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SUSSEX ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY

The Sussex Bird Report

Number Sixty-eight, 2015



Recorder: M Mallalieu

Editorial Team: Dr PJ Plant, NL Bond, MJ Chattaway,
Dr HM Crabtree, JA Hobson, P James, Dr JA Newnham

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Sussex Bird Report 2014 amendments and corrections

Very few errors in the 2014 report were brought to the Editor's attention; details of the more significant of these and of any additional records for previous years can be found under the relevant species in the Systematic List.



Lesser Yellowlegs, Rye Hbr, February 2015 (Barry Yates)

Photographs

Cover photograph: *Red-footed Falcon, Barcombe, June 2015 (Roger and Liz Charlwood)*

I would like to say a massive thank you to all the photographers who took time to submit their photographs of birds taken in Sussex in 2015 for use in this report; again the quality is outstanding. The quality and the quantity have improved every year allowing me to submit well over 100 photographs to the editor this year for the second year running. The number of photographs published in the report has pretty much doubled in the last 5 years as well to accommodate the increase in submissions.

We were again blessed with a couple of 'firsts' for Sussex in 2015, and both the Hudsonian Whimbrel and Short-toed Treecreeper were photographed and feature in the report. The fantastic sight of a flock of Bee-eaters was a great opportunity for many photographers to snap these colourful and beautiful birds on our doorstep.

I look forward to receiving more outstanding photos for the 2016 report. [Nick Bond]

Editorial

Peter Plant

The theme of the 2015 Sussex Bird Report (the 68th) must be “new”. As the new Editor I am honoured to take on the formidable challenge of succeeding Joanne Chattaway who I must thank for the help and insights she has given to smooth the handover. We also have a new Honorary Recorder, Mark Mallalieu, who has provided the review of the year and significantly enhanced the accuracy of the data in this report. However, perhaps the biggest change has been the introduction of the new COBRA 2 database. Records lie at the very heart of the SOS, and implementation of this major upgrade brought with it teething problems of interaction with methods of recording such as BirdTrack, access to records by account writers, and an increased number of queries. My thanks are due to John Newnham for patiently grappling with these issues with skill and wisdom.

The number of records submitted in 2015 again reached a new high of over 280,000 records of 252 species from about 1285 observers.

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
No. submitting records	986	948	894	1146	1362	1285
No. of records received	170,113	183,732	148,727	160,856	240,843	280,000
No. of species recorded	269	260	271	263	264	252

There were 57 birders who submitted more than 1000 records each; acknowledgements appear at the end of this report. Whereas it is very encouraging that the number of records submitted continues to exceed even that in the atlas years, a more complete database and more accurate species accounts would result from observers being diligent about including breeding codes in their submissions during the breeding season. It is also appropriate to remind observers that for those species requiring descriptions they will only be included in the Sussex Bird Report after approval by the Honorary Recorder and SOS Records Committee. An updated description species list is given at the end of this report on page 274.

There were two new additions increasing the Sussex list to 402: Hudsonian Whimbrel and Short-toed Treecreeper. Accounts of the finding and the intricacies of clinching the identification of these are given by George Kinnard and John Cooper, respectively, on pages 208-210.

Although there has been little change in the systematic list order, readers will note that the designations of Birds of Conservation Concern (red and amber lists) have been updated to incorporate the major revision of December 2015. Species names, however, remain unchanged from previous Sussex Bird Reports and the Birds of Sussex (Thomas) 2014 and are essentially vernacular. Although space is constrained we have managed to include a short Photographers' Gallery to display a greater selection of work from our talented contributors.

Some things have not changed. The species accounts were written by a large team of writers; thanks go to CJR Barfield, VP Bentley, RA Black, D Boddington, C Brooks, MJ Chattaway, JR Cowser, J Curson, LD Curson, C Davis, D Green, AC Gutteridge, JA Hobson, WG Harvey, A House, DH Howey, P James, RJB Jackson, ME Kalaher, JA Newnham, M Orchard-Webb, G Osborne, TW Parmenter, PJ Plant, AH Podmore, CJ Reay, A Rowe, T Seabrook, A Thomas, AB Watson and JH Whitman. The initials at the end of each account identify the author.

Thanks also go to the excellent team of proof readers: Val Bentley, Joanne Chattaway, Jacob Everitt, Dick Gilmore, John Hobson, David Howey, Peter Hughes, Paul James, Phil Jones,

Mark Mallalieu, Owen Mitchell, John Newnham and Barry Yates. They have conscientiously read through versions of the species accounts and made corrections and recommendations for improvements, additions and amendments, to include late records and to present the accounts in a uniform style for future researchers. I hope that authors are not offended by changes to their texts, but if so I offer my apologies.

In addition I would like to thank: Helen Crabtree, Christine George, John Newnham and Alan Perry for compiling survey tables; Helen again for editing the scientific articles, writing one of them concerning the BTO House Martin survey, and typesetting this report; Alan Perry who has contributed the important and comprehensive review of the Wealden Heaths Breeding Bird Survey (West Sussex) which has been running for some 17 years; Clare Buckle for the update on the Cuckoo tracking project; Val Bentley for compiling the Ringing Report; Nick Bond for selecting and processing the photographs; and Robert Yarham for designing the cover. John Newnham wrote the database report, and compiled the maps, the first and last migrant dates and the acknowledgement section. Joanne Chattaway and John Hobson were the primary proof readers and checkers of numbers. I thank you all for your considerable efforts, patience and understanding.

Abbreviations

The following abbreviations are used as standard practice:

AON	Apparently occupied nests	Res	Reservoir
BBRC	British Birds Records Committee	RSPB	Royal Society for the Protection of Birds
BBS	Breeding Bird Survey	RBRG	Rye Bay Ringing Group
BTO	British Trust for Ornithology	R	River
BOU	British Ornithologists Union	SOSRC	SOS Records Committee
CP	Country park	SSSI	Site of Special Scientific Interest
Fm	Farm	SWBS	Sussex Winter Bird Survey
GP	Gravel pit	WeBS	Wetland Bird Survey
GC	Golf course	WBBS	Waterways Breeding Bird Survey
Hbr	Harbour	WTW	Water Treatment Works
IUCN	The World Conservation Union	WWT	Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust
LNR	Local Nature Reserve	nc	No count
MP	Mill pond	ha	Hectare(s)
mo	Many observers	hr	Hour(s)
NR	Nature Reserve	km	Kilometre(s)
NNR	National Nature Reserve	m	Metre(s)
o/s	Offshore	N,E,S,W	As cardinal compass points
PH	Public house		

Views expressed by contributors to the Sussex Bird Report are not necessarily those of the Editor or the Council of the Sussex Ornithological Society.

Review of 2015

Mark Mallalieu

This review of 2015 is a mainly chronological summary of the year's weather and highlights of interesting and unusual bird sightings. In total, 252 species were recorded during 2015, compared with 264 in 2014.

Two discoveries were the result of exceptional fieldwork. The first **Hudsonian Whimbrel** for Sussex was in Pagham Harbour on 9 Jun and remained until 27 Jul, also being seen at Selsey Bill on 12 Jul. On 27 Oct, a **Short-toed Treecreeper** was at Beachy Head. Accounts of these exciting finds are on pages 208-210 of this report.

Four popular rarities stayed on from 2014. Observers had further opportunities to see the **Lesser Yellowlegs** in the Pett Level/Rye Hbr area, the bird remaining until 21 Feb. The **Rough-legged Buzzard** at Jevington stayed from 2014 and was last reported on 8 Mar. On Pevensy Levels, a **Richard's Pipit** was still present in early January having arrived the previous November. Another attraction in the 'returning bird' category was the second-winter **Kumlien's Gull** at Littlehampton in late January and early February, considered to be the same as the first-winter individual seen here in February/March 2014.



Kumlien's Gull, Littlehampton, February 2015 (Bola Akinola)

Several rare and scarce birds lingered long enough for many birdwatchers to see them. An outstanding find was the **Dusky Warbler** that skulked at Chichester GP in January. A **Little Bunting** at Old Lodge, Ashdown Forest allowed observers plenty of time to search for it in

February, but it was also not easy to see or photograph. A **Black Brant** remained at Chichester Marina from late January into February. There were further opportunities to see **Rough-legged Buzzard**, with birds at Laughton Level during much of February as well as one at Scotney GP in October. Diligent searching in Crawley in late March relocated the **Alpine Swift** first seen for only a few seconds. A second **Richard's Pipit** appeared in March, this one at the Ouse Estuary Project (Newhaven). Many observers were also able to see the **Black-winged Stilt** at Sidlesham Ferry Pool in April and another there in May/June. A female **Red-footed Falcon** at Barcombe Mills in late May/early June was widely enjoyed, as was a juvenile **Black Stork** in the Bexhill-on-Sea area during August/September. A remarkable occurrence was the appearance of a juvenile **Pallid Harrier** at The Burgh in September/October - the site hosted a juvenile of the same species at a similar time in 2011, the first county record. A **Pectoral Sandpiper** was at Pulborough Brooks in late October, albeit distant. The **Glossy Ibis** that arrived at Pett Level in November was still present at the end of the year. A **Black Brant** settled in Chichester Hbr in early December.



Pectoral Sandpiper, Sidlesham Ferry Pool, September 2015 (Andrew House)

Many scarce and rare birds passed through the county more quickly. A **Cattle Egret** was at Winchelsea for a day in March. In April a **Black Guillemot** flew east off Goring Gap, though this was subsequently relocated on the sea nearby. **Red-rumped Swallows** were seen at four sites at or near the coast in April-May, with two present at West Rise Marsh (Eastbourne) on 4 May. In May, a **Crane** flew over Weir Wood Res and a **Black Kite** over Woodingdean. Another May 'flyover' was a **Serin** at Selsey Bill, heard but not seen. Also in May, Sidlesham Ferry Pool hosted the only **Red-necked Phalarope** of the year. There were no less than seven spring records of **Bee-eaters**, mostly singles at the coast, but also three flocks, including a remarkable 10 at Little Dene (Glynde) in June. Spectacular mid-summer finds were a **Terek Sandpiper** at Pagham in June and a **Squacco Heron** at Southease in July. A second **Alpine Swift** was seen, this time at Beachy

Head in July. Single **Pectoral Sandpipers** were at Pagham in August and Sidlesham Ferry Pool in September, when the latter site also hosted one of only three **Grey Phalaropes** (the others being Cuckmere Haven in September at Selsey Bill in December). Much rarer was the **Wilson's Phalarope** at Pett Level in September. Another **Cattle Egret** was found, this time at Rodmell in September. Three **Pallas's Warblers** were discovered at Beachy Head in October, whilst **Yellow-browed Warblers** were more widespread, with eight records of single birds mainly at the coast. Also in October, a **Marsh Warbler** was at Selsey Bill, whilst a **Bluethroat** at Beachy Head was the only individual of this species recorded during the year. Remarkably, another winter **Dusky Warbler** was found, this time at Climping in December.

Some scarce species and subspecies are being observed more frequently. There were up to 24 **Great White Egrets** and 10 **Caspian Gulls**, at least nine eastern race **Chiffchaffs** and 11 **Continental Coal Tits**.

January to March

After some cold northerly winds early on, the first winter period was mainly mild with periods of dry weather as well as some heavy rain and strong winds.

In the mild conditions there were over 100 **Chiffchaffs** in the county, accompanied by at least five eastern race individuals. Both taxa were exploiting the insect life at water treatments works. By contrast, at least 60 **Blackcaps** in January-February were found mainly in gardens. Three **Sandwich Terns** overwintered in the Selsey and Chichester Hbr areas, although six flying west at Selsey Bill on 22 Feb were early spring arrivals. A few **Common Sandpipers** stayed through the colder months, mainly in the lower Ouse Valley.

Congregations of wintering wildfowl included a high total of over 17,500 **Brent Geese** in January, mainly in Chichester Hbr, where they were accompanied by a single **Black Brant**. In the same month there were nearly 4000 **Eurasian Wigeon** and over 2800 **Eurasian Teal** in the Arun Valley; and over 1000 **Gadwall** at various coastal and inland sites. A total of 33 **Velvet Scoters** in Rye Bay in mid-February was higher than in recent years. Scarcer wildfowl included four **Whooper Swans** in the Barnham area until 30 Mar and at least two **Tundra Bean Geese** that were tracked between various inland and coastal locations. The recent increase in wintering **Great Northern Divers** continued, with 18 being seen off Selsey Bill on 14 Feb. A **Red-necked Grebe** at Pagham Hbr on 5 Jan was the first of only five in the year.

The **Lesser Yellowlegs** in the Pett area stayed on from 2014 into late February. Concentrations of waders included nearly 1400 **Curlews** in Chichester Hbr and 2500 **Golden Plovers** at Rye Hbr in January; and a remarkable 5000 **Knot** at Pilsey Island in February. At Rye Hbr, 149 **Common Snipe** on 27 Jan was also a very high single site count.

Six **Spoonbills** frequented Chichester Hbr and Medmerry/Pagham Hbr in January-February and at least two **Great White Egrets** were in the Rye Hbr area during January-March. Also in the east of the county, a **Cattle Egret** was found at Winchelsea in mid-March. Scarcer gulls included the returning **Kumlien's** at Littlehampton in January-February, a **Glaucous Gull** at Cuckmere Haven in February and three **Caspian Gulls** at Newhaven Hbr and in the Cuckmere Valley. The **Rough-legged Buzzard** first seen at Jevington in 2014 stayed until early March and there was another at Laughton Levels in February.

Water Pipits were present at four sites near the coast in January-March. There were two rarer passerines in mid-winter: the **Dusky Warbler** that stayed for two weeks in January at Chichester GP; and a **Little Bunting** at Old Lodge, Ashdown Forest, in February. After the departure in January of the long-staying Pevensey Levels bird, a **Richard's Pipit** was seen at the Ouse Estuary

Project (Newhaven) during 12-21 March. As unusual was a **Ring Ouzel** in a Haywards Heath garden for eight days in February.

The first summer visitors included two **Northern Wheatears** at Beachy Head on 3 Mar and a **Sand Martin** at Chingford Pond on the 7th, closely followed by a **Barn Swallow** at Rye on 9 Mar and two **House Martins** at Pulborough Brooks on the 12th. A pair of **Garganey** was at Arlington Res on 8 Mar and the first **Little Ringed Plover** appeared at Medmerry on the 12th. The first arrivals of **Chiffchaffs** can be hard to detect given the presence of wintering birds, but there were 30 at Beachy Head on 3 Mar, with the first **Willow Warbler** being seen at Newhaven on the 13th. A **Yellow Wagtail** was at Sompting on the 17th. Following the inland bird in late winter, a **Ring Ouzel** was at Beachy Head on 23 Mar. At the end of March, an **Alpine Swift** graced Crawley on the 28-30th.

April to June

April was relatively dry and sunny, but a predominantly north-westerly airflow in May brought cooler and wetter conditions compared to average. June started wet, windy and cool, with the rest of the month being drier and generally sunny.

There was a further rush of first summer visitor sightings in April. A **Common Tern** was at Rye Hbr on the 1st, six **Arctic Terns** at Splash Point on the 9th and **Little Terns** at Splash Point and Beachy Head on the 12th. An **Osprey** was at Weir Wood Res on the 2nd, a **Nightingale** at Rudgwick on the 3rd, a **Hobby** on the 4th at East Dean and on the 5th a **Common Redstart** in Ashdown Forest, where there were also two **Common Cuckoos** on the 6th and a **Tree Pipit** on the 8th, the same day as the first **Common Swift** appeared at West Itchenor. **Pied Flycatchers** were at two sites on the 12th and **Whinchats** at multiple sites on the 13th, when there were two **Turtle Doves** at Sidlesham Ferry. Further species of warblers arrived: an early **Reed Warbler** at Selsey GC on 2 Apr was followed by a **Sedge Warbler** at Rye Hbr on the 3rd; the 6th saw the first **Common Whitethroat** in Ashdown Forest and on the 8th a **Garden Warbler** was at Netherfield; a **Grasshopper Warbler** reeled at Handcross on the 9th and a **Lesser Whitethroat** was at Beachy Head on the 15th. **Spotted Flycatchers** arrived later in April, with one on the 25th at the Knepp Estate and the first **Wood Warbler** on the 26th, whilst the first **Nightjar** was recorded on 9 May in Ashdown Forest and the first **Quail** only on 14 Jun, at Robertsbridge. Noteworthy numbers of spring migrants included 30 **Ring Ouzels** in April.

Sea-watching will be remembered as a remarkably poor year for both **Arctic** and **Pomarine Skuas**, with only 20 of the latter observed on spring passage. More positively, two **Roseate Terns** were seen off Selsey Bill on 4 May with three on 8 May, this species also being present at Rye Hbr during 2-12 May. A **Black Guillemot** was off Goring on 16 and 25 April. Other notable seawatching records included a **Great White Egret** flying east off Splash Point on 8 Apr, this species also being seen inland at Weir Wood Res on the 17th, whilst other individuals were at Rye on 18 Apr and 3 May, and in the Cuckmere Valley on 22-25 May.

Other exciting scarcer species in the period included a remarkable sequence of sightings of **Bee-eaters**: at Abbott's Wood, Hailsham (five on 19 Apr), Beachy Head (one on 15 May), Berwick (two on 29 May), no less than 10 at Little Dene (Glynde) on 22-23 Jun, three in Ashdown Forest on 26 Jun and one at Beachy Head on 30 Jun. Several observers encountered **Hoopoes**: there were seven at different sites during 14-22 Apr, with at least four **Wrynecks** also being found in April. Five **Red-rumped Swallows** were seen, with one at Wilmington on 21 Apr, one at West Rise Marsh on 2-3 May, two there on 4 May, one at Selsey Bill on 7 May and one at Littlehampton on the 8th. A **Red-footed Falcon** at Barcombe from 30 May to 5 Jun was a big attraction. More

fleeting sightings were a **Crane** circling over Weir Wood Res on 4 May and a **Black Kite** flying over Woodingdean on the 21st. Also of note were a **Water Pipit** at Cuckmere Haven on 9 Apr, a **Golden Oriole** at Beachy Head on 13 May, and a **Serin** at Selsey Bill on 17 May.

Scarcer waders included single **Black-winged Stilts** at Sidlesham Ferry during 13-19 Apr and 29 May to 7 Jun, this site also hosting a **Red-necked Phalarope** on 30 May. Much less expected was a **Terek Sandpiper** at Pagham Hbr on 21-22 Jun, but rarer still at this location was a **Hudsonian Whimbrel** on 9 Jun that stayed into July, the first for Sussex.

For a few species this period marked the end of the breeding season, with up to five pairs of **Goshawks** having nested.



Hudsonian Whimbrel, Pagham Hbr; June 2015 (Jake Gearty)

July to September

July started hot and sunny, with some record-breaking temperatures in the south-east of the UK, followed by cooler and more changeable weather; a pattern that continued throughout most of August and September, though with a warmer spell at the start of August. September saw periods of winds from the east, varying from south-east to north-east.

Of the uncommon breeding birds, there were 62 pairs of **Avocets** at Rye, Pett Level and Medmerly, the highest ever total. **Little Terns** had a very good year, with 42 pairs producing 38 young at Chichester, Pagham and Rye Harbours. **Sandwich Terns** also did well at Rye Hbr with 250 pairs producing 108 young. **Common Terns** fared much worse, with 179 pairs at Pett Level, Pagham and Rye Harbours producing very few young as a result of predation. Numbers of **Dartford Warblers** continue to increase, with up to 37 pairs present on Ashdown Forest and on the West Sussex heaths.

Very few scarce birds were recorded in July, with a **Squacco Heron** at Southeast on the 3rd being the outstanding find. At Beachy Head an **Alpine Swift** was present on the 1st and yet another **Bee-eater** on the 9th. At seawatching sites, good numbers of **Balearic Shearwaters** were found in the period 26 Jul to 14 Sep, with a total of 52-54 individuals. A juvenile **Black Stork** found at Rye on 12 Aug then remained around Bexhill-on-Sea until 5 Sep. Single **Great White Egrets** were at Winchelsea Beach on 19 Sep and at Thorney Deepes on 29 Sep, with a **Cattle Egret** being found at Rodmell on the 2nd. Six southbound **Honey-buzzards** were at the coast between 16 Aug and 19 Sep, with the star bird of prey being a juvenile **Pallid Harrier** found at The Burgh on 29 Sep and last seen on 10 Oct.

A variety of scarce waders included a **Pectoral Sandpiper** at Pagham Hbr on 18 Aug, followed by a long-staying individual at Medmerry and then Sidlesham Ferry from 7 to 19 Sep. A **Grey Phalarope** was at Sidlesham Ferry on 15-18 Sep and another at Cuckmere Haven on 20-25 Sep. A **Wilson's Phalarope** at Pett Level on 19 Sep was one of the major rarities of the autumn. Among commoner species, a total of 15 **Wood Sandpipers** at Medmerry on 24 Aug was noteworthy. On 11 Aug there were a record 803 **Mediterranean Gulls** in Fishbourne Channel (Chichester Hbr).

There was just one autumn **Hoopoe**, at East Preston from 31 Aug to 1 Sep, but it was an excellent autumn for **Wrynecks** with perhaps 30 birds, nearly all at coastal sites in August-September. Six **Red-backed Shrikes** were recorded in the same period, also mainly near the coast. An exciting find was a **Willow Tit** at Warnham on 20 Sep, a bird that had been trapped for ringing at this site in 2014. Heralding the later autumn and winter period, the first **Siberian Chiffchaff** was at Willingdon on 26 Sep.

Large gatherings of departing summer visitors included 15,000 **Barn Swallows** at Medmerry on 30 Sep, whilst on the 19th there were 7000 **House Martins** and 500 **Blackcaps** at Beachy Head. Also on the 19th, 1000 **Siskins** moved through Pett Level in five hours.

The last **Nightingale** was recorded on the early date of 31 Aug and September produced the final records of the year for **Nightjar** (4th), **Common Cuckoo** (6th), **Little Tern** (15th), **Turtle Dove** (21st), **Arctic Tern** (22nd), **Pied Flycatcher** (27th) and **Common Swift** (28th). Among arriving winter visitors in September were the first **Brent Geese** (8th), an early **Jack Snipe** on the 10th, **Fieldfares** (20th), **Redwing** (28th) and **Brambling** (29th).

October to December

October was a generally dry month, though with less sunshine than average, followed by a very mild but dull, sometimes windy November and an exceptionally mild December, the warmest in the UK since 1910.

October saw the departure of the last of most other summer visitors, with final records of **Garganey** (1st), **Grasshopper Warbler** (2nd), **Sedge Warbler** (8th), **Garden Warbler** and **Spotted Flycatcher** (10th), **Whinchat** (13th), **Sand Martin** and **Willow Warbler** (18th), **Lesser Whitethroat** (19th), **Hobby** (24th), **Common Tern** and **Tree Pipit** (25th), **Common Redstart** (26th) and **Ring Ouzel** (31st). A few species were last seen in November: a **Reed Warbler** on the 3rd, a lingering **Osprey** until the 8th, two **Common Whitethroats** on the 11th and **Northern Wheatear** on the 20th.

Among wintering species first arrivals included **Velvet Scoter** (11 Oct), **Great Northern Diver** (19 Oct) and **Bewick's Swan** (21 Nov).

Late autumn brings the promise of rarer species. On 27 Oct, the first **Short-toed Treecreeper** for Sussex was found and photographed at Beachy Head. October is often a good month for **Yellow-browed Warblers** and 2015 was no exception, with eight being seen from the 3rd

onwards. Three **Pallas's Warblers** were found at Beachy Head in late October. Later, another winter **Dusky Warbler** was found, following the bird in the early part of the year, this time at Climping on 9 Dec. Among other scarce small passerines, there was one **Bluethroat**, at Beachy Head on 25 Oct, a **Marsh Warbler** at Selsey on 20 Oct, and up to six **Water Pipits**, including inland at Arundel. A **Lapland Bunting** at Littlehampton West Beach on 23 Nov was the only one of the year.



Glossy Ibis, Pett Level, November 2015 (Malcolm Freeman)

The last quarter of the year saw an increase in **Great White Egrets**, with 10 being seen along the coast, as well up to seven **Caspian Gulls** from early November onwards and one **Iceland Gull** at Pett Level on 22 Nov. Highlights from the coast included a **Storm Petrel** at Splash Point on 5 Oct, whilst at Selsey Bill there were single **Little Auks** on 29 Oct and 17 Nov and a **Grey Phalarope** on 6 Dec. The only other scarce wader in the period was another **Pectoral Sandpiper**, this time at Pulborough Brooks on 17-25 Oct. From 26 Nov, a **Glossy Ibis** at Pett was a significant attraction for the rest of the year. Also in the east of the county, a **Rough-legged Buzzard** was at Scotney GP on 19-25 Oct, this site hosting a **Tundra Bean Goose** on 28 Dec. Other interesting geese included a family party of **Pale-bellied Brent Geese** in Pagham Hbr from 25 Nov to 15 Dec and two **Black Brants** in Chichester Hbr during 3-17 Dec.

A total of 199 **Common Crossbills** was counted during migration watches at Hastings from late September to the end of October. Impressive counts of commoner species in the period included 2100 **Redwings** over Sheepcote Valley in one hour on 14 Oct, whilst among the flocks of winter visitors at the end of the year were 150 **Bramblings** at West Dean Woods on 3 Dec. Four eastern race **Chiffchaffs** had returned by December. In the mild conditions, there was a **House Martin** at Lancing on 9 Dec and **Barn Swallows** at several sites until 13 Dec.



Mandarin Ducks, Weir Wood Res, April 2015 (Chris Hobden)

Classified Records for 2015

This list covers all species in Categories A and C of the BOU checklist with records of Category D species listed separately. An index to all the Category A and C species included in the Systematic List is given on pages 285-288.

The Category A and C species are again listed in the order announced by the BOU in October 2002 and include the further minor adjustments made by the BOU since that date.

Status descriptions

Preceding each species account, there is a brief description of its status in the county. These are regularly reviewed and amended to account for recent changes in status. The terms and their corresponding numerical ranges are as follows:

	Breeding pairs	Winter/passage
Very rare		1-10 records in total
Rare	Less than annual	Less than annual
Very scarce	1-10 per year	1-20 per year
Scarce	11-100	21-200
Fairly common	101-1000	201-2000
Common	1001-5000	2001-10,000
Very common	5001-30,000	10,001-60,000
Abundant	30,000+	60,000+

Seawatching records

Seawatching records were received from several sites and at five sites daily logs were maintained. The following table lists the hours watched in each month at the five locations for which this information was available:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
Selsey Bill	36	39	120	216	178	53	69	81	83	83	78	62	1099
Worthing	14	6	24	51	34	10	11	15	28	25	22	21	259
Telscombe Cliffs	6	5	5	12	6	1	-	-	-	7	13	13	67
Splash Point (Seaford)	3	5	19	79	45	1	-	10	-	1	1	4	167
Beachy Head	1	6	2	19	-	1	-	2	-	-	-	-	29

Wetland Bird Survey data

Many tables which are included in the accounts for wetland bird species refer to the monthly WeBS counts. Data were supplied by the Wetland Bird Survey (WeBS), a joint scheme of the British Trust for Ornithology, the Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust, the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds and the Joint Nature Conservation Committee (the last on behalf of the Countryside Council for Wales, the Environment and Heritage Service, English Nature and Scottish Natural Heritage). These counts are undertaken on a fixed date each month during the winter, and sometimes during the summer months as well. During 2015 the priority core count dates were: 18 Jan, 8 Feb, 8 Mar, 19 Apr, 17 May, 14 Jun, 19 Jul, 16 Aug, 13 Sep, 18 Oct, 15 Nov and 13 Dec. In the WeBS tables, "nc" signifies that the site was not visited, while "—" indicates that the site was visited but none of that species was seen. It is important to note that figures quoted in the tables may appear to contradict those in the text. This is because counts made on set dates may not reveal

higher or lower figures which feature throughout the remainder of each month. Prior to 1996 the sites displayed in these tables were randomly selected, invariably choosing sites with the highest counts. Between 1996 and 2003 the tables presented sites where any of the monthly counts held 5% or more of the county total for that month. However, the tables since the 2004 report show only sites where this figure is reached during the core (Sep–Mar) monthly counts.

Breeding Bird Survey data

Results from the Breeding Bird Survey (BBS) are presented on pages 196–199 as the numbers of 1-km squares in which each species was recorded at least once during the year. These figures provide a useful indication of the relative abundance of different species although they do not take account of differences in detectability between species. They do not provide a measure of absolute abundance because BBS surveys do not detect all of the birds present in a particular square. The BBS is organised by the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO), and jointly funded by the BTO, the Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC) and the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds.

Database report

Each species account in the systematic list is written by an individual using the records abstracted from the society's CoBRA (County Bird Recording Application) database. Throughout 2015 and into 2016, the new web-based database CoBRA2 (known as C2) has evolved and therefore the 2015 records are the first to have been processed completely within C2. As usual the dataset is a complex mixture of records received from the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO), from a miscellany of recording systems used by various groups and nature reserves and from individual observers.

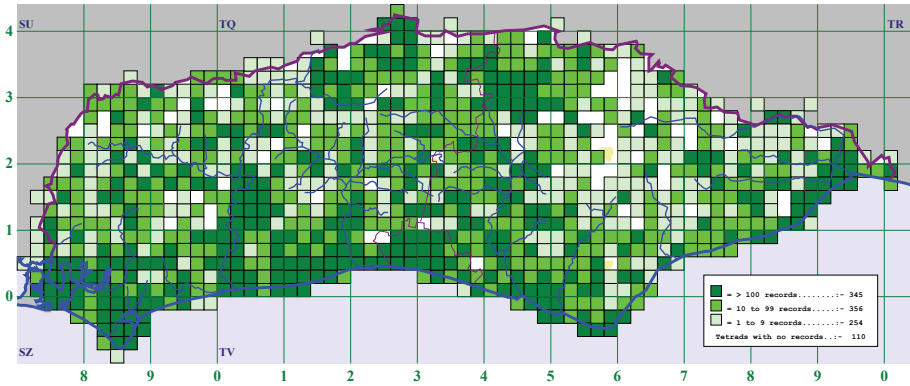
The total of nearly 281,000 records for 2015 sets another peak as the largest number of records admitted to the database for a single year and is approximately 15% greater than 2014. The trend of increasing online recording continued with over 88% (75% in 2014) of records being entered into web-based systems.

The greatest increase came from BirdTrack, an excellent system organised by the BTO in partnership with the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB), Birdwatch Ireland, the Scottish Ornithologists' Club and the Welsh Ornithological Society. A tiny portion of records are still submitted on paper, several being initially generated on computers. With the increasing difficulty in persuading volunteers to transfer these into a suitable electronic format for importing into CoBRA the society will need to consider ceasing to accept these general records other than in pre-arranged and exceptional circumstances.

About 1285 observers contributed to the records which form the basis for this report. As usual, the number of submissions varied considerably with the range from just one to over 10,000 records. Twenty-five observers recorded over 2000 records during 2015 and a further 32 birdwatchers provided over 1000 records. The records during the year came from 1795 sites with most, as expected, coming from the well-watched locations such as Chichester Hbr (7317), Pagham Hbr (22,993), Pulborough Brooks (13,488), Ashdown Forest (17,166), and Rye Hbr (8539).

The widespread recording is clearly shown in the following map which has been drawn using the same scale as in previous years. Just over 92% of the records provided grid references sufficiently precise to plot at tetrad level and this showed that nearly 89% of the county's tetrads received some recording attention in 2015 and when combined with 2014 records only 5% remained devoid of records. The pattern is similar to most years with the traditional "hole" in central East Sussex and, as usual, the recording hotspots, some of which are mentioned above, shown clearly. Throughout the systematic list reference is made to the number of tetrads in which

some of the more widespread species have been recorded; the fact that not all of the county's tetrads have been visited, and not all these for detailed recording, needs to be considered whilst reading these statements.



The number of records received for 2015 in each tetrad in Sussex.

Dark green symbol, >100 records; mid-green symbol, 10-99 records; and pale green symbol, 1-9 records.

With records from county-wide studies such as the Breeding Bird Survey and the Sussex Winter Bird Survey, coupled with the encouragement to record full lists in BirdTrack it is not surprising that the common and widespread species have again been the most recorded. The table shows the numbers of records generated in 2015 for thirty species; consider this mass of information has been distilled into a short summary for publishing in this report.

Woodpigeon	7686	Mallard	5219	Song Thrush	3685
Robin	7427	Jackdaw	4927	Coot	3442
Blackbird	7416	Duncock	4819	Mute Swan	3439
Carriion Crow	7017	Goldfinch	4791	Cormorant	3337
Blue Tit	6752	Chiffchaff	4693	Greenfinch	3225
Wren	6044	Black-headed Gull	4603	Great Spotted Woodpecker	3224
Magpie	5946	Common Starling	4351	Common Pheasant	3178
Herring Gull	5918	Moorhen	4245	Grey Heron	3098
Great Tit	5573	Common Buzzard	4139	Blackcap	2945
Chaffinch	5429	House Sparrow	4107	Barn Swallow	2917

As before some records have been lost as supporting notes describing rare and scarce species or unusual "out of season" sightings have not always been forthcoming. Additional details in records are useful, some text notes, an age or flight direction or pin-pointed grid reference add to the observation. Perhaps the most useful information is the inclusion of any evidence of breeding particularly for observations between April and July. Throughout this report authors have made statements about breeding based on poor information and readers need to consider this when studying this aspect in the systematic list. The following table shows a further decline in the proportion of records during the breeding season with some breeding evidence recorded. .

Year	No. of records (April–July)	Confirmed (%)	Probable (%)	Possible (%)	Total with breeding status (%)
2010	84,862	8.0	15.5	8.0	44.4
2011	87,600	9.5	14.1	16.3	39.9
2012	59,835	3.0	6.8	9.7	19.4
2013	62,771	2.4	5.4	10.8	18.5
2014	85,600	2.7	5.7	9.9	18.3
2015	105,871	2.6	5.4	8.3	16.3

As mentioned previously the proliferation of birding websites and personal blogs has revolutionised the dissemination of news, sightings, photographs and opinions. Although efforts have been made in 2015 to capture observations from the society's website and some blogs it is not possible to capture information into the database from most and therefore some interesting and important observations may be lost to the county avifauna. [John Newnham, Database Manager, August 2016]



Siberian Chiffchaff, Coldwaltham, January 2015 (Dorian Mason)

Distribution maps

The distribution maps for certain species include a range of symbols: large red circle, confirmed breeding; medium red circle, probable breeding; small red circle, seen in suitable breeding habitat; small open circle, all other records with grid references.

Mute Swan*Cygnus olor*

Fairly common resident. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern.

Mute Swans were recorded in 181 tetrads, 20% of the 923 tetrads from which records were received. The monthly WeBS counts at the principal sites were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
County total	421	402	391	340	566	434	247	494	391	437	437	546
Chichester Hbr	113	57	53	19	139	133	3	131	23	24	22	53
Pagham Hbr	4	2	20	20	46	44	40	27	28	25	7	2
Chichester GP	26	10	18	18	29	nc	nc	nc	11	14	14	22
Climping	3	4	-	-	14	-	17	37	34	18	1	1
Arun Valley	47	44	35	35	44	51	35	43	36	34	50	58
Arun (south of Arundel)	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	48	26	97	102	146
Upper Adur Levels	66	51	52	10	7	6	26	22	24	7	38	51
Ouse Valley	13	18	10	13	4	2	3	2	2	15	15	36
Eastbourne Lakes	34	35	36	13	4	7	7	7	46	37	36	36
Pevensey Levels	44	48	55	37	51	28	11	28	44	52	51	38
Rye Bay	15	64	47	61	181	134	67	103	50	26	44	22

Notable counts in addition to the WeBS in the first winter period included 100 at Bosham on 1 Jan, 68 at Barnham on 7 Jan, 75 at Bognor Regis on 30 Jan and 120 on the Arun at Ford on 22 Feb.

Breeding was confirmed in 33 tetrads, and possible in a further 11. The first report of a nest with eggs was at Birdham Marina on 10 Mar, while the first cygnets noted were seven at Widewater (Lancing) on 1 May. Post-breeding aggregations in the summer were largest at Chichester Hbr, with non-WeBS counts of 129 and 135 at Fishbourne on 5 Jun and 14 Jul respectively and 120 at Dell Quay on the 21st. The highest mid-summer count from elsewhere was 71 at Rye Hbr on 14 Jun.

In the second winter period the only notable non-WeBS counts were 120 at Tortington on 19 Dec and 90 at Jury's Gap on the 29th. The highest individual count of the year was in the December WeBS when 146 were recorded on the R Arun south of Arundel, a site not surveyed for the WeBS for the previous two years. [LDC]

Bewick's Swan*Cygnus columbianus*

Scarce winter visitor and very scarce passage migrant. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern.

Bewick's Swans were recorded in just nine tetrads. The WeBS counts at the principal sites were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar		Nov	Dec
County total	30	-	-		-	4
Arun Valley	30	-	-		-	4

In the first winter period numbers were about average for January and roughly twice as high as in 2014, but were poor in the second winter period.

Although only 30 were counted during the WeBS on 19 Jan numbers in the Arun Valley had been consistently higher during the first fortnight of the year, peaking at 40 on 4 Jan at Offham. Numbers declined after the 16th and the missing birds were not recorded elsewhere in the county. However, some reappeared later as 35 were counted at Burpham on 31 Jan, 37 on 10 Feb and 26 on the 20th but there were only two on the 25th, the final sighting in the Arun Valley. Nine at Brightham's Fm (Partridge Green) on 25 Feb, eight days earlier than the 10-year average date, was the final count for the period.

The first returning birds were three on Pulborough Brooks on 21 Nov, eight days earlier than in 2014 but ten days later than the 10-year average date. However, although one extra bird arrived on 25 Nov, numbers in the Arun Valley stayed at four until 14 Dec. Perhaps the same four adults were then noted at Henfield on 26 Dec, two were seen at Pulborough Brooks on the 29th and, finally, six, all adults, at North Stoke (Arun Valley) on the 31st. [LDC]

Whooper Swan

Cygnus Cygnus

Very scarce winter visitor and passage migrant. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern.

An adult with three juveniles wintered in the Lidsey Rife (Barnham) area until 30 Mar (BGRI, ARK). They were first seen here on 2 Nov 2014 and were the only records for the year. [JAH]

Bean Goose

Anser fabilis

A scarce winter visitor and passage migrant. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern.

All records were of the Tundra form *A.f.fabalis*. There were definitely two, possibly three, birds present in the west of the county in the first winter period, with two long-stayers generating a lot of reports before departing relatively late in the spring. The bird present around Pagham Hbr in late 2014 was relocated on 2 Jan at Sidlesham Ferry and remained in the area until the 27th. It was then relocated at Chichester GPs on 1 Feb (BGRI) and was seen intermittently there until the late date of 26 Apr. Another individual seen on Beeding Brooks on 2 Jan (DB) could have been the bird at Pulborough Brooks on 24 and 26 Jan (LJ, AK) and then found at Warnham LNR on 21 Feb (JE *et al.*) that remained there until 23 Mar. The only report from the second winter period was of one seen at Scotney GP on 28 Dec (DC *et al.*). (AH)

White-Fronted Goose

Anser albifrons

Scarce winter visitor and passage migrant. European race (A. a. albifrons) is a red listed species of high conservation concern.

Surprisingly, there were no records until 17 Jan, when four birds were seen at Lewes Brooks, remaining there until 22 Mar. The following day 35 were seen heading east at Rye Hbr and, on the 20th, 17 seen at Pett Level might have been part of the 35 as, although numbers in the Rye Bay area fluctuated, there was a peak count of 35 there on 8 Feb and still 32 on the 20th. At Scotney Court GP this species was recorded on several dates between 25 Jan and 7 Feb with a peak of 27 on 31 Jan; these may, of course, have been part of the same flock in Rye Bay at that time. The only

other site where this species was recorded was Cuckmere Haven where a single bird (possibly the one seen there in December 2014) was present between 23 Jan and 5 Apr; this might have been the bird seen at Rye Hbr on 16 and 22 May, the final spring record.

A single bird (possibly that documented above and/or possibly the same individual that roamed the county as a first year bird in 2014) was at Medmerry on 3 Oct, remaining in the area until the year's end. The only second winter records were of 4 W over Thorney Island on 25 Nov; four on Lewes Brooks on the 9 and 31 Dec; possibly the same four at Scotney Court GP on the 28th and 29th; a single bird on Pevensey Levels on 13 Dec and another at Pagham Hbr on the 31st. [AH]

Greylag Goose

Anser anser

Increasingly common introduced resident and winter visitor; scarce passage migrant.

The monthly WeBS counts from the principal sites were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
County total	513	1074	575	276	280	537	532	2027	1070	1226	753	1566
Chichester GP	118	1	20	11	29	nc	nc	nc	-	3	-	14
Arun Valley	44	19	29	58	50	25	11	81	4	249	61	49
Upper Adur Levels	41	100	54	-	-	-	1	69	-	-	16	100
Slaugham MP	-	-	3	nc	1	2	nc	nc	nc	252	-	-
Horsted Keynes Lakes	nc	-	51	-	4	-	-	-	-	-	nc	-
Ardingly Res	60	170	70	4	4	-	32	45	1	2	310	430
Weir Wood Res	2	88	2	6	-	10	21	132	364	186	150	145
Ouse Valley	58	122	13	6	2	-	-	-	70	100	110	152
Barcombe Res	-	-	-	10	5	-	106	173	266	-	6	-
Pevensey Levels	70	7	31	2	8	-	23	-	8	74	6	93
Rye Bay	93	552	260	118	119	380	187	1360	322	320	48	572

It was another good year for this species, including a new record WeBS count for the county of 2027 in August. Although the Rye Bay area remains the stronghold the population in the rest of the county continues to consolidate. The WeBS counts also demonstrate the mobility of this species with numbers at any site varying widely between successive months. The peak counts at key sites during the first winter period were 400 at Brighthams Fm (Partridge Green) on 15 Jan, 350 at Scotney GP on 2 Jan; 201 at Beeding Brooks on 25 Jan and 250 at Pett Level on 8 Feb. Reports from seawatching sites were restricted to 2 E past Beachy Head on 14 Feb and 4 E past Telscombe Cliffs on 16 Mar.

Breeding was confirmed in 14 tetrads and was probable in a further three. The species stronghold during the breeding season is Rye Hbr where at least 16 pairs nested. At Arundel WWT there were seven broods of goslings and at Chichester GP a pair and eight young were seen on 19 Apr. The earliest date when fledged young were seen was on 18 Apr at Plashett Lakes (Isfield).

The first obvious post-breeding count was of 189 at Pulborough Brooks on 31 Jul; peak counts at other traditional sites in the autumn included 314 at Rye Hbr on 12 Sep, 266 at Barcombe Res on the 13th and peaking at 450 at Weir Wood Res on the 14th. In the second winter period counts at only three sites exceeded 300 birds; 430 at Ardingly Res on 7 Dec, 305 at Pett Level on the 13th and 300 at Scotney GP on the 29th. [AH]

Canada Goose*Branta canadensis*

Common and increasing introduced resident and partial migrant.

The monthly WeBS counts from the principal sites were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
County total	3931	1797	804	538	372	649	427	2007	2158	2597	2999	3303
Chichester Hbr	100	2	7	16	8	20	15	2	159	-	128	108
Medmerry	-	3	3	2	4	4	-	234	420	312	188	108
Petworth Park	-	33	nc	33	nc	145	79	nc	212	-	4	6
Arun Valley	1806	178	77	102	67	31	33	348	72	1308	724	1111
Upper Adur Levels	310	20	20	-	-	-	-	28	-	-	-	5
Eastlands Estate	60	92	40	25	15	16	36	-	3	-	-	37
Ifield MP	15	nc	61	nc	nc	64	nc	nc	nc	25	41	1
Ditchling Common	40	nc	45	37	33	47	nc	nc	nc	-	nc	37
Ouse Valley	154	227	48	5	-	-	-	-	-	250	175	252
Barcombe Res	-	-	7	-	1	10	11	290	99	5	350	-
Arlington Res	57	23	3	2	3	22	13	517	628	1	1	9
Cuckmere Haven	555	140	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	19	370	378
Eastbourne Lakes	34	17	71	32	52	112	63	12	138	1	-	14
Pevensey Levels	266	40	62	35	12	7	-	18	-	166	109	301
Bewl Water	201	477	56	nc	nc	nc	nc	28	50	50	478	355
Wadhurst Park	77	30	nc	5	nc	40	nc	nc	218	210	1	12
Rye Bay	76	351	116	35	24	35	85	206	37	77	293	302

The January WeBS total of 3931 exceeded the preceding December's county record of 3537 birds. The biggest counts were, unsurprisingly, in January, with peaks at Pulborough Brooks of 837 on the 19th and 600 at Cuckmere Haven on the 22nd. The species is remarkably rare at seawatching sites, with just two records from Worthing in March, of 4 E on the 13th and 3 W on the 27th, and one from Selsey Bill in April of 1 E on the 17th.

Breeding was confirmed in 21 tetrads and was probable in a further 14. The first record of a nest with eggs was from Arundel WWT on 19 Apr and the first goslings noted at Troutbeck (Eridge) on the 28th. At Arundel WWT there were eight broods of goslings of from three to eight on 10 and 13 May. At Rye Hbr only one brood was recorded this year despite up to 14 birds being recorded there in May. In contrast to winter gatherings, the species is thinly spread during the breeding season and very many pairs are very probably unrecorded.

The first notable post-breeding flock was of 303 noted at Bewl Water on 21 Jul, but it was not until mid August that high numbers were noted elsewhere, such as 517 at Arlington Res on 16 Aug and 600 at Pulborough Brooks on the 26th. Numbers at traditional sites increased markedly during the autumn months; the highest counts were 304 at Ifield MP on 20 Sep, 550 at Medmerry (a site which has become an important post-breeding site in the last few years) on the 21st, 628 at Arlington Res on the 19th and a peak count of 1000 at Pulborough Brooks on 22 Oct. As the post-moult dispersal took place the only area where very large numbers were recorded was the Arun Valley where totals in excess of 1000 were recorded on several dates, peaking at 3000 on 30 Nov. [AH]

Barnacle Goose*Branta leucopsis*

Very scarce winter visitor; often in severe weather; and an increasingly common feral resident. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern.

The year started with a flock of 31 birds in Pagham Hbr on 1 Jan which remained until the following day before departing west. As ever, their origin was the cause of debate, but they certainly had the potential to be wild birds. The feral flock at Scotney GP from 2014 numbered 120 on 1 Jan, 116 on 8 Feb, and was not recorded there in March. The similar flock at Barcombe Res increased from 60 on 19 Jan to a peak of 71 birds on 8 Feb of which 66 remained on 16 Mar. There were five at Cuckmere Haven between 5 Jan and 2 Mar and one intermittently there until 1 May. A single bird, which might have wild credentials, was associating with Brent Geese around the Pagham Hbr area from 5 Mar to at least the 19th. Elsewhere single individuals were noted at nine well-spread sites. None was seen after early May.

In the summer, seven birds were noted at Chichester GP on 9 Jul and ten were seen at Barcombe Res on 16 Aug. During the autumn months the feral flock at Barcombe Res became re-established peaking at 62 on 13 Dec. Likewise, the similar flock at Scotney GP peaked at 70 on 29 Dec. The only autumn birds with any prospect of being wild were four at Thorney Deeps on 25 Nov, though keeping company with the Canada Geese did not enhance their credentials. [AH]

Brent Goose*Branta bernicla*

Very common winter visitor and passage migrant; a few oversummer. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern.

The monthly WeBS counts at the principal sites were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
County total	17,576	15,466	8952	58	14	1	9	10	319	7116	10,199	9008
Chichester Hbr	16,446	11,540	7366	34	13	1	9	10	319	6984	8939	7720
Medmerry	306	382	133	2	1	-	-	-	-	-	323	713
Pagham Hbr	232	2109	1441	7	-	-	-	-	-	125	928	404
Climping	550	1400	nc	-	-	nc	-	-	-	-	-	150

Following on from a very good autumn in 2014, the January WeBS count was even higher at 17,576, with Chichester Hbr accounting for 16,446 (93.5%) of that total. As usual, the two western harbours and adjacent farmland accounted for most of the large flocks, though Climping Gap is an increasingly important wintering area, with a peak count of 1400 birds on 9 Feb. The only other site to have a regular flock was Pett Level, with counts of up to 60 noted regularly through January and February. One, with Greylag Geese at Brighthams Fm (Partridge Green) on 15 Jan, was the only inland record in the first winter period, although in March there were single birds, either wandering or migrating, at Pulborough Brooks on the 2nd, Bewl Water on the 6th, Wisborough Green, where three flew over also on the 6th, and two at Darwell Res on the 15th.

The monthly totals from the regular seawatching sites were as shown in the table below. Although observers had recorded 70 E at Worthing on 7 Jan and 195 E at Telscombe Cliffs on 13 Jan, the first suggestion of spring migration proper was of 75 E past Splash Point (Seaford) on 14 Feb and 80 E there on the 16th. However, passage numbers remained low until 8 Mar when

751 E passed Splash Point followed by other groups on an almost daily basis with 595 on the 17th and 1350 on the 23rd. There was a period in early April, between the 7th and the 12th, of prolonged migration during which 3806 birds passed Splash Point, including 1557 on the 10th. Similarly, 1323 E were recorded at Selsey Bill including 787 E on the 10th. After that, numbers remained low but 1101 E past Splash Point on the 24th was notable.

		Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May		Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Peak counts
Selsey Bill	E	58	47	1047	2080	28		2	106	36	249	788 on 10 Apr
	W	39	135	97	7	1		172	1189	483	181	
Worthing Beach	E	118	-	812	1472	2		-	3	48	152	666 on 10 Apr
	W	7	-	70	18	-		21	21	952	65	
Telscombe Cliffs	E	209	3	77	360	28		nc	8	16	153	332 on 9 Apr
	W	4	-	-	-	-		nc	3	165	9	
Splash Point	E	14	176	3343	5442	100		nc	-	-	561	1350 on 23 Mar 1557 on 10 Apr
	W	-	-	-	-	-		nc	-	-	-	
Beachy Head	E	6	50	42	1885	nc		nc	nc	nc	nc	792 on 9 Apr
	W	-	3	-	-	nc		nc	nc	nc	nc	

The first intimations of return passage were quite early, with 2 W past Selsey Bill on 8 Sep followed by 9 W there on the 11th and another 22 W the following day. The WeBS count on 26 Sep revealed 319 birds back in Chichester Hbr, and thereafter numbers gradually increased, though totals in the second winter period were below that of the first, with a low percentage of juveniles suggesting a less successful breeding season than the previous year.



Pale-bellied Brent Geese, Pagham Hbr, December 2015 (Alan Kitson)

As usual, the vast majority of the winter population was in the far west of the county, but the Rye Hbr/Pett Level area consistently held a small population, peaking at 100 birds on 22 Nov but declining through December. There were few inland records during the autumn, but 35 flew SSW over Troutbeck (Eridge) on 11 Oct, 80 over Cedar Fm (Flimwell) on the 28th, seven flew over Weir Wood Res on 2 Nov and one was there on 15-16 Nov. One was at Lewes Brooks on 16 and 22 Nov and six were at Pulborough Brooks on 14 Dec.

There were only two records of the Pale-bellied Brent Goose *B.b.hrota*, in the first half of the year. One was seen at Pett Level on 8 Mar and another at Medmerry on 18 Apr. In the autumn, two were recorded at Church Norton on 1 Nov, a family group of five took up residence in the east side of Pagham Hbr between 25 Nov and 15 Dec and a single bird was seen at Pett Level on 29 Nov and 6 Dec.

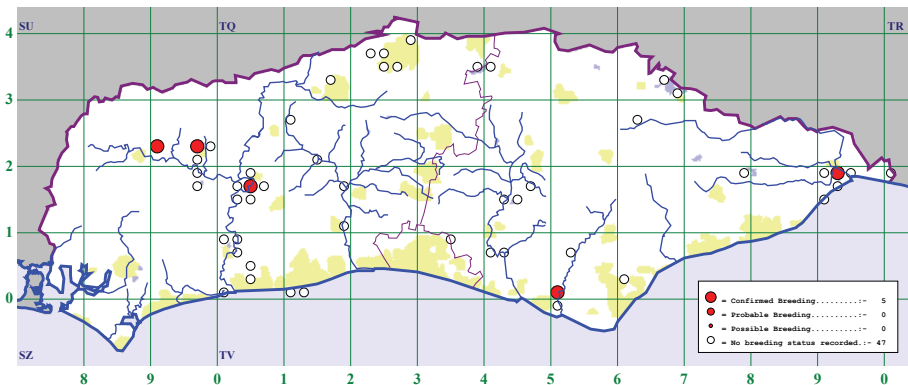
Two records for Black Brants *B.b.nigricans* were accepted by SOSRC. One was at Apuldrum (Chichester Hbr) between 21 Jan and 10 Feb (OM *et al.*) and two birds were in the same area from 3 to 17 Dec (BFF, DM, DIS). There was also an interesting bird seen and photographed in Pagham Hbr on 5 Mar which was accepted by SOSRC as a Black Brant x Dark-bellied Brent Goose hybrid (DC). [AH]

Egyptian Goose

Alopochen aegyptiaca

Very scarce introduced resident; bred for the first time in 2000.

During the year birds were recorded in 52 tetrads as shown in the map below; this was yet another large increase in the number of locations.



This species can now be expected to be recorded annually, albeit occasionally and in small numbers, in most of the main river valley wetlands and at the larger reservoirs, as well as at smaller pools in the Cowdray Park (Midhurst) and Petworth Park areas. An interesting coastal record in early spring was of two flying east past Goring Gap on 22 Mar.

Breeding was confirmed in five tetrads, three in West Sussex and two in East Sussex. As is often the case with this species, the breeding season started early, with five goslings at Charleston Reedbed on 21 Mar. Successful breeding was also recorded at Cowdray Park, where there were eight goslings on 6 Apr and at Petworth Park, where there were seven goslings on 20 Apr. At Rye Hbr a brood of 11 goslings was recorded on 11 May. Two goslings seen at Pulborough Brooks

on 12 Jul may have been raised elsewhere. The county breeding population appears to be still in single figures in terms of number of pairs.

The peak count in the second half of the year was an impressive 24 birds at Petworth Park on 24 Aug. In the autumn, nine birds flew west past Goring Gap and Climping on 20 Oct. [AT]

Common Shelduck

Tadorna tadorna

Fairly common winter visitor and scarce passage migrant; scarce breeding species. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern.

The monthly WeBS counts from the principal sites were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
County total	884	522	557	506	311	209	83	59	29	51	278	474
Chichester Hbr	572	381	272	137	85	59	12	27	-	33	194	248
Medmerry	16	30	40	17	41	38	8	16	4	8	9	21
Pagham Hbr	207	25	134	213	87	45	9	-	10	8	53	97
Arun Valley	34	49	56	45	24	11	17	2	-	-	12	46
Rye Bay	37	24	51	91	66	53	37	12	12	-	8	62

Although the January WeBS counts were the highest since 2011 they were still lower than the average of 917 for the last ten years and the counts in both February and March were the lowest on record for these months, so the prolonged decline of Shelduck as a wintering species continued.

The situation was little better in the breeding season. Breeding was confirmed in 14 tetrads and was probable in a further four and the first ducklings were seen in the fourth week of May. Ducklings (largest counts in brackets) were seen at Thorney Deepes (6), West Wittering (3), Medmerry (20 from three broods), Pagham Harbour (13), Arundel WWT (3), Pulborough Brooks (16 from three broods), Rodmell (10), Lower Cuckmere (4), Pett Level (7), Rye Hbr (1), Playden (10), Rye Saltings (9) and East Guldeford (22 from three broods). At Rye Hbr, despite 54 adults being recorded in May, no small chicks were seen.

Wintering birds do not start to return from their moult migration in numbers until late November, and the WeBS counts for the last three months of the year were all lower than the averages for the last ten years. The December count was the lowest on record for that month.

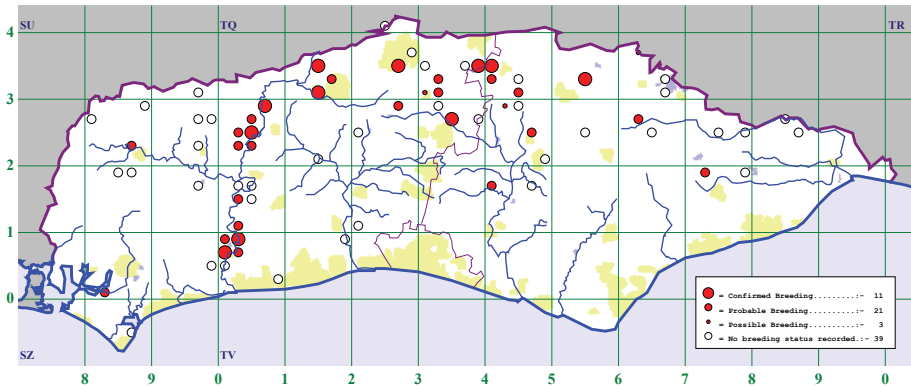
As usual, only small numbers were seen passing seawatching sites in almost every month. Peak passage was between March and May but the highest count was 11 E at Splash Point (Seaford) on 9 Apr from totals of 28 E and 2 W. Return westwards passage in the second winter period was also light and the highest count at both Selsey Bill and Telscombe Cliffs was 14 W on 22 Nov. [AT]

Mandarin Duck

Aix galericulata

Scarce introduced resident.

There were records from 71 tetrads as shown in the map below, a further increase, but this should not be taken as an indication of an increase in range or population as this species is most probably under-recorded in its Wealden woodland heartland. Peak counts in the first winter period were disappointing; the largest counts were of 27 at Wadhurst on 6 Jan, 19 at Arundel WWT on the 18th and 17 at Duncton on the 10th.



Breeding was confirmed in only ten tetrads, but was probable in a further 21 with slightly more than half noted in West Sussex. Weir Wood Res retains what is probably the most impressive recorded breeding population, where several nestboxes were occupied including one on 7 Apr found to contain 46 eggs. Ducklings were also seen at the Waterwoods (Arundel), Arundel WWT, Warnham LNR, Tilgate Forest, Lindfield and Troutbeck. At two breeding sites females were seen on eggs in owl boxes.

Numbers in the later months were also disappointing. The highest autumn counts were 17 at Arundel WWT on 14 Sep, 14 at Weir Wood Res on the 12th and ten at Powdermill Res on 23 Oct. In the second winter period the highest counts were of 20 at Weir Wood Res on 7 Nov, 12 at Shillinglee Lake (Plaistow) on 14 Dec and 12 at the Waterwoods on the 20th.

Away from the core inland sites, one was at Birdham on 9 Feb with two there on 18 Mar, three were at Pagham Hbr on 6 Mar, one was at Medmerry on 22 Apr, one was at Ferring on 10 Nov, and four were in the Birdham area on 8 Dec. [AT]

Eurasian Wigeon

Anas penelope

Common winter visitor; scarce on observed passage. Very scarce in summer; does not breed. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern.

The monthly WeBS counts from the principal sites were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
County total	11,775	7841	3645	31	5	3	1	48	1007	4970	6085	6461
Chichester Hbr	1666	1521	1098	5	5	-	-	48	444	2191	1336	739
Pagham Hbr	839	626	386	-	-	-	-	-	280	627	586	967
Arun Valley	3987	2231	1213	14	-	2	1	-	128	749	1552	1742
Ouse Valley	608	593	76	-	-	-	-	-	-	45	157	354
Rye Bay	3249	1987	542	10	-	1	-	-	151	928	1973	1912

The January WeBS count was just over 11% higher than the 10-year average of 10,459 and 2100 at Scotney GP on 20 Jan was the highest single site count of the year. Away from the principal sites, there was an impressive 750 at Iford Brooks on 22 Jan. However, numbers had slumped by the time of the February WeBS count which was significantly lower than the 10-year

average (cf. 10,105) as was that for March (cf. 4170). The last three figure count of the year was 100 at Pagham Hbr on 26 Mar; most birds had left the county by the end of that month.

As usual, a very small number of non-breeding birds summered in the county, mainly in Chichester Hbr, the Arun Valley and the Rye Bay area, but with no more than four birds at any one site. An unusual midsummer record was 5 W past Selsey Bill on 25 Jul.

In the autumn, the first possible returning birds were five at Pulborough Brooks on 6 Aug but, more likely, were the six at Pagham Hbr on 23 Aug and the 46 at Thorney Island two days later. The first three figure count was 120 at Pagham Hbr on 8 Sep.

WeBS counts in the second winter period were slightly above the 10-year averages in each of September, October and November but in December they barely increased and were significantly lower than the 10-year average of 9325, providing a disappointing end to the year. The year's most unusual record was one in Queens Park (Brighton) from 22 Oct onwards.

This is a species that, at most seawatching sites, is usually conspicuous by its relative infrequency being seen in just single figures during spring and autumn, but there was some moderate counts at Selsey Bill in the final third of the year, with 54 W and 31 E on 27 Sep, 40 W and 7 E on 30 Sep, 71 W and 22 E on 1 Oct, 83 W and 15 E on 22 Nov, and 40 W and 10 E on 29 Dec. [AT]

Gadwall

Anas strepera

Very scarce breeder and scarce summer non-breeder; fairly common winter visitor; scarce on observed passage. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern.

The monthly WeBS counts from the principal sites were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
County total	1009	711	267	158	94	102	43	198	319	279	383	588
Chichester Hbr	125	109	9	-	2	-	-	-	4	17	40	73
Chichester GP	97	38	12	4	11	nc	nc	nc	9	8	39	36
Burton & Chingford Ponds	24	16	10	6	1	-	-	8	nc	27	1	4
Wicks Fm Res	26	16	4	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	42	38
Arun Valley	103	114	49	42	27	11	8	52	79	50	45	117
Barcombe Res	42	10	-	-	2	3	-	-	-	4	17	35
Eastbourne Lakes	86	13	9	2	-	-	-	-	11	5	2	71
Bewl Water	93	100	21	nc	nc	nc	nc	-	3	3	61	57
Rye Bay	303	257	116	101	43	81	35	131	202	147	109	118

The January WeBS count was only just short of the record for that month (1021 in 2014) and well above the 10-year average of 733. Numbers in all months to November (except July) were also slightly above the 10-year averages; the April count was the highest on record but that in December was the lowest for that month since 2008. High counts additional to the WeBS included 150 at Scotney GP on 2 Jan, 120 at Chichester GP on 20 Jan and 90 there on 4 Feb, and 70 at Swanbourne Lake (Arundel) on 24 Feb.

However, the high numbers did not translate into proven breeding success. Breeding was confirmed at only three sites but was probable at a further 13. Ducklings were recorded at Pagham Hbr on 8 Jun, at Waltham Brooks on 21 Jul and Burton MP on 5 Aug. However, relatively high

counts were maintained at Pett Level through late spring and summer with 32 there on 15 and 17 May, 36 on 14 Jun and 47 on 16 Aug, numbers which doubtless helped raise the August and September WeBS counts to their highest ever levels.

The few which were recorded at the principal seawatching sites were mostly in spring, with a maximum day count of 6 E at Splash Point (Seaford) on 9 Apr. [AT]

Eurasian Teal

Anas crecca

Rare breeder and scarce summering non-breeder; common winter visitor and fairly common on observed passage. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern.

The monthly WeBS counts from the principal sites were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
County total	7239	4242	2337	403	8	26	28	220	1328	1888	4171	4208
Chichester Hbr	1651	1544	586	-	1	-	1	82	370	219	934	872
Medmerry	380	370	89	58	6	-	-	33	53	280	817	553
Pagham Hbr	551	114	211	63	-	8	2	29	314	416	258	710
Arun Valley	2847	1048	810	181	1	5	8	5	324	413	1330	1052
Rye Bay	958	547	325	54	-	13	14	55	220	383	526	509

The WeBS count in January was the highest ever for that month; it was only slightly lower than the all-time record of 7842 in February 2001 and was considerably higher than the 10-year average of 5333. The counts in February, March, April, October and November also slightly exceeded the 10-year averages for those months. A significant number additional to the WeBS counts was an impressive 450 on Lewes Brooks on 17 Jan.

Only small numbers were recorded on eastwards migration in spring; the largest numbers were noted at Splash Point (Seaford) with a total of 38 E in April. Peak passage occurred on 8 and 9 Apr with 28 E at Splash Point and 14 E at Birling Gap respectively. Presumably the majority migrated at night-time.

The last three figure counts of the spring were 100 at Waltham Brooks on 23 Mar and 100 at Pulborough Brooks on the 25th. However, there were still 30 at Pulborough Brooks on 4 May and 20 on 7 May, with small numbers continuing to show, albeit sporadically, in the Arun Valley and the coastal harbours throughout the summer but with breeding not confirmed at any site.

Return passage was first noted from 23 Aug with 3 W past Worthing followed by 5 W past Selsey Bill on the 25th and, by the 28th, 82 had assembled at Thorney Deeps. The first three-figure count of the autumn was 123 at Pulborough Brooks on 7 Sep. The counts at Medmerry of 600 on 31 Oct and no less than 755 on 16 Nov were encouraging for such a recently created site. Seawatching totals in the second winter period were typically low, with totals of 11 E and 14 W at Selsey Bill in November being the highest counts. [AT]

Mallard*Anas platyrhynchos*

Common resident and winter visitor. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern.

The monthly WeBS counts from the principal sites were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
County total	3534	3155	2213	1751	1612	1934	1916	2943	4052	3772	3656	3698
Chichester Hbr	355	276	234	37	73	44	28	32	186	397	158	183
Medmerry	103	26	42	50	70	33	26	40	86	90	282	129
Arun Valley	677	759	648	678	597	616	453	891	970	782	796	828
Angmering Decoy Ponds	95	94	nc	46	28	350	380	243	369	270	157	150
Bewl Water	305	244	113	nc	nc	nc	nc	364	331	227	185	122
Rye Bay	568	472	129	139	130	223	261	588	733	268	459	392

Mallard numbers usually peak in the autumn and this year the peak of 4096 birds occurred in September. The Arun Valley, as usual, held the largest resident population (of about 500 birds).

Mallards were widely distributed, being recorded in 379 tetrads (39% of the 964 tetrads wholly within Sussex). During the SWBS they were recorded in 44 of the 136 1-km squares surveyed (32%) during the Jan/Feb survey, but in only 29 of the 115 1-km squares surveyed (25%) during the Nov/Dec survey. However, in the BBS they were recorded in 104 of the 176 1-km squares surveyed (59%). Since the SWBS and BBS surveys cover the same 1-km squares this indicates a dispersal of birds to breeding sites for the breeding season.

Breeding was confirmed in 45 tetrads and was probable in a further 35. The first record of confirmed breeding was of ducklings seen at Warnham LNR on 30 Mar; records of successful breeding continued through April into July. Broods of 14 ducklings were recorded at Arundel WWT on 19 Apr and at Thorney Deepes on 15 May, and on 17 May broods were recorded of 12 at Filsham LNR and 10 at Knepp. At Rye Hbr, 25 nests or broods were recorded.

During the summer the usual concentration of eclipse birds occurred at Angmering Decoy Ponds, where 380 were recorded in July, with a further 132 similar birds at the nearby Poling Fishing Ponds.

Seawatching records were typically low with a total of only 14 birds being recorded across the whole year (10 E and 4 W) all except two in March. The peak day count was 7 E past Beachy Head on 23 Mar. [JRC]

Pintail*Anas acuta*

Fairly common winter visitor and scarce on observed passage; occasionally summers and has bred. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern.

The monthly WeBS counts from the principal sites were as shown in the table below. The trend of declining numbers continued, with the peak WeBS count of 452 (in January) being the lowest since 1988/89. This reflects the national picture where peak Pintail numbers have declined by more than half since the all-time high of 2005-6. WeBS counts at Pagham Hbr were particularly low in the first winter period. Both Pagham Hbr and the Arun Valley remain sites of national importance with their 5-year average of peak WeBS counts being 320 and 370 respectively

(national threshold 290). Counts not reflected in the WeBS totals included 27 at Rye Hbr on 7 Jan, the highest count from East Sussex during the year.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
County total	452	410	229	-	-	-	-	-	18	163	302	360
Chichester Hbr	67	296	82	-	-	-	-	-	-	27	91	67
Medmerry	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	110	19
Pagham Hbr	75	-	82	-	-	-	-	-	16	121	74	221
Arun Valley	302	91	10	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	15	36
Eastbourne Lakes	-	4	22	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Pevensey Levels	-	-	21	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Rye Bay	-	17	6	-	-	-	-	-	-	15	-	4

During early January Pintails were fairly evenly spread between Pulborough Brooks and Pagham Hbr but as wet weather set in in the first half of the month most spent the second half of the month at Pulborough and Amberley Brooks as water levels rose there. As the weather dried up numbers in the Arun Valley thinned out in early February and by the middle of the month the bulk of the county population relocated to Chichester Hbr, although between 26 Feb and 1 Mar 30 to 60 birds were briefly present at Henfield Levels after a wet spell at the end of the month. On 8 Mar WeBS counts of 22 at Eastbourne Lakes and 21 at Pevensey Levels were probably departing birds, and thereafter numbers across the county started to decline rapidly, except at Chichester Hbr where 54 were still present at Thorney Island on 21 Mar. From 26 Mar only single-figure numbers remained in the county. By May just a pair was present at Pulborough Brooks until the 21st (although there was no suggestion of attempted breeding). During the summer single birds were recorded on one day only at Pulborough Brooks on 11 Jun, and at the reservoir on Marsh Fm (Yapton) on 20 Jul.

The first record of returning birds was of two at Pulborough Brooks on 25 Aug followed by eight at Pagham Hbr on the 27th. Numbers at Pagham Hbr grew slowly to 30 on 8 Sep and 40 on the 25th before increasing to 121 on 18 Oct and then 221 on 13 Dec. Although the WeBS counts in the Arun Valley were very low in the second winter period there was a non-WeBS count of 200 birds at Pulborough Brooks on 10 Nov. There were also 120 birds at Medmerry on the 26 Nov. The usual movement of birds between the western harbours and the Arun Valley was clearly evident again in this second winter period.

Eastwards spring passage was very light with only 20 E recorded in February and March with a peak count of 16 E at Splash Point (Seaford) on 11 Mar. Movements recorded in the autumn and second winter period at Selsey Bill involved birds passing in both directions with totals of 18 E and 30 W. [JRC]

Garganey

Anas querquedula

Scarce passage migrant; very scarce summer non-breeder and rare breeder. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern.

The first birds of the year were a pair at Arlington Res on 8 Mar, three days earlier than the 10-year average date. Between 13 and 21 Mar a single (unsexed) bird was seen in the Cuckmere which may have been different from the birds seen in the High and Over/Litlington/Charleston Reedbed area where a single bird was seen on the 17th but a pair from the 18th to the 22nd. At Rye

Hbr, the first record of the year was of a single (unsexed) bird seen only on the 17th but followed by a further bird from 25 to 31 Mar. These records suggest a probable minimum of seven birds during March – a slow start to the year.

In April, at Rye Hbr the single bird was joined by a second on the 2nd and two birds were recorded regularly throughout the month, being joined by three drakes on the 14th for that date only. On the 6th a pair was recorded at Weir Wood Res and on the 9th four were seen at Cuckmere Haven. The first bird flying eastwards offshore was seen at Goring Gap on the 10th and a second was recorded at Selsey Bill on the 16th; these were the only birds so recorded, an unusually low offshore total for this species. On the 19th two were seen at Pett Level of which one at least stayed until the 27th. On the 22nd a single bird flew over Weir Wood Res and on the 25th one at Pulborough Brooks was the first bird of the year there, although it appeared to stay for only the day. On the 27th two birds were seen at Warnham LNR, also for just that day. In all some 17 new birds were recorded during April. It is to be regretted that the sex of birds was rarely recorded; it is easy to assume that a record of two was a pair but this cannot be stated without the appropriate note.



Garganey, Rye Hbr, April 2015 (Barry Yates)

In May, all records were for birds which appeared to stay for only one day. A drake was recorded at Pett Level on the 1st and again on the 21st; a pair was at Cuckmere Haven on the 2nd; another pair at Pulborough Brooks on the 8th; one at Arundel WWT on the 11th, a single bird was seen at Eastbourne on the 14th; two were recorded at Rye Hbr on the 22nd and one or two (uncounted) on the 25th. It appears that possibly nine new birds passed through the county in May. In June, a single bird at Pett Level on the 3rd and 10th may have been the one seen there in May and, similarly, a drake at Rye Hbr may also have been one of the May birds as two were recorded there on 6 Jul.

The above records suggest that possibly as many as 32 birds passed through the county in the spring. The only instance of potential breeding was at Pett Level where a pair was recorded on various dates between 19 Apr and 10 Jun, although there was no positive record of breeding.

Records of autumn migration came only from West Sussex. The first was on 23 Aug when a bird flew in at Arundel WWT before moving quickly into cover. The second arrival was of one at Pulborough Brooks on 31 Aug “amongst the Teal” and it, or the one from Arundel WWT, was on the R Arun south of Arundel on 1 Sep. During September, one was at Pagham Hbr on the 21st and from the 13th until the 26th there were almost daily records of two birds at Medmerry, but six on only the 20th, one of these on the 27th and, finally, one on 1 Oct, two days earlier than the 10-year average last date. [JRC]

Shoveler

Anas clypeata

Very scarce breeder and scarce summer non-breeder; common winter visitor; scarce on observed passage. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern.

The monthly WeBS counts from the principal sites were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
County total	805	715	517	174	17	17	12	19	108	415	638	897
Pagham Hbr	4	16	47	25	-	-	-	-	15	25	54	83
Chichester GP	80	93	103	-	-	nc	nc	nc	13	52	33	48
Arun Valley	182	133	137	34	2	7	1	2	17	65	159	195
Kneppmill Pond	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	-	-	-	31	11	3
Ouse Valley	47	31	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	7	6
Barcombe Res	43	6	1	-	-	-	-	-	10	5	55	88
Eastbourne Lakes	222	163	52	8	-	-	-	-	1	61	102	146
Rye Bay	218	241	134	89	15	10	11	17	48	156	197	324

The peak WeBS count of 897 in December matched that of Feb 2013 and, although lower than the two highest ever peaks last year (of 1031 in January and 933 in December 2014), it was still the joint third highest ever WeBS count in the county and affirms the current upward trend in wintering numbers. Significant counts not included in the WeBS table above were 70 at Northiam on 30 Jan and 154 at Drayton GP (Chichester), on 4 Feb.

During the first winter period numbers remained high at the inland sites in January and February, but during March there was some decrease in county numbers and a movement to more coastal sites, particularly to Pagham Hbr and Rye Bay. Although not reflected in the March WeBS count, Pagham Hbr held around 70 birds for much of March peaking at 85 on the 27th. The departure of wintering birds was evident over the first two weeks of April and after the 21st no double-figure counts occurred until mid-August. Unlike in 2014, when spring passage past seawatching sites was heaviest in March, this year only 12 E were recorded in March, whereas 88 E were recorded in April, with a peak of 27 E past Splash Point (Seaford) on 7 Apr, suggesting that departure was slightly later than in 2014.

During the summer a few birds were regularly recorded at Pulborough and Amberley Brooks, Arundel WWT, Warnham LNR, Pett Level and Rye Hbr. Breeding was confirmed at the last two sites with a female and seven ducklings recorded at Pett Level on 11 Jun and an adult and four ducklings recorded at Castle Water on 8 Jun.

The first sign of returning birds was of 12 at Rye Hbr on 15 Aug, followed by no less than 56 birds at Waltham Brooks on 24 Aug, 15 flying over the A23 near Hurstpierpoint on the 25th and 12 at Pagham Hbr on the 31st. Autumn numbers remained modest during September but increased in October, particularly in Rye Bay, where 115 were recorded at Rye Hbr as early as the 1st. In November and December the build-up continued leading to the WeBS peak count for the year in December. [JRC]

Common Pochard

Aythya ferina

Very scarce breeder: scarce summer non-breeder and fairly common winter visitor. Very scarce on observed passage. Red listed species of high conservation concern.

The monthly WeBS counts from the principal sites were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
County total	522	465	90	25	25	20	34	139	88	88	139	319
Chichester GP	178	139	29	6	7	nc	nc	nc	8	4	-	69
Arun Valley	23	17	22	5	9	3	2	1	-	-	2	3
Weir Wood Res	-	21	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	18
Barcombe Res	34	32	-	1	-	-	4	2	-	4	13	36
Eastbourne Lakes	2	-	10	1	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-
Bewl Water	15	20	8	nc	nc	nc	nc	-	-	4	10	6
Rye Bay	246	210	12	9	7	13	28	136	77	71	99	161

Although the January peak of 522 was a welcome increase from last year's low of 417, peak numbers remain well under half those recorded at the turn of the century. This reflects the national picture, and because there has been a 51% decline in the 25-year WeBS national trend Common Pochard has now been red-listed as a species of high conservation concern.

As usual the wintering population was concentrated at Chichester GP and Rye Bay. Numbers remained little changed from the January peak through the February WeBS counts (around 8 Feb) but started to rapidly decrease a week later as birds departed. The last record of substantial numbers of birds was 200 at the Beach Reserve (Rye LNR) on 17 Feb, thereafter all records were of less than 20 until birds returned in the autumn.

Small numbers of birds summered and breeding was confirmed at Arundel WWT where a female and 5 ducklings were seen on 2 May. There were two further broods there (of five and six ducklings). However, none of the ducklings fledged, due to predation by Herring Gulls. At Drayton Pit (Chichester GP), a female with four young was recorded on 7 Jun and again on the 29th, and on 11 Jul four additional broods (two of eight ducklings and two of four) had joined the "older existing brood". On 9 August a total of 25 (unaged) birds was recorded at Drayton, suggesting that quite a few birds successfully fledged. At Pett Level there were regular records of summering birds (peak ten on 7 Jul) and there were at least two broods of seven and eight ducklings. Three birds summered at the reservoir on Wicks Farm (Yapton), but there was no record of breeding. There were no records of birds at Rye Hbr after 10 May until seven appeared on 14 Jun, so breeding was not suspected there either. However, with a total of at least ten broods at three sites it was another good breeding year for this species.

Eight birds at Rye Long Pits on 16 Aug and 126 at Scotney GP the next day heralded the arrival of birds for the second winter period, but the Scotney birds were probably passing through

as numbers there declined to 33 in September. During September most birds were in the east of the county (particularly Rye Hbr), but in October small numbers also appeared across sites to the west. However, overall numbers remained low in the county until the influx of winter visitors in mid-December.

There was only one record of passage offshore when 4 W flew past Splash Point, Seaford on 8 May. [JRC]

Tufted Duck

Aythya fuligula

Fairly common resident although scarce breeder: fairly common winter visitor and scarce on observed passage.

The monthly WeBS counts from the principal sites were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
County total	1044	1038	905	600	377	283	361	562	523	551	683	880
Chichester Hbr	35	30	45	12	10	2	2	4	20	26	35	14
Pagham Hbr	3	32	39	35	10	45	15	4	50	42	17	20
Chichester GP	144	125	207	82	36	nc	nc	nc	32	55	92	171
Burton & Chingford Ponds	41	25	19	12	3	18	14	21	nc	30	26	12
Arun Valley	145	142	73	70	75	55	19	25	29	56	62	89
Barcombe Res	26	15	21	37	9	13	63	67	31	43	77	68
Eastbourne Lakes	46	56	50	26	-	-	-	-	22	37	37	41
Bewl Water	21	73	46	nc	nc	nc	nc	88	11	6	12	7
Powdermill Res	15	9	20	9	1	6	15	47	-	15	52	41
Rye Bay	369	356	228	193	194	119	205	292	273	112	92	256

The January WeBS peak of 1044 was well below the average 5-year maximum for 2010-14 of 1228. Although widely distributed, the largest concentrations were at Chichester GP, the Arun Valley (particularly Swanbourne Lake, Arundel) and Rye Bay (particularly Rye Hbr SSSI and Scotney GP). In addition to the WeBS numbers above, Southwater CP had over 50 birds for most of January with a peak of 82 on the 25th. Although overall numbers in the county remained largely unchanged through the March WeBS counts (which were carried out around the 8th of the month), they declined fairly soon afterwards. However, good numbers of birds were still present during early April before numbers finally thinned out, leaving a summering population of over 300 birds which was particularly evident around Rye Bay.

The first record of breeding was on 8 Jun, when six ducklings were at Arundel WWT. Successful breeding was also recorded at Chichester Hbr (Thorney Deepes), RSPB Medmerry (where 15 young fledged from two broods), Pagham Hbr, Chichester GP, Warnham LNR, Barcombe Res, Bewl Water, Pett Level and Rye Hbr. At Rye only two broods (of seven and eight) were recorded despite 73 males being present in mid-May. The last record of breeding was a female with nine small ducklings at Drayton Pit (Chichester GP) on 25 July - the last of five broods at this site.

