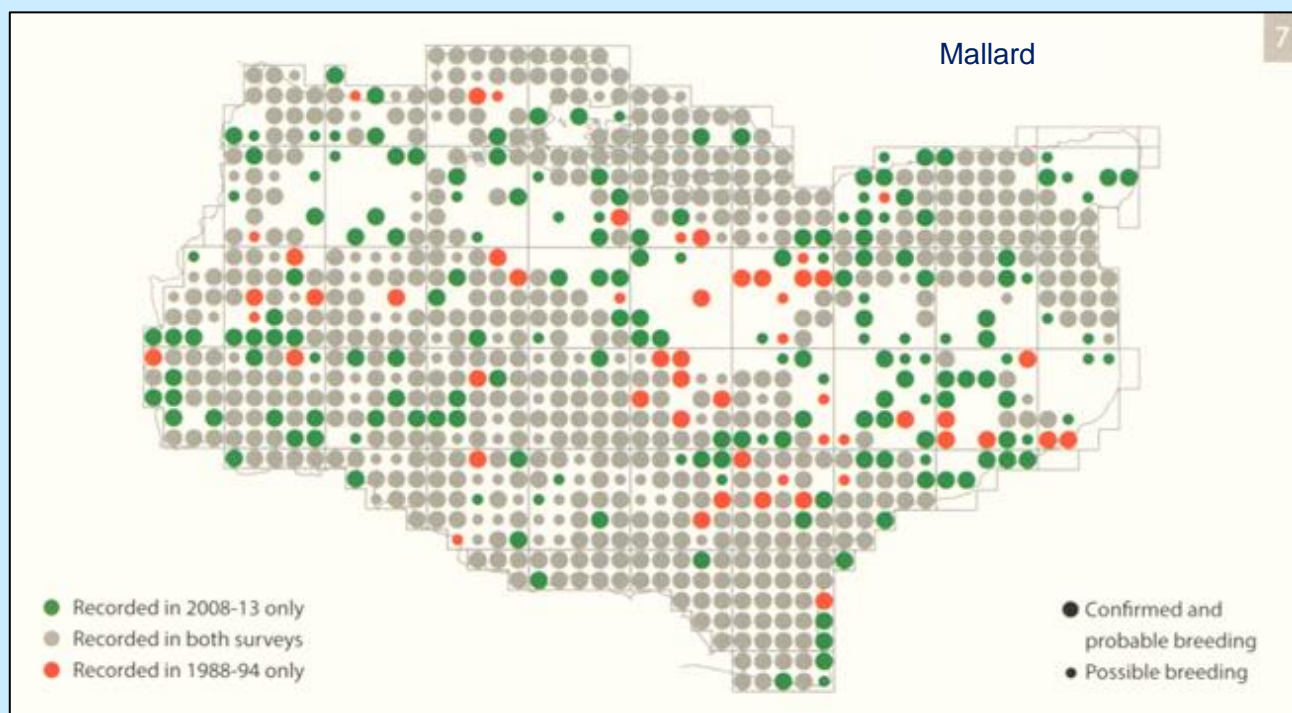


Figure 1. Mallard breeding distribution

The Mallard increased steadily as a breeding bird in the UK from the 1960s to around 2000, especially in England, with the trend levelling off since then, and a shallow decline has occurred over the last ten years (*BTO Bird Facts*). The trend in Kent since 1994 has been similar to the national one (Figure 2), and it should be noted that increases may have been due in part to releases of birds for shooting. In Kent, the breeding population estimate for 2008-13 was 3,00-5,000 pairs, the same as for 1988-91, made on the assumption that, on average, there were 10-20 pairs per tetrad in coastal areas and river valleys and 2-4 pairs per tetrad elsewhere. Those figures don't reflect the population change between atlases, however, and are really little more than guesswork.

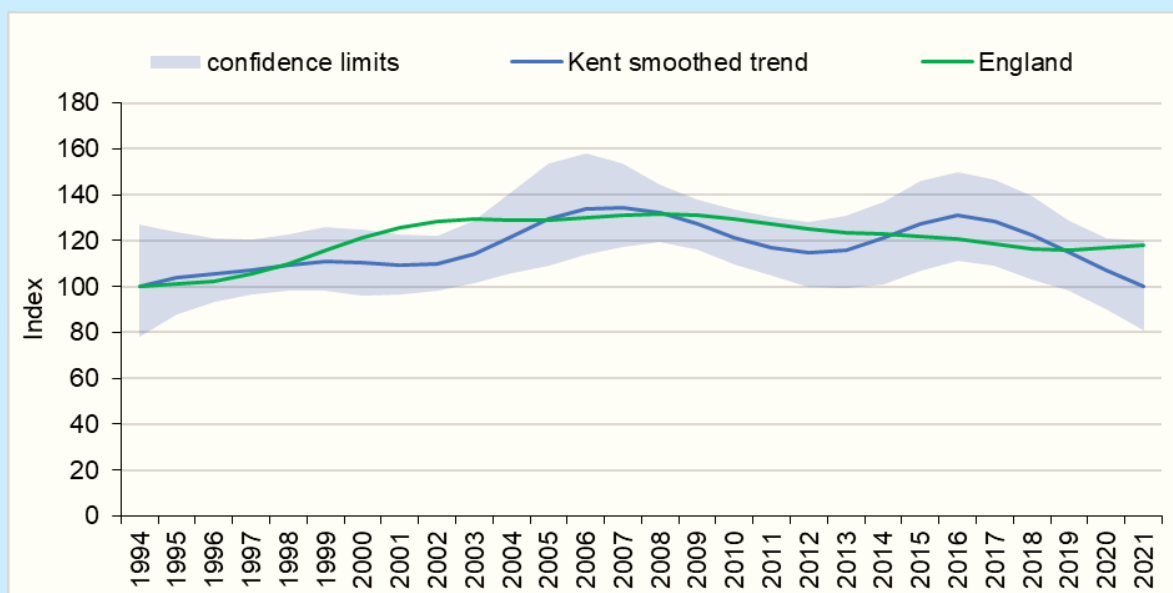


Figure 2. Mallard: Breeding Bird Survey trends, 1994-2021

In winter, Mallards feed in a wide variety of habitats but perhaps mostly on arable farmland including stubbles, typically flying into the fields at dusk from secure water bodies or offshore, where they have spent the day. Some do feed in fresh and saltwater marshes, though surprisingly few do so in north Kent marshes such as Elmley (Oliver, *Kent Bird Report* for 1997 pp 143-148), and in more urban areas many survive on food provided by the public.

The trend for birds present in the non-breeding season has been quite different from that for breeding birds. Figure 3 illustrates this, using count data for the main coastal zones and two well-covered inland sites in the period since 1977/78. It's important to remember that this does not include all Mallards in the county. We do not know what proportion occurs in areas other than those analysed here but, given that it is so widely distributed, it is certain to be higher than for, say Pintail or Teal.

The areas included in Figure 3 should be mostly self-evident but the east Kent lowlands here comprises the Stour valley downstream from Ashford to Sandwich Bay and north to Reculver and Minnis Bay.

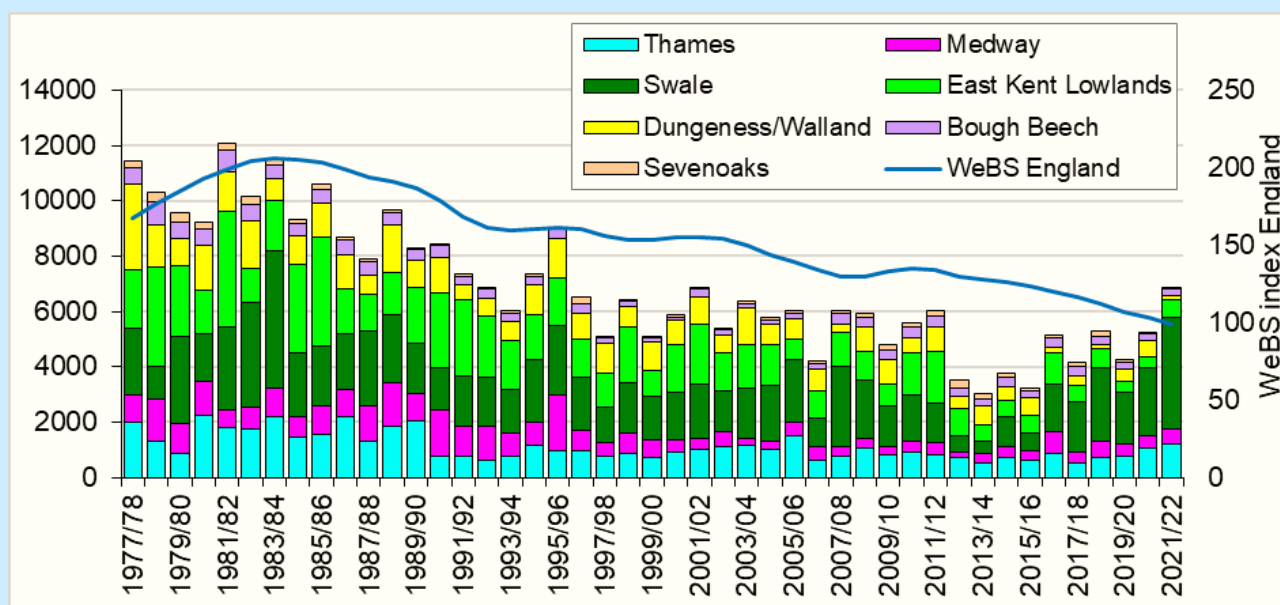


Figure 3. Annual Mallard maxima, 1977/78-2021/22

For much of the period, the Kent trend mirrors that of the Wetland Bird Survey (WeBS) nationally. Around 1980, the summed peaks across the principal area were in the range 9,000-11,000. By 2015, numbers had halved to around 4,000-5,000. Since then, there has apparently been a small recovery in Kent (although I wonder if some of that may be the result of more efficient counting). Note the increased

numbers in the Swale area in particular. The WeBS index trend for England as a whole has continued on a downward trajectory until the present.

In Table 1, I have shown the average peak counts in the principal areas for successive five-year periods. The declines in most of these is all too obvious, even in the Dungeness area where more wetland habitat has become available. This reinforces the contention above that the important feeding areas are not the wetlands themselves but the surrounding farmland, which has become progressively less suitable. However, the causes of the decline are not known with certainty. As well as lower food availability, they could include reduced immigration (itself due to falling continental populations or to climatic amelioration driving fewer birds west) or perhaps reductions in releases for shooting.

None of the Kent areas on its own exceeds the threshold for national importance (currently 6,700) let alone that for international importance (20,000). This applies throughout the period since 1977, though it's worth pointing out that the thresholds have varied widely, reflecting changes in count data and also the uncertainty regarding total population size because of the species' dispersed distribution.

Table 1. Five-year mean annual Mallard peaks in selected areas									
	1977/78- 1981/82	1982/83- 1986/87	1987/88- 1991/92	1992/93- 1996/97	1997/98- 2001/02	2002/03- 2006/07	2007/08- 2011/12	2012/13- 2016/17	2017/18- 2021/22
Thames	1,643	1,817	1,332	884	853	1,075	871	682	858
Medway	1,075	917	1,341	1,142	544	421	353	423	489
Swale	2,298	3,067	2,062	2,002	1,675	1,719	1,936	882	2,550
East Kent lowlands	2,818	2,356	2,055	1,746	1,608	1,228	1,281	801	546
Dungeness/Walland	1,734	1,188	1,049	958	938	836	712	482	345
Bough Beech	665	510	410	313	187	186	359	314	260

While the data in Figure 3 and Table 1 illustrate the decline in non-breeding numbers of Mallards, it's worth noting that equivalent KOS data for spring (April-June) over the same period indicate increase, as described earlier for the breeding population.

Table 2 shows the highest recorded counts for the principal areas. Because numbers were declining, I set different thresholds for inclusion in the table, as shown under the site names. Counts refer to the whole area unless stated. A few cautions about these data; first, because Mallard receives less attention than other ducks in the field and in the reports, some high counts may not appear; second, when successive months have exceeded the thresholds, I have included only the highest one. Also, where whole area counts are used, some duplication could have occurred; this may be especially likely in south Kent, where birds flight from Dungeness pits on to Walland Marsh.

Table 2. Mallard maxima in selected areas	
The table includes notably high counts prior to 1977, then counts above thresholds defined separately for 1977-1999 and 2000-2022, as indicated under area names.	
Thames >2,000/>1,200	4,000 on 30th December 1959; 2,000 in November 1977; 2,250 in August 1980; 2,204 in September 1983; 2,172 in September 1986; 2,045 in September 1989; 1,514 in November 1002; 1,231 in September 2021.
Medway >1,200/>600	2,500 in September 1970; 3,600 in September 1974; 3,370 in September 1975; 1,503 in December 1978; 1,323 in December 1987; 1592 in November 1988; 1,685 in September 1990; 1,684 in January 1991; 1,255 in October 1992; 2,027 on November 1995; 777 in October 2016.
Swale >3,000/>600	20,000 Elmley on 20th September 1979; 5,000 in September 1983; 4,580 in January 1984; 2,218 in August 2001; 2,389 in December 2005; 2,703 in November 2007; 2,944 in January 2008; 2,640 in November 2018; 4,006 in December 2021.
Stodmarsh area >2,000/>1,000	4,000 in January 1965; 3,500 on 13th December 1981; 3,000 in November 1985; 2,074 in November 1991; 1,069 in January 2002; 1,258 in February 2012.