There was an influx of birds during August when 120 were recorded at Drayton Pit on the 9th and 225 at Scotney GP on the 17th (the largest count at a single site during the year). A total of 208 were still present at Scotney GP on 14 Sep. Numbers then declined at Scotney but increased steadily throughout the rest of the county before a further influx of winter visitors during December.

During the year 18 birds (12 E, 6 W) were recorded passing seawatching sites. The peak count was 5 E past Splash Point, Seaford on 8 Apr. [JRC]

Greater Scaup

Aythya marila

Scarce winter visitor and passage migrant: rare non-breeder in summer. Red listed species of high conservation concern. Schedule 1 species.

A very modest year with the majority of sightings from East Sussex. In the first four months, a single male was noted at Pagham Hbr from 18 to 20 Jan, another male stayed at Rye Hbr from 1 Jan to 10 Mar and there was a popular long-staying male on Scotney GP which had arrived in late 2014 and was recorded on many dates from 1 Jan until 19 Apr. Elsewhere, single birds were recorded at Marsh Fm (Yapton) on 10 Mar and Glyne Gap (Bexhill) on 16 Jan.

There were only two records for the latter part of the year: the first was of one seen at Rye Hbr on 8 Sep and the other record was of four at Pagham Hbr on 28 Oct. [WGH]



Greater Scaup, Marsh Farm, March 2015 (Bola Akinola)

Common Eider

Somateria mollissima

Scarce winter visitor and passage migrant: very scarce non-breeder in summer. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern.

Common Eider were recorded mostly during the first half of the year with the majority seen at two of the main seawatching sites, Selsey Bill and Splash Point (Seaford). At Selsey Bill, in

particular, many were seen offshore where, presumably, they were feeding as there were very few noted offshore elsewhere. Numbers recorded at these two sites were as follows:

	Jan			Feb			Mar			Apr			May			Jun		
	E	W	o/s	E	W	o/s	E	W	o/s	E	W	o/s	E	W	o/s	E	W	o/s
Selsey Bill	1	-	12	3	2	19	3	4	55	17	17	13	2	2	-	5	-	-
Splash Point	-	-	-	-	-	-	4	-	-	21	-	2	2	-	1	-	-	-

Easterly spring passage was noted from early March to early May but numbers were much lower than in recent years. The last record involved 5 E at Selsey Bill on 6 Jun. During this period numbers elsewhere rarely exceeded two, the exceptions being four offshore at Pett Level on 15 Feb, 13 at Brighton Marina on 24 Apr and 3 E at Portobello (Telscombe Cliffs) on 9 Apr.

Very few were recorded in the second winter period. Most birds were again noted at Selsey Bill where there were totals of 5 E and 3 W during November and 4 W and 21 offshore during December with peak counts of four on 23 Nov and five on 16 Dec. Elsewhere, single birds were recorded at East Head (Chichester) on 29 Nov, and at Newhaven Hbr the same day, and on 13 and 28 Dec. [WGH, JAH]

Long-tailed Duck

Clangula hyemalis

Very scarce to scarce passage migrant and winter visitor: rare non-breeder in summer. Schedule 1 species. Red listed species of high conservation concern.

Most of the five records were noted on single dates so were probably birds on passage. In April, there was one off Brighton on the 8th and 1 W past Selsey Bill on the 29th. In October, there were 2 E off Worthing on the 16th and 1 W past Selsey Bill on the 24th. A single bird offshore from Pett Level on 13 Dec was the only other record. A very poor year for this species. [WGH]

Common Scoter

Melanitta nigra

Common spring passage migrant and fairly common winter visitor to the coast: usually scarce in summer and autumn. Very scarce inland. Red listed species of high conservation concern. Schedule 1 species.

As usual most wintering birds were seen in Rye Bay where 50 or more were counted on nine dates between 4 Jan and 21 Feb with peaks of 400 on 18 Jan and 200 on 25 Jan. Elsewhere during the first winter period small offshore flocks included up to 45 at Bracklesham Bay, 25 at Climping, 15 at Normans Bay and 30 at St Leonards-on-Sea. Most Common Scoters were recorded from regular seawatching sites, particularly in spring, where the monthly totals, computed on the assumption that the highest number seen at a single site was the maximum in the county that day and that birds seen on subsequent days were different, were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
East	29	15	193	5381	983	346	244	68	154	103	104	62
West	40	23	29	35	14	14	77	25	27	67	162	77

The March to May eastward total of 6557 is approximately half of that recorded for 2013 and 2014. The more detailed figures from four locations are shown below and demonstrate clearly that in spring most are seen in East Sussex and at other seasons considerably smaller numbers are noted mainly passing West Sussex sites.

		Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Selsey Bill	E	25	12	137	2048	687	197	236	49	146	103	104	59
	W	40	23	29	13	4	14	77	22	27	61	93	71
Worthing	E	4	0	29	403	107	168	10	12	18	0	4	4
	W	5	0	0	8	0	0	0	3	0	6	43	14
Splash Point	E	0	0	73	4303	516	16	nc	17	nc	0	2	5
	W	0	0	0	14	10	0	nc	0	nc	0	0	0
Beachy Head	E	0	5	5	1388	nc	12	nc	2	nc	nc	nc	nc
	W	0	0	0	0	nc	0	nc	0	nc	nc	nc	nc

The tables show the peak spring passage occurred, as usual but unlike 2014, in April and the details of the six days when over 300 were recorded at any site, with the hours of observations, are shown below.

	7 Apr	8 Apr	9 Apr	10 Apr	16 Apr	24 Apr
Selsey Bill	175 (8)	62 (8)	86 (5)	118 (11)	314 (11)	40 (10)
Worthing	60 (1)	15 (3)	0 (3)	7 (4)	130 (3)	0 (1)
Splash Point	476 (6)	572 (9)	419 (8)	1058 (8)	167 (3)	719 (8)
Beachy Head	nc	132 (4)	483 (3)	337 (2)	nc	nc

From June onwards a small flock was regularly seen in Rye Bay with 40 being recorded on 10 Jul, 13 Sep and 22 Nov but it was not until 27 Dec that 80 were recorded. Elsewhere there were sporadic records of small flocks. Although an adult female was on Widewater lagoon (Lancing) from 6 to 11 Jan all the other records were from the sea and there were no records from inland sites. [JAN]

Velvet Scoter

Melanitta fusca

Scarce passage migrant and winter visitor along the coast: rare inland. Red listed species of high conservation concern. Schedule 1 species.

The highest numbers during the year were reported from Rye Bay in the first winter period where Velvet Scoters were recorded on 14 dates between 1 Jan and 8 Mar. The highest numbers were recorded in February with a peak of 33 on the 17th and 18th. Elsewhere the only record was one, but possibly four, at Climping on 11 Jan. Interestingly the only record from this site in the second winter period was three on 18 Dec which suggests the wintering flock builds up late in the winter.

Offshore movements recorded at the principal seawatching sites computed on the assumption that the highest number seen at any site was the maximum for the county and that birds seen on subsequent days were different, were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
East	-	-	-	14	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	15
West	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	4	4

Movements were much lighter this year with the easterly spring passage only recorded between 9 and 24 Apr and involving daily maxima of two or three on six dates. The last spring sighting was of eight on the sea off Splash Point (Seaford) on 30 Apr which were almost certainly resting passage birds. Five at Cuckmere Haven on 11 Oct were the first of the autumn and thereafter passage was light with 4 W off Selsey Bill on 22 Nov. Easterly movements in December, which may have been local feeding flights, comprised six off Splash Point on the 28th and at Selsey Bill four on the 14th and 27th and five on the 30th.

There were no reports of inland or summering birds. [WGH]

Goldeneye

Bucephala clangula

Scarce winter visitor: rare non-breeder in summer. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern. Schedule 1 species.

The monthly WeBS counts at the principal sites were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
County total	12	16	9	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	4
Chichester Hbr	1	5	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1
Pagham Hbr	4	-	4	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Chichester GP	-	-	-	-	-	nc	nc	nc	-	-	1	-
Barcombe Res	2	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Rye Bay	5	9	5	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2

Numbers which were higher than the WeBS counts, and the dates of these counts, were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar		Nov	Dec
Chichester Hbr	8	7	-		5	6
	24 th	9 th			25 th	12 th
Pagham Hbr	10	12	-		3	5
	23 rd	20 th			25 th	3 rd
Rye Bay	6	-	6		2	-
	19 th		14 th		22 nd	

In the first winter period, small numbers were also recorded at several other sites: in January, one at Darwell Res on 31 Jan and two at Scotney Court GP on the 17th; in February, one at Pulborough Brooks on the 24th; in March, a drake at Weir Wood Res on the 24th until 5 Apr, the final spring county record.

The first autumn sighting was of two at Church Norton on 16 Sep but the next was not until 7 Oct when eight were seen at Rye Hbr. None was then recorded until 15 Nov when there was an influx with birds recorded widely at the principal WeBS sites but also at Weir Wood Res where three, a drake and two redheads, were noted on 22 Nov. In December, all records were from the principal WeBS sites. [WGH, JAH]

Smew*Mergellus albellus*

Very scarce winter visitor, mainly to east of county. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern.

This was another very poor year with the few records all coming from the Rye Hbr area. Single birds were reported on 2 and 4 Jan, on nine dates between 23 Jan and 18 Feb and, finally, two on 4 Dec. The few records recording any details all referred to redheads. [WGH]

Red-breasted Merganser*Mergus serrator*

Fairly common winter visitor and passage migrant along the coast: rare non-breeder in summer. Rare inland.

The monthly WeBS counts at the two principal sites were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
County total	245	143	120	1	-	-	-	-	-	67	73	81
Chichester Hbr	222	134	105	1	-	-	-	-	-	67	67	65
Pagham Hbr	13	3	11	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	12

Once again, Chichester Hbr was the most important wintering site for this species, but birds were seen regularly at other favoured coastal sites mainly in West Sussex. Numbers counted offshore, however, were fairly small with maxima of 26 at Selsey Bill on 31 Mar, 17 at Goring on 10 Apr and 16 at Worthing on 21 Mar. Birds were recorded on 26 dates on the sheltered lagoon at Widewater (Lancing) with a maximum of nine on 18 Jan.

As usual, most had departed their wintering quarters by late March with the last four at Pilsey Island (Chichester Hbr) on 6 Apr and a single late straggler at Birdham (Chichester Hbr) on the 17th. Although distinguishing between local feeding movements and migratory passage was difficult, passage in both directions was particularly noticeable from about 21 Mar until 8 May when there were 3 W at Splash Point. Monthly totals of birds moving past three principal seawatching sites were as follows:

		Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May		Oct	Nov	Dec
Selsey Bill	E	188	97	211	147	3		11	61	68
	W	90	28	147	27	2		28	166	155
	o/s	66	95	109	92	-		-	15	65
Worthing Beach	E	28	-	14	10	-		-	-	4
	W	-	-	6	6	-		-	21	16
	o/s	50	40	133	62	-		-	29	26
Splash Point	E	-	-	2	141	3		-	-	-
	W	-	-	-	-	3		-	-	-
	o/s	-	-	-	-	-		-	-	-

The largest movements were 66 E and 4 W at Selsey Bill on 18 Jan, 39 E and 6 W at Selsey Bill on 23 Mar, 51 E at Splash Point on 10 Apr and 8 E and 50 W at Selsey Bill on 22 Nov. Additionally a total of 35 E were recorded at Beachy Head in April with a maximum of 19 on the 9th.

The first returning bird was a redhead in Rye Bay on 31 Jul and 1 Aug which may have been the same bird seen between there and Seaford Head on 18 and 21 Aug. The next sighting was of 2 E at Hastings on 28 Sep but it was not until 11 Oct, when there were 4 W at Selsey Bill that birds were regularly recorded through to the end of the year. Passage in October and November was predominantly westerly, but some easterly, presumably local feeding movements were also noted. Numbers in wintering parties in the second winter period were generally small even in Chichester Hbr where the highest count was of 30 at Thorney Island on 12 Dec. [WGH, JAH]

Goosander

Mergus merganser

Scarce winter visitor and passage migrant.

The year 2015 was a fairly typical year for this species with records for the first half of the year from five coastal or near-coastal sites, and three inland. In the second winter period records were from six coastal or near-coastal sites and three inland. The approximate monthly totals were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar		Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
No. of birds	10	10	3		4	1	9	3
Offshore/coastal	9	5	2		4	1	5	2
Inland	1	5	1		-	-	4	1

In January, there were two (a pair) at Pagham Hbr on 2 Jan and two males and a female there on the 19th. At Widewater (Lancing) there were three (two males) on the 4th and a single male on the 12th and 15th. Inland, an adult male at Petworth Park was still there on 1 Feb but was joined by two more birds on the 5th to 6th. Numbers in February involved a single bird at Pagham Hbr on the 3rd, two on the R Adur at Shoreham on the 8th and 9th, and two redheads at Rye Hbr on the 7th. Inland, there was a pair at Hurstpierpoint on the 4th but only a redhead there on the 27th. Sightings in March involved 2 W (a pair) at Selsey Bill on the 23rd and a single bird (unsexed) at Pulborough Brooks on the 30th, the last spring record.

In the autumn, the first returning bird was one at Alexandra Park (Hastings) on 17 Oct. In November, there were three (two males) at Thorney Deepes on the 24th and two there the following day, one at Church Norton on the 29th and one at Pett Level on the 15th and 22nd. Inland, there was a single bird at Ardingly Res on 8 Nov and three at Arlington Res on the 23rd. In December, a single redhead was at Petworth Park on the 19th and there were two (unsexed) at Medmerry on the 31st. [WGH, JAH]

Ruddy Duck

Oxyura jamaicensis

Very scarce and declining resident and visitor: subject to culling to reduce numbers.

A single bird seen at Swanbourne Lake (Arundel) on 9 Feb was probably the same seen at nearby Arundel WWT on 1 Apr. This was confirmed as a feral bird, not one of the collection.

On five dates from 18 Jan to 7 Apr a single female was seen at Pett Level Pools. One seen at Scotney GP from 24 to 31 Jan may have been the bird from Pett Level. The only record for the second winter period was of one at Pett Level on 27 Dec. [WGH]

Quail*Coturnix coturnix*

Scarce summer visitor; recorded in variable numbers from year to year. Formerly occasional in winter. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern. Schedule 1 species.

Quails were recorded in 14 tetrads, four in West and ten in East Sussex, mostly on either the downs or nearby coastal sites, presumably on migration. Note however that there is probably some duplication with the same calling bird being recorded from different sites.

The earliest record was of one at Robertsbridge on 14 Jun, a month later than the 10-year average date, followed by two on the 28th at Barcombe Cross. Birds were then recorded on eight dates in July from the 13th. The records are consistent with 12 birds from ten sites, slightly down on the 15 of 2014. There was no confirmed breeding.

One bird was noted at Seaford on 13-14 Jul and possibly the same on the 31st; another bird was recorded at Five Lords Burgh (Denton) on 14-15 Jul; one was noted at Wepham Down on 19 Jul and also at The Burgh the same day and, possibly the same, on 1 Sep; one was noted at Seaford on 13-15 Jul and possibly the same on the 31st; another single bird was recorded at Alfriston on the 18th; one was present at Ditchling Beacon on the 22nd; at Pycombe GC one was singing on two dates between 22 Jul and 5 Aug; at Steep Down (Lancing) one was present on 29-30 Jul; in August one was calling at Cissbury Ring on the 2nd and two were calling at Telscombe on 16 Aug. The final record was of one on 1 Sep at The Burgh (Burpham). [JAH]

Red-legged Partridge*Alectoris rufa*

Common introduced resident; population augmented annually by captive bred stock.

Red-legged Partridges were recorded in 127 tetrads. In West Sussex, during the first winter period, 83 were recorded in eight of 136 1-km squares surveyed during the SWBS with a maximum of 27 at Coles Fm (Church Norton) on 27 Feb. There were eight other records of ten or more, all from West Sussex. In total 199 pairs were counted over several days in March on the Norfolk Estate.

In early September 900 birds (adult and young) were counted there. Elsewhere in the autumn the highest count was 100 at Pagham Hbr on 16 Oct and there were 13 other counts exceeding ten all but one of which was from West Sussex. In the second winter period, the highest count was 30 at both Sidlesham Ferry Field and Michelgrove (Patching) (where, presumably, they are captive bred) and there were 11 other counts in excess of ten. Throughout the year, most counts rarely exceeded six birds.

In East Sussex, the highest spring count was 22 at Pycombe GC on 23 May but all other significant counts occurred towards the end of the year with 43 at Weir Wood Res on 21 Sep, 20 at Sharpsbridge (Newick) on 1 Dec and 13 at Ditchling Beacon on 26 Sep; most records did not exceed four birds.

Breeding was not confirmed anywhere but was probable in eight tetrads and birds were recorded in suitable habitat in a further nine. One pair was noted in a breeding survey at Pagham Hbr and two pairs at Medmerry. [JAH]

Grey Partridge*Perdix perdix*

Scarce resident, much declined but benefiting locally through conservation effort. Red listed species of high conservation concern.

Grey Partridges were recorded in only 54 tetrads, predominantly in West Sussex by the ratio of 4:1 west:east. Although records from the Norfolk Estate in West Sussex accounted for only three of the West Sussex tetrads, the numbers recorded there dominated due to the conservation management of the estate. In total 2191 birds (adult and young) were counted there over several days in early September. Chick survival at 6 weeks was 39% (2014 56%) as the weather in the early breeding season was cooler and drier than usual leading to lower numbers of insects. However, as spring stock was 17% higher than in 2014, total September numbers were similar to 2014.



Grey Partridge, Church Norton, April 2015 (Andrew House)

In West Sussex, in the first winter period, all counts of ten or more were from the Norfolk Estate with a maximum of 40 on 19 Jan at Wepham Down; the highest count elsewhere was only six at Atherington on 9 Feb. The highest spring count was only ten at Wepham Down on 13 Apr but 20 on 12 Jul. In the autumn, numbers rose to 60 at Wepham Down on 2 Oct. In the second winter period the highest count was 30 at The Burgh (Burpham) on 25 Nov and the highest count elsewhere was 18 recorded during a walk from Ford to Littlehampton on 15 Dec. By contrast, in East Sussex, most records were from Rye Hbr. The highest first winter count was 12 on 9 Feb; no more than four until the autumn when 19 were noted there on 3 Sep.

Breeding was confirmed in five tetrads, and was probable in a further seven. At least six pairs bred at Rye Hbr. [JAH]

Common Pheasant*Phasianus colchicus*

Very common introduced resident. Population augmented by captive bred stock.

Common Pheasants were recorded in 433 tetrads, more than the average for the four years 2012-2015 of 380. Records were spread equally between sites in West and East Sussex.

The highest counts recorded in the first quarter were: 50 at Wepham Down on 14 Feb, 40 at Warningcamp (Arundel) on 6 Jan, 59 at Pulborough Brooks on 18 Apr and 53 at Wepham Down on 30 Mar. In the autumn, the highest counts were: 150 at Peppering Fm (Norfolk Estate) on 8 Oct and 99 at Warningcamp on 22 Sep, presumably reflecting the usual autumn post-breeding increase and release for the shooting season. In the second winter period: 90 at Paddockhurst Place (Worth) on 16 Nov and 80 there on the 25th, 50 at Balcombe on the 28th, and 36 at Cocking on 23 Dec.

Wild breeding was confirmed in four tetrads, was probable in 35 (in all months except January, November and December) and possible in 27. The earliest date recorded for confirmed breeding was 12 Apr at Cuckfield when a used nest was found. The earliest date for probable breeding was 23 Feb at Danehill. Breeding at Rye Hbr was described as widespread.

A bird seen at Littlehampton on 11 Mar was described as being a very distinctive darker blue and turquoise colour. One at Millbrook East (Ashdown Forest) on 18 Mar was described as of the Chinese type with broad white stripes along the sides of the head and with a very broad neck band. A female at Gills Lap (Ashdown Forest) on 30 May went for the observer in defence of her chicks. Birds were recorded in gardens in both West and East Sussex during the RSPB Big Garden Bird Watch. [JAH]

Red-throated Diver*Gavia stellata*

Fairly common winter visitor and passage migrant. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern. Schedule 1 species.

The estimated annual total of 1403 was the lowest for seven years and below the 10-year average of 2018. In line with previous reports, the estimated monthly totals have been arrived at by taking the highest daily counts of birds moving either east or west along the coast during the month together with the largest 'offshore' count during the month plus any inland records.

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
186	595	149	223	8	-	-	1	4	9	58	170

The estimated totals for coastal passage at four seawatching sites and the estimated totals for all seawatching records were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May		Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Monthly total*	167	448	143	219	7		1	4	10	63	207
Selsey Bill	153	297	85	74	6		1	4	8	59	192
Worthing	15	62	14	33	-		-	-	3	23	13
Splash Point	3	94	70	184	1		-	-	-	-	20
Beachy Head	-	90	14	33	-		-	-	-	nc	nc-

*adjusted to compensate for duplication

During Jan 90% of all records came from Selsey Bill where 74 W on the 4th was the only significant movement of the month. Westerly movements continued off Selsey Bill early in February with 63 on 7th and 90 the following day but in mid-month the emphasis changed to easterly movements with 47 passing Beachy Head on the 14th and 69 off Splash Point (Seaford) on the 16th. The number of birds present in Rye Bay peaked at 200 on 21 Feb. The March total of just 149 was exceptionally low compared to 663 last year and the only significant movement in April was of 83 E at Splash Point on the 10th. The last spring record was 1 E past Selsey Bill on 9 May.

The first returning bird was 1 E on 28 Aug off Selsey Bill. This is the first record for this month since 2003. Numbers remained low for the rest of the year with peak movements of 23 W on 22 Nov and 32 W on 18 Dec, both off Selsey Bill.

One at Arlington Res on 25-29 Nov was the only inland record. [DHH]

Black-throated Diver

Gavia arctica

Scarce winter visitor and passage migrant. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern. Schedule 1 species.

The estimated total of just 49 was the lowest annual figure on record and only 40% of the 10-year rolling average of 118. The extremely low figure was the result of the almost total lack of easterly spring passage which normally commences in mid-March and continues until early May. In 2014 the figure during that period was 88 but in 2015 it was just 30. The estimated monthly totals, calculated using the same method as for Red-throated Diver, were as follows:

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May		Oct	Nov	Dec
4	4	6	19	9		1	5	1

The monthly totals for coastal passage at four seawatching sites together with the estimated total of all seawatching records were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May		Nov	Dec
Monthly total *	2	2	5	17	9		4	1
Selsey Bill	2	2	4	8	-		3	-
Worthing	-	1	-	-	-		-	-
Splash Point	-	-	-	6	1		-	-
Beachy Head	-	-	-	4	8		nc	nc

*adjusted to compensate for duplication

In the table above, the records of birds in flight from seawatching sites during the first three months of the year all involved single birds. Offshore there were two at Bexhill on 16 Jan, one off Pett on 1 Feb, one off Worthing on 4 Feb and a maximum of two off Selsey Bill on 7 Mar. As mentioned earlier, spring passage was almost non-existent with no more than four birds seen on any one day. The last spring sighting was 1E off Splash Point (Seaford) on 4 May. The next sighting was the first returning bird, one off Pett on 20 Oct. There were then no further records until 21 Nov when one flew west past Selsey Bill followed by 2 W the next day when a single bird was offshore at Newhaven. Between the 24th and 30th single birds were seen at Climping, Portobello, Newhaven, and Hastings. The only December record was of 1 E at Portobello on 30th.

There were no records of the species away from the open sea or tidal harbours. [DHH]



Great Northern Diver, Southwick Canal, November 2015 (Howard Statham)

Great Northern Diver

Gavia immer

Scarce winter visitor and passage migrant. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern.

The approximate monthly totals were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May		Oct	Nov	Dec
Monthly total	14	18	13	16	9		3	11	9
Max. off Selsey Bill	13	18	11	16	6		2	8	6

Selsey Bill maintained its status as an important wintering area for this species with another rise in the maximum day count. In January there were 13 present on the 4th and up to nine regularly seen throughout the month. There were also 13 present off The Bill on 7 Feb but this rose to a new peak number of 18 (consisting of a feeding party of 11 plus seven other singles) on 14 Feb. Eight were present throughout March and numbers then increased to 11 on the 27th and continued to rise in early April peaking at 15 on the 5th before falling to four to six for the remainder of the month and to 13 May with up to three as late as the 23rd. The final spring record was 1 W at Selsey Bill on 26 May which was eight days earlier than in 2014.

Records from Pagham and Chichester Harbours are all assumed to involve birds wintering off Selsey Bill. Elsewhere, there were records of one off Bexhill on 16 Jan, two in Rye Bay on 11 Feb and three off Climping on 9 May. This last record may have been either birds on spring passage or from the Selsey group but there were no sightings from any of the sea-watching sites east of Selsey.

The first returning bird was off Worthing on 19 Oct. At Selsey there were two offshore on 28 Oct rising to eight on 25 Nov and then at least six throughout December.

The two records of birds away from the open sea or tidal harbours were both of juveniles both of which lingered long enough to be seen by many observers. The first was in Southwick Canal from 18 Nov to 2 Dec while one which appeared at Weir Wood Res on 27 Nov was still present at the end of the year. [DHH]

Diver species

Distant divers in flight are often impossible to identify to species. As a result one in six of all divers seen in flight during 2015 were reported as 'Diver sp'.

The numbers of divers recorded at four seawatching sites during the periods January to May and October to December are shown in the table below.

	Diver sp		R-t Diver		B-t Diver		Total		No. per hour	
	J-M	O-D	J-M	O-D	J-M	O-D	J-M	O-D	J-M	O-D
Selsey Bill	120	44	640	260	18	3	778	307	1.32	1.38
Worthing	3	12	141	40	2	-	146	52	1.13	0.76
Splash Point	105	-	358	-	7	-	-	-	3.11	-
Beachy Head	12	nc	149	nc	12	nc	173	nc	6.18	nc

The totals for each site have been calculating by adding the monthly totals of birds recorded moving both east and west to the numbers seen on the sea. No allowances have been made for duplication at sites so the columns should not be totalled. [DHH]

Fulmar

Fulmaris glacialis

Scarce breeding species and passage migrant; resident on coastal cliffs from November to September. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern.

There was no complete survey undertaken of breeding birds but there were five apparently occupied nests at Seaford Head while the numbers of birds present at sea cliffs during the breeding season included ten at Rottingdean, nine at Portobello, 18 at Newhaven and 25 at Cliff End and eight at Hastings CP.

Small scale feeding movements were recorded regularly between February and May but never exceeded 35 birds. Movements in the west of the county were predominantly westerly with maxima of 22 on both 29 Apr and 9 May at Selsey Bill where the monthly totals were 62 E and 175 W in April and 46 E and 126 W in May. Further east, the movements involved birds travelling in both directions with 33 E on 6 May and 22 W on 16 May off Portobello.

Numbers were very low during the summer with monthly totals at Selsey Bill of just 21 in June, 13 in July and 30 in August. The last birds were seen on 14 Sep at both Selsey Bill and Worthing five days later than the long-term average. The first returning bird was not recorded until 20 Nov at Portobello which is two weeks later than the long-term average. Movements in the last two months of the year included 28 W at Portobello on 30 Nov, 24 E at Portobello on 30 Dec and 31 W at Hastings on 31 Dec. By the end of the year there were 24 birds present at Cliff End and 19 at Seaford Head. There were no inland records of Fulmars during the year. [DHH]

Manx Shearwater*Puffinus puffinus*

Fairly common spring to autumn passage migrant. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern.

The estimated annual total (calculated using the same method as for Red-throated Diver) of 171 was a welcome increase over the 2014 figure of 46 but still below the 10-year rolling average of 241. The monthly totals at four sites are shown in the table.

	Mar		Apr		May		Jun		Jul		Aug		Dec	
County totals*	3		29		48		18		68		1		4	
	E	W	E	W	E	W	E	W	E	W	E	W	E	W
Selsey Bill	3	-	9	26	2	38	9	17	68	1	-	-	-	-
Worthing	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	4
Splash Point	-	-	-	-	17	15	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-
Beachy Head	-	-	1	-	nc	nc	-	-	nc	nc	-	-	-	-
Other sites	-	-	-	-	2 [#]	-	-	-	1 [#]	-	-	-	-	-

*adjusted to compensate for duplication

[#]2W off Rottingdean on 21 May and 1W at Newhaven on 27 July

The first record of the year was of 3 E off Selsey Bill on 28 Mar. During April birds were recorded on five dates from the 12th with a peak of 24 W and 5 E at Selsey Bill on the 29th. Birds were recorded on twelve days in May but the only double-figure counts occurred on the 5th when there were 21 W at Selsey Bill and 7 W and 14 E at Splash Point, Seaford. The three records in June all came from Selsey Bill including 14 W and 8 E on the 1st. The largest movement of the year was on 28 Jul with 53 E at Selsey Bill but there were then no further records until 25 Aug when there was 1 E past Splash Point. The last two records of the year were both off Worthing with 2 W on 3 Dec and 2 W on 5 Dec which are the first December records for Sussex. [DHH]

Balearic Shearwater*Puffinus mauretanicus*

Very scarce spring to autumn visitor. Red listed species of high conservation concern. Considered critically endangered by IUCN.

A total of 52-54 birds during the year was a vast improvement on the low 2014 total of 12 or 13 and also above the 10-year rolling average of 31. The first record of the year was of 2 W and 1 E off Selsey Bill on 26 Jul (JA, CRJ). The vast majority of the year's birds were seen in the last week of August as shown in the table.

Date	Location	No. and direction	Observer(s)
23 Aug	Splash Point	4 E	PSB, MRE
	Beachy Head	2 E	DC, JFC, BK
25 Aug	Selsey Bill	31 W	OM, DIS, SH <i>et al</i>
26 Aug	Splash Point	4 W & 2 E	MRE
27 Aug	Selsey Bill	9 W	BFF, OM, DM, PC
30 Aug	Selsey Bill	2 E	JA, CN, SR

The movement of 31 W off Selsey Bill on the morning of 25 Aug included two parties of seven birds. The only other record during the year was of 2 E at Selsey Bill on 14 Sep (AH, OM). [DHH]

Storm Petrel

Hydrobates pelagicus

Very scarce visitor; mainly in mid-summer and after autumn gales. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern.

The only record during the year was of a single bird watched for three minutes as it flew east past Splash Point (Seaford) on 5 Oct (MRE). This single record continues the run of seven years in which numbers have failed to reach double figures. [DHH]

Gannet

Morus bassanus

Common passage migrant and non-breeding summer visitor; once scarce but now fairly common to common in winter. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern.

Overall numbers were similar to those in 2014 despite Selsey Bill exceeding last year's figures in each of the five recording periods. The movements recorded at four seawatching sites are shown in the table.

	Jan-Feb		Mar-May		Jun-Jul		Aug-Oct		Nov-Dec	
	E	W	E	W	E	W	E	W	E	W
Selsey Bill	165	486	2568	1729	1186	792	2726	2144	262	1963
Worthing	1	25	444	175	86	42	266	380	36	253
Splash Point	131	-	411	79	-	-	461	4	78	1
Beachy Head	113	1	71	5	-	-	320	-	nc	nc

The only three-figure count in the Jan-Feb period was of 120 E at Splash Point on 13 Feb. Numbers remained low in March but in April there were easterly movements past Selsey Bill of 116 and 127 on the 17th and 26th respectively. There was no apparent pattern to the movements in May. On 2 May there were 229 E off Selsey Bill but 230 W the following day when there also 111 E passing Splash Point. At Selsey Bill birds continued to be seen moving both east and west throughout the remainder of May with peaks of 107 W on the 5th and 114 E on the 15th. Numbers in June were typically low and the only movement of note in July was of 288 E and 113 W off Selsey Bill on the 26th.

Post-breeding dispersal was presumably the cause of an increase in numbers from mid-August onwards with 281 E past Selsey Bill on 12 Aug while on 23 Aug there were 177 E past Selsey Bill and 269 E past Splash Point. The trend of easterly movement continued into September with 491 passing Selsey Bill on the 11th and 101 E the following day but 190 W off Worthing on 14 Sep. Following 185 E off Selsey Bill on 6 Oct, westerly movements became the norm peaking on 24 Oct with 548 W at Selsey Bill, 183 W at Portobello, 250 W at Beachy Head and a feeding party of 229 moving west off Hastings. The westerly movements continued throughout the remainder of the year with counts at Selsey Bill of 405 W on 7 Nov, 105 W the following day, a total of 339 W on 11 and 12 Dec and 267 W on 30 Dec.

The first major offshore feeding party of the year was of 100 off Worthing on 20 May but the largest concentrations were off Selsey Bill in December with 500-550 birds present on both the 26th and 29th. [DHH]

Cormorant*Phalacrocorax carbo*

Fairly common but localised resident and common winter visitor.

Cormorants were recorded in 259 tetrads (27% of the 964 tetrads wholly within Sussex). The monthly WeBS counts for the principal sites were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
County total	465	591	600	703	620	540	626	932	849	859	924	472
Chichester Hbr	29	36	38	13	10	11	5	15	26	56	34	22
Medmerry	6	9	9	15	27	41	46	56	48	63	17	21
Pagham Hbr	31	3	37	38	42	62	11	71	53	98	90	38
Chichester GP	19	40	135	170	164	nc	nc	nc	17	26	158	33
Weir Wood Res	17	22	18	14	4	8	16	25	41	30	49	26
Ouse Valley	11	33	3	6	5	-	1	17	6	133	17	15
Pevensey Levels	19	21	28	12	8	12	6	19	19	30	13	25
Bewl Water	20	51	18	nc	nc	nc	nc	68	84	42	60	28
Wadhurst Park	41	4	nc	-	nc	-	nc	nc	49	60	30	17
Rye Bay	164	219	239	389	333	387	473	543	348	290	256	101

During the first winter period treble-figure counts, representing the largest concentrations, were found at Chichester GP, Pagham Hbr and Rye Hbr; the highest WeBS count was 214 at Rye Hbr on 8 Mar. During this period, observers at Selsey Bill recorded 38 on 1 Jan (22 W, 16 offshore) and, in February, 80 on the 14th (23 W, 57 offshore).

The largest roost recorded during this period was at Burton MP where at least 60 birds roosted on 10 Jan and 34 on 2 Feb. Although cormorants were recorded in almost all months at Worthing the highest monthly total was 125 in April (including 100 E and 19 W) and a peak count of 21 on the 21st.

Breeding was confirmed at three sites, Chichester GP, Iford Brooks and Rye Hbr. Birds were first seen sitting on nests at Iford Brooks on 15 Feb and on 19 Apr there were 14 nests with at least 12 young being fed outside the nests. On 17 Apr 174 nests were counted at Rye Hbr and at Chichester GP 125 nests were counted on 1 May.

During the summer and autumn months the largest concentrations were generally to be found in Rye Bay and double-figure counts were made widely at the traditional wetland sites listed in the WeBS table above. Small numbers, however, were also found at other suitable wetland sites mostly near the coast or in one of the major river valleys.

In the second winter period, observers at Selsey Bill recorded a total of 359 birds on three dates between 11 and 27 Dec (122 W, 237 offshore) with a peak day count of 199 on the 11th and 100 offshore on the 27th. The largest roosts recorded during this period were at Steyning Levels, where 42 were counted on 20 Oct, and on offshore structures at Brooklands (Worthing), where the count was 26 also on 20 Oct. [RJBJ, JAH]

Shag*Phalacrocorax aristotelis*

Scarce winter visitor and passage migrant; rare away from the coast. Red listed species of high conservation concern.

There were only ten records from January to the end of August, principally one or two birds at four coastal localities of Selsey Bill, Worthing, Glyne Gap (Bexhill) and Rye Hbr. Additionally there was one inland at Weir Wood Res on 6 Feb.

Numbers increased from September onwards with regular counts from Selsey Bill, almost all of juveniles heading east. There were eight counts of five or more birds between 27 Sep and 4 Nov with a peak of 14 on 3 Nov. There was no obvious movement recorded further east along the coast, which would suggest that the observations from Selsey Bill were feeding movements of birds from the Solent. From 5 Nov to the year end there were 13 records of a single bird and six of two birds on 17 dates from four coastal localities between Selsey Bill and Newhaven.

The approximate monthly totals are shown in the following table:

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
1	3	-	3	2	-	-	3	37	61	35	8

These figures could well exaggerate the actual number of birds present as the majority from September to November represent figures from Selsey Bill, where the same birds may well have been involved in feeding movements on a daily basis. [RJB]

Eurasian Bittern*Botaurus stellaris*

Scarce but increasing winter visitor; rare outside the winter months. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern. Schedule 1 species.

The minimum monthly numbers of Bitterns and sites where they were recorded were as shown in the table below.

Mild winter conditions at both ends of the year meant it was another fairly poor one for this species, with numbers generally comparable to 2014 but with a few more records in spring. There were wintering birds at Arundel WWT, Eastbourne, Pett Level and Rye Hbr. A second bird was recorded at Rye Hbr on 1 Jan but it cannot be discounted that this might have been the same bird recorded on the 4th at Pett Level. The only records away from these traditional sites were of a bird at Pebsham Marsh on 17 Feb and one at Arlington Res on 19 Mar.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
County total	5	3	4	4	3	1	-	-	-	2	2	3
Arundel WWT	1	1	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-
Arlington Res	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Eastbourne	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Ewhurst Green	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Pebsham	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Pett Level	1	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	-
Tillingham	-	-	-	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Rye Hbr	2	1	2	2	2	1	-	-	-	1	-	1

In April, a single bird at Arundel WWT on the 19th and another at Tillingham (Rye) on the 4th and 19th were the only records away from Rye Hbr where one was heard booming on the 9th. In May, the Tillingham individual was seen again on the 9th and booming was heard at Rye Hbr from two separate individuals on several dates during late spring, but breeding was not suspected. The final sighting there was of one on 6 Jun.

During a mild autumn numbers were low. The first record was of one at Rye Hbr on 1 Oct where birds were recorded on several dates in that month and in December. Elsewhere, away from the county's only reliable site, records came from Pett Level on 18 and 19 Oct and 16 Nov, Arundel WWT on 5 Nov, Eastbourne on 16 Dec and Ewhurst Green three days later, all of single birds. [AH]



Squacco Heron, Southease, July 2015 (Ads Bowley)

Squacco Heron

Ardeola ralloides

Very rare vagrant. Breeds in Mediterranean basin from southern Spain to the Black Sea and east to Kazakhstan wintering in northern tropical Africa.

One discovered near Southease on 3 Jul (CJRB) stayed in the area for the rest of the day and was seen by many observers. This is the ninth county record and the first since one in Seaford on 21 Jun 2012. Records have occurred in April (1), June (5), July (2) and September (1). The record has been accepted by BBRC. [DHH]

Cattle Egret*Bubulcus ibis*

Very scarce migrant.

Two records were accepted: one individual in non-breeding plumage was at Winchelsea on 13 Mar (CHD); another at Rodmell on 2 Sep (DC) landed with a Little Egret and departed with it towards a Little Egret roost. These bring the county total up to 56 this century and the monthly totals for March and September increase to three and two respectively. [JAH]

Little Egret*Egretta garzetta*

Formerly rare but has bred since 2001 and is a scarce and increasing resident and probably scarce autumn visitor; status as winter visitor uncertain.

Little Egrets were recorded in 191 tetrads. The monthly WeBS counts at the principal locations are shown below.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
County total	101	72	134	89	59	84	99	256	254	185	104	103
Chichester Hbr	39	29	72	30	18	24	15	101	110	86	26	22
Medmerry	12	8	6	14	16	11	17	19	19	11	8	15
Pagham Hbr	6	-	5	10	5	10	28	36	38	36	14	8
Chichester GP	-	-	-	-	-	nc	nc	nc	-	-	2	6
Arun Valley	1	7	18	16	5	3	2	0	2	1	3	2
Ouse Valley	8	4	4	2	-	1	6	2	4	8	9	6
Cuckmere Estuary	4	4	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	16	14	18
Pevensey Levels	2	6	9	6	2	2	-	3	4	-	-	1
Rye Bay	20	7	3	8	8	19	24	56	43	15	16	16

In addition to the WeBS counts there were ten at Pagham Hbr on 17 Feb, and an influx at Ivy Lake (Chichester GP) from 8 to 14 Jan, with a maximum of 13 on the 10th. The only double figure count at a non-WeBS site was 11 at Woodmancote on 16 Feb, a good number for an inland location.

Breeding was confirmed in seven tetrads. A minimum of 50 nests was recorded: Old Park Wood (Bosham) 5, Hoe Fm (Flansham) 4, Warningcamp 1, Owl Copse (Pagham Hbr) 17, Applesham (Coombes) 12, Rodmell 3, Glynleigh Level 5, Winchelsea 3. This was a big increase on last year's 35 and only just short of 2013's record total of 53. As nests can be difficult to locate, the true total is likely to be higher, and there may also be other unrecorded sites.

As usual, the highest counts occurred post-breeding. The lower Cuckmere was a favourite haunt; the highest count of the year there was 35 on 15 Jul. A count in the area of the Rodmell colony on 3 Jul revealed 30. In August, there were counts of over 20 from Fishbourne Creek, Thorney Island and Goring and another good inland total of 20 at Bewl Water on the 11th. The species is regularly seen feeding in coastal rock pools at low tide moving between feeding and roosting sites with example records being 46 E at Ferring on 5 Aug, 35 at Worthing on the same day, and a loose flock of 29 W there on 28 Sep. Finally, 71 were counted going to roost at Pagham North Wall on 3 Sep, by far the year's highest total at any one site.



Little Egret, Littlehampton GC, October 2015 (Bola Akinola)

In the last two months, the largest counts at a single site came from the lower Cuckmere again, peaking at 19 on 18 Dec. Elsewhere, there were some good numbers at inland sites: 17 at Arundel WWT on 13 Nov, 16 at Shopham Bridge (Byworth) on 28 Dec and 12 at Burton MP on the 9th. [CJRB]

Great White Egret

Ardea alba

Very scarce but increasing visitor.

A maximum of 24 were reported during the year, but it is likely that at least some of the sightings involved the same individuals. In the first three months of the year the only records were from Rye Hbr, with two from 1 Jan to 8 Feb and one again from 16 Mar to 3 Apr. Spring migration brought a flurry of sightings, with 1 E at Splash Point (Seaford) on 8 Apr, one at Weir Wood Res on the 17th, and one back at Rye Hbr on 18 Apr and 13 May. One was resident in the lower Cuckmere from 22 to 25 May, but the largest count of the year was of four at Scotney Court GP on 18 Jun. One at Southease on 3 Jul was the last of the summer.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Records in month	24	3	5	8	9	1	2	0	16	10	15	9

There was a gap in sightings until 19 Sep, when two were seen at Winchelsea Beach, followed by one at Thorney Island on the 29th and two at Rodmell and one at Eastbourne on 26 Oct. November brought one at Saltdean on the 22nd and one in the lower Cuckmere from the 22nd to the

24th, but the most consistent run of sightings were from Rye Hbr, with up to three between 5 Sep and 22 Dec. Finally, one was seen in Chichester Hbr on 28 Dec. [CJRB]

Grey Heron

Ardea cinerea

Fairly common resident.

Grey Herons were recorded from 317 tetrads. The monthly WeBS counts at the principal sites were as shown in the table below.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
County total	89	112	115	99	74	97	86	99	146	131	114	123
Chichester Hbr	13	18	23	7	10	4	3	12	22	16	12	19
Pagham Hbr	4	9	8	1	2	5	12	8	6	5	4	4
Arun Valley	10	11	7	16	4	18	5	9	9	16	12	12
Arun (South of Arundel)	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	2	6	5	3	10
Upper Adur Levels	12	1	3	1	-	-	2	-	-	-	3	2
Weir Wood Res	1	12	37	33	23	14	23	24	18	8	1	2
Ouse Valley	4	4	3	6	3	4	-	-	4	10	7	7
Cuckmere Haven	4	2	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	1	6	4
Pevensay Levels	7	11	13	9	8	13	6	12	10	12	8	6
Bowl Water	-	2	-	nc	nc	nc	nc	5	15	5	4	-
Wadhurst Park	3	5	nc	2	nc	3	nc	nc	5	3	10	6
Rye Bay	10	13	5	7	5	11	3	9	12	14	13	10

During the breeding season 241 nests were counted at 28 sites (214 nests at 32 sites in 2014) and another three previously occupied sites held no nests in 2015. Counts for individual heronries with occupied nests, listed from west to east, were as follows: Folly Pond (Liphook) 3, Old Park Wood Bosham (Chichester) 4, Norton Priory 3, Pagham East Side 11, Barnham Lidsey Rife 11, Arundel Watermeadows 2, Parham Northpark Wood 9, Rustington Golf Course 4, Kneppmill Pond 9, Warnham LNR 18, near Henfield 5, Applesham (Coombes) 4, New Close Farm (Burgess Hill) 2, Ardingly Reservoir 11, Weir Wood Reservoir 35, Firlie Park 7, Hempstead (Uckfield) 3, Friston Forest 8, Hadlow Down 11, Eridge Park 16, Hampden Lakes (Eastbourne) 3, Glynleigh Level (Pevensay) 19, Wadhurst Park 3, Wallers Haven (Pevensay) 11, Burwash 11, Winchelsea 13, Brede Valley 4, Union Canal (East Guldeford) 1.

Away from the heronries, large reservoirs and harbours, most reports during the rest of the year were of single birds or two or three birds at ponds, streams and marshy areas. [GO]

Black Stork

Ciconia nigra

Very rare vagrant.

A juvenile seen in flight at Rye Hbr on 12 Aug (MFA *et al.*) then frequented the Cooden, Bexhill and Little Common area until 5 Sep. During its stay the stork visited residential gardens on 14 Aug (HG, RG), 15 Aug (IS), 16 Aug (CM), 17 Aug (LW) and 26 Aug (LWi). On one occasion it was attracted into a garden by a dog's bone-like toy and then hit a window as it took off! On 17

Aug it was photographed in flight at Cooden (MGF) but the majority of other sightings were in the late morning and early afternoon when it was seen in flight over Little Common Recreation Ground but where it was commuting to and from was never established (mo). The record, which has been accepted by BBRC, is the fifteenth for the county and this is the fifth consecutive year in which the species has been recorded in Sussex but the first long-stayer for over fifty years. [DHH]



Black Stork, Cooden (Bexhill), August 2015 (Malcolm Freeman)

Glossy Ibis

Plegadis falcinellus

Rare but increasing vagrant.

There was only one bird recorded this year, a long-stayer at Pett Level from 26 Nov to at least 30 Dec (CRJB, CHD *et al.*). The county total moves on to c.67 with 25 this century. Since 1962, monthly arrival totals have been: February 5, April 6, May 5, September 5, October 10 and November 1. [JAH]

Spoonbill

Platylea leucorodia

Scarce visitor, most frequent in spring and autumn. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern. Schedule 1 species.

The minimum monthly numbers of Spoonbills and sites where they were recorded were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
County total	6	6	12	18	13	3	3	6	3	3	-	1
Chichester Hbr	3	3	4	4	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Pagham Hbr/Medmerry	3	3	5	5	3	1	-	4	2	1	-	1
Splash Point	-	-	-	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Cuckmere Haven	-	-	-	6	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Rodmell Brooks	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Eastbourne	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-
Rye Hbr	-	-	2	-	2	-	-	-	1	1	-	-
Scotney GP	-	-	-	-	5	2	2	2	-	1	-	-



Spoonbill, Medmerry, February 2015 (Andrew House)

The year started with the three over-wintering first winter birds in Chichester Hbr and the similar three in the Pagham Hbr/Medmerry area still in residence, remaining into March. Six at Medmerry on 29 Jan was the sole occasion all were seen together. The former group were joined by a fourth bird (possibly from the other site) on 21-22 Feb, with up to four remaining until at least 19 Apr with the last two seen on 13 May. In the Pagham Hbr/Medmerry area the original three were joined by a fourth bird on 22 Feb only (possibly from Chichester Hbr). In March, five were recorded on the 1st but thereafter numbers fluctuated from one to four until five were seen there on 17 Apr. Numbers there then varied between one and four until the final record of one on 11 Jun.

Interestingly, there were no records from elsewhere in the county until the start of eastwards spring migration in March; two were noted at Rye Hbr from the 17th to the 22nd and another one was at Rodmell Brooks on the 23rd and 24th. Three noted at Splash Point (Seaford) on 16 Apr, which may have been birds migrating from sites further west, heralded a good run of records in East Sussex. These included single birds at Cuckmere Haven on the 22 Apr that lingered until 25 May and five there on 30 Apr that (presumably) turned up at Scotney GP the following day. Finally, one or two birds were recorded regularly at Rye Hbr from 11 to 24 May which may have been the same two seen at Scotney GP from 16 Jun to 21 Aug. The only other summer record was of one seen at Eastbourne on 6 and 7 Jul.

Four birds in Pagham Hbr on 23 Aug were the first of the autumn there, though numbers were then lower than earlier in the year, with just one bird seen on various dates in September and October in the Pagham Hbr/Medmerry area, although two were recorded on 3 Sep. Similarly, a single bird was seen at Rye Hbr on 6, 29 and 30 Sep through to 26 Oct. Surprisingly, there were no records in November but, in December, there were just three sightings of a single bird between the 14th and the 15th in Pagham Hbr and at Medmerry on the 18th. [AH]

Little Grebe

Tachybaptus ruficollis

Scarce resident, passage migrant and winter visitor.

Little Grebes were recorded from 120 tetrads across the county. The monthly WeBS counts at the principal sites were as shown in the table below.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
County total	162	182	92	34	26	30	26	80	208	245	193	299
Chichester Hbr	44	50	32	7	-	2	4	6	38	75	50	123
Pagham Hbr	25	20	6	4	-	5	-	25	27	53	48	26
Chichester GP	4	-	5	4	9	nc	nc	nc	10	13	6	7
Arun Valley	7	9	7	1	-	1	1	-	6	6	9	9
Brooklands (Worthing)	5	7	4	4	4	5	5	6	13	21	3	5
Widewater (Lancing)	20	16	13	-	-	-	-	-	1	11	13	28
Cuckmere Haven	4	16	-	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	4	-	14	24
Bewl Water	8	7	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	37	66	17	8	11
Rye Bay	32	32	14	8	4	9	5	2	38	37	33	51

Peak counts in the first winter period, not included in the WeBS count were 46 at Rye Hbr on 18 Jan, 40 at Pagham Hbr on 16 and 23 Jan, 36 at Widewater (Lancing) on 18 Jan and 22 in the lower Adur Valley on 6 Jan.

The approximate monthly minimum numbers, taking the largest count at a site as the minimum were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
No. of birds	312	231	152	84	72	73	90	203	181	254	205	224
No. of sites	42	37	35	29	28	21	19	29	30	28	31	39

Breeding was confirmed in four tetrads, was probable in another ten and possible in 11 more. Nest building was observed at Pett Pools on 7 Apr. Birds were observed displaying on the Knepp Estate on 9 Apr and chicks were present on 3 Jul. Display was observed at Pagham Hbr on 20 May with chicks present on 18 Jun. At least ten pairs bred on Chichester GP this year and eight of these were confirmed as having young. Chicks were also observed at Aldingbourne (Chichester).

The largest count of the year was 67 at Bewl Water on 11 Aug, which beat last year's record count by one and Pett Level also held high numbers in the autumn, peaking at 62 on 18 Oct. Both sites dwindled into single figures by December. Rye Hbr had counts of 20 or more birds throughout the autumn and second winter periods. Other large counts were 40 at Pagham Lagoon on 21 Nov, 25 at Chichester Hbr on 3 Dec and 22 on the Cuckmere Meanders on 17 Dec. Numbers at Widewater (Lancing) built from single figures in September to a peak of 28 on 26 Nov before numbers dwindled again, with just 12 birds recorded on 30 Dec. [RAB]

Great Crested Grebe

Podiceps cristatus

Fairly common resident, passage migrant and winter visitor.

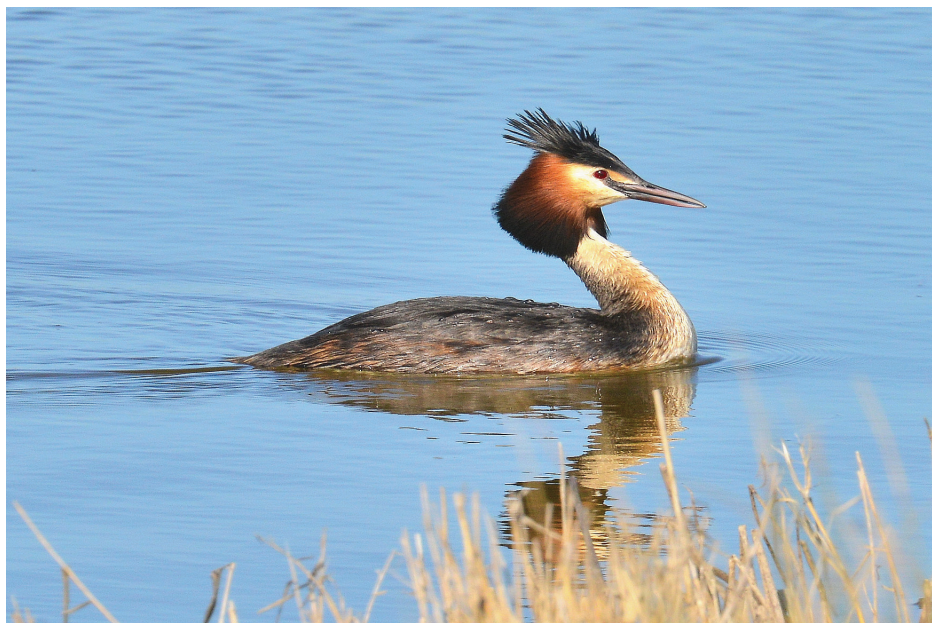
Great Crested Grebe was recorded from 121 tetrads across the county. The monthly WeBS counts at the principal sites were as shown in the table below.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
County total	214	537	331	182	175	197	264	490	474	426	244	188
Chichester Hbr	17	15	30	5	20	17	3	1	21	18	8	11
Pagham Hbr	7	10	9	15	8	19	11	9	19	29	18	12
Chichester GP	22	12	18	18	10	nc	nc	nc	30	41	33	26
Weir Wood Res	26	28	38	54	57	77	130	137	125	89	31	37
Arlington Res	5	6	8	14	9	13	31	31	31	48	14	8
Bewl Water	57	59	94	nc	nc	nc	nc	190	140	61	61	30
Glyne Gap	15	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	-	nc	nc
Rye Bay	34	374	58	18	18	32	34	92	58	97	33	22

After two years of relatively low counts in the first winter period larger flocks were observed in 2015. There were approximately 500 on the sea in Rye Bay on 10 Feb, the highest count of the year. There were 300 there on 4 Jan and that had risen to 400 by the 25th. Numbers on the sea between Worthing and Ferring peaked at 290 on 9 Feb. Other high count locations were 109 between Beachy Head and Eastbourne on 27 Feb and 94 at Bewl Water on 6 Mar. Few notable movements were recorded by seawatchers and interpretation is complicated by the presence of feeding flocks offshore. The table shows the monthly totals of passing birds taking the highest daily count at each of the main sites. Clearly most were seen at the end of the year with peak movements at Selsey Bill of 57 W and 4 E on 24 Nov and 31 W and 1E on 29 Nov.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
West	20	10	36	7	2	1	2	1	-	3	146	57
East	14	31	24	19	12	1	-	2	-	1	31	26

Breeding was confirmed in 15 tetrads, was recorded as probable in eight and possible in a further three. On 10 Feb four pairs at Widewater (Lancing) were already in breeding plumage and some birds in the large group observed on 27 Feb in the Eastbourne/Beachy Head area were observed in courtship displays. Display was also observed at Chichester Hbr, Chichester GP, Burton MP, Ardingly Res, Marsh Fm (Yapton), Balcombe, Weir Wood Res and Rye Hbr. The first youngster of the year was recorded at Milton Mount Pond (Crawley) on 14 Apr. The same pair were observed with a second brood on 11 Jun. The pair at Burton MP were also believed to have hatched two broods. An adult was observed sitting on a nest on the west side of Pagham Hbr on 2 May and three pairs bred at the site. Three pairs also bred at Chichester GP and there were five nests at Weir Wood Res. Post-breeding flocks gathered on inland lakes and 140 were at Bewl Water on 11 Aug and, as usual, numbers dwindled there during the rest of the year to a count of 30 by the 12 Dec. At Arlington Res, by contrast, numbers built from around 30 in July and August to 100 on 28 Nov. At Weir Wood Res the peak count was 137 on 16 Aug and numbers remained high in September, with 125 present on the 12th, before declining to only 26 on 24 Dec.



Great Crested Grebe, Pett Level, April 2015 (Chris Hobden)

During the second winter period the highest count in Rye Bay was 80 on 25 Oct. Counts at the usual favoured area off Worthing peaked at 24 on 23 Nov while off Climping there were 25 on 1 Nov and off Church Norton 22 on 24 Nov. The sites with other counts of over 20 during the second winter period are shown in the WeBS table. [RAB]

Red-necked Grebe*Podiceps grisegena*

Scarce winter visitor and passage migrant. Red listed species of high conservation concern.

Once again, there were very few records for this species. The first sighting of the year was of one at Pagham Hbr on 5 Jan. In February, 1 E was recorded at Selsey Bill on the 7th and two days later another was at an inland site near Medmerry.

In the second winter period, three birds were noted at Selsey Bill on 24 Nov and 1 W was recorded at Worthing Beach on the 27th. [RAB]

Slavonian Grebe*Podiceps auritus*

Scarce winter visitor and passage migrant. Red listed species of high conservation concern. Schedule 1 species.

The approximate minimum monthly numbers, taking the largest counts at a site as the minimum, were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr		Oct	Nov	Dec
Chichester Hbr	5	1	1	-		2	-	-
Selsey Bill – Church Norton	33	32	20	-		1	4	5
Littlehampton – Worthing	1	1	2	2		-	1	-
Lancing - Hove	1	-	1	-		-	1	-
Splash Point	-	-	2	4		-	-	-
Birling Gap	-	-	-	-		-	-	-
Eastbourne	-	-	-	-		-	-	-
Rye Bay	-	1	-	-		1	1	-
Other sites	1	6	1	-		2	-	-

The species was recorded in 24 tetrads. As is usual most records during the first winter period came from West Sussex. The first record was of presumably the same two birds offshore at both Selsey Bill and Pagham Hbr on 1 Jan. The numbers in the main wintering area from Selsey Bill to Church Norton peaked at 33 on 18 Jan, with 14W and 19 offshore. This is a more typical number than in the last two years, which peaked at only 10 birds. Thirty-two birds were seen offshore, on a flat calm sea, on 9 Feb from Pagham Hbr and there were 20 there on 17 Mar. The last sighting of the first winter period was one on 31 Mar, offshore at Selsey Bill. The peak within Chichester Hbr was just five birds on 22 Jan. Most records from elsewhere in the county were of single birds, including one that was at Arlington Res from 5 to 15 Feb, but five were seen at Bognor Regis on 10 Feb.

Not much migration was observed in April with just two birds seen at Rustington on the 6th and four seen flying E at Splash Point (Seaford) on the 10th.

The first bird of the autumn was at Ivy Lake (Chichester) on 11 Oct. On the 24th there were singles at opposite ends of the county with one at Rye Hbr and another offshore at Selsey Bill. There were also singles at Scotney GP on the 28th and Pagham Hbr on the 30th and two at Chichester Hbr on the 31st.

During the second winter period there were single birds at Rye Hbr on 15 Nov, Climping Gap on 16 Nov and Widewater (Lancing) on 29 Nov. However, most records, and all the December ones, were from the main wintering area and, even there, the high count was just five birds offshore at Selsey Bill on 20 Dec. The last sighting of the year was at Selsey Bill where a single bird was seen flying west on 29 Dec. [RAB]

Black-necked Grebe

Podiceps nigricollis

Very scarce winter visitor and passage migrant. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern. Schedule 1 species.

The approximate minimum monthly totals were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr		Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
No. of birds	4	3	3	3		1	1	1	4
No. of sites	2	3	2	1		1	1	1	2

The first record of the year was of two birds at Scotney GP on 1 Jan which had been there since 9 Dec 2014. The next day, however, they were joined by a third bird and all three remained until at least 1 Mar, declining to two on the 10th but only one on the 18th. A single individual was also seen in Chichester Hbr on 23-25 Jan and one at Rye Hbr on 22 Feb and 21 Mar could have been different from those at nearby Scotney GP.

In April, a single bird was offshore, but drifted east, at Worthing on the 3rd, another was at Rye Hbr the same day (and on the 6th) and on the 8th 1 E was noted at Splash Point (Seaford), the final spring record.

Autumn sightings involved single birds at Scotney GP again on 25-26 Sep and 26 Oct. In the second winter period, one was noted at Rye Hbr on 26 Nov and, in December, three birds were at Pagham Hbr on the 12th and one was recorded at Rye Hbr on the 13th and 19th. [RAB]

Honey-buzzard

Pernis apivorus

Very scarce breeding summer visitor and passage migrant. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern. Schedule 1 species.

The group that monitors Honey-buzzards in the south-east provided their summary for all Sussex breeding pairs known to them. Other Sussex fieldworkers also submitted valuable records. There were probably four successful pairs raising a likely total of six to eight juveniles. Of these four pairs, three pairs were proven to be successful with one pair re-occupying a nest in a Douglas fir and raising two young, a second pair nesting in an oak, also raising two young, and a third pair which was not found until late summer when the two young had already fledged. This third pair was watched independently by two other observers who recorded possibly three different Honey-buzzards on 8, 15 and 19 Aug (SHL, PJE). At a fourth location the adults were regularly seen taking food into the nesting wood in mid-August but the fledged young were not observed (MS-H). Since four feeding flights were recorded in just one and a half hours it is likely that this fourth pair had well-grown, possibly fledged young. At a fifth location which has had birds present for several years (but no known breeding to date), a nest was found but there was no evidence that it had been used. At a sixth location, which has been a regular breeding site for many years, only

the male was seen and although it remained 'on territory' throughout the summer it did not appear to pair off with another female. Otherwise several other historic sites were checked carefully but none appeared to be occupied.

In the spring and early summer there were records from three inland locations in both East and West Sussex. A male was seen at one location in East Sussex on 27 May (MJC, PDC), and a displaying male was seen in West Sussex on 4 Jun (BFF), with another displaying male seen at a different West Sussex location on 4 and 6 Jun (BFF). Later on in the summer a single bird circled with a Common Buzzard at a location in West Sussex on 18 Jul (SHL) and a few days later in East Sussex the observer had a 150-m close view of a female on 21 Jul (CRP).

There were eight records for late summer and the autumn beginning with single adult males at Blaker Park, Brighton (APC) and at Barcombe Res on 16 Aug (JSG, SH *et al.*). At Pulborough Brooks an adult female glided SW across the North Brooks on 29 Aug (AW, LK), and on the same day at Beachy Head a single spiralled very high before heading out to sea (JFC, DC, BK). The following day at Beachy Head an adult male came over the cliff and over Hodcombe before drifting off to the north (RHC). At Patcham, Brighton, on 7 Sep, a female heading south, came into view low down and was closely shadowed by a number of Herring Gulls (DGCH). There was another single at Beachy Head flying east on 8 Sep (JFC, DRC, PJ) and finally a single at Selsey Bill seen heading out to sea on 19 Sep (JA, PSB *et al.*). [MEK]

Black Kite

Milvus migrans

Rare vagrant.

There was only one accepted record of a single bird at Wick Bottom, Woodingdean on 21 May (DB). The county total moves on to 38 since the first record in 1970 with 19 this century. Of the overall total, 19 have occurred in May. [JAH]

Red Kite

Milvus milvus

Scarce breeding resident (first bred in 2004) and fairly common and increasing visitor.

Red Kites were recorded in 265 tetrads, distributed 172 in West Sussex and 93 in East Sussex, showing that this species is still expanding its range across the counties.

The estimated minimum monthly totals, excluding the resident pairs, were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
County total	98	65	131	161	194	100	67	56	31	54	56	65
Study area	44	10	14	12	12	10	4	2	2	8	20	21
The Burgh	34	22	16	22	20	17	20	15	12	12	12	16
Elsewhere	20	33	101	127	72	73	43	39	17	34	22	28

The county total of 161 for April is another Sussex record. If the resident pairs are included then there were probably in excess of 200 Red Kites in Sussex in April, astonishing numbers compared to just a few years ago. The table shows the usual movements between March and July with peak activity occurring in April. The figures for the study area and the Burgh are inevitably distorted by the targeted winter roost counts as the high figure of 44 for the study area in January

was obtained when a careful roost count was made but only ten were recorded in February when there was no roost count. Most of the records for 'elsewhere' relate to casual observations of birds moving through, probably second-year birds, including some visiting from all parts of the UK.

The Red Kite study team (CBC, MEK) undertook winter roost counts and recorded a minimum of 44 in the West Sussex study area on 4 Jan and 37 in the Burgh area (Burpham) on the 6th, figures which were records for these well-established roost sites. The West Sussex study area roost has been monitored since winter 2004/2005 and the Burgh area roost since winter 2011/2012. Whenever possible, individual birds were aged and apart from a handful of adults in the former roost the remainder were all first-calendar-year birds. Whilst speculative, it seems likely that most West Sussex-born Red Kites visit one or other (or both) of these roosts during their first year. Interestingly, during winter 2014/2015 it became evident at the Burgh roost that, amongst the Red Kite, there were also young Ravens and Common Buzzards; on 26 Jan there was a peak count of 85 Ravens, 28 Red Kites and six Common Buzzards in a mixed communal roost.

In East Sussex the situation is rather different; as numbers are low and there are very few breeding pairs which are very isolated from each other; the establishment of a significant communal roost is probably some years away.

Breeding was confirmed in only two tetrads (one in each county), with no details of breeding productivity, and was probable in three. However, the best estimate is that the breeding pool is around 25-30 pairs but probably more. Red Kite pairs are fairly easy to locate and count where the species is common and pairs are nesting fairly close together but, as with many other large raptors, this is not quite so easy when the pairs are scattered. With the beginning of incubation Red Kites do not usually draw attention to themselves and nest sites can be difficult to find. Fieldwork conducted in the second half of March and the first ten days of April provides the best opportunity of finding nesting pairs.

A very limited study took place on downland to the west of the Arun Valley (MEK). Six pairs, four of which were new to the observer, were found on 25 Mar in a relatively small area with 'spacing' between the pairs of 2-3 km. If this exercise were replicated elsewhere then doubtless the estimate of 25-30 pairs would be significantly revised upwards. The current 'spacing' generally found in Sussex does suggest that this species is still relatively uncommon for elsewhere in southern England neighbouring pairs can be as little as 100 m apart.

Multiple sightings of note were mostly in the area between the Burgh and Wepham Down, which is clearly the best tetrad in which to see large numbers regularly. There were 20 on 29 Jul, ten on 6 Aug and 12 on 6 Oct, 10 Nov and 1 Dec. Elsewhere, there were 15 at West Dean Woods on 23 Jan and nine overflying at Arundel WWT on 8 Nov and ten overflying on 12 Dec.

Although in 2014 cross-channel migrants were reported in unprecedented numbers, in 2015 there was just one record of one coming in off the sea at Hastings on 4 Oct. This is an intriguing report as this is the first-ever Sussex record of an autumn cross-channel migrant and in the reverse direction from what one might expect. As a partial migrant, it would not be surprising if a few British Red Kites cross the channel in late summer/early autumn and then, most probably, return in the spring. One wonders if this bird crossed the channel, decided against staying and then returned. It seems likely that there is a lot more cross-channel movement of Red Kites than we currently appreciate. Records from 1953-88 of c.52 birds, before the reintroduction programme in the Chilterns, seem to support this likelihood.

Two tagged birds were recorded. The first was a Sussex-tagged bird: yellow tag G left wing, purple tag G right wing, seen entering its nesting wood in the West Dean area on 22 Mar. The second was an East Midlands bird: white tag 33 left wing, red tag 33 right wing, that was first

reported in December 2013 and then again in December 2014; this bird was seen again in the West Dean Woods area on 8 Feb. [MEK]

Marsh Harrier

Circus aeruginosus

Scarce spring and autumn passage migrant and very scarce winter visitor; very scarce breeder since 2004. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern. Schedule 1 species.

The approximate monthly totals are shown in the following table.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
No. of birds	19	19	15	13	13	12	9	16	21	13	9	16

The table shows the species was recorded throughout the year with the fewest found in July and November. The majority of records involving more than one bird came from Rye Hbr and Pett Level. The highest counts of the year came in the first winter period; at Pett Level there were seven on 8 Feb, five on both 18 Jan and 8 Mar and four on various dates up until 20 Apr. At Rye Hbr four birds were seen regularly between 15 Jan and 18 Mar with five on 23 Jan. Three other notable counts in this period were five at Pevensey Levels on 5 Jan, three there on 8 Feb and at Pagham Hbr on 17 Mar.

Breeding was confirmed in just two tetrads (two in 2014) with probable or possible breeding in a further two, with two fledglings recorded on 3 Aug. Clearly the county population has not begun to expand significantly from its small breeding pool as yet; habitat would appear to be a potential limiting factor inhibiting the expansion although it is unclear if this is actually the case in Sussex.

During the autumn single birds were reported from over a dozen locations spread across the county, aside from the main sites of Pett Level and the Rye Bay area. At Pevensey Levels two were recorded on 3 Aug and the same number at Chantry Hill on 1 Sep. At Pulborough Brooks there was one on 3 Aug increasing to two by the 9th and peaking at three on 1 Sep, dropping back down to two again on the 29th. One was seen to fly out to sea from Hastings CP on 27 Sep and one was seen circling ½ mile out to sea off Cuckmere Haven on 8 Sep.

Numbers in the second winter period were generally lower than earlier in the year with only observers at Pett Level and Pulborough Brooks recording three birds. The former site reached a maximum of three on several dates and at Pulborough Brooks there were three on 28 Oct and two on 19 Dec. At Pevensey Levels two were recorded on both 13 and 29 Dec, whilst a single bird was observed at Amberley Wild Brooks on several dates from 3 Nov onwards. [DB]

Hen Harrier

Circus cyaneus

Scarce winter visitor and passage migrant. Red listed species of high conservation concern. Schedule 1 species.

Hen Harriers were recorded in only 36 tetrads. The sum of the monthly totals was only 33, continuing the downward trend for this species in Sussex (35 in 2014, 55 in 2013, 56 in 2012, 88 in 2011) and reflecting the Hen Harrier's declining fortunes in England due to illegal persecution. The highest monthly total was in January, but with only seven. Minimum monthly totals, which may include some duplication as birds roamed widely, were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
County total*	7	6	3	1	-	1	1	-	3	5	1	5
Medmerry, Chichester & Pagham Hbrs	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	2	-	1
West Sussex Downs	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	2	-	-
West Sussex Commons	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Arun Valley	-	-	1	1	-	-	1	-	-	1	-	1
East Sussex Downs	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Ouse Valley	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Ashdown Forest	1	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Pevensey Levels	2	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Rye Bay	1	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	1	1
Other sites	-	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	1

*Monthly totals are not necessarily the sum of locations totals as some birds may be seen in more than one location

Hen Harriers were seen at most of the usual locations during the first winter period but were absent from the West Sussex commons. The only location where two were seen was Pevensey Levels on 7 and 18 Jan; one was seen there on six further dates in January and one in February. One was at East Guldeford Level on 1 Jan, one at Hurstpierpoint on the 14th and a female at Sheepcote Valley (Brighton) on the 30th, which may have been the same ‘ringtail’ seen at Stanmer Park on 10 Feb. On Ashdown Forest, one was seen on three dates in January and one in February, which may have been the same one. Other February records came from Hunston on the 6th, Pevensey Levels on the 16th, Woodmancote on the 18th and North Chailey on the 24th. There were more records for March but they seem to relate to only two or three birds: one at Pulborough Brooks on the 1st and 22nd, a “ringtail” in the Ouse Valley on ten dates between the 3rd and 28th and a female on Ashdown Forest on three dates between the 3rd and 27th. The Ouse Valley bird and the Ashdown Forest bird could have been the same individual. The last record of the spring was at Bury (Arun Valley) on 1 Apr.

There were two unusual summer records: one at Pett Level on 14-15 Jun and another at Pulborough Brooks on 10 Jul.

The first bird seen in the autumn was at Medmerry on 5 Sep. A “ringtail” was reported from between the Burgh (Burpham) and Wepham from 26 Sep to 11 Oct and joined by an immature on 8 Oct. Birds were seen at Medmerry and the western harbours on two dates in September and five in October but it is difficult to know how many individuals were involved. One was seen flying high west over the sea at Hastings on the 31st.

The only record for November was one at Scotney GP on the 8th. In December, one was recorded at Pulborough Brooks and Hardham from the 2nd to the 11th. One was in the Pevensey/Eastbourne areas on three dates between the 9th and 31st, one at Blackdown on the 17th, one at Steep Down (Lancing) on the 18th, one at Beeding Brooks on the 20th (which was probably the same as the Steep Down bird) and one at Scotney GP on the 29th.

Unusually, and unfortunately, there were no records from Ashdown Forest during the latter half of the year and there were no adult males reported anywhere in Sussex in 2015. [MJC]

Pallid Harrier*Circus macrourus*

Very rare vagrant. Breeds from the Ukraine east through Russia and winters throughout much of east and central Africa.

A juvenile first seen at the Burgh on 29 Sep remained in the area until 10 Oct (BFF, DM, DIS *et al.*). During its stay the harrier was seen on most dates by many observers and the record has been accepted by the BBRC. This is only the second record of this species for Sussex, the first also being a juvenile at the Burgh from 15 Sep to 7 Oct 2011. [DHH]

Goshawk*Accipiter gentilis*

Very scarce resident. Schedule 1 species.

This is a species that has undoubtedly been under-recorded in Sussex for several years. Thanks to some very intensive fieldwork by just three or four members the situation in the county is a little clearer. The pair that bred successfully in West Sussex between 2009 and 2012 built yet another nest in larch and was successful in 2015 with fledged young. In March, three adults were seen at this site, probably two females and a male.

Quite close to this location, and no doubt benefitting from the productivity of this well-established pair, an area of woodland and farmland was visited no fewer than 28 times throughout the year, revealing some very interesting data (MM). In the spring there were a minimum of four different males: two second-calendar-year birds, one third-calendar-year bird and then on 18 Mar a male in full adult plumage. A male was seen chasing a second male on 18 March and aggressively harassing a Common Buzzard on 1 April. Then a juvenile was seen on 19 August (SHL, PJE). On 22 Nov one adult male was seen chasing another adult male and on 26 Nov both male and female birds were present. A first-year female was seen on 4 Dec and a first-year male on the 8th. It is probable that breeding took place at this location.

Elsewhere in West Sussex, a study area of some 70 square kilometres held a minimum of three territorial pairs (DB). At least two of these pairs bred successfully, fledging at least two and an estimated three young respectively. There was also a possible fourth pair. An unknown number of probably non-breeding birds was also present, often only apparent during the peak display period in March when, for example, three to four birds were seen in the air together at two separate sites on different dates. In common with many larger raptors, the spacing of these territories is very regular, and nearest-neighbour distances between known or potential nest sites currently range between 2 and 4 km. If these densities were to be replicated across suitable habitat in Sussex, the population would be, and is likely becoming, significantly larger. There was also a noticeable increase in autumn records, often of first-winter birds, presumably reflecting breeding success from the growing number of established pairs. [MEK, DB]

Sparrowhawk*Accipiter nisus*

Common resident and passage migrant.

Sparrowhawks were recorded in 312 tetrads (32% of the 964 tetrads wholly within Sussex), an increase of 12% on 2014's 279. The majority of records (88%) related to single birds. The highest counts during the first quarter were of threes at Arundel WWT on 18 Jan, Newick on the

26th, Worth on 1 Mar, Church Hill (Ashdown Forest) on the 8th, Pagham Hbr on the 21st, Warnham LNR on the 25th. Three were also recorded at Pippingford Park (Ashdown Forest) on 13 Apr and again on 17 May. A female may have flown in off the sea at Aldwick (Bognor Regis) on 2 Apr.

Breeding was confirmed in nine tetrads and was probable in 25, an increase in reporting on 2014. The earliest records of display were at High Hurstwood on 7 Feb and Newhaven on the 24th. The earliest record of confirmed breeding was of an apparently occupied nest at Northgate (Crawley) on 20 May from where fledged young were reported on 14 Jul. A family group of up to four was seen at Ladywell (Coombes) on several dates in August.



Sparrowhawk, Bishopstone, December 2015 (Pete Wilson)

The highest autumn/second winter period count was of only four at Whitbread Hollow (Beachy Head) on 2 Sep; three were also seen at Ladywell, Little Common (Bexhill) and Worth during this period, otherwise 88% of records were of single birds. There were no records of birds flying out to sea. A female was seen bathing in a garden birdbath for half an hour at West Tarring (Worthing) on 5 Sep and one was seen hunting over the sea at Selsey Bill on the 27th. Prey species recorded were Feral Pigeon, Woodpigeon, Collared Dove, Great Tit, Starling, Blackbird, Bullfinch, Wood Mouse and several unidentified rodents. [MJC]

Common Buzzard

Buteo buteo

Fairly common and increasing resident, passage migrant and probably scarce passage migrant.

Common Buzzards were distributed across the county and recorded in 584 tetrads (60% of the tetrads wholly within Sussex), a slight increase on 2014. There were 56 counts of 10 or more (43

in West and 13 in East Sussex) during the year, also a slight increase on 2014. The highest counts during the first winter period were 30 at Linch Down (Bepton) on 15 Feb, 20 at West Marden on 7 Mar and 17 at Heyshot on 17 Feb, Arundel WWT on 6 Mar and Warnham LNR on the 25th.

Breeding was confirmed in 16 tetrads and probable in at least a further 74 (16 and 57 in 2014 and seven and 62 in 2013). The population appears still to be growing. There were many reports of display and pairings, beginning in early February but few details of breeding recorded. The first confirmed breeding record was on 1 Apr of a bird sitting on a former Grey Heron nest at Warningcamp. The first reported nest with young was at Northlands (Warnham) on 7 Jun and the first fledged young were seen at Kirdford on the 25th. A family group was seen at Brighton Wild Park on 8 Sep and reported as the first successful breeding at this location.

In the summer, the highest counts were 19 at Thorney Island on 29 Aug and 15 each at Patching on 7 Jun and Wepham Down on 17 Aug. During the autumn, most records were of fewer than four but there were some high counts including the highest count of the year of 33 at Cliff End (Pett) where groups moved NE on 6 Sep. Other high counts were 20 at The Burgh (Burpham) on 6 Oct, 16 at South Harting on 2 Sep and 15 at Waltham Brooks on the 25th. The Hastings migration watch team reported 42 observed on five days between 8 Aug and 27 Oct with a peak being the aforementioned count of 33 on 6 Sep. During the second winter period the only double-figure count was 14 at the Burgh on 1 Dec. [MJC]

Rough-legged Buzzard

Buteo lagopus

Rare winter visitor.

Records for three birds were accepted. The first was the long-staying bird at Jevington first recorded on 9 Nov 2014 (CFB) which was last seen on 8 Mar. Another was seen at Laughton Level from 1 to 17 Feb (DB, ADW, IJW); photographs enabled this bird to be identified as different from the Jevington bird. In the autumn, a third bird was at Scotney GP from 19 to 25 Oct (NB, DAP *et al.*). With just two new birds, the county total this century moves on to 11. [JAH]

Osprey

Pandion haliaetus

Scarce passage migrant. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern. Schedule 1 species.

The first bird of the year was particularly early, 7 Mar at Selsey Bill. In only one year during 1960-2014 has there been an earlier record (4 Mar 2011) whilst in 2001 the first date was also 7 Mar. It was not until 2 Apr at Weir Wood Res that the next bird was sighted (seen also on the 4th), followed by one at Arlington Res on 5 Apr and another at Warnham LNR the following day. At Selsey Bill on 7 Apr a bird that was observed to fly in off the sea at 09:55 was presumed to be the same bird recorded at Medmerry the same morning. One, presumably different, was recorded at Arlington Res on the 10th and, the same day, another one at Pulborough Brooks was possibly the same as that seen at Angmering.

Spring records totalled ten different birds from ten varied locations which included Eastbourne and Rustington additional to those already mentioned.

Three birds were recorded in June (compared with none in 2014): one at Cuckmere Haven on the 1st, and another at Beachy Head on the 15th with possibly a different bird there a day later.