Sandwich area >750/>500	757 in January 1985; 776 in December 1985; 1,839 in December 1990; 743 in November 1993; 630 in January 2002; 582 in December 2002; 660 in January 2004; 550 in December 2009.
South Kent >1,600/>800	4,400 Romney Marsh August-September 1966; 4,600 Romney Marsh August-September 1967; 4,500 Romney Marsh August-September 1968; 1,100 Dungeness + 2000 Walland in August 1977; 1,662 Dungeness in January 1981; 1,700 Dungeness September 1982; 1,742 in September 1988; 865 Dungeness in December 2000; 867 Dungeness in August 2001; 990 in January 2002; 1,309 in August 2003; 914 Dungeness in August 2008; 902 Dungeness in September 2009; 881 Dungeness in October 2011.
Bough Beech >600/>300	841 in January 1979; 779 in December 1981; 609 in November 1982; 360 in December 2007; 342 in December 2009; 351 in December 2010; 315 in December 2012; 375 in September 2014; 345 in December 2014; 355 in February 2017; 300 in January 2018; 310 in December 2018.

It's worth drawing attention to one of the counts in Table 2 – 20,000 at Elmley on 20th September 1979. This was an astonishing total, with nothing like it before or since. The accumulation was fairly short-lived but there were 10,000 or more there until the 27th.

The seasonal pattern of occurrence for all of the main sites combined shows high numbers maintained from August to February and peaking in December (Figure 3). The figure may exaggerate the difference between summer and winter numbers, because the efficiency of counting of this widely dispersed species is very poor in summer. In most areas, a November-January peak is typical but there are a few places where September peaks, perhaps consisting mainly of locally-bred birds, occur. This was most pronounced at Dungeness/Walland Marsh but was also apparent in many years on the Thames marshes and Bough Beech, and occasionally elsewhere.

During 1952-1976, prior to the period covered in detail here, Mallard numbers were considered to reach a peak during early autumn, as post-breeding flocks built up (Taylor *et al.*, *Birds of Kent*, 1981). A decline was apparent in October before the arrival of winter visitors from November onwards, with a regular wintering population lower than that in autumn. The decline was attributed in part to emigration of Kent-bred or released birds (Harrison, *Wildfowl of the north Kent marshes*, 1972), though more recent evidence suggests that this is not significant.

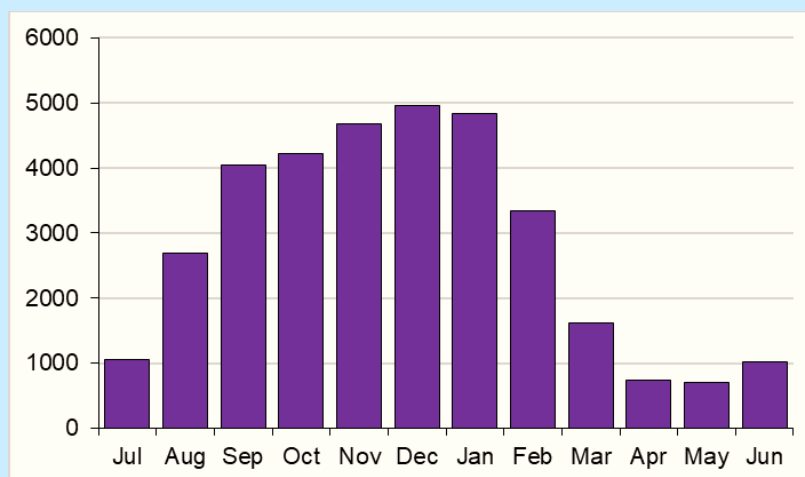


Figure 3. Monthly pattern of Mallard occurrence, 1997/98-2021/22
Data include counts at principal sites only

It should be pointed out that there is inconsistency between the breeding and winter population estimates. A breeding population of 3,000-5,000 pairs plus their progeny and winter immigrants should amount to more than 6,000-7,000 birds in autumn/winter (the sum of area peaks at the time of the most recent atlas), unless a significant proportion of the former emigrate, something which is not thought to occur on an appreciable scale (BTO *Migration Atlas*, 2002), or die before winter. It is possible that losses to shooting and natural causes have a major impact on numbers prior to the main arrival of immigrants in late autumn, but this still does not explain why recent counts have shown winter numbers higher than those in autumn, in contrast to the situation during 1952-1976. It may well be that one or both of the estimates is inaccurate.

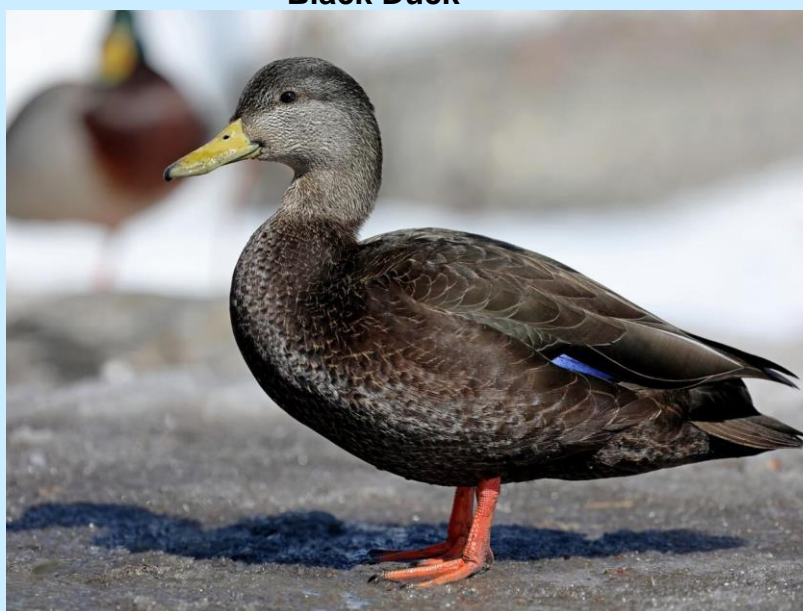
Winter visitors come from a broad swathe of Europe, north and east to Scandinavia and western Russia (*Migration Atlas*). It is not known what proportion of the winter population comprises immigrants, nor how many birds arriving in Kent from the north-east continue to areas further south-west in Europe. Arrivals are assumed to be mainly at night, since relatively little offshore movement is seen (compared to other duck species). The largest offshore passage counts recorded during 1952-2022 are listed in Table 3. The largest, by far, was at Reculver in December 1973, of birds arriving from the continent during an unusually early spell of very cold weather.

Table 3. Mallard: large offshore movements Counts of 75 or more are shown, in brown (autumn), blue (winter) or green (spring).		
1973	2nd December	760 W at Reculver
1979	1st January	131 N at Sandwich Bay
	3rd January	96 N at Sandwich Bay
1980	19th March	86 E at Dungeness
	12th October	90 N at Sandwich Bay
1981	18th October	76 N at Sandwich Bay
1982	6th November	95 W at Foreness, 168 SW at South Foreland & 236 W at Dungeness
1986	2nd November	80 W at Foreness
	22nd December	128 W at Foreness
1991	25th October	100 S at Sandwich Bay
1999	11th November	80 W at Allhallows

There are around 500 ringing recoveries of Mallards affecting Kent. Those involving movement within Britain reach no further north than Yorkshire. Of the 90 or so overseas recoveries, most come from countries to the east and north-east, though there was one male ringed in the Camargue, France, in February 1970 that was shot on Walland Marsh in September 1970. The most distant recovery involved a female ringed on Chetney Marshes in December 1962 and shot several hundred kilometres north-east of Moscow (a total distance of 2,688 km) in September 1963.

Hybrids: I have noted reports of hybrids with three other *Anas* species during 1952-2022 (but realise that I may have missed some mentions and others will not have been reported). They were with Shoveler at South Swale LNR in 1990; with Gadwall at Elmley in 1988 and Cliffe in 2001-02; and with Pintail at Leybourne in 1963, two at Kingsnorth (Medway) in 1972, Appledore in 1973, Leeds in 1978 (a Dutch-ringed drake that was shot), Bough Beech in 1986, Sandwich Bay in 2003 and Pegwell Bay in 2011.

Black Duck



Black Duck, Ontario by Dan Jauvin

The only Black Duck recorded in Kent was found by Chris Wheeler, Peter Oliver and Tony Hutson at Yantlet Creek on 18th March 1967. It was a male, seen in flight and briefly settled, and Chris saw it again resting on a lagoon on 25th March. A note about the sightings appears in *British Birds* vol 60, pp 482-483.

At the time, it was noted as the third for Britain & Ireland. However, when British and Irish lists were separated, it became – and has remained – the first for Britain (*British Birds* vol 96, p 403). Most British occurrences of this American species have been in the west, and it is extremely rare in east and south-east England, with the nearest to Kent I think being one in Hampshire in 2022.

Followers of my interest in discrepancies will be riveted to hear that in the British Birds Rarities Committee report of this record (*British Birds* vol 61, p 335) the dates are given as 18th and 20th, rather than 18th and 25th. I assume that the latter are correct (they were given in the later BB note and by BOURC in *Ibis* vol 145, p 178) but I think that it's never been formally corrected by BBRC.

Cape Teal:



Cape Teal (wikicommons)

A species of eastern and southern Africa. One was at Bough Beech on several dates during 8th July-23rd August 1988, another at Cliffe on 11th July 1992, and a third on Cliffe Pools on three occasions between June 8th and 23rd 1996.

White-cheeked Pintail:



White-cheeked Pintail (wikicommons)

This is a species from South America, the Caribbean (where it's also known as Bahama Pintail) and the Galapagos. It is one of the ducks most frequently kept in captivity and, consequently, occurring as escaped birds. Bearing in mind that records of escapes are not kept so assiduously as for wild birds, and that this account may therefore be incomplete, there have been reports in Kent in 25 years from 1973 onwards. There are few mentions of escapes before then, and no separate escapes section in Kent Bird Reports until 1976.

There have been records throughout the year, but most have been in May, July and October. Making allowance for a few that seem very likely to have remained from one year to the next, Figure 4 shows the annual totals. There were six at Bough Beech on 27th-31st October 1987 and also a total of six in 1988, although two of those (at Bough Beech) are judged to have been the same as in 1987. My estimate of the grand total is 42, but there could have been more duplicates than allowed for. Several, including three at Bough Beech in 1988 and one at Stodmarsh in 2020, have been described as leucistic.

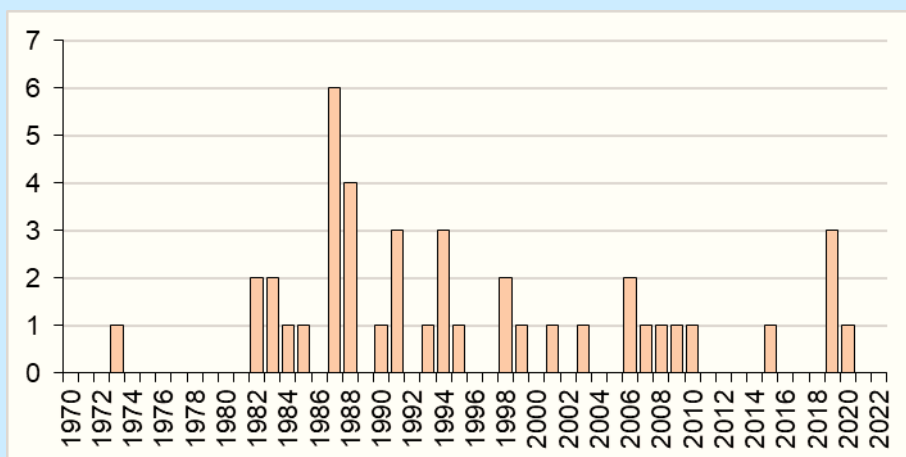
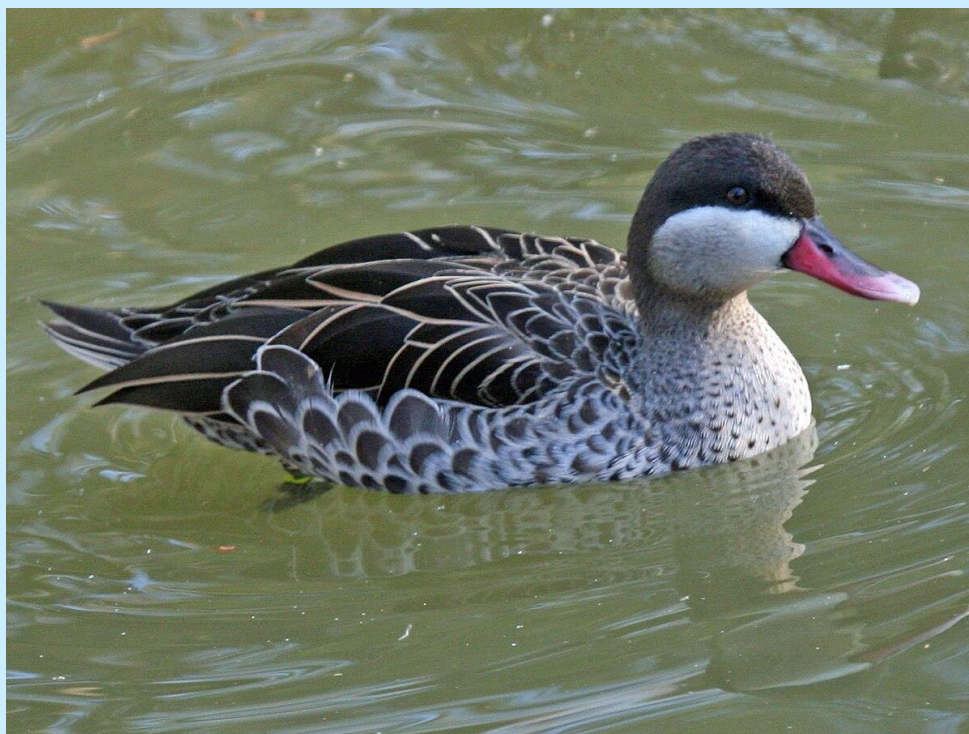


Figure 4. Annual totals of White-cheeked Pintail, 1970-2022.

Red-billed Teal:



Red-billed Teal (wikicommons)

Another species of eastern and southern Africa. One was present at Cliffe on 18th May 1998.

Yellow-billed Pintail:



Yellow-billed Pintail (wikicommons)

This is another South American species, also occurring on South Georgia. One was seen at Scotney Court GP on 23rd July 2000.

Pintail



Pintail pair by J Garg.

Is there anyone who doesn't like Pintails? The drakes are just so smart and even the ducks have that sleek elegance. Very scarce throughout Britain as a breeding bird, their tendency to shift wintering locations just adds to their allure.

The Pintail has become progressively more numerous since the mid twentieth century. Ticehurst (*History of the Birds of Kent*, 1909) knew it to be a winter visitor in mainly small numbers to the north Kent marshes and, less regularly, elsewhere. Numbers tended to be higher in hard winters, but one flock of 30 was the largest known count. In the first half of the twentieth century, there were generally fewer than 50 on each of the north Kent estuaries in most winters, though occasionally more, including 300 on the Thames in the cold of January 1947 (Gillham & Homes, *Birds of the North Kent Marshes*, 1950). They were less regular elsewhere, although 300-400 were present at Cottington in winter 1941/42 and 150 on Romney Marsh in January 1948 (Harrison, *Birds of Kent*, 1953). During 1952-1976, maxima were 1,400 on the

Thames, 1,250 on the Medway, where the average peak in the early 1970s exceeded 600, and 200 on the Swale (Taylor *et al.*, *Birds of Kent*, 1981). The Kentish Thames population reached a peak in February 1963, a cold month, and subsequently these birds redistributed either upstream where improving water quality gave rise to abundance of *Tubifex* worms on which many birds fed (Harrison & Grant, *Thames Transformed*, 1976), or to the Medway.

Breeding in Kent was first recorded on Romney Marsh in 1910 (apparently the first English record also) and has remained intermittent. Initially, records came only from Romney Marsh but from the 1940s most attempts have been in north Kent with the exception of a few in the Stour valley and Romney Marsh. During 1952-1976, there were usually one-five pairs annually in north Kent, and six pairs in 1952. More recently, confirmed and even possible breeding has become less frequent. A few sometimes hang about in the spring and may attempt breeding, but the last successful nesting I've noted was in 1981, when a brood of ducklings was seen at Elmley and a flying brood at Cliffe.

Wintering numbers of Pintail can vary considerably in any one area. Most famously, this happened on the Mersey, where counts increased 50-fold between the low hundreds in the 1960s and over 18,000 in 1980 but then fell again while the Dee estuary and Morecambe Bay became more important. Something similar has been seen in Kent, though at a lesser scale. For example, the numbers on the Thames reached a peak in the mid 1960s, with a shift then taking place to the Medway (see Taylor *et al.*, *Birds of Kent*, 1981).

Perhaps reflecting this mobile nature of Pintail populations, and compared to the other common dabbling ducks, there is less of a correlation between numbers in Kent and those in all England. Numbers across the UK as a whole, and in England, have undergone a decline (37% in England between 1995/96 and 2020/21) but there have been ups and downs in the process, as shown by the smoothed WeBS index line on Figure 4.

Numbers in Kent were increasing from the mid 1970s to about 1995, after which a decline set in. The size of the peak implied in Figure 4 may be something of an exaggeration, as the Medway and Swale peaks in the mid 1990s probably include some duplication. At that time, large numbers were using Elmley Marshes, mainly as a roost, and there was thought to be partial overlap between those flocks and birds feeding in Funton Creek and on Chetney Marshes on the Medway. A similar problem may exist for south Kent data, where peak counts for Dungeness and Walland Marsh have sometimes been added together, when at least some of the birds may have been the same, flying from one to the other. Nevertheless, even with those possible duplications taken into account, there does seem to have been a rise and fall centred on 1995.

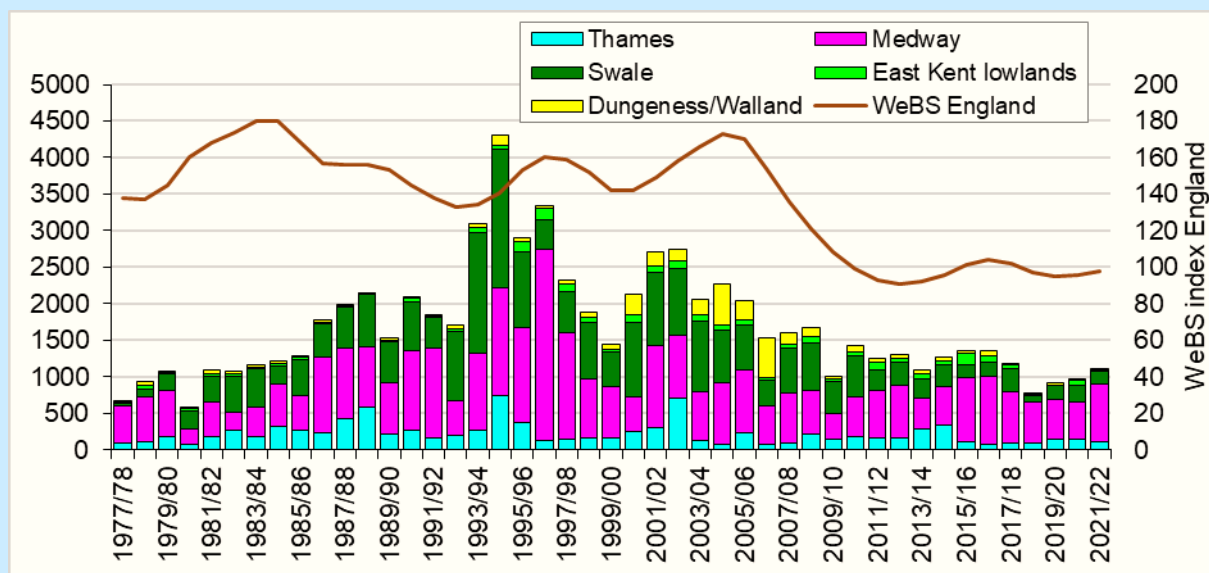


Figure 4. Annual Pintail maxima, 1977/78-2021/22

The East Kent lowlands include areas from Ashford downstream to Reculver and Sandwich Bay

In the 1960s, Pintail in north Kent fed predominantly in intertidal areas, especially on the small mollusc *Hydrobia ulvae* (Owen *et al.*, *Wildfowl in Great Britain*, 1986). More recently, Adam Rowlands (*Kent Bird Report* for 1993, pp 160-178) found that during the daytime, most birds on the Swale fed inside the seawall, but noted that many did flight to the mouth of the estuary at dusk. Peter Oliver (*Kent Bird Report*

for 1997, pp 143-148), based on studies at Elmley, recorded most feeding in intertidal areas or on arable land but with flooded grazing marsh being used when particular foods became available.

The average peaks in the principal areas are shown in Table 3. The populations on all three north Kent estuaries have achieved national or international importance at one time or another (note that, as for other ducks, the thresholds have changed over time). Table 3 indicates five-year means qualifying as internationally important in **red and bold**, nationally important in **blue and bold**, and non-qualifying values in black, using thresholds that were current in each period.

Table 3. Five-year mean annual Pintail peaks in selected areas									
	1977/78- 1981/82	1982/83- 1986/87	1987/88- 1991/92	1992/93- 1996/97	1997/98- 2001/02	2002/03- 2006/07	2007/08- 2011/12	2012/13- 2016/17	2017/18- 2021/22
Thames	129	252	332	345	206	243	159	194	116
Medway	489	551	962	1,380	912	751	564	695	620
Swale	194	445	587	1,189	763	719	513	253	203
East Kent lowlands	30	28	21	91	81	71	64	75	29
Dungeness/Walland	30	24	17	63	135	351	90	57	19

The Medway has held more Pintails than any other area in most years since 1977, although as can be seen from Table 3, the Swale has come close to it at times. The only occasion when a count exceeding 2,000 has been made was in cold weather in early 1997 when there were 2,400 at Funton Creek on 8th February. High counts in each of the principal areas (or totals for the whole area if no location is stated) are listed in Table 4.

Table 4. Pintail maxima in selected areas	
The table includes counts exceeding thresholds, as defined below the site name.	
Thames >900	1,400 Cliffe on 24th February 1973; 1,000 Egypt Bay on 23rd December 1963.
Medway >900	910 In February 1971; 1,250 In January 1972; 958 In January 1973; 935 In January 1974; 1,042 In January 1987; 974 In December 1987; 1,233 In January 1992; 1,055 Funton Creek on 5th December 1993; 1,470 Halstow & Funton Creeks on 7th January 1995; 1,300 in February 1996; 2,400 In February 1997; 1,460 Funton Creek on 30th December 1997; 1,118 in January 2002; 933 in December 2016.
Swale >900	943 Elmley on 11th January 1993; 1,660 Elmley on 6th January 1994; 1,900 Elmley 21st January 1995; 1,029 in January 1996; 952 in December 2000; 915 Elmley on 5th January 2003; 976 in January 2004.
Stodmarsh area >75	100 in February 1996; 83 in January 1998; 92 in February 2001; 130 in November 2015.
Sandwich Bay area >75	107 on 13th January 1997; 83 on 31st January 2012.
South Kent >200	205 Dungeness RSPB on 31st December 2000; 217 Dungeness + Walland on 25th January 2004; 377 Dungeness (+ 190 Walland) in January 2005; 266 Dungeness + Walland in December 2005; 272 Dungeness & 300 Walland in December 2006.

While Pintail are of regular occurrence at Stodmarsh and Grove area, sightings further inland are far less frequent. In most recent years, the majority of inland records have been of no more than five birds, and typically in spring or autumn, though there have been occasional larger passage flocks (see below). The presence of 20 at Bough Beech on 30th December 1981, in cold weather, was noteworthy. In earlier years, there had also been a curious arrival of up to 17 at Sevenoaks Reserve in July 1974.

Wintering Pintails are present from late August or early September until March or early April, with numbers peaking in January (Figure 5). Small numbers remain in summer, with some attempting to breed (see above), but quite often there is a gap in records during June-July.

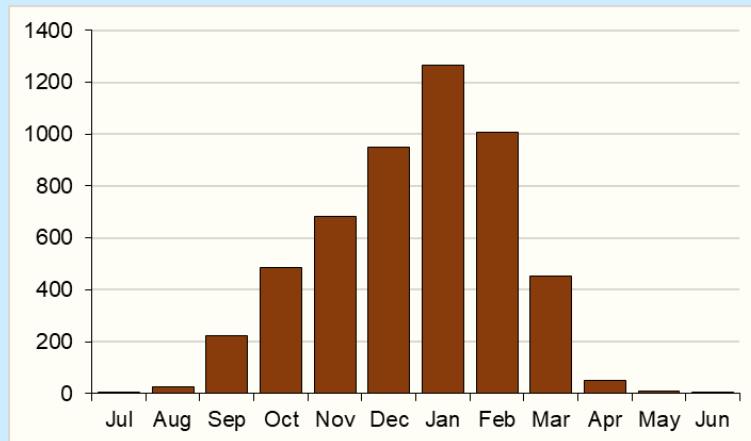


Figure 5. Monthly pattern of Pintail occurrence, 1997/98-2021/22

Offshore passage can be seen in spring or autumn, and during cold weather. Prior to the mid 1980s, movements of more than 50 birds were rarely seen, although there were 268 flying W at Allhallows on 29th September 1973. From the mid 1980s, larger counts have been more frequent (perhaps increased numbers of observers and interest in seawatching have helped). Autumn movements of 100 or more may be seen any time from late August into winter, mostly off the north coast. Spring passage, always in an easterly direction, is most evident at Dungeness, mostly in March though it can start in late February and may extend well into April. Numbers there are variable from year to year; the highest total for a single date was 860 on 13th March 2006. Numbers throughout a year's passage are of course higher but are not necessarily correlated with the peak count; thus the total for 2006 was about 1,180 E, almost exactly the same as in 2022 when the peak was half as large.

Table 3. Pintail: large offshore movements Counts of 200 or more are shown, in brown (autumn), blue (winter) or green (spring).		
1973	29th September	268 W at Allhallows
1987	10th January	270 W at Allhallows
	11th January	260 W at Allhallows
1988	25th October	430 SW at Shellness
1991	10th October	320 W at Shellness
1992	9th November	285 W at Dungeness
1994	26th February	372 E at Dungeness
1995	28th January	220 E at Allhallows
	10th March	321 E at Dungeness
2005	28th October	230 W at Allhallows
2006	13th March	860 E at Dungeness
2017	3rd March	299 E at Dungeness
2021	1st March	237 E at Dungeness
2022	21st March	369 E at Dungeness

Very occasionally, inland movements of Pintails are seen. The largest ones that I noted were 17 E at Tonbridge on 27th December 1968, 17 SW at Boughton Monchelsea on 31st October 1992, 45 S at Bough Beech on 16th October 1997, 36 SE at Horsmonden on 2nd November 2004, and 58 W at Grove on 21st September 2008.

Teal



Teal by Mike Linklater

The Teal is primarily a winter visitor, present in large numbers from September to March, but it is also a scarce breeding species. This seems to have been its status for many years. The main winter concentrations have always been in the north Kent marshes, the Stour valley and Romney Marsh, although smaller numbers can be found elsewhere, including well-vegetated lakes, ponds and streams throughout the county.