Osprey, Southease, October 2015 (Gareth Hughes)

The first returning migrant was recorded at Pagham Hbr on 11 Jul followed by one around Thorney Island (Chichester Hbr) on the 18th which stayed until at least the 25th. Ospreys were recorded in the Thorney Island area on 31 Jul and then on 12 days in August possibly involving seven individuals with two there on 28 Aug. Elsewhere during August, some 18 birds were recorded at 13 mostly coastal sites such as Shoreham, Brighton Marina and Beachy Head but including inland sites at Fernhurst and Weir Wood and Arlington Reservoirs.

During the autumn, observations of more than one bird all came from Thorney Island, Pagham Hbr and Medmerry. At Thorney Island two were recorded on 15 and 28 Sep and 3 Oct. At Pagham Hbr two were seen on 20 Sep. At Medmerry three were there on 20 Sep and two on 2 and 3 Oct, almost certainly the same birds. A single bird was seen soaring over Ashdown Forest on 7 Sep.

The final observations of the year came from the Southease/Piddinghoe area of the Ouse valley where one was present from 1 to 8 Nov, which was probably the bird seen at Lewes on 26 Oct. This was almost two weeks later than the 10-year average date of 26 Oct and almost three weeks later than in 2014.

Because returning Ospreys tend to linger at good fishing sites, such as Chichester and Pagham Harbours and the larger reservoirs, it is difficult to judge the numbers involved, but a best estimate is that 40-45 individuals were involved during July to November. [DB]

Water Rail*Rallus aquaticus*

Probably very scarce resident; scarce winter visitor and passage migrant.

Water Rails were found in 76 tetrads, continuing the recent increasing trend (cf. 63 in 2014, 60 in 2013 and 40 in 2012). Birds were noted in each month of the year at Pett Level (peaking at six in October), in 11 months at Pulborough Brooks and 10 at Warnham LNR.

Good numbers were in the county at both ends of the year. Ten were at Arundel WWT on 18 Jan (including a trio squabbling and a couple doing likewise, one of which turned aside to harass a Song Thrush) and six at Thorney Deeps on the 23rd. As in 2014, there were around five in the Newhaven Tide Mills/Ouse Estuary Project area early in the year. Birds were found in unlikely places including a small marshy area at Chailey on 10 Feb and in Crawley on 25 Feb.

Three were calling near Birdham Marina on 2 Apr and nest building was noted at Arundel WWT on 19 Apr. Breeding was confirmed at Arundel WWT and at Woods Mill where a very confiding family were often to be seen on the mill stream. It was probable in one other tetrad. The count of over 20 territories in the Pett Level area in 2014 was, sadly, not paralleled in 2015.

Migrants were found on Seaford Head on 13 Sep, in Whitbread Hollow (Beachy Head) on 18 Oct and on 13 Dec, and at Sheepcote Valley (Brighton) on 2 Nov. Six were at Pett Level on 18 Oct and eight were at Rye Hbr on 13 Dec. [CB]

Moorhen*Gallinula chloropus*

Very common resident; possibly fairly common winter visitor but status uncertain.

Moorhens were recorded in 315 tetrads, an increase from the 271 of 2014. Monthly counts at the principal WeBS sites are shown in the following table:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
County total	635	574	521	312	242	197	290	437	504	595	471	567
Chichester Hbr	88	38	56	9	11	6	-	6	7	18	22	17
Chichester Canal	92	93	75	45	24	26	57	86	79	84	100	85
Pagham Hbr	40	28	28	12	3	7	5	8	15	26	19	25
Arun Valley	147	169	132	69	68	58	114	100	104	108	98	96
Brooklands Worthing	34	20	15	14	14	5	8	10	7	14	17	31
Ditchling Common	23	nc	15	9	10	8	nc	nc	nc	16	nc	30
Bewl Water	11	7	1	nc	nc	nc	nc	70	51	15	11	4
Alexandra Park	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	42	60	nc	nc
Rye Bay	30	17	15	17	11	10	18	35	28	4	21	16

Compared with 2014, numbers were high in the first but lower in the second half of the year.

During the first winter period the highest counts outside the sites mentioned in the table were 26 at Rustington on 30 Jan and 23 at Lancing on 3 Feb. In the early year SWBS 28 was the highest count at Apuldrum on 14 Feb.

Breeding was confirmed in 39 tetrads and probable in 13 (cf. 35 and 13 in 2014). In the BBS, 166 Moorhens were found in 65 of 176 squares (a considerable improvement in numbers and a slight improvement in distribution over 2014), with a highest count of nine at Rustington on 28

May (interestingly 26 had been there in the early SWBS). The first young were at Blatchington Pond (Seaford) on 6 Apr. There were 31 nests and broods at Rye Hbr (cf. 22 in 2014).

In the late year SWBS a maximum of 14 was recorded at Rustington. Poor weather at the end of the year affected numbers at Pett Level.

At Benbow Pond (Cowdray Park) on 6 Apr a Moorhen joined a Little Grebe in chasing a Grass Snake before turning on the grebe, and a bird at Arundel WWT saw off an aggressive Lapwing on 19 Apr. On 26 May, at a small pond in the middle of Seaford, adults and their first brood co-operated to protect the second brood chicks; one first brood chick fed a young chick less than 10 days old by picking food from the ground. A bird in rough grass at the edge of a wood at Chelwood Beacon on 14 Oct was some 200 m from a stream. [CB]

Coot

Fulica atra

Fairly common resident and common winter visitor.

Coots were recorded from 180 tetrads, underlining the increasing spread noted over the last few years. Monthly counts from the principal WeBS sites are shown in the following table.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
County total	3034	2723	1644	878	769	775	1150	1768	2166	2034	2873	2750
Chichester Hbr	277	205	94	48	62	38	38	66	141	109	91	88
Chichester Canal	129	120	89	82	69	71	76	110	97	118	107	119
Pagham Hbr	87	43	47	46	44	64	97	5	89	146	113	96
Chichester GP	579	401	245	145	119	nc	nc	nc	281	377	744	753
Arun Valley	139	111	124	62	86	84	98	154	134	98	114	111
Bewl Water	277	344	217	nc	nc	nc	nc	332	261	131	145	255
Rye Bay	1030	970	436	251	200	273	606	781	737	539	1018	688

The county totals for 2014 were as follows.

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
3254	2180	993	550	662	706	1114	1631	2373	2811	2409	3011

Further counts in excess of 100 came only from Brooklands (Worthing) (January, October and November) and the Knepp Estate (December).

From year to year, and month to month, the number of Coots in Sussex is very variable; nevertheless some long term changes can be detected. Numbers at Chichester GP and Rye Bay, where the average WeBS counts in 2009-2011 were 1883 and 1581, have fallen right back. Birds were recorded in every month at 23 sites. Population levels at some smaller waters look healthy; many such sites have a peak in the early autumn post-breeding, and do not appear to witness any significant winter arrival. There were no counts in excess of 10 at Kneppmill Pond in the first half of the year, but breeding success there was good and numbers rose steadily, here invigorated by arrivals, from 22 in July to 92 in November and 117 in December.

Sixty eight in a field to the west of Pett Pools on 23 Mar were thought likely to be migrants and birds were heard passing overhead at Barcombe Cross late in the evening of 21 Apr.

Breeding was confirmed in 27 tetrads and probable in a further eight (cf. 176 and 43 during the atlas years 2008-11). There were 33 nests and broods at Rye Hbr (cf. 29 in 2014). The first young

were on the Chichester Canal on 24 Feb, an early date; the next were at Rye Hbr on 2 Apr. On the debit side, a bird at the previously regular site at Troutbeck (Eridge) was unable to find a mate. Two young at Burton MP did not fledge until the very end of July. Poor late autumn weather was thought to have affected numbers at Pett Level. [CB]

Crane

Grus grus

Rare vagrant. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern.

The only bird recorded during the year was seen for only one day at Weir Wood Res on 4 May (SCPW). The county total for this century is now 60. [JAH]

Stone-curlew

Burhinus oedicephalus

A rare passage migrant. Formerly a scarce breeding summer visitor, which since 2006 has tentatively started to recolonise the county. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern.

During 2015, the RSPB Sussex Stone-curlew Project continued to work with a small team of licensed volunteers to survey as much suitable habitat as possible, and to work intensively with local landowners, farmers and gamekeepers to create the conditions needed to assist returning and passage birds to stay and breed.

During 2015 the RSPB Sussex project team located two pairs in areas where habitat management and regular monitoring were possible. Through working closely with landowners, management of the breeding sites and surrounding areas was adjusted to best suit the species' needs. At one site, where breeding was first recorded in 2006, a bird was seen in early May; however, it was not until late June that a pair was seen together. The nest site was not found, but in mid-August the adult pair were seen with a well grown chick, and on 28 Aug the adults were seen again with what now qualified as their fledged young.

At a second site a pair returned to the field where they nested during 2014 and already had created a nest by 7 May. This pair consisted of one un-ringed bird and one which had been ringed as a nestling in the area in 2011 and which bred in the same area in 2013 and 2014. A detailed programme of monitoring established that two eggs were laid of which at least one hatched; a chick was seen in the company of both adults through to 24 May. On 28 May the birds could not be found and despite significant effort they were not relocated at the site. On 4 Jun this pair was discovered to have moved roughly 3 km away and by late June another nesting attempt was under way which was again monitored. This pair laid two eggs and two small chicks were seen; however, shortly afterwards a member of the public saw and possibly disturbed the birds and one of the chicks was not seen again. The surviving chick was successfully ringed in mid-August.

The only reports of possible passage birds were of one, possibly several, calling at night on 16 Sep at a site where birds had bred successfully in previous years, and which was close to one of the 2015 nesting sites, and one observed at Rye Hbr on 10 Oct (CB) and photographed there the following day (MW).

The RSPB Sussex Stone-curlew Project, actively supported by the Sussex Ornithological Society, remains indebted to the support of the landowners, farmers and gamekeepers whose efforts have allowed the breeding success we have seen so far.

There is a long way to go to before the re-colonisation of Sussex is assured, and the RSPB and SOS urge everyone to place the welfare of the birds first. Stone-curlews are specially protected under Schedule 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) and the EU Birds Directive, making it an offence to disturb or tape-lure them without a licence. At this stage it is recommended that birdwatchers do not go out purposely attempting to find Stone-curlews in Sussex, but if birds are stumbled upon by accident it would be greatly appreciated if records could be passed on to the project team at RSPB Brighton so that efforts can be made to ensure the maximum success of any breeding attempt. [DG]

Black-winged Stilt

Himantopus himantopus

Rare vagrant.

There were two records during the year but no repeat of the 2014 breeding. A male was present on Sidlesham Ferry Pool from 13 to 19 Apr during which time it also visited Medmerry on the 16th (mo). A female was at Sidlesham Ferry Pool from 29 May until 7 Jun (AH *et al.*). Both birds were seen and photographed by many observers and there was speculation as to whether they were from the successful nesting at Medmerry in 2014 but that we shall never know. Both records have been accepted by the BBRC and take the county total up to approximately 39. [DHH]

Avocet

Recurvirostra avosetta

Scarce winter visitor and passage migrant; very scarce and localised breeder. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern.

Avocets were recorded in 38 tetrads. The minimum monthly totals were as follows:

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
51	85	156	171	161	190	154	44	28	35	62	67

Wintering flocks were present as usual in the two traditional areas, Pagham Hbr and on the east side of Thorney Island (Chichester Hbr). At Thorney Island there were up to 21 between 11 Jan and 8 Feb, whilst at Pagham Hbr there were up to 28 during January, rising rapidly during February to a peak of 55 on the 21st, most likely due to birds stopping off on their way to breeding areas further east. The only birds seen anywhere else during the first winter period were two in the Rye Hbr area between 4 and 18 Jan.

Offshore passage was as usual very light, with a total of 34 E and a maximum day total of 14 E at Splash Point (Seaford) on 17 Mar, the first day on which passage was recorded. There were several spring sightings at Cuckmere Haven, with three on 18 Mar, seven flying up-river on 6 Apr and one on the 11th. One at Arlington Res on 18 Mar was probably one of the Cuckmere trio, and two were seen at Selsey on 7 Apr. At Pulborough Brooks there were single birds on 23 Mar and 11 May, two on 2 Apr and four between 30 Jun and 1 Jul, with two remaining until the 9th. Birds were recorded at Sidlesham Ferry Pool in every month of the year on a total of 243 days, with a maximum of 43 on 1 Mar.

At least 62 pairs bred at three major sites, beating the previous highest total of 59 in 2007. At Rye Hbr there were 41 nests, a site record, and although there were many early failures, most pairs re-nested. At Pett Level, 24 pairs bred but drying of the scrape in spring allowed mammalian predators to reduce breeding success and, at Medmerry, 16 pairs raised 24 young.

Numbers were low in autumn as usual as birds departed the county, with an influx of returning birds in the second half of October. The first record at the Thorney Island wintering site (and the maximum for the year there) was 40 on 29 Nov, but there were only four further records, the last count being 39 on 19 Dec. At Pagham Hbr birds were recorded on most days through to 28 Dec, with a maximum of 28 on the 1st. The only records anywhere else from 3 Oct to the end of the year were three at Scotney Court GP on 28 Oct and one at E Guldeford on 15 Nov. [CJRB]



Oystercatcher, Pagham Hbr, December 2015 (Gareth Hughes)

Oystercatcher

Haematopus ostralegus

Scarce breeder, fairly common passage migrant and winter visitor. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern.

Oystercatchers were recorded in 102 coastal or near-coastal tetrads. The monthly WeBS counts at the principal sites were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
County total	1591	1684	1095	868	586	648	684	434	1194	993	1274	2177
Chichester Hbr	1283	1300	682	551	304	363	427	108	903	707	567	1444
Pagham Hbr	197	177	116	96	30	79	67	78	132	127	193	110
Climping	1	1	nc	-	-	nc	-	-	32	70	70	4
Rye Bay	91	202	276	204	240	193	171	237	106	67	421	514

There were some significant numbers additional to the WeBS counts. In January, 400 at Rye Hbr on the 27th, 200 in Pagham Hbr on the 9th and 13 at Climping on the 13th; in February, 500 at Rye Hbr on the 11th; in April, 240 at Rye Hbr on the 3rd; in August, 600 at Pilsey Island on the 16th and 36 at Climping on the 30th; in September, 200 at Rye Hbr on the 4th; in October, 180 at Rye Hbr on the 2nd; in November, 400 at Pagham Hbr on the 25th; in December, seven at Climping on the 10th.

A minimum of 75 pairs bred in 12 tetrads, continuing a run of good years, although success was variable. There were 36 nests/territories at Rye Hbr, where many chicks survived to fledge and ten pairs nested at Pett Level. At Pagham Hbr, however, 18 pairs raised just four young. At Medmerry, three pairs raised two and single pairs nested at Pilsey Island and West Wittering. The habit of nesting on roofs seems to be gradually spreading – the pair that has nested on a warehouse roof in Shoreham since 2010 was joined this year by a second pair; the pair on the tennis club roof in Rye returned for its seventh year; a pair nested on a roof in Littlehampton for its second year; at Arundel WWT a pair chose the roof of the Sand Martin hide. Pairs were also regularly recorded in the lower Cuckmere and in the Lewes Brooks area during the spring.

During the autumn, the highest counts at sites not shown in the WeBS table were 125 at Fairlight Cove on 6 Sep and 130 at Cuckmere Haven on the 8th. In the last two months, 1012 at Pilsey Island was the highest single-site count for the year, 80 were at Littlehampton on 29 Nov and 43 in the high-tide roost at Telscombe Cliffs on 10 Dec. [CJRB]

Grey Plover

Pluvialis squatarola

Common winter visitor and passage migrant. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern.

The monthly WeBS counts at the principal sites were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
County total	2185	1214	611	27	7	40	67	450	330	742	740	2629
Chichester Hbr	1536	569	366	7	-	-	-	233	231	606	471	1495
Medmerry	50	16	5	18	3	40	67	49	18	22	20	6
Pagham Hbr	506	530	198	-	4	-	-	168	79	113	217	1058
Rye Bay	9	40	42	1	-	-	-	-	2	1	3	21

From January to March the only counts at WeBS sites higher than in the above table were at Rye Bay, with 35 at Pett Level on 21 Jan, 32 at Rye Hbr on the 27th and 64 there on 17 Feb. Elsewhere, Medmerry held good numbers, with 150 on 21 Jan and 190 on 4 Mar and, along the other West Sussex beaches, the highest counts were 70 at Goring on 15 Mar, 59 at Climping on 7 Feb and 10 at Worthing on 18 Jan. Grey Plovers are much less common between Worthing and Pett, the only records were three at Cuckmere Haven on 4 Jan and one on the lower R Adur on 1 Jan and 1 Feb.

From April through to June, migrants were passing through Medmerry (maximum 80 on 22 Apr) and Pagham Hbr (maximum 50 on 10 Apr), but there were very few records from Chichester Hbr after the end of March, the last was of 4 on 17 Apr. Small numbers were noted passing offshore at seawatching sites during the spring, by far the highest day total being 37 E at Splash Point (Seaford) on 3 May. Three at Cuckmere Haven from 3 to 13 May was an unusually long stay for this site.

The first signs of returning migrants were at Medmerry again, with already 75 on 10 Jul, but the first arrivals in Chichester Hbr were not noted until the 22nd with 12 at Pilsey Sands. In the last two months, the only count higher than WeBS was 400 at Pagham Hbr on 25 Nov. The highest count at Medmerry was a low 30 on 26 Nov, but there were 46 at Climping on 13 Dec and 68 at Goring on the 19th. The only inland record for the year was of one at Steyning Levels on 15 Nov. [CJRB]

Golden Plover

Pluvialis apricaria

Common winter visitor and passage migrant, rare in summer.

The monthly WeBS counts at the principal sites were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
County total	2434	810	303	3	-	-	-	348	456	505	1777	1909
Chichester Hbr	1974	346	23	-	-	-	-	-	65	45	395	150
Medmerry	25	-	242	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	25	17
Pagham Hbr	274	-	-	3	-	-	-	-	6	60	330	548
Rye Bay	161	464	38	-	-	-	-	348	385	400	1027	1192

Counts made in between WeBS dates often produce much higher numbers; counts higher than the WeBS were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Chichester Hbr	-	500	-	-	-	-	-	40	-	-	-	-
Pagham Hbr	650	400	120	12	-	-	-	-	11	415	300	500
Medmerry	200	400	250	-	-	-	-	-	-	80	75	-
Rye Hbr	2500	2000	350	85	-	-	9	71	100	500	-	-
Scotney GP										1000		

NB: Scotney GP within the Rye Bay counts

The above table shows that the decline in numbers in the west of the county continues, with birds departing earlier and returning later than in the Rye Bay area.

Between January and March, the only records from sites not in the above tables were a maximum of 50 at Pulborough Brooks on 1 Mar, and ten at Rodmell Brooks on the 23rd. Five flew west at Selsey Bill on 4 Apr, there were still 23 at Rye Hbr on the 10th, and the last spring record was of three at Pagham Hbr on the 19th. There were no records for May.

The first autumn record was of one at E Guldeford on 27 Jun, followed by nine at Rye Hbr on 15 Jul, but the first arrivals at Chichester Hbr were 40 on 12 Aug, with no further double-figure counts in West Sussex until 26 Sep. During the autumn and early winter there were several records of ones and twos overhead along the East Sussex coast or passing offshore, including sightings at Beachy Head and Hastings CP on six dates in October. Singles were also seen well inland at the Burgh (Burpham) on 2 Sep and at Hardham on 5 Dec, while at Pulborough Brooks birds were present from 12 Oct to 19 Dec, with a peak of 25 on 7 Dec. The highest count at Scotney GP was 1000 on 31 Oct; at Pevensey Levels, a former stronghold, the only record all year was of one on 29 Dec. [CJRB]

Ringed Plover*Charadrius hiaticula*

Scarce breeder, fairly common passage migrant and winter visitor. Red listed species of high conservation concern.

The monthly WeBS counts at the principal sites were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
County total	259	248	105	90	250	89	56	329	279	192	294	216
Chichester Hbr	154	139	53	37	192	63	9	218	154	97	127	115
Medmerry	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	14	-	-	-
Pagham Hbr	2	15	13	10	7	10	18	6	1	8	75	5
Goring Gap	21	-	-	-	nc	nc	nc	nc	43	41	40	25
Rye Bay	33	8	9	35	44	7	1	23	26	2	11	26

In addition to WeBS there were up to 50 in Pagham Hbr during January and February and 20-30 at Medmerry, with a maximum of 68 on 17 Feb. The largest flock within Chichester Hbr was 121 at East Head (W Wittering) on 21 Feb. At other sites, the largest flocks were 35 at Worthing Beach on 18 Jan and 32 at Widewater (Lancing) on 1 Feb. A spring peak of 192 at Pilsey Island on 15 May was the highest count of the year at any one site.

A total of 56 breeding pairs were reported, continuing an increase from the low of 35 in 2012, mainly due to improved protection at Rye and Pagham Harbours and the addition of Medmerry as a breeding site. At Rye Hbr 28 pairs had a very successful season, a high proportion of chicks fledged and many pairs went on to raise second broods. At Pagham Hbr 18 pairs fledged 20, and there were six pairs at Medmerry and two at Pilsey Island. Isolated pairs bred at Portslade and Brighton Marina, and pairs were also seen at Shoreham Beach and Newhaven Tide Mills but with no evidence of breeding.

The usual autumn migration peak was almost non-existent this year, the maximum count at Pilsey Island was only 150 on 2 Sep. But there were some good numbers at other sites, with 80 at Rye Hbr on 19 Aug, 130 there on 11 Sep, 100 at Pagham Hbr on 30 Aug, 80 at both Goring Gap and Worthing Beach on 2 Sep, 74 on the lower Adur on 26 Aug and 60 at Medmerry on the 21st.

In the last two months, in addition to WeBS there were 30 at Medmerry on 16 Nov, 41 there on 15 Dec and 40 at Pagham Hbr on the 17th. Goring Gap again regularly held good numbers, with a peak of 96 on 27 Dec.

Several birds were recorded well inland. Arlington Res hosted one on 5 Aug and one to two on 3-5 Sep, one was at Greatham on 2 May, and Pulborough Brooks had one or two on seven dates between 20 Mar and 6 Sep, with four present on 30 May. [CJRB].

Little Ringed Plover*Charadrius dubius*

Scarce breeding summer visitor and passage migrant. Schedule 1 species.

Little Ringed Plovers were recorded in 30 tetrads. The minimum monthly totals were as follows:

	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep
No. of birds	8	46	30	26	45	11	5
No. of sites	5	15	8	5	8	5	4

About 95% of the year's records came from only six sites – Medmerry, Pagham and Rye Harbours, Pulborough Brooks, Weir Wood Res and Pett Level. The first sighting was one at Medmerry on 12 Mar, followed by reports of mostly ones and twos from all the above locations in April and May. The highest counts were 11 at Pulborough Brooks on 7 Apr and ten at Medmerry on 24 May.



Little Ringed Plover, Pulborough Brooks, April 2015 (Darren Bird)

Breeding was confirmed in three sites: at Medmerry, six pairs fledged eight young, at Pett Level there were two pairs, while at Rye Hbr at least five pairs bred and one was seen with three chicks. Breeding was probable at a further three sites: birds were present in Pagham Hbr throughout the spring and summer and fledged young were seen on 7 Jul; birds were displaying at Selsey WTW on 8 Apr; there was one pair at Pulborough Brooks, though no nest was found.

During the summer the highest numbers were in July at Medmerry and Pulborough Brooks with regularly up to ten at both sites and up to nine at Rye Hbr. Two called in at Cuckmere Haven on the 15th and one at Weir Wood Res from the 10th to 16th. Numbers declined in August and the last record of the year was one at Pagham Hbr on 16 Sep. [CJRB]

Lapwing

Vanellus vanellus

Scarce or fairly common but declining resident and very common winter visitor. Red listed species of high conservation concern.

Lapwings were recorded in 157 tetrads. The monthly WeBS counts at the principal sites were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
County total	11873	6731	677	222	195	516	352	1272	1446	2549	7452	8646
Chichester Hbr	1968	961	23	18	23	14	28	118	84	623	1485	1429
Medmerry	140	14	57	24	28	16	6	8	10	61	234	110
Pagham Hbr	2542	1213	55	7	-	47	4	19	35	319	551	1412
Arun Valley	1778	1149	125	66	49	35	68	16	129	286	1558	1694
Arun (south of Arundel)	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	2	120	120	500	37
Upper Adur Levels	15	170	174	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	215
Ouse Valley	733	318	114	20	9	2	-	-	-	60	315	367
Pevensey Levels	820	253	102	46	42	16	10	1	-	43	429	355
Rye Bay	3511	2395	25	38	38	353	128	922	905	879	2314	2848

During the first two months there were several notable counts not evident from the WeBS table including 2500 at Sidlesham Ferry on 21 Jan, 1571 at Pulborough Brooks on 5 Jan and 1500 at Pett Level on 25 Jan. Other peak site counts included 847 at East Guldeford Level on 8 Feb, 800 at Henfield Levels on the 14 and 17 Feb, 650 at Lewes Brooks on 4 Jan, and 500 at Medmerry on 4 Jan and at Newhaven Tide Mills on 24 Jan. At Weir Wood Res, 104 on 12 Jan was the year's highest total for the site.

Breeding was confirmed in 16 tetrads and probable in 28, slightly higher numbers than for recent years but comparable with the 5-year average. Display was first noted on 8 Feb at Arundel WWT. Twenty one pairs nested at Pett Level where the first nest with eggs was noted on 8 Apr. At Pulborough Brooks 22 pairs fledged 13 young, at Medmerry 16 pairs fledged four, at Pagham Hbr 11 pairs fledged just two, and at Rye Hbr 16-17 pairs nested but few young were seen and no fledglings were seen. On the Norfolk Estate, 16 pairs bred and chick survival was calculated at a healthy 0.9 per adult (0.45 per pair); there was no obvious reason for the decline in the number of pairs from a peak of 37 in 2012.

The first signs of migration were evident in Rye Bay as early as 14 Jun when 169 were counted followed by 180 on the 21st and 250 at Pett Level on 6 Jul. The first four-figure count occurred at Rye Hbr with 1000 on 14 Aug, rising to 1500 on 5 Sep. In West Sussex numbers did not reach three figures until late August. In the last two months of the year, significant numbers additional to the WeBS counts included 2082 at Pulborough Brooks on 7 Dec, 2000 at Pagham Hbr on the 2nd and, elsewhere, 320 at Shoreham Airport on 8 Nov and 250 at Glynde Reach on 14 Dec. [CJRB]

Hudsonian Whimbrel*Numenius hudsonicus*

Very rare vagrant. Breeds on tundra of west and north Alaska and northern Canada east to Hudson Bay. Winters in coastal regions of southern USA south to Chile and Brazil. Formerly considered a sub-species of Eurasian Whimbrel N. phaeopus but recommended as a separate species in the BOURC seventh report in 2011.

One identified (GK) in Pagham Hbr on 9 Jun represented the first record for Sussex. The bird remained in the area until 27 Jul and was seen by many observers not only from Sussex but also from much further afield. On 12 Jul what was assumed to be the same bird flew west past Selsey Bill (JA, AH *et al.*) but had returned to Pagham Hbr later in the day. The records have been accepted by the BBRC and an account of the initial finding can be found on page 208 of this report. [DHH]

Whimbrel*Numenius phaeopus*

Common passage migrant, very scarce summering and wintering species. Red listed species of high conservation concern. Schedule 1 species.

The monthly WeBS counts at the principal locations were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
County total	1	3	10	82	34	1	40	63	28	8	7	3
Chichester Hbr	-	2	10	25	7	-	19	35	8	5	5	2
Medmerry	-	-	-	13	6	1	2	6	1	1	1	-
Pagham Hbr	1	1	-	20	16	-	10	19	7	2	1	1
Cuckmere Haven	-	-	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	12	-	-	-

There were several reports on 1 Jan of overwintering birds in the Fishbourne Channel and at Pagham Hbr, a very similar pattern to recent years. The Fishbourne bird was present until at least 7 Feb, and may have been the same as the one seen at Thorney Island on 2 Jan and 21 Feb. Records suggest that the Pagham bird probably stayed right through until mid-April.

There were no sightings outside Pagham and Chichester Harbours until 11 Mar, when one flew north in the lower Cuckmere valley. This was followed by 2 E at Worthing on the 15th, but there were only occasional ones and twos until the main passage period began abruptly on 8 Apr with 61 past Splash Point (Seaford). The totals recorded at the main seawatching sites are shown below.

		Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Total	Peak movement	
Selsey Bill	E		375	36		2		413	109 E in 12.7 hr	23 Apr
	W		15	16		19	6	56		
Worthing	E	2	191	14			1	208	40 E in 5.5 hr	23 Apr
	W		3	9	1	8	1	22		
Splash Point	E		402	108				510	219 in 7.75 hr	24 Apr
	W		3					3		
Beachy Head	E		46				3	49	34 in 3.5 hr	8 Apr
	W					3		3		

Other than offshore, the highest spring counts were 40 at Pagham Hbr and 34 at Rye Hbr, both on 28 Apr. The only other regular sites for the species were Medmerry, with a peak of 18 on 22 Apr, and Cuckmere Haven, with a maximum of 15 on the 30th. A good number lingered in Pagham Hbr throughout May, and in June nearly all records came from there, with a high of 20 on the 14th. During autumn passage, by far the largest counts were 42 at Pilsey Island on 30 Jul and 33 at W Chidham on 28 Aug. The highest count at Pagham Hbr was 20 on 6 Aug, and there were 12 in the lower Cuckmere valley on 9 Sep.

At the end of the year, once again there were regular sightings at Pagham Hbr, with one to three until 14 Nov, one remaining until 31 Dec. In Chichester Hbr there were five at Bosham on 31 Oct, four on 28 Nov and two on 12 Dec as migrants gradually departed, and occasional sightings of single birds at Thorney Island and in the Fishbourne Channel until 28 Dec. One at Medmerry on 16 Nov and one on the lower R Adur on 2 Dec could also have been lingering migrants.

There were several inland records, all during the spring. One was seen at Amberley Wild Brooks on 20 Apr, one at Pulborough Brooks on the 26th with four there on 1 May, and one was reported flying over Willingdon on 28 Apr. [CJRB]

Curllew

Numenius arquata

Common passage migrant and winter visitor; formerly a very scarce breeder. Red listed species of high conservation concern.

The monthly WeBS counts at the principal sites were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
County total	1984	1518	1613	267	36	67	618	1135	1259	875	1061	1315
Chichester Hbr	1391	1108	1167	201	24	26	452	876	1004	587	649	754
Pagham Hbr	320	194	344	54	7	12	79	121	123	141	177	256
Rye Bay	196	198	92	6	1	20	72	117	116	80	209	246

The early winter maximum at Chichester Hbr was just under the threshold for a site of national importance, currently 1400. At Rye Hbr there were higher numbers than WeBS suggests, with 520 on 20 Jan and 330 on 26 Feb. The highest counts at sites not shown in the WeBS table were 50 at Cuckmere Haven on 22 Jan, and 40 at Newhaven Tide Mills on 19 Jan. Very little offshore spring passage was observed, the highest day total was 19 E at Splash Point (Seaford) on 7 Apr.

Return migration was evident from late June, when there were already 49 at Rye Hbr on the 26th and 75 at Pagham Hbr the following day, with 220 there on 5 Jul. During the autumn migration peak counts at Rye Hbr were 315 on 21 Sep and 280 on 23 Oct, and there were 80 in the lower Cuckmere on 12 Sep. A count of 689 roosting on Stakes Island (Chichester Hbr) on 26 Sep was noteworthy. During the last two months of the year there were no counts higher than shown in the WeBS table; maxima elsewhere were 75 in the lower Cuckmere on 17 Dec and 54 at Newhaven Tide Mills on 26 Nov.

There were several inland records. During June, one was recorded at Small Dole on the 4th, one was at Eridge on the 30th and one was at Pulborough Brooks on the 12th, 22nd and 30th. One was on Ashdown Forest on 1 Sep, and single birds were again seen at Pulborough Brooks on 6 Aug and 14 Dec. The leucistic bird with very pale plumage was reported frequently in Pagham Hbr for its seventh year, and has now been seen there in all months except May and October. [CJRB]

Black-tailed Godwit*Limosa limosa*

Fairly common but localised winter visitor and passage migrant; scarce non-breeder in summer. Red listed species of high conservation concern.

The monthly WeBS counts at the principal sites were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
County total	1091	596	440	133	103	167	59	182	163	486	715	935
Chichester Hbr	469	215	218	12	-	-	14	34	46	375	590	699
Medmerry	-	-	-	-	-	41	34	14	16	5	4	1
Pagham Hbr	89	277	208	121	78	110	9	127	97	102	66	44
Arun Valley	531	104	13	-	9	-	2	2	-	3	55	190

Chichester and Pagham Harbours remain the principal wintering sites for the species with the Arun valley providing significant counts in January, February and December too. The WeBS table indicates that the 1% international threshold number of 610 (based on the mean of maxima over five seasons) was only exceeded at Chichester Hbr in December with 699. A further two WeBS counts at the site, 469 in January and 590 in November, were above the 1% national threshold number of 430; the only other count exceeding this threshold was 531 in January from the Arun valley. The WeBS counts from Pagham Hbr recorded the species in every month of the year with a significant 110 in June, although this fell to nine in July. At Pulborough Brooks the maximum count was 606 on 12 Jan with four other counts in excess of 450. Numbers fell away at this site after the end of January.

During the summer a max of 140 were recorded at Pagham Hbr on 23 and 26 Jun with several slightly lower counts in the month; apart from these, 16 were reported from Pett Level on 14 Jun.

Autumn passage away from the main wintering sites was noted Rye Hbr on several dates through July and September with maxima of 16 on 3 Sep and 14 on 7 Jul; five, which were considered to be of the Icelandic race *L.i. islandica* were at Cuckmere Haven on 8 Jul and three were at Waltham Brooks on 13 Aug. Significant counts apart from the WeBS in the second winter period came from Pulborough Brooks, with 314 on 17 Dec rising to 375 on the 23rd. [DB]

Bar-tailed Godwit*Limosa lapponica*

Fairly common winter visitor and passage migrant. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern.

The monthly WeBS counts were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
County total	310	352	259	149	16	24	5	69	16	2	68	126
Chichester Hbr	310	328	257	115	15	16	3	68	12	1	68	125
Medmerry	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-
Pagham Hbr	-	20	-	5	-	5	-	1	-	-	-	1
Rye Hbr	-	4	2	24	1	3	2	-	4	-	-	-

The national 1% threshold number of 380 is based on the mean of maximum counts over a five-season period; clearly the WeBS counts fall short of this number, although there was a notable non-WeBS count of 550 birds at Thorney Island on 21 Feb.

Spring passage, as recorded at three of the principal seawatching sites, was as follows:

		Apr	May
Selsey Bill	E	155	87
Worthing Beach	E	16	3
Splash Point	E	446	68

The total spring passage, computed on the assumption that the minimum seen on any day was the highest count at any site on that day, was only 671, only just over half the total for 2014, itself recorded as a poor year. Peak passage occurred on 23 and 24 Apr when 173 E and 265 E were counted at Splash Point (Seaford).

Few were recorded at other coastal sites during the spring migration period. The highest count during this period at Pagham Hbr was 33 on 23 Apr on which date 45 were noted at Rye Hbr. Double-figure counts at this latter site were recorded on six dates between 19 and 24 Apr, indicating that this is an important stop-off site during spring migration. A nocturnal migrant was recorded at Splash Point with 1 E on 7 Apr.

The first significant count in August was of 67 at Emsworth Marina (Chichester Hbr) on the 6th. However, return migration in the autumn was very light; the only non-WeBS double-figure count in September was 18 at Rye Hbr on the 12th; the next was 56 at Pilsey Island on 26 Nov; otherwise numbers anywhere were generally in single figures. The only significant count in the second winter period was a non-WeBS count of 250 at Pilsey Sands on 9 Dec. [DB]

Turnstone

Arenaria interpres

Fairly common winter visitor and passage migrant; scarce non-breeder in summer. Rare away from coast. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern.

The monthly WeBS counts at the principal locations were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
County total	395	211	323	263	40	4	25	246	228	441	349	284
Chichester Hbr	115	78	162	4	3	1	10	3	2	153	119	184
Pagham Hbr	81	36	69	55	20	3	-	48	60	110	17	38
Climping	69	32	nc	122	2	nc	3	126	38	34	104	24
Goring Gap	106	15	1	-	nc	nc	nc	nc	12	32	32	4
Lower Adur Estuary	1	2	46	65	5	-	-	59	43	50	27	-
Brighton Marina	4	1	-	12	2	nc	2	10	39	26	13	5
Rye Bay	15	47	42	5	8	-	10	-	34	32	28	15

The county totals for January and February (usually the best months) were the lowest for many years. Additional counts to those shown in the WeBS table included 200 at Pagham Hbr on 17 Feb which was the year's highest count at any site. There were 120 at Climping on 22 Jan, 101 there on 17 Feb, 122 at St Leonards-on-Sea on 5 Jan and 40 at Rye Hbr on the 15th.

Spring migration brought the usual influx, with 69 at Winchelsea Beach on 10 Apr, 67 at Selsey on 20 Mar and 61 at Bexhill on 2 Apr. Seawatching at Selsey Bill produced an April total of 209 E, with a maximum day count of 60 E on the 15th. Numbers declined during May, and in June all counts were in single figures except for 11 at Pagham Hbr on the 5th.

Autumn migration also brought some good numbers. In addition to the WeBS there were maximum counts at Goring Beach of 26 on 23 Aug, 41 on 29 Sep and 85 on 31 Oct, and at St Leonards-on-Sea another high count of 182 on 15 Oct, the second highest total of the year at any site. At Selsey Bill, regular monitoring revealed a consistent 25-40 on the beach from late July to the end of the year.

In the last two months the only counts higher than the WeBS were 90 at Pagham Hbr on 25 Nov and 87 at Goring on the 2nd, with 40 there on 27 Dec. Within Chichester Hbr, 82 at Pilsey Island on 26 Nov and 140 at W Chidham on 12 Dec were the highest counts of the year. [CJRB]

Knot

Calidris canutus

Fairly common winter visitor and passage migrant. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern.

The WeBS counts for the principal sites were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
County total	1035	5103	245	10	-	-	-	12	19	35	85	1493
Chichester Hbr	980	5053	139	-	-	-	-	7	2	20	85	1254
Pagham Hbr	55	50	-	-	-	-	-	-	6	15	-	203
Rye Bay	-	-	106	-	-	-	-	-	11	-	-	36

There were a number of counts significantly higher than WeBS from January to March. At Pagham Hbr there were 300 on 10 Jan, 200 on 15 Feb and 150 on 18 Mar, at Pett Level 70 on 21 Jan and, at Rye Hbr 88 on 17 Feb and 160 on 13 Mar. There were 2000 in the Pilsey Island roost on 17 Jan, rising to a massive 5000 on 21 Feb. This was a record total for an individual location in Sussex, the previous highest count was 4000 at the same site on 15 Jan 2011. The usual light offshore spring passage was observed, the highest day count being 18 E at Selsey Bill on 21 Apr. There were no records of more than five in May and only three records in June when the last was at Pett Level on the 14th.

The first returning birds were two at Medmerry on 10 Jul, but 40 at Pagham Hbr on 20 Aug and 7 Sep were the highest autumn counts until numbers began to rise steeply in late November with the arrival of wintering birds. In the last two months the only figures higher than WeBS were at Pagham Hbr, with 200 on 30 Nov and 280 on 15 Dec.

Apart from occasional offshore movements noted at Selsey Bill and Splash Point (Seaford), the only records away from the harbours were six at Elmer (Middleton) on 31 Aug, five at Worthing on 25 Oct, two at Goring on 2 Feb and one at Climping on 1 Feb and one at Littlehampton on 9 Apr. [CJRB]

Ruff*Philomachus pugnax*

Scarce winter visitor and passage migrant. Red listed species of high conservation concern.

The monthly WeBS counts from the principal sites were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr		Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
County total	41	5	17	4		10	5	-	19	15
Medmerry	-	-	-	-		2	1	-	-	-
Arun Valley	9	3	-	-		-	-	-	-	3
Upper Adur Levels	-	-	6	-		-	-	-	-	-
Rye Bay	32	2	11	4		8	4	-	19	12



Ruff, Sidlesham Ferry Pool, August 2015 (Andrew House)

During the first winter period the major concentration of wintering birds was at various sites in Rye Bay where numbers varied from 14 on 4 Jan through a peak count of 50 at Pett Level on the 5th, declining to 33 on the 29th, 22 on 13 Mar and finally only five on the 27th. The other important site was the Arun valley where two at Pulborough Brooks on 1 Jan increased to nine on the 19th then ten on 4 Mar and 14 on the 10th declining thereafter to one on the 22nd. The only other site with a significant number was Rye Fm (Henfield) where six were recorded on 9 Mar.

During spring migration through April and May numbers varied from one to a maximum of five at Pett Level on 6 Apr and effectively had ended by 4 May when two were noted at Rye Hbr.

During the summer months a single bird was seen at Medmerry on 24 May and, in June, one was seen at Medmerry and four at Pulborough Brooks on the 11th.

Returning migrants were a single bird at Pett Level on 6 Jul with three there on the 9th. These were followed by single birds at Sidlesham on the 20th and another at Rye Hbr on the 27th. Numbers were generally low during August but eight were recorded at Rye Hbr on 15 and 16 Aug and ten at Sidlesham on the 24th, following a summer storm and an influx of various wader species, with three still there on 1 Sep.

Most other records during September were of one or two individuals but at the end of the month numbers at Rye Hbr suddenly increased from eight on the 26th to 29 on the 29th. Thereafter, numbers declined generally with the majority being at Rye Hbr where there were still 16 on 24 Oct and 12 on the 31st.

During the second winter period most of the birds previously at Rye Hbr seemed to have relocated to nearby Pett Level by 15 Nov when 17 were noted there with 20 on 7 Dec and 28 on 28 Dec, although there were still occasional sightings of a few at Rye Hbr.

The only other site to hold Ruff regularly during this period was Pulborough Brooks where, in December, up to ten birds were recorded with seven still there on the 29th. [RJB, JAH]

Curlew Sandpiper

Calidris ferruginea

Passage migrant, scarce in autumn and very scarce in spring; rare in winter. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern.

Total numbers of Curlew Sandpipers can vary greatly from year to year, and the total minimum sightings for 2015 were lower than for previous years. The estimated minimum monthly totals were as follows:

May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct
4	2	3	25	7	2

Unlike in 2014, there were no April records, and the first spring record occurred on 10 May at Medmerry. Further May sightings were single birds at three sites; Rye on the 16th, Pulborough Brooks between the 17th and 19th, and Medmerry again on the 26th. There were two records in June, at Pagham Hbr on the 20th and at Rye Hbr on the 30th.

In July there were two at Rye Hbr on the 24th, and one at Church Norton on the 25th. The peak time for Curlew Sandpiper sightings is usually mid- to late August and September, when the passage of juveniles reaches its maximum. The estimated August total was higher than usual, whilst the September total was very much lower. The highlights included nine birds at Rye Hbr from 24 to 27 Aug, and a further nine birds at Medmerry on 31 Aug.

One of two birds at Sidlesham Ferry from 29 Sept to 1 Oct continued to be seen up until 15 Oct, when a final sighting for 2015 was recorded at Breech Pool (Pagham Hbr). [CD]

Sanderling*Calidris alba*

Fairly common winter visitor and passage migrant. Very rare away from coast.

The monthly WeBS counts at the principal sites were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
County total	111	19	209	23	240	97	17	7	13	14	77	53
Chichester Hbr	48	1	202	23	230	80	-	5	-	-	21	45
Climping	3	5	nc	-	10	nc	-	1	-	2	20	8
Goring Gap	19	-	2	-	nc	nc	nc	nc	-	-	33	-
Newhaven	-	2	-	-	nc	-	-	-	-	nc	-	-
Cuckmere Haven	-	-	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	1	-	-	-
Rye Bay	40	10	4	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-

There were a number of higher counts in between the WeBS counts; the table below shows the maximum monthly figures at the main sites, giving a better picture of numbers and distribution through the year.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Pilsey Island	60	-	196	100	230	104	400	200	-	40	140	134
Climping	60	72	52	3	10	-	-	1	-	2	20	10
Ferring/Goring	50	30	50	50	5	-	-	-	-	1	50	65
Worthing Beach	25	3	35	34	-	-	-	1	-	4	100	104
Rye Hbr	250	110	4	-	6	-	9	2	12	1	-	-

Away from the above sites, the only other notable record in the first two months was 15 in the lower Adur on 4 Jan. Offshore spring passage was as usual very light, the highest day counts were 50 W at Worthing Beach on 20 Mar and 27 W at Selsey Bill on 2 Jun. There were 60 at Pagham Hbr on 26 May and still 80 at Pilsey Island on 11 Jun, but then no sightings anywhere until two were recorded at Pilsey on 15 Jul, the first returning birds. From then until the end of October, apart from at Pilsey there were mostly only single-figure counts, by far the highest total being 40 at Elmer on 31 Aug. Unusually, one was reported at Cuckmere Haven on 30 Jul, with another there on 8-9 Sep.

In the last two months, the highest count from a site not in the tables was of 25 at Shoreham on 19 Nov. The only inland record was of two at Arlington Res on 5 May. [CJRB]

Dunlin*Calidris alpina*

Very common passage migrant and winter visitor, scarce away from estuaries; scarce non-breeder in summer. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern.

The monthly WeBS counts at the principal sites were as shown in the table below. The 1% national threshold of 3500 was exceeded in Chichester Harbour in January, February, November and December.

In addition to the WeBS there were counts of over 100 birds in the first winter period at Goring with 183 on 18 Jan and at Pett Level with 560 on 22 Jan and 350 on 15 Feb. In the second winter

period there were 200 at Ferring on 14 Dec, 223 and 450 at Goring Gap on 23 Nov and 24 Dec respectively and, at nearby Worthing, 250 on 25 Nov and 120 on 11 Dec.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
County total	8631	9907	3064	106	2588	30	65	458	409	2678	7163	11619
Chichester Hbr	7269	8821	2847	68	2560	24	2	245	254	2566	7031	9852
Medmerry	48	11	33	20	17	4	12	55	66	18	25	53
Pagham Hbr	1020	969	103	8	2	-	31	34	16	77	84	1520
Rye Bay	103	106	80	10	9	2	19	121	34	15	3	80

An unusual feature was the high number at Pilsey Island (Chichester Harbour) at the end of April with 3000 on the 30th and 2500 still there on 15 May (the wintering population having decreased to 220 in March.); a late spring passage.

There were no significant seawatching numbers in the spring as the March to May total was only 67 E and 93 W, but late in the year there were two noteworthy movements at Selsey Bill of 300 W on 28 Nov and 650 W on 10 Dec.

There were a number of inland records, with small numbers of birds (one to six) in all the river valleys. In addition there were small numbers recorded at Pulborough Brooks in every month of the year except January, June and August with a maximum count of 40 on 26 Apr. Elsewhere there was one at Amberley Wild Brooks on 24 Jan and 1 Feb, and two there on 7 Mar. Single birds were at Lewes Brooks on 11 Mar and 6 Sep, Rye Fm (Henfield) on 9 Mar, Arlington Res on 29 Apr and 3 Sep, and Weir Wood Res on 11 May (in summer plumage) and on 22 Jul. [RJB]

Purple Sandpiper

Calidris maritima

Scarce winter visitor and passage migrant, very rare in summer. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern.

Total numbers recorded were generally close to the county total averages for the last five years, although the WeBS counter for Brighton Marina reported that counts there may be low due to site closures preventing access throughout 2015.

The highest count in January was 14 at Newhaven on the 7th, and the final sighting at Newhaven for the first winter period was eight on 23 Mar, which is an earlier departure than usual. Numbers at Shoreham Hbr peaked with seven on 23 Feb, and the final record there was two on 20 Apr. The peak at Brighton Marina was six on 23 Jan, and the final record was also of two on 20 Apr. The only record in May was one seen flying over Rottingdean beach on the 14th.

The first returning birds were in October, which is later than the 10-year average (26 Aug), with two recorded at Brighton Marina on the 17th, one at Shoreham Hbr on the 26th, and six at Newhaven Hbr on the 27th. The peak count of 13 at Newhaven Hbr occurred on 14 Dec and at Shoreham Hbr six on 24 Dec. Numbers were low at Brighton Marina as explained above. [CD]

Little Stint

Calidris minuta

Scarce passage migrant; very scarce in winter.

The minimum monthly totals for the county were as shown in the table below. Once again this year no overwintering birds were reported. The first record was of one at Scotney GP, staying

from 20 Feb to 1 Mar, followed by one at Rye Hbr on the 12th. Another turned up at Scotney GP on 30 Apr, then there was a three-week gap until one spent six days at Pagham Hbr and Medmerry from 21 May. The last spring record was a party of seven which stopped off at Rye Hbr on 26 May. This was by far the largest count of the year and oddly the same number was recorded there on 23 May 2014, also a one-day visit.

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
0	1	2	1	8	1	2	4	5	5	1	0

The first returning migrant was one at Rye Hbr on 30 Jun, followed by two there on 7 Jul. Thereafter, ones and twos were recorded intermittently from 10 Aug through to 13 Oct at Medmerry (maximum three on 6 Sep), Rye Hbr, Pagham Hbr, and Pulborough Brooks, with unusually one at Newhaven on 17 Aug. Finally, one arrived at Sidlesham Ferry on 25 Oct and was reported almost daily until last seen on 13 Nov. [CJRB]

Pectoral Sandpiper

Calidris melanotos

Rare vagrant, mainly in autumn.

Records for three single birds were accepted. The first was one at Pagham Hbr on 18 Aug (IB, OM). The second was seen first at Medmerry but then at Sidlesham from 7 to 19 Sep (BFF, DM, DIS). The third bird was at Pulborough Brooks from 17 to 25 Oct (ARK, JSW). These three increase the county total to 94 of which 29 have been recorded this century. Of those records with an arrival date, 91% have arrived between 18 Jul and 2 Nov. [JAH]

Wilson's Phalarope

Phalaropus tricolor

Very rare vagrant. Breeds interior western Canada south to the midwest states of USA and winters in South America.

One was watched for several hours at Pett Level on 19 Sep (BEM *et al.*). This is the ninth Sussex record with the last being at Sidlesham Ferry Pool on 3 Jun 1991. The nine records have occurred in June (2), August (1), September (3) and October (3). The record has been accepted by the BBRC and what was considered to be the same bird was then seen at Vange Marsh, Essex the day after the Pett Level sighting. [DHH]

Red-necked Phalarope

Phalaropus lobatus

Rare spring and autumn passage migrant. Red listed species of high conservation concern.

The only record for the year, and the first since 2007, was one found associating with Avocets at Sidlesham on 30 May (RJF, JWK). This was only the fifth May record since 1962. The county total since 1962 moves on to 32. [JAH]

Grey Phalarope***Phalaropus fulicarius***

Very scarce autumn and rare winter visitor; usually occurs after gales.

There were three records this year all of single birds. The first was at Sidlesham from 15 to 18 Sep (ALB, BFF) found on an SOS outing. Another one was at Cuckmere Haven from 20 to 25 Sep (mo). The third one was seen at Selsey Bill on the sea for 1¼ hr on 6 Dec (AH, RJS) before flying off eastwards. These raise the county total for the 21st century to 56. [JAH]



Grey Phalarope, Cuckmere Haven, September 2015 (Bob Eade)

Terek Sandpiper***Xenus cinereus***

Very rare vagrant.

An elusive bird in Pagham Hbr on 21 and 22 Jun (AL *et al.*) was seen by some lucky observers at the same time as the Hudsonian Whimbrel. The record has been accepted by the BBRC and is the seventh Sussex sighting. The records have been in May (3), June (3) and July (1). [DHH]

Common Sandpiper***Actitis hypoleucos***

Fairly common passage migrant; very scarce in winter. Has bred at least once. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern.

Common Sandpipers were recorded in 76 tetrads. The monthly WeBS counts at the principal sites were as follows:



Terek Sandpiper, Church Norton, June 2015 (Dorian Mason)

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
County total	3	1	2	7	10	-	36	81	39	4	8	2
Pagham Hbr	-	-	-	2	-	-	3	6	4	-	-	-
Arun (south of Arundel)	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	17	8	1	5	1
Ardingly Res	-	-	-	-	1	nc	-	3	1	1	-	-
Ouse Valley	1	1	2	2	-	-	4	-	3	-	2	-
Barcombe Res	-	-	-	-	1	-	4	3	4	-	-	-
Arlington Res	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	3	2	1	-	-
Cuckmere Haven	-	-	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	2	-	-	-
Bewl Water	-	-	-	nc	nc	nc	nc	8	2	1	-	-
Darwell Res	2	-	-	-	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	-
Rye Bay	-	-	-	-	2	-	9	14	7	-	-	-

The minimum monthly county totals were as follows:

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
7	4	16	53	25	5	102	171	80	22	18	8

The Ouse south of Lewes was again the most favoured site in the first winter period, with frequent reports of up to seven between 7 Jan and 9 Mar. There were also four on the R Adur at Coombes on 6 Mar, two at Darwell Res on 24 Feb and occasional singles on the lower R Arun and at Medmerly. Birds were reported more widely from mid-March, with one at Pulborough Brooks on the 12th, the first probable migrant. In the spring, the highest count was ten at Weir Wood Res on 30 Apr, and the last record was one at Warnham LNR on 27 May.

The first autumn arrival was one at Pagham Hbr on 15 Jun, followed by single birds at Weir Wood and Arlington Reservoirs on the 23rd. The highest autumn count was 20 at Union Canal (E Guldeford) on 19 Jul, but there was a noticeable influx in the second half of August, with 17 on the lower Arun on the 15th, the same on the Adur at Beeding on the 28th, 15 along the lower Ouse on the same date, 12 in the lower Cuckmere on the 24th and the same number at Medmerry on the 25th.

In the second winter period, five were noted at Pagham Hbr on 1 Nov and one lingered at Arlington Res until the 25th, but the most regular site in the last two months was once again the lower Ouse, where birds were present from 15 Oct until 14 Dec, with counts of five on 12 Nov and six on 13 Dec. Birds were also regularly reported from the lower Arun (maximum five on 23 Nov), and one was at Rose Green until 15 Nov. [CJRB]

Green Sandpiper

Tringa ochropus

Scarce spring and autumn passage migrant; more frequent in autumn; scarce in winter. Amber listed species of medium concern. Schedule 1 species.

The monthly WeBS counts at the principal sites were as shown in the table below. The 1% national threshold of nine birds was not exceeded at any site. During the first winter period, wintering Green Sandpipers were recorded at some 20 wetlands. The most frequently inhabited sites were Medmerry, Sidlesham Ferry Pool and pools at Church Norton, and less frequently at Pulborough Brooks, the Knepp Estate, the Ouse-Glynde confluence and Rye Hbr. Of 66 records, 77% were of single individuals, ten were of twos and five were of three birds, one such record being at Sidlesham Ferry on 8 Feb, the other four on four dates between 1 and 25 Mar, the later ones being possibly the vanguard of spring migration.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
County total	2	7	0	5	0	2	19	20	11	9	7	10
Medmerry	-	3	-	-	-	-	-	1	3	1	1	2
Pagham Hbr	-	3	-	2	-	1	1	-	-	2	-	-
Arun Valley	-	-	-	-	-	-	9	7	1	3	1	-
Weir Wood Res	-	-	-	-	-	1	4	5	4	1	-	-
Barcombe Res	-	-	-	2	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	1
Cuckmere Haven	-	-	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	1	-	-	-
Pevensey Levels	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	1
Wadhurst Park	2	1	nc	-	nc	-	nc	nc	2	2	2	2

Spring passage during April and May was marked by five birds at Pulborough Brooks on 6 Apr, four there on the 26th, four more between Arundel and Littlehampton on the 28th and nine at Weir Wood Res on the 21st. Otherwise numbers were the usual ones or twos. Records from inland sites included single birds at Loxwood, Warnham LNR, Crawley and Novington (Plumpton).

There were numerous records in June of presumably non-breeders early on but possibly including some returning failed breeders later in the month. The favoured sites were Pagham Hbr where up to three were seen, mainly on Sidlesham Ferry Pool, on 17 dates, Pulborough Brooks, with one on the 21st and a peak count of six on the 29th, and Weir Wood Res during the second half of the month with a peak count of three on the 28th. Numbers gradually increased through July into August with numerous counts of five or more but high counts of 12 flying west at Seaford Head on 14 Aug, 18 at Rye Hbr on

the 24th and 13 at Sidlesham Ferry on the 30th. The only inland sites during this period were the Knepp Estate, Warnham LNR, Novington SP, Barcombe Res, Tinkers Marsh (Bewl), and Crowhurst. The highest counts were nine at Sidlesham Ferry in early September and six at Weir Wood Res on 9 Sep, but numbers began to decline from mid-September.

During the second winter period the highest counts were of four at both Sidlesham Ferry on 2 Nov and Sefton Fm (Rose Green) on 13 and 14 Dec but numbers were mostly of ones or twos. Singles were recorded at five inland locations but there were two at Wadhurst Park on 13 Nov and 14 Dec and three at Crowborough on 31 Dec. [RBJJ]

Spotted Redshank

Tringa erythropus

Scarce passage migrant and winter visitor. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern.

The monthly WeBS counts at the principal locations were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
County total	6	10	5	2	-	-	-	-	4	4	3	1
Chichester Hbr	4	7	4	1	-	-	-	-	1	-	2	1
Medmerry	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	1	-
Pagham Hbr	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Rye Bay	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

The approximate minimum monthly totals, including WeBS and other records, were as follows:

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
16	12	9	10	2	5	3	11	13	11	18	9

In the first winter period, most birds, as usual, were in the Chichester Hbr area where the highest counts were of four in Fishbourne Channel on 7 Feb and nine at West Wittering on 14 Jan. The highest count in Pagham Hbr was four on 19 Jan. Elsewhere, single birds were seen at Pulborough Brooks on 1 Mar, Newhaven Tide Mills on 1 Jan and at Scotney GP on 5-8 Feb. For most of April, only one, just occasionally two, birds were recorded at Pagham Hbr so five at Sidlesham Ferry on the 15th presumably included at least four migrants. Elsewhere, there was one at Thorney Island on the 17th and two at Rye Hbr on the 4th and again on the 23rd. In May, which is often a lean month for this species, only two single birds were recorded; at Fishbourne Channel on the 2nd and Waltham Brooks on the 27th. What was presumably the last spring migrant was one at Rye Hbr on 9 Jun.

The first returning autumn bird was at Pagham Hbr on 24 Jun followed by two more on the 27th and another at Rye Hbr on the 29th. Thereafter, one was in the Pagham Hbr area throughout July but with two there on the 29th. Pagham Hbr hosted the majority of birds in August. The month started with six there on the 1st after which numbers fluctuated with a peak count of ten on the 18th. The only bird reported elsewhere during August was one at Rye Hbr on the 16th. Good numbers continued to grace Pagham Hbr throughout September, with up to five present in the early part of the month, increasing to eight on the 9th and nine on the 11th. Numbers then declined, though there were still four there on the 30th. Elsewhere, there were one at West Wittering on 4 Sep, two at Dell Quay on the 9th, one at Medmerry on the 13th (which could have involved one of the Pagham birds) and one at East Head on the 26th. Numbers held up at Pagham Hbr throughout October, with

a peak count of six there on the 19th but only a single bird on the 31st. Elsewhere, there were three in Fishbourne Channel on the 20th and single birds at Medmerry on the 1st and 31st.

During the second winter period numbers in the Pagham Hbr area varied, peaking at five on 20 Nov. Similarly, in Chichester Hbr, numbers also varied with up to three at East Head on 18 Nov and also in Fishbourne Channel on 3 Dec and one or two at Thorney Island. One or two were noted on five dates during the period and at Pulborough Brooks a single bird was present most of December being joined by another on the 19th. [JC]

Greenshank

Tringa nebularia

Fairly common passage migrant; very scarce in winter, except at Chichester Hbr. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern.

The monthly WeBS counts at the principal locations were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
County total	32	22	28	27	-	3	20	131	34	34	23	19
Chichester Hbr	30	21	28	17	-	1	18	101	30	32	23	16
Lower Adur Estuary	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Rye Bay	1	-	-	5	-	1	2	3	2	-	-	-

As is usual, the largest numbers during the first winter period were in Chichester Hbr where typically numbers varied from one to five during the period except at Thorney Island where there were 24 on 22 Jan and 19 on both 18 and 21 Feb. During March there were ten at East Chidham and 15 at Thorney Island on 21st. Elsewhere in the county only single birds were recorded during the period at four different sites. Numbers at Thorney Island declined during April to 13 on the 24th, some of which may have been spring migrants.

While it is always difficult to detect the onset of spring migration, away from the established wintering grounds single birds were noted at Cuckmere Haven on 24 Mar, there was 1 W past Selsey Bill on 1 Apr and further sightings at Cuckmere Haven on the 2nd, at Pulborough Brooks on the 8th and another at Lewes Brooks on the 11th. The tempo of spring migration increased on 20 Apr. In the Arun Valley, single birds were noted on several dates to the 22nd but then peaked at six on the 26th with four at Waltham Brooks on the 30th. In East Sussex, at Cuckmere Haven, single birds were recorded on nine dates to the 21st, peaking at four on the 22nd. At Rye Hbr, from a single bird recorded on 10 Apr, numbers peaked at five on the 20th. Inland, single birds were seen at Weir Wood Res on 20 Apr, twos at Lewes Brooks on the 19th, and at Wadhurst also on the 20th.

There was the usual trickle of birds in May recorded at coastal or near coastal sites including seven at Thorney Island on the 8th, 6 W past Selsey Bill on the 3rd, and four at Pulborough Brooks on the 3rd being the highest counts.

There was no clear gap in records in June making it difficult to determine when spring migration finished and the autumn return passage began. Single birds were noted at a number of sites across the county during the month. The first clear indication of autumn passage, however, was a count of 18 at Thorney Deepes on 5 Jul where numbers increased to 40 on the 19th, a monthly peak of 83 on the 31st and a late summer maximum of 94 on 15 and 28 Aug. Elsewhere numbers during August were usually in the range from one to three at coastal sites, but significant counts included 12 on Pevensey Levels on the 18th, 44 at Rye Hbr on the 24th and 14 at Pagham Hbr on the 27th. Elsewhere, numbers mostly ranged from one to two, occasionally up to eight, at

traditional coastal and wetland sites. The pattern in the later autumn months was very similar; the highest numbers were at Thorney Deepes where the peak count was 46 on 30 Sep. In the second winter period the wintering flock at Thorney Deepes peaked at 21 on 28 Nov. Numbers elsewhere were most frequently of single birds at a range of traditional sites but with occasional sightings of up to eight, some of which may have been late migrants. [JC]

Lesser Yellowlegs

Tringa flavipes

Very rare vagrant. Breeds in sub-Arctic Alaska and Canada and winters in central and southern South America.

The bird first seen at Pett Level Pools on 25 Dec 2014 remained in the Pett/Rye Hbr area until 21 Feb (AK, JW *et al.*). This is first time that the species has over-wintered in Sussex (although one stayed at Willingdon for 37 days in Feb/Mar 1983), and the record has been accepted by the BBRC as an extension to the dates reported in 2014. [DHH]

Wood Sandpiper

Tringa glareola

Very scarce spring migrant and scarce autumn passage migrant; recorded once in winter. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern. Schedule 1 species.

The minimum monthly totals were as follows:

Apr		Jul	Aug	Sep
2		6	36	5

The only spring record was of two birds at Cuckmere Haven on 26 Apr. Return passage commenced in July with a single bird at Pulborough Brooks on the 11th and 12th (and other single birds on the 22nd and 29th) followed by two at Rye GC on the 21st and a single bird at Rye Hbr from the 22nd to 28th, and another one at Scotney GP on the 31st. In August, an influx was recorded at Medmerry with 15 on the 24th (two remaining to the 28th); a single bird was seen at Pagham Hbr on the 11th and 12th; one was recorded at Pulborough Brooks from the 1st to 8th and another arrived on the 29th. In Rye Bay one or two were recorded on seven dates but there were five at Rye Hbr on the 19th, 11 on the 24th and 27th and nine at Pett Level on the 31st. Elsewhere, single birds were noted at Fairlight on the 1st, Seaford Head on the 17th (flying overhead with a Green Sandpiper *T. ochropus*) and 31st, Cuckmere Haven on the 28th and Rodmell Brooks on the 31st.

Numbers declined in September as birds continued their migration. A single bird stayed at Medmerry from the 4th to 19th, one was at Sidlesham Ferry from the 1st to 8th and other single birds were recorded at Rye Hbr on the 7th and 27th, the final record for the year, three days earlier than the 10-year average date. [RJBJ]

Common Redshank

Tringa totanus

Scarce resident and fairly common winter visitor and passage migrant. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern.

The monthly WeBS counts at the principal locations were as shown in the table below. As usual, the highest counts by far were in Chichester Hbr, where numbers exceeded the 1% national

threshold number of 1200 in January, February, August to October and December, with these numbers clearly demonstrating that this site continues to hold nationally significant numbers of this species. There were few notable counts away from these sites during the first winter period, but 210 at Pagham Hbr on 26 Feb and 73 on the lower Adur on 19 Feb were the most significant. Spring passage was, as is usual with this species, unremarkable and best indicated by the departure of wintering birds from the main sites, which can be gauged from the WeBS table above.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
County total	2206	1842	1350	208	31	59	565	1727	1626	1627	1566	1946
Chichester Hbr	1777	1517	1007	123	11	12	482	1312	1326	1385	1071	1397
Pagham Hbr	187	113	78	11	2	8	36	145	157	133	124	254
Newhaven	43	20	37	-	nc	-	2	-	2	nc	82	118
Rye Bay	118	97	174	48	9	23	20	198	79	37	151	100

Breeding success never seems to be very good in Sussex, but there were about 12 young raised altogether. Rye Hbr once again held the highest number, with ten pairs at Harbour Fm and three on the Beach Reserve. Breeding success was described as low with only a few fledged young seen. At Pagham Hbr, six pairs fledged three young, and at Amberley Wildbrooks two pairs produced three young. A single pair produced three young at Pulborough Brooks and there were also single pairs at Lewes Brooks, Medmerry and Pilsey Island but with no note of breeding success.



Common Redshank (Chris Hobden)

The first non-breeding birds started returning in late June, with 50 at Sidlesham Ferry on the 27th, rising to 80 there two days later. The first bird returned to the Adur Estuary on 2 Jul, following two months with no records there. At Rye Hbr numbers had built to 68 on 3 Jul and

at Thorney Island there were 480 on 6 Jul, rising to an autumn peak there of 1200 on 28 Aug. Other notable counts during the autumn/ winter period, apart from the WeBS counts given above, included 45 at Newhaven Tide Mills on 20 Nov (with 58 there on the 14 Dec) and 65 at the Adur Estuary on 24 Dec. [JC]

Jack Snipe

Limnocryptes minimus

Scarce winter visitor and passage migrant.

The monthly WeBS counts reveal little about this species; apart from two at Novington sand pit in January just singles were counted from five other sites on ten occasions.

The minimum monthly totals were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr		Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
No. of birds	24	30	9	2		1	6	4	3
No. of sites	15	10	8	2		1	4	4	3

The year began well with three at West Rise Marsh (Eastbourne) on 1 Jan. Nearly 68% of the year's records were in the first two months. By far the largest number recorded was 18 at Rye Hbr on 27 Feb following four there on 27 Jan. Ones and twos were seen at many of the traditional and well-watched sites, mostly on or near the coast, but the most frequent sightings came from Shoreham Airport, where regular visits produced one or two from 14 Jan to 17 Feb. The final record was of one at Charleston Reedbed on 23 Apr.

The first returning bird was one at Petworth Park Lake on 10 Sep. All records came from regular sites and all were of single birds except for three at Rye Hbr on 20 Oct. The only birds seen with any regularity were at Arundel WWT and East Head (Chichester Hbr). [CJRB]

Woodcock

Scolopax rusticola

Fairly common resident and winter visitor. Red listed species of high conservation concern.

The minimum numbers of birds and sites for the two winter periods are shown below.

	Jan	Feb	Mar		Nov	Dec
No. of birds	18	21	17		15	10
No. of sites	13	13	13		12	8

For the second year running winter numbers were low at both ends of the year. In the first three months nearly all reports were of one or two, the highest counts being six at Pett Level on 4 Jan and five at Salehurst on 4 Feb.

Most sightings were from north of the Downs, with the bulk coming from Ashdown Forest, but there was an interesting series of records from the outskirts of Brighton. Also interesting was a report from the Knepp Estate of a bird seen in late March which had been satellite tagged there in March 2014. It spent the summer of that year in Finland, returned to winter at Knepp in 2014/15 and was back in Finland again by early April.

Roding was first reported on 18 Mar from The Ridge (Ashdown Forest) and a total of about 53 territorial birds were recorded in the county, average for recent years. There were about 37 territories on Ashdown Forest, nine on the West Sussex commons and three at Broadwater Warren and isolated territorial birds were also seen at Milland, Chailey Common, Frant and St Leonard's Forest. There were no records of confirmed breeding.

Unusually there were no records between 18 Jul and 1 Nov. In the last two months of the year once again nearly all reports were of single birds from the interior, the highest count being three at Weir Wood Res on 11 Dec. [CJRB]

Common Snipe

Gallinago gallinago

Very scarce breeder and fairly common winter visitor. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern.

The monthly WeBS counts at the principal sites were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
County total	271	235	241	45	-	-	-	36	47	135	152	110
Chichester Hbr	59	15	15	3	-	-	-	-	5	12	10	7
Pagham Hbr	-	5	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	22	2	7
Arun Valley	53	50	68	11	-	-	-	-	6	27	15	16
Lower Adur Estuary	58	71	11	-	-	-	-	-	7	10	70	28
Upper Adur Levels	-	16	17	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	11
Weir Wood Res	1	4	2	-	-	-	-	-	4	9	-	-
Newhaven	22	16	2	-	nc	-	-	-	-	nc	-	-
Ouse Valley	16	7	85	2	-	-	-	-	8	2	-	5
Eastbourne Lakes	15	17	5	13	-	-	-	-	-	12	12	22
Pevensay Levels	3	3	1	2	-	-	-	32	10	8	16	4
Rye Bay	34	8	18	10	-	-	-	4	5	27	20	10

In the early part of the year there were several counts significantly higher than the WeBS. At Rye Hbr, 149 on 27 Jan was by far the highest total at any site, with 70 there on 21 Feb, but at Pulborough Brooks 37 on 19 Jan was the reserve's best count all year. There were 50 at Henfield Brooks on 17 Feb, and numbers at Pagham Hbr were also higher than the table suggests, with 40 on 24 Jan and 23 on 17 Mar. Some of the smaller sites had good numbers too - 85 at RSPB Lewes Brooks on 16 Mar was the county's second highest count of the year, 71 on the lower Adur on 19 Feb was the third, and there were 59 at Newhaven Tide Mills on 16 Mar. Counts of 30 at Charleston Reedbed on 22 Feb, the Knepp Estate on 7 Mar and Cuckmere Haven on the 23rd were also notable.

Although 35 were at Pett Level on 16 Apr and one on 5 Jun there was no drumming recorded there. Only seven birds were recorded in May. The only evidence of breeding was two displaying at Pulborough Brooks in June, and none were found at Amberley Wild Brooks, with a note that conditions were too dry.

Only five birds were reported in July, and numbers were mainly in single figures throughout August and September except for 25 on Pevensay Levels on 16 Aug, ten at Rye Hbr on the 20th and the same at Pagham Hbr on 8 Sep.

Numbers began to build up in late October but were generally very low in the second winter period at most sites, particularly in December. In addition to WeBS there were 40 at Arundel WWT on 30 Nov, 15 at Newhaven Tide Mills on the 26th (with 36 on 18 Dec), plus 22 at Pett Level on 24 Dec, 20 at East Head (W Wittering) on 26 Nov and the same number at Pagham Hbr on the 19th. [CJRB]

Pomarine Skua

Stercorarius pomarinus

Passage migrant in variable numbers in spring but very scarce in autumn; rare in winter.

It was a disastrous year for this species with an estimated spring total of just 20 birds which is the lowest on record and well below the 10-year rolling average of 127. Numbers have shown great variations this century ranging from 46 in 2010 to 369 in 2008. Spring migration along the Sussex coast and visible to land-based observers depends to a great extent upon wind direction. The numbers of many migrant species are influenced by weather conditions but it appears that Pomarine skuas are particularly affected. It is possible that the strong north-westerly winds which predominated throughout much of May were responsible for the low numbers of spring migrants and particularly this species.

The first record of the year was of 1 E off Worthing on 1 Jan but there were no further records until May. Spring migration was recorded on only six dates in May and a further three dates in June. Seven sightings were of one or two birds with 4 E past Splash Point (Seaford) on 5 May and 6 E off Beachy Head on 11 May the only exceptions. The last spring record was of 2 E off Selsey Bill on 13 Jun and there were no further records during the year. [DHH]

Arctic Skua

Stercorarius parasiticus

Fairly common spring and scarce autumn migrant; very scarce in summer and rare in winter. Red listed species of high conservation concern.

This was yet another poor year for this species with a total of 198 being the lowest this century. This was the third consecutive poor year resulting in the 10-year rolling average being reduced to 363.

The approximate monthly totals for which a flight direction was recorded are shown in the first table below. As in previous years, both tables have been compiled assuming that the highest count at any coastal site on a particular day was the minimum in the county on that date. It has also been assumed that birds recorded on subsequent dates were different. Only those birds for which a flight direction was recorded are included in the tables.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
No. of birds	-	-	-	79	86	6	2	10	11	3	8	1
No. of days	-	-	-	19	17	3	2	5	7	3	8	1
Peak no.	-	-	-	16	23	3	1	4	4	1	1	1
Peak day	-	-	-	24 th	6 th	4 th	23 rd	25 th	9 th	19 th	21 st	12 th

With no records in the first three months of the year the first record was not until 8 Apr when there were 4E at Beachy Head. Easterly spring passage was slight with only four dates providing

double-figure counts: 14 on 23 Apr with 16 the following day, 17 on 3 May and 23 on 6 May all from Splash Point (Seaford). In addition to those birds recorded passing seawatching points there were four off Rye Hbr LNR on 2 May. Numbers in June and July were typically low with 3 E past Selsey Bill on 4 Jun the highest count and with just two singles in July. In the east of the county there were two or three in the Rye/Hastings/St Leonards area on four dates in September. The normal late summer and autumn movements did not materialize with 4 W past Selsey Bill on 25 Aug and 4 W past the same site on 9 Sep being the highest daily totals.

The monthly totals of passage birds at four seawatching sites are shown in the table below.

	Apr		May			Aug		Sep	
	E	W	E	W		E	W	E	W
Selsey Bill	40	-	44	4		1	9	7	4
Worthing	3	-	8	-		-	-	-	-
Splash Point	50	-	54	-		3	-	nc	nc
Beachy Head	13	-	4	-		-	-	nc	nc

In the last three months of the year all records were of single birds with the last being 1 W at Selsey Bill on 12 Dec. [DHH]

Great Skua

Stercorarius skua

Scarce spring and autumn passage migrant; very scarce but increasing in winter. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern.

The annual total of just 75 was the lowest this century and only a third of the 10-year rolling average of 218. The minimum numbers of passage birds shown in the table below have been calculated using the same method as for Arctic Skua. The numbers include only those records for which a direction of flight was given and does not include records of birds lingering offshore.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Monthly total	6	-	-	22	33	-	2	2	-	-	6	4
No. of days	3	-	-	11	13	-	2	-	-	-	6	4
Peak no.	3	-	-	6	8	-	1	1	-	-	1	1
Peak date	1 st	-	-	29 th	5 th	-	*	*	-	-	*	*

*all records in July, August, November and December were of single birds

The first record of the year was of 3 W off Selsey Bill on 1 Jan with three others there during the month and singles at Worthing and Shoreham. There were no records in February and the only March records involved single birds off Roedean and Selsey Bill. Spring passage commenced on 11 Apr with 1 E past Beachy Head but was very sporadic for the remainder of the month with 4 E off Beachy Head on the 26th and 6 E passing Splash Point (Seaford) on the 29th. There was light passage on each of the first twelve days of May with peaks of 6 E on the 3rd and 8 E on the 5th off Splash Point. The last spring record was of 1 W at Worthing on 14 May and there were no further records until July when there were singles off Selsey Bill and Medmerry on the 3rd and 19th respectively. 1 E off Beachy Head on 23 Aug was followed by 1 E off both Selsey Bill and Splash Point two days later.

There were no records in either September or October. During November all records were of single birds with a total of four moving west (off Selsey Bill, Worthing, Portobello and Hastings) and a total of three moving east at Selsey Bill, Portobello and Splash Point. The pattern was similar in December with singles being recorded off Selsey Bill on three dates and also off Splash Point on three dates. The last records of the year were of 1 E off both Selsey Bill and Splash Point on 30 Dec. [DHH]

Black Guillemot

Cepphus grylle

Rare vagrant. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern.

An adult bird in breeding plumage was seen flying east past Goring Gap on the morning of 16 Apr (CEH, SPS). What was assumed to be the same bird was watched for an hour off Goring Beach where it was feeding and drifting slowly eastwards on 25 Apr (RNS, SPS). This is the 16th record for the county and the first since one was seen at Selsey Bill on 13 May 2010. [DHH]

Razorbill

Alca torda

Common winter visitor and fairly common passage migrant; formerly bred. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern.

The annual total of just 311 is the lowest this century and only one fifth of the 10-year rolling average of 1611. The table below gives the minimum monthly totals and shows that there were no three-figure counts during the year.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Monthly total	13	89	8	31	38	6	-	-	7	34	41	46
Peak no.	5	41	2	12	9	3	-	-	2	10	10	16
Peak day	1 st	26 th	7 th	29 th	10 th	13 th	-	-	27 th	24 th	25 th	30 th

Razorbills were recorded on only five days in both January and February and on six days in March. During that period there were double-figure counts on just three dates: 21 E at Splash Point (Seaford) on 13 Feb, 21 E at Splash Point on 16 Feb and 41 W at Selsey Bill on 26 Feb. 12 W at Selsey Bill on 29 Apr was the only other double-figure count in the first half of the year with the last record being 3 E at Selsey Bill on 13 Jun. There were no further records until one flew east past Selsey Bill on 11 Sep. The pattern of low numbers continued in the last three months of the year with peak counts at Selsey Bill of 10 W and 3 E on 24 Oct and 3 W and 10 E on 25 Nov while there were 16 E at Splash Point on 30 Dec.

The table below shows the totals at three seawatching sites. Even with extremely low numbers, the table shows the normal pattern of predominantly westerly movement at Selsey Bill and easterly movement at Splash Point, Seaford.

[illegible]

Away from the three sites listed in the table above, the only records during the year were of one off Bexhill on 16 Jan and 1 E off Beachy Head on 8 Mar. [DHH]

Little Auk

Alle alle

Very scarce autumn passage migrant and winter visitor.

There were just two records of single birds during the year. Both sightings were off Selsey Bill where one landed on the sea for two minutes before flying off westwards on 29 Oct (GAH) and one flew east on 17 Nov (RJS, DF). These bring the total this century to approximately 131 although annual totals have been very variable with peaks of 38 in 2001 and 32 in 2007 but none in three other years. [DHH]



Little Auk, Selsey, October 2015 (George Heath)

Common Guillemot

Uria aalge

Fairly common winter visitor and passage migrant; formerly bred. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern.

The estimated total for the year (calculated using the same method as for Red-throated Diver) of 227 was the lowest since 2006 and well below the 10-year rolling average of 625. The minimum monthly totals are shown in the table below.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Monthly total	24	22	1	6	30	7	3	-	1	3	95	33
Peak no.	21	2	1	2	4	3	3	-	1	2	62	9
Peak day	1st	13th	13th	12th	8th	1st	28th	-	11th	14th	24th	30th

Numbers in January consisted almost entirely of 21 W off Selsey Bill on the 1st while the February figure of 22 included 20 offshore at Newhaven on the 3rd. There was very little spring passage in either March or April. Although birds were recorded on 14 days in May the monthly total was only 30 with maxima of four on the 8th and 9th. Numbers were typically low in June and July with the last on 28 Jul and no records in August. The first autumn bird was 1 E passing Selsey Bill on 11 Sep with the three October records all coming from that area. The largest count of the year of 62 E and 11 W at Selsey Bill on 24 Nov and the last record was of 9 E at Splash Point, Seaford on 30 Dec.