Taylor *et al.* (*Birds of Kent*, 1981) suggested that 10-25 pairs bred each year around 1970, stressing that the secretive nature of the species made it hard to be certain. Historically, Teal breeding numbers are thought to have been higher. Ticehurst (*History of the Birds of Kent*, 1909) recorded it as scattered sparsely through the north Kent marshes and on Romney Marsh. He commented that they often bred at a considerable distance from open water and even in woodland on the edge of the marshes. Numbers appear to have fallen in recent years, with 10-26 pairs reported most years up to 1985 but seldom more than 10 subsequently. It should be stressed that these totals are of summering pairs, and that relatively few are confirmed as having bred. As shown in Figure 6, taken from the *Kent Breeding Bird Atlas, 2008-13*, strong evidence of breeding has recently been largely restricted to the north Kent marshes and, in fact, only one instance of confirmed nesting was recorded during 2008-13 (a nest found on Swale NNR). The presence of a few pairs in the Dungeness and Stodmarsh areas late into spring suggests that breeding is attempted there, though evidence of success is generally lacking. Confirmed breeding further inland is rare, but a pair reared ten young at Bough Beech in 1996.

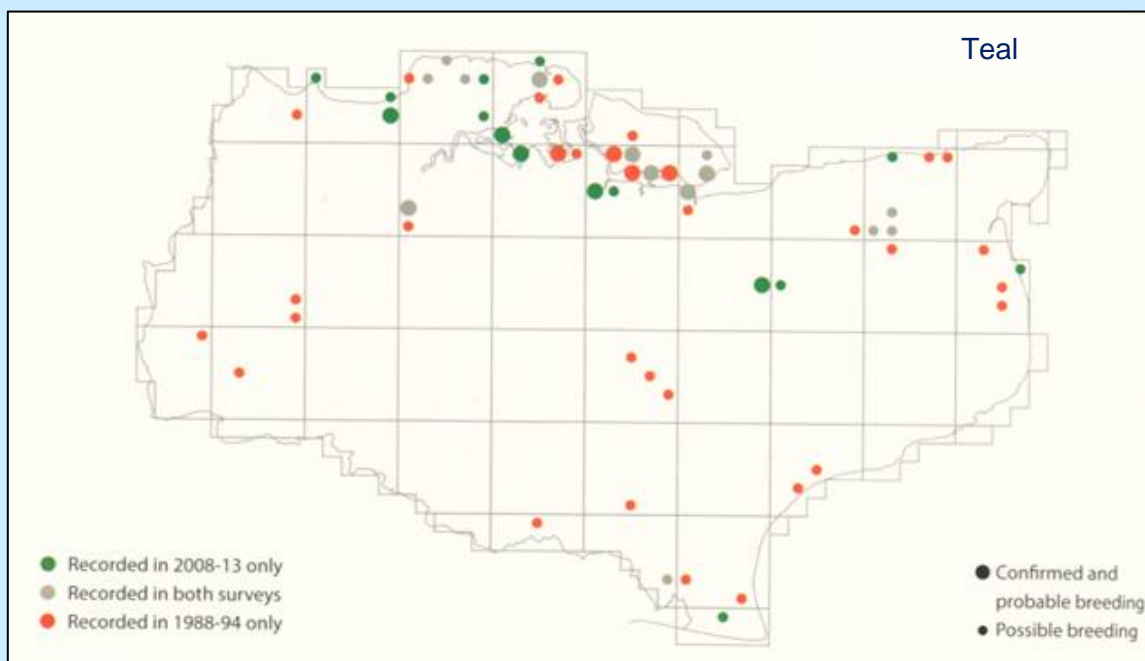


Figure 6. Teal breeding distribution

Turning to wintering birds, during 1952-1976, maxima were 5,460 on the Medway including 4,000 on Chetney Marshes, 3,000 on the Swale, 3,000 on the Thames marshes, 1,000 on Romney Marsh and 1,000 in the Stour valley, although there had been at least 3,000 in the last area in 1937. The Medway estuary was of international importance in the early 1970s, holding far more than either the Swale or the Thames marshes.

They feed in both the fresh marshes and the saltings, and take a wide variety of foods, though primarily plant seeds. Night flighting may well take place in some areas, although Peter Oliver (*Kent Bird Report* for 1997, pp 143-148) found no firm evidence for it at Elmley where birds were able to feed safely throughout the day.

The annual peaks in the principal areas used by Teal from 1977/78 onwards are shown in Figure 7, along with the smoothed WeBS index line for England. The east Kent lowlands here comprises the Stodmarsh/Grove, Seaton, Reculver/Minnis Bay and Sandwich Bay areas. It is possible that some exaggeration of totals has occurred there, as birds regularly fly from one area to another, but totals have been calculated as sums. Three areas inland in west Kent are included in 'Others', namely the Burham/New Hythe area, Sevenoaks reserve and Bough Beech reservoir.

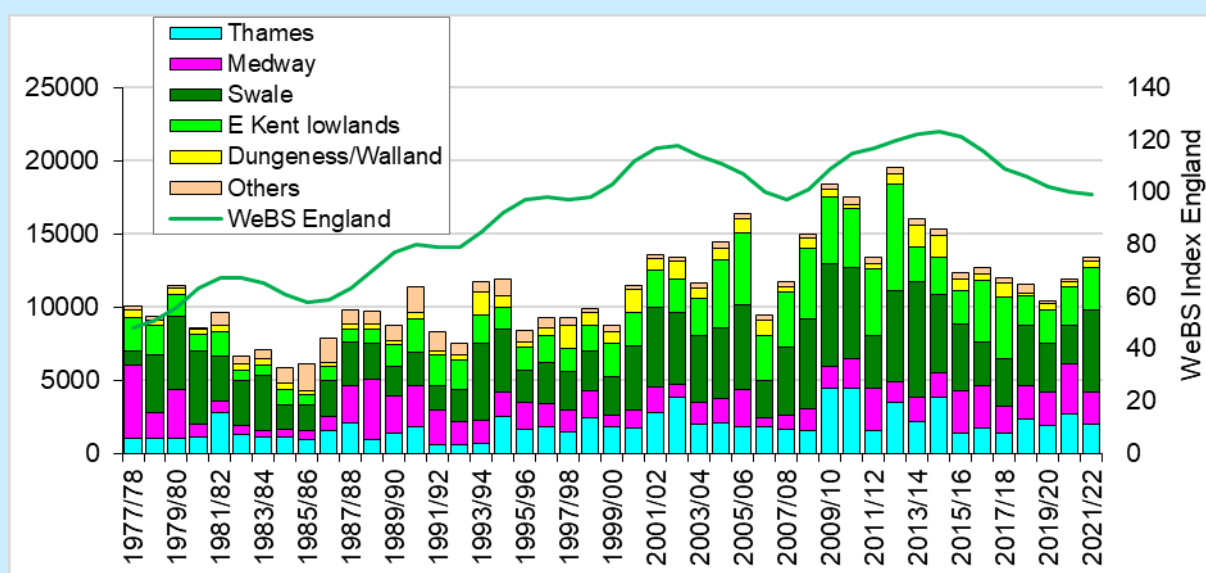


Figure 7. Annual Teal maxima, 1977/78-2021/22

The wintering population fluctuated a good deal during 1977/78-2021/22, but with a long-term trend of gentle increase reaching a high point in about 2012 before a gentle decline. This broadly matches the national pattern shown by WeBS data, something Teal has in common with other dabbling ducks with the exception of Pintail. There is no obvious correlation between high numbers and cold winters as there is for some other waterfowl. Figure 7 includes counts from the majority of sites regularly holding 50 or more Teal, but a few other areas may attract large numbers in unusual conditions. For example, the Stour valley between Plucks Gutter and Sandwich held 880 in hard weather in early February 1979. Also, some occur in areas that are less often counted, in the river valleys and the inland parts of Romney Marsh, for example. However, the majority, probably about three-quarters, of the county's Teal are found in the north Kent marshes. Table 4 summarises the annual peaks in the principal areas during 1977/78-2021/22, indicating five-year means qualifying as internationally important in **red and bold**, nationally important in **blue and bold**, and non-qualifying values in black, using thresholds that were current in each period. The reason that no 'important' populations are shown in the last period is that the threshold for national importance doubled from 2,100 to 4,300 (don't ask me why).

Table 4. Five-year mean annual Teal peaks in selected areas									
	1977/78- 1981/82	1982/83- 1986/87	1987/88- 1991/92	1992/93- 1996/97	1997/98- 2001/02	2002/03- 2006/07	2007/08- 2011/12	2012/13- 2016/17	2017/18- 2021/22
Thames	1,373	1,191	1,344	1,416	2,049	2,289	2,736	2,502	2,048
Medway	2,367	630	2,864	1,680	1,404	1,448	1,761	2,119	2,408
Swale	3,584	2,527	2,300	3,349	3,580	4,553	5,543	5,415	3,792
East Kent lowlands	1,728	836	1,541	1,757	2,088	3,491	4,336	3,752	2,826
Dungeness/Walland	410	389	344	716	1,122	939	449	987	470
Burham/New Hythe	113	876	900	554	160	34	52	60	44
Sevenoaks	7	22	74	99	112	162	137	111	107
Bough Beech	233	230	219	182	69	147	180	252	165

Through most of the 45 year period, the Swale has held more than any other area, in contrast to the previous 15 years when the Medway tended to hold more (*Birds of Kent*, 1981). This change is probably due in large part to the establishment of the Sheppey nature reserves, which provide refuge from shooting and other disturbance, though changing food availability could also be involved. The Medway did for a while continue occasionally to attract larger numbers than the Swale, such as during the winters of 1978/79 and 1988/89.

Table 5 lists the peak counts in the principal areas, with thresholds for inclusion for the north Kent areas differentiated in years up to and after 1970. It is worth noting that, as for most species but perhaps more so for Teal, the very highest are often considerably larger than the mean peaks. Such concentrations tend to be short-lived, occurring during severe winter weather or at peak passage times.

Table 5. Teal maxima in selected areas	
The table includes counts above thresholds, as given below the area names, separated for the north Kent areas into smaller ones up to 1970 and larger ones subsequently.	
Thames >3,000/>5,000	3,000 on 26th January 1958. Post-1970 maxima were 4,483 in January 2010 and 4,476 in December 2010.
Medway >3,000/>5,000	4,500 on December 1969; 5,100 in January 1973; 5,460 in December 1973; 5,050 in December 1975; 5,000 in February 1978.
Swale >3,000/>5,000	3,000 on 5th January 1957; 3,000 Shellness on 27th January 1962; 5,000 in December 1980; 5,248 in December 1993; 5,794 in November 2005; 6,185 in January 2009; 7,061 in January 2010; 6,201 in October 2010; 6,214 in January 2013; 7,901 (at least 7,000 Elmley) on 17th January 2014; 5,374 in January 2015; 5,469 in January 2022.
Stodmarsh area >2,000	2,500 in February 2005; 3,800 in October 2005; 3,633 in January 2006; 2,508 in January 2008; 2,280 in February 2009; 2,640 in December 2009; 3,800 on 29th December 2012; 3,000 in January 2018; 2,050 in January 2022.
Sandwich area >1,000	1,574 in January 2012; 2,750 in December 2012; 1,000 in November 2013; 2,115 in November 2016; 1,366 in February 2021.
Dungeness/Walland >1,000	1,600 in January 1994; 1,564 in November 1997; 1,615 in November 2000; 1,252 in January 2003; 1,069 in January 2006; 1,540 in February 2014; 1,486 in January 2015; 1,000 in January 2018.
Burham/New Hythe >1,000	1,500 in February 1986; 1,100 in January-February 1987; 1,100 in December 1990; 1,150 in February 1991.

The high counts in the Burham/New Hythe area in the late 1980s and early 1990s are striking, being far larger than the totals present in recent years. I believe the concentrations were largely on the Burham Marshes, to the east of the Medway, but don't know the area well enough to conjecture why the change occurred.

Teal are scarce for most of May-July, with only a handful of summering individuals and perhaps a few breeding pairs present. Arrivals from the main breeding areas in northern Europe begin in July or August. On average, peak winter numbers are not reached until December-January (Figure 8) but, as noted by Gillham & Homes (*Birds of the North Kent Marshes*, 1950), there can be a series of influxes during the

autumn, which may lead to high numbers present in some areas at any time during September-November. The departure of birds in late winter and spring tends to be more even and progresses more rapidly.

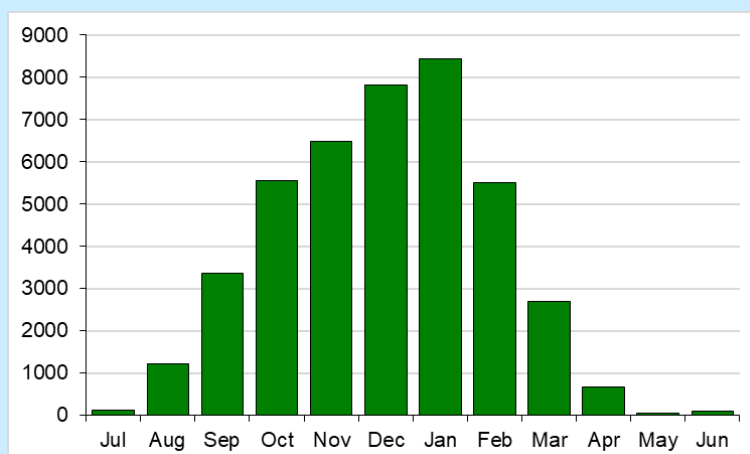


Figure 8. Monthly pattern of Teal occurrence, 1997/98-2021/22

Visible offshore passage is surprisingly small, although some are seen each year moving east in spring at Dungeness, and west in autumn at more widespread locations. Table 3 lists the three largest spring movements, and autumn movements involving day counts at any location of 500 or more. It illustrates the wide span of autumn passage, with listed counts between early September and early December.