The totals at four sea-watching sites are shown below. There will inevitably been duplication between sites as birds moved along the coast so no attempt should be made to total either rows or columns. It is noticeable that the majority of the records came from the western end of the county. The records from the east of the county related to birds offshore at Pett where there were one on 1 Jan, two off Bexhill on 16 Jan and one at Cliff End on 9 Feb.

	Jan-Feb			Mar-May			Jun-Jul			Aug-Oct			Nov-Dec		
	E	o/s	W	E	o/s	W	E	o/s	W	E	o/s	W	E	o/s	W
Selsey Bill	2	2	22	6	3	28	5	-	6	1	-	1	66	5	54
Worthing	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-
Splash Point	-	-	-	1	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	16	-	-
Beachy Head	2	1	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	nc	nc	nc

The two records of birds away from the open sea were of singles at Southwick Canal on 3 Jan and Sovereign Hbr on 24 Dec. [DHH]

Auk species

The approximate annual total of 4108 was the lowest this century and resulted in the 10-year rolling average reducing from 27,426 to 21,202. Annual numbers have been extremely variable in the past ten years ranging from a peak of 63,138 in 2011 and now only 4108 this year. The table below shows the monthly totals including those for Common Guillemots, Razorbills and auks not identified to species. The figures should not be taken as an accurate assessment as no account has been taken of any duplication of sightings.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Monthly total	321	1746	55	298	500	42	7	-	15	56	792	276
Peak no.	67W	421W	14E	94W	107W	11W	2E	-	2W	20W	197W	37W
Peak day	31st	1st	13th	17th	8th	1st	6th	-	27th	26th	29th	1st

The approximate totals recorded at four seawatching sites are shown in the table below. The pattern of occurrence changes from one year to the next but in the past two years the large numbers normally expected in the first three months of the year have not occurred. In previous years birds involved in feeding movements in the early part of the year accounted for the majority of sightings with numbers often boosted as birds returned north in March. The reasons for the

reduced numbers in the past two years are not known but the lack of food in the area is a possibility and there is also the suggestion that movements may have occurred further offshore than normal.

	Jan-Feb			Mar-May			Jun-Jul			Aug-Oct			Nov-Dec		
	E	o/s	W	E	o/s	W	E	o/s	W	E	o/s	W	E	o/s	W
Selsey Bill	210	4	1068	116	6	643	24	-	23	32	6	27	403	10	436
Worthing	4	-	45	-	-	14	-	-	-	-	4	2	5	4	8
Splash Point	681	-	-	39	3	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-
Beachy Head	18	1	11	47	-	1	2	-	-	-	-	-	nc	nc	nc

The figures show that where auks were seen in flight only one in eight was identified to species compared to one in three last year which suggests that the movements which did occur were further offshore than normal. Where specific identification was possible the ratio of Razorbills to Guillemots was 1:1.4 which is similar to that of last year. [DHH]



Little Tern, Selsey, May 2015 (Ads Bowley)

Little Tern

Sternula albifrons

Scarce breeding summer visitor and fairly common passage migrant. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern. Schedule 1 species.

The first birds of the year were seen passing Splash Point (Seaford) (one) and Beachy Head (two) on 12 Apr, four days later than the 10-year average date. Thereafter, birds were recorded on an almost daily basis through the spring and early summer months, particularly in the Pagham

Hbr/Selsey Bill area, from where the vast majority of April records emanated. These included 18 feeding offshore at Selsey Bill on 26 Apr and 40 seen at Medmerry on that and the following day. Elsewhere, the first seven birds were back in Chichester Hbr on the 24th and at Rye Hbr the first bird returned on the 22nd, with numbers there building up to 35 by the month's end. The biggest movements were on 1 May, with 47 E past Selsey Bill, and 3 May, with 40 E there, and 26 E past Splash Point, but thereafter passage was minimal and, overall, numbers were well down from the principal seawatching sites. The only inland record during this period was one a single bird at Weir Wood Res on 26 Jun.

Records from four seawatching sites of eastwards movements were as follows:

	Apr	May	Total	Peak movement
Selsey Bill	111	138	249	47 E on 1 May
Worthing	-	3	3	2 E on 5 May
Splash Point	9	28	37	26 E on 3 May
Beachy Head	2	nc	2	2 E on 12 Apr

Happily, for the first time in a long time, there was some positive news from all three of the main breeding sites. In Chichester Hbr, 17 young fledged from 13 nests; in Pagham Hbr, 16 young fledged from 18 nests and at Rye Hbr at least 11 pairs nested and at least five chicks fledged. This was the best breeding season in the county for well over a decade and particularly encouraging as young were fledged at all three sites.

As is typical of this species, numbers began to diminish swiftly in August although the second inland record of the year occurred this month of two seen at Weir Wood Res on the 13th. The only double figure count was of 14 in Chichester Hbr on the 16th; none was recorded there or at Rye Hbr after the 18th; the last two sightings of the year were at Selsey Bill on 12 Sep and Church Norton on the 15th, 14 days earlier than the 10-year average date. [AH]

Black Tern

Chlidonias niger

Scarce passage migrant. Schedule 1 species.

The minimum monthly totals were as follows:

Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct
4	16	2	-	28	8	-

It was a particularly poor spring for this erratic visitor to the county, though the autumn's showing was a little better.

The first two birds of the spring passed Splash Point (Seaford) on 23 Apr, ten days later than the 10-year average date; 2 E there the following day was the only other April record. In May, one passed Selsey Bill on the 2nd then, on the 3rd, came the only day of any real passage with 12 E past both Selsey Bill and Splash Point followed by one past both Brighton and two past Splash Point on the 5th. The only other coastal records were of one past Church Norton on the 16th and another past Rustington the following day. The only inland record was of one at Chichester GP on 3 May. There were two records in June, both of single birds on the 15th, one at Pagham Hbr and another at Rye Hbr.

Records from three seawatching sites were as follows:

	Apr	May	Jun	Aug	Sep	Total	Peak movement
Selsey Bill	-	13 E	-	3 W	-	16	12 E on 3 May
Worthing Beach	-	-	-	2 W	1 W	3	2 W on 26 Aug
Splash Point	4 E	14 E	-	11 E	nc	29	12 E on 3 May

The first returning birds, an adult with a juvenile, were recorded in Chichester Hbr on 12 Aug, followed by another adult there three days later. Between 25 and 31 Aug there was a flurry of records of ones and twos all along the coast from Rye Hbr, Eastbourne, Splash Point, (where 10 E on the 26th was the month's highest count), the Shoreham/Worthing area, Selsey Bill and Medmerry. There were also records of single birds from inland sites: from Warnham LNR on the 26th and Arlington Res the following day. In September, there were further coastal records of single birds from Brighton on the 10th and 20th, but two at Pagham Hbr on the 18th and 19th, Ferring and Rye Hbr on the 20th and Worthing on the 22nd. There were two inland birds; one at Weir Wood Res from 17 to 20 Sep and at Chichester GP from the 22nd to the 26th, which was the final sighting of the year, 13 days earlier than the 10-year average date. [AH]

Sandwich Tern

Sterna sandvicensis

Scarce breeding summer visitor and common passage migrant, winters in very small numbers. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern.

There were, as last year, at least three birds wintering in the west of the county, recorded intermittently between Selsey Bill and Chichester Hbr, but 6 W were noted at Selsey Bill on 21 Feb and six were recorded in Chichester Hbr the following day. At Rye Hbr, the first two birds were back on 5 Mar followed by 12 on the 19th, 17 on the 20th, 55 on the 24th and 110 by the 27th. Numbers remained low in West Sussex, however, with eight past Selsey Bill on the 11th being the highest March count.

Eastwards spring passage started slowly as birds dribbled past in small numbers. Although there were 300 at Rye Hbr on 3 Apr the first significant count was not until 7 Apr when 124 birds passed Splash Point (Seaford). Thereafter, things picked up rapidly and the 10th was the biggest day of the spring when 264 E were noted at Selsey Bill and 310 E at Splash Point. Overall it was a much better spring than last year. During April and May a minimum of 3502 birds were recorded moving eastwards. These figures are based on the assumption that the highest count at any coastal site on any day was the minimum in the county on that date and that birds counted on subsequent days were different. In recent years an increasing tendency has been noted by observers at Selsey Bill for birds to linger and or feed offshore; during April and May a total of at least 710 were counted offshore with daily counts between mid-April and mid-May varying from 20 to a maximum of 62.

Records from four seawatching sites were as shown in the table below.

Encouragingly, given last year's total failure, the breeding colony at Rye Hbr was estimated to contain 250 nesting pairs and 108 fledglings were counted on 6 Jun. Despite there being no breeding attempted at Pagham Hbr, juvenile birds were noted there, with over 20 seen from 12 Jul onwards among the roosting flock, which peaked at c.100 on the 19th.

		Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Peak counts
Selsey Bill	E	20	1840	792	18	36	83	156	29	261 E, 4 o/s on 16 Apr 79 E, 62 o/s on 2 May
	W	6	42	107	26	101	178	208	13	
	o/s	23	246	465	237	325	543	33	5	
Worthing	E	-	414	149	41	12	29	64	2	75 E on 10 Apr
	W	-	28	35	23	57	20	18	15	
	o/s	2	7	5	4	1	11	4	-	
Splash Point	E	-	1577	288	4	nc	3	nc	-	310 E on 10 Apr 173 E on 3 May
	W	-	4	11	-	nc	-	nc	-	
	o/s	-	2	-	-	nc	-	nc	-	
Beachy Head	E	-	476	-	2	nc	-	nc	nc	110 E on 9 Apr
	W	-	1	nc	-	nc	-	nc	nc	
	o/s	-	-	nc	-	nc	-	nc	nc	

A big count of 300 offshore and 16 W at Selsey Bill on 3 Aug suggested some early movement but passage was light. In September, there were still 170 birds at Rye Hbr on the 12th and birds were noted flying both eastwards and westwards in small numbers at several sites during both September and October; the highest counts at Selsey Bill were 37 W on the 1st and 29 W on 15 Sep.

There were still 38 birds at Rye Hbr on 2 Oct and the last report from there was of 14 birds on the 23rd. Small numbers remained through November to the end of December, but invariably in the Selsey Bill to Chichester Hbr area, with regular sightings of two to three birds and a peak of eight at the latter site on 6 Dec. There were no records from inland sites. [AH]

Common Tern

Sterna hirundo

Fairly common breeding summer visitor and common passage migrant. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern.

The first were not seen until the very late date of 1 Apr at Rye Hbr, seven days later than the 10-year average date. Thereafter recorded on 3 Apr at Selsey Bill, Worthing, Splash Point (Seaford) and Rye Hbr. Birds were then recorded on a daily basis through the spring and summer months. A fuller account of the passage records is given in 'Commic' Tern.

The first inland record was of eight at Warnham LNR on 11 Apr, and there were regular records from there, Chichester GP and Weir Wood Res thereafter, though at only the former site were more than ten birds recorded, with a peak of 50 on 1 May. The only other inland sites where spring passage was recorded were Ardingly Res, with two on 11 May and Balcombe Res, with one on 21 Apr.

Perhaps surprisingly, given that it was a good year for our other breeding terns, this species did not do particularly well. At Pagham Hbr, 14 pairs managed to fledge five young; at Pett Level, although there were 30 pairs early on, the scrape dried out in late May and mammalian predators inflicted much damage; at Rye Hbr, although an estimated 135 pairs nested, predation by gulls meant that only 10-15 young fledged. At Warnham LNR, three chicks were fledged; at Weir Wood Res two pairs nested on rafts but the number of chicks fledged is unknown.

By late July return migration was well under way, with 150 W noted at Selsey Bill on 27 Jul, 200 birds feeding off Selsey Bill on the 3rd and 141 W there the following day followed by counts

of 150 from both Pagham and Chichester Harbours on the 12th. Thereafter, small numbers were recorded flying westwards at several coastal sites. Inland, birds were recorded at Weir Wood Res through July and August with ten on 14 Aug and a final record of two on the 16th. One was seen at Ardingly Res on 9th Aug and the last record at Chichester GP was on 22 Sep. Along the coast numbers were low in September. There were only three records in October, all of single birds: at Church Norton on the 6th, at Shoreham Hbr the following day and, the last of the year, past Worthing on the 25th, two days earlier than the 10-year average date. [AH]

Roseate Tern

Sterna dougalli

Very scarce passage migrant and non-breeding summer visitor. Red listed species of high conservation concern. Schedule 1 species.

There were records of probably five but possibly seven birds, all in early May. At Rye Hbr the first and last were seen on the 2nd and the 12th. At Selsey Bill two were feeding offshore on the evening of the 4th (JA, CRJ *et al.*) before drifting away west; they may have been the same two seen going east early on the morning of the 8th (JA), but were clearly different to the single bird feeding offshore later that morning (JA, AB, PM *et al.*). The minimum of five birds is just above the average occurrence of recent years. [AH]

Arctic Tern

Sterna paradisaea

Uncertain, but probably a fairly common spring and autumn passage migrant. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern.

There were, as usual, relatively few confident claims of this species, even from seawatching sites, with only 111 reported from Splash Point (Seaford) and a mere 14 from Selsey Bill during April and May.

The first record, one day earlier than the 10-year average date, was of 6 E past Splash Point on 9 Apr; the next coastal record was not until the 18th when 3 E were noted at Selsey Bill. At Splash Point 50 E were recorded on both the 23rd and 24th, but few others were noted. Inland, one was noted at Weir Wood Res on the 17th, two on the 18th, one of which stayed until the 21st and two on the 30th. A single bird was seen at Arlington Res on the 26th, the only other inland record of the year. Numbers in May were also low with only 6 E and 2 offshore at Selsey Bill and 5 E at Splash Point during the month.

There were records of only 15 birds, seen in ones or twos, between 4 Jul and 22 Sep, the final record for the year, 34 days earlier than the 10-year average date. [AH]

Common/Arctic Tern

Sterna hirundo/paradisaea

Due to the difficulties in separating Common and Arctic Terns passing seawatching sites due, primarily, to brevity of view and distance, the majority of birds are recorded as 'Commic' Terns. A summary of the combined totals of Common, Arctic and 'Commic' Terns from three of the principal seawatching sites is shown in the table below.

It was a very poor spring for passage, with the combined Common/Arctic/Commic total of 3851 being less than half of last year's, and barely half of the 25-year average. There were only two 'big' days, 23 and 24 Apr, when a total of 2316 (of a spring total of 2815) birds passed Splash

Point (Seaford). At Selsey Bill there was a build-up of feeding birds offshore in mid-May, peaking at 250 on the 20th before the flock began to disperse again.

		Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep
Selsey Bill	E	901	808	15	42	29	4
	W	16	170	16	227	303	64
	o/s	220	1276	-	341	331	2
Worthing	E	51	22	28	-	37	3
	W	4	2	-	3	2	12
	o/s	1	-	-	-	-	-
Splash Point	E	2515	300	2	-	110	
	W	-	1	-	-	-	
	o/s	-	-	-	-	-	

Numbers classified as 'Commic' Terns were few and low in number on return passage; the only double figure counts were 18 W past Selsey Bill on 18 Sep and 15 W past Beachy Head the next day. The last report of a 'Commic' Tern was of 4 W past Beachy Head on 27 Sep, 18 days earlier than the 10-year average date. [AH]

Kittiwake

Rissa tridactyla

Common but very localised breeding species: fairly common or common winter visitor and passage migrant. Rare away from coast. Red listed species of high conservation concern.

As usual most were recorded from the regular seawatching locations and the month totals are shown in the following table. It should be noted that Kittiwakes are not counted at Splash Point (Seaford) once breeding pairs have settled on the cliffs (after 4 Mar in 2015), as birds are ever present and constantly flying to and fro.

		Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Selsey Bill	E	12	37	1	8	37	-	5	5	1	12	19	100
	W	146	58	1	29	46	16	3	14	6	19	2126	1241
Worthing	E	-	-	-	1	-	1	-	-	-	-	3	5
	W	14	3	-	2	-	1	-	-	-	-	25	32
Splash Point	E	-	228	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	-	-	66
	W	-	1	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	-	-	-
Beachy Head	E	10	56		988	nc	-	nc	-	nc	nc	nc	nc
	W	-	3	-	-	nc	-	nc	-	nc	nc	nc	nc

The figures are generally low and additionally a few were recorded feeding offshore with month totals of ten at Worthing in January and four in December, and 41 off Selsey Bill in December.

During the first winter period the largest movement was 200 E in 1¾ hr from Splash Point on 13 Feb. During spring the only notable counts were both from Birling Gap; these were 150 E in 2¼ hr on 10 Apr, and 693 E in 2 hr on 12 Apr.

Seaford Head cliffs remains the major nesting site in Sussex but data on the precise number of occupied nests and their breeding success was not available this year, although a count of 270

occupied nests was made in May, and an estimate of 200 birds still on nest ledges was made on 7 Aug.

In the second winter period, six movements of more than 100 were recorded at Selsey Bill. The largest of these was 1404 W on 29 Nov, followed by 480 W on 13 Dec, and 396 W on 28 Nov. These movements were not recorded from other sites. There were no inland records this year. [CD]

Black-headed Gull

Chroicocephalus ridibundus

Common breeding species and very common to abundant passage migrant and winter visitor. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern.

This numerous and widespread species was recorded in 360 tetrads during the year which amounted to 39% of the 923 tetrads from which records were received. The distribution of observations broadly follows that shown on page 15 with the well watched coastal and river valley locations providing most records.

In keeping with recent years the largest counts in the early part of the year were from inland roosts with the highest at Bewl Water where 28,150 roosted on 9 Jan, 28,340 on 12 Jan and 10,000 on 13 Feb. At Weir Wood Res the roost held 1400 on 18 Jan and 1750 on 8 Feb. The only other four figure counts during the first winter period were 1000 at Warnham LNR on both 2 and 23 Jan. Elsewhere notable counts included c.800 at Cliff End (Pett) on 5 Jan, c.800 at Brighthams Fm (Partridge Green) on 11 Jan, 857 at Chidham on 24 Jan, c.1200 at Newhaven Tide Mills on 10 Mar and c.1000 in Cowdray Park (Midhurst) on 14 Mar.

Very few were recorded passing the regularly watched seawatching locations during the spring with the total of just 247 E between March and June and a peak count of a mere 37 E at Worthing on 8 Apr. Although this species is not meticulously recorded the daily logs suggest a decline in the visible migration of this species over recent years.

During the early spring peak counts at breeding sites included 1600 at Arundel WWT on 1 Mar, 600 at Pett Level on 1 Apr and 800 at Rye Hbr on 4 Apr. As usual the largest breeding colonies were in East Sussex. At Rye Hbr a count on 30 Apr found 1113 apparently occupied nests. Additionally 150 pairs nested at Castle Water although these nests failed with birds then moving to the beach reserve. Overall it was estimated that at least 1400 pairs nested on the reserve with good fledging success; probably averaging around one bird per nest. Nearby, at Pett Level, up to 1440 pairs nested but unfortunately the scrape dried out in May which enabled mammalian predators to do considerable damage. At Pagham Hbr four fledged from 20 apparently occupied nests, at Medmerry five fledged from four nests and at Arundel WWT there were an estimated 100-125 pairs but fledging was relatively low due to high predation and mortality with perhaps 30-50 chicks raised. Breeding was not recorded for any other sites.

Throughout July and August larger numbers were recorded away from the breeding sites and although there were several three figure counts during the autumn all the largest occurred between 21 Aug and 11 Sep. On the former date 4000 were hawking for flying ants over Thorney Deepes, 900 were following a plough at Goring Gap on 4 Sep, 1000 were also following the plough at West Chidham on 10 Sep and 700 were at Southbourne on the following day. There were no further comparable counts until 710 were at Cuckmere Haven on 18 Dec and 600 at Beeding Brooks on 23 Dec. The highest numbers however, like the first winter period, were recorded at the nocturnal roosts at Bewl Water and Weir Wood Res. At Bewl Water 26,840 roosted on 17 Nov, 29,070 on the 29th and in December four counts ranged between 18,200 and 33,310 with the

highest on the 30th. The peak counts at Weir Wood Res were also in December with 3000 on the 13th and 4500 on the 14th. [JAN]

Little Gull

Hydrocoloeus minutus

Fairly common passage migrant; most numerous in spring. Very scarce non-breeder in summer and scarce in winter. Schedule 1 species.

Approximately 426 birds were recorded during the year. The following table of monthly totals at both coastal and inland sites, and the numbers of days recorded, demonstrates that most were recorded at coastal locations during April with few during other months.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
No. of days recorded	3	-	1	17	10	1	2	2	6	3	6	10
Coastal	3	-	8	363	8	1	2	-	3	5	12	5
Inland	9	-	-	2	2	-	1	1	1	-	-	-
Total	12	-	8	365	10	1	3	1	4	5	12	5

Nine at Rodmell Brooks on 12 Jan was the only notable record before the spring; remarkably the same number was seen at this site on 18 Feb 2014. Coastal passage was heralded by 8 E at Splash Point (Seaford) on 17 Mar but was then observed between 7 Apr and 16 May. As usual most were seen from East Sussex watch points as the table of month totals of eastbound birds from each site shows.

	Mar	Apr	May	Peak count (hours watched)
Selsey Bill	-	58	2	15 on 9 Apr (5)
Worthing	-	3		3 on 12 Apr (3)
Splash Point	8	342	2	115 on 24 Apr (8)
Beachy Head	-	28		15 on 9 Apr (3)

With 109 E at Splash Point on 23 Apr the main observed passage and over half of the annual total was seen on just two days, 23 and 24 Apr. After this date no more than two were seen on any spring date. Inland spring records included one at Arlington Res on 6 Apr and, at Chichester GP, singles were noted on 23 Apr, 1-10 May and 29 May. The sole record in June was one at Pagham Hbr on the 11th and thereafter equally small numbers continued through the summer and autumn with more than two birds recorded on just three occasions; three at Rye Hbr on 2 Oct, 4 W at Selsey Bill on 18 Nov and three at Widewater (Lancing) on 29 Nov. One or two were seen in Chichester Hbr on eight dates between 15 Dec and the end of the year. [JAN]

Mediterranean Gull

Larus melanocephalus

Fairly common winter visitor and passage migrant; scarce but increasing breeder. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern. Schedule 1 species.

Mediterranean Gulls were recorded in 100 tetrads during 2015 and, as in previous years, the majority of observations were from sites on or near the coast with records from just 12 tetrads

greater than 10 km from the shore. The mobility of the species makes it impossible to estimate the numbers involved but, as before, many of the high counts were from a few favoured locations. An indication of these numbers and the pattern of occurrence can be seen from the following table showing the highest count in each month for sites in West and East Sussex. Apart from considerably lower numbers in the early months at Pagham Hbr there is a remarkable similarity to the same display for 2014. Noteworthy points are the scarcity in East Sussex outside the spring and the 803 seen in Fishbourne Channel (Chichester Hbr) in August creates a new county record.

	West Sussex			East Sussex		
	Number	Site	Day	Number	Site	Day
Jan	25	Pagham village	20th	2	Brighton marina	1st
Feb	40	Pagham Lagoon	2nd	35	Pett Level	27th
Mar	30	Medmerry	1st	412	Pett Level	27th
Apr	150	Thorney Island	24th	336	Pett Level	7th
May	6 W	Selsey Bill	10th	9 E	Splash Point Seaford	6th
Jun	80	Funtington	28th	8	Rye Hbr	13th
Jul	133	Funtington	26th	12 E	Beachy Head	6th
Aug	803	Chichester Hbr	11th	5 E	Beachy Head	5th
Sep	300	Medmerry	19th	1	Beachy Head	5th
Oct	154	Selsey Bill	1st	5	Pett Level	25th
Nov	20 W	Selsey Bill	14th	2	Cuckmere Haven	27th
Dec	16 W	Selsey Bill	11th	4	Bewl Water	24th

Breeding was again rather disappointing; at Rye Hbr c.130 were present on Ternery Pool on 9 Apr though, as has been the case in previous years recently, numbers dropped steadily after this maximum count and only three pairs nested fledging four young. Even higher numbers were at Pett Level in the early spring but none nested. A pair continued to display into April at Arundel WWT but there was no confirmed breeding. The county total of just three pairs is the lowest since two pairs nested in 1996.

Post breeding records also support a poor breeding season as there were only 13 juveniles amongst the party of 150 at Funtington airport on 2 Aug, no more than 30 juveniles amongst the 665 in Fishbourne Channel (Chichester Hbr) on 4 Aug and only six juveniles amongst 106 hawking for ants over Thorney Deepes on 21 Aug.

With a larger number now occurring in the county the seawatch sites record this species regularly; the following table of month totals derived from the sum of the highest daily count flying in each direction from the main sites shows, like many species, a predominantly eastward movement in spring. The high figures for the autumn come from Selsey Bill where many observations probably involved local movements.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
East	2	15	35	216	18	-	7	19	50	40	9	3
West	11	10	6	5	10	6	35	9	60	64	47	77

The peak spring movement was on 12 Apr when 57 E at Worthing (2½ hr), 85 E at Splash Point (Seaford) (6 hr) and 19 E at Beachy Head (2 hr).



Mediterranean Gull, Rye Hbr, April 2015 (Roger and Liz Charlwood)

Although recorded on all except eight days during the last two months the numbers declined towards the end of the year. [JAN]

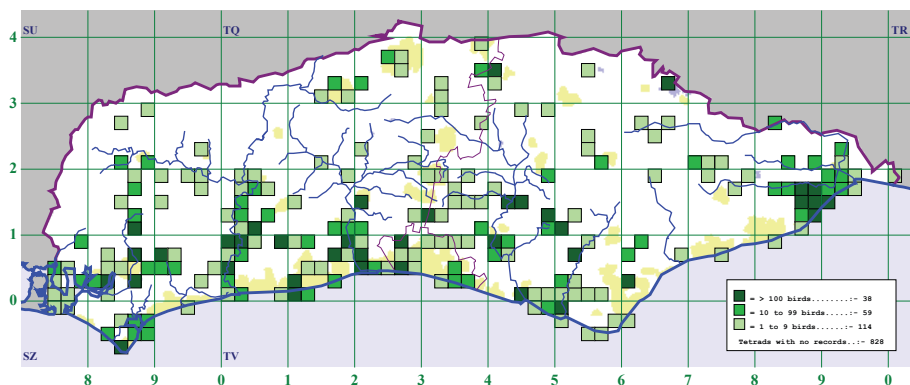
Common Gull

Larus canus

Very common winter visitor and passage migrant; scarce in summer; bred until 1963 and then in 2006 and in some years since then. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern.

The species was recorded from 211 tetrads and the map below shows the distribution of these records and gives some indication of abundance by plotting the highest number recorded in each tetrad in three broad categories.

Although the map gives some indication where the highest numbers were recorded the true scale of the variation in numbers is not shown. The three nocturnal roost counts at Bewl Water of 35,050 on 9 Jan, 39,570 on 12 Jan and 35,000 on 13 Feb dwarfed all other records. Although there were a further 22 three-figure counts during the first winter period the highest were 800 at Old Erringham Fm (Shoreham) on 22 Feb, 760 at Chichester Hbr on 9 Jan and 600 at Goring Gap on 25 Jan. Several flocks were reported during March, the largest occurring in the early part of the month with 800 resting in a sheep grazed field at Pyecombe on the 5th, 500 at Newhaven Tide Mills on the 10th with presumably the same at the nearby Ouse Estuary Project on the 12th, and 400 at Pett Level and Beachy Head on the 9th and 12th respectively. After March numbers fell dramatically. The observed passage from seawatching sites was very poor with a combined total for March to May of just 246 E with a maximum of 57 E at Selsey Bill on 11 Apr.



At Rye Hbr single pairs nested at two locations but both failed and at Pett Level there was again no nesting following recent successes. As usual there were few records between mid-May and the slow return of adults in the early autumn however, 25 seen following a plough at Amberley on 23 May were noteworthy. The largest of the few autumn counts were from West Dean where there were 150 on 22 Aug, 110 on 18 Sep and 220 on 23 Sep. Thereafter only relatively small numbers were reported until mid-November. Once again the roost counts at Bewl Water produced the highest counts with November counts of 4140 on the 17th and 7390 on the 29th and in December 6390 on the 2nd, 21,720 on the 22nd, 21,040 on the 24th and 27,860 on the 30th. Elsewhere there were 700 at Pett Level on 16 Nov, 520 near Bramber on 26 Dec and several counts between Ferring and Goring Gap with 1000 on 24 Dec being the highest. [JAN]

Lesser Black-backed Gull

Larus fuscus

Fairly common passage migrant and winter visitor; scarce (mainly immature) in summer and scarce breeder. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern.

The species was recorded in 172 tetrads during the year but generally in fairly low numbers as over 95% of the records involved fewer than ten birds. Observations were made on 310 days with a suggestion of fewer days recorded in the autumn and most records, by a substantial margin, came from Warnham LNR.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
No. of days recorded	24	27	31	30	29	27	28	29	15	19	22	29

Forty at Rye Hbr on 29 Mar and 20 at Cuckmere Haven were the largest gatherings recorded during the first quarter of 2015. There were no records noting spring movements and the breeding was again poorly recorded with nesting pairs noted only from Chichester, Brighton, Newhaven Tide Mills and Rye Hbr.

Although recorded on fewer days in the autumn some of the largest gatherings occurred in this season with 100 at Rye Hbr on 4 Sep, 35 there on 1 Oct and 39 at Glyne Gap (Bexhill) on 16 Oct. Only small numbers of this species roost on the reservoirs and the highest winter counts were at Cuckmere Haven with 30 on 28 Nov, 60 on 14 Dec and 90 on 18 Dec. [JAN]

Herring Gull*Larus argentatus argenteus*

Very common resident; status uncertain as passage migrant; and winter visitor. Red listed species of high conservation concern.

Noted on every day of the year and recorded in 448 tetrads, this was again the most frequently recorded and widespread of all the gulls. During the first two months the largest numbers were recorded at the nocturnal roost of gulls at Bewl Water where there were 2850 on 9 Jan and 3340 on the 12th. Elsewhere there were over 70 three-figure counts at this time with the highest being 850 at Rye Hbr on 8 Jan and amongst several from Warnham LNR there were 800 on 2 Jan and 600 on 23 Jan. During March the largest flocks were encountered at coastal sites; examples being 739 offshore at Selsey on the 22nd, 600 at Shoreham-by-Sea on the 8th and 500 at Newhaven on the same day. The same theme continued later in the spring, a regular accumulation off Selsey Bill reached a peak of 809 on 17 Apr, 500 and 400 were at Scotney GP on 19 Apr and 17 May respectively and 400 at Beachy Head on 6 Apr.

Confirmed breeding was recorded from 26 tetrads and the species was considered as probably breeding in a further 15 tetrads; most were at locations near to the coast but inland confirmed breeding was recorded from Storrington, Burgess Hill, Keymer, Haywards Heath and Hailsham.

Numbers appeared to rise again during the autumn and winter, most notably 3500 left Rye Hbr at dawn on 2 Oct, 2000 were following a plough at Steyning Round Hill also on 2 Oct and 1000 nearby on downland near Cissbury on 8 Nov. At Warnham LNR 1000 were recorded on 26 Nov, 2 and 3 Dec. Between 685 and 2960 were counted roosting at Bewl Water on five winter dates with the peak occurring on 17 Nov. The only significant coastal movement during the year was 680 W at Selsey Bill on 11 Dec.

Birds of the northern race *L.a. argentatus* are scarce in Sussex although it possible that they are under-recorded due to the difficulties of identification. The only record of the year was of one at Pagham Hbr on 18 Sep (OM). [JAN]

Yellow-legged Gull*Larus michahellis*

Scarce to fairly common but localised visitor; mainly in the late summer and autumn. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern.

This remains a scarce and rather localised visitor and although recorded in 25 coastal tetrads most were seen, as usual, on or near the Selsey Peninsula during the late summer and early autumn. The following table showing the approximate numbers in the county and the highest monthly count from the vicinity of Pagham Hbr, Medmerry or Chichester Hbr, is shown below:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Approx. county total	2	5	3	-	1	1	10	33	34	2	5	2
Max no. Selsey Peninsula	1	2	2	-	-	-	5	30	34	2	1	1
Days recorded	3	6	2	-	1	1	9	17	13	2	5	3

Peak counts at Pagham Hbr were 30 on 17 Aug, 29 adults on 20 Aug and 34 on 18 Sep. Apart from three juveniles flying west at Beachy Head on 9 Jul all observations away from the Selsey Peninsula involved just one or two birds were mostly single day sightings. The exception was an adult at Cuckmere Haven on 18 and 19 Feb and two adults at the same site on 27 and 28 Nov.



Yellow-legged Gull, Selsey Bill, July 2015 (George Heath)

A detailed analysis of the records suggest about 60 individuals were involved during the year and therefore perhaps marginally more than in 2014. [JAN]

Caspian Gull

Larus cachinnans

Very scarce but probably regular winter visitor. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern.

There were ten accepted records in 2015 of this wide ranging migratory gull. During the first winter period three records involved a first-winter bird at Newhaven Hbr on 1 and 2 Feb (DC, DRC, JFC et al), a third-winter at Cuckmere Haven on 19 Feb (MRE) and a third-summer in the lower Cuckmere Valley on 7 Mar (DC, BK).

In the second winter period the seven records were of a first-winter bird by the R Adur (Shoreham) on 7-8 Nov (RJF), another first-winter at Newhaven on 8 Nov (MO), a third-winter in the lower Cuckmere Valley on 25 Nov (MRE); in December in the lower Cuckmere Valley there were a first-winter on 20 Dec (SHL), a first-winter and a third-winter on 26 Dec (GB, MRE) and, finally, a second-winter on 30 Dec (MRE, ADW).

The county total, since the first record on 12 Jan 2001, rises to 44. [JAH]

Iceland Gull*Larus glaucoides*

Very scarce winter visitor and passage migrant. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern.

The only record during the year was of a second winter bird in flight at Pett Level on 22 Nov (CHD, PR).

There are several differing opinions as to the taxonomic status of Kumlien's Gull *Larus glaucoides kumlieni* but the consensus view is that it is a subspecies of Iceland Gull. It is a very rare vagrant in Sussex (with only two county records), and the only record was of the bird from 2014 returning to Littlehampton, this time in appropriate second winter plumage. It stayed in the Littlehampton area from 21 Jan to 8 Feb (BA *et al.*). [JAH]



Kumlien's Gull, Littlehampton, February 2015 (Bola Akinola)

Glaucous Gull*Larus hyperboreus*

Very scarce regular winter visitor and passage migrant. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern.

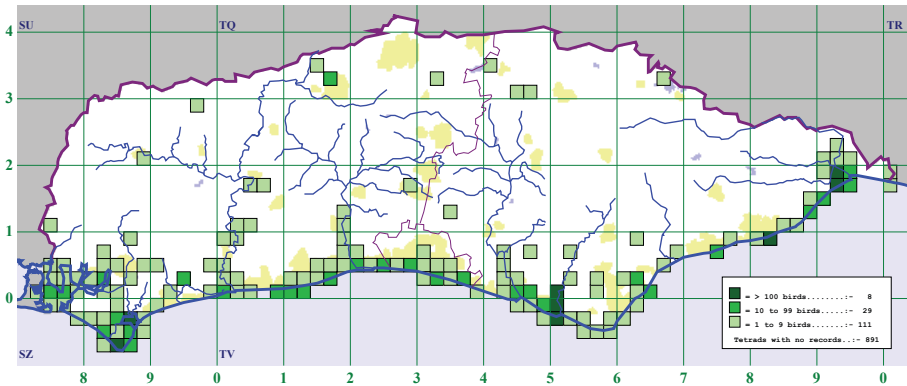
Following last year's probable eight individuals, this year there was only one: a first-winter bird at Cuckmere Haven from 18 to 21 Feb (MRE *et al.*). This brings the county total for this century up to a minimum of 39. [JAH]

Great Black-backed Gull

Larus marinus

Common winter visitor and passage migrant; scarce in summer; mostly non-breeders; but very scarce breeder since 2000. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern.

The species was recorded from 148 tetrads. This further increase may merely reflect recording changes but, as usual and as the following map shows, most were seen from sites near the coast.



The map plots the highest number recorded in each tetrad during the year and the monthly top counts at the four key locations are shown in the following table.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Selsey Peninsula	50	21	114	45	66	19	51	15	28	50	12	539
Cuckmere Haven	2	300	100	2	6	2	nc	4	82	1	350	1300
Bexhill/Hastings	20	nc	1	2	nc	3	3	12	1	55	170	nc
Rye Bay	489	95	50	50	20	187	236	132	150	27	22	1

The largest flocks in the first winter period were 489 at Rye Hbr on 8 Jan, 300 at Hope Gap (Seaford Head) on 18 Feb and 114 at Selsey Bill on 22 Mar. During the summer pairs were seen at several locations but confirmed breeding was noted with single pairs only at Chichester, Selsey, Goring, Hastings and Rye Hbr. At Rye Hbr 187 and 236 roosted on the shingle on 26 Jun and 10 Jul respectively; the latter record being the highest July count since 240 were recorded at Pilsey Island (Chichester Hbr) on 22 Jul 1998. The only three figure counts into the autumn were also at Rye Hbr with 132 on 19 Aug and 150 on 4 Sep. During the second winter period a large flock gathered in the lower Cuckmere valley and on 10 dates between 28 Nov and 31 Dec over 300 were seen with 1300 on 17 Dec and 1000 on the 19th being the only four figure counts during the year.

Significant coastal movements were seen from Selsey Bill where 70 W on 7 Nov and 339 W on 11 Dec. The map shows few were seen inland except at Warnham LNR where the highest of four double figure counts was 27 on 31 Dec. [JAN]

Feral Pigeon*Columba livia**Common resident.*

In the first winter period, apart from 250 at Fishbourne Creek (Chichester Hbr) on 1 Jan, the usual concentration of birds appeared to be in the Brighton area with a peak count of 265 on 2 Mar. Generally, counts averaged fewer than 20 although there were 16 records of 50 or more.

In the spring and summer periods, the only records of note were 80 at Hove on 12 Apr, 190 at Brighton on 26 Jun and 120 at Sheepcote Valley (Brighton) on 11 Aug. After an absence of some years, two birds were seen on 8 Jun at Pett Level. Recorded in 207 tetrads; there were no reports of confirmed breeding for clearly under-recorded Feral Pigeons.

For the autumn and second winter period, 105 were at Hove on 21 Sep and 145 on 11 Nov at Brighton. Counts averaged fewer than 15 with ten records of 50 or more. [AHP]

Stock Dove*Columba oenas*

Common resident and possible winter visitor. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern.

Stock Doves were recorded in 349 tetrads, an increase on the 297 in 2014. In the first winter period, the only records of note were 300 in game cover crops at Jevington on 4 Jan, 112 at Sidlesham Ferry on 6 Jan and 120 in a stubble field at West Dean on 6 Feb. One bird was seen flying west, well offshore at Selsey Bill on 19 Feb.

By 27 Feb, cooing was heard at Old Lodge LNR (Ashdown Forest) while breeding was confirmed in 34 tetrads and likely in a further 85 tetrads with the first record of confirmed breeding at Beauport Park (Hastings) of a nest with young on 16 May. There were numerous records of Stock Doves using owl boxes for nesting including one chick living alongside a Barn Owl chick in a box at Cocking on 30 Jul but no report of the outcome.

Autumn passage was light with 40 W at Beachy Head on 25 Oct, 75 at Selsey Bill on the 26th and 47 W at Hastings on 13 Nov. Eighty five were at Pett Level on 6 Oct and 70 at East Guldeford on the 13th.

Late winter counts were also unremarkable with 85 at Steyning Round Hill on 21 Nov, 100 at Nutbourne on 7 Dec and 75 at Small Dole on the 24th. [AHP]

Woodpigeon*Columba palumbus*

Abundant resident and winter visitor.

Woodpigeons were recorded in 599 tetrads compared to 592 in 2014. Surveys confirm the widespread distribution of this species with occurrence in 98% of BBS squares and 99% of both early and late year SWBS. In the Big Garden Birdwatch the species was the fourth most regular recorded species with 76% and 81% of East and West Sussex gardens respectively reporting this species. Noteworthy sightings for the first winter period included 1500 at Jevington on 1 Jan, 1000 at Wepham Down on 11 Feb, 4000 at Chantry Hill on 17 Feb and 1000 at Ifield (Crawley) on 10 Mar. There were over 100 records of counts of over 100 birds.

In the spring period, juveniles were first seen at Uckfield on 21 Mar. Although a widespread breeder, breeding was only confirmed from 15 tetrads and likely in a further 107.

Autumn passage was significantly reduced from previous years, beginning with 904 E at Selsey Bill on 31 Oct, 900 SE at Weir Wood Res on 3 Nov and 1850 S at Beachy Head on 8 Nov. The Hastings migration watch team provided the remaining high counts with 990, predominantly eastward, on 4 Nov, a peak count of 3230 E on the 9th, 2395 W on the 13th and 1375 W on the 14th.

There were no other large concentrations for the remaining winter period, with the only records of note being 1087 at Warnham LNR on 9 Nov, a flock of 823 at Oving on 22 Nov and 600 seen heading ESE along the scarp of the downs at Steyning on 11 Dec. [AHP]

Collared Dove

Streptopelia decaocto

Very common resident.

Collared Doves were recorded in 369 tetrads compared to 347 in 2014. In the first winter period, there were seven records of counts of 20 or more birds with high counts of 45 at Westbourne Common on 4 Jan and 62 at Sidlesham on 15 Feb. During the early year SWBS the species was encountered in 49% of squares surveyed and similar percentages were found in the Big Garden Birdwatch with 44% and 49% in West Sussex and East Sussex gardens respectively..

Breeding was confirmed in two tetrads but likely in a further 70 tetrads (38 in 2014). Displaying behaviour was first noted on 26 Jan at West Tarring (Worthing), nest building was first observed at Littlehampton on 19 Mar and the first fledged young were seen at Bewbush on 16 May. Collared Doves were recorded in 61% of the squares surveyed during the BBS.

As in 2014, there were no notable flocks for the autumn while counts in the second winter period were again poor with the best being 50 at Iford (Lewes) on 16 Nov with five further counts of 20 or more. For both winter periods, flock size was generally under half a dozen birds. Although the late year SWBS showed a reduction from surveys earlier in the year to 35% of squares this was comparable to the 34% in the same survey in 2014. [AHP]

Turtle Dove

Streptopelia turtur

Scarce but declining summer visitor and passage migrant. Red listed species of high conservation concern.

Birds were recorded in 57 tetrads compared to 75 in 2014, 53 in 2013 and 76 in 2012. The first birds of the year were two at Sidlesham Ferry on 13 Apr, six days later than the ten-year average of 7 Apr. There were just five other April records, all for singles except for two at Plumpton on 14 Apr. Sightings were received on an almost daily basis during May and June, generally for ones and twos. However, there were nine records of three birds or more with high counts of four at Woods Mill on 22 May and five singing males at Pett Level in June. As in 2014, birds do appear to be attracted to gardens with three at a bird feeder in Arlington on 7 Jun.

There was just one tetrad with confirmed breeding although breeding was probable in 12 other tetrads and possible in 17 more. Encouragingly, in 2015 numerous sightings were received from the Knepp Estate, hopefully providing an early indication that the 're-wilding' project there is helping to establish much more suitable feeding and breeding conditions for this species.

There were just seven records for August, all for single birds. In a similar vein, there were only two September records with the last of the year being one at the North Wall (Pagham Hbr) on 21 Sep, two days earlier than the ten-year average date of 23 Sep. [AHP]

Common Cuckoo

Cuculus canorus

Fairly common but declining summer visitor. Red listed species of high conservation concern.

Cuckoos were recorded in 210 tetrads in 2015, equalling the 2012 figure and up on the 2013 figure of 182 and the 194 in 2014.

The first arrivals were seen and heard at Four Counties (Ashdown Forest) on 6 Apr, five days later than the 10-year average, followed by Mill Hill (Shoreham), Old Lodge LNR (Ashdown Forest) and Weir Wood Res the next day. Thereafter they were recorded daily throughout April, May and June widely across the county. By the end of April records were received from 108 sites throughout Sussex, although some duplication is likely. Eighteen different birds were recorded on 23 Apr and 16 on the 15th.

Breeding was confirmed in two tetrads, probable in a further 14 and possible in another 86. There were up to six territories at Rye Hbr, four territories at Filsham LNR and three at Thorney Island. At Old Lodge LNR four birds were recorded on 30 Apr and the same number at Pippingford Park (Ashdown Forest) on 17 May, Northiam on 27 May and Pagham Hbr on 1 Jun. The first fledged youngster was seen on the Knepp Estate on 5 Jun and at Arundel WWT a Reed Warbler nest was seen containing a Cuckoo egg on 7 Jul. Juveniles were recorded from 17 Jul onwards. The last reported sighting for the year was at Fernhurst on 6 Sep, slightly earlier than the 15 Sep average departure date but later than the 2014 date of 27 Aug.

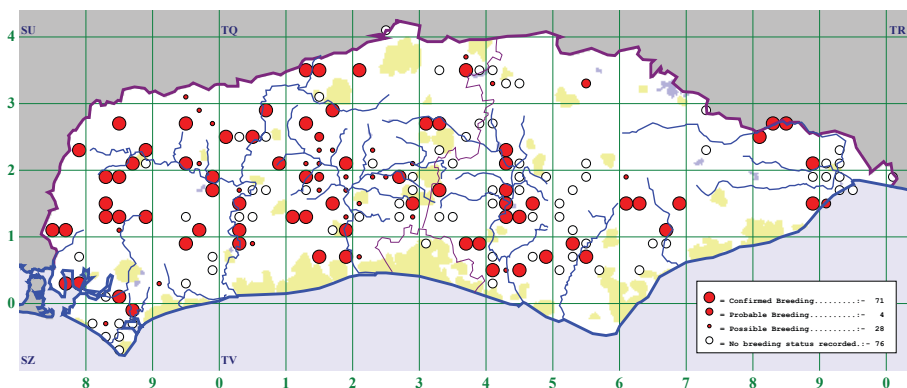
An article on the SOS tagged Cuckoos appears on pages 267-269 of this report. [TS, MJC]

Barn Owl

Tyto alba

Fairly common resident. Schedule 1 species.

Barn owls were reported seen flying and hunting, usually singly, across Sussex particularly during the first two and the last two months of the year. Records came from 179 tetrads as shown in the map below.



Breeding was confirmed in 71 tetrads, with a total of 76 known attempts in nest boxes and only one in a natural site, a hollow tree. Brood size where known was generally smaller than in

2014, with six broods of four chicks, 24 each of three and two, and eight broods of one. One nest box contained a Barn owl chick and a Stock dove chick, but the outcome is unknown (CRS). No second broods were reported.

During the year four Barn owls were found dead on roads and one at Gatwick Airport was reported as an aircraft casualty. A ten-year-old ringed bird drowned in a cattle trough, and another owl in a swimming pool. [ABW]

Little Owl

Athene noctua

Fairly common resident.

The species was recorded from 66 tetrads, down from the 74 in 2014, but an increase from 2013 when it was only recorded in 49 tetrads. Although recorded in every month of the year, the highest number of records came from the early winter/spring period (January-March) and the fewest in the late winter period of November and December. As the species is resident and sedentary, it is likely that the recording pattern reflects detectability at different times of the year rather than the abundance or otherwise of birds.



Little Owl, Burpham, March 2015 (Ads Bowley)

During the early winter period there were reports of at least six pairs across the county, mostly from known sites. Although oak trees seem to be favoured for roosting/nesting, a pair was observed roosting in a larch tree, reflecting the catholic nature of the species. Two heard calling in Troutbeck (Eridge) during February at a former nest site, apparently moved on, not being heard or seen during the remainder of the year.

Breeding was confirmed from four tetrads compared to five in 2014, with probable in a further six and possible in another five (eight combined probable and possible in 2014). Thus the total from all categories of breeding evidence was similar to 2014. There would seem to be enough suitable habitat in the county to support a larger breeding population than recorded, indicating that perhaps the species is under-recorded.

Details of breeding were: on the Knepp Estate, of four known pairs, one bred in a pile of rubble and another in the base of an oak tree; at Barcombe two adults and a young bird were recorded at their traditional nest site in an oak on 7 Jun; on 1 Jul at Slindon adults were observed visiting a nest site where at least one young bird could be heard calling; and finally, on 15 Jul at Bepton, two fledged young were recorded.

In the post-breeding period three were recorded at Wineham on 4 Jul and two at Winchelsea Beach on 26 Jul. Two at Firle on 18 Oct was the only other record received of more than one bird. With few records coming from the late winter period, it was not surprising that at only four locations birds were recorded, with just six records during November and December. [DB]



Tawny Owl, Beachy Head, May 2015 (Laurence Pitcher)

Tawny Owl

Strix aluco

Fairly common or common resident. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern.

The species was recorded from 153 tetrads (137 in 2014) widely across the county, with the majority of records coming equally in June and October. With a possible Tawny Owl survey in the near future it will be interesting to observe the findings; it is highly likely that the species is very

much under recorded in the county, especially as a breeding bird. Many of the records from the first winter period relate to calling birds with males being more frequent. There were ten separate records of two birds during this time, although three of these concern presumably the same pair at Beachy Head.

Confirmed breeding came from just three tetrads (11 in 2014) with probable breeding in a further 17 and possible breeding was recorded in 24. Details of breeding included an occupied nest on 13 Apr at Selham (Petworth) and a nest with young on 30 Apr at Pett Level. Two fledged young were observed at Troutbeck (Eridge) on 22 May and two juveniles were noted at Beachy Head on 27 May. A chick rescued after it had been blown out of a nest by strong winds at West Dean on 5 Apr was taken to a rescue centre and successfully released back into the wild after a period of growth and recuperation.

During the latter part of autumn three birds together were recorded at several locations, more noticeable at this time of year due to their territorial behaviour and vocalisations. On 20 Oct four were at Buchan Park whilst the highest count of the year came during the second winter period on 12 Nov when five were at Pett Level.

Three deceased birds were recorded during the year; the first was at Beachy Head on 30 Jul where only the remains were found. On 7 Aug at Oreham Common one became the victim of a road traffic accident after flying into a passing van; and lastly at the Knepp Estate on 31 Oct a freshly dead bird was found beneath a library window, leading to the assumption that it died after colliding with the window. [DB]

Long-eared Owl

Asio otus

Scarce resident and very scarce passage migrant and winter visitor.

This species was recorded in eight tetrads, six of them in West Sussex. Although no birds were recorded in the first winter period and no spring migrants were reported, nevertheless pellets and feathers were collected in March from two roosts at a downland site in West Sussex.

During the breeding season a pair fledged two young in an area of downland scrub in West Sussex; they were recorded between 23 Apr and 8 Jun at a site where they have been seen regularly for more than a decade. Adults were recorded from a further four West Sussex sites during the breeding season. An adult was seen on numerous occasions during May and June at a farmland site; however, despite much effort, neither nest site nor young were located. Elsewhere, a bird was found freshly dead in an area of deciduous woodland on 6 Jun; one was recorded during a BBS in mixed woodland on 28 Jun, and was still present on 5 Jul; another one was seen on 22 Jul in mixed woodland.

One seen on 15 Aug at a coastal location in West Sussex as a possible autumn migrant might have been a resident bird. A presumed winter migrant was recorded at Brighton Marina on 22 and 23 Nov. [DG]

Short-eared Owl

Asio flammeus

Scarce winter visitor and passage migrant; has bred. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern.

Short-eared Owls were recorded from 86 tetrads. The approximate month totals, based on the highest daily count at each site in each month, are shown in the following table:

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
41	16	13	10	1	-	-	11	9	49	31	35

During the first few months of the year four sites held a minimum of four birds; these were Pilsey Island (Chichester Hbr, four on 6 Jan), Medmerry (four on 2 Jan), the Burgh (five on several dates between 16 Jan and 25 Feb) and Pevensy Levels (maximum of six on 4 Jan). At a further four sites three were recorded whilst two were seen at a number of other locations.

During spring four were seen flying in off the sea. On 25 Mar at Shoreham Hbr two arrived, one at 06:31 which continued inland and at 06:57 one flew in from the south-west. At Selsey Bill one flew in off the sea on 3 Apr and another seven days later.

One at Pagham Hbr on 22 and 23 May was the last in the spring. Following on from an absence of summering birds last year, there were again no records for June or July this year. Thus two blank years follow two years (2012 and 2013) when summering birds were recorded.

The first autumn migrants were observed on the comparatively early date of 8 Aug at both Beachy Head and Chichester Hbr; this compares with the first in 2014 of 24 Aug. Throughout the autumn until the end of September, a total of 20 birds were observed from 12 different locations. At Beachy Head there were five on various dates between 8 Aug and 20 Sep. A few migrant birds continued to be recorded here until late October, with one high up out to sea flying east at Beachy Head on 16 Oct and two high over on 24 Oct. Three or more birds were recorded at several sites, with three at Beachy Head, Chichester Hbr and Henfield (on 17, 19 and 31 Oct respectively). Observers at Scotney GP recorded four on 25 Oct, whilst at Climping counts of four on 17 Oct and five on 20 Oct were recorded. At Chichester Hbr there were five on 13 Dec. The records suggest numbers in the county at the year's end were similar to those in January. [DB]

European Nightjar

Caprimulgus europaeus

Fairly common but localised summer visitor rarely seen on migration. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern.

This species was recorded in 45 tetrads, six more than in 2014, but eight fewer than in 2013.

The first report for the year was of a single male at West Chase (Ashdown Forest) on 9 May, just over a week later than the 2002-2011 mean. A female was then reported at Hindleap Warren (Ashdown Forest) on 10 May. In East Sussex during the rest of May, singles were reported at a further 11 sites on Ashdown Forest, as well as at St John's (Crowborough) on the 11th, Darwell Hole on the 16th, with a pair at Duddleswell (Ashdown Forest) on the 13th, two at Chailey Commons on the 17th and a pair at Churlwood (Ashdown Forest) on the 28th. In West Sussex during May, one flew in off the sea at Selsey Bill on the 15th, with another on the 24th. Inland, three were reported at Rewell Wood (Arundel) on the 21st, one at Flexham Park (Fittleworth) on the 27th and two were heard churring on Wiggonholt Common the 28th.

During the WHBBS, 44 pairs or territories were recorded, nine more than in 2014, but five fewer than in 2013 (see also the paper on pages 220-260). These included 21 territories at Ambersham and Heyshott Commons, six at Iping Common, and five in the Lavington Common area (see page 207). Evidence of probable breeding was recorded at Chailey Common and at approximately 11 sites on Ashdown Forest. Churring males were reported from at least 17 further locations on Ashdown Forest; however, the number of territories on Ashdown Forest was not calculated this year. Churring males in suitable habitat were also noted at Wiggonholt Common, Rewell Wood

(Arundel), Memorial Common and Romany Ridge (both Chailey), St John's (Crowborough), Broadwater Warren, and Darwell Woods.

Breeding was confirmed at three sites on Ashdown Forest only, a disturbed female showed distraction-display behaviour on 27 Jun, an adult male and female with two fledged young were reported on 5 Jul and there was another report of distraction-display behaviour on 4 Sep.

In August, two birds were heard churring at Churlwood on the 3rd and three were reported at the Old Airstrip (Ashdown Forest) on the 7th. The only reports of birds apparently on autumn passage were of two each at Parham Park on 21 Jul and at High Cross Fm (Uckfield) on 6 Aug, and of a single bird at Pett Level on 12 Aug. The last report of the year was on Ashdown Forest on 4 Sep, almost two weeks earlier than the long-term mean last date. [AR]

Common Swift

Apus apus

Common summer visitor and passage migrant. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern.

The first record of the year came from West Itchenor on the very early date of 8 Apr; although only four days earlier than the 10-year average, it was only one day later than the 1960-2013 earliest record of 7 Apr. There is however, comparatively little variation in the first arrival date for this species between different years.

One was at Pett Level on the 12th, at Sidlesham Ferry on the 13th and at Pulborough Brooks on the 16th before three were recorded from Barcombe on 18 Apr with three also at Rye Hbr on the 21st. The first double figure count came on the 26th with 13 at Winchelsea Beach and 40 at Pett Level and the following day 40 were observed at Rye Hbr. Throughout the spring there were only six double-figure counts of between 50 and 99. Coincidentally the first and only 3-figure count of the spring came from Ivy Lake (Chichester) with 500 on 5 May, exactly the same day and location as last year. The next 3-figure count came on 1 Jun with 100 at Barcombe Mills.

Confirmed breeding came from just six tetrads, compared with 22 in 2014 and 34 in 2013, a potentially worrying trend but it could be due to under-reporting. In Horsham birds were back at the nest site by 8 May; subsequently birds were reported from nest sites across the county. Probable breeding was reported from a further 19 tetrads, the same number as the previous year but down from 33 in 2013. At the Brighton General Hospital colony 11 confirmed nest sites were observed, maintaining this as probably the prime Swift colony in the county. In addition to this, eight confirmed nest sites were reported in the nearby Queen's Park area of Brighton. The last recorded date which young birds were deemed to have fledged was on 10 Sep at Cuckfield, a very late date indeed.

Two notable counts during late June came from Storrington, with 150 on the 28th, and Selsey, with 100 on the 29th. At Medmerry 300 were observed feeding over fields on 5 Jul, whilst 745W at Beachy Head on 9 Jul would seem to indicate the early onset of autumn migration. Four further three-figure counts were received over the next three days before numbers returned to more usual levels until late July. The highest of these was 180 at Pulborough Brooks on 9 Jul. Late July saw further migration with 120 at Seaford Head on the 23rd; there were however, only seven three-figure counts in the autumn, with 410 at Beachy Head on 30 Jul and 400 at St Leonards-on-Sea on 2 Aug being by far the highest. The largest count in September was nine from Rye Hbr on the 3rd.

It is not surprising that the last record for 2015, from Goring Gap on 28 Sep, was 15 days later than the corresponding date for 2014, as that holds the county record for earliest departure

between 1960-2014. This year's final record was, however, still ten days earlier than the 10-year average of 8 Oct. It is interesting to note that recent research indicates departure being significantly earlier now than 50 years ago (Ibis 2016). [DB]

Alpine Swift

Apus melba

Rare vagrant.

After a wait of five years, two turned up. The first was seen flying west over Crawley on 28 Mar and later over Lowfield Heath by Gatwick Airport. It roosted on the Virgin Atlantic building in Manor Royal (Crawley) and was last seen on the 30th (AG, JG *et al.*). The second bird was seen flying north then east from Hodcombe (Beachy Head) on 1 Jul (RHC).

The county total since 1962 moves on to 40, of which eight have occurred this century. Of the 40 records only six have been in March and just three in July. [JAH]

Hoopoe

Upupa epops

Very scarce spring and even scarcer summer passage migrant; has bred. Schedule 1 species.

There were eight records of Hoopoes seven of which were in April.. The first record was of a single bird at Medmerry on 14 Apr followed by another at Goring on the 17-18th, another at Lyminster on the same dates, yet another bird at Stanmer Park (Brighton) also on the 18th followed by one at Littlehampton on the 20th. Further records in April included one at Cuckmere Haven on the 21st and another at Piddinghoe (Newhaven) on the 22nd. The final record was of an obvious reversed autumn migrant at East Preston, seen to be feeding on the observer's lawn, on 31 Aug and 1 Sep. [JAH]

Bee-eater

Merops apiaster

Rare vagrant; bred once in 1955. Schedule 1 species.

The year 2015 was exceptional for this species with a total of 23 recorded, far exceeding the previous highest annual total of seven in 2012. The first were five in a clearing in Abbott's Wood (Hailsham) on 19 Apr (KL, ML) which stayed for 15 mins before flying off. They had earlier been seen at Dover (Kent). The next was at Hodcombe/Shooters' Bottom (Beachy Head) for almost 2 hrs on 15 May (LP *et al*) followed by two at Berwick Church on 29 May (PM, LAS, RKS) which were watched for 15 mins catching insects and returning to a Horse Chestnut in the churchyard, and then ten at Little Dene (Glynde) on 22-23 Jun (LD, RJF, KBG *et al*). The latter were found mid-afternoon and showed superbly to the delight of many observers during the evening. They were still present the following morning but at 06:34 hr all ten departed high to the north. On 26 Jun three were seen flying N over the Old Airstrip (Ashdown Forest) at 11:50 (DGB) while on 30 Jun one was seen briefly flying around Hodcombe (MEC, RHC). On 9 Jul one circled low over Hodcombe for 3-4 mins at 09:45 hr before departing W (MEC, RHC). Presumably the same bird was seen twice more later in the day.

The total recorded this century is now 72 with records for 13 of the last 16 years. The Abbott's Wood birds were the earliest ever to be recorded in the county while the latest date remains 19 Sep 1958. [PJ]



Bee-eater, Firle, June 2015 (Jake Gearty)

Kingfisher

Alcedo atthis

Scarce to fairly common resident and possibly very scarce winter visitor. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern. Schedule 1 species.

This species was recorded in 185 tetrads across the county, up on last year’s figure of 142. Observations during the winter months, with the minimum numbers recorded were as shown in the table below.

	Jan	Feb		Nov	Dec
No. of birds	78	51		62	68
No. of inland sites	33	15		31	35
No. of coastal sites	33	30		20	28

Breeding was confirmed in five tetrads with probable breeding in a further seven and possible in another 11. Two birds were displaying at Northiam on 11 Apr. On 23 May two juveniles were viewed near a presumed nest tunnel at Troutbeck (Eridge), on 1 Jun birds were seen entering and leaving a nest site at Barcombe and an adult with food was seen at Lindfield on the 3rd. Juveniles were recorded at Northlands (Warnham) on 5 Jul and Weir Wood Res on 14 Jul. At Selsey Bill a record of one that flew up from the beach on 6 Sep was the first sighting there for 18 years.



Kingfisher, Warnham LNR, September 2015 (Dorian Mason)

There were some good autumn and second winter period counts with six at Weir Wood Res on 6 Sep and again on 30 Oct, the same number during a WeBS at Southease on 22 Nov (and five

there on 15 Sep), five each in the lower Arun Valley on 5 Sep at Warnham LNR on 10 Sep and 13 further counts of four. During 38 ringing sessions at Ladywell (Coombes) there were 12 handlings involving ten different individuals of which one had been ringed the previous year. [TS, MJC]

Wryneck

Jynx torquilla

Very scarce passage migrant, most in autumn; last bred in 1944.

After a number of years with no spring record, in 2015 there were at least four. Reports from Beachy Head from 18 to 23 Apr would represent a noteworthy long spring stay if as suspected just one bird was involved. The earliest spring arrival at this site was 13 Apr 1997 (the earliest county record is 22 March 1990 and the mean first date for the springs since 1960 (excluding the 10 when no birds or recorded date) is 23 Apr.) One was at West Marden on 22 Apr and one at North Chailey two days later. Another was at Selwyn's Wood (Waldron) on 30 Apr.

It was also a very good year for autumn passage. One feeding on a lawn at East Harting on 9 Aug was followed by the observer's earliest record of one at Seaford Head on the 14th. The next day there were Wrynecks at Newhaven and Rye Hbr and on the 16th at Thorney Deep and Church Norton. The latter area proved very popular with some 38 records covering almost every day up to 30 Aug. Was this one long-staying individual or a rotation of several birds? On 23 Aug there was one at Litlington and an immature bird, probably the same individual, was trapped at nearby Charleston Reedbed. One was at Beachy Head from the 24th to 26th, and one was photographed at Steyning on the 25th. Further records in the month came from RSPB Medmerry, Pett Level (where one was ringed), Waltham Brooks, Sheepcote Valley (Brighton), Coldwaltham, Seaford Head and Beachy Head. Beacon Hill LNR (Rottingdean) rounded off the month with an observation on the 31st. The Seaford bird (which was tail-less) remained till 6 Sep, and Wrynecks at Hastings and at Fairlight Glen on 3 Sep (likely to be the same bird) were followed by others at Beachy Head on 9 Sep, Pagham Hbr and another ringed at Pannell Valley on 13 Sep. Between 19 and 23 Sep there were reports from Winchelsea Beach, Cuckmere Haven, Bishopstone (Seaford), Rye Hbr, Beachy Head and Canadia (Battle). The final record of the year was at Pagham Hbr on 6 Oct.

As ever estimating the total number of Wrynecks involved is problematic but an estimate of at least 30 in the autumn is the highest since 2002. [PJP]

Green Woodpecker

Picus viridis

Fairly common or common resident. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern.

The species was recorded from 449 tetrads widely distributed across the county (436 in 2014, 356 in 2013, 415 in 2012), suggesting a further increase after the effect of the severe snow covered winter of 2012.

During the first winter period the highest counts were eight at Pippingford Park (Ashdown Forest) on 9 Mar, and seven there on the 2nd and the 16th of the month. In the SWBS 125 were recorded in 75 of 136 squares surveyed with a maximum of six in Northchapel on 28 Feb.

In the BBS 283 were recorded in 119 out of 176 squares surveyed with a maximum of six at Petworth Park on 2 Jun and in the early winter SWBS the figures were 55 birds in 40 out of 115 squares surveyed with a maximum of four at Cuckfield on 14 Dec.

Breeding was confirmed in nine tetrads and was probable in 37, similar numbers to recent years. A nest with young was noted at Warningcamp on 10 Jun. The first record of fledged young was at East Kingston (Ferring) on 3 Jul, and there were six further records of adults with young through July and one in early September. Surely breeding confirmation for this widespread species is under recorded. There were high counts of 12 at Pulborough Brooks on 25 Jul with ten there on 6 Aug, seven at Jevington on the 21st, and eight records of five to the end of the year. [PJP]

Great Spotted Woodpecker

Dendrocopos major

Common resident.

The species was recorded in 464 tetrads widely distributed across the county, a further improvement on the 387 in 2013 and 417 in 2014. The highest site counts in the first winter period were on Ashdown Forest with 12 at Pippingford Park 16 Mar and eight at Old Lodge LNR on 19 Jan.



Great Spotted Woodpecker, Old Lodge (Ashdown Forest), July 2015 (Gareth Hughes)

Drumming was heard on 6 Jan at Storrington. Breeding was confirmed in 29 tetrads and was probable in a further 56. The first report of confirmed breeding was a bird carrying food on 7 May at Frant and a nest with young was observed on 15 May at Pulborough Brooks and a day later at Horsham. The first fledged young were seen at Seaford on 23 May.

The maximum count during the autumn and second winter period was seven at Old Lodge LNR on 24 Sep. Six each were recorded at Cliff End (Pett) on 9 Oct and Five Ashes on 8 Nov. [PJP]

Lesser Spotted Woodpecker*Dryobates minor*

Scarce, possibly now very scarce, and declining resident. Red listed species of high conservation concern.

The species was recorded in 34 tetrads, a welcome increase from the 14 in 2014 and comparable with the 30 and 31 tetrads in 2013 and 2012. Breeding was confirmed in two tetrads, and was probable in a further four, and during the season birds were present in suitable habitat in two others.

Drumming was first heard at Rackham Woods on 12 Feb, one was seen on Ashdown Forest on the 16th, and two birds were seen at a site in mid-Sussex at the end of the month. Birds were recorded on four dates in May and nine in June at ten sites which included Pulborough Brooks, Gossops Green (Crawley), Fore Wood (Crowhurst) and Arundel WWT. Three chicks fledged from a nest at Broadwater Warren where there was possibly another territory and a recently fledged bird was reported on Ashdown Forest.

During March and April there were interesting observations of a male Great Spotted Woodpecker displacing a male Lesser Spotted Woodpecker from a favoured drumming branch on several occasions. When this occurred the Lesser moved to a nearby branch where it continued drumming, albeit more quietly. This male bird continued drumming until at least 10 May and was thought to be an unmated bird. In the second winter period sightings included those from Ardingly Res, Pagham Hbr, Darwell Res and (after many years) Burton MP.

As Lesser Spotted Woodpeckers are of high conservation concern, all sightings should be reported with 4-figure or preferably 6-figure grid references, especially if territorial behaviour or other evidence of breeding is observed. [PJP]

Kestrel*Falco tinnunculus*

Fairly common resident and passage migrant. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern.

Kestrels were recorded in 453 tetrads (47% of the 964 tetrads wholly within Sussex), a significant 20% increase on the 378 of 2014. Kestrels were recorded in more tetrads than Sparrowhawk (312) but in fewer than Common Buzzard (584).

During the first quarter, most records (80%) were of single birds. The highest counts were of seven at Pevensey Levels on 16 Feb (with five there on 6 Jan), six at Thorney Island on 25 Mar, and five at The Burgh (Burpham) on 27 Mar. There were no records of birds flying in off the sea.

Breeding was confirmed in 20 tetrads and probable in a further 37, nearly double the number in 2014. Display was first observed on 26 Jan at High Cross Fm (Uckfield). The first sign of confirmed breeding was at the Reservoir (Ashdown Forest) on 19 Apr where a female was seen carrying food or a faecal sac. The first nest with young was noted at Stone Cross (Lindfield) on 14 May and the first fledglings were recorded at Great Bentley Fm (Balcombe) on 15 Jun. Three pairs were recorded at Thorney Island throughout the breeding season. There were reports of successful breeding in four Kestrel boxes and in four owl boxes.

The majority of records (77%) during the late spring and summer (April-August) were of one bird. The highest counts were 11 at Thorney Island on 15 Aug and seven at Falmer on the 17th and six (including four downy young) at Woods Mill (Henfield) on 25 Jun. During the autumn

and second winter period the highest counts were 11 at Thorney Island on 2 Sep and also on the Norfolk Estate on 8 Oct and six to eight in that area on various dates between 30 Sep and 1 Dec. [MJC]

Red-footed Falcon

Falco vespertinus

Rare vagrant.

After a gap of three years, a single female bird was seen and photographed at Barcombe Mills on 30 May (CC, KF *et al.*) and was last seen on 5 Jun. This raises the county total since 1962 to 27 of which seven have occurred this century. Most arrivals since 1962 have occurred in May (22) or June (27). [JAH]



Red-footed Falcon, Barcombe, June 2015 (Dave Sadler)

Merlin

Falco columbarius

Scarce winter visitor and passage migrant. Red listed species of high conservation concern. Schedule 1 species.

During the period from January to March Merlins were recorded in 25 tetrads but, for such a wide-ranging species, this probably involved only some 12 broad locations and an absolute minimum of 13 birds. All records except one were of single birds; the exception was two at Sharpesbridge (Newick) on 14 Feb for which the observer noted the nearby flock of c.100 Skylarks and 40 Linnets may well have been an enticement for at least one Merlin to stay around, as one was recorded from the same site on 3 Mar.

It is difficult deciding whether a bird seen in late March is a wintering one or a spring migrant. Possibly the earliest migrant was one at Crowhurst on 21 Mar as may have been the one seen at Thorney Island on the 25th chasing Skylarks. There were records for April involving three sites: at Seaford on the 6th and 14th, Hastings on the 19th and at Medmerry/Selsey GC on the 18th, 19th and 22nd, the last spring record. Unlike the previous two years none was recorded during May.

The first birds of the autumn were recorded on 16 Aug with singles at both Hasting and Pevensy Levels. There were then around 25 further records until late October; mostly from coastal locations such as Selsey Bill, Seaford Head, Beachy Head and Rye Hbr. Most observations were of single birds but twos were seen at Pulborough Brooks on 12 Sep, Beachy Head on 3 and 26 Oct, Medmerry on the 10th (hunting Goldfinches together successfully) and Seaford Head on the 31st.

Apart from two at Beachy Head on 8 Nov the records later in the year involved single birds. Observations during this period came from a slightly wider range of locations than usual and possibly involved a minimum of 16 different birds from 15 sites.

Species noted being chased included Goldfinch, Skylark, Chaffinch, and a Whinchat at Rodmell on 6 Sep. A single instance of hunting offshore was observed at Selsey Bill on 13 Dec. [DB]

Hobby

Falco subbuteo

Scarce breeding summer visitor and passage migrant. Schedule 1 species.

The first returning spring migrant was recorded at East Dean on 4 Apr, a day earlier than the 10-year average but four days later than in 2014. The following day one was on the Parham Estate, one at Ladywell (Coombes) on 8 Apr and thereafter regular sightings continued widely across the county. The first multiple sightings came on the 23rd with three at Selsey Bill and two at Pulborough Brooks and two at Rye Hbr the next day. Three were at the last site on 27 Apr and six on 4 and 7 May. Observers at Waltham Brooks recorded six on 7 May whilst at Pulborough Brooks the same number was recorded on three dates in May.

A number of spring records indicated birds flying in off the sea; from Selsey Bill two on 1 May, one on 2 May and one on 15 May; Splash Point (Seaford) one on 2 May; Worthing one on 2 May; and Beachy Head one on 4 May. Of these records, three (all from Selsey Bill) involved birds coming in during the early hours of the morning (05:50, 05:55 and 05:56), suggesting nocturnal migration. These observations add to those from previous years confirming this pattern of migration.

Breeding was confirmed from two tetrads with probable breeding in a further ten; this represents a reduction from three and 17 respectively in 2014. Possible breeding was recorded from another 12 tetrads, perhaps indicating that a more accurate estimate of this data for Sussex would be in excess of 20 breeding pairs. A 2001 estimate of the Sussex breeding population, however, gives a total of 174 pairs (*British Birds* 109:316-323). The unmistakable conclusion must be that the breeding status of Hobby in Sussex is very much under-recorded. The only records for breeding success reported a fledged bird on 14 Aug on Ashdown Forest (the same date as recorded in the previous two years) and a youngster just out of the nest at another East Sussex location on the 29th.

Autumn observations mainly concerned one or two birds, some of the latter involving an adult with a juvenile probably indicating a family. Exceptions to this were three at both Pett Level and Pulborough Brooks on 20 and 19 Sep respectively and four at the latter site on 6 Sep.

Only slightly later than the 10-year average of 22 Oct, the final record for 2015 came from St Leonards-on-Sea on 24 Oct, although this was six days later than the corresponding record for 2014. [DB]

Peregrine

Falco peregrinus

Scarce breeding resident. Schedule 1 species.

Peregrines were recorded in 174 tetrads and breeding was confirmed from eight (four fewer than 2014) with probable in a further 13, compared to 12 the previous year. This represents perhaps half the number of pairs that are likely to be breeding in the county, although it is difficult to get confirmation of this.

As in previous years, webcams provided data on egg-laying and fledging dates at both Sussex Heights (Brighton) and Chichester Cathedral. The Brighton pair were again slightly ahead of their Chichester counterparts, laying their first egg on 23 Mar (two days earlier than 2014) and completing the clutch of four eggs on 30 Mar, two days faster than in 2014. The Chichester pair laid their first egg on 31 Mar and completed the clutch with the fourth egg laid on 6 Apr. Thus in 2015 both Brighton and Chichester pairs laid their eggs slightly earlier and more quickly than in the previous year.



Peregrine, Church Norton, August 2015 (Andrew House)

The first two chicks at Sussex Heights hatched on 30 Apr with the fourth by 4 May; the first egg of the Chichester pair by contrast hatched on 9 May, with the second and third hatching on successive days. The fourth egg failed to hatch. Fledging occurred between 11 Jun to 14 Jun in

Brighton and on 23 and 24 Jun in Chichester. The four Brighton chicks (two male and two female) were ringed on 22 May (approximately three weeks old) whilst the Chichester chicks (two female and one male) were ringed on 31 May.

Elsewhere the only data received for breeding success was of two young fledged from a coastal location. At an inland site there was confirmation of breeding of a pair using a pylon for their nest; this may be an indication that other more “conventional” nest sites such as cliffs, quarries and tall buildings are beginning to reach saturation point.

On 6 Jul a dead Peregrine was found in Brighton, although no details were received on age, sex or whether the bird was ringed. Of the various prey items that Peregrines take, Wood Pigeons were the most numerous species observed. Other birds taken included Dunlin and a Turnstone at Pagham Hbr and a Black-headed Gull at Pett Level. Peregrines hunting over the sea were observed from Selsey Bill on both 30 Jan and 22 Apr. An interesting report was received of a juvenile Peregrine harassing a fishing juvenile Osprey on 2 Sep at Pilsey Sands. Altercations were also noted on a number of occasions with Ravens and Buzzards, and on one occasion with a Marsh Harrier. [DB]

Rose-ringed Parakeet

Psittacula krameri

Very scarce introduced breeding resident.

More than 20 records for Ring-necked Parakeet were received throughout the year; the only months with no reports were May and September. These were mainly for single birds although 15 were at Gatwick on 2 Jul with possibly the same flock of 15 at Crawley on 17 Aug and seven flew over Maidenbower on 22 Nov. Most records were from the Crawley/Gatwick area but singles were seen in the Seaford area on six dates (January, August, October and December) and the Brighton area on three dates (January and March). One was at Warnham LNR on 7 Jun and one at Weir Wood Res on 4 Nov. The last four records of the year were all for single birds seen at the coast: at Old Town (Eastbourne) on 26 Nov, the lower Cuckmere Valley on 7 Dec, Bexhill on the 13th and the final sighting at Winchelsea Beach on the 28th. [AHP, MJC]

Golden Oriole

Oriolus oriolus

Very scarce passage migrant and rare summer visitor; may have bred in 1965. Red listed species of high conservation concern. Schedule 1 species.

The only record was of a male singing at Hodcombe (Beachy Head) for about half an hour from 14:00 hr on 13 May (MEC, RHC) before flying off north. The county total this century moves on to 26. [PJ]

Red-backed Shrike

Lanius collurio

Very scarce passage migrant; formerly a breeding summer visitor. Red listed species of high conservation concern. Schedule 1 species.

Six birds were recorded during the year, following a blank 2014. The first, a superb adult male, was on the east side of the Cuckmere valley south of Exceat on 16-17 Aug (RABr *et al.*). The remaining five birds were all juveniles, at Church Norton on 28-29 Aug (BGRI, CWM, CN *et*

al.), Atherington (Climping Gap) from 30 Aug to 1 Sep (BA, NB, DM *et al.*), Shooters Bottom (Beachy Head) on 2-3 Sep (RAB *et al.*), Rye Hbr on 3 Sep (CHD, AP, TW) and photographed beside the R Rother at Bodiam on 5 Sep (per AR). These records bring the total this century to 35 although occurrences have been erratic with peaks of six in 2006 and 2015 but none in five other years. [PJ]

Great Grey Shrike

Lanius excubitor

Very scarce winter visitor and passage migrant.

2014: The record of a Great Grey Shrike at Selsey Bill on 25 Oct was an error and has been withdrawn. [PJP]

2015: Great Grey Shrikes were recorded in 31 tetrads in 2015 – more than 50% up on last year’s 19. Approximate monthly totals are shown in the following table:

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr		Oct	Nov	Dec
5	2	2	2		13	5	3

The first sighting of the year was on 2 Jan at Crow and Gate (Ashdown Forest). One was recorded at Iping Common on 4 Jan and remained there or the neighbouring Stedham Common until late March. Other records for the first winter period were from Lancing College, Lewes Brooks, the Cuckmere Valley and Brede Levels. The last report was from Lewes Brooks on 11 Apr, eight days later than the 10-year average departure date.

The first sighting of the second winter period was near Amberley on 16 Oct, approximately two weeks earlier than 2014 and four days later than the 10-year average. On the following day one was seen at Arlington Res, on the 18th there were singles at both Pevensy Levels and Beachy Head and wintering birds returned to Iping Common and Black Down on the 19th and 20th respectively. During later October singles were also seen at Nutbourne, Medmerry, Climping, Waltham Brooks, Southease, Ashdown Forest and the Brede Levels. Additionally one was at Balcombe Forest on 26 Nov. Long stayers were at Iping Common, Ashdown Forest and the Pulborough Brooks/Amberley area; these three remained until the end of the year. [TS]

Magpie

Pica Pica

Very common resident.

Magpies were recorded in 548 tetrads. During the first winter period highest counts were almost all at Warnham LNR, with 100 on 24 Jan, 62 on 9 Mar, 48 on 26 Jan and 43 on 25 Feb. Other significant records were 43 at Pulborough Brooks on 25 Jan and 38 at Broadwater (Worthing) on 27 Feb. A total of 709 were recorded from 122 of the 136 squares surveyed in the early year SWBS with a maximum of 33 at Wick Bottom (Woodingdean) on 1 Feb.

The BBS revealed similar numbers with 889 recorded from 157 of the 176 squares surveyed with a peak count of 28 at Portslade-by-Sea on 13 May. However, breeding was confirmed in only 15 tetrads and probable in 33, as in previous years indicating under reporting for this common species. Nest building was first recorded at Lancing Clump on 4 Feb, at Patcham (Brighton) on 16 Feb and Beauport Park (Hastings) again on 16 Feb. An occupied nest was reported on 5 Apr at East Kingston, and the first recorded fledglings were at Weir Wood Res on 6 Apr.

During the latter half of the year counts of more than 20 were recorded from 14 sites after the end of August with a maximum of 61 at Warnham LNR on 3 Dec. The late year SWBS produced a total of 616 from 107 out of the 115 squares surveyed with a maximum of 36 at Westfield on 19 Dec. [MOW]

Jay

Garrulus Gladarius

Very common resident.

Jays were recorded in 367 tetrads (396 in 2014). During the first winter period the highest count were ten at Linch Down (Bepton) on 9 Feb, two counts of nine at Pippingford Park (Ashdown Forest) on 16 Mar and Stansted Forest on 11 Feb and eight at Warnham LNR on 25 Mar. The species was recorded in 42 of the 136 squares surveyed for the early year SWBS with a maximum count of seven at Warnham on 22 Feb.

Breeding was confirmed in only two tetrads, with probable breeding identified in a further 20 tetrads. The first record of a singing male was at Slaugham on 11 Feb and a faecal sac was found at Newhaven on 13 Apr. The only fledglings were identified at Pett Level on 31 Jul. The lack of recorded breeding evidence is a feature of the under recording of this very common species.

Post breeding, the highest counts were ten at Kingley Vale on 17 Oct and nine at Pulborough Brooks on 14 Oct. There were eight at Broadbridge Heath and Hove on 20 Sep and 8 Nov respectively, seven at Southwater on 23 October, and six at seven locations both inland and on the coast in October and November. The late year SWBS recorded a total of 90 from 49 of the 115 squares surveyed with a maximum count of six at Petworth on 8 Nov. [MOW]

Jackdaw

Corvus monedula

Very common resident.

Jackdaws were recorded from 526 tetrads. During the first winter period there were 45 counts of 100 or more. The only four-figure count was 4000 at East Lavington on 6 Feb but 600 birds were seen at Wisborough Green on 7 Mar and there were two counts of 350, at Railwayland LNR (Lewes) on 2 Mar and at Horsham on 31 Mar. There were three counts of 300 birds at different sites. During the early year SWBS 2086 Jackdaws were recorded from 107 of the 136 1-km squares surveyed.

The first observations of nest building occurred on 6 Apr with records of a single pair at Sheffield Park and of two pairs at Patcham (Brighton). Breeding was confirmed in 31 tetrads with evidence of probable breeding in a further 38 tetrads. A nest with one young bird was recorded in a nest box at Weir Wood Res on 20 Apr and the first record of fledging was at Pippingford Park (Ashdown Forest) on 4 Jun. There was extensive use of owl boxes for nesting by Jackdaws, with 16 boxes being used on the Knepp Estate. Elsewhere, four owl boxes on trees at Goddards Green were used, two pole boxes at Arlington Res each held two nests, and there were two occupied boxes at Weir Wood Res. Single owl boxes used by Jackdaws were recorded at Balls Cross (Kirdford), Belchambers Fm (Kirdford) and at Pyecombe.

The highest counts of the summer period were 150 at Newick on 7 Jul, 135 at Jevington on 21 Aug and 120 at Hoath Hill (Mountfield) on 11 Jul. There were a further seven records of 100 birds at five different locations.

During the autumn and second winter period there were 34 counts of 100 or more Jackdaws. Near Hassocks there were 2500 on 11 Nov, and there were two counts of 1000 birds, at Up Marden on 16 Dec and at Crowlink (East Dean) on 31 Dec. Seven hundred and fifty were recorded at Beeding Brooks on 15 Nov, 300 at High Cross Fm (Uckfield) on 28 Oct and 230 at Hastings CP on 28 Dec. During the SWBS during November or December 1767 Jackdaws were recorded from 96 of the 115 squares surveyed. [GO]

There were two records of birds of one of the eastern races. One showing the characteristics of *C.m. monedula* or *C.m. soemmerringii* was photographed at Beachy Head on 20 Mar and one of the Nordic race *C.m. monedula* was present at Beachy Head on 17 Oct (both DC, JFC, BK).

Rook

Corvus frugilegus

Very common resident.

Rooks were recorded from 346 Tetrads compared with 350 tetrads the previous year. During the first winter period the highest counts were 500 at Greyfriars (Winchelsea) on 5 Feb, 300 at Westdean Woods on 7 Jan and 250 at Beddingham Cement Works on 14 Feb. There were three more counts of 200 or more birds and nine further records of 100 or more at various locations. During the January or February SWBS Rooks were found in 69 of the 136 1-km squares surveyed.

The first signs of breeding came from Barcombe Mills and Lewes where nest building was observed at both locations on 17 Feb. Breeding was confirmed in 22 tetrads and was recorded as probable in a further 10 tetrads. The recording of rookeries in 2015 was less comprehensive than in recent years, with no dedicated survey in the Arun Valley and only six records of rookeries comprising 20 or more nests. The two largest rookeries were at Beddingham Cement Works where at least 100 nests were recorded (200 in 2014), and at Greyfriars (Winchelsea), also with a total of 100 nests.

During the summer period the highest counts of Rooks were 180 at Medmerry on 19 Jul, 168 at West Dean on 4 Jul and 150 at Warners Lane (Selsey) on 25 Jul. There were six other counts of 100 or more, four of which were at West Dean, whilst the other two were at Arundel WWT and Pulborough Brooks.

During the autumn and second winter period the largest gathering by far occurred at Crowlink (East Dean) where there were 1000 birds on 31 Dec. There were four more records of 200 or more birds: 300 at Up Marden on 16 Dec, 261 at the Trundle (Goodwood) on 4 Dec, 201 at Racton on 17 Dec and 200 at High Cross Fm (Uckfield) on 3 Dec. During the late year SWBS Rooks were found in 51 of the 115 1-km squares surveyed. [GO]

Carrion Crow

Corvus corone

Very common resident.

Carrion Crows were recorded from 581 tetrads. During the first winter period there were three records of 100 or more birds: 200 at Westdean Woods on 27 Jan, 155 at East Guldeford Level on 25 Mar and 100 at Wepham Down on 16 Mar. There were a further ten records of 50 or more birds from various locations. During the SWBS in January or February 1358 Carrion Crows were found in 135 of the 136 1-km squares surveyed.

Breeding was confirmed in 14 tetrads and recorded as probable in a further 40 tetrads. The first record of nest building was on the early date of 25 Feb when a single bird was seen constructing a

nest in a tree near a burger bar in Patcham (Brighton). The first occupied nest was seen at Crawley on 15 Apr and a nest with young birds was seen at a different site in Crawley on 19 Apr. The earliest report of fledged young was from East Blatchington (Seaford) on 25 May. The largest gathering during the breeding season was of 93 birds at East Ashling on 26 Jun.

During the summer period the highest counts were 150 at Warners Lane (Selsey) on 25 Jul and 75 at Sidlesham Ferry on 14 Aug.

During the autumn and second winter period there were three counts of 100 or more Carrion Crows: 170 at Rye Hbr on 8 Sep, 100 at Kithurst Hill (Storrington) on 7 Oct and 100 at Church Norton on 22 Oct. Ninety nine birds were recorded at Lymminster on 13 Dec and 90 were observed at Bulverhythe (St Leonards-on-Sea) on 6 Sep. There were 13 further counts of 50 or more at various locations. During the late year SWBS Carrion Crows were found in 112 of the 115 1-km squares surveyed. [GO]



Raven, Cissbury Ring, September 2015 (Dave Sadler)

Raven

Corvus corax

Scarce and increasing breeding resident; first bred in modern era in 2001.

More than one thousand records were submitted from localities across the county, with more or less an even split between East and West Sussex. Whilst all records for Ravens are very welcome perhaps the more interesting ones relate to breeding activity, multiple sightings and winter roosts.

It was reported last year that there are at least 76 Raven territories in Sussex but only a small number of pairs are likely to be monitored annually. In 2015 there was good evidence of breeding activity at 17 different localities, mostly reported when there were family parties. However, in

the early part of the breeding cycle a Raven was seen carrying twigs to a nest in a Douglas Fir on 22 Feb and grass collecting (to line the nest) on the 2 Mar. Other nests were located in a Cedar and a Scots Pine and it is interesting that, as yet, there have been no county reports of Ravens nesting in deciduous trees. Since our county Common Buzzard, Red Kite and Honey Buzzard choose equally between conifer and deciduous it is interesting that Sussex Ravens should show such a strong preference for conifers. Fledging dates are also of interest as one can back-date and calculate reasonably accurately the start of incubation. At one nest the young were 'about to leave their nest in a Cedar tree', on 18 May, and at two other locations three fledged juveniles were seen on 18 and 22 May. By early September most young Ravens will be independent but there was one report of a family of four still intact on 19 Sep, with one of the youngsters begging for food.

There were many observations of interest but three diverse records stood out: on 8 Jun there was a first-ever record for Selsey Bill, at Seaford Splash Point on 13 Jun a Raven raided the Kittiwake colony twice and on one occasion was seen to take an egg; and at Arundel WWT a Raven 'furiously mobbed' an adult Peregrine on 15 Aug (presumably in defence of fledged young?).

Most of the multiple sightings related to the winter roost but otherwise there were 12 birds at Wepham Down on 27 May, 30+ at Chantry Hill on 29 Jun and 11 seen near The Burgh on 29 Dec.

The winter roost discovered in December 2014 was monitored monthly throughout the first half of 2015. The Raven count peaked at 85 on 26 Jan (together with 28 Red Kites and six Common Buzzards) but there continued to be a sizeable count every month until June when there were still 56 Ravens into roost. There was just one further count on 17 Sep when none came into roost but when a further count was done during the following winter on 14 Jan 2016 there were 61 Ravens and 33 Red Kites. Given the rapidly expanding population of Ravens in Sussex it would not be at all surprising if there are other significant roosts in the county. [MEK]

Goldcrest

Regulus regulus

Very common breeding resident; common passage migrant and winter visitor.

The species was recorded in 400 tetrads, an increase on the 325 in 2014. In the first winter period a total of 102 Goldcrests was recorded in 53 of 136 1-km squares surveyed for the SWBS, with a maximum count of nine in Beckley Woods on 18 Feb. This is more than double the figure of 43 in 22 of 95 squares in 2014, though does not match the 115 recorded from 131 squares in 2012. There were nine at Sidlesham Ferry on 1 Jan, seven at Warnham LNR on the 2nd, ten at Swanbourne Lake (Arundel) on the 8th and the same number at Fairlight on the 25th. A minimum of 15 were found on a walk through Collington Wood (Bexhill) on 16 Feb and the highest March counts were 10 each at Iping Common on the 10th and Warnham LNR on the 21st. As to be expected they were most often feeding in conifers, but were also in ivy and were seen in gorse on Ashdown Forest. On 15 Mar a male which had been singing for a week in a Goring garden was joined by a presumed female, and the first evidence of nest building was seen at Catsfield on the 18th.

Breeding was confirmed in ten tetrads and probable in 32, an increase on 2014. During the BBS a total of 290 were found in 82 of the 176 1-km squares with the two highest counts being 11 in a square on Ashdown Forest on 29 Apr, and 20 at West Lavington on the 21st. At Old Lodge LNR (Ashdown Forest) there were 13 on the 17th. More nesting evidence came from Honeypools (Knepp Estate) on 10 Apr and at Patcham the next day, when the female of a pair was noted carrying moss. One unfortunate individual was found drowned in a partly filled watering can at

Chichester on 10 Apr. An observer at Eridge watched a pair nest building in a weeping cedar from 4 May; the nest survived repeated storms but was finally blown down at the start of June. The first record of confirmed breeding was at Patcham on 7 May where a bird was seen with food or faecal sac and the first successful fledging was noted on 30 May at Waltham Brooks where a brood was being fed. Thirteen were recorded in the late BBS in the Ashdown Forest square on 6 Jun.

Migration was noted at coastal sites from 1 Sep; the first report from Seaford Head was of a single bird on the 4th, and at Beachy Head the first of the autumn was seen on the 6th. A total of 435 was recorded by the Hastings Migration Watch team on 47 days between 1 Sep and 14 Nov with a maximum of 43 on 23 Oct. Forty were at Beachy Head and 39 at Seaford on 9 Oct and 40 around Pagham Hbr on the 12th. Other high counts in October were 35 at Ladywell on the 8th, 32 at Cliff End (Pett) on the 9th, 30 at Pett Level on the 14th, rising to c50 on the 23rd and 26 were at Old Lodge LNR on the 19th. Towards the end of the month 28 were recorded at Church Norton on the 26th, 30 at Pulborough Brooks the following day and 40 at Seaford Head on the 30th. A minimum of 75 at Climping on 2 Nov was the highest single count of the year while 30 at Monkton (Chilgrove) on 3 Dec was by far the highest for December. During the second winter period SWBS a total of 173 was found in 60 of 115 1-km squares surveyed, suggesting another good breeding season this year.

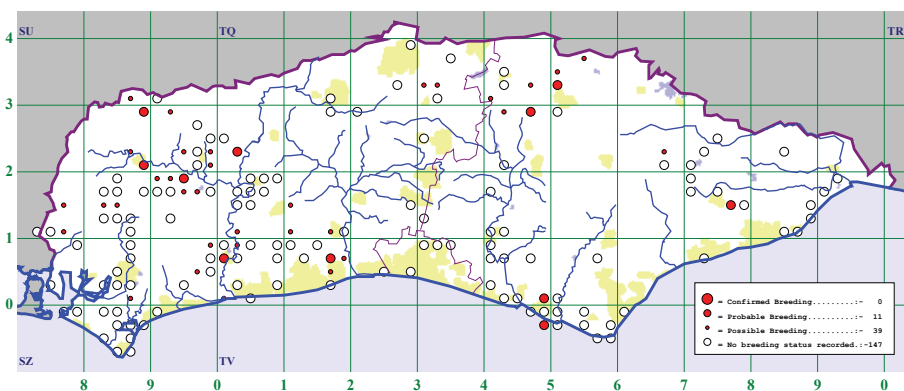
More than 200 Goldcrests were ringed at each of three different sites, with 213 at Charleston Reedbed, 224 at Ladywell (Coombes) and 243 at Pett Level, all significantly higher than in 2014, when the totals were 23, 32 and 54 respectively. [VPB]

Firecrest

Regulus ignicapilla

Scarce or possibly fairly common breeding resident, passage migrant and winter visitor. Schedule 1 species.

Firecrests were recorded in 165 tetrads as shown in the map below, an increase on the 132 in 2014. There was just a single encounter with the species in the 135 1-km squares surveyed for the SWBS during the first winter period.



During January, reports mainly of single birds, came from 33 locations across East and West Sussex, though there were three at Arundel, at Collington Wood (Bexhill) and at Rackham Woods. One was seen at Forest Row on the 25 Jan, near to where a pair had been holding territory

during 2014. On 1 Feb four were seen at three different 1-km squares around Arundel, which may represent a total of 12 individuals in the area; another observer found ten at Swanbourne Lake (Arundel) on 27 Feb. Four were at Duncton Common on 18 Mar and four males were heard singing at Benges Wood (Selhurst Park) on the 25th. The monthly maximum reported at Beachy Head was eight on the 27th.

The first songsters were reported from Sompting on 2 Mar and at Fernhurst the next day. One was singing in a garden in Seaford on 8 Apr and three were at the Angmering Park Estate. On 14 Apr an observer in West Lavington (Midhurst) heard both Firecrest and Goldcrest singing in competition. There was probable breeding in ten tetrads but was confirmed in none. Four were found in three of the 176 1-km squares surveyed for the BBS. However, on 10 May two males were noted disputing territory at West Lavington and at least eight singing males were heard at Leggetts Wood (Brightling) on the 10th. Later in May three were at East Blatchington (Seaford) and Compton, while five were reported in the Arun Valley at South Stoke. Two observers reported first ever sightings on their regular patches, at Paddockhurst Place (Worth) and at Pyecombe GC.

The species was absent from Beachy Head between 9 May and 29 Jul, when reports became more regular, and on 12 Nov a party of five were seen at Shooters Bottom. A colour-ringed bird was seen at Arundel on 25 Sep, and information received by the observer revealed that it had been ringed as a juvenile on Southampton Common on 31 Jul 2014 and was the first ringed juvenile that had been discovered away from the ringing site (G Trew *pers. comm.*). A bird retrapped at Cissbury on 24 Oct had been ringed at the site on 10 Feb, and three were ringed there on the 27th. During the second winter period SWBS counts four were found in four of 115 1-km squares surveyed, one more than in 2014.

Firecrests may be under-recorded in Sussex, so to help establish their status records of all sightings particularly inland are especially valuable. [VPB]

Blue Tit

Cyanistes caeruleus

Abundant resident.

Blue Tits were recorded in 580 tetrads, a similar number as in 2014. During the first winter period there were 24 counts of 40 or more birds with the highest counts being 69 at Hurstpierpoint on 27 Feb (with 54 there on both 4 Feb and 24 Mar), 62 at Broadbridge Heath on 27 Jan and the same number at Roffey (Horsham) on 18 Mar. There were 61 at Warnham LNR on 22 Feb (with 60 there on 25 Mar and 50 on 2 Jan) and 53 at Partridge Green on 2 Feb, which was the highest count during the early SWBS.

Breeding was confirmed in 52 tetrads and probable in a further 56, similar to last year. The first record of nest building was at Strood Green (Kirdford) on 18 Mar and the first confirmed breeding was an occupied nest at Fairlight on 5 Apr. Fledglings were first recorded at Willingdon on 24 Apr. During the BBS, the highest early counts were 55 each at Slinfold and St George's (Wivelsfield) on 15 and 20 Apr respectively and the highest late BBS survey was 40 at West Lavington (Midhurst) on 4 Jun.

In the autumn, counts of 30 or more came from only five sites with the highest being 50 at Broadbridge Heath on 20 Sep. During the second winter period, counts of 30 or more came from ten sites with the highest being 62 at Salehurst on 10 Nov and 60 at Broadbridge Heath on 9 Dec. The highest number counted in the late SWBS was 35 on 9 Nov at Fernhurst. [MJC]

Great Tit*Parus major**Abundant resident.*

Great Tits were recorded in 548 tetrads, a slight increase on 2014. During the first winter period there were 29 counts of 25 or more birds; the highest being 60 at Warnham LNR on 10 Mar with 50 there the next day and 40 on two further dates. Other locations with high counts were Hurstpierpoint with 29 on 27 Feb, Cliff End (Pett) with 27 on 4 Mar and Bexhill with 25 on 20 Jan. The highest SWBS counts were 25 each at Bexhill on 25 Jan and Ridgewood (Uckfield) on 12 Feb. Breeding was confirmed in 39 tetrads and probable in a further 54. Nest building was first seen at Danehill (Ashdown Forest) on 23 Mar. The first record of confirmed breeding was a nest containing eggs at Pett Level on 22 Apr and fledglings were first recorded on 18 May at West Worthing. There were only 31 reports of fledged young during the breeding and summer periods, a reduction on 2014. The highest early BBS count was 31 at West Lavington (Midhurst) on 21 Apr and the highest late count was 23 at Partridge Green on 14 Jun. Consistently high counts of 20-25 birds were made at Warnham LNR during June.

During the autumn there were only six counts of 20 or more with the highest being 30 at Broadbridge Heath on 9 Oct. In the second winter period there were 16 counts of 20 or more with the highest being 35 at Warnham LNR on 2 Dec and 34 at Lyminster on the 12th, which was the highest count during the November and December SWBS. [MJC]

Coal Tit*Periparus ater**Very common resident.*

Coal tits were reported from 277 tetrads distributed widely across the county, a slight increase from 2014. During the first winter period there were eight counts of ten or more, with the highest counts of 20 at Stansted Forest on 9 Jan and 15 at Trotton Common on 15 Feb. Eighty nine per cent of the records for this period were of one or two birds. During the Jan/Feb SWBS there was a high count of 13 at Rotherfield on 17 Feb. Territorial behaviour was observed from early January and a bird was seen plucking fur from a dead shrew to line a nest at Burton MP on 9 Apr. The first report of confirmed breeding was of an occupied nest at the base of trees on Lavington Common on 11 May. Breeding was confirmed in 14 tetrads (ten in 2014). There was probable breeding in a further 19 (11 in 2014). In total 17 reports referred to fledglings, and as in 2014, the majority of these reports were from Ashdown Forest.

There were five counts of ten or more during the breeding season. At Broadwater Warren a reserve survey counted 13 fledglings from three nests (in dormouse boxes), giving an average productivity of 4.33 fledged young per pair. During the BBS there was a maximum count of 16 at West Lavington (Midhurst) on 21 Apr.

The largest late summer concentration was 18 at Old Lodge LNR (Ashdown Forest) on 28 Aug found during a monthly survey of the reserve. The highest count of the autumn was 13 at Pulborough Brooks on 28 Sep.

During the second winter period there were just two counts of ten or more: 12 at Old Lodge LNR on 18 Dec and a flock of 12 feeding together at Stansted Forest on 19 Dec. Eighty eight per cent of the records for this period were of one or two birds. During the Nov/Dec SWBS the highest count was nine at Tilgate Forest on 4 Dec.

During the autumn there was a small influx of birds of the continental race *P.a. ater* involving one at Beachy Head on 28-30 Sep (RHC), two at Birling Gap on 29 Sep to 4 Oct (JFC), three at Apuldram on 20 Oct (BFF), three at Beachy Head and one at Seaford Head on 30 Oct (both MRE) and one at Charleston Reedbed on 31 Oct (JJE). [CJR]

Willow Tit

Poecile montanus

Very scarce and declining resident. Red listed species of high conservation concern.

The only record this year was of one re-trapped at Warnham LNR on 20 Sep (JJE), a bird that had been ringed at Warnham LNR on 5 Sep 2014. The likelihood is that Willow Tit is now extinct as a breeding species in Sussex though the possibility remains that it could still exist in the interior of the county in small numbers. [PJ]

Marsh Tit

Poecile palustris

Scarce resident. Red listed species of high conservation concern.

Marsh Tits were recorded in 171 tetrads, mostly in ones and twos, from across the county where suitable habitat occurs, an increase on the 157 in 2014. The only coastal records came from Fairlight and Pett Level. The highest count during the first winter period was 15 at Brede High Woods on 27 Mar; other high counts were ten at Warnham LNR on 1 Mar and six at Linch Down (Bepton) on 26 Jan.

Breeding was confirmed in seven tetrads and was probable in 27, an apparent increase on the combined total of 16 in 2014 but whether this is an actual increase or only an increase in reporting is unclear. During the breeding season, records were received from 80 locations which was an increase on the 72 in 2014. Marsh Tit is a sedentary species and records during this period are probably of potential breeders. The earliest songster was reported on 14 Jan at North Marden and the first nest building at Loxwood on 12 Apr. Confirmed breeding was first recorded, with fledglings seen, on 29 May at Linchmere (Fernhurst) and the next day at Brede High Woods. Other high late spring counts were six (adults feeding a recently fledged family) at Troutbeck (Eridge) on 6 Jun and Hawkins Pond (St Leonard's) on 10 Jun.

There were no autumn counts above three but during the second winter period there were fours at Ashdown Forest, West Dean Woods, Arundel and Northchapel.

Although recorded more widely in 2015 than in recent years, there is evidence of a decline of Marsh Tit in southern England and observers are encouraged to submit all records, especially if breeding evidence is observed. [MJC]

Bearded Tit

Panarus biarmicus

Scarce breeding resident and very scarce passage migrant and winter visitor. Schedule I species.

Bearded Tits were recorded in 12 tetrads with almost 90% records coming from Pett Level and Rye Hbr areas with just a few from Thorney Island (Chichester Hbr); there were none from Pagham Hbr.



Bearded Tit, Rye Hbr, February 2015 (Yvonne Taylor)

During the first winter period, apart from these two core areas, Bearded Tits were recorded at the Ouse Estuary Project (Newhaven) from 12-16 Mar and West Rise Marsh (Eastbourne) on 4-5 Jan.

High counts outside of the breeding season, from the seven locations where this species was recorded, were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar		Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
County total	26	14	11		6	24	51	14	9
Thorney Deepes	2	2	2		2	-	8	-	-
Arun Valley	-	-	-		-	-	-	-	1
The Burgh	-	-	-		-	-	1	-	-
Eastbourne	10	-	-		-	-	-	8	-
Newhaven	-	-	4		-	-	-	-	-
Pett Level	10	6	1		4	14	30	6	8
Rye Hbr	4	6	4		-	10	12	-	-

Breeding was confirmed at only two sites; at Rye Hbr there were at least six pairs and eight pairs at Pett Level where fledged young were observed on 8 Jun.

In the autumn, one was observed “high flying” at The Burgh (Burpham) on 10 Oct, an unusual record where a bird was “calling from a hawthorn hedge...then flew east in the direction of the dew pond”. During the second winter period, away from the two core areas, eight were at West Rise Marsh on 22 Nov and one was recorded in the Arun Valley on 12 Dec. [MJC]

Woodlark

Lullula arborea

Scarce resident and possibility very scarce passage migrant. Schedule 1 species.

The species was recorded in 54 tetrads, up from 48 last year.

As is usual, the majority of records early in the year were from various sites in Ashdown Forest, with Iping Common the next most reliable site, producing counts of up to four birds on many dates in the first quarter of the year, with other records of one and two birds received from Balcombe Forest, Broadwater Warren, Broxmead (Bolney), Wiggonholt Common and Lavington Common and Plantation.

Breeding was confirmed from five tetrads, with probable breeding in a further 22, and possibly in another 18. Ashdown Forest remains the core site, with singing and/or evidence of breeding seen in at least eight different sites within the area, including nine singing males around Old Lodge LNR.

Encouragingly, the WHBBS found the species to be present in 12 of the 13 locations surveyed, with a total of 48 pairs or territories recorded, up from 33 last year (see page 207 for fuller details). Also, up to ten singing males were noted at Broadwater Warren, and a number of records were received from locations away from the main breeding areas during the season, including Chailey Commons, Stansted Forest and Abbots Wood (Hailsham).

Records were typically sparser in the autumn, though an early count of 14 at Coates Common on 29 Aug was noteworthy, and there were very few records from coastal sites, though in October the migration watchers in the Hastings area produced a total of 16 birds, including six on the 11th and eight on the 25th, and at Pett Level one was seen on the 13th and 13 on the 21st.

Records were few for November and December, but singing was noted on several occasions in Ashdown Forest in the last ten days of the year. [AH]

Skylark

Alauda arvensis

Very common but declining resident, and probably common passage and winter visitor. Red listed species of high conservation concern.

The species was recorded in 321 tetrads, down from 373 last year. The year started, though, with a big count of approximately 500 birds on rough ground at Beachy Head on 4 Jan, a total not bettered anywhere during the year, though the same number was recorded on Steep Down (Lancing) on 22 Jan. Flocks of 100 or more were also seen at The Burgh (Burpham), Sharpsbridge (Newick), Jevington and Rye Hbr during the first winter period. The species was found to be present in 28 of the 136 squares checked for the SWBS

On 2 Apr one observer found Skylarks singing all over the downland at Beachy Head and considered more than 200 were present. The BBS found the species in 83 of 176 squares surveyed across the county, whilst counts on the RSPB reserves at Pagham Hbr found 13 pairs, at Medmerry 26 pairs and Broadwater Warren three pairs during the season. At least 23 territories were at Rye Hbr. Confirmed breeding reports were received from only five tetrads, but probable breeding was reported from a further 35, with another 82 noted as possibly holding breeding pairs.

In contrast to the spring, when almost no birds were reported on sea-watching logs, there was an obvious movement in October, particularly at Selsey Bill where the bird is otherwise uncommonly recorded, with 115 birds noted, including 34 over on the 8th. The team of migration watchers at Hastings recorded a total of 232 with a peak of 35 arriving from the sea also on 8 Oct. Only four reports of over 100 were received in the autumn, with 250 at The Burgh (Burpham) on 8 Oct being the largest, with lesser counts from Chichester Hbr, Tortington (Arundel) and Beachy Head, also in October, and peak counts in excess of 50 from another half a dozen sites. There were records from only 17 of the 115 squares checked for the SWBS. [AH]

Sand Martin

Riparia riparia

Fairly common summer visitor and very common passage migrant.

Four days earlier than the first record for 2014 and the 10-year average arrival date of 11 Mar, the first record came from Chingford Pond on 7 Mar. One at Falmer on the 10th and in the Arun Valley on the 14th and 15th came before the first multiple sighting of seven at Rye Hbr on 21 Mar and one week later six were sighted at Arundel WWT.

As with the previous year, spring migration was fairly slow and characterised by small numbers passing through the county; this is in stark contrast to the autumn when far larger numbers are recorded. Sixteen double figure counts were returned, four more than 2014, the highest being 40 on 5 May at Bewl Water and then 35 on 11 May over West Heath Common sand pit.

As in 2014 breeding was confirmed from just one site, although different from 2014, at Rock Common (Washington), a commercial sand extraction pit. Unfortunately there were no details of the size of the colony. The breeding status of Sand Martin in the county remains perilous.

The first notable count of returning migrants was of 50 from Pett Level on 10 Jul; four days later 150 were recorded from Medmerry with 120 there on 19 Jul. By late July numbers had

risen to 500 at Medmerry on the 23rd, whilst 200 were observed from Beachy Head on the 30th. In what will be considered a poor year for autumn passage by comparison with previous years, a total of 26 three-figure counts were received between 14 Jul and 19 Sep. There were again 500 at Medmerry on 1 Aug and the same number at Rye Hbr on 4 Sep. The highest count of the year was 1200 at Medmerry on 31 Aug.

During the latter part of September migration fell away quickly with just two 3-figure counts: 400 at Rye Hbr on the 19th and 100 there on the 28th. The next highest count over this period was 35 at Sidlesham Ferry on the 24th. There were eight records during October with 50 from Steep Down (Lancing) on the 7th and ten in the lower Cuckmere Valley on the 8th being notable. The final record of the year, on 18 Oct at Pett Level, came a full ten days earlier than 2014 and three days earlier than the 10-year average departure date. [DB]

Barn Swallow

Hirundo rustica

Common summer visitor and abundant passage migrant.

Barn Swallows were recorded in 457 tetrads, 49% of the 923 tetrads from which records were received. The first spring bird was recorded from Rye Hbr on 9 Mar, exactly the same date as in 2014 and also as the 10-year average date. However, the next records were not until the 21 Mar with two at Rye Hbr and one at Bury.

There were 59 counts in excess of 20 throughout April and May, including 11 three-figure counts, the most notable of which were 200 at Arlington Res on 29 Apr, 200 also at Weir Wood Res on 5 May and 253 N at Selsey Bill on 9 May.

Breeding was confirmed in 24 tetrads (up from 16 in 2014) and was probable in a further 23. The earliest signs of probable breeding were of a pair flying in and out of stables on 16 Apr at Pagham Hbr, where nesting occurred last year, and of another pair collecting mud from the river bank at Exceat Bridge on 29 Apr and flying with it to the underside of the bridge. Birds were visiting nests in a hide at Arundel WWT on 10 May where a nest contained five eggs three days later; a nest with young was seen at Offham on the 22nd and, at Street, two broods of five were ringed on the 25th. The first record of fledged young was on 4 Jun at Knepp.

Post-breeding congregations of 100 birds were noted at Medmerry and Henfield on 10 and 28 Jul respectively. The first indication of autumn movement occurred on 31 Jul when 870 flew east at Sheepcote (Brighton). It was not until mid August, however, that migration began in earnest, with 150 at East Guldeford on 16 Aug and 200 at Medmerry two days later. A total of 8730 were recorded at Hastings on 55 days between 17 Aug and 9 Nov with a peak day count of 1170 on 19 Sep. From mid-August to mid-October there were 24 counts exceeding 1000, the most notable being: 15,000 at Medmerry on 30 Sep, 8000 at Beachy Head and 6107 at Selsey Bill both on 19 Sep and 4000 at Beachy Head on 30 Aug, Pett Level on 13 Sep and Uckfield on the 18th. The last four-figure counts, both of 1000, came from St Leonards-on-Sea on 14 Oct and Seaford Head on the 17th. There were also 129 three-figure counts during this period. The total number of birds moving through the county this autumn is likely to be in excess of 100,000. A notable observation from Goring Gap on 29 Sep concerned an all-white bird flying east with other Swallows.

Following on from records received on eight different days during November, there were four records of single birds on four dates in December: at Greatham Bridge on the 3rd, Rye Hbr on the 4th, Burgess Hill on the 12th and, finally, Thorney Island on the 13th, just one day later than in 2014 but significantly later than the 10-year average date of 22 Nov. [DB]

House Martin*Delichon urbium*

Common summer visitor and abundant passage migrant. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern.

House Martins were recorded in 439 tetrads, 47% of the 923 tetrads from which records were received. Two birds at Pulborough Brooks on 12 Mar were the first of the year, just two days earlier than the 10-year average date, but 12 days earlier than the corresponding record for 2014.

The first double-figure count of 20 was at Medmerry on 19 Apr and the following day 12 were recorded at Rye Hbr. Later in the month there were counts of 50 at Pulborough Brooks on 21 Apr, at Arundel WWT on the 26th and at Rye Hbr on 27th with 70 also on the 27th at Chichester GP. The only triple-figure counts recorded during spring migration were of 150 at Arlington Res on 29 Apr, 100 at Steyning on both 7 and 29 May and 200 at Medmerry on 4 Jun which was the highest count until the autumn.

Breeding was confirmed in 132 tetrads and was probable in a further nine. The large increase in the number of tetrads in which breeding was confirmed (21 in 2014) was due entirely to the effort put into the BTO House Martin survey of 2015 (see pages 261-266). Nests were observed from a wide variety of locations but rather more in West Sussex than in the East Sussex (ratio 10:7). Birds were seen visiting nests as early as 24 Apr at Ardingly and the first record of an occupied nest was on 8 May at Hartfield. The first nest with young was noted on 17 Jun at Chichester. Birds were still using nests well into September, the last record thereof being on the 26th at Fishbourne.

From late July to mid-August small parties of 10-60 were being recorded, including 60 E on 7 Aug and 70 W on the 9th at Selsey Bill although some of these were perhaps post-breeding local movements. Autumn migration began to accelerate at the end of August with c.200 at Bewl Water on the 27th, 2000 E at Beachy Head and 1000 at Seaford Head on the 30th. The migration watch at Hastings recorded a total of 6030 on 44 dates between 17 Aug and 25 Oct with a peak day count of 855 on 25 Sep. Between 1 Sep and 31 Oct there were 12 four-figure counts. The most significant of these were 3000 E at Selsey Bill on 8 Sep and Beachy Head on the 11th, at least 1700 over Uckfield on the 18th, 7000 W at Beachy Head on the 19th and 6000 the following day. During September some 57,000 birds were recorded; peak migration occurred between 18 and 27 Sep involving some 29,000 birds. The only significant counts in October were made at Beachy Head where 3685 were recorded between the 3rd and 18th with a peak count of 1000 on the 10th.

By the latter part of October regular sightings were becoming fewer, and the final record for the month was of a feeding flock of 30 over Great Wood (Battle) on the 26th. There were then two late records: one in the Shoreham/Hove area on 10 Nov and one flying west at Widewater (Lancing) on 9 Dec, 25 days later than the 10-year average date but still nine days earlier than the latest date in recent years of 18 Dec 1994. [DB]

Red-rumped Swallow*Cecropis daurica*

Rare vagrant.

A total of five were recorded, continuing the recent upward trend. The first was sitting on wires at Wilmington on 21 Apr (CH). This was followed by one at West Rise Marsh on 2-3 May (KBG *et al.*), with two there on the 4th (DC, JFC, BK, RK), one in off the sea at Selsey Bill on the 7th (AH, CRJ *et al.*) and one at Littlehampton on the 8th (DGCH). The county total moves on to 44, of which 26 have been this century, including six in 2011. [PJ]

Cetti's Warbler*Cettia cetti*

Scarce but increasing resident, passage migrant and winter visitor.

During January and February there were reports from 33 different sites, double the number for the same period in 2014, and comprising at least 61 individuals. Four were at West Rise Marsh (Eastbourne) on 4 Jan, and seven were heard singing at Arundel WWT on 1 Feb. Many sites occupied in 2014 were used again in 2015, and those further away from the more usual coastal area or river valleys were Burton MP and Twineham where single birds were reported.

During the BBS the species was found in 13 squares from 176 surveyed with a maximum count of eight on 15 Apr at Hoo Level (Pevensey). There were at least ten territories at Thorney Deepes, 12 at Rye Hbr, 16 at Filsham Reedbed and 25 at Pagham Hbr. Arundel WWT held at least 14 singing males, and on 16 Jun a bird there was seen mobbing a Cuckoo, despite not being a recognised host species. Breeding was confirmed in only one (Arundel WWT) of the 105 tetrads in which the species was recorded, but with possible or probable breeding in another 53. Expansion from previously occupied sites is evident, with observers recording the species in new areas, such as North Ease Fm (Rodmell) and Woods Mill. At Pett Level 88 birds were ringed and another 13 were trapped at Charleston Reedbed, a healthy increase compared with 54 and three ringed at the same two sites in 2014.

During the second winter period records came from at least 35 different sites, slightly fewer than the previous year. However, some of these were new, for example, a coarse fishery near Rustington. Four birds were at Long Pool (Pagham Hbr) on 2 Nov, seven at Arundel WWT on the 21st and four each at Pett Level on the 26th, the Ouse Estuary Project (Newhaven) on 18 Dec and Arundel WWT on several dates. [VPB]

Long-tailed Tit*Aegithalos caudatus*

Very common resident.

Long-tailed Tits were recorded in 423 tetrads in 2015, an increase of 13% from 2014. During the first winter period there were 53 records of ten or more, and the highest counts were 30 at both Church Norton and nearby at Selsey on 10 Jan and 25 at Pulborough Brooks on 2 Jan. During the Jan/Feb SWBS a high count of 13 was recorded at Nutbourne (Pulborough) on 8 Feb. Sixty four per cent of the records for this period were of only one or two birds.

An early record of probable breeding was of a bird collecting nest material at Goring Gap on 4 Feb. There were three other records of nest building in February. By contrast, the earliest record of collection of nesting material in 2014 was on 30 Mar. Observers noted Long-tailed Tits collecting moss, lichen from trees, horse-hair (placed in a suet feeder cage) and cobwebs from an outbuilding. Breeding was confirmed in 36 tetrads, an increase of 44% from the previous year. The first record of an occupied nest was at Lavington Plantation on 6 Apr. Breeding was probable in another 41 tetrads (25 in 2014). Records of fledged young included at least five youngsters roosting on a branch at Lidsey Old Canal on 11 May and 16 at Steyning on the 23rd. High counts during this period were 20 each at Chichester GP on 16 May, the Knepp Estate on 4 Jun, Church Norton on 11 Jun, and Sidlesham Ferry on 21 Jun, 17 at Pett Level on 17 Jun and 15 at Ladywell (Coombes) on 23 May. During the BBS there was a maximum count of 13 at Rake on 30 Jun. Late summer/early autumn high counts were 22 at Pagham Hbr on 31 Aug, 20 at Woods Mill on 27 Aug and 20 at Warnham LNR on 9 Sep. During the autumn and second winter period there were

94 records of ten or more with high counts of 38 at Arundel WWT on 18 Oct and 25 at Cliff End (Pett) on 27 Oct but highest of all was c.100 on the Knepp Estate on 18 Oct. However 45% of the records for this period related to one or two birds. During the late SWBS the highest count was 17 at Hanlye (Cuckfield) on 14 Dec. [CJR]

Pallas's Leaf Warbler

Phylloscopus proregulus

Very scarce visitor, mostly in late autumn.

There were three records this year of this delightful species, all from Beachy Head. The first was found in Horseshoe Plantation on 26 Oct (JFC, RHC, LP *et al.*) where it remained until the 28th, when there was also one in Shooters Bottom (GB). One in the old trapping area on 30 Oct (ASC) was presumed to be a third bird. A total of 99 have now been recorded in the county, 38 of which have occurred in all but three years this century. [PJ]

Yellow-browed Warbler

Phylloscopus inornatus

Very scarce visitor; mostly in late autumn.

A total of eight was recorded, all in October. The first was at Birling Gap on the 3rd (DC, JFC *et al.*) with another heard calling nearby in Horseshoe Plantation (PD, JW), followed by further singles at Beachy Head (DRC, JFC, RK), Cissbury Ring (BFF, DM) and in a Hove garden (JCH) on the 8th, trapped and ringed at Charleston Reedbed (TWP) and Pett Level on the 22nd (PEJ) and at Bailiffscourt (Climping) on the 27th (OM). At least 108 have been recorded this century, an average of almost seven per annum. [PJ]

Dusky Warbler

Phylloscopus fuscatus

Very rare vagrant.

There were two records in 2015, the first for the county since 2011. The first was found at Chichester GP on 5 Jan (APB *et al.*) where it remained until the 19th, frequenting the margins of East Trout Lake where it was seen by many observers. The second was at Atherington Pools (Climping Gap) on 9-11 Dec (BA, BFF, DM *et al.*). Both were typically shy and elusive.

These are the seventh and eighth records for Sussex but are the first to be recorded in January and December. Previous records have been in October (5) and November (1). [PJ]

Wood Warbler

Phylloscopus sibilatrix

Very scarce and declining summer resident and passage migrant. Red listed species of high conservation concern.

A welcome, if slight, increase in the number of tetrads Wood Warblers were recorded in, from 13 in 2013 and 2014 to 15 in 2015. Sadly there is still no evidence of breeding.

The first records were of singles at Hodcombe (Beachy Head), Beacon Hill LNR (Rottingdean) and Brighton Wild Park, all on 26 Apr. These were 12 days later than in 2014 and nine days later than the 10-year county average arrival date. One ringed at Ladywell (Coombes) on the 28th and one at Seaford Head on 1 May were the only other spring records.

There were no summer records. Return passage commenced with singles at Beachy Head on 29 Jul and then at Findon Park Farm and in the Arun Valley on the 30th. One was trapped at Cissbury on 1 Aug and further singles were found at Stopham Bridge (Byworth) on the 3rd, Beachy Head on the 21st, Kingley Vale on the 27th and lastly at Church Norton on the 30th, 17 days earlier than the 10 year county average departure date. From 2017 records of this species will need to be supported by a description for assessment by the SOSRC. [TWP]

Chiffchaff

Phylloscopus collybita

Very common summer visitor and passage migrant; small numbers winter.

There was a very slight increase in the number of tetrads this species was recorded in rising from 494 in 2014 to 504 in 2015. In January it was recorded from the 1st and there were well over 100 records for the month, the highest concentrations were as follows; 12 at Waltham Brooks on the 2nd, ten at Steyning WTW on the 4th, ten at Atherington on the 13th, 12 at Burpham on the 14th and 15 at Coldwaltham WTW on 21st. Similar figures were recorded in February but 20 at Lavant WTW on the 7th was a large count for this time of year. Numbers at Steyning WTW rose to 15 on the 10th and Waltham Brooks also hosted 20 on the 12th. March kicked off with 20 at Lidsey on the 1st (and also 20 on the 6th) but there was an obvious arrival on the 3rd with 30 at Beachy Head. At Medmerly 20 were recorded on the 7th and numbers at Steyning WTW rose to 30 on the 16th; 45 were counted at Sidlesham Ferry on the 18th, another obvious influx, as there was also on the 26th when 30 were at Beachy Head and 41 at Seaford Head. At Porthole Farm (Sidlesham) 50 were present on the 25th. Records continued well into April as usual with 15 at Charleston Reedbed on the 5th, 21 at Honeypools (Knepp Estate) and 39 at Pulborough Brooks on the 7th and 22 at Old Lodge LNR (Ashdown Forest) on the 8th. On the 9th 22 were recorded at West Beach (Littlehampton) and 20 were at Beachy Head on the 10th. A major influx occurred on the 13th with 20 at Beachy Head, 41 at Seaford and 100 at Pagham Hbr; numbers then remained a fairly steady trickle for the rest of the month.

Confirmed breeding was only recorded from 13 tetrads with probable breeding in a further 41. Eleven singing males were counted at Broadwater Warren, 17 pairs at Pagham Hbr, and 16 territories at Filsham LNR.

There were signs of a very early autumn movement on 31 Jul with 45 at Whitbread Hollow (Beachy Head), then as normal throughout August with numbers only picking up in September, the main month for this species' exodus. At Pett Level the first day of autumn migration was the 4th with 12 ringed. There was a notable increase in numbers at Ladywell (Coombes) with 30 present on the 5th, 80 counted on Iping Common on the 6th and 100 at Whitbread Hollow on the 13th. High counts for the Hastings Migration team were 64 on the 5th, 60 on the 6th, and 74 on the 19th. Also on the 19th there were 170 at Beachy Head and 130 at Seaford Head. At Ladywell 100 were recorded on the 23rd and Pett Level hosted 150 on 25th. Another 100 appeared at Ladywell on the 27th; ringing effort there showed these were different birds to those on the 23rd, and yet another 100 there on 30th. October produced 100 at Whitbread Hollow on the 3rd, also 24 were ringed at Cissbury the same day, another fall at Ladywell involved 113 trapped on the 4th, 97 trapped there on the 8th when observers at Seaford Head also recorded 97 birds. At Splash Point (Seaford) 100 were recorded on the 9th and from then on numbers tailed off, as would be expected for the rest of the month.

November and December records involved mainly single figure numbers when the species was recorded right up to the 31st with WTWs being the usual attraction.



Common and Siberian Chiffchaffs, Steyning, January 2015 (Dave Sadler)

Birds showing the characteristics of one of the eastern races *P.c. tristis* or *P.c. abietinus* were recorded at five sites. At Steyning WTW one was present from 1 Jan to 26 Mar (ARK); two were at Coldwaltham WTW from 11 Jan to 23 Mar (GB, ARK) and also two there on 17-28 Dec (BFF, DM, DIS). Singles were present at Lavant STW on 2-17 Feb (GAH) and at Willingdon on 26 Mar (GD). On the last day of the year there were two at Swanborough STW (DC, JFC, BK). [TWP]

Willow Warbler

Phylloscopus trochilus

Common but declining summer visitor and passage migrant. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern.

Despite this species declining status it was recorded from 242 tetrads, an increase over the last two years, and a welcome one at that.

Nine records were received for March, the earliest being recorded at Newhaven on the 13th, six days earlier than the 10-year county average arrival date. Another was at Chichester GP on the 17th, at Wych Cross (Ashdown Forest) on the 18th and then at Brighton, Hope Gap (Seaford), Pagham Hbr and Arundel. The first few days of April started slowly with ones and twos but then eight at Sidlesham Ferry on the 6th, 12 at West Beach (Littlehampton) on the 9th but then 50 at Pagham Hbr on the 10th was a nice fall, as was 110 at Beachy Head on the 13th but there were at least 150, possibly more, at Pagham Hbr on this date due to the presence of heavy fog. Numbers then dwindled substantially with mainly single figure counts for the rest of the month in the county.

In the breeding season breeding was confirmed from only four tetrads. Probable breeding was noted in 16 tetrads with possible breeding in 69. At Broadwater Warren 14 singing males were recorded, and Ashdown Forest remains the prime breeding area for this species.

The first returning migrant for the autumn was a single at Beachy Head on 16 Jul, with another there on the 18th whilst at Pett Level the first was recorded on the 21st. These were followed by four at Exeat Bridge (Cuckmere Valley) on the 23rd, and ten at Beachy Head on the 29th and 15 there on the 30th. Seaford Head held 23 on the 31st when there were 30 at Whitbread Hollow (Beachy Head). August got off to a good start with 100 at Pett Level on the 4th and 50 at Whitbread Hollow on the 5th. There was a substantial fall on the 7th with 75 at the latter site, 69 ringed at Ladywell (Coombes) and 40 at Hope Gap. Sixty were recorded at Climping Gap on the 11th and 62 the next day. Seaford Head observers counted 60 on the 14th with 48 there on the 15th. On the 18th at Charleston Reedbed 71 were ringed and at Cissbury 24 were similarly ringed, 25 were at both Ladywell and Beachy Head. On the 22nd there were 50 at Beachy Head and 30 at Ladywell. Further notable counts included 30 at Church Norton (Pagham Hbr) on the 27th and 50 at Whitbread Hollow on the 28th, 20 at Cissbury and 15 at Climping Gap on the 30th. In early September 31 were counted at Selsey Bill and 30 were at Ladywell on the 2nd whilst 40 were present at Whitbread Hollow on the 5th. The last count in double figures was 17 at Beachy Head on the 6th. Records in single figures continued for the rest of the month and into October, the last recorded was at Atherington on the 18th when heard briefly in song, which is 11 days earlier than the 10-year average last date. [TWP]

Blackcap

Sylvia atricapilla

Very common summer visitor and passage migrant; scarce winter visitor.

During January and February there were reports from 37 different sites, mainly in gardens, representing a minimum of 60 individuals, more than double the total recorded in this period in 2014. Three were seen in Patcham, Stanmer Park, Steyning and West Tarring, but on 2 Jan six were encountered in 45 minutes at Seaford. Food sources used were holly, ivy and myrtle berries, as well as sunflower hearts, suet and apples which had been hung in a tree. One male was seen flying at and chasing a Blue Tit from a feeder. One very long-staying male was seen in a Keymer garden from 10 Dec 2014 through to 31 Mar. Some sub-song was heard during February, a few birds commenced full song from the start of March; the first Filsham Reedbed record of the year on the 18th is likely to have been a returning migrant.

The peak coastal counts during the spring occurred in April with 40 at Hodcombe (Beachy Head) on the 13th, 30 at Cuckmere Haven on the 14th, 23 at Goring Gap on the 16th, and 21 at Climping Gap on the 20th.

During the BBS Blackcaps were found in 34 squares from 176 surveyed with a maximum count of 16 on 21 Apr at West Lavington. There were eight territories at Filsham Reedbed, 15 at Friston Forest, and 19 at Pagham Hbr. There was evidence of breeding at Cissbury, where a female with an incubation patch was trapped on 10 May; on the 30th six females were ringed, all with brood patches and the first juveniles were trapped there on 21 Jun. On 11 Jun fledged young were reported at both Pett Level and Woods Mill. The species was recorded in 438 tetrads in 2015, confirmed breeding in only 14, but with possible or probable breeding in another 168.

After a record year of autumn passage in 2014, numbers were back to average this year. The highest estimated daily totals at Beachy Head in September were 200 on the 5th and 7th, 400 on the 13th and 500 on the 19th, while the ringing group trapped 977 birds. At Cissbury and Ladywell

(Coombes) 419 and 359 different birds were handled, and at Charleston Reedbed 581 new birds were ringed. One long-lived individual, ringed as a juvenile on 20 Jun 2009, was retrapped at Cissbury on 10 May.



Blackcap, Hodcombe, April 2015 (Roger and Liz Charlwood)

The highest figure in October was 450 at Beachy Head on the 8th; the following day numbers were down to 100. From mid-October there were only single-figure records and in the final two months of the year reports overwintering birds came from 15 different sites. Two males and a female were in a Steyning garden on 29 Dec and on the 21st a male was again feeding in a Keymer garden where the species was present the previous winter. Was this the same individual? [VPB]

Garden Warbler

Sylvia borin

Common summer visitor and passage migrant.

The first arrival was at Netherfield on 8 Apr, three days later than the 10-year average date, and five days later than in 2014. The next report was on the 10th when one was perching on a rose bush in a garden in Bexhill. A pair was seen feeding in sallows at Newick WTW on the 20th.

During the BBS Garden Warblers were found in 29 squares from 176 surveyed with a maximum count of five on both 24 Apr and 7 Jun in a square north of Ifold. A male singing at Plaistow on 25 Apr was interacting with a Nightingale. An observer reported a "Garden Warbler bonanza" on 8 May when he heard ten at Lullington Heath, though they were outnumbered by Blackcaps. Seven were at Ardingly Res on the 11th and eight at Honeypools (Knepp Estate) on the 17th. An adult was seen carrying food on 1 Jun on Churlwood (Ashdown Forest). The species was

recorded in 154 tetrads in 2015, confirmed breeding in only one, but with possible or probable breeding in another 49.

Returning migrants were first reported at Pett Level on 21 Jul when three were ringed. At Cissbury the species was absent from the site during the whole breeding season, and the first encounter was not until 23 Jul. As with Blackcap, the number ringed at Beachy Head was fewer with only 47 ringed, compared with 121 in 2014, and the ringing group reported a poor autumn with a maximum of only 12 on 22 Aug. Ten birds, all first years, were trapped at Ladywell (Coombes), between 7 Aug and 8 Oct. The only other October records were singles at Pett Level on the 1st and Keymer on the 4th, and the final sighting of the year was of three at Beeding Brooks on the 10th, two days earlier than the 10-year average date. [VPB]

Lesser Whitethroat

Sylvia curruca

Fairly common summer visitor and passage migrant.

The first returning migrant was seen at Beachy Head on 15 Apr, 11 days later than in 2014 and four days later than the 10-year average arrival date. The first record from West Sussex was from Pagham Hbr the following day. By the end of April there were birds in suitable habitat throughout the county. Five were at Rye Hbr on the 25th, and six at Newhaven Tide Mills on the 26th.

During the BBS the species was found in 17 of the 176 1-km squares surveyed with a maximum count of 7 on 20 Jun in a square on the Knepp Estate. There were seven pairs at Thorney Island, nine pairs at Pagham Hbr, three more than in 2014 and 16 pairs at Rye Hbr where the number of territories returned to the 2013 level after only nine found in 2014. Two pairs bred at Charleston Reedbed, but the species was absent from Cissbury during the breeding season, probably for the first time in 30 years of ringing at the site. Lesser Whitethroats were recorded in 141 tetrads, similar to 2014, confirmed as breeding in three, with probable or possible breeding in another 55.

The first returning migrant at Beachy Head was trapped on 31 Jul, but the ringing group reported a very poor autumn with only 16 different birds caught, the third year running for record lowest totals, indicative of poor breeding success. The maximum seen at Beachy Head was ten on 19 Aug, 14 on the 30th was the highest number at Seaford Head, while the Hastings migration watch team recorded only 34 at various locations in the area between 2 Aug and 3 Oct, with a maximum count of seven on 23 Aug. This was less than one-quarter of their 2014 total.

Most birds had departed by the end of September. During October single birds were seen until the 4th at Atherington, Beachy Head, Hastings, Pett Level and Pagham Hbr, from whence the final sighting came on the 19th, seven days later than the 10-year average date. [VPB]

Common Whitethroat

Sylvia communis

Very common summer visitor and passage migrant.

The earliest report was of a single bird on Ashdown Forest on 6 Apr, four days later than in 2014 and also four days later than the 10-year average arrival date. Noted at Chailey Common 6 Apr and on the 10th singing males were heard at Stanmer Park, Knelle Wood (Beckley) and Fishbourne, and by mid-month the species was widely reported across the county, including four at both Chantry Hill (Storrington) on the 15th and Climping on the 16th, five at Thorney Island on the 17th and ten or more singing males at Woods Mill the following day.

During the BBS the species was found in 101 of the 176 1-km squares surveyed with a maximum count of 18 on 20 Jun in a square at Rye Hbr. At Sheepcote Valley 16 were found in less than an hour on 1 May, and on the 10th no less than 23 were in a 1-km square near Knepp. Fifty territories were mapped at Rye Hbr, an increase of 16 over the previous year, while at Pagham Hbr there were fewer pairs, 32 compared with 53 in 2014. On 22 Jun an adult was seen feeding three young at Sidlesham, 15 birds including juveniles were reported at Newhaven on the 23rd and 20 were counted at Winchelsea Marsh on the 26th. In a well-watched area at Sheepcote Valley the first bird was seen on 15 Apr, 20 were recorded on the 30th, fledged young seen on 12 Jun and nest building seen on 2 Jul possibly for a second brood. Whitethroats were recorded in 334 tetrads, similar to 2014, confirmed as breeding in 24, with probable or possible breeding in another 127.

Numbers on return passage were generally lower than in 2014. At Beachy Head 206 were ringed, compared with 256 in 2014, and at Cissbury 53 different birds were trapped compared with 62 the previous year. The August maximum at Beachy Head was 115 on 28th; 100 passed through the site on 2 Sep, but thereafter the highest number seen was 40 on the 17th. At Sheepcote Valley a maximum of 70 was recorded in August as migration got under way, and 100 were at Church Norton on 29 Aug. In the latter half of September numbers dwindled, with 30 at Church Norton on the 20th being the only report in double figures. There were records from only five sites in October, and the final report of the year was of two very late individuals at Newhaven Tide Mills on 11 Nov, six weeks later than the final 2014 sighting, and fourteen days later than the 10-year average date. [VPB]

Dartford Warbler

Sylvia undata

Scarce to fairly common but localised resident. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern. Schedule 1 species.

This species was recorded in 41 tetrads, a further increase on 2012 and 2013. The estimated maximum month counts and 1-km squares were as follows.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
No. of birds	10	12	16	13	10	23	8	6	7	43	24	13
No. of 1-km squares	7	8	11	11	8	15	6	6	6	20	20	12

In January, five were reported from two West Sussex commons and one at a site on Ashdown Forest. In February and March, reports from four West Sussex commons were mostly of single males and females, although two were observed at one site in mid-February and four at another in mid-March. On Ashdown Forest, birds were seen at two sites in February and six in March; again sightings were mostly of one or sometimes two of both sexes, although three males were reported at one site on 14 Mar. Away from usual breeding areas, singles were reported at New Bridge (Pevensy Levels) on 2 and 23 Jan, West Wittering on 17 Jan, East Head (Chichester Hbr) on 23 Jan, Beachy Head on 11 Feb; Steep Down (Lancing) on 17 Feb, and Pagham Hbr on 21 Mar.

During the WHBBS 14 territories were recorded (see table on page 207). Confirmed breeding was reported at two sites on Ashdown Forest, with two fledged young seen on 6 Jun and one on 15 Aug. There was evidence of probable breeding in at least 16 other locations on Ashdown Forest with possible breeding in a further five.

Autumn sightings were mainly of one or two birds at five locations on West Sussex heathland, including of one juvenile with an adult on 27 Oct; could this juvenile have been a result of

breeding in West Sussex? Adults were also seen at ten sites on Ashdown Forest. There were reports from coastal sites from late September, with birds reported at Hastings from 27 Sep to 20 Oct and in the Beachy Head area from 10 Oct onwards, with six reported on 18 Oct and eight on 25 Oct. Mostly singles were seen during autumn at other coastal sites including Chichester Hbr, Climping and Pagham Hbr. No juveniles were reported. There were reports from around the Pagham Hbr area throughout November and most of December, with four seen on 22 Nov. Other coastal sites with sightings during this period included Thorney Deepes (Chichester Hbr), Medmerry, Climping and Newhaven Tide Mills.

Further inland, there were reports of one at Pulborough Brooks from 3 Nov to 30 Dec, with two observed on 29 Dec. Nearby, there were sightings of one on 14 Dec at Amberley Wild brooks and Waltham Brooks, which was probably the same bird. Singles were also reported at five sites on Ashdown Forest in November and mid-December. [AR]

Grasshopper Warbler

Locustella naevia

Very scarce and declining summer visitor and fairly common passage migrant. Red listed species of high conservation concern.

A singing male at Nymans (Handcross) on 9 Apr was the first noted, one day earlier than the 10-year average date, but no more were recorded until the 13th when single birds were at Selsey, Beacon Hill (Rottingdean), Pagham Hbr and Newhaven. The only other spring records came from Seaford, Ashcombe Bottom (Lewes), and Blackcap (Plumpton), and disappointingly, none at all were reported this year in the latter half of May or during June.

The first autumn passage bird was at Cuckmere Haven on 21 Jul, and three days later passage started through Pett Level. Despite the apparent absence of breeding pairs in Sussex, 284 birds were ringed at Pett Level and 27 at Charleston Reedbed, both sites seeing an increase over the 2014 totals of 190 and nine respectively. A few individuals were recorded elsewhere, including Newhaven on 1 Aug, Climping Gap on 11 and 12 Aug, Bracklesham Bay on the 13th, Arundel WWT on 15 Aug, Thorney Island on 2 Sep, and Hollingbury Camp on the 19th. The final report was from Pett Level on 2 Oct, 12 days earlier than the 10-year average date. [VPB]

Sedge Warbler

Acrocephalus schoenobaenus

Fairly common summer visitor and common passage migrant.

This species was recorded in 84 tetrads, one less than 2014. First recorded at Rye Hbr with one on 3 Apr, two days later than 2014 and three days later than the 10-year county average arrival date. These were quickly followed by birds at Pagham Hbr, Pett Level and Charleston Reedbed. On the 12th seven were recorded at the Ouse Estuary Project (Newhaven) and then ten at Pagham Hbr on 13th. Numbers slowly built up during this month with ten at Waltham Brooks, eleven in the Arun Valley and twelve at Ouse Estuary Project (Newhaven), all on the 26th.

Although breeding was confirmed in only four tetrads and probable in a further eight the following is perhaps cause for optimism. Breeding surveys produced seven pairs at Medmerry, 24 pairs at Pagham Hbr, and ten territories at Filsham LNR. The 36 territories mapped at Rye Hbr were a welcome increase from the 23 in 2014 but still down on the 43 in 2013. Hopefully this increase will continue. Elsewhere many records in the breeding season only referred to numbers, not pairs, so it is not possible to calculate how many pairs are present in the county.

The first obvious autumn returning migrants were two at Charleston Reedbed on 10 Jul. At Beachy Head three were recorded on the 26th and at East Guldeford Level there were 30 on the 30th. In August, the main month for the autumn exodus of this species, provided very few obvious records of migrants with four at Beachy Head on the 2nd, seven on the 7th, six on the 9th, two on the 11th and four on the 28th. The largest number at Charleston Reedbed (where the species failed to breed for the second year running) was 59 on the 16th. At Pett level 1528 were ringed during the autumn and the last for the county were two at this site on 8 Oct. [TWP]

Marsh Warbler

Acrocephalus palustris

Rare summer visitor and very scarce passage migrant. Red listed species of high conservation concern. Schedule 1 species.

There were three accepted records of this rare species. In late May, at a site in East Sussex, a bird was heard singing initially in an area of habitat considered unsuitable as a breeding site, but it eventually moved to a more suitable area where it settled for longer periods of extensive singing. In early June there was no sign of the bird at the original location but either the same or another was singing long sequences of high-tempo streams of mimicry in an area considered to be ideal breeding habitat. These two locations were some 300 m apart and it was considered that there may have been two singing males and that breeding was at least possible (APP). An autumn migrant was seen and photographed in the Bill House garden at Selsey Bill on 20th October (OM *et al.*). It was missing two tertials from the left wing and may well have been the same bird as one on St Agnes, Isles of Scilly, on 31 October, which was similar in appearance. [JAH]

Reed Warbler

Acrocephalus scirpaceus

Common summer visitor and very common passage migrant.

This species was recorded from 126 tetrads, another year on increase from the 118 in 2014 and 107 in 2013. Reed Warbler was first recorded with a single at Selsey GC on 2 Apr, 5 days earlier than the 10-year county average arrival date and equalling the earliest date for 1960-2014. This was closely followed by individuals at Selsey Bill on the 3rd, Warnham LNR on the 5th, Pett Level on the 8th and Lewes on the 10th. The species was then seen daily at many sites throughout the county with the highest monthly totals being ten at Pett Level on the 23rd, 11 at Ouse Estuary Project (Newhaven) on the 26th and 12 at Ladywell (Coombes) on the 28th.

During the breeding season confirmed breeding was recorded in 11 tetrads, slightly down on the 13 in 2014 but probable breeding was reported in a further 13 which is up on the eight probable in 2014. As with Sedge Warbler, most of the records in the breeding season were of just numbers, so not easy to ascertain actual pairs. However, there were 20 pairs at Medmerry, six at Chichester GP and the 44 pairs counted at Pagham Hbr was well down on the 63 in 2014. Twelve pairs bred in Charleston Reedbed, there were 44 territories counted at Filsham LNR and 150 territories were mapped at Rye Hbr but the figure is probably in excess of 200 pairs.

Return passage was first noted at Beachy Head with four on 26 Jul, then five at Seaford Head on the 31st. These were followed by 12 at Beachy Head on 5 Aug and then there was a small fall on the 7th with 22 at Seaford Head and 30 at Whitbread Hollow (Beachy Head). At Breech Pool (Pagham Hbr) 20 or more were present on the 20th and then 30 at Whitbread Hollow on the 22nd. At Charleston Reedbed 44 were trapped on the 28th. Small numbers were present through September and October with the last trapped at Pett Level on 3 Nov, a typical date. [TWP]

Nuthatch*Sitta europaea**Common resident.*

Nuthatches were recorded in 321 tetrads, 35% of the 923 tetrads from which records were received, slightly more than in 2014. In the first winter period, the only double-figure count was of ten at Rackham Woods on 18 Jan; other high counts were of eight at Stansted Forest on 6 Jan and seven at Pulborough Brooks on 2 Mar, but there were 13 counts of five birds from 13 sites of which ten were in West Sussex.

Breeding was confirmed in 11 tetrads and was probable in a further 25. The first signs of breeding activity were nest building on 8 Apr at Friends (Ashdown Forest), a nest with young at Crawley on 13 May and, the same day, two adults with seven young at Warnham LNR.

During the summer and autumn months the highest counts were of 12 at West Dean on 16 Aug and 11 at Pulborough Brooks on the 3rd and some 93% of records where a count was recorded were of one or two birds. During the second winter period the highest count was eight at West Lavington on 26 Nov with sevens at Pulborough Brooks on 9 Nov, Wardley on 13 Dec and Stansted Forest on 19 Dec; otherwise some 85% of records where a count was recorded were of one or two birds. [JAH]

Treecreeper*Certhia familiaris**Common resident.*

Treecreepers were recorded in 233 tetrads, only 24% of the 964 tetrads wholly within Sussex. During the first winter period the highest counts were of sixes at Rackham Woods on 18 Jan and during a SWBS at Kirdford on 18 Feb and fives at Pippingford Park (Ashdown Forest) on 17 Jan and Petworth Park on the 26th; otherwise some 69% of records for which a count was recorded were of ones or twos.

Breeding was confirmed in 11 tetrads and was probable in a further 21. The first signs of breeding were of a bird visiting a probable nest site at Fletching on 6 Apr, one nest building at Lavington Common the next day and a bird carrying a twig into a barn roof at Rye Hbr on 11 May, although this activity was queried by the observer as, presumably, of doubtful intent. The first record of fledged young was at Bulverhythe (St. Leonards) on 17 May.

The highest post-breeding count was of four at the Knepp Estate on 1 Aug, four at Markstakes Common (Chailey) on 17 Sep and four further counts of three. Six at West Lavington (Midhurst) during the SWBS on 26 Nov was the highest second winter count during which period over 90% of records with a count were of ones or twos. [JAH]

Short-toed Treecreeper

Very rare vagrant. Mostly resident from southern Spain northwards to Denmark and eastwards to Poland, western Ukraine and Greece. Also breeds Channel Islands. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern.

One found in the Old Trapping Area at Beachy Head on 27 Oct (JFC, DRC *et al.*) was the first for Sussex. The use of playback and some excellent photographs proved crucial in identifying the bird and having the record accepted by the BBRC. Although present for just one day, news

was sent out quickly enabling a number of other birders to see the bird. An account of the finding appears on pages 209-210 of this report. [DHH]

Wren

Troglodytes troglodytes

Abundant resident.

Wrens were recorded in 552 tetrads (cf. 550 in 2014). In the early year SWBS, 370 birds were found in 109 of the 136 squares covered (80%). In 2014 the corresponding figures were 283 in 71 of 95 squares (75%). The maximum count was ten in Hornshurst Wood (Rotherfield).

Breeding was confirmed in 19 tetrads and probable in 48 (cf. 16 and 48 in 2014). The encouraging returns from the SWBS were underlined by BBS results: 3271 birds were found in 96% of the squares surveyed (cf. 1725 found in 98% of squares in 2014). There were 33 counts in excess of 20, underlining the recently improved fortunes of the bird (cf. 27 in 2014, 11 in 2013). Despite these encouraging signs, some BBS counts were surprisingly low, with only three south east of Bolney, two just west of Dallington, and three at Blackboys, for example. The highest counts were found during the late surveys: 43 at Nutley, 38 in Tilgate Forest (Crawley) and 35 just north of Scaynes Hill.

At well-watched Cliff End (Pett), maximum counts on walks usually lasting 2½ hr were 34 on 17 May and 33 on 30 Mar and 26 were logged on a one hour walk in the Preston Park area of Brighton on 22 May. Regular transect surveys at Old Lodge LNR (Ashdown Forest) found a maximum of 22 birds in January, April and November.

Nest building was underway in Stanmer Park in early March and nests with eggs were found there on 21 Apr. The first fledged young were at Pebsham (Bexhill) on 10 May. There were 50 territories at Rye Hbr (the highest count for at least the last seven years); by contrast, the 40 territories at Pagham Hbr was the lowest count in the same period (cf. 86 in 2014). In Haywards Heath on 3 Jun, an observer saw two birds watching two others fighting.

In the late year SWBS, 396 birds were logged in 95 of the 115 squares covered (83%). The figures for 2014 were 429 in 110 of 136 (81%). The maximum count was of 18 at Nutley. Autumn and late year counts on 2–2½ hr walks at Cliff End (Pett) peaked at 23 on 23 Sep and were around 15 in December. On 9 Dec, 22 were found between Winchelsea and Rye in 2¼ hrs. On 9 Nov a bird was singing under the lights by the Chichester Festival Theatre.

There was one intriguing suggestion of migration: on 8 Oct, a bird arrived on the beach at St. Leonard's, landing on a lady, before proceeding inland. [CB]

Common Starling

Sturnus vulgaris

Common but declining resident and very common to abundant winter visitor. Red listed species of high conservation concern.

Starlings were recorded in 427 tetrads during the year. In the early winter period flocks of 100 and above were reported from 39 sites. On 18 Jan 16,000 roosted at Brighton Palace Pier. Other large counts in the first winter period were 1000 at Arundel Watermeadows on 1 Jan and 1500 at Arundel WWT three days later, 1000 at Rodmell Brooks on 14 Jan and 1500 at Chantry Hill (Storrington) on 17 Feb. On the Norfolk Estate 708 were counted in surveys during this period. The few records of movement during this period include 25 W at Troutbeck (Eridge) on 19 Feb and 13 NE at Portslade on 23 Mar.

Breeding was confirmed in 41 tetrads, probable in 21 and possible in another 29. Starlings were seen carrying food to nests between 20 Apr and 21 Jun. The first juvenile seen out of the nest was on 12 May at Seaford but already by 15 May evening flocks of up to 500 were noted at Littlehampton and on 25 May a flock of 300 mainly young birds was at Cradle Hill (Seaford).

Flocks exceeding 100 were located at 45 sites in the autumn and second winter period, the largest being 2000 at Thorney Island on 9 Oct and roost counts at Brighton Palace Pier of 17,400 on 25 Nov and 18,500 on 26 Dec, 1000 at dusk on several days in late December at Singleton and 4000 split between two sites at Pevensey Levels on the last day of the year.

There were several reports of movement, either migration or flight to or from roost during this period, including 30 W on 11 Oct and 45 N on 25 Oct at Beachy Head and several groups flying mainly north or west during November, with 100 W at Worthing on 22 Nov and at Pett Level 500 were seen to come in off the sea the same day and 300 the next day. A flock of 500 N early on 8 Nov at Cissbury and 300 there on 18 Dec were presumably leaving a roost. [ACG]

Ring Ouzel

Turdus torquatus

Passage migrant, very scarce in spring, scarce in autumn. Red listed species of high conservation concern.

Ring Ouzels were recorded mostly at or near coastal sites or downland prominences. An excellent spring count was followed by a fine autumn passage. The estimated minimum monthly totals, after adjusting for possible duplication, were as follows:

Feb	Mar	Apr	May		Sep	Oct	Nov
1	1	30	-		10	190	-

The first bird of the year was a male photographed at Haywards Heath on 4 Feb, eight weeks earlier than the 10-year average of 31 Mar, and was the earliest since one was recorded at Mannings Heath on 2 Feb 1905. The second bird appeared at Hodcombe (Beachy Head) on 23 Mar, still early, and was followed by one at Brighton on 4 Apr before a modest influx started with one at Pagham Hbr and two at Beachy Head on 9 Apr. There were two at Firle Beacon on 11 Apr with four at Fairlight Glen (Hastings) on the 13th, the only sighting east of Beachy Head, and another four at Devils Dyke on the 18th. The last migrants were one at Sheepcote Valley (Brighton) and two at Alfriston on the 23rd with a final bird at Lidsey Lodge (Barnham) on 25 Apr, rather earlier than the 10-year average of 4 May. The spring total is the highest since 36 birds were recorded in 2000.

The return passage started with a single on 8 Sep at Blackdown (Fernhurst), a week earlier than the 10-year average of 17 Sep. It was followed by one at Hodcombe on the 19th but the real passage began with one at Chantry Hill on the 25th and daily reports of ones and twos across a broad front. There were seven birds at both Blackdown and Fairlight Glen on 1 Oct and a few others at Hastings and Beachy Head until Blackdown hosted 16 on the 8th. Other high spots were five at Cissbury Ring on 12 and 18 Oct and 20 at Hastings, seven at Beachy Head and five at Findon all on the 14th. Ten at Beachy Head on the 17th preceded a decline to a last five at Hastings on the 28th and finally one at Beachy Head on 31 Oct, a fortnight earlier than the 10-year average departure date of 13 Nov. While this period total is dwarfed by three of the previous ten year totals it is the fifth highest since 1994. [JHW]

Blackbird*Turdus merula*

Abundant breeding resident; very common or abundant winter visitor; status uncertain as passage migrant.

Blackbirds were recorded from 592 tetrads, similar to 2014. There was a notable rise in population at both ends of the year suggesting migration.

There were a dozen counts of at least 25 birds in both January and February, twice the number of 2014, with a peak of 51 at Pett Level on 31 Jan. There were five other records of 39 birds or more spread widely across the county and birds were reported on the Norfolk Estate in surveys between 8 Dec 2014 and 12 Feb 2015.

March was strangely quiet though the following two months rebounded with spring verve. The four sites reporting over 40 birds were all in the west. Confirmed breeding was recorded in 53 tetrads, cf. 67 last year, and probable in a further 48. Nest building was seen at Patcham (Brighton) on 11 Mar and food or faecal sac carrying there on 4 Apr, the latter preceded by one day at Aldwick (Bognor). The first fledglings reported were seen at Chailey Common on 6 Apr, Danehill on 12 Apr and next at Haywards Heath on the 22nd. Newly fledged birds were indicated in 46 reports with a similar number of records noting active nests. Twenty two pairs were reported at Pagham Hbr, seven territories at Hope Gap (Seaford), six more at Filsham and 24 at Rye Hbr.

The autumn and second winter periods were poor and only a dozen reports included 25 or more birds, half the number noted last year, and most were in December. The peak counts reported were 39 at Hastings on 23 Oct, 42 at Broadbridge Heath on 4 Dec and 49 at Pett Level on 14 Dec. Although a total of 32 birds passed through Beachy Head in October, the other high counts were of 30 or fewer birds and generally at the extremities of the county. [JHW]

Fieldfare*Turdus pilaris*

Common, occasionally very common, passage migrant and winter visitor. Red listed species of high conservation concern. Schedule 1 species.

Fieldfares were recorded from 251 tetrads, a modest recovery from the previous year's drop. Another poor first winter period was followed by an improved second period, the year's total being 73% of the 10-year average. Approximate monthly totals in the west and east sides of the county were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr		Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
County total	2508	2711	1161	67		3	2033	3951	2632
West of TQ30	1274	1129	633	62		-	1216	2522	1095
East of TQ30	1234	1582	528	5		3	817	1429	1537

The first period count was again poor, though better than the previous year, and distributed throughout the county. Fifteen counts of 100 were made from The Burgh (Burpham) to Rye Hbr with highlights of 330 at Pett on 31 Jan and 200s at Edburton, Streat and Bewl Water in February. There were still 40 birds on the Knepp Estate on 5 Apr and 20 at Wisborough Green on the 6th but few later until a pair at Falmer on the 18th were followed by a single bird at Isfield on the 25th, more or less the 10-year average departure date.

Three adults found at Stonehill (Ashdown Forest) on 20 Sep were ten days earlier than the 10-year average and preceded two flying north at Goring on 8 Oct. Numbers built up rapidly across the county thereafter with 20 counts of 100 birds during the period including a peak of 500 on the Adur Levels near Small Dole on 8 Nov.

Counts of 200 came from Iping Common, The Burgh and Cissbury in October, Pulborough Brooks and Brede Levels in November and Troutbridge (Eridge) in December. [JHW]

Song Thrush

Turdus philomelos

Very common but decreasing resident and partial migrant; common passage migrant and winter visitor. Red listed species of high conservation concern.

The species was recorded in 504 tetrads widely distributed across the county. The year's total was a little higher than the 10-year average and showed significant migration in both winter periods.

First winter migration was apparent until the end of February and especially around the change of month when 30 were seen at Hangleton Round Hill (N of Hove), 29 at Lancing/Shoreham Airport, another 29 at Laughton (Ringmer) and 35 at Lidsey, though the winter peak of 40 was on 21 Feb at Winchelsea. Notable records of about 20 birds came from Brede Levels, Breeding Brooks, Pett Level and Uckfield and there were ten more reports of a dozen. Surveys on the Norfolk Estate between 8 Dec 2014 and 12 Feb 2015 gave a total of 135 Song Thrushes.

Breeding was confirmed in 21 tetrads, was probable in a further 38, and possible in 114. A pair was regularly reported nest building at Patcham (Brighton) from 11 Mar to 7 Apr though the first fledglings were reported from nearby Stanmer Park on 18 Apr and from Selsey the next day. While nesting was reported at Lancing College on 15 Apr and in Ashdown Forest from the 19th the only other fledgling report in April came from Haywards Heath on the 29th. Four reports of juveniles came in May, nine in June, four in July and three in August and the total recorded for the year was 65, of which more than half were ringed.

The first suggestion of the return passage came with seven birds at Blackdown (Fernhurst) and 12 at Cissbury Ring on 3 Oct, followed by five at Hollingbury Camp on the 7th. A significant movement started on 11 Oct with nine at Sheepcote Valley (Brighton) and ten at Ashford Forest while the Hastings Migration Watch counted 154 in four days, out of their total of 212, with a maximum of 59 on 12 Oct. Elsewhere there were 50 birds at Hollingbury Camp and 42 at Beachy Head on the 14th and 20 at Cissbury Ring on the 15th. Thereafter there were 15 at Brighton and 13 at Tangmere in November and 15 at Winchelsea, 18 at Pett Level and 16 at Blackham Highfield (Ashurst) in mid-December. [JHW]

Redwing

Turdus iliacus

Common, occasionally very common, passage migrant and winter visitor. Red listed species of high conservation concern. Schedule 1 species.

Redwings were recorded from 286 tetrads slightly biased to the west of the county. The first winter period was average and the second well above average due to a fine October passage. The approximate minimum monthly totals in the west and east sides of the county were as follows.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr		Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
County total	3252	2673	1479	13		1	3865	1938	2107
West of TQ30	2065	1527	1002	7			597	902	1085
East of TQ30	1187	1146	477	6		1	3268	1036	1022

While there were 15 counts of at least 100 birds in the first winter period these may have been just six localised flocks in transit. For example, 155 birds at Hurstpierpoint were physically close to 100s seen at Bolney and Cowfold, and 180 noted at Warninglid later. The only high count in March was 200 at Pulborough Brooks on the 20th followed by a steady decline in numbers until the final bird left Cophthorne on 19 Apr, three days earlier than the 10-year average.

The first returning bird at Flimwell (Hurst Green) on 28 Sep, within a day of the 10-year average, was the only one that month and was followed by several 20s and 30s across the county from 3 Oct. On the 14th, 2100, in flocks of up to 150 birds, passed north-west through Sheepcote Valley (Brighton) during one hour in the early morning and many of them passed through Hollingbury Camp, 5 km to the north-west, where 660 were seen. Also that day 170 were recorded at Fernhurst and 105 at Beachy Head. In November 100s were seen at Ladywell (Coombes), Troutbeck (Eridge) and near to Worth, while in late December 200 were seen at Kingsfold on the 18th, 150 at Weir Wood Res on the 23rd, and 100 on the Knepp Estate and near Steyning on the 20th and 29th respectively. [JHW]

Mistle Thrush

Turdus viscivorus

Common resident and partial migrant. Red listed species of high conservation concern.

Mistle Thrushes were recorded from 310 tetrads spread across the county and there was an increase in spring and overall sightings. The approximate monthly totals were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
No. of birds	174	180	128	216	153	132	111	141	106	143	92	121

First period counts showed a welcome increase from recent years and were well above average. Highlights included 13 birds at Hurstpierpoint and 11 at Northchapel though only three other counts reached six: at Petworth Park, where two were singing, Pulbough Brooks and the Norfolk Estate. In April and May there were counts of seven at Plashett Lakes, Petworth Park and Pett Level and 12 at Knepp Estate (Shipley) on 31 May.