Table 3. Teal: large offshore movements		
Counts of 400 or more are shown, in brown (autumn) or green (spring).		
1971	31st March	576 E at Dungeness
1975	8th November	1,290 W at Allhallows
	9th November	510 W at Allhallows
1982	6th November	500 W at Allhallows
1984	16th September	410 N at Sandwich Bay
1990	31st March	460 E at Dungeness
1994	1st September	1,150 W at Sheerness & 420 W at Allhallows
1995	10th March	582 E at Dungeness
2002	8th December	1,027 W at Dungeness
2004	1st April	479 E at Dungeness

There is plenty of ringing information for Teal. Within Britain and Ireland, there have been over 300 recoveries affecting Kent, though around two-thirds have come from Abberton, Essex, where huge numbers of ducks have been ringed. Recoveries of Kent-ringed birds have come from as far away as western Ireland and north-east Scotland. But there are also plenty of continental recoveries. Around 120 have involved countries between Denmark and France, including no fewer than 64 from the Netherlands. More distant ones include half a dozen to/from Finland and a male ringed at Harty in December 2003 that was shot near St Petersburg or whatever it is today in May 2010, a distance of 1,949 km. In the other direction, four have come from Portugal, the furthest being ringed near Lisbon in November 2015 and shot on Chetney Marshes in September 2016. Between them these recoveries cover much of the Teal's migration route, though some breed further east in Russia and some winter in Morocco.

Green-winged Teal



Green-winged Teal by Peter Maton

This, *Anas carolinensis*, is the north American counterpart of our Teal *Anas crecca*. The males, when not in eclipse, are readily separable but females pose more of a challenge. Not surprisingly, most British records and all Kent records of Green-winged Teal are of males. The two were treated as subspecies of *A crecca* through most of the twentieth century and were split by BOURC in 2001 (*British Birds* 94: 218-226). Fortunately, recording of Green-winged separate from our Teal was maintained prior to that split.

The first for Kent was a bird seen at Cheyne Court on Walland Marsh on 21st March 1961. It was also seen just over the border into Sussex at The Midrips on the 19th and 22nd. The observers mentioned in the *Kent Bird Report* and *British Birds* include some illustrious names: Geoff Harris and Bob Scott are listed in the KBR, while BB (which covers both counties' records) also mentions John Parslow and James Cadbury.

The next was not for another twenty years but since then they have become almost regular, as shown in Figure 9. In several instances, it is hard to decide whether successive records were of the same or different birds. I have treated records at Oare and Eastborough in 2002, Pegwell Bay and Grove Ferry in 2005, and Grove Ferry and Sandwich Bay in 2011/12 as the same in each case. This results in a total up to 2023 of 33 individuals.

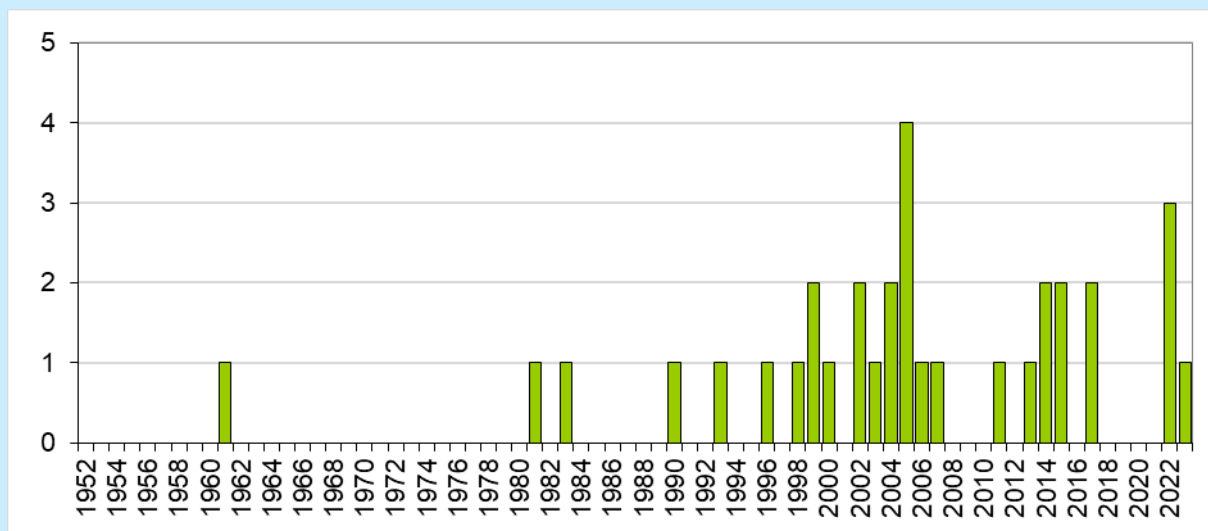


Figure 9. Green-winged Teal: annual totals to 2023

Most of the records were of single birds but there were two at Stodmarsh/Grove Ferry for a week or so in April 2005, and two at Oare Marshes in November-December 2017. There had been a fairly even spread around the coastal zones and Stour valley, plus a couple inland, at Sevenoaks in February-March 1990 and at New Hythe in March 2006.

Thames	7
Swale	6
Stodmarsh/Grove	5
Minnis Bay	1
Sandwich Bay	3
Dungeness	8
Walland Marsh	1
Inland	2

The seasonal pattern (Figure 10) is not strongly biased towards autumn, which would be expected if the birds were new arrivals from North America, but rather the species appears to be a rare passage migrant and winter visitor. This could well be the case, if significant numbers of Green-winged Teal are now present in Europe, migrating back and forth with your Asian Teals. However, with drakes in eclipse during autumn, perhaps they are then overlooked.

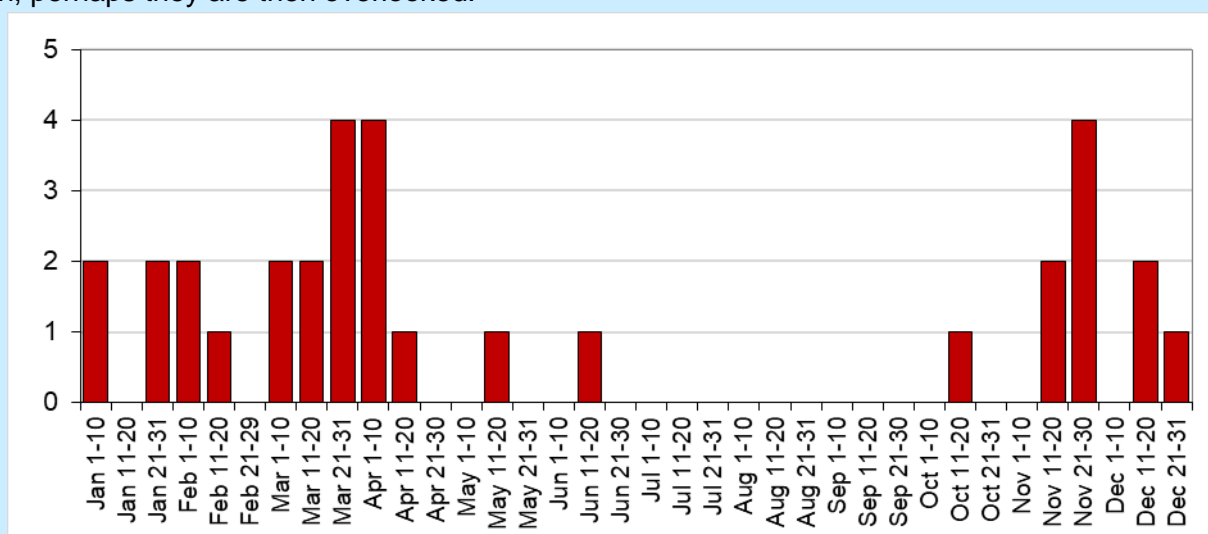


Figure 10. Green-winged Teal: seasonal pattern of occurrence, 1952-2023

Most sightings have been between mid November and mid April, but additionally there was one at Dungeness on 12th-14th May 2013, another at Dungeness on 18th-26th June 1993, and one at Sandwich Bay on 15th October 2015.

Yellow-billed Teal: Also known as Speckled or Chilean Teal, this is another species of South America. With records in nine (or more) years, there have been probably around nine individuals reported in Kent. The Sandwich Bay records of 2018-2023 are likely to relate to one individual, and I may well have failed to include some of the dates when it was seen.



Yellow-billed Teal by Steve Ray

1982	One was at Bough Beech on 12th September.
1983	A pair was at Gazen Salts, Sandwich, during 11th October-2nd December.
1992	Singles were seen at Bough Beech on 6th May, and at Sevenoaks Reserve on 22nd August and 19th-26th September (all assumed the same bird).
1993	One was present at Dungeness RSPB Reserve on 30th July.
1998	A drake was on Stone Lake on 1st March and on 29th April when it was in the company of a duck Mallard. One was seen at Cliffe on 18th May (assumed the same as at Stone). In the autumn, one was present on Dungeness RSPB Reserve on 31st August and 12th September.
2004	One was at Sevenoaks Reserve on 24th October.
2018	One at Sandwich Bay on 21st August and 27th-28th November, seen to be carrying an avicultural ring.
2019	One at Sandwich Bay on 19th April (assumed same as in 2018)
2023	One at Sandwich Bay on 8th and 15th January (assumed same as in 2018 & 2019).

Chestnut Teal:



Chestnut Teal (wikicommons)

There have been four reports of escaped Chestnut Teal, an Australian species. There was a drake at Westbere during 21st May-9th June 1977, single birds (could they have been the same?) at Sandwich Bay during 17th May-3rd June (female) and at Bough Beech on 6th-12th June 1988 (sex unknown), and a drake at Scotney Court GP on 20th-27th June 2005.

Andrew Henderson

ROOKERY CENSUS 2024



Rookery by David Hawgood

This year's census was undertaken between the 14th and 26th of March. The weather was generally mild at the start but was much colder from the 22nd onwards with rain for much of the final day. While Blackthorn and various species of Willow were in leaf mature trees, even at the conclusion of the counts, had produced very little in the way of leaf cover.

Seven new sites were found, Adisham Village(228542), Alkham Village (259424); Barham Village(202501); Brenzett Roundabout(006271) between East/West Stourmouth (TR248622); St. Nicholas Roundabout (276670) and Sibton Park(161416). I should point out that these "new" sites are not necessarily newly established Rookeries but more accidental finds having not previously travelled those routes in earlier years. These produced 55 nests a total offset by nil returns from Ivychurch Village(029277), Nonington Court(263524) Old Romney Church (034252)and Wingham(west) (242578).

There was evidence of consolidation at some sites on the Romney Marsh. The s

tretch on the A259 between the Brenzett Roundabout and the junction with Old Romney always produces challenges not only those posed by Rooks who appear to move between the several sites along this stretch on an annual basis but also to the author of this report who is constantly aware that at he is in acute danger of becoming another road accident statistic. The site at Lydd bounded by the church and The Glebe contained at least 190 nests, the highest total since 2021. It remains, by far, the largest rookery that we visit followed by those at Stodmarsh and Berwick House (Lympe). On the day of my visit to Berwick House extensive thinning was underway to remove Ash trees affected by die-back. The seven new sites produced 66 nests while there was a loss of 24 from the four that had disappeared meant a loss of 24.