Breeding was confirmed in 18 tetrads, and was probable in 19 more. The first report, of food carrying, was from Stanmer Park (Brighton) on 16 Feb though fledglings were not seen there until 10 Apr, the same day as food or faecal sac carrying was reported from Streat. Two chicks were predated at Troutbridge on 14 Apr and confirmations of success came later from Nutley, Findon, Pett Level, Cuckfield, Ashdown Forest and West Dean. There was a late report of a family party at Uckfield on 27 July.

Mid-July post-breeding flocks of 16 or 17 were noted at Ninfield, Barns Green and Barcombe Res while later peaks included 35 flying over Crowhurst on 17 Aug, 27 at Petworth Park on the 22nd, 23 at Ashdown Forest on 24 Sep and 20 at Blackdown (Fernhurst) the next day. There were another 30 at Ashdown Forest on 11 Oct and finally 15 at Plashett Lakes on 19 Dec. [JHW]

Spotted Flycatcher*Muscicapa striata*

Fairly common but declining summer visitor; scarce passage migrant in spring and fairly common in autumn. Red listed species of high conservation concern.

Spotted Flycatchers were recorded in 152 tetrads in 2015, up on the 128 of last year. The first sighting was on 25 Apr on the Knepp Estate, more than a week earlier than in 2014 but exactly on the 10-year average date. Subsequently birds were seen at Shooters Bottom (Beachy Head) and Exceat (Cuckmere Valley) on 26 Apr. There was then a slight pause until 3 May when one was recorded at Darwell Res. A total of four were seen at Church Norton on 5 May, four more were at Climping Gap on the 9th, seven at Seaford Head on the 10th and six at Selsey on the 12th. Ones and twos were reported across the county throughout May and June.

Breeding was confirmed in 13 tetrads, probable breeding was recorded in five and possible breeding in ten. One was seen at a nest hole at Lavender Platt (Ashdown Forest) on 8 May (with two there on the 26th and fledglings seen on 13 Jul) and one was watched inspecting a last year's nest box in Dallington on 11 May. Three were recorded as holding territory at Linchmere Common on 21 May. A nest was found with two chicks at Broadwater Warren on 1 Jun and parent birds were watched feeding fledglings at St George's Retreat (Wivelsfield) on 17 Jun. On the same day a bird was found incubating a nest on the Knepp Estate. An adult with young was seen at Netherfield on 11 Jul and another at Billingshurst on the 18th. Two adults feeding a chick were recorded at Pett Level on 11 Aug.

Birds were recorded throughout August and September with the highest counts being 16 at Church Norton on 30 Aug and 20 at Blackdown on 3 Sep. The Hastings migration watch team recorded 29 over the period 28 Aug to 12 Sep with a maximum of six on 7 Sep. Between 20 Aug and 19 Sep there were 28 reports of between five and twenty birds from 13 mainly coastal locations.

The last recorded sighting of the year was at Rye Hbr on 10 Oct, slightly later than the 2014 date of 28 Sept but earlier than the 10 year average date of 14 Oct. [TS]

Robin*Erithacus rubecula*

Abundant resident; probably common passage migrant mainly in autumn; status uncertain as winter visitor.

Robins were recorded in 588 tetrads (cf. 592 in 2014; 673 in 2011). In the early year SWBS, 1351 birds were found in 132 of 136 squares, with a maximum of 35 at Nutley. This was a substantial increase on the numbers logged in recent years (931 in 2014; 933 in 2013). Twenty or more were found in 10 squares. On the RSPB Big Garden Birdwatch (26 Jan), birds were in 84% of West Sussex gardens, 83% of East Sussex gardens and ranked as the sixth species in each county.

The aggressive nature of winter Robins was several times remarked upon. One squabbled with other birds on a small filtration tank at Burpham on 14 Jan. In West Tarring (Worthing) a pair monopolized front-garden bird feeders, driving off Blackbird, Blackcap and House Sparrow; a third bird quietly went about its business in the back garden. In Patcham, one fought a male Blackcap for spindle berries on 8 Feb, and that area was full of Robin song on, appropriately, Valentine's Day. At Three Cornered Copse (Hove) 15 were singing on the early evening of 25 Feb.

Breeding was confirmed in 41 tetrads and probable in a further 43: (cf. 2014: 53 and 34; 2013: 37 and 51). In Henfield a nest with three eggs was found in a compost bag by the side door of the house on 21 Mar. Two of these hatched but, although full grown, they had vanished by 15 Apr. Fledged young were reported on 21 Apr from Stanmer Park (Brighton).

Robins were found in 172 of the 176 squares of the BBS. The maximum count was of 52 at Nutley on 21 Apr; there were counts of 20 or more in 18 squares (seven of which were in the far west of the county). Numbers in Loxwood which had held 18 in 2012, 35 in 2013 and only nine in 2014 stabilized at last year's low level.

Song had resumed in Patcham by mid-August. In the autumn there were high numbers, as usual, around Pett, peaking at 62 around Cliff End on 23 Sep. It is not clear how many of these might be migrants. Fifteen in Whitbread Hollow (Beachy Head) on 28 Aug was considered a significant number for so early in the autumn, but reported totals for the Beachy Head area did not this year exceed 25 (reached on 25 Sep).

In the late year SWBS, 868 birds were found in 108 of the 115 surveyed squares, with a maximum of 30 (again at Nutley). The number found was lower than in 2014 (1006); 20 or more were found in eight squares (as in 2014). Two birds were singing for most of the morning of 18 Dec at Cissbury.

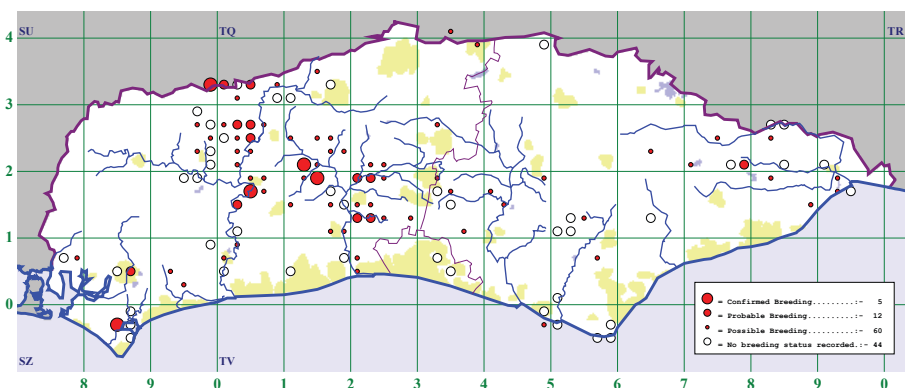
The leucistic bird reported from West Malling in 2014 was seen again late in 2015 (described now as white and cinnamon with a red breast). [CB]

Common Nightingale

Luscinia megarhynchos

Fairly common summer visitor and infrequently seen passage migrant. Red listed species of high conservation concern.

There were records from 121 tetrads as shown in the map below (cf. 109 in 2014 and 114 in 2013) and from 15 of 176 BBS squares. Breeding was confirmed in five, probable in 12 and possible in a further 60 tetrads (cf. 3, 13 and 42 in 2014). On the face of it, 2015 was a good year for Nightingales in Sussex.



The first bird was at Rudgwick on 3 Apr, a couple of days earlier than the 10 year average. A few birds were found while on spring passage (three individuals at Hope Gap (Seaford) and singles at Lidsey and Shoreham Airport) but most were already at, or very close to their breeding

sites when discovered. Twelve were at Shortland Copse (Plaistow) and 11 at Pulborough Brooks on 18 Apr, while 13 were singing in Abbots Wood (Hailsham) on 9 May. Confirmed breeding came from Sidlesham (where a pair were feeding three fledged young on 23 Jun, perhaps the first breeding record for the peninsula), Shortland Copse, Pulborough Brooks, Knepp Estate (where there were a remarkable 16 territories in the southern portion of the estate) and Shermanbury. A nest was found on the north east edge of Chichester.

As in recent years, the heartland for Nightingales lay across a swathe of West Sussex from Ebernoe to Wineham: 229 of the 514 records submitted were from TQ01, TQ02, TQ11 and TQ12. Even in this well covered area, observers found birds singing at new sites. Several records from the Petworth area between 19 and 23 May might refer to just one bird trying to find a mate rather late in the season; the same might be true of a group of records from the Steyning area and of records from just one of the two BBS surveys (birds were recorded on both in five 1-km square, only on the early survey in seven and only on the late in two). One singing at a new site by the R Adur just west of Wineham was surely descended from one of the many pairs found between there and Shermanbury over the years. There were two singing males at Pett Level and up to three were singing between Rye and Cadborough Cliff in mid-late May.

The last birds noted at breeding sites were on 9 Jul at Chiddingfold Woods (Plaistow), on the 30th at Sidlesham, and on the 31st at Pulborough Brooks.



Common Nightingale, Pulborough Brooks, April 2015 (Andrew House)

The first autumn migrant detected was at Hope Gap on 23 Jul and most birds were subsequently seen there or in the Beachy Head area (though one on 2 Aug was the only bird to be found at Whitbread Hollow). The high proportion of autumn birds found at these two sites was particularly striking this year; there were no records (other than of the breeding pair and their young at

Sidlesham) from the Selsey Peninsula. The last were two at Seaford on 31 Aug, two weeks earlier than the 10-year average departure date and only the third year that none have been recorded in September. [CB]

Bluethroat

Luscinia svecica

Very scarce spring and autumn visitor. Schedule 1 species.

One seen and photographed at Shooters Bottom (Beachy Head) on 25 Oct (KH, RS *et al.*) was the first county record since 2012. The county total now stands at 140, of which only 12 have been this century. [PJ]



Bluethroat, Shooters Bottom, October 2015 (Jacob Everitt)

Pied Flycatcher

Ficedula hypoleuca

Scarce passage migrant: more numerous in autumn than spring. Has bred. Red listed species of high conservation concern.

This species was recorded in 32 tetrads in 2015, the same number as 2014. Again, the majority of sightings were in coastal or near coastal areas.

The first spring migrants were seen on 12 Apr at Beachy Head and Loxwood, one day earlier than the 10-year average arrival date. During the rest of April birds were recorded at sites along the coast including four at North Common Fm (Selsey) (13th) and at Pagham Hbr (13th), three

at Seaford (28th) and singles at Lancing Clump (13th), Newmarket Bottom (13th), Seaford Head (15th), Stanmer Park (Brighton)(17th), Pagham Hbr (19th), Wepham Down (23rd), and Beachy Head (26th). A bird was seen at East Hoathly on 31 May and another at Pulborough Brooks on 1 Jun.

The following table shows minimum monthly numbers and assumes some birds stayed for several days.

	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep
No. of birds	20	1	1	-	21	10

Return migration began with a sighting at Seaford on 7 Aug, followed by one at Beachy Head the next day. After that birds were seen regularly at mainly coastal sites; three at Seaford Head on the 15th, two each at Hope Gap (Seaford) (14th), Beachy Head (14th and 18th), Climping (15th) Church Norton (16th), Seaford Head (30th and 2 Sep) with singles on many dates at these locations. Further records of one came from the Knepp Estate (16th), Selsey East Beach (17th), Blackdown (17th), Arundel WWT (29th) and in September at Rottingdean (1st), Hollingbury (2nd), Blackdown (3rd), Pyecombe (13th), Newhaven Fort (26th) and finally at Firle on the 27th which was the last recorded sighting, five days later than last year and four days earlier than the 10-year average. [TS]

Black Redstart

Phoenicurus ochruros

Rare resident; scarce passage migrant and very scarce winter visitor. Red listed species of high conservation concern.

This species was recorded in 70 tetrads. The first report of the year was of a single bird at Brighton Marina on 1 Jan, with further sightings here and also at Telscombe Cliffs (including two on the 31st) in January and February. Black Redstarts were also seen at six other coastal locations. At Roedean (Brighton) two females were seen on 19 Jan. Inland, sightings included singles at Stanmer Park (Brighton) in January and February, Lavant WTW on 5 Feb, Lancing College on the 6th, and at Barnham on the 22nd.

Reports from approximately 25 coastal locations were mostly of one or two, with sightings most frequent from mid-March to mid-April and continuing to early May. Birds were reported in the Beachy Head area on 15 dates in March and April, with two seen on 21 and 27 Mar and three on 24 Mar. Singles were reported at Pagham Hbr and at Selsey Bill on seven dates during this period, with two seen at Pagham Hbr on 19 Apr and at Selsey Bill on 23 Apr. Two were at Seaford Head on 10 Apr, two at Medmerry on the 23rd and three at Selsey Bill on the 30th. There were records from six inland sites on single dates during March and April.

At Rye Hbr on 23 May one was seen and there were then no reports of this species until a female was seen at Birling Gap on 16 Jul and another single was reported flying over at Selsey Bill on the 30th. Two territories were reported at Hastings CP in April, but there were no reports of confirmed breeding in Sussex this year.

The first autumn migrants were reported at Beachy Head on 17 Sep and at High Cross Farm (Uckfield) on the 23rd; there were then reports, mostly of one or two birds, in about 38 mainly coastal locations during the autumn. From 8 Oct to 30 Nov there were reports on 37 days. Birds were seen on 12 dates in the Beachy Head area and with similar frequency on the Selsey Peninsula. The largest movements were during late October, with seven at Medmerry on the 27th and six at Shooter's Bottom (Beachy Head) on the 28th. Inland, birds were reported at 15 sites, mostly on

single days between 14 Oct (at Hurst Green) and 26 Nov (at Robertsbridge). A female was seen at Storrington on 22 Oct and a pair there on 29 Oct. One possible juvenile (or female) was seen on newly excavated land at Waltham Brooks between 16 Nov and 20 Nov.

One was at Arlington Res on 4 Dec which was the only inland sighting in December. Two were at Newhaven on the 16th and 20th, one at Shoreham Beach on the 22nd and one at Medmerry on the 25th and the 31st. [AR]

Common Redstart

Phoenicurus phoenicurus

Scarce and declining summer visitor and fairly common passage migrant. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern.

This species was recorded in 105 tetrads. The first reports of the year were of single birds on Ashdown Forest on 5 Apr and 6 Apr and at Patcham on 7 Apr. Sightings, mostly of single birds, were frequent at coastal or near-coastal sites across the county in April. Twelve birds were seen at Selsey and six at Pagham Hbr on 13 Apr and five at Beachy Head on 26 Apr. The only coastal record in May was of a male at Shoreham on the 15th.



Common Redstart, Beachy Head, April 2015 (Les Bird)

Reports from Ashdown Forest during April included numerous sightings at Old Lodge NR, with maximum counts of 16 birds reported on the 20th and 30th. There were reports, mostly of one or two birds, from 11 other locations on Ashdown Forest in April and May, with 16 recorded at Pippingford Park on 20 Apr and 25 on 17 May. On the West Sussex commons most reports were of single birds during April and May, although six were seen at Linchmere Common on 21 May.

Single birds were seen sporadically at other inland sites in April, including at Pulborough Brooks on the 13th, 16th, 23rd and 28th and at Balcombe Forest on the 21st, 23rd and 27th, and on 1 and 11 May.

Breeding was confirmed on Ashdown Forest only. Fledged young were reported on 15 Jun, 20 Jun and 14 Aug at Old Lodge NR. Birds were also seen carrying food or faecal sacs in four different locations here on 18 Jun, and a nest with young was reported on the same day. Fledged young were also reported on 6 Jul and 14 Aug at Chelwood Beacon. There were at least 16 pairs or territories on Ashdown Forest and 24 pairs or territories were recorded on the West Sussex heaths during the Wealden Heaths Breeding Bird Survey (West Sussex) (see page 207), the latter being a threefold increase on the eight reported in 2014 and more than double the counts in the previous three years.

A male at North Stoke (Arun Valley) on 5 Jul was probably on passage but a juvenile on Seaford Head on 30 Jul was the first coastal autumn observation. Birds were reported across Sussex at coastal or downland sites on most days during August and September. The largest counts were of ten birds each at Climping Gap on 30 Aug and at Flansham on 17 Sept. Eight birds were reported at Whitbread Hollow (Beachy Head) on 28 Aug, Pagham Hbr on 31 Aug (with six here on 28 Aug) and Cissbury Ring on 8 Sep. At Pulborough Brooks, seven were reported on 25 Aug, and six on the 27th.

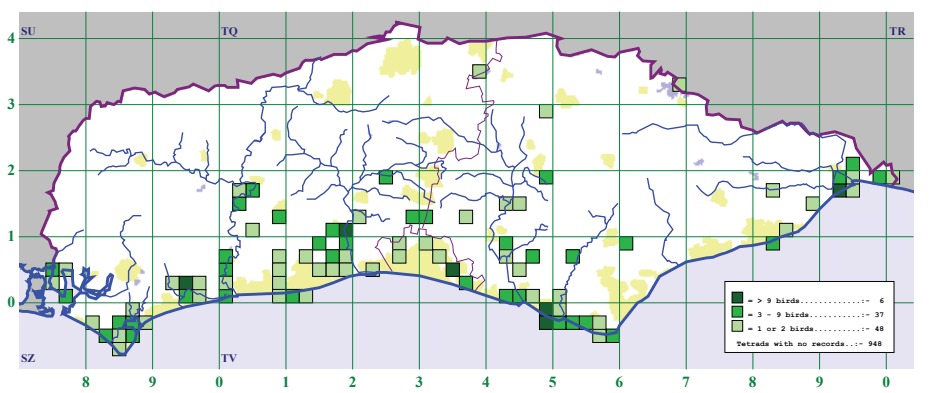
The last heathland sighting of 2015 was of a male at Black Down (Fernhurst) on 9 Oct and the final report of the year was of a male at East Dean on 26 Oct. [AL]

Whinchat

Saxicola rubetra

Fairly common passage migrant. Rare summer visitor; last bred in 1999. Red listed species of high conservation concern.

Whinchats were recorded in 91 tetrads as shown in the map below (98 in 2014 and 76 in 2013), with a strong bias towards the coast, as usual.



The approximate monthly numbers compared with the 5-year monthly average 2011-2015 and the numbers of days on which they were seen were as shown in the table below.

The first spring arrivals came on 13 Apr, nearly two weeks later than the 10-year average arrival date, with at least five birds: three at Pagham Hbr and singles at Northcommon Fm (Selsey) and

	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov
No. of birds	-	41	5	-	4	195	316	18	-
Five-year average	1	21	31	<1	7	257	357	31	<1
No. of days	0	12	5	0	4	25	27	10	0

at Widewater (Lancing). In the next four days they were recorded from further coastal locations: Medmerry, Sompting, Brighton, Cuckmere Haven and Rye Hbr. There were ten records of two or more during April and May. There were no breeding records.

The first returning bird was seen at Medmerry on 18 Jul (13 Jul in 2014) and birds were seen almost daily from the 24 Jul into October at mainly coastal or near coastal locations.

The highest count for August, by a long way, was of 23 at Beeding Brooks on the 30th; the only other double figure count was of ten at Brighton Racecourse on the same day. In September there were three counts of 14, at Beeding Brooks again on the 6th and 13th and at Lidsey Rife on the 19th. Also on the 19th, 11 were counted at Rye Hbr and ten each at Sheepcote Valley (Brighton) and Seaford on the 1st and the same number at Beachy Head the next day. At Hastings, the migration watch team recorded a total of 19 on ten dates between 1 and 27 Sep. Two at Rodmell on 6 Sep were chased by a Merlin but escaped.

In October the highest count was three at Medmerry on the 1st and the last of the year was also at Medmerry, one on the 13th, three weeks earlier than the 10-year average departure date. [MJC]

Stonechat

Saxicola rubicola

Fairly common resident and partial migrant.

Stonechats were recorded in 183 tetrads (19% of the 964 tetrads wholly within Sussex), the highest in recent years. The minimum monthly totals and the numbers of days on which Stonechats were recorded, were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
No. of birds	143	95	109	121	86	134	119	143	216	258	129	119
No. of days	28	28	30	30	24	25	26	27	29	30	27	29

As can be seen from the table they were seen on most days of the year but the numbers recorded are fewer than in 2014 when exceptional autumn totals were recorded.

The highest counts in the first winter period were eight each at West Wittering on 17 Jan and Iping Common on 21 Feb, seven at Lewes Brooks on 7 Jan and the same number on the Norfolk Estate throughout January. Both Lidsey Rife (Barnham) and Sheepcote Valley (Brighton) held six on 4 Jan and 30 Jan respectively.

Judging from the figures in the above table, it seems breeding success was about average, confirmed in 18 tetrads and probable or possible in another 37. The first confirmed breeding records were of birds carrying food on 1 May at Iping Common and the Old Airstrip (Ashdown Forest). Fledged young were first noted at Ashdown Res on 10 May and continued to be recorded throughout Ashdown Forest until the end of August. Elsewhere confirmed breeding was reported from Hoyle (Heyshott), Ambersham Common, Steep Down (Lancing), Newhaven, the lower Cuckmere Valley and Rye Hbr. In the WHBBS (West Sussex) there were records of 30 territories (see page 207).

The highest numbers recorded during the summer period were 25 at Beachy Head on 30 Aug (with 18 there on 16 Jul and 11 Aug), 14 at Ashdown Res on 1 Aug (with 12 there on the 23rd), 12 at Old Lodge LNR (Ashdown Forest) on 30 Jul and five further counts of ten or more elsewhere on Ashdown Forest.



Stonechat, Hodcombe, May 2015 (Roger and Liz Charlwood)

In September five counts of 10 to 15 were recorded at Beachy Head, 13 were at Old Lodge LNR on the 24th and nine each at Roman Road (Ashdown Forest) on the 8th and Ashdown Res on the 20th. The Hastings migration watch team recorded a total of 76 on 23 dates between 19 Sep and 1 Nov with a peak count of 11 on 19 Oct. In October the highest counts were 20 at Climping Gap on the 4th and 13 each in the lower Cuckmere Valley on the 8th and Medmerry on the 25th.

During the second winter period the only double-figure counts were ten at both Beachy Head on 1 Nov and Medmerry on 29 Dec. There continued to be records of ones and twos on Ashdown Forest during this period. [MJC]

Northern Wheatear

Oenanthe oenanthe

Very scarce breeding summer visitor and common passage migrant; very rare in mid-winter.

Northern Wheatears were recorded from 141 tetrads, predominantly coastal or near coastal, along the river valleys and on downland. The minimum monthly numbers, computed on the assumption that birds seen on different dates at the same site were different but which may, therefore, include some duplication, were as follows:

	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov
No. of birds	97	628	70	18	29	352	713	194	8
No. of days	17	30	19	11	8	26	30	24	6

Spring arrival started on 3 Mar, two days earlier than the 10-year average date, with two seen at Beachy Head, followed by one at Mount Caburn (Lewes) on the 5th. There were a minimum of four, possibly 12, birds in the Pagham Hbr area on 8 Mar when there was also one at Pett Level Pools. For the remainder of March birds were recorded on most days from the 11th onwards, the largest count being of 12 birds at Pagham Hbr on the 18th. During April birds were recorded on every day. At least 12 Wheatears were seen at Selsey Bill on the 3rd, 14 were at Goring Gap on the 4th, with groups of ten at Medmerry and 16 at Littlehampton on the 9th. There were three double-figure counts on 13 Apr: 12 at Steyning Round Hill, 15 at Sovereign Hbr Marina and ten at Church Norton. Three more similar counts were recorded during April, with ten birds at Climping on the 16th, 12 at Pagham Hbr on the 21st and 14 on Worthing Beach on the 30th. Following the peak of migration in April, only modest numbers were recorded on only 19 dates in May, the largest count comprising seven birds at Church Norton on the 4th. The last clear record of spring passage, away from confirmed or probable breeding sites, was of a single bird at Church Norton on 3 Jun.

Breeding was confirmed from only one site, at Rye Hbr, and probable breeding was recorded from three other tetrads. Four or five territories were identified at Rye Hbr where breeding success appeared to be good, with several broods of fledglings present in late May to early June, and most pairs probably raised second broods. At Beachy Head on 16 Jun a male was seen collecting food and entering a rabbit burrow.

The first sign of autumn passage, away from breeding sites, was at Friends (Ashdown Forest) where one was observed on 6 Jul, possibly a failed breeder. Two adult Wheatears were then seen at Crow and Gate (Ashdown Forest) on 21 Jul, and a further individual was recorded at Bilsham (Yapton) on 31 Jul. During August Wheatears were recorded on 26 days and on every day of September. Peak autumn passage occurred at the beginning of September, with a minimum of 86 birds recorded on the 1st, followed by at least 101 on the 2nd, including 28 at Ferring. The two largest counts in the month were both of 30 birds, at Rye Hbr on 19 Sep and at Medmerry on the 23rd.

During October, birds were recorded on 24 dates; there was one high count of 20 on the beach at Ferring on the 12th. There were seven records on six dates in November, mostly of single birds. The last records occurred on 20 Nov, seven days later than the 10-year average date, when single birds were seen at Medmerry and Shoreham Hbr.

This was a poor year for the Greenland Wheatear subspecies *O.o. leucorhoa*, with just two birds recorded from a group of three Wheatears seen at Beachy Head on 12 Apr. There have now been 62 spring records of this subspecies since 1949 (37 this century) and 28 autumn records (14 this century). [GO]

Dunnock

Prunella modularis

Very common resident. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern.

Dunnocks were recorded in 486 tetrads in 2015, maintaining the level of 2014. In the early year SWBS 336 birds were found in 96 of 136 surveyed squares (cf. 241 in 65 of 95 in 2014). There were four double-figure counts, with a maximum of 14 at Ridgewood (Uckfield). The highest early year count was of 30 found on a 2-hour walk at Cliff End (Pett) on 23 Feb.

Four birds were establishing territories in a strip of woodland next to the car park at Climping on 13 Jan and two birds were singing against each other in Patcham on 8 Feb. On 4 Mar a bird was collecting horse hair for its nest in High Salvington. Breeding was confirmed in 19 tetrads and probable in a further 44 (cf. 14 and 35 in 2014). Returns from the BBS totalled 846 birds in 143 of 176 surveyed squares (cf. 520 in 142 of 164 in 2014). There were double-figure counts in eight squares, with a maximum of 16 at Hempstead (Uckfield). A total 37 territories were mapped at Rye Hbr (cf. 22 in 2014) and there were 17 pairs at Pagham Hbr (cf. 28 in 2014).

The first fledged young to be reported was at Haywards Heath on 20 Apr. At West Grinstead on 15 May a Dunnock was singing against two Garden Warblers and a Nightingale. Several observers on Ashdown Forest commented on the bird's presence in gorse.

Thankfully there were no records of lice infestation among the birds handled at Cissbury this year. Dunnocks are rarely seen in groups: seven together at Broadwater (Worthing) on 18 Sep was unusual.

In the late year SWBS, 197 birds were found in 72 of the 115 surveyed squares (cf. 243 in 90 of 136 in 2014). The maximum count was of 10 at Fishbourne. The only hint of migration came from Aldwick (Bognor Regis), where there was an influx of birds on 19 Oct. Counts at Cliff End revealed a pattern akin to 2014: they peaked at 20 in late October and fell away thereafter to 12 on 14 Dec. [CB]

House Sparrow

Passer domesticus

Very common but possibly declining resident. Red listed species of high conservation concern.

House Sparrows were recorded in 454 tetrads during the year. A roost of 120 was reported from the Conquest Hospital (St. Leonards-on-Sea) on 29 Jan and counts of 50 or above were received from eight other sites in the first winter period including 97 at Ridgewood (Uckfield) during an SWBS on 12 Feb where there were early signs of nest building, 80 at Broadbridge Heath on 24 Mar and 88 at Pett village the following day.

Breeding was confirmed in 28 tetrads, probable in 41 and possible in a further 35 but in practice it is likely that they bred in all the 300+ tetrads where significant numbers were seen in the breeding season. The largest number recorded at one site during the breeding season was 100 at St. Leonards-on-Sea on 19 Apr. At Selsey House Sparrows nested in an old House Martin nest before the martins arrived and in another House Martin nest after the martins had raised one brood. Nests were also reported in a small metal electricity box in Brighton and in Swift nest boxes. Encouragingly nesting sites were found in modern buildings in Portslade. Fledged young were first seen at Pulborough Brooks and Horsham on 15 May. Young were still in the nest at Selsey on 8 Aug.

On 1 Jul at least 200 in flocks of up to 50 of mainly young birds were seen well away from houses at Chidham. Other large post-breeding flocks were 100 at St Leonards-on-Sea on 2 Aug, 250 at Nutbourne on 31 Aug and 100 nearby at Prinsted and Thornham (Southbourne) on 11 Sep. The only large number reported in the second winter period was 150 at Broadbridge Heath on 4 Dec. [ACG]

Tree Sparrow*Passer montanus*

Much declined and now very scarce resident and scarce passage migrant and winter visitor. Red listed species of high conservation concern.

Tree Sparrows were recorded in 13 tetrads exclusively in East Sussex. As usual most sightings were from the populations at Romney Marsh and Pevensey Levels.

At Romney Marsh breeding was not recorded as confirmed but there were sightings from both Scotney Court Fm and East Guldeford Level. At the latter location the year's highest count was of 13, from three sites, on 19 Apr. There were also sightings at Rye Hbr on 18 May and again on 13 Jun, although breeding was not suspected. A single Tree Sparrow was spotted at Pett Level, where they formerly bred, on 17 Jan with a flock of six seen a day later.

Breeding was confirmed at Pevensey Levels. Seven pairs bred at the Sussex Wildlife Trust LNR, an increase on the three pairs from last year, but still relatively low for the site (for further details see the ringing report on page 215). Birds were present throughout the year with the largest flock being five birds seen on 18 Oct.

Single birds seen at Laughton Place (Ringmer) on 2 Feb and Scobells Farm (Barcombe) on 3 Mar and a pair seen at Bodle Street Green on 14 Nov may represent winter wanderings from the Pevensey population. A single bird was also seen at Stonegate (Bearhurst) on 27 Feb and again on 6 May. [RAB]

Yellow Wagtail*Motacilla flava flavissima*

Scarce and localised summer visitor; scarce passage migrant in spring and fairly common in autumn. Red listed species of high conservation concern.

Birds were found in 80 tetrads (93 in 2014). Indeed, 2015 was a poor year for the Yellow Wagtail all round.

The first arrival was at Sompting on 17 Mar (against a ten year average of 25 Mar). There was then a gap until a thin (no double-figure counts) but fairly regular series of arrivals commenced with two at Scotney GP on 6 Apr. On the 9th birds appeared at Selsey, Medmerry, Pulborough Brooks, Seaford and Rye Hbr. Eight were at the latter site on the 14th. One was at Chanctonbury Ring on the 16th. Very few other obvious migrants were noted: in April, only four were logged at Splash Point (Seaford), with 15 at Selsey Bill (and a further eight in May).

A pair was displaying on Pevensey Levels on 4 May. While breeding was not suspected at Rye Hbr, there were six pairs in cereals at Winchelsea Marsh on 20 May and 19 territories on East Guldeford Levels on 14 Jun. Nonetheless, no reports of confirmed breeding were received and records came from only two of 176 BBS squares surveyed. There seems to be no sign of Yellow Wagtails seeking to breed in arable areas of the county.

Return passage was evident from 8 Jul, when one was at Church Norton and three were on the beach at Rye Hbr on the 10th. A juvenile at Cuckmere Haven on 24 Jul was still present on the 30th. Numbers began building from 9 Aug, with largest counts coming predictably from the river valleys and the coast, especially at Rye Hbr with 350 on 24 Aug, and 150 on the 25th, 29th and 3 Sep. Only at Rye Hbr were there counts in excess of 100 in August. High counts came from the Pagham Hbr area after late Aug with 300 at the North Wall on 9 Sep, and 200 there on the 12th. Eighty on 11 Sep, was the highest count from the Rye Hbr in that month. As usual, there were

a good number of records of return passage from favoured downland spots (e.g. Michelgrove (Patching) and Cissbury) and from Arlington Res, while single birds appeared at a handful of sites north of the downs. The Hastings migration watch team logged 267 between 15 Aug and 2 Oct.



Yellow Wagtail, Rye Hbr, April 2015 (Barry Yates)

There were only 27 autumn counts of over 50 birds (cf. 156 in 2014) and only seven of over 100 (cf. 15 in 2014 and 25 in 2013). At Pett Level 46 left a roost on 19 Sep (the only double-figure count from that site). A notable record was of 60 heading west in a single flock over Elmer on 30 Aug. There were 24 records in October with a maximum 12 at Cuckmere Haven on the 8th and the sole November record was one at Southease on the 1st, five days later than the ten-year average last date. [CB]

Grey Wagtail

Motacilla cinerea

Scarce resident and fairly common passage migrant and winter visitor. Red listed species of high conservation concern.

Grey Wagtails were recorded in 247 tetrads, a remarkable increase over the past few years (193 in 2014, 163 in 2013, 144 in 2012) and in excess of the distribution in the 2007-11 atlas years. As in 2014, birds were noted in every month of the year at Warnham LNR and Weir Wood Res.

Eight were around Burton MP on 7 Mar and seven were at Pippingford Park (Ashdown Forest) on the 16th. Such groups are not unprecedented but are unusual. Wintering birds continued to visit urban locations, especially in hard weather (e.g. at Hurstpierpoint on 4 Feb and a Patcham garden pond on 8 Feb). One was at a regular wintering site behind Selsey East Beach in January and

February. Some simply seemed to be wandering: one was on farm buildings near Jevington on 4 Jan and one was in a garage compound at Upper Beeding on 4 Feb.

Spring passage can be difficult to detect: one flying north over the cliffs at Cliff End (Pett) on the late date of 17 May seems a good candidate. On 15 Apr, one was flycatching from a dead branch over the edge of a pond in Hurstpierpoint.

Breeding was confirmed in 17 tetrads and probable in 22 (cf. 13 and 16 in 2014 and four and 10 in 2013). The first record of a bird visiting a probable nest site was on 6 Apr at Sheffield Park and the first fledged young were at Troutbeck (Eridge) on 23 Apr.

The Hastings migration watch team recorded 107 on 33 dates between 19 Aug and 19 Oct with a maximum of 14 on 4 Sep and a remarkable 13 in Alexandra Park on 17 Oct. At Selsey Bill 54 were recorded on 17 dates between 1 and 30 Sep with a maximum of ten on the 2nd. During the second winter period birds were recorded in many suitable locations in ones and twos with a high of four at Lidsey WTW on 22 Dec and three were observed at the Railwayland LNR (Lewes) on 14 Dec. [CB]

Pied Wagtail

Motacilla alba yarrellii

Common resident, passage migrant and winter visitor.

Pied Wagtails were found in 381 tetrads in 2015 (cf. 384 in 2014). In the early SWBS, 112 birds were found in 43 of the 136 squares, a distinct improvement in numbers though not in distribution on 2014 (62 in 32 of 95). At Newick WTW the peak count of 42 was in January rather than in February as in 2014, falling away to only a handful by early April and on 30 Jan, 45 were at the WTW by the Bevern Stream (Chailey).

Early year roost sites included traditional locations (e.g. near Thorney Deepes, central Worthing and Hickstead service station) and at Steyning WTW the roost count peaked at 140 on 27 Feb. Unfortunately, there were no roost records from Gatwick, the Princess Royal Hospital (Haywards Heath) or the Brighton area. It is not clear whether these known roosts were not reported, or whether they were not used in 2015. At Thorney Deepes 120 flew to roost on 18 Jan, 200 were at Medmerry on 6 Mar, 100 at Nyetimber (Bognor Regis) on the 9th and 60 in a pre-roost gathering at Billingshurst on 30 Mar.

Encouragingly, 189 birds were found in 76 of the 176 BBS squares (cf. 123 in 63 of 164 in 2014). Breeding was confirmed in 13 tetrads and probable in 22 (cf. 26 and 16 in 2014; 11 and 6 in 2013). The first confirmed breeding was at Michelgrove (Patching) on 7 May where a bird was seen with food or faecal sac and the first fledglings were reported at Weir Wood Res on 9 Jun. A second brood was on the way at Salehurst on 11 Jul.

Twenty moved west over Beachy Head on 15 Aug, a premonition of autumn movements. Mixed gatherings of Pied Wagtails and Meadow Pipits above Coldean on 29 Sep and on 23 Oct near Shipley were probably migrants. Also on 23 Oct, 50 (about which the observer commented “suspect just arrived”) were at Beeding Brooks; the next day saw 60 at Southease. Thirty were in a newly ploughed field at Michelham Priory on 4 Oct. Of Selsey’s October total of 749 (102N, 548E, 7S, 67W), 94 passed through on the 8th. The Hastings migration watch team recorded a total of 946 on 39 dates between 2 Sep and 11 Nov with a maximum of 100 E on 12 Oct.

In the late year SWBS, 195 birds were found in 58 of the 115 squares covered, a slight decline in numbers and distribution (cf. 213 in 74 of 136 in 2014). At Steyning WTW there were 100 on 12 Oct and the year’s highest roost count, of 250, came from the reedbed at Arundel WWT on 17

Nov. Roosts of 50-60 birds were found in December at New Fm, by the road to Thorney Island, Worthing and Winchelsea Marsh. Numbers built up at Newick WTW from 6 on 13 Dec to 31 on the 26th.

It was a poor year for White Wagtail (*M.a. alba*) in 2015, with records involving about 22 birds. The first was at Beachy Head on 3 Mar, with further sightings at Patching and Pulborough Brooks for that month. April produced single birds at Arlington Res, the Cuckmere Valley, Weir Wood and Pulborough Brooks, and four at Beachy Head on the 12th. A late migrant was at Selsey West Beach on 4 May. Two at Pett Level on 14 Jun was the only record at all suggestive of breeding. The first autumn bird was at Rye Hbr LNR on 8 Sep and one was at Weir Wood on the 14th. Two were at Cissbury Ring on 1 Oct; they were followed by three records from Pett Level, culminating with four on the 11th. [CB]

Richard's Pipit

Anthus richardi

Rare vagrant.

The long-staying bird at Horse Eye Level (Pevensey) first seen on 29 Nov 2014 remained into the New Year and was last reported on 6 Jan (mo). A second bird at the Ouse Estuary Project (Newhaven) seen by many observers from 12 to 21 Mar (LC *et al.*) had the misfortune to be killed by a Sparrowhawk during an altercation with a Reed Bunting. The county total moves on to 82 of which only nine have been this century. [PJ]

Tree Pipit

Anthus trivialis

Fairly common but local summer visitor; fairly common passage migrant. Red listed species of high conservation concern.

Tree Pipits were recorded in 64 tetrads (similar to last year) distributed across the counties in the ratio west:east 28:35 but with significantly more birds recorded in East Sussex (87:295) reflecting that their stronghold is on Ashdown Forest.

The first bird of the year was singing at Ashdown Ridge on 8 Apr, eight days later than the 10-year average date. Birds were then recorded daily to the month's end, particularly on Ashdown Forest from the 11th, with a peak count of ten at Pippingford Park on the 20th. During April and May only seven single birds were recorded at seven coastal or near coastal sites.

Breeding was confirmed in one tetrad, was probable in 23 and birds were recorded in suitable habitat in a further four. The confirmed breeding involved a bird visiting a nest on 26 May on Ashdown Forest; a juvenile was seen in the same tetrad on 16 Jun and the first bird seen carrying food was on 15 Jul, possibly from a second brood in that tetrad. At Broadwater Warren, 13 singing or displaying males were recorded.

The first autumn migrant was noted at Seaford Head on 14 Aug while, at Pett Level, 12 were noted on the 25th, also presumably migrants. Migration watch observers at Hastings recorded 45 birds on 15 days between 15 Aug and 4 Oct with a peak count of 17 on 2 Sep. In September, at Selsey Bill, nine birds were recorded during 82 hrs of watching with a peak count of six on the 2nd. Elsewhere numbers were invariably of three or fewer from predominantly coastal or near coastal sites. In October the two highest counts during a lean month were ten at Combe Hill (Willingdon) on the 3rd and seven at Pulborough Brooks on the 4th. The last record for the year was of a single bird at Selsey Bill on 25 Oct, 11 days later than the 10-year average date. [JAH]

Meadow Pipit*Anthus pratensis*

Common but declining resident; very common passage migrant and winter visitor. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern.

Meadow Pipits were recorded in 253 tetrads, slightly lower than in the two previous years but up on the average for the previous four years (230). Notable numbers in the first winter period included counts of 86 and 101 at Lancing on 19 Jan and 17 Feb, 50+ at Iping Common on the 2nd, 120 at Groombridge on 22 Feb, and 75 at Green Heath Fm (Wivelsfield) on the 10th. A total of 199 was recorded during the SWBS between 4 Jan and 23 Feb.

In March, spring migration observers at Selsey Bill recorded a total of 1516 birds (1511 N) on 25 dates between the 2nd and 31st with a peak count of 805 N on the 23rd. In April, a total of 2070 N was recorded on 21 dates between the 1st and 26th, including 675 N on the 5th. Elsewhere, 135 were noted at Seaford Head on 17 Mar, 109 at Warnham LNR on the 23rd and 100s at Medmerry on the 6th and 22nd, Church Norton on the 21st, Porthole Fm (Sidlesham) on the 25th and Beachy Head on the 21st. At Goring Gap there were 122 on 5 Apr.

Breeding was confirmed in 10 tetrads, was probable in 19 and birds were observed in suitable habitat in at least a further 28. There were seven pairs at both Thorney Island and Medmerry and 12 territories at Rye Hbr. Adults were first observed carrying food at Littlehampton on 8 May. The first nest with young was noted at Castle Hill (Falmer) on 7 Jun and the first fledged young at Ellison's Pond (Ashdown Forest) on the 18th.

In the late summer/autumn period, migration watchers at Hastings recorded no less than 3107 birds between 23 Aug and 14 Nov with a peak count of 380 on 28 Sep. At Selsey Bill, 1632 birds (including 886 N and 584 W) were recorded on 17 days between 5 and 30 Sep with a peak count of 350 W on the 23rd. Elsewhere, 150 were counted at Beachy Head on 20 Sep and at Rye Hbr on the 25th and 100 were counted at Sheepcote Valley (Brighton) on the 23rd. In October, observers at Selsey Bill recorded a total of 938 birds (including 548 E and 321 N) on 23 dates between the 1st and 31st with a peak count of 141 E on the 3rd and there were 200 at Beachy Head on the 8th.

In the second winter period, the highest count in November was 140 at the Old Airstrip (Ashdown Forest) on the 26th but the next highest was only 30 at Sheepcote Valley on the 2nd and there were ten counts of 10-29 elsewhere. In December, the highest count was 41 at Petworth Park on the 2nd and there were 12 counts elsewhere of ten or more. [JAH]

Rock Pipit*Anthus petrosus*

Scarce resident and scarce winter visitor; very rare away from the coast.

Rock Pipits were recorded in only 48 tetrads spread along the coast from Thorney Island to Rye Hbr; there were no inland records. The sum of the daily counts (including 'one' for birds recorded as present only) were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
No. of birds	56	47	62	35	9	15	-	6	36	51	57	61

The highest counts in the first winter period were four at Brighton Marina on 4 Jan, six at Apuldrum (Chichester Hbr) on the 24th and four each at Pagham Hbr on 5 Jan, Newhaven on 4 Feb and Shoreham Fort on the 18th; these numbers were significantly smaller than in 2014.

In March, 20 were noted at Exceat Bridge (Cuckmere Valley), the highest count of the year; otherwise numbers throughout the first eight months rarely exceeded four at any site.

Breeding was confirmed in only one tetrad, was probable in three and birds were recorded in suitable habitat in a further two. Fledged young were noted at Newhaven on 23 Jun.

In the autumn, numbers picked up but the highest count was still only seven at Newhaven on 19 Sep and six each at Brighton on 17 Oct and at Beachy Head on 23 Oct. In the second winter period, seven were counted at Fishbourne Creek (Chichester Hbr) on 24 Nov, six remained at Newhaven on the 1st and 2nd, and the peak counts in December were eight at Apuldram on 15 Dec and seven at Telscombe Cliffs on the 16th.

Records of birds of the Scandinavian race *A.p. littoralis* came from Cuckmere Haven and Shoreham. At the first site there were up to six birds on 23-25 Mar (MRE) with a single bird at the second site on 31 Mar (ARK). [JAH]

Water Pipit

Anthus spinoletta

Scarce winter visitor and passage migrant.

There were eleven accepted records involving a minimum of ten birds, a situation which probably does not reflect the true status of the species in Sussex. The first record was of one at West Rise on 4-5 Jan (JSG, SHL) followed by singles at Brede Levels on 25 Jan, Pett Level on 1 Feb and another (or the same bird) at Brede Levels on 4 Feb (all AP). Spring records were of singles in the Cuckmere Valley, near Charleston Reedbed, on 16 Mar (MM, DCW) and in Cuckmere Haven on 9 Apr (PC). In the last three months of the year there were singles along the R Arun south of Arundel on 26 Oct and 18 Nov (MCD) and Pannell Valley NR on 16 Nov (PEJ). Finally, there were three at Crowhurst on 20 Dec (CHD). [PJ]

Brambling

Fringilla montifringilla

Fairly common winter visitor and passage migrant. Schedule 1 species.

Bramblings were recorded in 56 tetrads. There were just five double figure counts in the first winter period; 60 at Pulborough Brooks on 19 Mar, 30 at both Staple Ash Fm (Chilgrove) on 1 Feb and Petworth Park on 1 Mar and 20 at Linch Down (Bepton) on 26 Jan. Of 13 birds recorded during April, there was one singing male at Arlington Res on the 5th, eight at Graffham on the 9th and the last record was at Wych Cross (Ashdown Forest) on 18 Apr, two days later than 2014 and one day earlier than the ten year average of 19 Apr.

The earliest returning birds were five at Ashdown Forest on 29 Sep, the same date as 2014 and one day earlier than the 10 year average. During October the species was recorded on 20 dates, the highest counts were from the Hastings migration watch team who logged 54 between the 12th and 27th with a peak of 22 E on the 18th.

The area around Westdean Woods and Chilgrove hosted good numbers during November and December with five counts of between 60 and 80 and a high of 150 at Westdean Woods on 3 Dec. Another flock was recorded at Paddockhurst Place (Worth) with at least 80 recorded on both 26 and 17 Nov whilst nearby at West Hill (Balcombe) there were 70 on 24 Dec. Eighty at the Old Airstrip (Ashdown Forest) on 26 Nov was the only other record of similar magnitude. [MOW]

Chaffinch*Fringilla coelebs*

Abundant resident, and probably very common passage migrant and winter visitor.

Chaffinches were recorded in 540 tetrads, 56% of the 964 tetrads wholly within Sussex. During the first winter period there were 224 double-figure counts, although most of these were in the order of 10-25. Only seven counts were of 40 or more; these included 40 at Beddingham on 14 Feb, 45 at Cliff End (Pett) on 9 Feb.

There were 50 at Brede Level on 22 Jan, 50 at Charlton Forest on 25 Mar, 60 at West Marden on 8 Mar and 71 at Cocking on 9 Feb. The most notable count was of 700 in 1 hr at Pett Level on 21 Mar which included flocks of up to 70 migrating birds.

Breeding was confirmed in just ten tetrads and was probable in a further 51, suggesting that breeding performance was poorly recorded despite the species being noted in over 50% of Sussex tetrads. The widespread distribution of the species during the breeding season was demonstrated by the BBS where Chaffinches were found in 168 of the 176 squares surveyed with a maximum of 27 on 27 Apr at Grafton Down. Nest building was first observed on the comparatively early date of 4 Apr at Patcham (Brighton), whilst fledging was first recorded on 23 Apr at Willingdon and was noted elsewhere to 12 Jul. Small post-breeding flocks with juveniles were observed throughout July, typically numbering 10-20.

Autumn migration was observed principally at Hastings where, on 44 dates between 28 Aug and 14 Nov, a total of 1358 was recorded, including 17 counts of 30 or more between 25 Sep and 31 Oct with a peak count of 180 on 12 Oct. At Sheepcote Valley (Brighton) 51 were recorded on 30 Sep while at Selsey Bill the October total was 222 birds; 161 were flying east but the peak day count of 60 on the 8th were westbound.

During the second winter period the highest count was 100 at Paddockhurst (Worth) on 22 Nov but 110 double-figure counts were recorded including 50 at Warnham LNR on 6 Dec, 60 at Bexhill on the 10th and 50 at Newick on the 21st.

A female with a brood patch, trapped at Cissbury Ring on 30 May, was starting to suffer from scaly leg and an adult male, trapped on 23 Jul, was also suffering from this disease; both birds were released un-ringed. These were the only examples recorded in 2015 of this disease afflicting this or any other similar species. [DB]

Hawfinch*Coccothraustes coccothraustes*

Scarce or possibly very scarce breeding resident and very scarce passage migrant. Red listed species of high conservation concern.

A similar number of records were received for Hawfinch as in 2014 with the majority of these coming from the two winter periods as expected. There were no records for April, July or September and just a single bird at one site in June. As in previous recent years the bulk of the observations came from the Westdean Woods/Monkton area.

During the first winter period numbers peaked with a minimum of 14 on 22 Jan at Westdean Woods; this was the only double-figure count of the whole year. Nine were there on 17 Jan; seven on 4 Jan and five were recorded on five January occasions. In the spring single birds were at Woods Mill on 8 May, Pett Level on the 12th, Heyshott Down on the 27th and at Crowhurst on 1 Jun.

There were just two autumn records, both involving two birds; at Sidlesham on 23 Aug was certainly unusual, whereas at Kingley Vale on 27 Aug were perhaps more to be expected. A maximum of nine was recorded during the second winter period at Westdean Woods on 24 Nov. Apart from four on both 4 and 28 Dec all other counts from the area comprised between one and three birds. Elsewhere the only record was one at Henley (Fernhurst) on 1 Dec. [DB]

Bullfinch

Pyrrhula pyrrhula

Fairly common or common resident. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern.

The species was recorded in 305 tetrads widely distributed across the county a welcome increase on 285 in 2014. The county summary of the SWBS in January and February was 71 birds found in 32 of the 136 squares surveyed, a significant increase from the previous year. During the first winter period the highest counts were 15 at Weir Wood Res on 8 and 12 Mar, ten at Pulborough Brooks on 23 Feb and eight at Northchapel on 28 Feb.

Breeding was confirmed in seven tetrads and was probable in a further 41, broadly similar figures to the previous year and significantly under-recorded (especially as five of the confirmed breeding records came from ringing of juveniles at Cissbury Ring on five separate dates in July and August). The first confirmed breeding record was of a juvenile at Frant on 15 Jul, and juveniles were seen being fed on 18 Jul at Arundel WWT. A nest with five young was found in a creeper on the side of a house in Balcombe Forest on 8 Aug with young fledging the next day.

In the second half of the year the highest count was ten on 7 Dec at Pulborough Brooks. In the SWBS at the end of the year 70 Bullfinches were found from 29 out of 115 squares surveyed. [PJP]

Greenfinch

Chloris chloris

Very common resident and possibly fairly common passage migrant and scarce winter visitor.

Greenfinches were recorded in 413 tetrads. There were 53 double-figure counts during the first winter period; of these most were below 20 with just nine above this number. Most notable amongst them were 50 at Rye Hbr on 1 Jan and 52 at Pagham Hbr on 23 Jan. During the early year SWBS they were recorded in 44% of the squares with a maximum of 19 at Ridgewood (Uckfield) on 12 Feb.

Breeding was confirmed from seven tetrads with probable breeding in a further 34; this is similar to the data from 2014 but still represents a much under-recorded status for such a widespread and common species. The earliest breeding of the year was observed on 4 Apr where a female was seen carrying nest material in Brighton and the first evidence of fledging for the year on 22 May at Uckfield; subsequent fledging occurred across the county until last noted from Hastings on 16 Aug.

From late July through until the end of August post-breeding flocks were noted, with many juveniles being recorded in them. The first such flock was observed at Sheepcote Valley (Brighton) on 29 Jul with 19 and this increased to 35 a day later; 16 were noted at Hollingbury (Brighton) on 16 Aug, the same day that 25 were recorded at Sheepcote Valley.

During the autumn there was some evidence of movements, notably 33E at Selsey on 4 Oct. There were a number of other two-figure counts during this time mainly from coastal locations with a maximum of 37 on 18 Oct at Hastings. By far the highest count of the year, however, came from The Severals (Church Norton) where 400 were feeding on the shingle spit on 20 Oct and ten days later 150 were noted at the same location.

At Pagham Hbr several other 3-figure counts were recorded during the second winter period; the highest of these was 250 on 3 Nov at the North Wall with 100 each at Pagham Spit on 12th and Church Norton on the 16th. At Selsey Bill an interesting movement of 114E on 8 Nov was recorded, indicating a mobile local population perhaps. Few double-figure counts were received during this time; the best of these being 30 at Shoreham on 11 Nov, 34 from Seaford on 15 Dec and 45 at Newhaven Tide Mills on the last day of the year. The highest count during the late year SWBS was 24 at Stopham on 9 Nov. [DB]

Linnet

Linaria cannabina

Fairly common but decreasing resident and partial migrant. Red listed species of high conservation concern.

Linnets were recorded in 311 tetrads (332 in 2014). During the first winter period there were just nine counts of 100 or more and most of these were at Chichester Hbr. On Thorney Island a flock of 500 was present on 23 Jan, 200 were there on 27 Feb and 250 on 12 Mar, whilst at nearby Pilsey Island a flock of 100 was noted on 24 Jan. Elsewhere two flocks feeding in stubbles at Sharpsbridge (Newick) on 26 Jan totalled 200 birds, 135 were at Pyecombe GC on 5 Mar and 200 at Pagham Hbr on 19 Mar. Additional counts of between 30 and 99 were recorded from 19 different sites.

Breeding activity was confirmed in 17 tetrads (13 in 2015), and probable breeding in 62 tetrads. The first singing male was recorded on 8 Mar and the first evidence of nest building was on 8 Apr. The first fledged young were observed at Ashdown Forest on 22 Apr. During June and July flocks between 50 and 100 (4 Jul) were regularly recorded at Beachy Head and other notable gatherings included 65 at Rye Hbr on 17 Jul, 60 at Pilsey Island on 15 Jul, 59 at Pyecombe GC on 22 Jul, 53 at Sheepcote Valley (Brighton) on 5 Jun and 50 at West Chidham on 1 Jul.

Between August and October there were three figure counts from 21 different mainly coastal or downland sites. At Rye Hbr the peak of several counts was 300 on 4 Sep whilst at Medmerry the peak count of 220 was on 11 Oct. Higher numbers were noted at some downland sites with at least 600 feeding on stubbles and game cover strips at The Burgh (Burpham) on 8 Oct, 500 near Cissbury on 3 Oct, 250 at Woodingdean on 30 Aug and 200 at both Steyning Round Hill and Chantry Hill on 20 and 26 Sep respectively. Many records were of passage birds and the Hastings migration watch team recorded a total of 2481 between 23 Sep and 14 Nov with a maximum of 459 E on 12 Oct. At Selsey Bill 969 were counted between 2 and 29 Oct. with a maximum of 370 S on the 29th. There was no consistent direction of travel there and birds were noted moving east, west and south and continued passing into early November.

During the second winter period flocks of 50 or more were recorded from ten sites with the highest counts being 300 near Pagham Lagoon on 20 Dec, 100 on the Norfolk Estate on 25 Nov and the same number at Lychpole (Sompting) on 12 Dec. [MOW]

Lesser Redpoll*Acanthis cabaret*

Scarce breeder and fairly common passage migrant and winter visitor. Red listed species of high conservation concern.

Lesser Redpolls were recorded in 103 tetrads (65 in 2014). During the first winter period 20 or more were recorded from eight sites. The highest counts were 120 at Church Hill (Ashdown Forest) on 8 Mar, 85 at Balcombe Forest on 18 Jan, and 70 at Old Lodge LNR (Ashdown Forest) on the same day.

Breeding was confirmed in only one tetrad, with probable breeding identified on seven tetrads, all in Ashdown Forest. The first singing male recorded on 12 Feb at the Old Airstrip (Ashdown Forest) and fledglings were seen at Stonehill (Ashdown Forest) on 6 Jun. Most records for the breeding season were from Ashdown Forest but up to five were noted on single dates at six other locations between April and July.

Autumn records were higher than in 2014. The Hasting migration watch team recorded a total of 1228 on 38 dates between 19 Sep and 13 Nov with the peak counts of 202 E on 12 Oct, 175 E on the 13th and 105 E on the 11th. Elsewhere in October there were 200 at Pett Level on the 8th, 100 at Crow's Nest (Ashdown Forest) on the 3rd and 50 at Whitbread Hollow (Beachy Head) on the 23rd. October produced most high counts with 20 or over being recorded at six other sites not previously mentioned.

In early November there were 30 at Pett Level on the 3rd and 9th and 29 at Weir Wood Res also on the 3rd. The highest counts during the last winter period included two flocks each of 50 and 60 at Burton MP on 22 Dec and 70 on market garden fields at Henfield on 8 Dec. [MOW]

Common Crossbill*Loxia curvirostra*

Irruptive species; usually scarce visitor but fairly common in some years. Very scarce breeder in some years.

Crossbills were recorded in just 38 tetrads compared with 30 in 2014 (54 in 2013 and 91 in 2012). In the first three months there were only seven records with a maximum of four at Worthlodge Forest (Worth) on 21 Jan. The number there had increased to six on May 11 and the same number flew over Brighton on 18 Jun. There were no records of confirmed or probable breeding, but a bird observed in suitable habitat in Brede High Wood was the only record of possible breeding.

Numbers improved modestly in the second half of the year with 20 on Ashdown Forest on 15 Jul, seven at Blackdown (Fernhurst) on 26 Sep, and five at Iping Common on 1 Aug. In the final quarter reported numbers picked up with the Hastings migration watch team recording 199 birds between 26 Sep and 31 Oct with a maximum of 41 at Hastings on 11 Oct (38 there on the 17th) and 25 were counted at Pett Level on the 13th. The only double-figure count in the last two months of the year was 10 at Black Down on 22 Nov. [PJP]

Goldfinch*Cardulis cardulis*

Probably fairly common resident, common summer visitor and passage migrant and fairly common winter visitor.

Goldfinches were recorded in 502 tetrads. There were 160 double-figure counts from the first winter period with many of these coming from Warnham LNR; of these 11 consisted of more than 50 birds, with the highest, 99 on 17 Jan, coming from Ardingly College. Other notable counts included 80 at West Marden on 11 Feb, 70 at Duncton on 18 Jan and four counts of around 60 from a variety of locations. Two three-figure counts during this time were recorded, both in February; 100 at Wepham on 10th and 200 at Stansted Forest on 24th. During the early year SWBS the species was recorded in over 50% of squares surveyed with a maximum of 67 at Westbourne Common on 4 Jan.

Breeding was confirmed in 13 tetrads, fewer than the 18 in 2014, but was probable in a further 51 tetrads, higher than the 35 for the previous year. Nesting was first observed at Stanmer Park (Brighton) on 18 Apr whilst the first fledged birds of the year noted in Uckfield on 19 May. Fledged birds were recorded widely until the last on 3 Sep in Uckfield again. A nest that was destroyed in Steyning by cats on 21 Apr highlights one of the potential dangers to rearing a successful brood.

Post-breeding flocks began to accumulate from early July with the first observed at Beachy Head on 3 Jul, fluctuating between 35 and 50 birds until the month's end. At Sheepcote Valley (Brighton) flocks varying between 71 on 10 Jul to 120 by 29 Aug were recorded, whilst 64 were observed at Weir Wood Res on 29 Jul increasing to 135 by 13 Aug. The highest count during this period came from Cissbury with 200 on 18 Aug. Smaller numbers were recorded widely across the county. Movements through the autumn consisted of 185 double-figure and 84 three-figure counts. There were four counts of over 1000: at Pett Level on 13 Sep 2000 were recorded; at Hastings eastbound movements of 1255, 2220 and 1150 on 11, 12 and 13 Oct respectively, making mid-October the peak time for passage at this location. Between 21 Sep and 21 Nov 12,750 birds were recorded on 45 days at Hastings with a maximum of 2220 mentioned above.

In the second winter period 150 two-figure counts were received from a wide variety of locations. There were also 12 three-figure counts, almost all from coastal sites indicating visible migration continued through November and even into December. The most notable were: 448 E at Hastings on 3 Nov, 280 past Selsey Bill (including 200E) on 8 Nov and 200 at Medmerry on 12 Nov. One four-figure count came from Beachy Head with 1400, including 1000 E, on 8 Nov. In the late year SWBS Goldfinches were recorded in 68% of squares with a maximum of 48 at Holme Fm (Stansted) on 12 Nov. [DB]

Serín*Serinus serinus*

Very scarce passage migrant; has bred. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern. Schedule 1 species.

The only record in 2015 was of one that flew N calling over Selsey Bill on 17 May (JA, SH), a typical date and location. This species has occurred in all but one year (2009) this century, totalling 62 individuals. [PJ]

Siskin*Spinus spinus*

Common winter visitor and passage migrant. Very scarce breeder.

Siskins were recorded in 177 tetrads (113 in 2014) with only eight counts from six sites of 20 or more during the first winter period, the highest of which was 27 at Worth Forest on 5 Feb.

Although recorded at over 60 sites between April and July recorded breeding activity was confirmed in just two tetrads (three in 2015), and possible or probable breeding in 23 tetrads. Autumn passage started early as a total of over 150 were recorded passing over Pett Level on 12 dates between 25 Jun and 1 Aug with a minimum of 40 on 22 Jul and 30 on the days either side. A considerably higher number was seen during September and to a lesser extent October. The Hastings migration watch team recorded a total of 5821 on 53 dates between 28 Aug and 21 Nov with maxima of 524 E on 6 Sep, 413 E on 7 Sep, 405 E on 11 Oct and 440E on 12 Oct. A passage of c.1000 was observed over a five hour period on 19 Sep at Pett Level. Additional to these observations there were 27 other three figure counts, mostly from East Sussex and mostly, where noted, of eastward passage except 160 W at Beachy Head on 6 Sep. In West Sussex movements were more variable and the peak counts at Selsey Bill, where 850 were recorded between 2 and 27 Sep, were 120 W on 2 Sep and 180 W on 5 Sep. Movements continued on a much smaller scale into November and the highest counts in the second winter period were 70 at Weir Wood Res on 28 Nov and 40 at Ifield MP on 13 Dec. [MOW]

Snow Bunting*Plectrophenax nivalis*

Scarce passage migrant and winter visitor. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern. Schedule 1 species.

Snow Buntings were recorded from seven tetrads in 2015, fewer than in recent years as shown in the table below and involving no more than four birds.

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
No. of tetrads	24	17	17	17	7

In the first winter period one was seen at Bexhill on many dates between 19 Jan and 22 Feb.

In the second winter period there was one at Seaford from 29 to 31 Oct, one at Selsey Bill from 29 Oct to 3 Nov, and one at Rustington on 5 Nov. [PJP]

Lapland Bunting*Calcarius lapponicus*

Very scarce passage migrant and winter visitor. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern. Schedule 1 species.

The only record this year was of one seen and heard in flight over Littlehampton West Beach on 23 Nov (RNP). The county total this century rises to 97 of which 44 were recorded during the exceptional influx in autumn 2010. [PJ]



Snow Bunting, Bexhill, February 2015 (Howard Statham)

Corn Bunting

Emberiza calandra

Fairly common but decreasing resident. Red listed species of high conservation concern.

Corn Buntings were recorded in 73 tetrads in the course of the year. During the first winter period flocks in double figures were reported from 13 tetrads. Over 60 were estimated to be on the Norfolk Estate around Burpham, the largest flock being 40 on 8 Feb at The Burgh (Burpham). In the Adur valley and surrounding downs Corn Buntings were reported on many dates between 22 Jan and 19 Mar with a maximum of 50 at Beeding Brooks on 31 Jan. In East Sussex 70 were at Winchelsea on 21 Feb and over 80 at Beachy Head on 15 Feb with substantial flocks on other dates there throughout the period. At nearby Jevington a flock reached a maximum of 41 on 17 Jan.

Song was first noted at Stanmer Park (Brighton) on 16 Feb. Breeding was confirmed in two tetrads, probable in eight and possible in 33 but flocks of around 40 were still present at Steep Down (Lancing) on 1 May and Peppering Fm (Burpham) two days later. One was carrying food for young at Pyecombe GC on 23 Jun and at least one juvenile was amongst four at Beachy Head on 3 Jul. Ten pairs were thought to have bred at Medmerry and ten or more singing birds were reported from Steep Down (Lancing), Sheepcote Valley (Brighton), Pyecombe GC, Beachy Head and Winchelsea.

The first and largest autumn flock was 53 at Steep Down on 3 Sep but disappointingly only 11 tetrads held double-figure flocks in the rest of the year.

Away from the downs the populations on the Selsey Peninsula and at East Lavant appear to be holding their own or even increasing as is the population in the extreme east of the county. [ACG]



Corn Bunting, Medmerry, April 2015 (Andrew House)

Yellowhammer

Emberiza citrinella

Fairly common resident. Red listed species of high conservation concern.

2014: The note of “30-40 singing males recorded in a breeding survey between Birling Gap and Beachy Head Hotel” did not refer to 2014 but to a recollection of the situation some 50 years ago!

2015: Yellowhammers were reported from 287 tetrads during the year, down on the 330 in 2014. In the first winter period double-figure flocks were recorded at 24 sites; as usual more high counts were in West Sussex. The largest flocks were of 50 at Stretham Manor (Henfield) on 18 Jan and at Isfield on 21 Mar. Other large flocks were 40 at Medmerry on 27 Feb, 32 at Ladyholt Park (Compton) on 11 Jan, 31 at Westdean Woods on 5 Jan, 30 feeding in stubble at Brede Levels on 22 Jan and at Aldwick (Bognor Regis) a flock usually of up to 35, mainly males, visited seed feeders in a garden throughout the period and into mid-April after which small numbers still continued to visit the feeders until mid-June. Up to three of the birds appeared to be ailing and having difficulty in swallowing. Flocks of 20 at Sheepcote Valley (Brighton) on 22 Jan and at Crutches Fm (Winchelsea) on 21 Feb were the highest ever recorded at those sites. Approximately 40 were recorded during surveys on the Norfolk Estate. Song was noted at several sites from mid-February.

In mid-April three records could indicate migration: one arrived at Seaford Head and flew N out of sight on 10 Apr, five days later one at Beachy Head departed west and on 19 Apr two arrived along the cliffs at Hastings CP, quickly settling to sing.

Breeding was confirmed in nine tetrads, probable in 49 and possible in a further 67. The Wealden Heaths Breeding Bird Survey (West Sussex) mapped 56 territories (see page 207 for details). Other counts in specific areas include eight pairs at Medmerry and Hastings CP, 12 pairs at Buckland Bank (Falmer) and eight singing males at Broadwater Warren (Groombridge).

Double-figure flocks were reported from 16 different sites in the second winter period but only four sites held flocks of 30 or more; 30 were at Peppering Fm (Burpham) on 8 Oct, Patching two days later and Medmerry on 27 Oct while a flock of 30-50 was seen on several dates from mid-November to 15 Dec around Apuldrum and Dell Quay. The Aldwick flock did not reappear. [ACG]

Reed Bunting

Emberiza schoeniclus

Fairly common resident; passage migrant and winter visitor. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern.

Reed Buntings were recorded in 183 tetrads during the year including a scattering of small numbers away from wetland and heathland sites. In the first winter period double-figure flocks were reported from 21 tetrads, 150 at Crutches Fm (Winchelsea) on 21 Feb being by far the largest. At Old Lodge LNR in Ashdown Forest numbers exceeded 20 on many dates. Various surveys on the Norfolk Estate produced an estimated population of 77 during the period. The maximum count at the Weir Wood Res roost was 43 on 17 Jan. A regular flock visiting a garden at Burgess Hill numbered a very impressive 37 on 20 Feb.

A single bird flying along the cliff edge at Seaford Head before departing north-west on 17 Mar was regarded as a probable migrant.

Breeding was confirmed in nine tetrads, probable in 27 and possible in a further 35. Counts of territories include 14 at Medmerry, 21 at Pagham Hbr, 16 at Graftham Common, 12 at Filsham LNR and 33 at Rye Hbr. One pair appeared to be nesting in oil-seed rape at Newick. On 9 Apr 60 were counted at Porthole Fm (Sidlesham).

First evidence of movement came from one at Beachy Head on 10 Sep, one at Hastings the following day and several other records there during the month, two separate records of birds flying west at Seaford Head on 19 Sep and the arrival of three birds at Ouse Estuary Project (Newhaven). During migration watches at Hastings between August and November a total of 283 Reed Buntings were counted between 11 Sep and 11 Nov with a maximum of 44 on 8 Oct.

In the second winter period the only large flock was the Weir Wood Res roost which built to a maximum of 80 on 27 Dec. [ACG]

Little Bunting

Emberiza pusilla

Rare vagrant.

One was photographed at Old Lodge NR on 5 Feb and was then seen most days from 9 to 27 Feb (mo). It was often elusive and ranged over a wide area but on occasions showed well with Reed Buntings. This was the 17th county record since the first in 1864 and the first for February. The previous records have been in January (one), March (one), April (one), September (two), October (seven) and November (four). There is a previous record for Old Lodge (12-13 Apr 2009). [PJ]

ESCAPES and FERAL BIRDS

All records of BOU Category D species, of apparently feral individuals of other species and of probable or certain escapes from captivity (but not those clearly in captivity) will be welcomed by the Hon. Recorder for this annual feature. In order to track records, particularly those involving wildfowl which are prone to wander between sites, observers are reminded to include the age, sex and, where appropriate, colour morph of individuals when submitting records. Such records should be submitted in the approved way.

The following escaped or feral birds, other than those Category C species in the main list, were recorded in the county in 2015 (unless stated otherwise). It should be noted that the identity of these birds is largely unchecked. A list of useful references can be found in SxBR **62**:210 (2009). This list is compiled by John Hobson unless indicated otherwise. Species names and order follow IOC World Bird Names (v 6.2) available online at <http://www.worldbirdnames.org>.

Bar-headed Goose

Anser indicus

Breeds in central Asia; migrates to northern India for winter. Commonly kept in wildfowl collections. Free flying individuals are liable to wander.

This species was recorded in 16 tetrads, all but two of them in West Sussex. In West Sussex, single birds were seen at ten sites from Chichester GPs to Henfield Levels between 19 Jan and 1 May and then from 19 Jul to 31 Dec. Twos were noted at West Stoke on 14 Apr and Tilgate (Crawley) on 11 Mar. In the Medmerry/Selsey/Pagham Hbr area, two birds were recorded variously between 31 Aug and 23 Oct. In East Sussex there were single birds at Barcombe Res on 8 Jun and Cuckmere Haven on 18 Feb. Doubtless there will be some duplication amongst these sightings due to the wandering nature of this species.

Snow Goose

Anser caerulescens

Breeds in Arctic North America, winters in southern USA and Mexico. There have been no accepted records of wild birds in Sussex.

Single birds were seen at Pulborough Brooks on 29 Jan and at Cuckmere Haven on 19 Dec. At Scotney Court GP, single birds were seen on 15 Jan, 22 Oct and 30 Dec. Observers should be aware that there may be Barnacle x Emperor Geese hybrids at Scotney Court GP which can resemble blue phase Snow Geese.

Cackling Goose

Branta hutchinsii

Breeds in northern Canada and Alaska and winters mainly in western USA. The BOU added the species to Category A of the British list in March 2016.

Single birds were seen at some six sites across the county from Thorney Deepes to Rye Hbr between 4 Feb and 28 Dec which were possibly sightings of the same individual. A bird at Pulborough Brooks on 9 Oct was noted as a possible Ridgeway's Cackling Goose *B h. minima*.

Emperor Goose*Anser canagicus**Breeds mainly in Alaska. Present in many wildfowl collections.*

A single bird was seen at Scotney Court GP on 1-2 Jan and 10 Feb. This was the first record of a pure-bred bird since 2009.

Red-breasted Goose*Branta rufacollis**Very rare vagrant or escape from captivity.*

One was recorded at Beeding Brooks on 2 Jan, one was at Ardingly Res on 16 Jan and again there on 6 Feb, and one was at Henfield Levels on 22 Mar. Finally one was reported at Waltham Brooks on 28 Mar. Possibly just one wandering individual was involved. [PJP]

Black Swan*Cygnus atratus**Breeds in Australia and New Zealand. Commonly kept in wildfowl collections and on ornamental lakes. Full-winged birds are liable to wander; has bred in Sussex.*

Black Swans were recorded in 18 tetrads of which 15 were in West Sussex at three broad sites, the Chichester Hbr area, Medmerry and Pagham Hbr, and the Arun valley from Arundel to Pulborough. In the Chichester Hbr area single birds only were seen on seven dates in the first two months, then on 21 Mar, 13 Jun and 19 Aug. Two birds were seen on 20 Sep and 11 Oct but only single birds on 9 and 11 Nov. At Medmerry/Pagham Hbr, single birds were seen on 4 Mar and then on six dates between 30 Aug and 13 Sep. In the Arun valley there were up to four birds in January and up to two from 2 Feb to 2 Mar. Two were then seen at Shoreham Hbr on 7 Apr but none until one on 1 Sep at Arundel WWT. It is, of course, conceivable that a maximum of only four birds were present, wandering between these three areas at different times as only rarely were birds (never more than one or two) seen in more than one area on the same date.

In East Sussex, single birds were seen at Etchingham on 18 Jul and Weir Wood Res between 28 Nov and 4 Dec. There was no record of breeding this year.

Ruddy Shelduck*Tadorna ferruginea**Breeds in SE Europe and across central Asia. Rare vagrant or escape from captivity.*

Two birds (unsexed) were seen in the Pagham Hbr area from 1 to 6 Jan and a single bird (probably one of these) at Arundel WWT and Amberley Wild Brooks on 19 Jan.

Muscovy Duck*Cairina moschata**Native to Mexico and Central and South America. Widespread in its domesticated form.*

This species was recorded at only six broad sites, all in West Sussex. One was seen in the Chichester Hbr area on 11 Oct. A single bird at Selsey East Beach on six dates between 19 Jan and 25 Nov was reported as being the 'one which got away' when another six were collected by volunteers from a local wildlife hospital, all having been dumped in a pond. A maximum of nine

were counted on Swanbourne Lake (Arundel) between 15 Jan and 30 Aug. Up to two were noted variously in the Crawley/Ifield area between 18 Jan and 24 Dec.

Wood Duck

Aix sponsa

Breeds northern USA, winters southern USA. Commonly kept in wildfowl collections. Not recorded in the UK as a vagrant; some might conceivably be of wild origin.

A single bird (unsexed) was seen at Arlington Res on 10 Sep.

Ringed Teal

Callonetta leucophrys

Breeds in South American forests. Often kept in wildfowl collections.

A pair were seen in Petworth Park on 12 Mar but only one (unsexed) on 13 May and 23 Sep while another was at Shillinglee Lake, c.8 km north, on 14 Dec.

Red-crested Pochard

Netta rufina

Native to southern Europe and Central Asia wintering in the Indian subcontinent and Africa. Possibly a rare winter visitor; most records probably relate to escaped birds.

A single bird (unsexed) was present at Chichester GPs from 10 to 16 Jan, on 10 Apr and 13 Jun and again on 10-11 Dec. In August, one was at Wallers Haven (Pevensy) on the 31st.

Southern Pochard

Netta erythrophthalma

The nominate form breeds in Amazonia; the subspecies N.e.brunnea breeds in Africa from Ethiopia to South Africa. It favours lakes, rivers, coastal lagoons and marshes.

One individual was at Medmerry from 10 Jan to 25 Feb; it was neither ringed nor pinioned.

Helmeted Guineafowl

Numida meleagris

Breeds in Africa, mainly south of the Sahara. Kept domestically elsewhere.

This species was recorded at six sites. In West Sussex, up to five were recorded at Cocking between 1 Jan and 10 Jun; two were seen at Sutton End on 21 Apr; 11 were feeding in a recently sown field at West Grinstead on 30 Apr. In East Sussex, a single bird was at Balcombe on 5 Jun; two in Stanmer Park (Brighton) on 2 Mar; five at Newick on 18 Jan and eight on 27 Dec.

Reeves's Pheasant

Syrnaticus reevesii

Endemic to China. Introduced for ornamental purposes; small numbers released alongside Common Pheasants.

A male bird seen at Cocking throughout January was the first record since May 2011 at Parham.

Indian Peafowl*Pavo cristatus*

Wild birds are restricted to the Indian subcontinent. This is a traditional favourite in ornamental gardens.

All records were of un-sexed birds from six localities. Two birds were seen at Hurstpierpoint on 8 May and 16 Jun, one was seen at East Grinstead on 23 May, there were five in Newick Park on 27 Sep, single birds at Uckfield on 17 May and Cobbarn (Eridge) on the 15th and there were twos at Sticks Fm (Icklesham) on 24 Jan, 22 Apr and 24 May.

Golden Eagle*Aquila chrysaetos*

Mainly resident in Europe, North Africa, northern and central Asia and northern North America. Is sometimes flown by falconers.

One was recorded from Ashburnham Place (Battle) on 7 May, presumably the bird previously recorded in the Bexhill/Ashburnham area in 2008-11 but, surprisingly for such a large and noticeable species, not noted since then.

Harris's Hawk*Parabuteo unicinctus*

Breeds from SW USA south to Chile and central Argentina; it is semi-migratory. Popular with falconers from whom it sometimes escapes.

One was recorded flying east and being mobbed by Herring Gulls at Heighton Hill (Newhaven) on 12 Apr.

Red-tailed Hawk*Buteo jamaicensis*

Breeds commonly throughout much of North America and the Caribbean; some move south to winter in Central America. Often kept in captivity.

One individual was noted in the Cocking area on five dates between 9 Feb and 23 Dec and was probably the same bird seen in each year at Cocking since May 2008. Another, which was reported as having been around the Slindon/Pulborough area for at least two years, was seen at Waltham Brooks on 7 May.

Diamond Dove*Geopelia cuneate*

Breeds widely in arid or semi-arid areas of Australia. Often kept and bred in captivity.

A single bird was seen by the R Adur near Shoreham on 15 Jun.

Cockatiel*Nymphicus hallandicus*

Common Australian nomad. One of the commonest aviary birds.

A single bird was seen at Patcham on 14 Feb.

Breeding Bird Survey (BBS) results for Sussex 2011-2015

For each species recorded, the number (n) of BBS squares in which that species was recorded in Sussex, and the percentage (%) of the total number of BBS squares surveyed in which that species was recorded, for the period 2011-2015. Species which have only been recorded in single squares have been omitted from the list, but are included in the total numbers of species recorded. Red-listed and amber-listed species of conservation concern are shown in the relevant colours.

	Year (and total no. of squares surveyed)									
	2011 (145)		2012 (149)		2013 (156)		2014 (167)		2015 (179)	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Mute Swan	18	12	17	11	15	10	21	13	29	16
Greylag Goose	16	11	15	10	16	10	22	13	22	12
Greylag Goose (domestic)	1	1	2	1	1	1	1	1	-	-
Canada Goose	41	28	40	27	37	24	45	27	55	31
Egyptian Goose	2	1	2	1	1	1	1	1	3	2
Shelduck	4	3	7	5	11	7	12	7	5	3
Mandarin Duck	7	5	5	3	7	4	11	7	9	5
Gadwall	3	2	1	1	4	3	4	2	4	2
Mallard	81	56	88	59	87	56	99	59	108	60
Mallard (domestic)	1	1	-	-	1	1	3	2	-	-
Tufted Duck	8	6	9	6	9	6	5	3	6	3
Red-legged Partridge	17	12	16	11	19	12	20	12	16	9
Grey Partridge	7	5	3	2	1	1	4	2	2	1
Pheasant	121	83	118	79	123	79	135	81	142	79
Cormorant	12	8	18	12	10	6	19	11	25	14
Little Egret	7	5	5	3	7	4	11	7	14	8
Grey Heron	30	21	37	25	30	19	52	31	53	30
Little Grebe	2	1	3	2	1	1	4	2	7	4
Great Crested Grebe	3	2	3	2	4	3	4	2	3	2
Red Kite	4	3	1	1	4	3	7	4	8	4
Marsh Harrier	-	-	1	1	-	-	3	2	3	2
Sparrowhawk	16	11	13	9	18	12	15	9	24	13
Buzzard	60	41	74	50	79	51	80	48	96	54
Kestrel	42	29	41	28	34	22	30	18	51	28
Hobby	2	1	3	2	2	1	1	1	5	3
Peregrine	3	2	1	1	1	1	2	1	6	3
Moorhen	56	39	47	32	51	33	52	31	69	39
Coot	16	11	22	15	17	11	23	14	26	15
Oystercatcher	2	1	3	2	5	3	5	3	6	3
Lapwing	15	10	14	9	15	10	17	10	25	14
Whimbrel	1	1	1	1	3	2	2	1	3	2
Curlew	2	1	4	3	5	3	5	3	3	2
Redshank	1	1	1	1	6	4	2	1	3	2
Black-headed Gull	19	13	20	13	22	14	28	17	36	20
Mediterranean Gull	5	3	6	4	4	3	6	4	3	2
Common Gull	2	1	6	4	6	4	4	2	13	7

	Year (and total no. of squares surveyed)									
	2011 (145)		2012 (149)		2013 (156)		2014 (167)		2015 (179)	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Lesser Black-backed Gull	12	8	12	8	18	12	13	8	20	11
Herring Gull	76	52	85	57	96	62	102	61	104	58
Great Black-backed Gull	5	3	3	2	5	3	7	4	8	4
Sandwich Tern	3	2	2	1	1	1	2	1	3	2
Common Tern	4	3	2	1	3	2	5	3	3	2
Feral Pigeon	34	23	39	26	37	24	43	26	40	22
Stock Dove	55	38	49	33	59	38	68	41	72	40
Woodpigeon	144	99	148	99	154	99	166	99	177	99
Collared Dove	88	61	89	60	89	57	101	60	111	62
Turtle Dove	7	5	7	5	4	3	6	4	2	1
Cuckoo	55	38	39	26	41	26	38	23	39	22
Barn Owl	1	1	3	2	3	2	2	1	2	1
Little Owl	4	3	4	3	4	3	4	2	4	2
Tawny Owl	5	3	10	7	5	3	8	5	5	3
Swift	42	29	42	28	43	28	49	29	46	26
Kingfisher	-	-	1	1	-	-	1	1	3	2
Green Woodpecker	97	67	102	68	104	67	112	67	123	69
Great Spotted Woodpecker	93	64	100	67	110	71	99	59	119	66
Lesser Spotted Woodpecker	2	1	1	1	1	1	-	-	-	-
Magpie	130	90	129	87	135	87	152	91	160	89
Jay	68	47	67	45	82	53	68	41	83	46
Jackdaw	121	83	120	81	130	83	141	84	159	89
Rook	80	55	85	57	88	56	90	54	98	55
Carrion Crow	139	96	143	96	153	98	164	98	175	98
Raven	4	3	4	3	7	4	5	3	5	3
Goldcrest	57	39	63	42	46	29	54	32	84	47
Firecrest	3	2	2	1	-	-	2	1	3	2
Blue Tit	142	98	145	97	153	98	162	97	174	97
Great Tit	139	96	137	92	150	96	161	96	169	94
Coal Tit	43	30	44	30	37	24	42	25	36	20
Marsh Tit	19	13	14	9	13	8	10	6	15	8
Woodlark	2	1	2	1	1	1	-	-	4	2
Skylark	74	51	78	52	75	48	90	54	87	49
Swallow	107	74	100	67	109	70	117	70	120	67
House Martin	36	25	29	19	29	19	37	22	33	18
Cetti's Warbler	6	4	5	3	6	4	12	7	15	8
Long-tailed Tit	61	42	65	44	53	34	59	35	93	52
Chiffchaff	123	85	123	83	120	77	147	88	160	89
Willow Warbler	33	23	31	21	41	26	34	20	41	23
Blackcap	123	85	127	85	130	83	145	87	144	80
Garden Warbler	33	23	36	24	30	19	22	13	30	17
Lesser Whitethroat	18	12	9	6	20	13	26	16	18	10

	Year (and total no. of squares surveyed)									
	2011 (145)		2012 (149)		2013 (156)		2014 (167)		2015 (179)	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Whitethroat	101	70	83	56	89	57	107	64	105	59
Sedge Warbler	9	6	5	3	8	5	13	8	15	8
Reed Warbler	14	10	13	9	16	10	25	15	22	12
Nuthatch	67	46	73	49	66	42	70	42	87	49
Treecreeper	35	24	42	28	27	17	36	22	36	20
Wren	138	95	142	95	146	94	163	98	172	96
Starling	93	64	105	70	101	65	107	64	124	69
Blackbird	144	99	147	99	155	99	166	99	178	99
Song Thrush	122	84	129	87	131	84	142	85	157	88
Mistle Thrush	44	30	39	26	50	32	51	31	58	32
Spotted Flycatcher	7	5	2	1	2	1	5	3	8	4
Robin	142	98	146	98	152	97	165	99	176	98
Nightingale	12	8	16	11	18	12	16	10	16	9
Stonechat	1	1	3	2	2	1	2	1	1	1
Wheatear	2	1	6	4	8	5	5	3	5	3
Dunnock	110	76	117	79	121	78	145	87	147	82
House Sparrow	107	74	106	71	108	69	129	77	136	76
Yellow Wagtail	2	1			1	1	1	1	2	1
Grey Wagtail	4	3	3	2	5	3	6	4	8	4
Pied/White Wagtail	55	38	55	37	55	35	64	38	78	44
Tree Pipit	4	3	1	1	3	2	2	1	3	2
Meadow Pipit	11	8	16	11	14	9	20	12	14	8
Chaffinch	142	98	146	98	154	99	162	97	172	96
Greenfinch	111	77	107	72	108	69	118	71	124	69
Goldfinch	103	71	107	72	114	73	123	74	140	78
Siskin	3	2	3	2	7	4	6	4	6	3
Linnet	46	32	49	33	45	29	63	38	64	36
Lesser Redpoll	3	2	1	1	-	-	1	1	1	1
Common Crossbill	2	1	4	3	-	-	1	1	-	-
Bullfinch	38	26	43	29	25	16	36	22	43	24
Yellowhammer	61	42	61	41	58	37	64	38	65	36
Reed Bunting	15	10	16	11	18	12	19	11	23	13
Corn Bunting	7	5	7	5	6	4	3	2	5	3
Number of species	128		123		132		144		144	

Breeding Bird Survey (BBS) population trends in Sussex 1994-2015

Sussex BBS population trends for 38 common species for the period 1994-2015 are presented in the table below, along with population trends for the period 2014-2015. Those trends that are considered statistically significant are indicated by asterisks. The size of the difference between the upper 95% confidence limit (UCL) and the lower 95% confidence limit (LCL) for each 1994-2015 trend gives an indication of the accuracy of the population trend. The sample size is the mean number of squares per year in which each species was recorded during 1994-2015.

	Change 1994-2015 (%)	UCL	LCL	Change 2014-2015 (%)	Sample size
Mallard	321*	477	208	-37	51
Pheasant	33*	51	17	36*	72
Moorhen	34	89	-4	47	34
Woodpigeon	-5	4	-13	2	91
Collared Dove	181*	216	150	33*	57
Stock Dove	147*	245	76	26	30
Cuckoo	-64*	-51	-74	236*	31
Green Woodpecker	-25*	-8	-38	-13	62
Great Spotted Woodpecker	536*	742	380	120*	59
Magpie	32*	56	11	10	81
Jay	-58*	-47	-67	25	42
Jackdaw	226*	287	174	55*	72
Rook	58*	82	37	12	50
Carriion Crow	175*	227	131	-4	88
Goldcrest	57*	105	21	101*	35
Blue Tit	37*	54	22	-7	89
Great Tit	15*	30	2	11	86
Skylark	-15	3	-30	-16	49
Swallow	42*	70	19	-36*	62
Long-tailed Tit	-51*	-38	-62	-33	41
Chiffchaff	-4	15	-20	-4	76
Blackcap	106*	143	75	28	72
Whitethroat	160*	240	99	-35	54
Nuthatch	7	40	-19	177*	42
Wren	6	16	-3	7	87
Starling	-75*	-68	-80	-54*	66
Blackbird	18*	28	9	-17*	91
Song Thrush	33*	48	18	17	80
Mistle Thrush	-87*	-83	-90	-67*	33
Robin	27*	40	15	7	89
Duncock	-17*	-5	-28	49*	76
House Sparrow	64*	82	48	-18	68
Pied Wagtail	-43*	-29	-54	-16	39
Chaffinch	-52*	-48	-56	-21*	89
Greenfinch	-55*	-46	-62	17	70
Goldfinch	133*	180	94	-14	59
Linnet	454*	618	328	162*	33
Yellowhammer	-86*	-81	-90	-64*	40



Goldfinch, Seaford, January 2015 (Bob Eade)

Sussex Winter Bird Survey (SWBS) results Nov 2013–Feb 2016

For each species recorded during a SWBS visit there are four columns per 'winter'. The last three winters are included in the table below.

Column 1 gives the total number of 1-km squares surveyed in Sussex in which that species has been recorded (n) with the percentage for that winter (%). **Column 2** gives the total number of individuals of that species recorded during SWBS for that winter period. This represents the sum of the early survey plus the late survey and may include two recordings of the same bird. **Column 3** is derived by dividing the total number of individuals recorded by the number of completed surveys that winter period. This can produce a comparable figure from one year to another despite variation in the number of surveys undertaken. The average is to one decimal place. **Column 4** gives the position of that species amongst all the species recorded in that particular winter period. Red-listed and amber-listed species of conservation concern are shown in the relevant colours.

	Winter 3: Nov 2013–Feb 2014 113 1-km squares surveyed 208 surveys completed 104 species recorded				Winter 4: Nov 2014–Feb 2015 143 1-km squares surveyed 269 surveys completed 118 species recorded				Winter 5: Nov 2015–Feb 2016 125 1-km squares surveyed 242 surveys completed 111 species recorded			
	1 n (%)	2 Total	3 Mean	4 Rank	1 n (%)	2 Total	3 Mean	4 Rank	1 n (%)	2 Total	3 Mean	4 Rank
Red-throated Diver					1 (1)	1	0.0	111				
Fulmar					1 (1)	1	0.0	106				
Little Grebe	3 (3)	24	0.1	69	2 (1)	2	0.0	90	5 (4)	17	0.1	70
Gt Crested Grebe	1 (1)	6	0.0	89	3 (2)	10	0.0	77				
Cormorant	15 (13)	42	0.2	48	24 (17)	53	0.3	46	24 (19)	80	0.3	43
Little Egret	9 (8)	18	0.1	55	15 (10)	32	0.2	52	14 (11)	47	0.2	54
Grey Heron	16 (14)	28	0.1	47	31 (22)	47	0.2	45	18 (14)	34	0.1	49
Mute Swan	21 (19)	189	0.9	44	16 (11)	135	0.6	51	18 (14)	124	0.5	47
Gt W-fronted Goose					1 (1)	9	0.0	118				
Greylag Goose	4 (4)	473	2.3	61	5 (3)	55	0.3	68	3 (2)	198	0.8	78
Domestic Goose	2 (2)	4	0.0	76	2 (1)	4	0.0	89	1 (1)	3	0.0	98
Canada Goose	14 (12)	239	1.1	50	13 (9)	320	1.5	55	10 (8)	336	1.4	59
Barnacle Goose					1 (1)	1	0.0	98				
Brent Goose	3 (3)	707	3.4	70	5 (3)	3258	15.7	67	5 (4)	1935	8.0	68
Egyptian Goose	1 (1)	10	0.0	90	1 (1)	3	0.0	105	1 (1)	4	0.0	96
Common Shelduck	2 (2)	20	0.1	77	4 (3)	15	0.1	70	1 (1)	7	0.0	94
Mandarin Duck	1 (1)	2	0.0	91	2 (1)	9	0.0	92				
Eurasian Wigeon	4 (4)	23	0.1	62	4 (3)	310	1.5	71	7 (6)	138	0.6	64
Gadwall	2 (2)	84	0.4	78	2 (1)	16	0.1	84	2 (2)	14	0.1	85
Eurasian Teal	6 (5)	80	0.4	59	8 (6)	222	1.1	62	4 (3)	248	1.0	71
Mallard	40 (35)	831	4.0	32	56 (39)	969	4.7	33	43 (34)	943	3.9	36
Domestic Mallard	2 (2)	15	0.1	79	3 (2)	8	0.0	78	1 (1)	1	0.0	108
Pintail					1 (1)	60	0.3	108	1 (1)	1	0.0	109
Shoveler	1 (1)	7	0.0	92	2 (1)	14	0.1	94	2 (2)	43	0.2	84
Common Pochard	2 (2)	13	0.1	80	1 (1)	10	0.0	100	1 (1)	2	0.0	100
Tufted Duck	3 (3)	55	0.3	71	4 (3)	42	0.2	75	4 (3)	34	0.1	73
Common Scoter					1 (1)	2	0.0	101				

	Winter 3: Nov 2013–Feb 2014				Winter 4: Nov 2014-Feb 2015				Winter 5: Nov 2015-Feb 2016			
	1 n (%)	2 Total	3 Mean	4 Rank	1 n (%)	2 Total	3 Mean	4 Rank	1 n (%)	2 Total	3 Mean	4 Rank
Red-brst Merganser	1(1)	9	0.0	93	1 (1)	5	0.0	109				
Red Kite	5 (4)	6	0.0	63	3 (2)	3	0.0	79	3(2)	3	0.0	80
Marsh Harrier	1 (1)	1	0.0	95					2(2)	2	0.0	89
Sparrowhawk	17 (15)	17	0.1	46	23 (16)	26	0.1	47	22(18)	22	0.1	46
Common Buzzard	76 (67)	181	0.9	15	90 (63)	236	1.1	18	78(62)	213	0.9	21
Kestrel	29 (26)	38	0.2	37	45 (31)	65	0.3	36	44(35)	65	0.3	35
Merlin	1 (1)	1	0.0	96	1 (1)	1	0.0	107				
Peregrine	8 (7)	10	0.0	57	6 (4)	6	0.0	65	2(2)	2	0.0	90
Red-legged Partridge	5 (4)	33	0.2	64	14 (10)	252	1.2	54	9(7)	97	0.4	62
Grey Partridge	1 (1)	5	0.0	97	2 (1)	11	0.1	87	2 (2)	12	0.0	86
Common Pheasant	73 (65)	828	4.0	17	99 (69)	987	4.7	15	88 (70)	795	3.3	16
Water Rail					1 (1)	1	0.0	117	1 (1)	2	0.0	103
Moorhen	36 (32)	149	0.7	34	46 (32)	234	1.1	35	34 (27)	115	0.5	39
Coot	13 (12)	168	0.8	51	16 (11)	147	0.7	49	14 (11)	120	0.5	53
Oystercatcher					4 (3)	79	0.4	74	3 (2)	50	0.2	83
Ringed Plover									1 (1)	1	0.0	110
Golden Plover									2 (2)	121	0.5	81
Grey Plover					2 (1)	7	0.0	88	1 (1)	1	0.0	107
Lapwing	11 (10)	1283	6.2	52	12 (8)	1286	6.2	58	12 (10)	1213	5.0	57
Dunlin					2 (1)	3	0.0	83	2 (2)	76	0.3	82
Common Snipe	4 (4)	21	0.1	65	10 (7)	22	0.1	60	7(6)	39	0.2	65
Woodcock	1 (1)	1	0.0	98	3 (2)	4	0.0	80	2(2)	2	0.0	91
Black-tailed Godwit					2 (1)	58	0.3	81				
Bar-tailed Godwit									1 (1)	1	0.0	104
Curlew	2 (2)	117	0.6	81	9 (6)	110	0.5	61	5 (4)	215	0.9	69
Common Redshank	1 (1)	2	0.0	99	3 (2)	31	0.1	76	4 (3)	41	0.2	72
Greenshank									1 (1)	10	0.0	93
Green Sandpiper	2 (2)	2	0.0	82	2 (1)	2	0.0	86	4 (3)	6	0.0	75
Turnstone					2 (1)	77	0.4	96	1 (1)	47	0.2	92
Mediterranean Gull	1 (1)	3	0.0	100	2 (1)	10	0.0	93				
Little Gull	1 (1)	6	0.0	101								
Black-headed Gull	60 (53)	2582	12.4	24	82 (57)	3193	15.4	25	75 (60)	3915	16.2	23
Common Gull	19 (17)	1119	5.4	45	38 (27)	684	3.3	41	23 (18)	725	3.0	44
Lesser Black-bk Gull	3 (3)	6	0.0	72	6 (4)	12	0.1	64	9 (7)	21	0.1	63
Herring Gull	69 (61)	2135	10.3	18	88 (62)	2471	11.9	21	82 (66)	2866	11.8	17
Great Black-bk Gull	4 (4)	61	0.3	66	2 (1)	10	0.0	85	10 (8)	27	0.1	60
Feral Pigeon	25 (22)	353	1.7	42	36 (25)	624	3.0	43	22 (18)	366	1.5	45
Stock Dove	30 (27)	158	0.8	36	38 (27)	218	1.0	42	35 (28)	234	1.0	38
Woodpigeon	111 (98)	9503	45.7	4	143 (100)	13310	64.0	1	125 (100)	11276	46.6	1
Collared Dove	58 (51)	365	1.8	27	74 (52)	673	3.2	27	63 (50)	526	2.2	29
Barn Owl					1 (1)	1	0.0	97	1 (1)	1	0.0	105
Little Owl	2 (2)	2	0.0	83	2 (1)	2	0.0	91				
Tawny Owl	2 (2)	2	0.0	84	1 (1)	2	0.0	116	1 (1)	1	0.0	111

	Winter 3: Nov 2013–Feb 2014				Winter 4: Nov 2014–Feb 2015				Winter 5: Nov 2015–Feb 2016			
	1 n (%)	2 Total	3 Mean	4 Rank	1 n (%)	2 Total	3 Mean	4 Rank	1 n (%)	2 Total	3 Mean	4 Rank
Short-eared Owl					1 (1)	2	0.0	114	2 (2)	4	0.0	87
Kingfisher	4 (4)	5	0.0	67	5 (3)	6	0.0	69	4 (3)	6	0.0	76
G. Woodpecker	64 (57)	111	0.5	21	91 (64)	197	0.9	17	72 (58)	129	0.5	25
G. S. Woodpecker	59 (52)	124	0.6	26	88 (62)	237	1.1	20	79 (63)	182	0.8	20
Woodlark	1 (1)	2	0.0	102					4 (3)	6	0.0	77
Skylark	40 (35)	205	1.0	33	43 (30)	561	2.7	38	36 (29)	301	1.2	37
Meadow Pipit	24 (21)	240	1.2	43	39 (27)	423	2.0	40	29 (23)	330	1.4	40
Rock Pipit					1 (1)	1	0.0	112	1 (1)	4	0.0	97
Grey Wagtail	10 (9)	11	0.1	53	11 (8)	15	0.1	59	14 (11)	16	0.1	56
Pied Wagtail	67 (59)	227	1.1	19	83 (58)	328	1.6	24	71 (57)	373	1.5	27
Wren	96 (85)	543	2.6	8	131 (92)	818	3.9	8	116 (93)	884	3.7	9
Dunnock	79 (70)	394	1.9	12	114 (80)	590	2.8	12	105 (84)	571	2.4	12
Robin	111 (98)	1636	7.9	5	141 (99)	2392	11.5	5	124 (99)	2125	8.8	4
Eurasian Stonechat	6 (5)	14	0.1	60	13 (9)	36	0.2	56	17 (14)	48	0.2	50
Blackbird	112 (99)	1629	7.8	2	143 (100)	3102	14.9	2	125 (100)	2319	9.6	2
Fieldfare	53 (47)	1494	7.2	29	72 (50)	1628	7.8	30	59 (47)	1914	7.9	30
Song Thrush	75 (66)	273	1.3	16	118 (83)	563	2.7	11	108 (86)	472	2.0	10
Redwing	60 (53)	1679	8.1	25	86 (60)	2492	12.0	23	75 (60)	2686	11.1	24
Mistle Thrush	28 (25)	62	0.3	39	58 (41)	132	0.6	32	45 (36)	110	0.5	34
Cetti's Warbler	2 (2)	3	0.0	85	2 (1)	3	0.0	82	4 (3)	4	0.0	74
Dartford Warbler	1 (1)	1	0.0	103	1 (1)	1	0.0	104	1 (1)	2	0.0	101
Blackcap	3 (3)	4	0.0	73	1 (1)	1	0.0	99	2 (2)	2	0.0	88
Chiffchaff	2 (2)	2	0.0	86	12 (8)	19	0.1	57	14 (11)	20	0.1	55
Goldcrest	43 (38)	103	0.5	31	74 (52)	216	1.0	28	83 (66)	297	1.2	19
Firecrest	4 (4)	4	0.0	68	4 (3)	4	0.0	72	6 (5)	7	0.0	67
Long-tailed Tit	57 (50)	357	1.7	28	87 (61)	568	2.7	22	82 (66)	539	2.2	18
Marsh Tit	8 (7)	11	0.1	58	19 (13)	42	0.2	48	18 (14)	46	0.2	48
Coal Tit	29 (26)	62	0.3	38	44 (31)	157	0.8	37	50 (40)	168	0.7	32
Blue Tit	113 (100)	2030	9.8	1	141 (99)	3177	15.3	4	122 (98)	2616	10.8	5
Great Tit	106 (94)	1109	5.3	6	134 (94)	1670	8.0	7	117 (94)	1336	5.5	7
Nuthatch	46 (41)	127	0.6	30	72 (50)	272	1.3	31	57 (46)	223	0.9	31
Treecreeper	26 (23)	57	0.3	41	40 (28)	71	0.3	39	28 (22)	64	0.3	41
Jay	61 (54)	159	0.8	22	80 (56)	212	1.0	26	77 (62)	193	0.8	22
Magpie	104 (92)	1014	4.9	7	135 (94)	1313	6.3	6	121 (97)	1233	5.1	6
Jackdaw	95 (84)	3866	18.6	10	127 (89)	4815	23.1	10	106 (85)	4060	16.8	11
Rook	67 (59)	2644	12.7	20	89 (62)	3934	18.9	19	71 (57)	3247	13.4	26
Carrion Crow	112 (99)	1881	9.0	3	142 (99)	2778	13.4	3	124 (99)	2772	11.5	3
Raven	3 (3)	4	0.0	74	14 (10)	20	0.1	53	12 (10)	20	0.1	58
Common Starling	82 (73)	4762	22.9	11	96 (67)	4105	19.7	16	100 (80)	5458	22.6	13
House Sparrow	79 (70)	1377	6.6	13	108 (76)	2227	10.7	13	91 (73)	1905	7.9	15
Tree Sparrow					2 (1)	2	0.0	95				
Chaffinch	96 (85)	1011	4.9	9	129 (90)	1418	6.8	9	116 (93)	960	4.0	8
Brambling	2 (2)	12	0.1	87					3 (2)	36	0.1	79

	Winter 3: Nov 2013–Feb 2014				Winter 4: Nov 2014–Feb 2015				Winter 5: Nov 2015–Feb 2016			
	1 n (%)	2 Total	3 Mean	4 Rank	1 n (%)	2 Total	3 Mean	4 Rank	1 n (%)	2 Total	3 Mean	4 Rank
Greenfinch	61 (54)	399	1.9	23	74 (52)	352	1.7	29	69 (55)	323	1.3	28
Goldfinch	79 (70)	772	3.7	14	106 (74)	1107	5.3	14	96 (77)	977	4.0	14
Siskin	9 (8)	63	0.3	56	7 (5)	27	0.1	63	24 (19)	154	0.6	42
Linnet	10 (9)	84	0.4	54	16 (11)	179	0.9	50	14 (11)	288	1.2	52
Lesser Redpoll	2 (2)	4	0.0	88	4 (3)	29	0.1	73	8 (6)	26	0.1	66
Bullfinch	32 (28)	88	0.4	35	53 (37)	165	0.8	34	47 (38)	158	0.7	33
Yellowhammer	27 (24)	173	0.8	40	33 (23)	137	0.7	44	16 (13)	118	0.5	51
Reed Bunting	15 (13)	78	0.4	49	6 (4)	21	0.1	66	10 (8)	35	0.1	61
Corn Bunting	3 (3)	10	0.0	75	1 (1)	7	0.0	103	1 (1)	4	0.0	95
Red-tailed Hawk	1 (1)	1	0.0	104	1 (1)	1	0.0	110	1 (1)	2	0.0	102
Black Swan									1 (1)	1	0.0	106
Bar-headed Goose									1 (1)	2	0.0	99

Sussex Winter Bird Survey top 20 species based on presence in 1-km squares

Winter 3: Nov 2013–Feb 2014	Winter 4: Nov 2014–Feb 2015	Winter 5: Nov 2015–Feb 2016
1 st Blue Tit	1 st Blackbird	1 st Woodpigeon
2 nd Blackbird	2 nd Woodpigeon	2 nd Blackbird
3 rd Carrion Crow	3 rd Carrion Crow	3 rd Carrion Crow
4 th Woodpigeon	4 th Blue Tit	4 th Robin
5 th Robin	5 th Robin	5 th Blue Tit
6 th Great Tit	6 th Magpie	6 th Magpie
7 th Magpie	7 th Great Tit	7 th Great Tit
8 th Wren	8 th Wren	8 th Chaffinch
9 th Chaffinch	9 th Chaffinch	9 th Wren
10 th Jackdaw	10 th Jackdaw	10 th Song Thrush
11 th Common Starling	11 th Song Thrush	11 th Jackdaw
12 th Dunnock	12 th Dunnock	12 th Dunnock
13 th House Sparrow	13 th House Sparrow	13 th Common Starling
14 th Goldfinch	14 th Goldfinch	14 th Goldfinch
15 th Common Buzzard	15 th Common Pheasant	15 th House Sparrow
16 th Song Thrush	16 th Common Starling	16 th Common Pheasant
17 th Common Pheasant	17 th Green Woodpecker	17 th Herring Gull
18 th Herring Gull	18 th Common Buzzard	18 th Long-tailed Tit
19 th Pied Wagtail	19 th Rook	19 th Goldcrest
20 th Rook	20 th Great Spotted Woodpecker	20 th Great Spotted Woodpecker

ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE DATES OF SUMMER VISITORS, 2015

	First recorded date			Last recorded date		
	2015	1960 to 2014	10-yr average ($\pm$ SD in days)	2015	1960 to 2014	10-yr average ($\pm$ SD in days)
Garganey	10 Mar	2 Feb	10 Mar (± 10)	1 Oct	13 Dec	3 Oct (± 22)
Quail	14 Jun	6 Feb	18 May (± 20)	1 Sep	15 Nov ²	29 Aug (± 30)
Osprey	2 Apr	4 Mar	22 Mar (± 10)	8 Nov	9 Dec	26 Oct (± 7)
Little Ringed Plover	12 Mar	6 Mar	16 Mar (± 7)	16 Sep	8 Oct	25 Sep (± 9)
Wood Sandpiper	26 Apr	11 Feb	8 May (± 22)	27 Sep	3 Nov	3 Oct (± 15)
Pomarine Skua	2 May	10 Mar	18 Apr (± 3)	-	31 Dec	13 Oct (± 49)
Little Tern	12 Apr	1 Apr	7 Apr (± 4)	15 Sep	4 Nov	23 Sep (± 11)
Black Tern	23 Apr	9 Mar	15 Apr (± 13)	26 Sep	16 Nov ³	3 Oct (± 19)
Common Tern	1 Apr	14 Mar	24 Mar (± 7)	25 Oct	26 Nov	27 Oct (± 14)
Roseate Tern	2 May	17 Apr	9 May (± 17)	-	5 Oct	14 Aug (± 31)
Arctic Tern	9 Apr	2 Apr	10 Apr (± 5)	22 Sep	31 Dec	23 Oct (± 17)
Common/Arctic Tern	3 Apr	10 Mar	2 Apr (± 4)	27 Sep	31 Dec	14 Oct (± 12)
Turtle Dove	13 Apr	5 Feb	11 Apr (± 10)	21 Sep	18 Dec	23 Sep (± 11)
Common Cuckoo	6 Apr	21 Mar ⁴	1 Apr (± 5)	6 Sep	23 Oct ⁵	13 Sep (± 11)
Nightjar	9 May	14 Apr ¹⁴	4 May (± 8)	4 Sep	5 Nov	18 Sep (± 10)
Common Swift	8 Apr	7 Apr	13 Apr (± 4)	28 Sep ¹	24 Nov	7 Oct (± 18)
Wryneck	18 Apr	22 Mar ¹⁸	21 Apr (± 15)	6 Oct	2 Nov ⁶	4 Oct (± 11)
Hobby	4 Apr	21 Mar	6 Apr (± 4)	24 Oct	9 Nov	25 Oct (± 9)
Sand Martin	7 Mar	27 Feb	11 Mar (± 8)	18 Oct	1 Dec ⁷	18 Oct (± 11)
Barn Swallow	9 Mar	4 Feb ¹⁷	11 Mar (± 11)	13 Dec	28 Dec ¹⁷	23 Nov (± 11)
House Martin	12 Mar	1 Feb	19 Mar (± 6)	9 Dec	18 Dec ⁸	14 Nov (± 8)
Wood Warbler	26 Apr	7 Apr	16 Apr (± 5)	30 Aug	7 Oct	16 Sep (± 13)
Willow Warbler	13 Mar	4 Mar	19 Mar (± 6)	18 Oct	27 Nov ⁹	27 Oct (± 8)
Garden Warbler	8 Apr	28 Mar	4 Apr (± 6)	10 Oct	16 Nov	14 Oct (± 11)
Lesser Whitethroat	15 Apr ¹	4 Apr	10 Apr (± 5)	19 Oct	18 Nov ¹⁰	13 Oct (± 12)
Common Whitethroat	6 Apr	19 Mar	2 Apr (± 6)	11 Nov	17 Dec	22 Oct (± 18)
Grasshopper Warbler	9 Apr	2 Apr	9 Apr (± 5)	2 Oct	1 Nov	12 Oct (± 5)
Sedge Warbler	3 Apr	23 Mar	31 Mar (± 6)	8 Oct	29 Oct	14 Oct (± 5)
Reed Warbler	2 Apr ¹	2 Apr	7 Apr (± 4)	3 Nov	1 Dec	7 Nov (± 14)
Ring Ouzel	4 Feb ¹	9 Feb ¹¹	31 Mar (± 6)	31 Oct	26 Dec	14 Nov (± 6)
Spotted Flycatcher	25 Apr	10 Apr ¹⁵	25 Apr (± 8)	10 Oct	18 Nov	13 Oct (± 11)
Common Nightingale	3 Apr	21 Mar	4 Apr (± 5)	31 Aug	1 Oct ¹²	14 Sep (± 11)
Pied Flycatcher	12 Apr	1 Apr	12 Apr (± 5)	27 Sep	1 Nov	29 Sep (± 7)
Common Redstart	5 Apr	5 Mar	29 Mar (± 11)	26 Oct	26 Dec	26 Oct (± 25)
Whinchat	13 Apr	18 Feb	6 Apr (± 14)	13 Oct	2 Dec	29 Oct (± 9)
Northern Wheatear	3 Mar	13 Feb	6 Mar (± 9)	20 Nov	31 Dec	15 Nov (± 7)
Yellow Wagtail	17 Mar	12 Feb	25 Mar (± 9)	1 Nov	23 Nov ¹³	27 Oct (± 10)
Tree Pipit	8 Apr	24 Mar ¹⁶	31 Mar (± 6)	25 Oct	9 Nov	16 Oct (± 10)

Notes: ¹county record early or late date; ²excludes historic December records; ³excludes one in Cuckmere Valley 13-21 Nov 1954; ⁴excludes one at Fairlight Cove on 15 Mar 1936; ⁵excludes one at Goodwood on 11 Nov 1928; ⁶excludes one at The Crumbles on 5 Nov 1947; ⁷excludes record from unknown location on 5 Dec 1911; ⁸excludes three at Fishbourne on 22 Dec 1894; ⁹excludes two historic records on 26 Dec 1892 and 1949;

¹⁰excludes one at Burgess Hill on 21 Nov 1957 and known wintering birds; ¹¹excludes one at Mannings Heath on 2 Feb 1905; ¹²excludes one at North Bersted on 19 Oct 1943; ¹³excludes one at Sidlesham between 11 Dec 1960 and 14 Jan 1961; ¹⁴excludes one at Pulborough on 8 Apr 1912; ¹⁵excludes one at Hastings on 8 Apr 1909; ¹⁶excludes record from unknown location on 17 Mar 1922; ¹⁷excludes wintering bird at Newick; ¹⁸excludes one on 9 Mar 1908 and one on 10 Mar 1918 both at Pulborough.

DEPARTURE AND ARRIVAL DATES OF WINTER VISITORS, 2015

	Last recorded date			First recorded date		
	2015	1960 to 2014	10-yr average ($\pm$ SD in days)	2015	1960 to 2014	10-yr average ($\pm$ SD in days)
Bewick's Swan	25 Feb	26 Apr	4 Mar ($\pm$ 10)	21 Nov	6 Oct	14 Nov ($\pm$ 16)
White-fronted Goose	22 May	25 May	23 Mar ($\pm$ 30)	3 Oct	12 Sep	19 Oct ($\pm$ 28)
Long-tailed Duck	29 Apr	14 Jun	23 Apr ($\pm$ 40)	16 Oct	12 Aug	6 Nov ($\pm$ 10)
Velvet Scoter	30 Apr	15 Jun	16 May ($\pm$ 14)	11 Oct	2 Aug	27 Oct ($\pm$ 15)
Goldeneye	5 Apr	31 May	21 Apr ($\pm$ 15)	16 Sep	6 Aug	9 Oct ($\pm$ 29)
Smew	18 Feb	24 Apr	2 Mar ($\pm$ 14)	4 Dec	22 Oct	3 Dec ($\pm$ 18)
Goosander	30 Mar	14 Jun	13 Apr ($\pm$ 29)	17 Oct	12 Sep	26 Oct ($\pm$ 13)
Black-throated Diver	4 May	21 Jun	24 May ($\pm$ 6)	20 Oct	3 Aug	7 Oct ($\pm$ 23)
Great Northern Diver	26 May	21 Jun	30 May ($\pm$ 10)	20 Oct	16 Sep	24 Oct ($\pm$ 14)
Red-necked Grebe	9 Feb	19 Jun	12 Apr ($\pm$ 20)	24 Nov	13 Aug ²	28 Sep ($\pm$ 30)
Hen Harrier	15 Jun	19 Jun	21 May ($\pm$ 13)	5 Sep	4 Aug	24 Aug ($\pm$ 13)
Purple Sandpiper	14 May	4 Jun	2 May ($\pm$ 17)	17 Oct	1 Jul	6 Sep ($\pm$ 39)
Jack Snipe	23 Apr	19 May	14 Apr ($\pm$ 15)	10 Sep	24 Aug	28 Sep ($\pm$ 21)
Great Grey Shrike	11 Apr	5 May ⁴	1 Apr ($\pm$ 15)	16 Oct	26 Sep ³	13 Oct ($\pm$ 8)
Fieldfare	25 Apr	5 Jun	25 Apr ($\pm$ 11)	20 Sept	6 Aug	30 Sep ($\pm$ 8)
Redwing	19 Apr	26 May ⁵	16 Apr ($\pm$ 9)	28 Sep	6 Aug	21 Sep ($\pm$ 17)
Water Pipit	9 Apr	28 May	23 Mar ($\pm$ 16)	25 Oct	1 Sep	1 Nov ($\pm$ 6)
Brambling	18 Apr	12 May	18 Apr ($\pm$ 13)	29 Sep	3 Sep	29 Sep ($\pm$ 5)
Snow Bunting	22 Feb	6 May	16 Feb ($\pm$ 24)	29 Oct	17 Sep	21 Oct ($\pm$ 9)

Notes: ¹earliest or latest county record; ²excludes one off Brighton on 3 Aug 1872; ³excludes one at The Crumbles on 7 Sep 1899; ⁴excludes one at Rye Hbr on 14 May 1950; ⁵excludes two undated historic records of birds found dead in June.

Arrival and Departure Dates

The tables include information from 1960 with earlier notable records in notes. To make a clear cut-off between arrival and departure dates all January records have been omitted from the table of summer visitors and from the calculation of mean dates and all July dates from the table of winter visitors with the exception of Purple Sandpipers, which regularly return to their winter grounds in July. Any January and July dates for the current year are to be found as footnotes. The large numbers of terns seen at seawatches to which a specific identification could not be ascribed have been included as Common/Arctic Tern. The early dates are most likely to refer to Common Tern and the later ones could be either Common or Arctic.

The 10-year average is included to indicate if the date quoted is unusual and is calculated from the 10 years prior to the current one. The standard deviation gives an indication of the reliability of the average (64% of values fall within one standard deviation). For example, a standard deviation of ± 7 means that 64% of the dates fall within 7 days of that average.

SUMMARY OF HEATHLAND BREEDING BIRD COUNTS

Wealden Heathlands Breeding Bird Survey 2015 (West Sussex)

	AC	BD	BH	CC	CL	GC	IC	LC	LS	SC	WC	WD	WH
Woodcock	4	-	-	1	1	-	-	2	-	-	-	1	-
Stock Dove	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	2	7	-	2	4	-
Turtle Dove	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Nightjar	21	3	-	1	-	2	6	5	-	1	3	1	1
Green Woodpecker	3	-	-	2	4	1	1	3	8	1	7	8	1
Great Sp. Woodpecker	2	-	-	4	5	5	4	3	8	7	6	8	2
Hobby	1	-	-	-	-	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
Woodlark	7	6	3	4	6	2	7	2	3	2	2	4	-
Skylark	-	-	-	1	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
Common Whitethroat	4	2	2	6	9	-	3	6	-	1	2	3	-
Dartford Warbler	5	3	-	-	-	-	3	2	-	-	1	-	-
Common Redstart	-	3	-	3	-	-	2	-	10	2	-	4	-
Eurasian Stonechat	6	6	-	4	-	-	6	3	-	2	1	2	-
Tree Pipit	5	6	-	1	-	1	5	2	-	2	2	2	-
Meadow Pipit	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
Linnet	9	2	-	2	10	-	8	9	-	4	2	2	1
Lesser Redpoll	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Common Crossbill	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Siskin	-	-	-	-	-	2	1	2	1	-	-	-	-
Yellowhammer	14	-	2	2	6	2	8	6	-	5	6	3	2
Reed Bunting	-	-	-	-	3	16	1	-	-	-	-	-	-

Figures relate to pairs or territories. The hyphen (-) indicates that no territories were identified.

Key to sites:

AC: Ambersham and Heyshott Commons

BD: Blackdown (Fernhurst)

BH: Broad Halfpenny

CC: Chapel Common (Liphook)

CL: Coates Common and Lords Piece (Fittleworth)

GC: Graffham Common

IC: Iping Common

LC: Lavington and Duncton Commons and Lavington Plantation

LS: Linchmere and Stanley Commons

SC: Stedham Common

WC: Woolbeding Common

WD: Weavers Down (Liss)

WH: West Heath Common

The above heathland sites were the only ones surveyed this year.

NEW SPECIES for SUSSEX in 2015

Two new species were added to the Sussex list during 2015 bringing the total up to 402.

The first was a Hudsonian Whimbrel which was discovered in Pagham Harbour on 9 Jun and remained in the area until 27 Jul where it was seen by many visiting birders. The bird also made a brief flight past Selsey Bill on 17 Jul before returning to Pagham Harbour later in the day. This was perhaps a surprise addition to the county list having only been considered as a separate species in 2011.

The second addition was a Short-toed Treecreeper found in the old trapping area at Beachy Head on 27 Oct. Although the bird was present for only one day, the use of mobile phones enabled several observers to see it. Given that several Short-toed Treecreepers have been trapped at Dungeness, it can be considered that this addition to the Sussex list was long overdue.

Hudsonian Whimbrel

Numenius hudsonicus

A New Species for Sussex in Pagham Harbour

George Kinnard

My grandfather and I arrived at Church Norton at mid-morning on 9 Jun in the hope of connecting with any late spring 'overshoots'. We were greeted by an empty car park so took advantage of this and wasted no time in getting on with the birding.

Initially the harbour appeared devoid of any waders which was, admittedly, not unexpected given the time of year. However, as we approached the shingle bank to obtain a more extensive view I noticed two Eurasian Whimbrels *Numenius phaeopus* and a third *numenius* apparently showing no white 'V' on the upperparts as it lifted off - fortunately it landed a short distance away. Realising that this indicated a potential Hudsonian Whimbrel, in a frenzy we continued further north to obtain closer views of the bird.

From our new position I was instantly struck by the pale facial pattern and the contrast it presented between the dark lateral crown stripes and broad white supercilium. The large central crown stripe was also rather conspicuous creating an Aquatic Warbler-like head pattern. The pronounced dark eye stripe and white demarcated throat added to the bird's distinct appearance. We were fortunate in being able to watch the bird feeding side-by-side with Eurasian Whimbrels and note the differences in the plumages.

Description: Overall plumage tones of upperparts rather light buff with patterning less coarse than in *phaeopus*. The flank tones differed from those of *phaeopus* in having a rather 'weak tea' wash to them showing faint rufous-tinged barring to the flanks when seen at close quarters. The facial pattern was extremely contrasting with broad white supercilium and central crown stripe in contrast to the chocolate brown lateral crown stripes. The demarcated white throat and paler ear coverts added to the unique appearance.

The breast and neck were finely streaked in pale buff giving a uniform impression. In flight the concolorous upperparts including the dark upper tail coverts were obvious in their uniformity. The cinnamon heavily-barred axillaries were distinctly noticeable in flight. The bill was very long with the basal part of the lower mandible exhibiting a large pink area.

Short-toed Treecreeper

Certhia brachydactyla

A New Species for Sussex at Beachy Head

John F. Cooper

While walking through the bushes of the Beachy Head old trapping area I was watching a small flock of Goldcrests when a Treecreeper flew past me. I had not seen a Treecreeper on Beachy Head for three years and couldn't recall one in the old trapping area in over 50 years so it was obviously worth checking. When the bird could not be relocated I used a playback recording of a Common Treecreeper *Certhia familiaris* but got no response. However, playback of Short-toed Treecreeper *Certhia brachydactyla* produced an immediate reaction with the bird flying towards me. When it landed I obtained some photographs and looking at the images on the back of the camera I was immediately struck by the fine longish bill, the brownish rear flanks and the general lack of whiteness associated with *familiaris*.



Short-toed Treecreeper, Beachy Head, October 2015 (John Cooper)

My own hearing is now poor but my wife, Doreen, had heard the bird respond to the tape which she described as being very similar to the tape play-back. Realising the importance of the call I phoned Roger Haggard who was birding nearby and he and two colleagues joined us. Soon we were all watching the Treecreeper and Roger immediately heard it call. I also contacted Roger Charlwood, David Cooper and Richard Fairbank and the news of 'a very interesting Treecreeper' was immediately sent out enabling a good number of birders to connect with the bird although it was only present for two to three hours.

Whilst the bird's plumage, structure and call were all very encouraging, proving the identification of such a challenging species beyond doubt required critical analysis of all the images I had obtained of the bird. David (Cooper) and I compared a large number of online images of both species and their various subspecies and consulted a number of identification articles before we were satisfied that this was the first Short-toed Treecreeper for Sussex.

Description: The bill always looked very long and de-curved appearing fine when seen from above but quite thick when viewed from the side. The long bill was the first character I saw and all other observers remarked on how long the bill appeared. The upper mandible was dark with a very narrow pale cutting edge and a slightly pinkish lower mandible.

The supercilium was creamy-buff flaring from above and over the eye but narrowing towards the rear where the upper border was rather ill-defined. In front of the eye the supercilium was far less prominent, darker and broken almost rendering it a brown-washed 'loral spot'. The supercilia did not join above the base of the bill. The fore-crown was plain brown and lacked the narrow pale streaking of the rest of the crown. The nape was brown and a little less heavily streaked than the crown.

The mantle and scapulars were dusky brown with some rufous tones and with narrow pale greyish-buff streaking often coalescing to almost form a series of wavy vertical pale lines running down the length of the mantle. Close inspection of the images revealed the scapulars showing long pale shaft streaks.

When in shade the bird appeared overall rather dull and drab lacking contrast although the pure white throat consistently contrasted with the remainder of the underparts which comprised a matt grey breast and belly with dirty buff sides to the breast and flanks.

The hind claw appeared short (certainly shorter than the toe) and strongly de-curved. Critical examination of the wings was crucial with possibly the most important feature being the pale bars on primaries 6, 7 and 8 which overlapped to an almost equal extent forming a 'stairway' rather than the pronounced right-angled blackish 'corner' of Common Treecreeper. The border of the pale bars to P6 to P8 narrowed to long points rather than rectangular or rounded as in *familiaris*. The dark wing bar below the pale wing bar was consistently broad and did not narrow as in Common Treecreeper.

Editor's note: For reasons of space, the description of the Short-toed Treecreeper printed here has been abridged and summarised. John's complete 14-page BBRC submission containing the full description and discussion on the identification can be found on the SOS website. John's submission to BBRC has been placed joint second in the Carl Zeiss award for the overall presentation of the record.

The Sussex Ringing Report for 2015

Val Bentley

The weather during the first three months of 2015 was relatively mild, but at the start of the main breeding season during May and into the start of June it was more unsettled, with cooler, wetter conditions, which would no doubt have affected those species which start nesting early, and particularly those which are single-brooded. Though July saw a record high temperature on the 1st at Heathrow, changeable conditions, including thunderstorms, returned for the rest of this month, continuing through August and September. The final three months were milder than average. Intermittent summer storms in the north and west of the UK during June and July would have had an impact on the numbers of young birds available to migrate south and hence on the totals of passage birds ringed in Sussex. Also, generally milder temperatures throughout at the end of the year can affect the number of winter visitors seeking refuge in the south-east of the UK from the cold further north or on continental Europe. (*N.B. The figures for the annual totals of birds ringed in Sussex are based on those published on the British Trust for Ornithology website at <http://www.bto.org/volunteer-surveys/ringing/publications/online-ringing-reports>.*)

The number of birds ringed in Sussex in 2015 proved to be the lowest since the total of 25,083 in 1986, the year before the full establishment of the Rye Bay Ringing Group (RBRG), though at that time this figure was the highest to date. The year 2014 had seen totals for the entire country reach one million for the first time, but nationally in 2015 there was a decrease of 6%, to 983,887, while in Sussex the decrease over the previous year was 9.5% and, as shown in Table 1, is brought about by a further reduction in birds ringed by RBRG since their operations have been scaled down. At other sites, overall totals were remarkably similar to those in the previous three years, as shown in Table 1 (*2014 figures have been adjusted to agree with the current published BTO figures which have been updated since the 2014 report).

Table 1. *Ringing totals in Sussex 2010-2015.*

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014*	2015
Sussex total	82,689	102,203	68,767	51,020	31,700	28,683
Rye Bay	59,199	79,870	53,439	34,752	15,883	12,847
Others	23,490	22,333	15,328	16,268	15,817	15,836

There were five ringing groups operating in Sussex in 2015, and other ringers also provided information to the SOS on their individual activities.

Rarities and notable records

There were two species for which the numbers ringed in Sussex were more than 10% of the national total. RBRG trapped 112 Rooks, of which 52 were juveniles, 26% of the total for Britain and Ireland. However, of more interest due to the status of the species were the numbers of Grasshopper Warblers; the county total was 317, including 294 juveniles, 27% of the national total of 1183. Of these, RBRG contributed 284 and Cuckmere RG 27. The effect of the scaling down of activity at Rye Bay (Table 1) on the numbers of Grasshopper Warblers ringed nationally is indicated below in Table 2.



Great Grey Shrike, Charleston Reedbed, February 2015 (Jacob Everitt)

Table 2. *Grasshopper Warblers ringed 2010-2015.*

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
UK	2417	3661	1376	1388	1496	1183
Sussex	1238	1635	526	431	209	317

Either due to the technicalities of capture or genuine scarcity, several species were ringed in very small numbers in 2015, including (with the Sussex total since 1979 in brackets) two Mute Swans (375), three Mandarin Ducks (22), four Gadwalls (58), one Pochard (16), one Common Sandpiper (70), one Buzzard (35), three Wrynecks (60), two Whinchats (1705), one Yellow-browed Warbler (31), two Wood Warblers (153) and three Pied Flycatchers (267). Absent from the totals in 2014 but making a return in 2015 were three Lapwings (691) ringed as nestlings in West Sussex, and a sole Mistle Thrush (700), also ringed in the nest. Of these species, Pochard, Whinchat, Mistle Thrush and Pied Flycatcher were moved from the amber list to the red list of Birds of Conservation Concern (Eaton *et al.* 2015), while Lapwing and Wood Warbler were already on the red list.

The majority of the wildfowl on the list this year were as a result of efforts at Rye Bay, where the group ringed nine Shelducks, four Gadwalls, nine Teal, 87 Mallards, one Pochard and 72 Tufted Ducks. Also included in their totals were seven of the eight Water Rails ringed, plus all 21 Moorhens and 12 Coots.

An addition to the county ringing species list was Great Grey Shrike. There are no ringing records of this species between the years 1979 and 2015, and James (1996) makes no reference to any prior to that period. Surprisingly, however, two different birds were captured in 2015, one at Charleston Reedbed by the Cuckmere RG in February, and another by Martin Lanaway at Hardham on 23 Nov.

Top 20 species ringed

The two most ringed species in Sussex are Blackcap and Chiffchaff which are very successful breeders, not only here but also elsewhere in the UK, so there is a significant passage movement during autumn migration. There were fewer Blackcaps ringed in 2015 than in 2014, and more Chiffchaffs, but this did not affect their overall ranking in the Sussex ringing table (see Table 3 below).

Sedge Warbler slipped from third to fifth; 500 fewer birds were ringed at Rye Bay, though numbers elsewhere remained similar to those in 2014. Willow Warbler maintained its position as, despite a reduction in numbers ringed at Rye Bay, over 500 more were ringed at other sites compared to 2014. The number of Goldcrests ringed increased significantly again, the species having benefited from a mild winter. Only 100 were ringed in the county in 2013. There was an improvement to 268 in 2014, and this year the total was 953 with three different groups, operating at Charleston Reedbed, Ladywell and Rye Bay, each reporting over 200 ringed. The national totals showed a similar trend, increasing by 183% from 2013 to 2014 and a further 229% between 2014 and 2015, with this year seeing the highest number of Goldcrests ringed in Britain and Ireland according to the BTO (Robinson *et al.* 2016), surpassing the previous record in 1989 by 46%. Notably, however, a very hard winter followed in 1990-91 and the national total in 1991 fell by 85%. However, the red-listed Lesser Redpoll showed the largest jump in numbers, with five times more ringed in 2015 than in the previous year, though still not regaining the ninth position it held in both 2012 and 2013. The national trend has also been similar, with a record number ringed in 2011, reducing over the next three years to only a third of that number in 2014, but recovering

to a more normal level in 2015. Greenfinch slipped down to nineteenth; nationally the number of Greenfinches ringed has seen a reduction in every year except one since 2005, with the 2015 total at less than half that of ten years ago, as the disease *Trichomonosis* continues to affect the species, as it has since it was first noticed in 2005 (Robinson *et al.* 2010).

Table 3. *Sussex ringing totals for the 20 most ringed species in 2015. Birds of conservation concern are marked as: (R), red-listed and (A), amber-listed.*

Ranking	Species (with position in 2014)	2015		2014	
		Total	RBRG	Total	RBRG
1.	Blackcap (1)	5194	2611	7468	4154
2.	Chiffchaff (2)	4029	1684	3647	1697
3.	Reed Warbler (4)	2895	1835	2357	1639
4.	Blue Tit (5)	2115	452	1897	454
5.	Sedge Warbler (3)	1987	1528	2502	2031
6.	(A) Willow Warbler (6)	1869	593	1498	728
7.	Goldcrest (21)	953	243	268	54
8.	Common Whitethroat (8)	711	248	1026	458
9.	Goldfinch (11)	707	51	644	141
10.	Great Tit (9)	700	165	858	233
11.	Robin (10)	664	213	775	226
12.	Barn Swallow (7)	610	410	1059	924
13.	(R) Lesser Redpoll (35)	420	276	84	4
14.	Blackbird (13)	442	164	523	172
15.	Wren (15)	428	135	443	125
16.	(A) Dunnock (14)	384	90	462	105
17.	Long-tailed Tit (24)	371	65	240	46
18.	Garden Warbler (18)	325	210	350	172
19.	Greenfinch (12)	321	111	538	259
20.	(A) Reed Bunting (23)	205	114	244	83

Colour ringing and tagging projects

Cuckoo tracking For full details of the BTO satellite-tagged Cuckoos, sponsored by the SOS, see the article on pages 267-269.

Honey-buzzards Colour rings were fitted to four Honey-buzzards, two chicks from each of two nests visited at the end of July. Since the project started in 1997 a total of 111 birds have been ringed in the county. There were no sightings of colour-ringed birds at nests this year. Thanks are due to the project organisers for providing this information.

Peregrines Four broods of Peregrines were colour-ringed in Sussex in 2015. Black rings are used in West Sussex and light green rings in East Sussex, each with a unique inscription enabling birds to be identified as individuals from field sightings. A bird ringed as a chick in East Sussex in 2011 was photographed in Belgium in April 2015. This individual, which had moved 280 km, is the first foreign record for this project. Two other UK-ringed Peregrines were recovered on mainland Europe in 2015, one in Portugal and one in the Netherlands, but both of these were injured in some way. Most Peregrine movements are of Scandinavian birds moving south-west into the UK (Wernham *et al.* 2002). Birds ringed as chicks at Chichester Cathedral were reported breeding as far afield as Hull, south London and Surrey. A female ringed as a chick in East

Sussex in 2007 was again recorded at Charing Cross Hospital (London) where she has bred since 2010. A male ringed as a chick at Sussex Heights (Brighton) in 2008 was found long dead inside a building in Stratford (London). Any sightings of colour-ringed Peregrines should be sent to Graham Roberts at Graham.C.M.Roberts@btinternet.com.

Woodcock tracking A female Woodcock, given the name “Knepp”, was ringed and a satellite tag fitted on the Knepp Estate in 2014 and in that year had made a return trip to breed in Finland. She then survived the arduous return migration, returning to spend the 2014-15 winter on the Knepp Estate in the same field in which she was tagged. She departed sometime after 7 Mar and was in Latvia by the 14th. After crossing the Gulf of Finland she was on her breeding grounds in the Finnish municipality of Kinnula by 10 Apr. In the autumn contact was lost with “Knepp”, not surprisingly as the tags are solar powered, but in the middle of the 2015-16 winter a transmission was suddenly received from Knepp Castle which proved that she had safely returned to the UK, but unfortunately provided no information about the route taken or its timing. “Knepp” was a particularly early migrant compared with the national average date of departure from the wintering site, and she also arrived earlier at her breeding destination. More information on the project can be found at <http://www.woodcockwatch.com>.

Tree Sparrows It was a more successful year for the Tree Sparrow recovery project in terms of nestlings ringed, with a total of 43, compared to 26 in 2014 when there were fewer nests than expected. Details of any sightings of ringed Tree Sparrows should be sent to Richard Black at richard.black@rspb.org.uk.

Greenshanks and Redshanks The Greenshank colour-ringing and geolocator project and a Redshank colour-ringing project are run by the Farlington Ringing Group in partnership with Chichester Harbour Conservancy. Five Greenshanks were ringed by the group in 2015, and two retrapped. Though three birds with geolocators were seen at the roost, they were not among those captured on 3 Oct. However, one of the retraps had been ringed as a first-year bird 9 years previously on 27 Aug 2006. A first-year bird ringed at Thorney Island on 13 Sep 2014 was shot at the Baie de Canche (France) on 1 Aug 2015. For more information on the project and how to report birds seen visit the website www.greenshank.info.

On 17 Oct the group captured 61 new and ten previously ringed Redshanks. Seven were ringed as adults at Thorney, two in 2013 and four in 2008, plus one long-lived individual ringed on 29 Sep 2001, also recaptured in 2005 and 2008 and now also colour-ringed. The longest interval between ringing and recovery for Redshanks is just over 20 years, so at more than 14 years this bird is doing very well. Of the controls one had been ringed in South Gloucestershire in 2014 and, a cause for some excitement for the group, two were birds ringed at Breida Fjörður in Iceland. The group are only aware of one previous control which has come from Iceland since operations started in 1968 and of the thousands ringed by Farlington RG none has ever been found in Iceland. Two birds ringed on Thorney Island were reported elsewhere, one in Ardnamurchan (Scotland) and one in Gloucestershire.

Stone-Curlews The South Downs Stone-Curlew project reached its ninth year of operation in 2015. As in 2014, just one chick was ringed, and this successfully fledged.

Recoveries and controls

The following is a selection from the list of birds found away from the site where they were ringed, not included in the project summaries above. Controls are those captured and subsequently released by another ringer, and recoveries are birds found, usually dead, by others. Recoveries and controls can provide more precise information on the age of a bird and included below are details of some long-lived individuals, including those retrapped at the initial ringing site.

A **Greylag Goose** ringed as an adult at Sevenoaks Wildfowl Reserve on 24 Jun 2007 was shot at Henfield on 8 Nov. There were six recoveries of dead seabirds. A **Storm Petrel** ringed in 2014 at Burhou, a small island off Alderney (Channel Islands) was found at Brighton Marina on 13 Jun. Three **Gannets** ringed as nestlings on Les Etacs and Ortac, also small islands off Alderney, were found on the West Sussex coast; their ages were 10, 12 and 16 years, still way below the longevity record of 37 years. Gannets only started nesting on these islands in 1940, and the colony grew from a single pair that year to c8000 pairs in 2011 (www.visitalderney.com). After a January storm, a **Razorbill** was found dead at Camber Sands on 10 Jan. It had been ringed as a chick at Great Saltee Island, off the southern coast of Co Wexford (Eire) on 9 Jun 1998. Four days later at Goring-by-Sea a similar fate had befallen a **Great Skua** ringed as a chick on Orkney on 7 Jul 2004.

A **Cormorant** ringed as a nestling in Denmark in Jun 2014 was found dead at Ashburnham six months later. More successful was a **Spoonbill** fitted with colour rings as a nestling in Denmark, at Var Holm, on 15 May 2014. In October 2014 it was seen at Pagham Hbr, and in 2015 it was reported at Cuckmere Haven on 8 and 9 May.

There were two interesting **Kestrel** movements into Sussex in 2015. Both had been ringed as nestlings abroad. One killed in a collision with a car in Brede on 4 Sep was ringed 1,892 km away in northern Sweden in June. The second bird, controlled by the RBRG on 25 Sep, had been ringed in the Netherlands in July 2014. These movements follow the description in the Migration Atlas (Wernham *et al.* 2002) which suggests that “the wintering population in Britain and Ireland contains some birds from countries bordering the North and Baltic Seas” and that recoveries are mostly of immature birds that had been ringed in the nest. Recoveries of **Common Buzzards** show only a median 15-km movement from their nest sites (Wernham *et al.* 2002) and the one recovery from 2015 of this species bears this out. A male ringed as a nestling at Pippingford (Ashdown Forest) was found dead at Sheffield Green on 26 Jun, just 7 km away. However, the time between ringing and recovery was 20 years and 10 days, only 8 years short of the longevity record for this species.

There were some recorded movements of waders other than Redshanks and Greenshanks. A well-travelled colour-ringed **Avocet** ringed as a nestling at Seal Sands (Teesmouth) on 12 Jun 2012, seen in Essex in the spring of 2013 and at Poole Harbour in November 2014, was at Pett Level on 27 Mar from where it moved to the Exe Estuary by October and was back to Essex in November. An adult male **Ruff** colour-ringed in the Netherlands in 2010 was seen at Rye Hbr on 9 Mar, and a **Woodcock** ringed in Hampshire in January 2015 met an unfortunate end when it was shot at Isfield in December.

Black-headed Gull sightings provided information on the movements of this species both in the UK and abroad. One ringed in Gloucestershire in June 2004, seen at Arundel WWT in April 2013 and March 2014, was there again in March this year. Another ringed at Pett Level in 2006 visited Herne Bay in 2010 and 2011 but was re-trapped across the Channel near Antwerp (Belgium) on 30 May. An individual ringed in northern Germany in 2013 was at Pett Level on 20 Mar, and one from a nest site in south-west Poland was seen at Rye Hbr on 7 May. Colour-ringed **Mediterranean Gulls** were reported on several occasions at Pett Level. These included five birds ringed as first- or second-year birds at Great Yarmouth beach in 2013, and another five which had been ringed as nestlings in mainland Europe. Three were from Belgium, two of which were 9 years old and the other 10 years. A bird seen at Pett Level in February and March was ringed in Hungary in 2002 and has been recorded in many different locations across southern England since 2004, including previous visits to Pett and Rye Hbr. Finally, a bird ringed in 2000 in the Netherlands has been visiting Pett Level since 2010, and at 14 years 9 months old is nearing

the longevity record of 15 years 3 months. A **Herring Gull** ringed at Fairlight in July 2000 was reported the following year as “sick (pollution)” at Herne Bay, but obviously recovered as it was seen again at Herne Bay on 22 Jul. Three **Great Black-backed Gulls** from a nest site in Seine Maritime (France) were reported from Brighton, Hastings and Rye Hbr.

Many **Barn Owls** do not survive their first winter and “the usual life span may be only 3-5 years” (Thomas 2014) so it is gratifying when older birds are retrapped during nestbox monitoring. A bird ringed as an adult at Ashurst in 2009 was at a nestbox at the same site in 2015, though in 2011 it was using a box 6 km away at Woods Mill. A 7-year-old Barn Owl was in a box at Hurstpierpoint, and another ringed as a chick at Barcombe Cross in 2005 was trapped at Chalvington, 11 km away, on 19 Aug this year, hence just over 9 years old. The oldest recovery was of a female found drowned at Upper Beeding which had been ringed as an adult on 28 Jun 2005, 6 km north at Partridge Green.

Among a total of 176 **Rooks** retrapped by Rye Bay RG were two ringed 12 years ago and another three ringed in 1997, so over 18 years old. A **Carrion Crow** found dead at Pett Level had survived 12 years since it was ringed there as an adult in 2003.

Movements of **Goldcrests** from mainland Europe in autumn are well documented, and in 2015 a first-year male from the island of Borkum (Germany) had travelled 552 km in 26 days before meeting its end in Brighton on 29 Oct. Two other first-year males were controlled in Sussex; one was ringed at Zandvoort (The Netherlands) 6 days before capture at Pett Level, and a second ringed 992 km away at Sokndal (Norway) on 21 Sep was trapped in Sedlescombe on 22 Oct. Between the loss as a breeding species in the 19th century and the re-establishment in the 1970's (James 1996) **Bearded Tits** were exclusively winter visitors (Thomas 2014), but numbers have increased and 436 individuals have been ringed in the county between 2007 and 2015. In 2011 a bird ringed at Pett Level was controlled in Suffolk, and a similar movement was reported this year when a female ringed at Pett in October 2012 was controlled on 27 Oct at Walberswick, also in Suffolk. Five **Sand Martins** ringed at Pett Level in 2013 were retrapped elsewhere in 2015, four in Scotland during July and one in County Kildare (Eire) at the end of August.

Long-tailed Tits which have survived well past the typical life span, suggested as 2 years (www.wildlifetrusts.org/species/long-tailed-tit), were one retrapped at Sedlescombe over 5 years since it was ringed, and two more ringed at Pett Level in 2009 caught there again 6 years and 4 months later.

A **Chiffchaff** ringed at Charleston Reedbed on 17 Sep was controlled 1,351 km away in Portugal on 23 Oct and two others were found in Spain in December where they were obviously wintering. The only foreign-controlled **Willow Warbler** was ringed at Cissbury on 18 Aug 2015, and was 496 km SSW on its autumn migration route when it was trapped at Les Sables d'Olonne (France) on the 30th. **Blackcaps** are the third most-ringed species in the UK, after Blue and Great Tits, and hence recoveries from within Britain and from abroad are annual, and in 2015 two birds ringed at Beachy Head in September 2014 were controlled, one in Gibraltar in October and another, possibly in its breeding area, on the island of Utsira (Norway) on 10 May. **Reed Warblers** frequently remain faithful to the sites at which they were ringed. Three birds ringed at Steyning in 2010 were caught there again, and two of these had also been found there in previous years. An adult trapped at Pett Level in July had first flown into a net there on 26 Jun 2008 when it was a juvenile, so was at least 7 years old. An adult female ringed on Guernsey on 24 May had moved on and was at Charleston Reedbed by the 27th.

Travelling in the opposite direction to the Reed Warbler was a **Song Thrush** ringed at Marck, Pas de Calais (France) in November 2014, but found dead at Storrington at the end of January. Most Song Thrushes from the British breeding population seem to be relatively sedentary, but

many continental birds, particularly from Belgium and the Netherlands, spend the winter in Britain (Wernham *et al.* 2002).

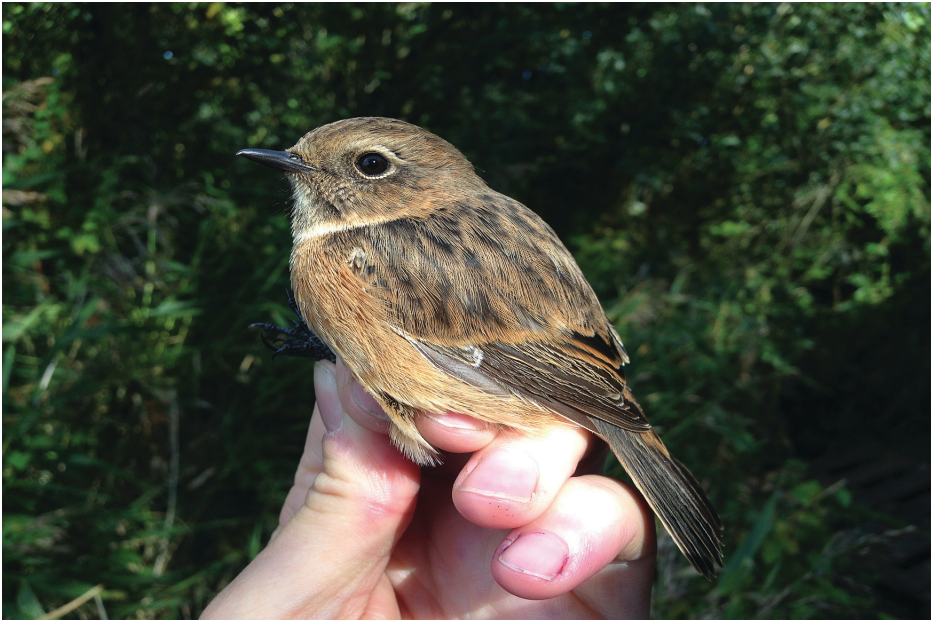
Only a single **Brambling** was ringed in Sussex in 2015, but a retrap at Hardham was over 5 years old, and another bird which was caught there in November had been ringed in Ploegsteert (Belgium) in March 2013, and was presumably taking a longer route to England from its northern breeding grounds rather than a direct flight across the North Sea which is often the case according to ringing information in the Migration Atlas (Wernham *et al.* 2002). There were no continental recoveries of Sussex **Goldfinches** during 2015, though one ringed at Steyning in November 2011 was controlled at Edenderry, Co Offaly (Eire) in December, and one ringed in East Sussex in 2011 which had turned up in Carlisle (South Lanarkshire) in April 2013 and 2014, and again in November 2014, was retrapped there again in February. **Lesser Redpolls** from Scotland and the north of England move south in the autumn and controls from 2015 fit this pattern well. One Scottish-ringed bird from Glen Isla (Angus) and two from Yorkshire were controlled in Sussex in October, and another ringed at Pett Level in October 2011 was controlled in Lancashire in April 2015.



Continental Coal Tit, Charleston Reedbed, October 2015 (Jacob Everitt)

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Stonechat, Charleston Reedbed, September 2015 (Jacob Everitt)

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Wealden Heaths Breeding Bird Survey (West Sussex) 1998-2015: site descriptions, breeding survey results and notes on wintering birds

Alan Perry

Originally the Wealden Heaths and Thames Basin Breeding Bird Survey was set up in 1997 as a collaboration between four county ornithological societies to monitor the important heathlands of West Sussex, Surrey, Hampshire and Berkshire. These included some of the Wealden heaths, designated as a Special Protection Area (SPA) in 1994 (Phase I) and 1998 (Phase II), and the Thames Basin heaths, designated as an SPA in 2005. Unfortunately there are no immediate plans by the statutory authority to implement a Phase III to include the West Sussex group of Wealden heaths. Nevertheless, the Wealden Heaths Breeding Bird Survey (West Sussex) is continuing as designation could become a possibility in the future.

As well as monitoring the West Sussex heaths to provide evidence for a possible SPA designation, the additional objectives of the survey are to provide data to assist in management decisions and to enable results to be measured thereafter, to provide a long run of data to help protect the sites from damaging developments either within or adjacent to them, and to ensure that results are retained in the Sussex Ornithological Society database.

An initial scoping exercise in 1997 identified a potential 26 Greensand Wealden heaths in Sussex. Of these, eleven sites had open heathland and have since been the most consistently monitored, and these are the sites detailed in this article. Twenty-one bird species perceived to be specialists of the habitat or typical users were chosen as the subjects of the survey and of these Nightjar *Caprimulgus europaeus*, Woodlark *Lullulu arborea*, Dartford Warbler *Sylvia undata*, Tree Pipit *Anthus trivialis* and Stonechat *Saxicola torquata* were priority species.

Results show that many species benefited from early management and in particular from restoration work funded by a substantial Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) grant in 2002. After 18 years it is possible to discern species distributions, and where sufficient data is available it is possible to see population trends. Tree Pipit data shows the species to be in long-term decline, whilst Woodlark numbers peaked on three occasions with the last peak reached in 2015 reversing a ten-year declining trend. Stonechat and Dartford Warbler populations were particularly affected by the severe winters of 2008-2009 and 2009-2010 but are now recovering. Nightjars have been the most stable of the five priority species. Data has been collected on 16 other species; Stock Dove *Columba oenas*, Great Spotted Woodpecker *Dendrocopos major*, Green Woodpecker *Picus viridis*, Common Redstart *Phoenicurus phoenicurus*, Common Whitethroat *Sylvia communis*, Linnet *Carduelis cannabina* and Yellowhammer *Emberiza citrinella* numbers all showed positive trends or were stable, Woodcock *Scolopax rusticola* numbers appear to be declining, Turtle Doves *Streptopelia turtur* disappeared completely after 2008, and insufficient data has been collected on other species including Hobby *Falco subbuteo* for trends to be discerned.

Introduction: setting the Greensand Wealden heaths in context

Lowland Atlantic heathland is a traditionally managed habitat that is restricted to north-west Europe, stretching from northern Spain (Galicia) in the south to the north-west coast of Norway and in its entirety only covers 4000 km²; consequently this is one of the rarest habitats in the world. Typically occurring at altitudes below 300 m, this heathland is seldom found more than 200 km from the coast and its range therefore coincides with a temperate and moderate (oceanic) climate (Tucker and Evans 1997). It is a habitat typified by dwarf shrubs including ling

heather *Calluna vulgaris*, bell heather *Erica cinerea*, cross-leaved heath *Erica tetralix*, gorse *Ulex europaeus*, dwarf gorse *Ulex minor*, and less commonly bilberry *Vaccinium myrtillus*. Lowland heath is classed as a priority habitat under the UK Biodiversity Framework which succeeded the UK Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP). It is protected by the EU Habitats Directive which is translated into UK legislation by the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010.

The Lower Greensand heaths of West Sussex occur along the Folkestone Sands and Hythe Beds and are within the Wealden Greensand National Character Area (NCA). The heaths are strongly acidic and typified by leached podzolic soils with a scattering of nutrient-poor bogs, mires and small open waters. Extending from the Surrey/Hampshire borders the Sussex area arcs around the western end of the basin of the Weald and terminates in the south-east around Washington. Approaching 90% of the West Sussex heathland has been lost and what remains is a fragmented relic adjoining the larger heaths of the Wealden Heaths Phase II SPA situated in Surrey and Hampshire with an area extending to 3923.8 ha and also the Thames Basin Heaths SPA. The total area of the Sussex Greensand heaths is 1017 ha of which 428 ha is recorded as open heath.

A.E. Knox in his *Ornithological Rambles in Sussex* (1849) provides a clue to the nature of the heaths in the mid-nineteenth century describing an undulating common with heather and gorse. He noted: "I proceeded my way some miles over a wild country where other than the Stonechat in every little copse where dwarf oak and blackthorn had grown a Nightingale sang regularly."

The heaths are a man-made landscape, clearance of forest areas having commenced in the Mesolithic period and occurred more extensively during the Neolithic and Bronze Ages (Rackham 1986). Heathland was an important resource for providing for the needs of the rural population, for example with fuel, grazing, bedding and, commercially, glass making, peat extraction, broom making etc. However, this usefulness waned as the needs of society changed and heaths came to be "considered dreary and desolate wastes" (Rackham 1986). With the collapse of agricultural and commercial use and consequent abandonment, invasive species such as bracken *Pteridium aquilinum*, silver birch *Betula pendula* and purple moor grass *Molinia caerulea* took hold resulting by the early twentieth century in the sites being considered only useful for such purposes as forestry (mainly coniferous but also chestnut coppicing), housing and mineral extraction.

It was realised in the latter years of the twentieth century that such a rare and fragile habitat was under threat of disappearance. With this acknowledgement many heaths were designated as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs), some became Local Nature Reserves (LNRs) or Sites of Nature Conservation Interest (SNCIs), the latter more recently to have been renamed as Local Wildlife Sites (LWSs), and the Sussex Greensand Wealden Heaths area was granted Important Bird Area (IBA) status in 2007. Falling initially within the area managed by the Sussex Downs Conservation Board a fillip to heathland restoration in West Sussex was a five-year HLF award in excess of £600,000 which enabled, in 2002, substantial restoration to commence. Heathlands then came under the remit of the South Downs Joint Committee and in 2011 the South Downs National Park Authority (SDNPA) took over and with a recent award of £1.4 million from the HLF and other partners work will continue to preserve and enhance heaths but with a particular emphasis on education and developing connectivity between sites.

The Wealden Heaths Breeding Bird Survey (West Sussex)

The survey was initiated in 1998 as the Thames Basin and Wealden Heaths Breeding Bird Survey by representatives of the Surrey Bird Club, the Sussex Ornithological Society, the Hampshire Ornithological Society, the Berkshire county bird recorder and the RSPB, to provide data on the existing Wealden Heaths SPA Phase I and II, the prospective Thames Basin SPA and

a possible future Phase III Wealden Heaths SPA. The West Sussex Wealden Greensand heaths currently meet the SPA criteria for Nightjar, and Woodlark numbers are not far below the criteria, but Dartford Warbler numbers are well below the required criteria and consequently it is not as yet possible to submit an SPA application. The Thames Basin SPA was designated in 2005 and the Sussex survey was renamed the Wealden Heaths Breeding Bird Survey (West Sussex) (WHBBS).

Additional to the aforementioned aim the objectives of the survey are to provide data to assist in management decisions and enable results to be measured thereafter, to provide a long run of data to help protect the sites from damaging developments either within or adjacent to them, and to ensure that results are retained in the Sussex Ornithological Society database.

The scope and methodology of the survey were agreed at an inaugural meeting by a steering group to ensure that the data were robust whilst the methodology was kept relatively simple to allow for changes in surveyors over a lengthy time period. Twenty-one relevant species considered typical of the heathland and afforested heaths of Berkshire, Surrey, Hampshire and Sussex were chosen with particular emphasis on the three species listed in Annex I of the EU Birds Directive: Nightjar, Woodlark and Dartford Warbler. Tree Pipit and Stonechat were added as priority species. Several red-listed birds of conservation concern (Eaton *et al.* 2015), namely Woodcock, Linnet, Yellowhammer and Turtle Dove, were also included within the survey.

An outbreak of Foot and Mouth Disease in 2001 led to the cancellation of the survey in that year, and although Black Down, Woolbeding Common, Lavington Common and Lords Piece received limited coverage, results from 2001 have been excluded from the analyses.

Survey methodology

The survey period is from late February through to the middle of July. The aim is for surveyors to cover all parts of each site on at least four occasions, including two visits on still, mild, sunny mornings early in the season to locate Woodlarks, and two visits between April and late June to locate Dartford Warblers and other species. At least one evening visit between late May and mid-July should ideally be extended to one hour after sunset in order to locate Nightjars. Surveyors are asked to plot the locations of pairs or territorial males on maps of their sites and to then enter on recording sheets the estimated numbers of pairs or territorial males of each species in each 1-km square. Numbers which are thought to be underestimates are written in brackets and unless verified otherwise these underestimates are the numbers used in the analyses.

The surveyed sites

Of the initially identified 26 possible sites, all listed in Table 1, seven were found to be either forested or heavily wooded heath, and others such as Verdley Wood and Coombe Hill/Harting Coombe/Tullecombe had early-stage re-planting and received only limited monitoring for two or three years until the open areas were lost. Other sites dropped included the golf courses at Wheatshaf Enclosure and Hurston Warren due to access difficulties, and a number of heaths near Storrington were abandoned during the early years because surveyors reported high levels of recreational pressure (mainly dog-walking) and a lack of target species. Three further sites only received intermittent monitoring. The survey therefore has focused on the eleven most regularly monitored sites covering the principal Greensand heathlands of the county (see Figure 1), varying from the high Hythe Bed heaths of the north-west ridge (Black Down at 280 m above sea level is the highest point in Sussex) to those along the Rother valley, which being lower and on the Folkestone Sands have a microclimate that is generally warmer due to the freely draining substrata (Edwards and Hodge 1993). It is these eleven sites that are individually described in this article. Table 1 indicates the years in which each of the sites were surveyed.

	Location	Area (ha)	Height (m)	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Weavers Down	SU8130	82.7	136																		
Chapel Common	SU8128	98.2	140																		
Lynchmere and Stanley	SU8530	106	150																		
Black Down	SU9130	91	280																		
West Heath	SU7822	41.1	70																		
Iping Common	SU8422	41.1	50																		
Stedham Common	SU8521	35.2	60																		
Woolbeding	SU8725	190	182																		
Ambersham and Heyshott	SU9119	450	52																		
Lavington and Duncton	SU9418	125.5	50																		
Coates and Lords Piece	SU9916	89.7	36																		
Wheatshaf Common	SU8329	78.1																			
Greenhills and Oakreeds	SU8829	76.5																			
Verdley Wood	SU9026	34.9																			
Coombe Hill	SU8025	15.8																			
Former King Edward VII	SU8824	3.8																			
Great Common	SU8824	106.3																			
North Heath	SU8924	117.6																			
Fenced and Bexley	SU9024	91.5																			
Hesworth Common	TQ0019	38.4																			
Midhurst Common	SU8721	59.8																			
Wiggonholt Common	TQ0615	84.4																			
Hurston Warren	TQ0716	78.6																			
Sullington Warren	TQ0914	27.3																			
Heath Common	TQ1114	16.1																			
Washington Common	TQ1113	29.4																			
Broad Halfpeny	SU9817	14.5																			
Grafham Common	SU9319	38.0																			

Table 1. The principal heathlands with representative site 1-km square grid references, areas, approximate maximum heights above sea level, and years surveyed. Green fill, full survey completed; pink fill, limited survey; purple fill, no survey for Nightjars or Woodcock but full survey for other species completed; no fill, no survey conducted at all. Note: in 2001 surveys were limited by Foot and Mouth Disease restrictions.

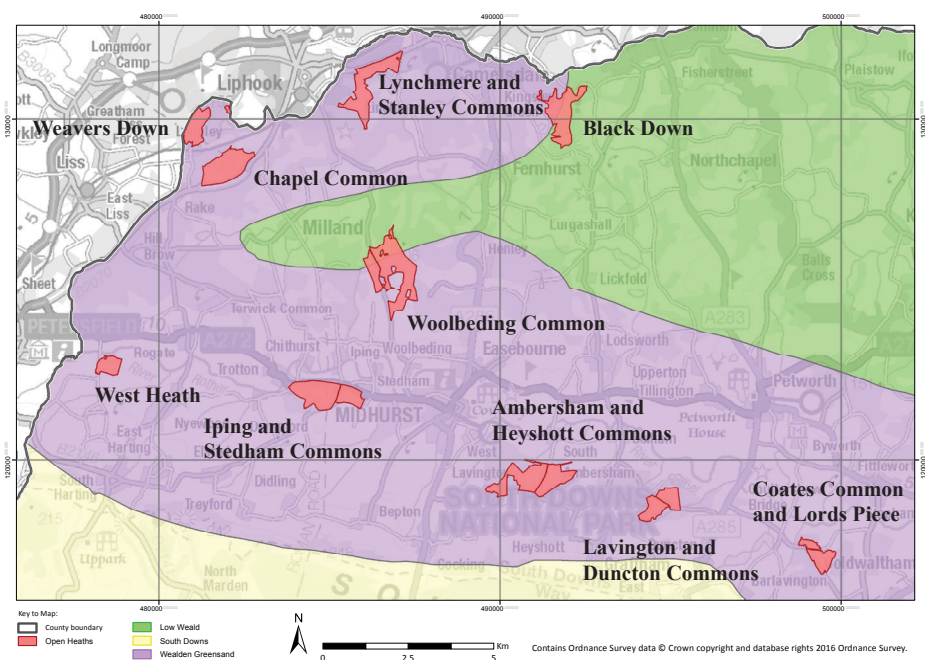


Figure 1. The locations of the principal West Sussex heathlands in relation to the underlying geological areas.