Overall the total was 1,235 from 51 sites this means an increase over 2023 of less than 1.0%

Nine Rookeries visited in at least 17 of the twenty years, 2004 - 2024				
	Max	Min	Avg	Notes
Church Whitfield	35	20	27	Many Ivy covered trees make this a difficult site to make accurate counts
Gore Street	13	0	7	Birds often move from year to year to nearby Monkton Village site
Minster Village	19	2	10	
Monkton Village	79	18	44	Collective totals from small sites with in the village
Preston Church	35	8	18	A steady decline since peak in 2009
Quex Park	48	3	16	Original site rapidly declined after a peak in 2010. A new site within the park was found in 2022

Richboro. Power Station	51	4	24	Situated on A256 numbers have increased almost year on year since reaching double figures in 2019
Sarre Village	35	7	18	Increase in numbers since 2019
Stodmarsh	78	30	57	By far the largest Rookery I have found in East Kent. The number of nests has only fallen below 50 in 2008 & 2010

New in 2024	Nests
Alkham Village	8
Barham Village	17
Sibton Park	5
East/West Stourmouth	11
St. Nicholas R'bout	7
Brenzett R'bout	7
Adisham Village	11

No trace in 2024	notes
Nonington Court	Steady decline from a peak of 44 in 2016
Wingham (West)	Only once, 2028, reached double figures
Ivychurch Village	Competition from 3 nearby sites
Old Romney Church	Trees cut down

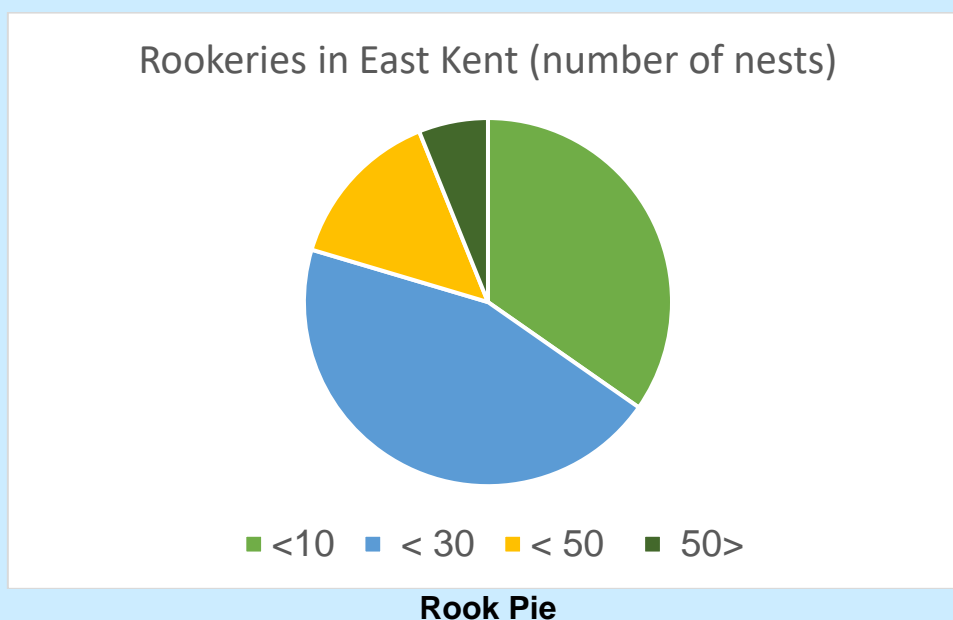
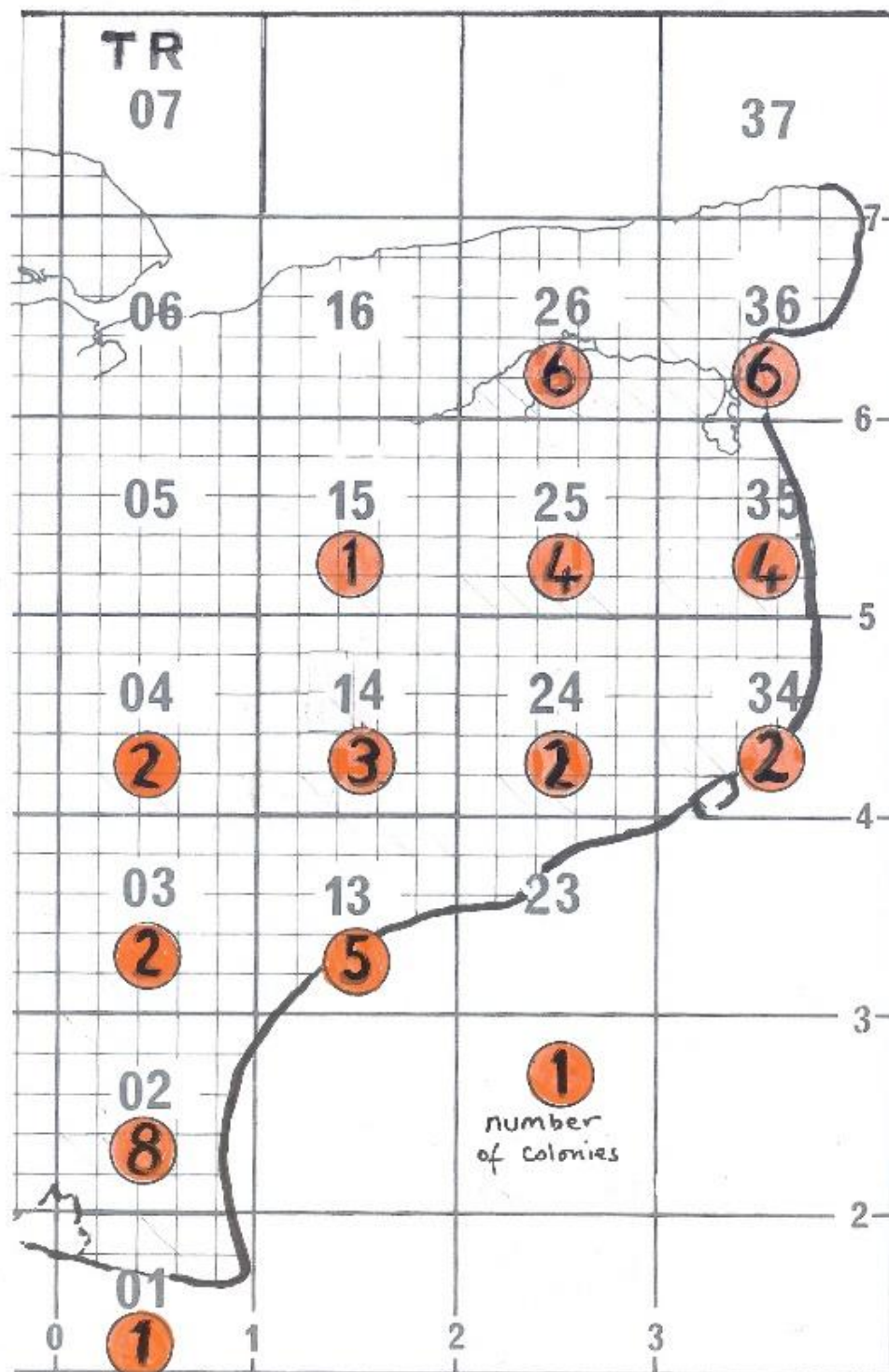


Chart showing the number of nests in the 49 Rookeries counted in 2024

Number of Nests	Percentage of total
1-10	34.7
11-30	44.9
31-50	7.0
50+	6.1

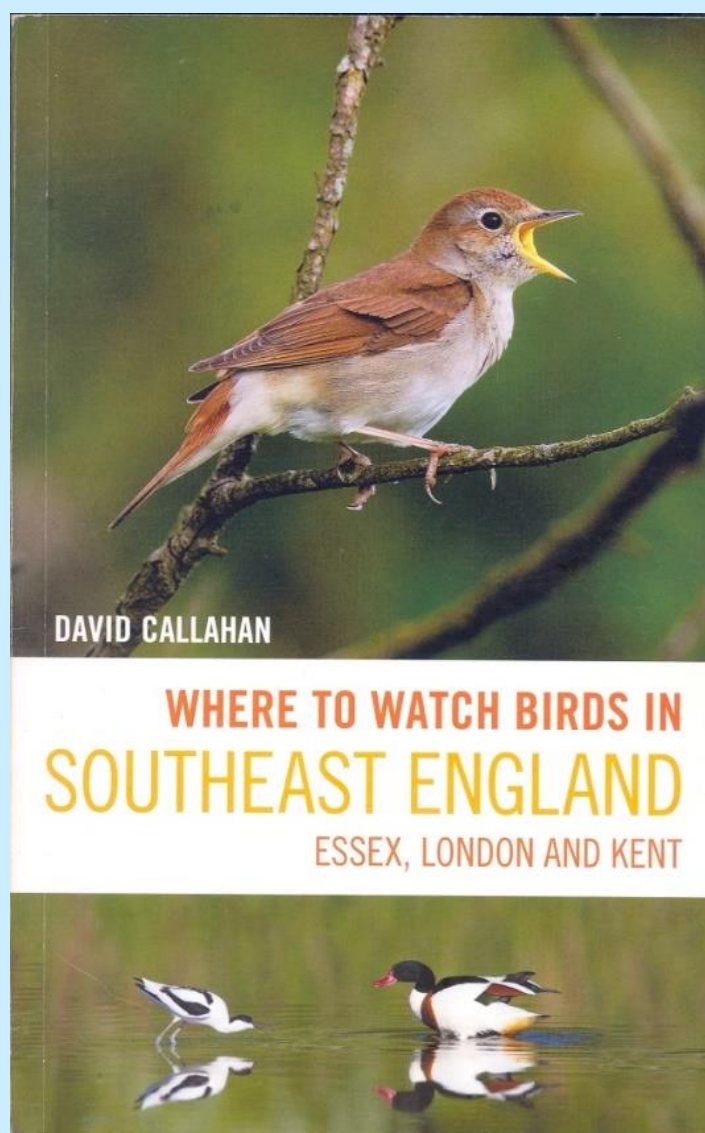
The three Rookeries with more than fifty nests were at Lydd, Stodmarsh and Berwick House{Lympe}



Number of rookeries per 10km square

John Websper

Book Review: Where To Watch Birds in Southeast England, by David Callahan



Helm ISBN: 978-1 3994-0360-3 £27.99

Books in the “Where to Watch Birds ...” genre are endlessly fascinating, tempting our dreams and aspirations in equal measure. Over the years a generalised format for such works has emerged, but one that leaves much scope for a choice of priorities which reflect author preferences.

This title is a bit of a challenge for me; I have lived either in or close to Kent for over fifty years and know the county quite well, but only lived and birded in North London for two of those years, while I have not knowingly made a birding trip to Essex (although I have passed through it by road and train many times)! So how does the book present its information? To begin at the beginning ; “**How to use this book**” is clearly an important place to start, followed by “**Thirty species to see in Southeast England**” (I have seen all of them!); a listing of **useful organisations and links**; A **Glossary**; listing of **Habitat terms**, A list of **Acronyms** and a **Checklist** all provide useful guidance .

The format for each site listing is re-assuringly familiar, beginning with a **Grey box** which contains concise information such as **Ordnance Survey Map details** , **Address and Post Codes**, **What three Words link**; **e-mail contact details and telephone numbers**, **site status and Opening hours**. Next comes a summary of the **Habitat** of the site, then a comprehensive analysis of the likely **Species** which may be encountered at each season of the year. **Access** gives clear information about how to find the site with details relevant to visits by Bike, Bus, Train and Car. I was most impressed by listings of “**twelve top reserves for disabled access**” and “**twelve top reserves for access by public transport**” , both of these reflecting the growing awareness of the need for inclusivity and access to the countryside.

A feature of this book which I do not recall seeing in similar publications is a section devoted to **Gulls**. While these may not be everyone’s favourite birds, I have spent years studying them in all sorts of places

and there is no doubt that this corner of South-east England is a great place to get to know them better. The section in this book is a comprehensive guide to the best places to enjoy these misunderstood birds, often in the most unlikely places.

The three counties in the title are divided into manageable regions, each with a range of sites. Greater London has 51 sites, Essex has 57 sites and Kent has 66 sites. Generally away from London there is a feature which would be particularly helpful to the travelling birder: most key localities are followed by listings of "Nearby sites" which are close enough to include in a day trip and would be worthy of investigation. The listings for London have been a bit of a revelation; my time in the city included a spell working for the Metropolitan Water Board which gave me privileged access to many areas otherwise closed to mere mortals. It is astonishing to see how many such sites have made the transition from industrial infrastructure to recreational sites, often with substantial habitat regeneration along the way especially Walthamstow Wetlands and Walthamstow marshes, which had much potential over fifty years ago. It is good to see that potential realised today. On the other hand, some places which were discoveries in my past are no more; I recall a blistering hot summers day searching the dereliction and rubble of the Old Surrey Docks for Black Redstarts with a birding friend, finding two pairs feeding fledged young. In this most unlikely of places on the same day we also found a group of Shoveler, a Grey Wagtail, several Common Sandpipers and even a small covey of Red-legged Partridges. A recent Google map search showed that all is now steel, concrete and glass.

As I mentioned, I have no experience of birding in Essex but looking through the sites included reveals a catalogue of places which feature prominently in bird reports and online information services, perhaps one day I will seek out some of these for myself.

My earliest explorations of Kent came thanks to my school in North Surrey where the natural history society organised field trips at the weekends periodically. These opened my eyes to magic places such as Cliffe pools, Shellness and Leysdown on Sheppey, as well as Harty Marshes, Dungeness and especially Stodmarsh along with the wider Stour Valley which later became home. The school sailing club also revealed the treasures of a new reservoir where I quite literally developed a taste for Bough Beech! Eventually I spent a season as warden of Sandwich Bay Bird Observatory and subsequently came to live between the Bay and the Stour Valley sites, so that these are now my "Home Patch".

Looking through a range of local sites featured in this book I find that the ornithological information to be generally accurate and as reliable as annual variations allow. The only criticism is the suggestion that Lapwing and Redshank breed on the wet grasslands at Seaton Lakes. To my knowledge the last breeding of both species on the site was back in the early 1990's! Access information is notoriously changeable and since the early 2000's the site has featured a large Otter proof fence which prevents the close access to the water enjoyed in previous years. I would also take issue with the comment under Pegwell Bay, which describes the area known as Stonelees as being 'largely taken up by a lorry park'. The area in question is an outstanding area of rough scrubland with a good record of rare birds and also orchids. It is separated from the lorry park by a large sports ground and a filling station. Another minor irritation with access information was a scatter of misprints and errors. Some are likely to be typographical and of little consequence, "Gold Road" instead of "Golf Road", "Gresham Bay" in place of "Grenham Bay", "Idle Hill Road" instead of "Ide Hill Road" and several others noticed in my perusal.

More significantly, errors of name, the greatest of these being on page 280 where the section is titled THE STOUR/STOW VALLEY. A careful search of Kent place names shows that Stow does not appear to occur anywhere in the county, although it does pop up in Essex with surprising regularity! The same page includes "Lambkin Wall", an error of transcription for the correct "Lampen Wall". These represent the instances which caught my attention, I am not convinced that I found all such errors in my small sample. Finally, I found some instances where maps were incomplete, particularly where a path or road is mentioned in the Access text but is not labelled on the accompanying map. A minor criticism, but it did cause me some confusion when looking over the entry for RSPB Cliffe pools, which has changed dramatically since my last visit.

This book gives an enormously wide range of valuable information and useful advice which will inform and assist users and encourage access to more birds for many more people. I might even try to venture into darkest Essex to visit some of the sites, using it as a guide. Thoroughly recommended!!

Norman McCanch

KENT BIRD SIGHTINGS FOR MARCH-APRIL 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

March overall was unsettled, wet and dull. The month began colder than normal, however the cool weather was replaced by milder conditions for much of the rest of the month with temperatures widely into the mid-teens. By mid-month, Kent had experienced their whole month average rainfall and continued to be soaked until the month's end.

April continued the theme of the previous few months, being unsettled, wet and dull. April showers were present from the beginning of the month with frontal systems often bringing persistent rain across the UK. The eleventh named storm of the season, Kathleen, also brought gale force winds along the coasts on the 5th and 6th. After a warm start to the month, temperatures dropped with the last two weeks being cooler than average. A high pressure system moved over the UK on the 20th bringing cooler temperatures. Monthly rainfall at Bishopstone totalled 51mm.

EARLIEST SPRING MIGRANTS IN 2024

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

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

Garganey – a male was seen at Dungeness RSPB on Mar 9th. **(-1)**
Common Swift – one flew south at Sandwich Bay on Apr 9th. **(-6)**
Cuckoo – one was reported singing at Herne Bay on Mar 31st. **(-1)**
Turtle Dove – single birds seen at Kingsgate and South Foreland on Apr 14th. **(+3)**
Little Ringed Plover – one arrived at Conningbrook on Mar 14th. **(-2)**
Whimbrel – two flew E at DBO on Mar 20th. **(-10)**
Common Sandpiper – a bird was seen at North Foreland on Apr 4th. **(-4)**
Greenshank – one seen at Oare Marshes with two at Cliffe Pools on Apr 2nd. **(-3)**
Wood Sandpiper – one was seen at Worth Marshes on Apr 13th. **(-8)**
Sandwich Tern – one flew W at DBO on Mar 10th. **(+6)**
Little Tern – seen at Pegwell Bay, North Foreland, Grenham Bay on Apr 16th. **(+5)**
Common Tern – the first flew E at DBO on Mar 27th. **(0)**
Arctic Tern – a single bird flew past DBO on Apr 6th. **(-6)**
Black Tern – one was seen flying N at North Foreland on Apr 21st. **(+4)**
Osprey – the first of the year was seen at Bough Beech on Mar 13th. **(-12)**
Hobby – one reported flying towards Hawkinge at Capel-le-Ferne on Mar 15th. **(-18)**
Sand Martin – one was reported from Brooksend on Feb 10th. **(-28)**
Swallow – one was seen at Worth Marshes on Feb 21st. **(-19)**
House Martin – a bird spent an hour at Foreness on Feb 22nd. **(-28)**
Chiffchaff – a male was seen and heard at Oare Marshes on Feb 20th. **(-17)**
Willow Warbler – birds were recorded at Swalecliffe and Marden on Mar 20th. **(-4)**
Sedge Warbler – a male was singing at Dungeness RSPB on Mar 21st. **(-7)**
Reed Warbler – a bird was recorded from Northward Hill on Apr 2nd. **(-4)**
Grasshopper Warbler – one was heard at Nethergong on Apr 7th. **(-3)**
Lesser Whitethroat – a bird was reported from Dungeness RSPB on Apr 6th. **(-5)**
Common Whitethroat – singles at Sandwich Bay and Faversham on Apr 5th. **(+1)**
Garden Warbler – a bird arrived at Worth Marshes on Apr 11th. **(-1)**
Blackcap – two males were singing at Higham on Mar 14th. **(-5)**
Ring Ouzel – a male was seen at Reculver on Mar 5th. **(-26)**
Nightingale – one was singing at Bekesbourne on Apr 3rd. **(-3)**
Black Redstart – two were seen at DBO on Mar 7th. **(+6)**
Common Redstart – there was one at Dungeness on Apr 5th. **(+2)**
Northern Wheatear – one was discovered at DBO on Mar 14th. **(+8)**
Whinchat – two were seen on Dartford Marshes on Apr 18th. **(+7)**
White Wagtail – one was seen at St Margarets-at-Cliffe on Mar 14th. **(+4)**

Yellow Wagtail – there was one seen at New Romney on Mar 24th. (+5)

Tree Pipit – one flew over Foreness on Apr 3rd. (+2)

PARTRIDGE TO WILDFOWL

Single **Pale-bellied Brent Geese** were seen at DBO and Oare Marshes on Mar 9th, at Kingsdown on the Mar 10th and at Hope Creek on Apr 11th whilst a **Barnacle Goose** was seen at Swale NNR on Mar 9th and 10th.

During March up to 353 **Russian White-fronted Geese** were seen at Swale NNR with smaller numbers at Sandwich Bay, Worth Marshes, Capel Fleet, Oare Marshes, Harty Marshes and Dungeness RSPB. There was still one bird at Oare Marshes on Apr 3rd.

A **Whooper Swan** was regularly seen at Oare Marshes between Mar 29th and Apr 10th.

As many as 15 **Egyptian Geese** were seen at Bough Beech, Swale NNR, Swanscombe Marshes, Haysden, Eastwell Park, Penshurst, Conningbrook GPs, Cock Ash Lake, Seaton, East Peckham, North Foreland, Uplees, DBO, Swalecliffe, Littlebrook Lakes, Sevenoaks WR, Copt Point, Cliffe Pools, Worth Marshes, Shuart and Stodmarsh/Grove Ferry and as many as nine **Mandarin Ducks** were seen at Bough Beech, Godmersham, West Blean Woods, East Peckham, Reculver, Marshside, Penshurst, Garrington and Selling.

After the first male **Garganey** arrived at Dungeness RSPB on Mar 9th as many as eight birds were recorded from Dungeness RSPB, DBO, Capel Fleet, Grove Ferry/Stodmarsh, Worth Marshes, Ash Levels, Scotney, Seasalter, Cliffe Pools and Oare Marshes.



Ferruginous Duck by Mark Chidwick

A male **Green-winged Teal** was identified at Seasalter on Mar 31st and a male **FERRUGINOUS DUCK** was found at Whetsted GPs on Apr 6th where it remained until the 23rd. If accepted by BBRC it will be the 28th record for Kent.



Green-winged Teal by Peter Maton

The **Scaup** first seen at New Hythe in January remained there until Mar 2nd and a first winter male was seen at Scotney GPs from Mar 3rd-16th.

During March up to seven **Velvet Scoter** were seen at DBO and in April five birds flew N at Sandwich Bay on the 19th and seven flew past DBO on the 25th with one there on the 27th and one at Swalecliffe on the 29th.

The wintering **Long-tailed Duck** remained at Elmley NNR until Apr 2nd whilst another bird was seen at Swalecliffe from Mar 26th-Apr 5th. One also flew E at DBO on Apr 24th.

Up to four **Goosanders** were seen at Bough Beech, Haysden, Penshurst Place, New Hythe, Abbeymead and Sandwich Bay with the last birds were seen flying W at Foreness on Apr 16th and at Haysden on the 28th.



Goosander by Terry Laws

NIGHTJAR TO WADERS

An **Alpine Swift** was reported from Palm Bay on Mar 31st.

A **Common Crane** was seen at Worth Marshes on Apr 21st and 22nd.

Single **Slavonian Grebes** were recorded at Walmer Beach on Mar 4th, at Sandwich Bay on Mar 18th, at Dungeness RSPB on Mar 23rd and at Dartford Marshes on Apr 27th whilst during March as many as three **Black-necked Grebes** were seen at Dungeness RSPB and one was identified at Bough Beech on Apr 19th.

Two **Stone Curlews** were heard overnight at DBO on Mar 12th and on the same night one was also heard at Stonar whilst on the 20th birds were heard overnight at Walmer and Weddington and on the night of the 23rd another was heard at DBO. One was also photographed at Stodmarsh on Apr 18th.

A **Curlew Sandpiper** was seen at Higham Marshes on April 28th and a **Temminck's Stint** was seen at Worth Marshes on Apr 30th.

During March as many as 13 **Purple Sandpipers** were seen at Broadstairs, Hythe, Shellness, Seabrook, Swalecliffe, Leysdown and North Foreland. In April there was still one at Swalecliffe on the 5th with 12 at Foreness on the 19th and one still at Foreness on the 28th.

Single **Jack Snipe** were seen at Bough Beech, Oare Marshes, Ash Levels and Elmley NNR and up to six **Spotted Redshanks** were seen at Milton Creek, Stodmarsh, Otterham Creek, Cliffe Pools, Seasalter and Oare Marshes.



Spotted Redshank by Richard Hanman

After the first **Wood Sandpiper** was seen at Worth Marshes on Apr 13th up to three birds were recorded from Grove Ferry/Stodmarsh, Bough Beech and Worth Marshes.

GULLS TO SHEARWATERS

As many as 30 **Little Gulls** were seen DBO and Dungeness RSPB with up to three at Scotney, Swalecliffe, Oare Marshes, Elmley NNR, Cliffe Pools, Bough Beech and Samphire Hoe.

A **Glaucous Gull** was reported from Swalecliffe on Mar 9th.

Single **Caspian Gulls** were seen at DBO, Foreness, Deal, Dartford Marshes and Kingsdown and one or two **Yellow-legged Gulls** were seen at Reculver and South Foreland.

After the first **Black Tern** flew N at North Foreland on Apr 21st up to five birds were seen at DBO, North Foreland, Dartford Marshes, Bough Beech and Minster Marshes.

Up to three **Great Skuas** were seen at DBO with single birds at Foreness, Hythe and North Foreland. Single **Arctic Skuas** flew past DBO on Mar 10th and 19th with nine on the 27th, 23 on the 28th and six on

the 29th. During April up to 51 birds were seen at DBO with up to three seen at Samphire Hoe and North Foreland.

After the first seven **Pomarine Skuas** were seen flying E at DBO on Apr 27th three birds flew E on the 28th, one flew E on the 29th with six on the 30th.

Gull, Tern and Skua passage at Dungeness Observatory on April 27th

With a variable south-east to north-west wind blowing, and rain falling from mid-afternoon, an easterly passage past the seawatch hide produced excellent numbers of gulls, terns and skuas between 0530 and 1700.

Little Gull	45
Little Tern	154
Common Tern	16,210
Arctic Tern	3,104
Black Tern	48
Great Skua	2
Arctic Skua	51
Pomarine Skua	7

During March one or two **Black-throated Divers** were seen at Dungeness RSPB and DBO and in April one was seen at Margate on the 4th with two at DBO on the 6th and single birds there on the 7th and 8th. Single birds were also at North Foreland on the Apr 7th and 26th and three flew past DBO on 25th with two there on the 29th.

During March up to three **Great Northern Divers** were recorded from Swalecliffe, Oare Marshes, Conyer, Tankerton, Walmer, Dungeness RSPB, DBO, Uplees, Bockhill and North Foreland. In April one was still to be seen at Dungeness RSPB until the 19th and singles flew S at North Foreland on the 12th, 17th and 21st and W at Reculver on the 16th.

The first 17 **Manx Shearwaters** of the spring flew past DBO on Mar 28th and one flew past North Foreland the next day. During April as many as four birds were seen at DBO and North Foreland.

WHITE STORK TO WOODPECKERS

Single **White Storks** flew E at Littlestone-on-Sea on Mar 30th, N at Mersham on Apr 1st, over Tenterden on the 6th, S at Stodmarsh on the 9th and were seen at Worth Marshes on 11th, at Sevenoaks on the 17th, at Grove Ferry/Stodmarsh and Wickhambreaux on the 23rd and at Bough Beech on the 11th, 17th and 27th.

One or two **Shags** were seen at Foreness, North Foreland, Bockhill and Sandwich Bay whilst a **Glossy Ibis** was seen at Dungeness RSPB until Mar 24th.

One or two **Spoonbills** were seen at DBO, Oare Marshes, Elmley NNR, Pegwell Bay, Worth Marshes, Stodmarsh/Grove Ferry, Cliffe Pools and Plumpudding and single **Bitterns** were seen or heard at Stodmarsh/Grove Ferry, Fordwich Lakes, Capel Fleet, Dungeness RSPB, DBO and Sandwich Bay.

As many as 26 **Cattle Egrets** were seen in the Stodmarsh/Grove Ferry area with smaller numbers recorded from DBO, Littlebourne, Sandwich Bay, Swalecliffe, Worth Marshes, Northward Hill, Hacklinge, Grain, Teynham, Elmley NNR, Netherhale, Capel Fleet and Shalmsford Street.

An adult **Purple Heron** was seen at Dungeness on Apr 13th and flying out to sea on the 14th and others were seen at Capel Fleet on Apr 23rd, at Allhallows from the 24th-26th, at Seasalter on the 25th and at Minster Marshes on the 30th.

Up to four **Great White Egrets** were recorded from Worth Marshes, Oare Marshes, Dungeness RSPB, Collard's Lake, Whetsted GPs and Stodmarsh/Grove Ferry.

The first **Osprey** of the spring was seen at Bough Beech on Mar 13th after which single birds were recorded from Langdon Cliffs, Bough Beech, Elmley NNR, Dungeness RSPB, Walmer Beach and Foreness.

As many as five **Hen Harriers** were seen at Stodmarsh/Grove Ferry with one or two seen at Oare Marshes, Sandwich Bay, Dungeness, Capel Fleet, Harty Marshes, Graveney, Minster Marshes, Wittersham, Reculver Marshes, South Foreland, Small Hythe, Walland Marsh, Nethergong, Pegwell Bay, Upstreet, Seasalter, Smeeth, Swale NNR and Elmley NNR.

During March and April as many as five **Red Kites** were seen at many sites throughout Kent and a **Black Kite** flew NE at Bough Beech on Mar 23rd.



White-tailed Eagle by Peter Maton

Single **White-tailed Eagles** were seen at Elmley NNR on Mar 24th and from Apr 4th-8th, at Bough Beech on Mar 25th, at Godmersham on Apr 4th and at Bishopsbourne and Bough Beech on Apr 11th. One was also seen at Elmley NNR on Apr 24th.

OWLS TO HIRUNDINES

As many as 24 **Short-eared Owls** were seen at Elmley NNR with up to three seen at Sandwich Bay, Reculver, Bockhill, Dartford Marshes, Dungeness, Langdon, North Foreland, Capel Fleet, Conyer, Abbotscliffe and Grain.

A **Hoopoe** was seen at Godmersham on Apr 2nd whilst there was another at Greatstone-on-Sea on Apr 12th and 13th and one was reported from Great Mongeham on Apr 13th and 14th.



Hoopoe by Chris Bond

One or two **Merlins** were recorded from Stodmarsh/Grove Ferry, DBO, Reculver Marshes, Shuart, North Foreland, Capel-le-Ferne, South Foreland, Swale NNR, Sandwich Bay, Abbotscliffe and Oare Marshes.

A **Golden Oriole** was heard at Tenterden on Apr 12th whilst another was seen at Sandwich Bay on the 17th.

A **Hooded Crow** was reported from Joss Bay on Mar 18th and one was reported from Dungeness RSPB on Mar 31st and Apr 29th.

Four **Waxwings** were seen at Sevenoaks on Mar 4th and another flew over Stonar on Mar 14th, there were 25 feeding on mistletoe berries at Sissinghurst on Mar 15th, four flew W at Foreness on the 16th, 25+ at Lullingstone Park on the 18th and 20 at Boughton Monchelsea on the 20th. On Mar 21st, 17 were found at Horsmonden and on the 26th there were seven at Faversham whilst on the 29th there were two at the M2 Services. In April two were found at Seal on the 2nd and there was one at Staplehurst on the 5th.

A **Penduline Tit** was reported from Elmley NNR on Apr 18th.

A **Woodlark** flew ENE at North Foreland on Mar 4th, two were seen at DBO on Mar 12th with one flying W at Foreness on Mar 13th and two flying over Walmer Beach on Mar 14th. Two were seen at Goatshurst Common on Mar 18th and there was one at Joss Bay on Apr 6th and two at South Foreland on the Apr 7th.

A **Red-rumped Swallow** was seen at Worth Marshes from Apr 23rd-26th.

WARBLERS TO WHEATEARS

A **Siberian Chiffchaff** was reported from near Meopham on Apr 6th.

After the first **Grasshopper Warbler** was heard at Nethergong on Apr 7th single birds were reported from Seasalter, East Peckham, DBO, Rushenden, Stodmarsh and Canterbury.



Grasshopper Warbler by Mark Chidwick

As many as 14 **Firecrests** were recorded at Denge and Eggringe Woods with up to five seen at Bough Beech, DBO, Dungeness RSPB, Sandwich Bay, Bockhill, Stodmarsh, East Blean Woods, Shuart, Faversham, Folkestone, Sevenoaks, West Blean Woods, Swalecliffe and Clowes Wood.

An exceptionally early male **Ring Ouzel** was seen at Reculver on Mar 5th. Looking through Kent Bird Reports since 1952, with the exception of the occasional wintering bird, this appears to be the second earliest spring bird in Kent after the earliest was seen at Dungeness in 1980 on March 2nd.

After this, as many as three were reported at mainly coastal sites including Samphire Hoe, Langdon Cliffs, Bockhill, Faversham, Kingsdown, Northward Hill, Tonbridge, Foreness, North Foreland, Warden Point, Sandwich Bay, Minster on Sheppey, Higham Marshes Oare Marshes, Walmer, DBO, Shuart, Cliffe Pools, Swalecliffe, Gravesend, Shorne Marshes, Brooksend, Furnace Pond, Fan Bay, Folkestone and South Foreland.

A male **Pied Flycatcher** was found at Stodmarsh on Apr 14th and others were seen at Sandwich Bay on the 20th and DBO on the 27th.

One or two **Black Redstarts** were recorded from DBO, Ramsgate, Lydd, Dover, Finberry, Foreness, North Foreland, Langdon Bay, Abbotscliffe, Kingsdown, Samphire Hoe, Hythe Ranges and Dungeness RSPB.

SPARROWS TO BUNTINGS

There was a small arrival of **Blue-headed Wagtails** between Apr 5th and 10th with up to three seen at Joss Bay and single birds seen at Foreness and Bockhill. Single birds were also seen at Oare Marshes on Apr 18th and Worth Marshes on the 19th.

As many as seven **Water Pipits** were recorded from Ash Levels, Stodmarsh/Grove Ferry, Dungeness RSPB, Worth Marshes, Sandwich Bay, Harty Marshes, Swanscombe Marshes and Oare Marshes.

A **Hawfinch** flew over Broomfield on Mar 29th and one flew W at Foreness on Apr 13th whilst during March one or two **Mealy Redpolls** were seen at Furnace Pond, Horsmonden and Seal.

As many as 14 **Common Crossbills** were recorded at Kingston, South Foreland, Denge Wood, Clowes Wood, Bockhill and West Blean Woods.

A **Serin** was reported flying S at East Farleigh on Mar 24th and another flew N at North Foreland on Apr 7th whilst single birds flew past North Foreland and Hope Point on Apr 12th and another flew S at Ramsgate on the 13th. One was singing at Marden on Apr 18th and another was seen at South Foreland on the 21st.

The **Little Bunting** found at Godmersham on Feb 3rd was still there on Mar 9th.

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

CONTRIBUTORS

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

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

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

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

The following 2023 and 2024 KOS Rarities have recently been accepted by the KOS Rarities Panel based on published photos or from descriptions submitted.

2023

Ring-necked Duck (male)	Lydden Valley RSPB	June 8th
Stone-curlew (nocmig)	Worth Marshes	April 4th
Caspian Gull (first winter)	Marden	December 3rd
White-winged Black Tern (adult)	Worth Marshes	June 13th
Cory's Shearwater (flying E)	Foreness	August 3rd
Night-Heron (recorded calling)	Stonar	May 6th
Night-Heron (adult)	Worth Marshes	September 5th
Purple Heron	Dungeness RSPB	May 18th-20th and
Black Kite	Worth Marshes	April 19th
Black Kite (flying SW)	North Foreland	June 16th
Red-footed Falcon (female)	Worth Marshes	June 16th
Red-rumped Swallow	Worth Marshes	May 29th
Common Rosefinch (juvenile ringed)	Sandwich Bay	November 11th
Ortolan Bunting (recorded)	Stonar	September 15th

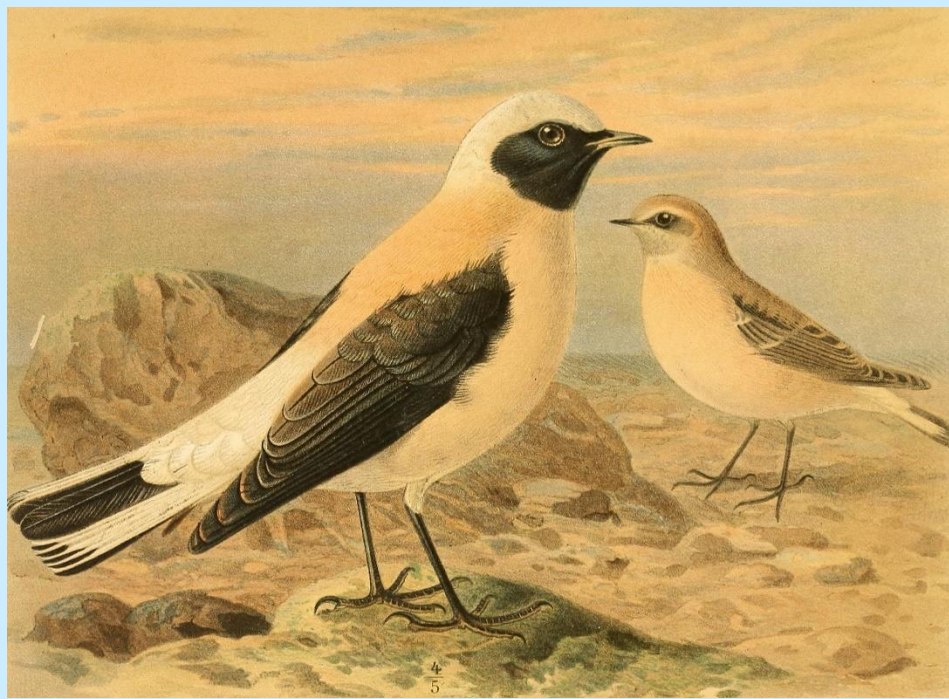
2024

Green-winged Teal (male)	Seasalter	March 31st
Iceland Gull (juvenile)	St Margrets-at-Cliffe	January 7th-8th
Little Bunting	Godmersham	Feb 3rd-Mar 9th

Fifty Years Ago

Black-eared Wheatear

Two were present at Denge Marsh on May 21st, and one remained until the County 29th (PJG, NR, RES). These were the first acceptable records for the since the 'Bristow record' of 1906.



Black-eared Wheatear by JG Keulemans

KBR 1974

MEET THE MEMBER – Chris Roome, Vice Chair of the KOS



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

I am the Membership Secretary of KOS and also the Vice Chair. (The latter role is just in case we need another person to chair a meeting if the Chair cannot make it.)

As Membership Secretary I am responsible for keeping the membership database up to date, noting and chasing subscriptions, keeping track of all changes, lapsed members, and communicating with members when necessary. This work takes me quite a lot of time - I guess averaging about 5 hours a week with peaks of longer hours in January when c 350 members all renew.

I chose to take part in response to an email in 2010 from the exec – along with all other members – asking for a volunteer to take on the job as the previous Membership Secretary was giving it up. So, I went along to the AGM and volunteered from the floor – to the utter amazement (and relief) of the then Chair – Martin Coath. So I joined the exec and I enjoy being part of the volunteers who keep KOS on the road – or should that be “in the field”? I wished to take a more active role in the society and to get to know more regular Kent birders.

What first drew you into the world of birds?

I was always interested in birds from childhood but not in a systematic way. The key catalyst for me was a colleague I met at the first school in which I taught in South London - Eddie Anderson. He was an experienced teacher and became a close friend, mentor and also happened to be a keen South London birder – and a member of KOS. I was then living in sunny Plumstead and like lots of South London birders I went with Eddie to the Thames and Kent marshes, the Isle of Grain, Sheppey, Dungeness, Stodmarsh – all places I visited for the first time with him. I saw many of my ‘firsts’ in his company – Short-eared Owl at Shellness; Cetti’s Warbler recently arrived at Stodmarsh, Long-eared Owls at Dartford Marshes – and so on. I was hooked and have remained so. I always have enjoyed walks and the countryside and I feel birds “embroider” my walks.

How are you involved with birds in Kent?

I take part in Surveys, but I am by instinct a casual birder. KOS is a broad church with a place in it for all who are interested in birds and their fascinating lives. Eddie died back in the late 90s but I think of him often as I visit places we first visited together. I have some close friends with whom I bird regularly in the County, and also I relish birding abroad and have been on a number of tours with companies. In addition, four of us self-organise trips – which have included Greece, Northern Norway, Estonia, Georgia, Bulgaria and most recently, Cyprus, where we went last month. It was a great trip! I love going to bird in Scotland too.

I also like solitary birding too – I enjoy being alone in the countryside and literally “spotting” and hearing birds.

What has been your biggest birding blunder?

Lots and lots of them! Biggest – I do remember a tour when we were scanning a damp field in the Highlands and I called out a particular wader I thought I had seen and there being a pause as the group all scanned the field and then the ever courteous guide(not always the case in my experience) gently said ‘I can only see Oystercatchers.....but I may have missed it?’

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

Join a club! Go birding with a friend. Read. Listen. And really, really look.

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

Lens wipes!

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

The span of my birding life – from the late 60s to now – demonstrates the decline I have seen in birdlife in the County. I find it depressing to walk in Kent through fields of solid green, no wild flowers, fewer insects, fewer butterflies and far fewer birds. In my home village, Staplehurst, we have lost lots of common species since 1977 when I first moved here. No more Swifts, House Martins or Swallows. No more Corn Buntings,

fewer Yellowhammers, no more flocks of wintering Lapwings and Golden Plover, far fewer Snipe, and no more singing Nightingales. We have made gains – great to see Buzzards in Kent, Ravens back, Little, Great and Cattle Egrets – and that has been encouraging and exciting. But the current pressures on wildlife from continued pesticide use, global warming, pollution of our seas and waterways etc. etc. – It is all pretty gloomy.

So, I cling to the idea that the little bit we can do in KOS to make the argument for birds, to work to increase safe places for birds to breed and live is something worth doing – especially here in this strategically important - for birds - corner of the UK. Our views can count too – collective action is important – but we birders also have to grasp that for some of our depleted wildlife to flourish it must be left alone by everyone – and that includes birders too. (I am aware of the contradictions here as I travel to other countries to look at birds.....)

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

I have a close friend, a birder, who owns a few acres of woodland close to where I live. Visiting that woodland with him over the years, seeing it change and evolve is fascinating. There are Lesser Spotted Woodpeckers there and we love to glimpse one and hear its call in very early spring, and then- with luck – we wait for the Spotted Flycatchers to return. There are grass snakes and wild orchids, Treecreepers and Goldcrests, butterflies and beetles – nothing spectacularly rare but just fascinating. An early morning walk in the wood is as good as birding gets for me.