Site descriptions and management comments

Weavers Down Conservation status: partly falls within the Wealden Heaths Phase II SPA. The same area is also designated as part of Woolmer Forest SSSI. Ownership: Old Thorns Golf Hotel and Country Estate Limited. Underlying geology: Folkstone Sands.

This is a tongue of heath on the Sussex/Hampshire border situated between, to the west, the Hampshire part of Weavers Down and Old Thorns Hotel complex (including a golf course), and to the east, private ownerships including Forest Mere Spa. An undulating site varying between 96 and 136 m above sea level, the heath slopes to the south and east with a thin plateau area on the north-west boundary adjoining the golf course. The habitat is varied and comprises to the northern part of the site mixed conifer and deciduous woodland, open heather and gorse heath interspersed with both scrub and mature Scots pine *Pinus sylvestris*, extensive purple moor grass, bracken and a small area of bilberry (see Photograph 1). The southern half of the site is good quality acid grassland interspersed with gorse and Scots pine and supports feeding Woodlarks (see Photograph 1).

Scrub clearance, mowing, scraping, birch cutting and bare area formation are ongoing at the northern end of the site. An application to turn the acid grassland into a golf course remains under consideration by the SDNPA. Data provided by the WHBBS have enabled a strong case to be built to oppose the application. The site is vulnerable as it is so thin but recreation use has been, to date, less than that on most of the other WHBBS sites.

As shown in Figure 2, Nightjar numbers at Weavers Down have not exceeded two during the survey period, and Woodlark numbers have remained relatively constant at between four and



Photograph 1. *The northern part of Weavers Down (above) showing the open heather and gorse heath; and the southern aspect towards the acid grassland at Weavers Down (below).*

seven territories, apart from an unusually high 11 territories in 2000. Dartford Warblers commenced breeding again in 2012 after the 2008-2009 and 2009-2010 winters with one to three pairs recorded although there were no records for 2015. Previous to the cold winters and in the years 2003-2008 numbers varied between six and 12 territories. Recent Tree Pipit numbers vary between one and two whilst Stonechats have slightly recovered from the zero counts in 2013 and 2014 with two territories in 2015.

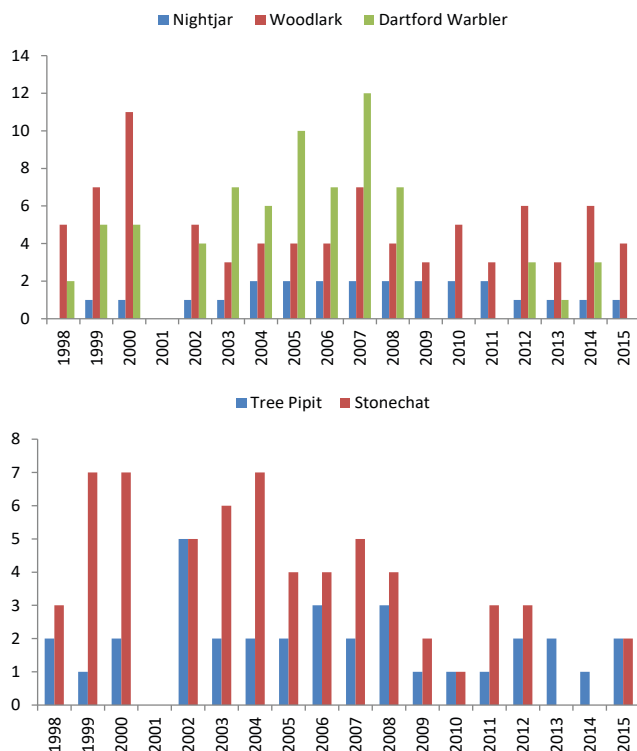


Figure 2. Numbers of territories of the five priority species recorded at Weavers Down.

Chapel Common Conservation status: SSSI. Ownership: private individual. Underlying geology: Hythe Beds.

Adjoining the former main A3 road this site has been considered to have the best acid grassland in West Sussex for insects (Edwards and Hodge 1993). Surrounded by a variety of deciduous and mixed deciduous/conifer woodland, it comprises a diverse mosaic of habitat including a large acid grassland area, open heath with mature gorse stands, heather, wet areas, mature pine and birch, and bracken and birch scrub (see Photograph 2). There were extensive bare areas, caused partially by the historic use of the site for motor-cycling, but mosses and lichens have now covered much of these areas. Grazed by rabbits *Oryctolagus cuniculus*, the site slopes gently from the south-west down to the north-east.

The open heath was vastly improved after Higher Level Stewardship (HLS) investment with, in particular, extensive scrub, birch sapling and pine removal. Grazing has been undertaken and regular management continues to control regrowth. The main parking area adjoins the acid grassland and, with a number of other access points available, increasing recreational pressure is a problem over the entire site. The heath is subject to the future plans of the freehold owner.

This site has been the most inconsistently monitored of the eleven main heaths due to observer changes and lapses. Woodlark has been the most stable of the priority species with between two and six territories since 2007, as shown in Figure 3. The fall in Nightjar numbers to just one in



Photograph 2. *The western aspect of Chapel Common (above) taken from the east of the heath showing the rabbit-grazed areas; and the acid grassland area of Chapel Common (below).*

2015 is disappointing as is the nil return for Dartford Warblers which have yet to recover from the severe winters of 2008-2009 and 2009-2010.

Tree Pipits declined to just one territory in 2015 and after following a similar trend Stonechats have made a welcome return with four territories in 2015. Although scarce on the WHBBS survey

sites, Skylarks *Alauda arvensis* have bred irregularly on Chapel Common with six territories in 2007. Subsequently this species has been absent since 2011 probably due to recreation pressures.

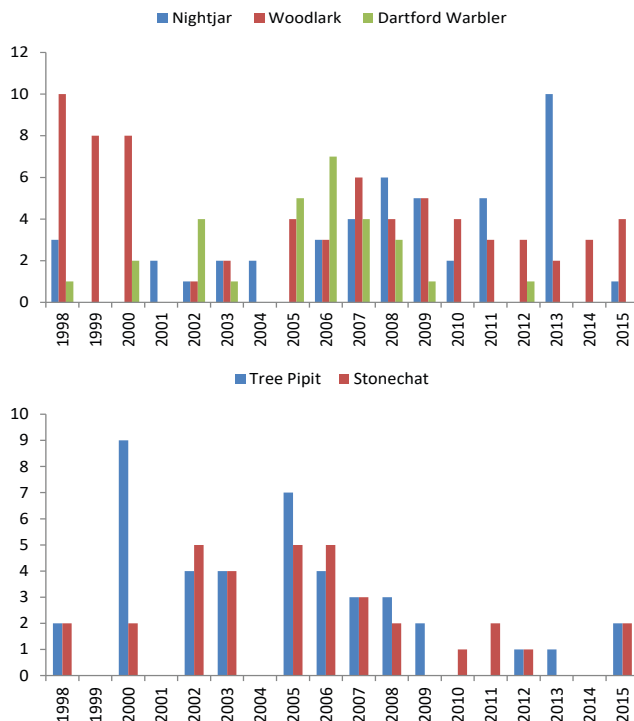


Figure 3. Numbers of territories of the five priority species recorded at Chapel Common.

Lynchmere and Stanley Commons Conservation status: LNR. Ownership: the Lynchmere Society. Underlying geology: Hythe Beds.

Situated on the north-west ridge close to the borders of Hampshire and Surrey the north-east end of these commons is separately fenced and comprises birch wood pasture, mature pine, open areas of gorse, heather and bracken, and bare areas (see Photograph 3). Close to a residential area, this area is favoured for recreational activity particularly dog-walking, as is the area immediately to the west and south which has a similar habitat. The southern third of the heath, identified as Stanley Common, is more typical of wooded and open heathland comprising heather, gorse, bracken and bare areas with mature pine woodland adjoining. Set further away from roads it receives less recreational pressure and over the survey period has held most of the heathland specialists including Dartford Warblers in 2007.

Purchased in 1998 by the Lynchmere Society with donations from individuals and organisations and a grant from the HLF on condition that it was restored to a lowland heath habitat, this heath has been the subject of major restoration work undertaken mainly by the society membership and other volunteers. The Lynchmere Society organises regular volunteer restoration and management work and also arranges for summer grazing by Belted Galloway cattle. Recent results have

been poor and it is hoped that current management, particularly on the southern part of Stanley Common, will enhance future prospects.

Of the priority species only Woodlarks have been consistently recorded in the last three years of the survey (see Figure 4). Nightjars were present, albeit in low numbers, in all years until 2011; thereafter the only record was of a single territory in 2013. Dartford Warbler numbers have always been low and Stonechat numbers have been even lower. Tree Pipit numbers were at reasonable



Photograph 3. *The separately-fenced northern part of Lynchmere Common (above); and the recently cleared area of Stanley Common (below).*

levels but fell to two in 2012 and have yet to recover. On the positive side the site is regularly occupied by Common Redstarts and this is the most successful heath for this species of all those monitored for the WHBBS. In 2015 ten territories were identified suggesting that the site could benefit from a nest box scheme.

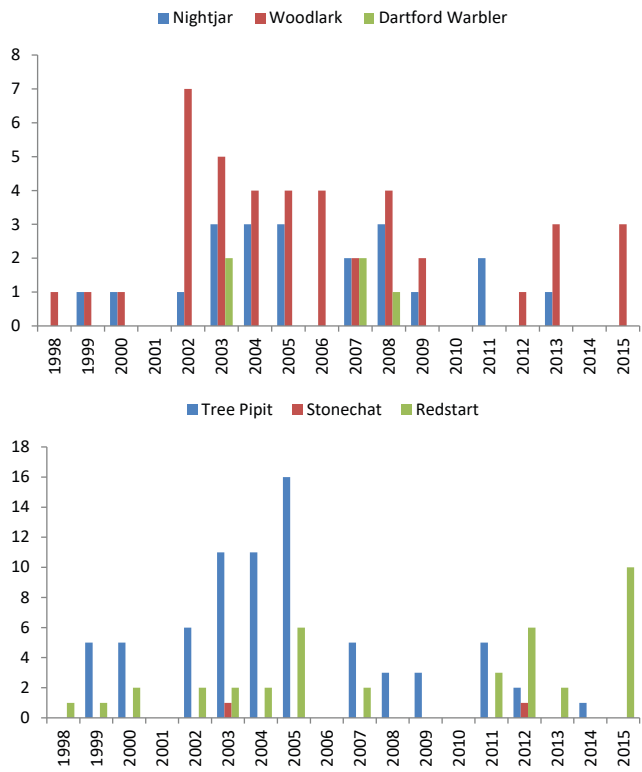


Figure 4. Numbers of territories of the five priority species and also Common Redstarts recorded at Lynchmere and Stanley Commons.

Black Down Conservation status: LNR. Ownership: the National Trust. Underlying geology: Hythe Beds.

This is a prominent Greensand ridge on the Sussex/Surrey border and towers, at 280 m above sea level, over the Low Weald of West Sussex and south-west Surrey. Accessed from the northern boundary, a level plateau terminates vertiginously at its southern tip. The plateau area is partially wooded, comprising mainly mature pine and birch, with some oak *Quercus robur* and rowan *Sorbus aucuparia* (see Photograph 4). The ground layer is a mosaic of heathers, bilberry and bracken, with more open patches of mosses and lichens. The site is also notable for a small area of boggy vegetation and ponds. The western flanks slope gently, and support a mix of heathers, gorse and some bracken, whilst the much steeper eastern side supports mixed pine/birch/oak woodland and an impressive hanger of beech *Fagus sylvatica*. Ancient dew ponds are a feature of this area, as are the former borrow pits which are evidence of the mining of chert.



Photograph 4. *The western aspect at Black Down across a dew pond (above); and the central plateaux area of Black Down (below).*

Major woodland and scrub removal has occurred, particularly over the past decade, resulting in extensive open heath areas with a scattering of mature pine and birch. Scrub control and restoration work continue and fencing of the site facilitates conservation cattle grazing. The National Trust erects annual guidance notices concerning breeding birds, and the regular maintenance of the hilltop walk together with the steepness of the flanks provide some relief from

recreational pressures, but being close to the Surrey town of Haslemere, and since restoration, these pressures have increased.

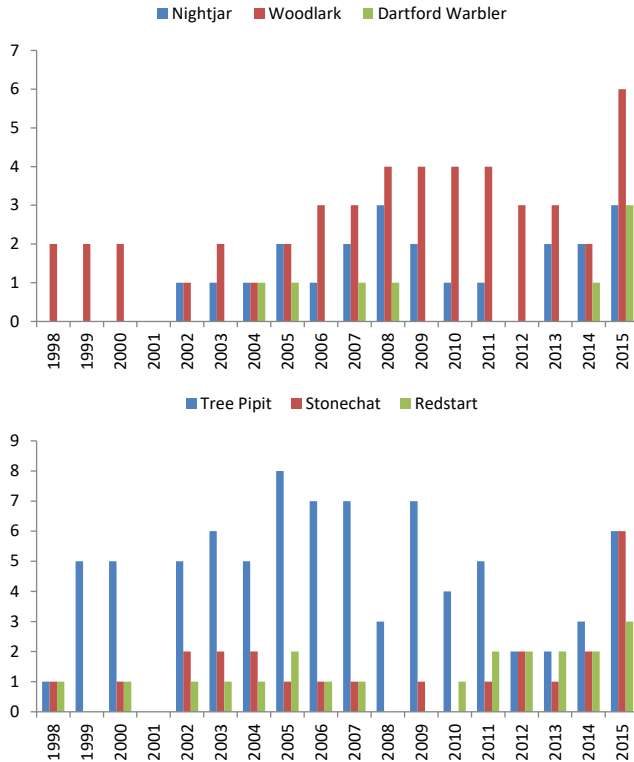


Figure 5. Numbers of territories of the five priority species and also Common Redstarts recorded at Black Down.

Nightjar numbers at no more than three have been low throughout the survey whilst Woodlark and Tree Pipit populations have been relatively stable (see Figure 5). Dartford Warblers had been recorded on only five occasions until three were found in 2015, and a similar trend occurred with Stonechats with six recorded also in 2015. Common Redstarts were not found in three of the survey years and numbers when recorded varied between one and three.

West Heath Common Conservation status: LWS. Ownership: Cemex UK. Underlying geology: Folkstone Sands.

One of the very few remaining working sandpits in the South Downs National Park, this site was in 1947 a fine *Calluna* heath (Rose 1991-2). As the pit expanded, counts of all species declined. However, as worked areas lapse, restoration is beginning and once the site is worked out the plans are that it will be restored to heath with a sandy cliff suitable for Sand Martins *Riparia riparia*, and hopefully it will be under the control of a conservation organisation. Numbers of all territories recorded have obviously fallen due to the current commercial works but earlier records show that a potentially diverse number of species could return during and after restoration.

Of the five priority species, a single Nightjar territory was regular until 2012 and recorded again in 2015. Woodlarks and Stonechats have been irregularly recorded and other than two records of the latter species in 2004 all other reports have been of single territories. There was a single Tree Pipit record in 2004 and Dartford Warblers have not been recorded. Of other species the most abundant is Yellowhammer with regular counts of two to six, followed by Linnet (one to six), Green and Great Spotted Woodpeckers (two or three) and Common Whitethroat (one or two). Skylarks were present in eight years but have not been recorded after 2010.

Iping Common Conservation status: SSSI and LNR. Ownership: Sussex Wildlife Trust (SWT) except an area of 9 ha owned by the Leconfield Estate and leased via West Sussex County Council (WSCC) to the SWT. Underlying geology: Folkestone Sands.

This is an undulating landscape with open south-facing heather banks, gorse, bracken, wet heath and bog, extensive purple moor grass and scattered mature and scrub pine and birch (see Photograph 5). For management comments see the section about Stedham Common.

The data indicate stable populations of Nightjar and Woodlark whilst Dartford Warblers are recolonising after the 2009-2010 winter having reached a peak of 16 territories in 2008 (see Figure 6). Tree Pipit numbers peaked with 11 pairs in 2000 and 10 in 2004, and thereafter have

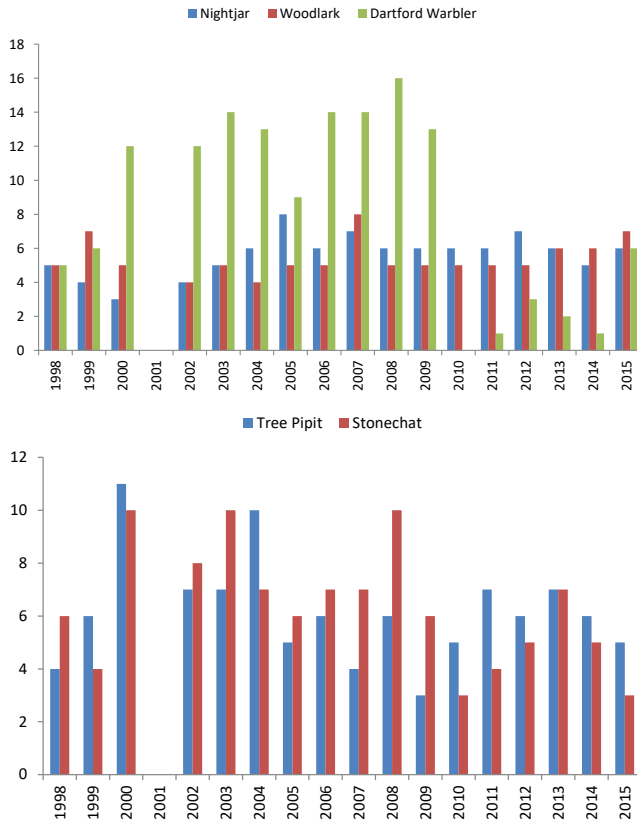


Figure 6. Numbers of territories of the five priority species recorded at Iping Common.

remained stable at between three and seven pairs. Stonechat numbers followed a similar trend and since a peak in 2008 have also varied between three and seven territories.



Photograph 5. *The southern aspect over the heath at Iping Common, taken from the ridge path (above); and the southern area of the heath, typical Woodlark and Nightjar habitat (below).*

Stedham Common Conservation status: SSSI and LNR. Ownership: SWT. Underlying geology: Folkestone Sands.

The freehold of Stedham Common was acquired by the SWT in 1985 and major restoration work was undertaken during 1988-1990. Overall, the habitat type is similar to that of Iping Common but it is more wooded with extensive mature birch and pine (a second phase of pine

woodland removal occurred approximately ten years ago) (see Photograph 6). Crane (2013) describes in greater detail the habitat and analyses the results of a Common Birds Census (CBC) study in the years 1993-2012.



Photograph 6. *The south-western aspect at Stedham Common, taken from the central path, showing the re-growth heather and birch scrub (above); and the eastern aspect (below).*

Reacting well to the initial restoration work, both Nightjar and Woodlark numbers were stable thereafter at low numbers of between one and four territories (see Figure 7). The situation has

been similar for Tree Pipit with a high count in 1999 of six territories. Stonechats proved to be more volatile, being recorded as absent from 2009 to 2012. Dartford Warblers have not as yet recolonised after the winters of 2008-2009 and 2009-2010; before that there had been between four and six territories.

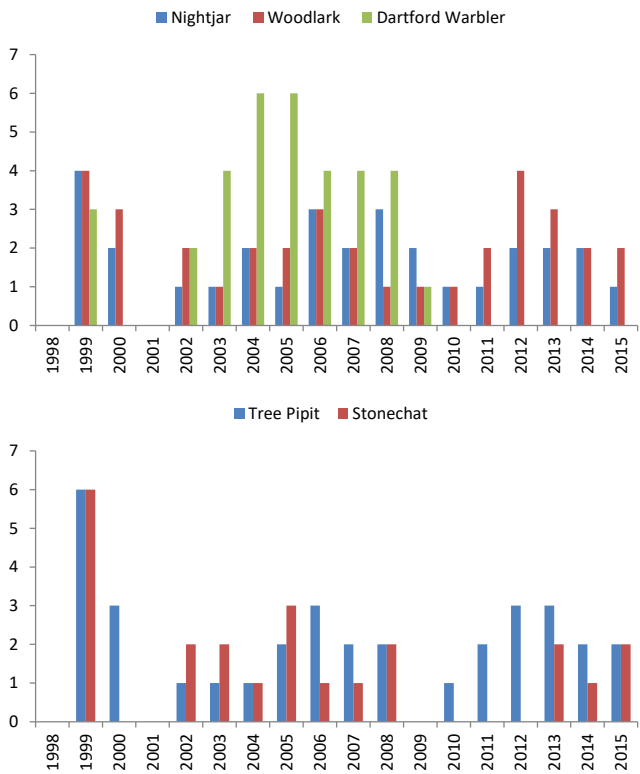


Figure 7. *Numbers of territories of the five priority species recorded at Stedham Common.*

Split by the Elsted road, Iping and Stedham Commons are managed by the SWT as one unit. Situated close to Midhurst and the surrounding villages, Iping Common is particularly popular for recreation including dog-walking. Stedham Common, which is fenced and more recently restored, does not have its own car park and tends to be used less; it has been cattle-grazed since 2000. An application has been made to fence Iping Common but no decision had been made by the time this article was published. Both sites are regularly subject to management operations including tree and scrub birch clearance, formation of bare areas, occasional controlled burns, heather cutting and turf stripping. The SWT currently receives HLS funding for routine management to Iping but not for larger restoration projects. In 2015 the Sussex Ornithological Society provided funds to assist this latter aspect of the work on both sites.

Woolbeding Common Conservation status: SSSI. Ownership: the National Trust. Underlying geology: Hythe Beds.

Situated at its highest point 190 m above sea level, this common comprises a mosaic of habitats including heathland, old pasture woodland trees, secondary woodland, scrub and extensive bracken (see Photograph 7). Much of the site slopes, in places steeply, to the south-west. Accessed from the Redford/Midhurst road it also adjoins the recent and extensive development of the former King Edward VII Hospital. With over 300 new residential units having been built, this will inevitably lead to a major increase in recreational use which will need to be carefully monitored to ensure the future integrity of the common and its wildlife.



Photograph 7. *The northern aspect at Woolbeding Common, taken from Older Hill, showing the recent mowing (above); and the Older Hill area with typical gorse, bracken and heather (below).*

The site is actively managed by the National Trust to provide a mosaic of habitats and management includes scrub and bracken control including extensive mowing and targeted grazing to ensure variable structures of uneven age. Guidance is offered to the public regarding disturbance of ground-nesting birds during the breeding season.

Of the five priority species, only Nightjars have sustained any consistency, with numbers falling from a high of six in 2004 to a regular two to three in the latter years (see Figure 8). Formerly an excellent site for Tree Pipits, numbers have fallen from a maximum of 20 in 2000 to no more than three over the past five years. Similarly, Woodlark and Stonechat numbers have dropped. The decrease in numbers recorded for four of the priority species is significant and although there are no obvious reasons for such sharp drops it could be speculated that a period of intense management followed by the adjoining development may be relevant factors.

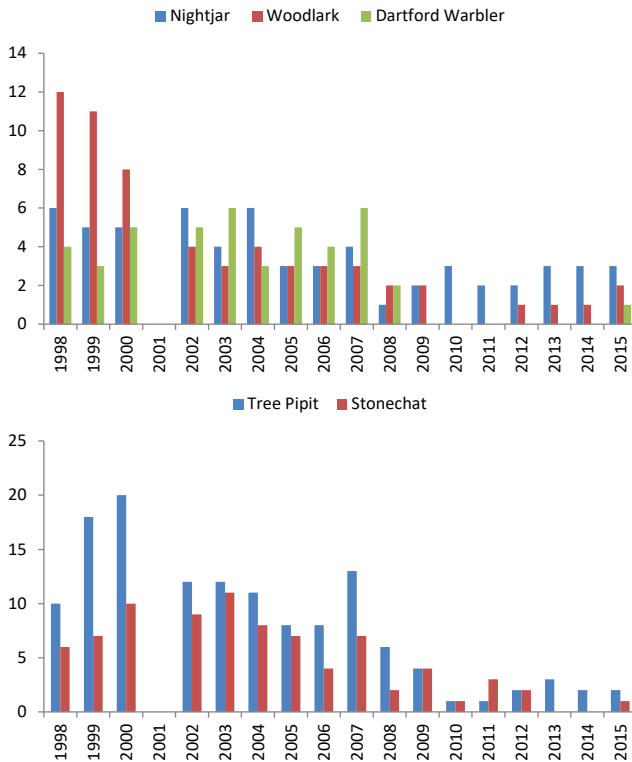


Figure 8. Numbers of territories of the five priority species recorded at Woolbeding Common.

Ambersham and Heyshott Commons including Goldballs Plantation Conservation status: partly SSSI (SSSI area 146 ha). Ownership: Cowdray Estate. Underlying geology: Folkestone Sands.

The largest area of open heathland in West Sussex this site excluding Goldballs Plantation was considered by the late botanist Francis Rose (1991-2) to be of “international importance ecologically”. The highest part of the heath is the plateau of Ambersham Common at 55.80 m and

comprises extensive heather stretches with gorse stands, pine and some birch (see Photograph 8). The west side slopes gently down to the Ambersham road whilst to the east the site falls steeply with a number of dry gullies and beyond a large area of conifer plantation. Heyshott Common lies to the west of the road at a lower level and is typified by large expanses of open heath including acidic marshy grassland, numerous valley bogs, extensive bracken, dry dwarf shrub heath, wet dwarf shrub heath, running water and bare ground.



Photograph 8. *The north-western aspect across Heyshott Common, taken from the parking area (above); and typical heather at Ambersham Common favoured by Dartford Warblers (below).*

Additionally, there is semi-natural broadleaved and conifer woodland, and further to the west is Goldballs Plantation comprising mainly conifers with some broadleaved trees; after thinning and upon maturity the clear-felled blocks provide rotational open areas.

A management plan was drawn up in 1993 by English Nature to deal urgently with the loss of open heath to invasive successional birch and pine scrub and bracken. The resultant management work and a follow-up based upon a revision of the management plan in 2002 proved successful but lapses in management during the latter part of the previous and early part of the current decade led to extensive and intrusive succession regrowth re-occurring. Subsequently active management has been reinstated by the SDNPA acting as agents to the Cowdray Estate.

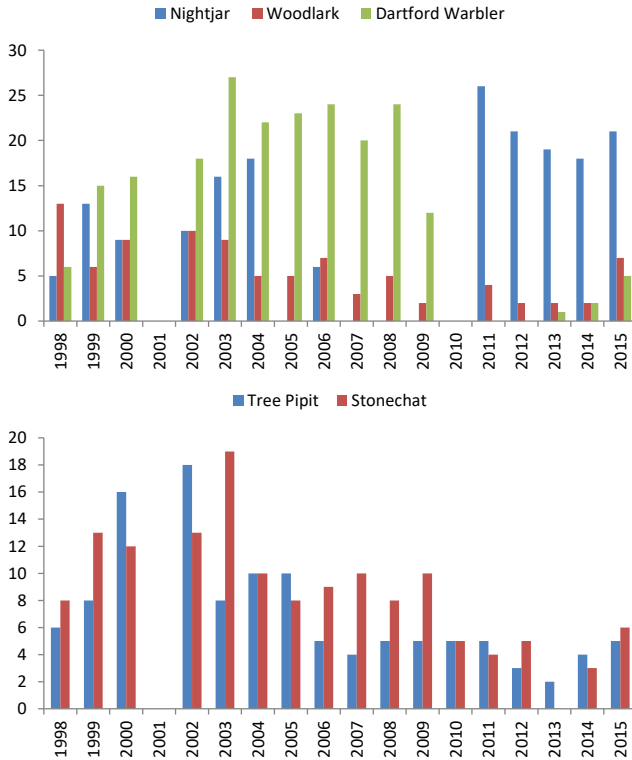


Figure 9. Numbers of territories of the five priority species at Ambersham and Heyshott Commons.

Monitoring of Nightjars has been sporadic but recent comprehensive surveying identified 21 churring males in 2015, and a previous count of 26 in 2011 proved to be the highest annual figure from any of the monitored sites over the 18 years of the WHBBS (see Figure 9). Up until 2010 the site was also important for Dartford Warblers with numbers peaking at 27 pairs in 2003. Woodlarks react positively to ground clearance work and the increase in 2015 to six pairs is likely to have been due to recent management operations. Both Tree Pipit and Stonechat numbers peaked during the first years of the century and it can be speculated that the settling down of the heath after extensive restoration work and lack of access due to the Foot and Mouth Disease

outbreak in 2001 had a positive effect. Thereafter, a fall in numbers was evident and populations appear to have stabilised albeit with low numbers.

Lavington Common, Lavington Plantation and Duncton Common Conservation status: Lavington Common, SSSI; Duncton Common, LWS. Ownership: Lavington Common and Plantation, the National Trust; Duncton Common, Leconfield Estate plus three small individually-owned parcels of wooded heath. Areas: Lavington Common 31.11 ha, Lavington Plantation 33.65 ha, Duncton Common 60.79 ha. Underlying geology: Folkestone Sands.



Photograph 9. *The retained forestry Scots pines on Lavington Plantation with bracken and scrub (above); and the heather-dominated Lavington Common favoured by Dartford Warblers (below).*

Lavington Common and Plantation comprise two distinct areas but have been recorded as one unit. Lavington Common is dominantly heather, mainly *Calluna* with areas of bell heather and cross-leaved heath, bracken, wet heath and areas of mixed woodland including rhododendrons *Rhododendron sp.* (see Photograph 9). Lavington Plantation was acquired in 2001 by the Robus Trust and gifted to the National Trust. The conifer plantation was cleared and the site now comprises a diverse mosaic of heather, gorse, bracken, purple moor grass, bare and wet heath, mature Scots pine remaining from the forestry period, and woodland edge deciduous trees.

Duncton Common adjoins Lavington Common and is a mix of deciduous and conifer woodland and forestry, with bracken, holly *Ilex aquifolium* and some rhododendron under-storey.

Lavington Plantation benefitted from an HLS agreement to undertake the initial clearance. The present management of both areas owned by the National Trust is manual eradication of scrub to promote, for the characteristic plants, a varied structured of uneven age with the addition of grazing by Belted Galloway cattle on the fenced area of Lavington Plantation. The latter area suffers particularly from birch scrub invasion. Duncton Common is lightly managed as forestry with most recently thinning out of the Scots pine occurring and rhododendron control. Part has been reserved for an extension of the adjoining Heath End sandpit. Recent advice by the SDNPA suggests that permission for the proposed extension will not be given.

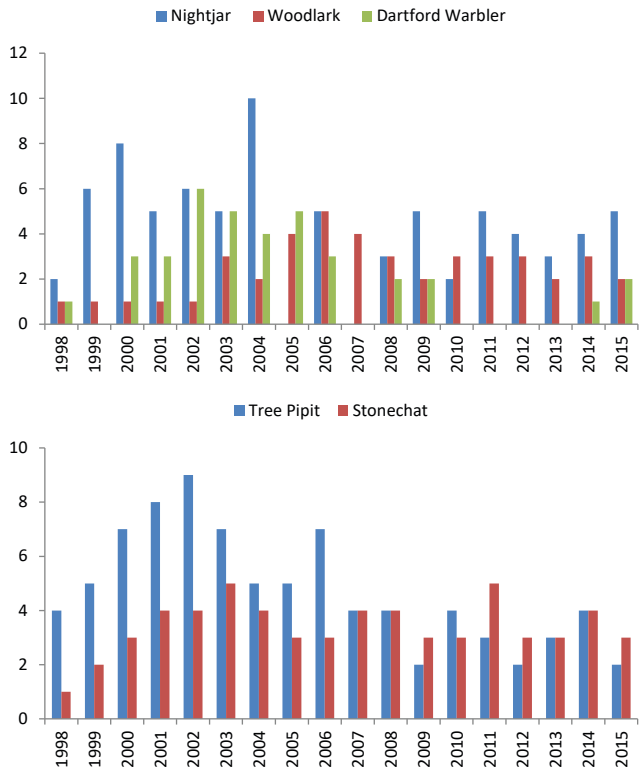


Figure 10. Numbers of territories of the five priority species at Lavington and Duncton Commons.

Dartford Warblers ceased breeding in 2010 but then a single pair bred, for the first time, on the former plantation in 2014; in 2015 two territories were shared between Lavington Plantation and Lavington Common (see Figure 10). Nightjar, Woodlark and Stonechat populations, although not high in numbers, appear stable. Tree Pipit numbers have declined but appear to have stabilised since 2007 at between two and four pairs. Lavington Plantation has a greater matrix of habitat than the heather-dominated Lavington Common, and holds a greater variety and number of species although the latter with its high heather content tends to be more attractive to Dartford Warblers.

Coates Common including Lords Piece Conservation status: SSSI. Ownership: the Barlavington Estate. Underlying geology: Folkestone Sands.

Managed principally for the re-introduction and establishment of field crickets *Gryllus campestris* there are two distinct areas. Lords Piece (area 37.5 ha) is a fenced undulating triangular heath comprising acid grassland with mown areas of bracken and heather with a variety of either small stands or individual conifer and deciduous trees of various ages (see Photograph 10). The second area is to the west of Coates Castle and is also fenced and comprises mainly deciduous wood pasture, some areas of conifer, heather and bracken, and bare areas. With limited access this site provides greater privacy and is currently used by Woodlarks.

Lords Piece suffered badly from invasive and maturing succession birch with very few open areas. Active management during the late 1990s under the Countryside Stewardship Heathland

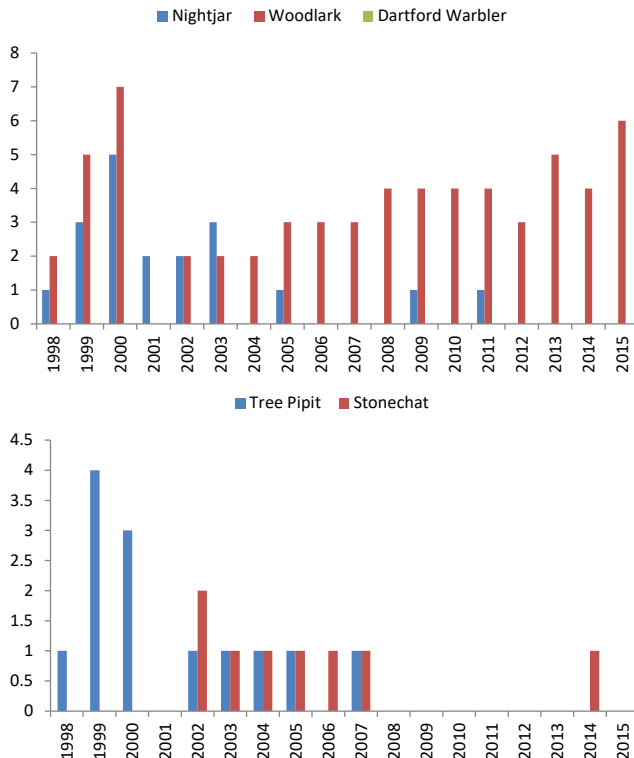


Figure 11. Numbers of territories of the five priority species at Coates Common and Lords Piece.



Photograph 10. *The south-eastern aspect across Lords Piece, taken from the north-west corner (above); and the wood pasture at Coates Common (below).*

Restoration Programme led to thorough clearance occurring particularly by scraping which led initially to a devastated looking landscape with the inevitable local outcry. Once the habitat recovered and it was fenced it became a very popular dog-walking site and this allied to regular low mowing for the field crickets has limited the number of breeding bird species. The wood pasture area adjoining Coates Castle is largely controlled by grazing.

A maximum of five Nightjars were recorded in 2000, and thereafter numbers remained extremely low; since 2011 there have been no records at all (see Figure 11). Woodlark is the only regular breeding species of the five priority species and, surprisingly, despite the high activity levels, is doing well. Very occasionally Tree Pipits and Stonechats have bred but other than a single attempt in 2014 by the latter species breeding has not been recorded since 2007. It is disappointing that the more protected area of Coates Castle has not provided more records.

Broad Halfpenny and Graffham Common These two sites have recently been added to the WHBBS. The former is owned by the Bignor Estate and is in the process of regenerating after felling of conifer forestry. Both mowed and grazed it is fully fenced and without public access, and will prove to be an interesting experiment by contrasting its success or otherwise with the adjoining Lords Piece. Woodlarks have already been reported breeding. Graffham Common was purchased by the SWT in 2010 (with financial assistance from the Sussex Ornithological Society) as a substantial addition to a smaller area already owned. It lies between Lavington Common and Ambersham and Heyshott Commons. Originally covered in dense rhododendron and conifer forestry and with the benefit of a large acid pond the restoration has already brought in heathland specialists including Woodlark and Nightjar. This site was included within the WHBBS until 2004 but afforestation caused it to be dropped.

Other more minor listed sites

CoombeHill/Harting Coombe/Tullecombe Situated on the Greensand ridge to the far west of the county, Tullecombe and Harting Coombe comprise variously aged conifer plantation interspersed with chestnut coppicing, scrub birch and occasional heather glades. Clearance by felling or other management provides areas temporarily suitable for Woodlarks and Yellowhammers, and possibly Nightjars, Stonechats and Tree Pipits; the mature forestry is likely to attract Siskins *Carduelis spinus* and Crossbills *Loxia curvirostra*. Coombe Hill is a reservoir area with maturing conifer plantation but still retaining a gorse/heather matrix with open areas and has regularly attracted breeding Woodlarks. In 1998 an area including Rogate Common recorded nine birds holding territory, and Woodlarks have bred regularly since albeit in smaller numbers.

King Edward VII Hospital site, and Great, North Heath, Fenced/Bexleyhill Commons These are a contiguous group of forestry and wooded heathland sites situated on the north-west ridge above and to the north of Midhurst at between 100 and 191 m above sea level. Managed in blocks of Scots pine, larch *Larix decidua*, Corsican pine *Pinus nigra*, Norwegian spruce *Picea abies* and sweet chestnut *Castanea sativa*, felling and coppicing provide temporary open habitat. Thinning, of particularly Scots pine, results in mature blocks providing a potential habitat for Nightjars. Crossbills have been recorded as present whilst cleared areas for pylons and mains electricity poles provide open areas that offer a more stable open habitat. The afforested nature of these areas is likely to provide a viable habitat for Siskins, Lesser Redpolls *Acanthis cabaret* and Woodcock. Great Common is situated adjoining the large residential development of the former King Edward VII Hospital site and similarly to Woolbeding Common must anticipate a much greater leisure use and disturbance in the future.

Verdley Wood Situated immediately to the north and some 100 m below Bexleyhill Common, this site is now a conifer plantation with some chestnut coppicing and small patches of heather. Prior to afforestation it was surveyed for three years from 1998-2000; in 2000 one Tree Pipit, three Stonechats, two Common Whitethroats, two Linnets and two Yellowhammers were recorded.

Greenhills and Oakreeds Woods This is a steeply south-facing sloping site situated to the west of Fernhurst village. The management is mainly of conifer forestry with sweet chestnut coppicing and at the lowest level a small deciduous plantation of oak.

Midhurst Common This is a registered common and is designated as a Local Wildlife Site. It is largely conifer plantation with some cleared areas and rides, remnant wet and dry heath, semi-natural woodland and a large disused sandpit which until 1990 had been threatened with a large residential development. In the early 1980s Little Ringed Plovers bred in this latter area as did Woodlarks. The Friends of Midhurst Common undertake regular work and there are plans for more extensive management including connecting with Stedham Common. The site is situated within easy walking distance of Midhurst town and is consequently heavily used for recreation.

Hesworth Common This site is owned by Fittleworth Parish Council and is designated as a Local Wildlife Site. Management of the birch scrub, heather mowing and scraping are undertaken mainly by volunteers. The site has held Woodlarks and Tree Pipits whilst Nightjars and Yellowhammers are now occasional breeders. The mature birch on the western side of the site held a high density of breeding Willow Warblers *Phylloscopus trochilus* (nine territories in 2011) but this population has declined. This small area of heath understandably receives intense recreational pressure.

Wiggonholt Common This site was initially part of the survey but for various reasons including succession growth it was dropped. Recent work on restoration by the owners, the RSPB, is putting this heath back into good condition. Records are kept by the RSPB and forwarded to the Sussex Ornithological Society.

Sullington Warren and Washington Common These sites are owned by the National Trust. The former has open areas of heather, gorse and acid grassland plus extensive mixed woodland. It is located close to a residential built-up area and although two churring Nightjars were recorded in 1999 the continued heavy recreational use has resulted in a lack of heathland specialist birds. The latter site is mixed woodland with an area of grassland and is also close to housing. **Heath Common** is comprehensively covered in mixed woodland. None of these sites were surveyed after 2004. The areas covered by **Wheatsheaf Common** and **Hurston Warren** are used for golf and sympathetic heathland management is undertaken in both cases; limited survey work resulted in four Nightjar records in 2000 at the latter site.

Species accounts

Nightjar This is a migrant species that arrives in Sussex occasionally in April but mainly during May and leaves in July and into early August after which Sussex records reduce substantially (Perry 2004). Crepuscular and nocturnal in habit this is one of the most charismatic species of the heaths, with a strange song and aerial antics appealing to both birders and non-birders alike.

A countywide survey in 2004 found the highest density of breeding in Sussex occurring in the Wealden Greensand area (Perry 2004) and Figure 12 indicates that the population in this area has remained relatively stable with a gently improving trend during the survey period with a marked peak in 2004 likely to have been due to greater observer effort for the national survey (all sites were covered in this year with dedicated evening visits). Troughs of 30 territories and below in the period 2006-2009 were due to some of the important sites (Ambersham, Heyshott, Lavington and Chapel Commons) not being surveyed.

Nightjars are vulnerable ground-nesting birds that reacted well to the initial heath restoration work, and although remaining loyal to many of the breeding sites they are sufficiently mobile to utilise clear-fells and newly-planted forestry such as those sites which occur at Goldballs Plantation. Nightjars will also occupy maturing, thinned pine woodland. The Wealden heaths, being relatively small, have extensive and close wooded margins providing excellent feeding opportunities. As with all ground-breeding birds the main threats to this species other than abandonment of heath restoration are disturbance particularly from dogs and predation.

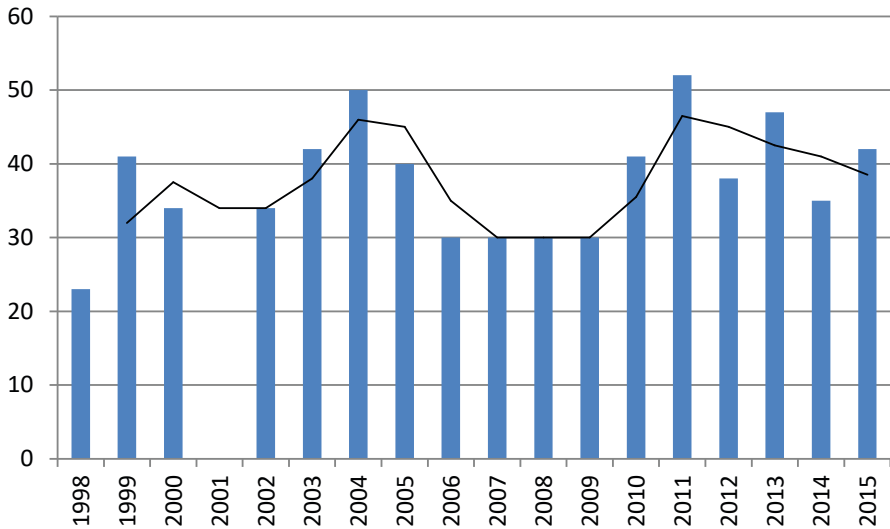


Figure 12. Numbers of Nightjars recorded by the WHBBS in each year 1998-2015 inclusive (blue columns) and the 2-year moving average number (solid black line).

Woodlark Historically the Wealden Greensand heaths have been the stronghold of this species in Sussex, with greater numbers here than are found on the Ashdown Forest, no doubt benefiting by being close to the larger population occupying the heaths of Hampshire and Sussex (Perry 2006). Sussex Woodlarks are largely sedentary (James 1996) and can often be found singing on their breeding sites, albeit briefly, throughout the winter period.

This species is subject to marked population changes (Brown and Grice 2005), and also birds will readily occupy newly planted forestry areas such as Goldballs Plantation adjoining Heyshott Common. Males usually appear on the heaths or clear-fell areas to claim territories in mid-February.

As shown in Figure 13, the initial period of heath restoration resulted in a population of over 50 pairs until 2000, with numbers peaking again at 51 in 2006. Thereafter, numbers fell but stabilised in the period 2009-2014 at 26-32 territories until a marked increase to 43 was recorded in 2015. It can be conjectured that recent active management work, particularly mowing, bracken clearance and formation of bare areas, has proved beneficial to this species.

Dartford Warbler This is a resident insectivorous species that is particularly vulnerable to severe winters. The run of mild winters up until the winter of 2008-2009, and the heathland restoration work which had been undertaken, enabled the population to expand and it is likely with 66 territories recorded in 2003 that a plateau, due to habitat restrictions, had been reached. About 10-15 pairs per square kilometre are typical of fragmented heaths (Cramp 1992). Ambersham and Heyshott Commons and Iping and Stedham Commons are the prime sites with seven of the smaller heaths, excluding Coates Common and Lords Piece and West Heath, also recording occupation. The highest single count from these seven sites was of 12 on Weavers Down in 2007. The population remained relatively stable at 41-63 territories (see Figure 14) between 2000 and 2008 until the winters of 2008-2009 and 2009-2010 devastated the species; in 2010 there were

no records at all. However, the recent run of mild winters combined with the high reproductive rate of the species (Brown and Grice 2005) is enabling it to recover. One pair resumed breeding in 2011 and numbers had increased to 14 in 2015.

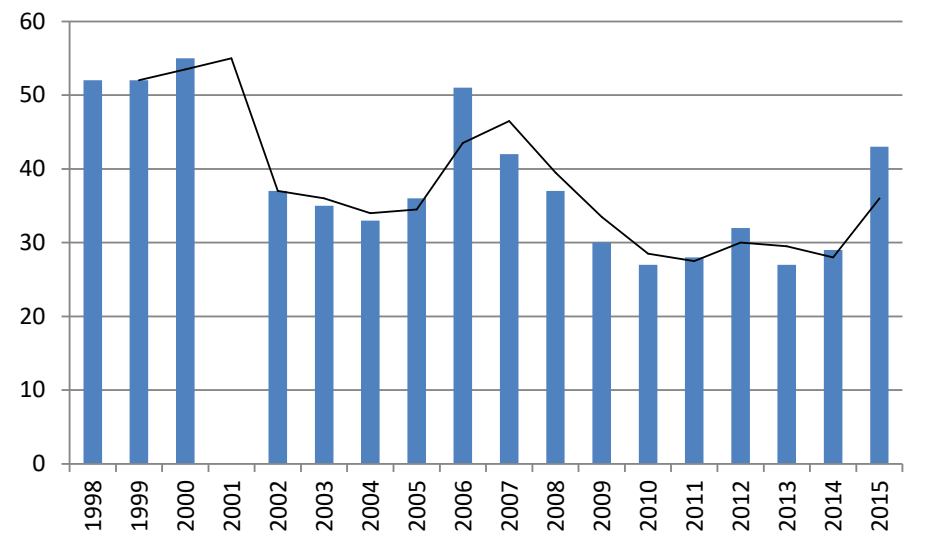


Figure 13. Numbers of Woodlarks recorded by the WHBBS in each year 1998-2015 inclusive (blue columns) and the 2-year moving average number (solid black line).

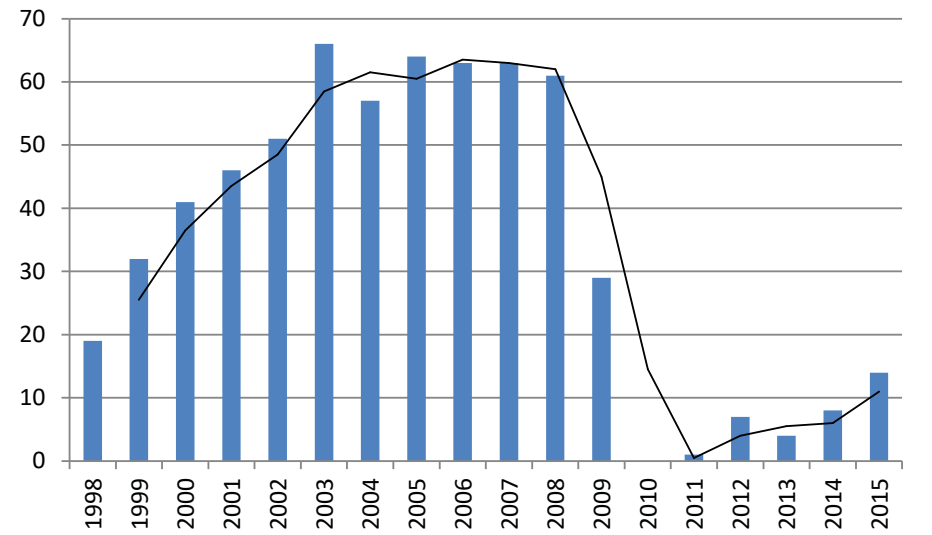


Figure 14. Numbers of Dartford Warblers recorded by the WHBBS in each year 1998-2015 inclusive (blue columns) and the 2-year moving average number (solid black line).

Tree Pipit This is a migrant from sub-Saharan Africa usually arriving in Sussex in late March and through April, and the long-term population trend shows a steep decline in Britain since the late 1980s with losses that began in central England having deepened and spread to south-east and northern England (Balmer *et al.* 2013). In Sussex the two core areas are the Ashdown Forest and the Greensand Wealden heaths. A county survey in 1967-70 (Hughes 1972) suggested a breeding population of 600 pairs whilst casual and WHBBS recording resulted in an estimate of 90 pairs in 2010 (Thomas 2014).

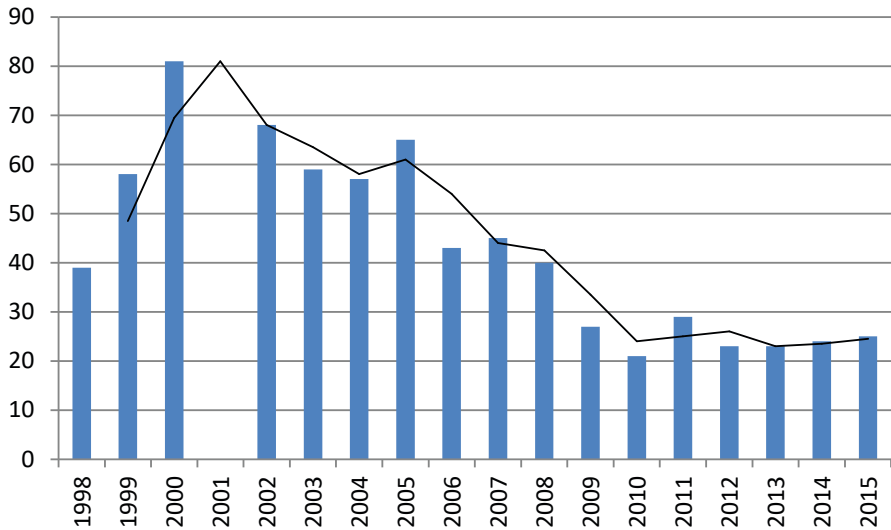


Figure 15. Numbers of Tree Pipits recorded by the WHBBS in each year 1998-2015 inclusive (blue columns) and the 2-year moving average number (solid black line).

Favouring, within the Wealden Greensand area, scrubby heathland and early-stage plantations, the initial conservation restoration work undertaken is likely to have been a factor resulting in the peak of 81 males holding territory in 2000 on the eleven monitored heaths (see Figure 15). A steady decline occurred thereafter with a major downward step in 2008 from 40 pairs to 27 in 2009 and to 21 in 2010. Numbers then stabilised at 23-29 territories. It is possible to speculate that as heaths mature and recreational use increases these ground-nesting birds are suffering accordingly; to this must be added the fact that this species is one of several long-distant migrants undergoing steep declines (Balmer *et al.* 2013). Nest failure due to predation is also likely to take its toll as has happened in Thetford Forest (Burton 2009).

Stonechat The male of this species is a handsome bird and with its pugnacious attitude is hard to miss whether visually or very often giving its “two pebbles knocking together” alarm call. With an estimated county total of c.150-200 pairs (Thomas 2014) the Greensand Wealden heaths population represents less than 25% of the Sussex population.

Often accompanied by Dartford Warblers, some birds, singly or in pairs, over-winter in the breeding areas whilst others relocate to the coast or migrate as far as the Iberian Peninsula and Algeria (Thomas 2014). Those that stay can suffer similarly to Dartford Warblers from severe winters and numbers fell in 2010 to 14 pairs (see Figure 16). The subsequent recovery was

reversed when numbers fell again to 15 after the winter of 2013-2014 which was the stormiest in 20 years and one of the wettest on record despite the weather of that spring being much more benign and unexceptional. Numbers recovered in 2015 to 30 pairs.

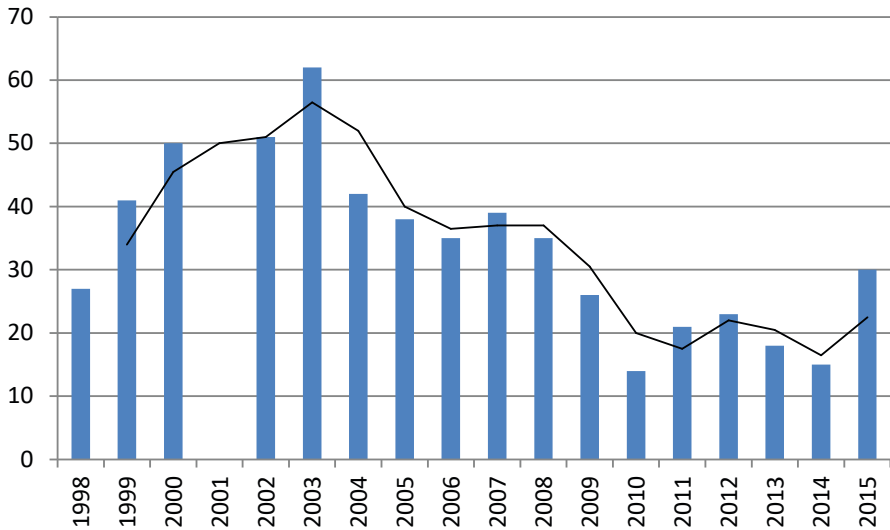


Figure 16. Numbers of Stonechats recorded by the WHBBS in each year 1998-2015 inclusive (blue columns) and the 2-year moving average number (solid black line).

Hobby This is a migratory species returning to the heaths through April into early May; the best time to detect these birds is upon arrival or when the young fledge as at these times they are at their most vocal. Often returning to the same nesting locations for many years, other than at Lavington Common and Ambersham and Heyshott Commons where at least one pair is usually detected annually at each site, they have been recorded singly on nine of the eleven sites irregularly throughout the survey period. Often seen hawking over the open heaths for dragonflies they usually breed in the woodland adjoining the heaths and often in elevated pine trees providing wide-ranging views over the countryside. Sometimes difficult to detect, it is likely that this is underestimated as a breeding species within the WHBBS area.

Woodcock Data provided for the Bird Atlas 2007-11 project (Thomas 2014) and the subsequent BTO Woodcock survey in 2013 (Crabtree 2014) suggest that the Wealden heaths area is one of the strongholds of this species in the county. Roding Woodcock were recorded on at least one occasion throughout the period of the WHBBS on all of the eleven main heaths. The most reliable sites over the 18 years of the survey have been Ambersham and Heyshott Commons, Iping and Stedham Commons, and Lavington Common and Plantation and Duncton Common. The absolute numbers recorded (see Figure 17) were based on assessments by the individual surveyors and as it is notoriously difficult to assess accurate numbers from roding birds the data are more useful to show the distribution of the species throughout the survey area rather than to assess the population. It should also be noted that Woodcock, as with Nightjars, were poorly surveyed due to lack of observer coverage in the years 2005-2010 at two of the main sites, Ambersham and Heyshott Commons and Lavington Common and Plantation.

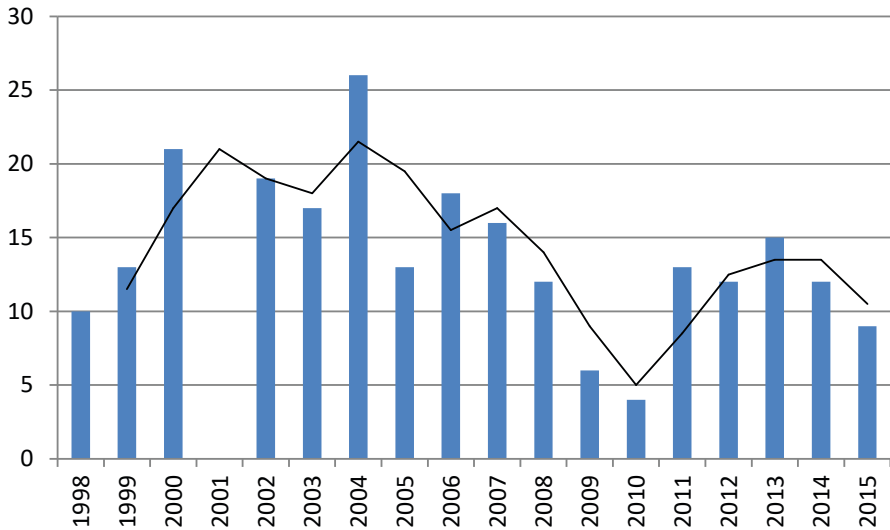


Figure 17. Numbers of Woodcock recorded by the WHBBS in each year 1998-2015 inclusive (blue columns) and the 2-year moving average number (solid black line).

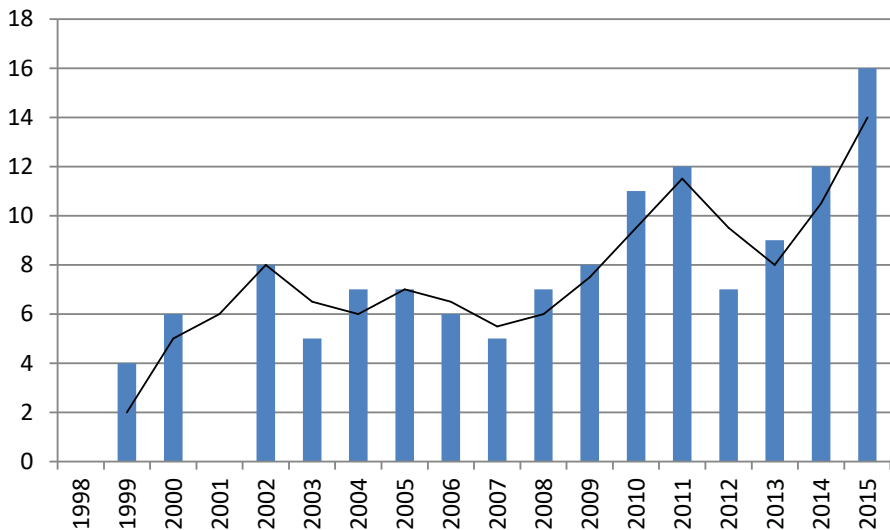


Figure 18. Numbers of Stock Doves recorded by the WHBBS in each year 1998-2015 inclusive (blue columns) and the 2-year moving average number (solid black line).

Stock Dove Favoured breeding sites of this species are usually in holes or cavities in trees on the edges of the open heaths. Counts have been obtained from all heaths throughout the survey

period (see Figure 18). Low annual total numbers of below 10 were recorded from all sites until 2009, after which observed numbers have improved. A total of 16 pairs were reported in 2015 from Weavers Down, Chapel Common, Linchmere and Stanley Commons, Woolbeding, Duncton Common and Coates Common and Lords Piece.

Turtle Dove The most recent record received for this species was of one at Weavers Down in 2008. Previous to that the records were as follows:

- 1999 Lavington Common (3), Woolbeding Common (1), Hesworth Common (3)
- 2000 Woolbeding Common (1), Heyshott Common (2), Lavington Common (4)
- 2002-2004 Linchmere and Stanley Commons (a single record in each year)
- 2006 Chapel Common (1), Woolbeding Common (1), Heyshott Common (2)
- 2007 Chapel Common (1)

This is a migratory species which has suffered both a national contraction in range and tumbling numbers within its core range in eastern and south-eastern England (Balmer *et al.* 2013). The alarming reduction in numbers is also reflected in Europe where population levels have dropped by 73% since 1980 (Thomas 2014). Amongst possible causes of declines it is likely that hunting on migration is a major factor, as in eight EU states alone it is estimated that between two and four million birds are shot annually (Boutin 2001).

Green Woodpecker and **Great Spotted Woodpecker** Widely distributed throughout the survey area, both species breed mainly in the woodland adjoining the heaths and occasionally in trees within the open areas. The Green Woodpecker is often found on the ground searching particularly for ant nests whilst the Great Spotted Woodpecker feeds in both the deciduous and pine trees throughout the heaths. Figures 19 and 20 show that after 2004 the Great Spotted Woodpecker has proved to be the more numerous of the two species, but both populations increased markedly up to 2005 and thereafter have retained largely stable numbers. This improving trend for both species is reflected in the Breeding Bird Survey (BBS) population trends in Sussex 1994-2012 (Crabtree 2012). During the period 1994-2012 Great Spotted Woodpecker numbers increased by a huge 320% and Green Woodpecker numbers by 59% in Sussex.

Skylark During the period covered by this article the Skylark has never been an abundant breeding species and is now extremely scarce. It was most regularly recorded from the following three sites: the rough-grass pasture area of Weavers Down where numbers peaked in 2005 at four but since 2012 a total of only two territorial males have been recorded; similar habitat at Chapel Common where a maximum of six singing males in 2006 dwindled from 2012 to an occasional single; West Heath prior to the sandpit extension which held a single pair in most years until 2011. With this species favouring on both Weavers Down and Chapel Common the grassland areas, an increase in leisure activity including dog-walking attracted to this particular landscape is possibly the reason for the decline in numbers.

Common Redstart Wintering south of the Sahara this species has a wide but patchy distribution in western and northern Britain, with highest abundance in the wooded uplands of Wales, northern England and to a lesser extent southern Scotland. Small pockets of distribution remain in southern England, mostly associated with heathland (Balmer *et al.* 2013). The Greensand Wealden heaths hold the second largest breeding population in Sussex, after the Ashdown Forest. Within the survey area the favoured sites are in descending order Lynchmere and Stanley Commons, Weavers Down, Black Down and Chapel Common, all of which are situated on the north-west ridge. Occasional birds are recorded from the less elevated heaths, particularly Iping and Stedham Commons where in 2015 an exceptional number of four were recorded. Overall annual figures for the survey period, as shown in Figure 21, only exceeded 10 once until 2011 when all but 2014

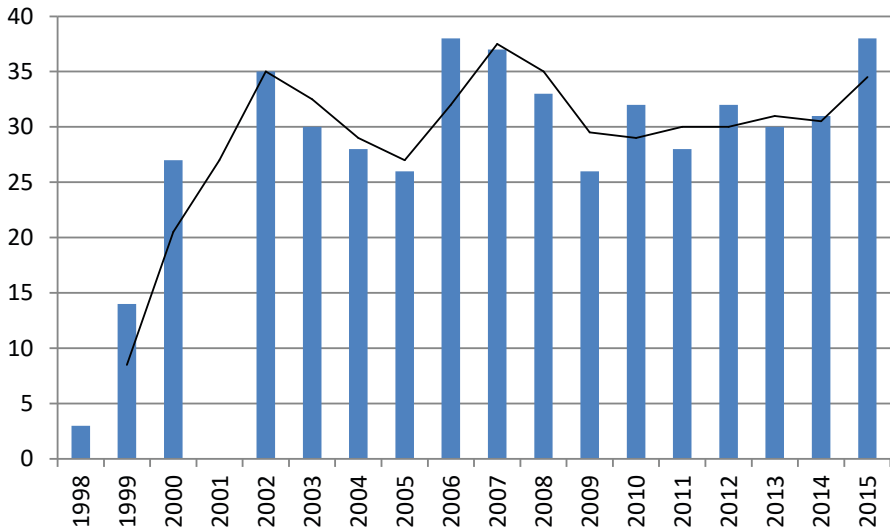


Figure 19. Numbers of Green Woodpeckers recorded by the WHBBS in each year 1998-2015 inclusive (blue columns) and the 2-year moving average number (solid black line).

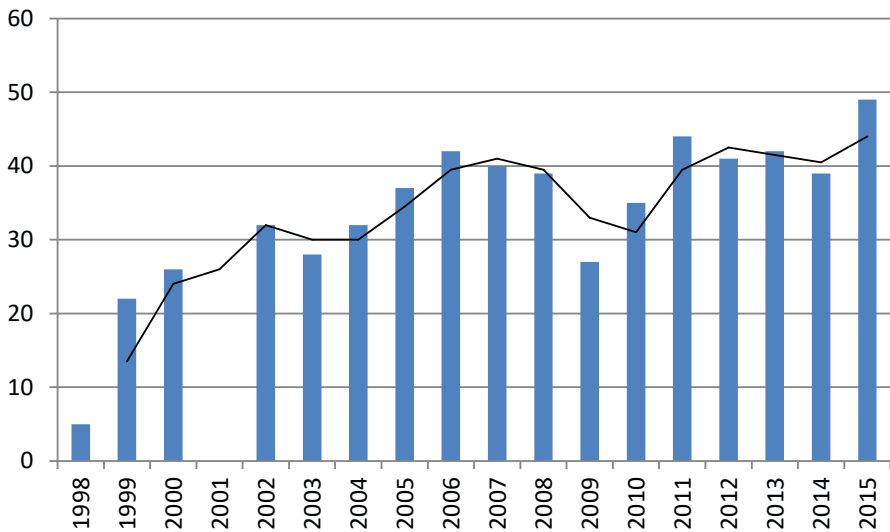


Figure 20. Numbers of Great Spotted Woodpeckers recorded by the WHBBS in each year 1998-2015 inclusive (blue columns) and the 2-year moving average number (solid black line).

recorded numbers of 10 and over with a high of 24 in 2015 of which 10 were recorded from Lynchmere and Stanley Commons. This latter site has extensive heath woodland and woodland pasture areas and is regularly where the highest number of pairs is recorded.

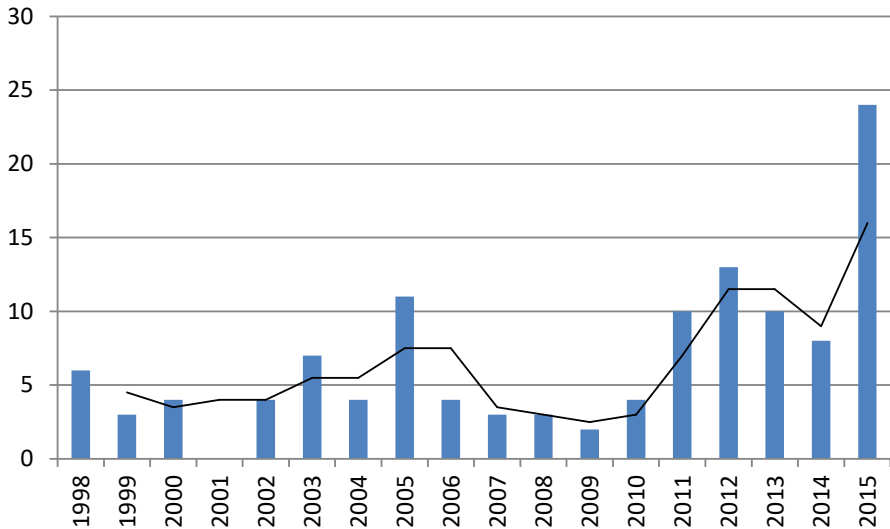


Figure 21. Numbers of Common Redstarts recorded by the WHBBS in each year 1998-2015 inclusive (blue columns) and the 2-year moving average number (solid black line).

Common Whitethroat This is a very common migrant species in Sussex which arrives in April and early May (Thomas 2014) and although it has been recorded regularly throughout the period of the survey it was subject to fluctuations in numbers albeit that the overall trend was upwards (see Figure 22). An initial peak of 40 territories in 2002 dropped away and stabilised at figures mainly between 20 and 30, and then a noticeable increase occurred in the latter three years of the survey with a count of 43 in 2013. Weavers Down and Chapel Common have held the most stable populations although these have rarely exceeded 10 territories. The greatest variation, and against the trend elsewhere, was at Woolbeding where regular counts of up to a maximum of 15 fell in 2014 and 2015 to three and two respectively. BBS population trends in Sussex for the period 1994-2012 indicate a remarkable increase of 324% (the highest of any of the species monitored by the BBS in Sussex) (Crabtree 2012).

Linnet This species is red-listed as a species of high conservation concern (Eaton *et al.* 2015). Records throughout the survey period show a relatively stable population and yearly counts for the last five years of the survey have been between 32 and 50 territorial males or pairs (see Figure 23). Ambersham and Heyshott Commons and Iping Common have consistently held the highest populations, the maximum count being 21 territories at the former site in 2002. A notable increase occurred at Lavington Plantation where as a result of heath restoration the population increased dramatically to 10 pairs in 2014 and 2015. At this site breeding was regularly proven, the favoured nest sites being in gorse, often beside the paths. Lynchmere and Stanley Commons are the only sites where there have been no records during the survey to date.

Lesser Redpoll There were only 15 records during the survey period of males of this species holding territory. It is likely that the species is under-recorded as the metallic contact call is often heard in flight during the breeding season while singing males are much less frequently reported. No confirmed breeding records were received and most of the records came from Ambersham and Heyshott Commons and Lavington Common and Plantation.

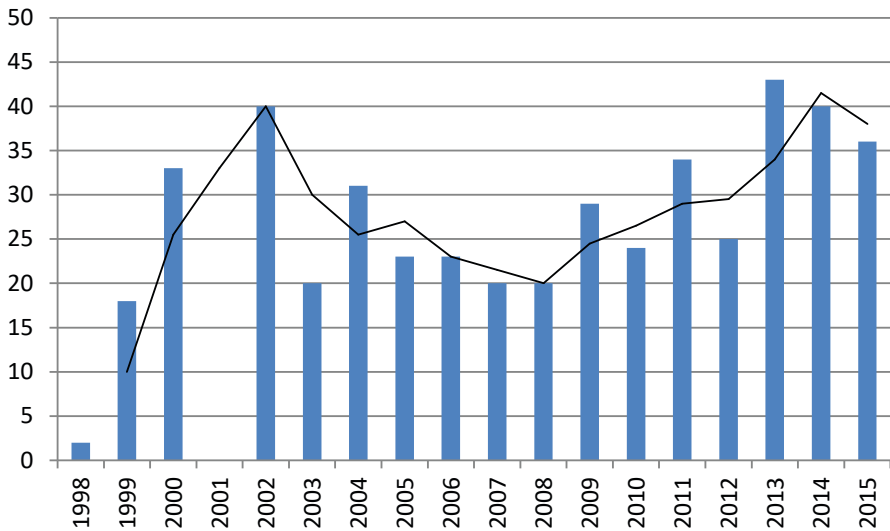


Figure 22. Numbers of Common Whitethroats recorded by the WHBBS in each year 1998-2015 inclusive (blue columns) and the 2-year moving average number (solid black line).

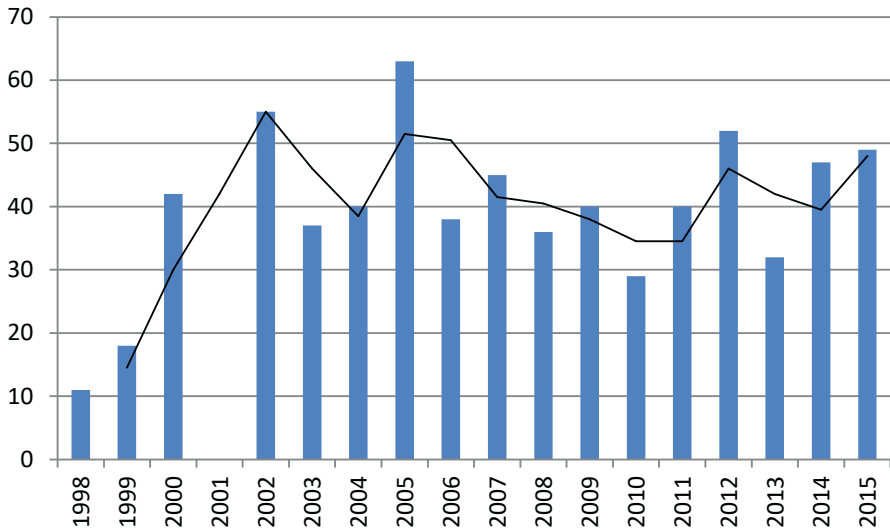


Figure 23. Numbers of Linnets recorded by the WHBBS in each year 1998-2015 inclusive (blue columns) and the 2-year moving average number (solid black line).

Siskin This is a species that is subject to irruption influxes, and as with Lesser Redpoll it is likely to be under-recorded as suspicion of breeding is aroused by its presence in suitable habitat either flying over or within pine woodland and birch scrub. The highest count was in 2014 with

eight males holding territory, four in the Lavington area, two at Iping and Stedham Commons, and singles at Chapel Common and Lynchmere and Stanley Commons.

Common Crossbill This is an irruptive species that is thought primarily to originate from the pine forests of northern Europe (Thomas 2014). Breeding reports from the survey area were infrequent and annual numbers when recorded were usually less than six, the highest count having been of nine in 2012, and in five of the years there were no records at all. The most consistent sites were Ambersham and Heyshott Commons, the Lavington area, and Iping and Stedham Commons. On three other heaths, namely Chapel Common, Black Down and Lynchmere and Stanley Commons, a total of seven territories were reported throughout the survey period. Breeding occurs within the Wealden heaths exclusively in conifers and in areas such as Duncton Common, where this species has been found nesting high up in trees adjoining rides and open scrubby areas, although in contrast a nest was found in April 2010 in the open heath of Heyshott Common in a lone Scots pine tree.

Yellowhammer This species is red-listed as a species of high conservation concern (Eaton *et al.* 2015) but numbers have remained encouragingly stable throughout the survey period (see Figure 24). Reacting well to the early conservation restoration work, this species has been consistently most numerous on Ambersham and Heyshott Commons followed by the Lavington area and Iping Common. The least occupied sites have been the high heaths of Lynchmere and Stanley Commons and Black Down where only nine territories were recorded in 18 years and where there have been none since 2013.

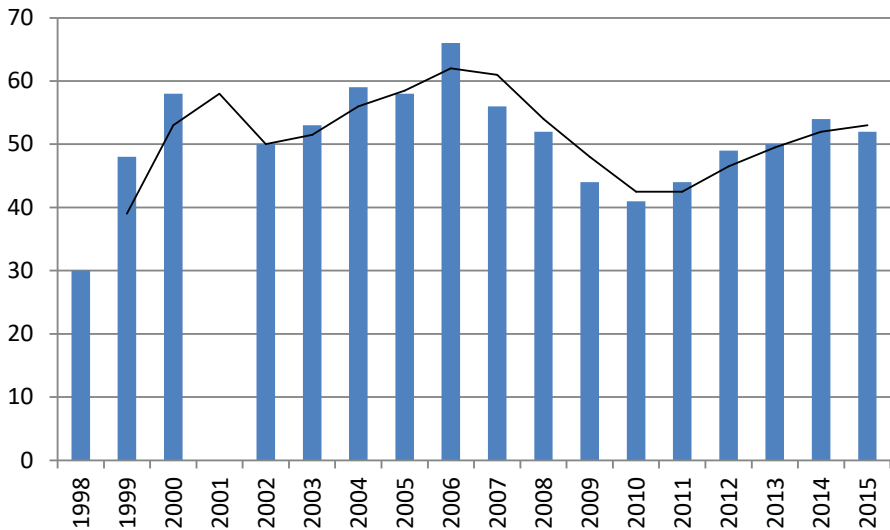


Figure 24. Numbers of Yellowhammers recorded by the WHBBS in each year 1998-2015 inclusive (blue columns) and the 2-year moving average number (solid black line).

Reed Bunting Particularly associated with river valleys and wetlands (Thomas 2014), this is an infrequent breeding species on the Wealden heaths where it occasionally nests in the wetter areas, low down in grass clumps or heather. This species has been recorded on only 12 occasions throughout the survey to date, and Iping has been the most consistent site with a single territory recorded in nine of the years, with the last having been recorded in 2015. Only Heyshott and

Lavington Commons produced further records until 2014 and 2015 when three in each year were reported at Coates Common and Lords Piece.

Brief notes on wintering birds

A number of the heaths have also been monitored by the WHBBS surveyors during the winter months. Of the sites monitored in the winter, two were the subject of the BTO/Hawk and Owl Trust Hen Harrier Winter Roost Survey (HHWS) (Lavington Common and Ambersham and Heyshott Commons), and additionally Iping and Stedham Commons and Coates Common and Lords Piece provided sufficient records to enable a brief commentary on the birds in winter. The following is a resume of some of the pertinent and interesting records from 1998–2015. Winter for the purpose of this section is the period October to March.

Hen Harrier *Circus cyaneus* Once a regular winter visitor to roost in the heather, records of this species have become rare and although singles are occasionally reported the last sighting from the long-running annual HHWS (undertaken October to March) was at Heyshott Common where three were seen in 2012 although a male was seen roosting on Iping Common in 2013. During the 1990s three to four birds were found regularly roosting in the heather at Ambersham and Heyshott Commons, Iping Common and Lavington Common. Prior to that there are records in 1983 and 1984 of at least six “wheeling about on Woolbeding” and a similar minimum number on Ambersham Common (L. Osborne *pers. comm.*). The decline mirrors the national picture.

Jack Snipe *Limnocryptes minimus* This is a regular species but it is elusive. Single birds were reported at Lavington Common and Plantation in ten of the years, and there were two there in 2012. Single birds were found on Ambersham Common in 2002 and 2003.

Common Snipe *Gallinago gallinago* The wet heath areas of Iping Common, Lavington Common and Plantation, and Ambersham and Heyshott Commons regularly hold small numbers of this species and it is most likely that the species also occurs on many of the wetter heaths within the Rother valley area. Although counts in excess of 10 have been recorded (24 on Lavington Common in 2013 and 22 on Iping Common in 2014) the numbers are usually in single figures.

Green Woodpecker and **Great Spotted Woodpecker** These species have been annually recorded as present throughout the winter period.

Woodcock Sightings of this species are rare and mainly of single birds which are sometimes flushed from woodland edges.

Great Grey Shrike *Lanius excubitor* Although this species is not recorded annually it does appear in many years and occasionally birds stay on into April. The favoured sites are Iping and Ambersham Commons with sporadic records from the Lavington area and the high heaths of the north-west. Sightings were reported at Ambersham Common in the years 1998, 2003, 2004, 2008, 2013 and 2015, and at Iping Common in the years 1998, 1999, 2003, 2004, 2008 and 2013–2015.

Woodlark This species can be found in all the winter months, with birds briefly singing above the breeding heaths possibly advertising their rights over particular territories. Larger groups have been found and typically number no more than 10 birds. The low-mown sward and bare areas of Lords Piece are particularly attractive to the species and held 20 in 1998 and 18 in 2003 although subsequent counts have not exceeded 10 birds.

Dartford Warbler This is a fragile resident species particularly reliant upon clement weather conditions to thrive, and consequently the population is subject to wild peaks and troughs. With a run of mild winters up until the cold winters of 2008–2010, this species could be found on the heaths where it bred in good numbers. On Iping Common there were 15 in 2001 and 27 in 2007 but after the cold winters numbers have not exceeded five, although they are slowly rebuilding.

Redwing *Turdus iliacus* and **Fieldfare** *Turdus pilariscan* Both of these species use heathland for roosting although the latter is by far the most numerous recorded. Fieldfares particularly favour either gorse or mature *Calluna* heather. Most records have come from Iping Common where 26 roosted in gorse in November 2001 and 80 in heather in February 2005. Further records were received from Lavington Common where there was a high count of 60 in November 2005.

Stonechat It is difficult to know whether those that overwinter are resident or winter migrants. Generally not exceeding four in number on any one heath, exceptional counts were of 14 on Iping Common in 2000, 2003 and 2007 and 10 at Ambersham Common in 2002 and 2008.

Meadow Pipit *Anthus pratensis* This species is a regular winter visitor and gathers in flocks, often occupying single mature birch trees at dusk prior to roosting in the heather. Numbers are variable but records from Lavington Common over the survey period indicate that October, November, January and February are the most populous months with counts of more than 100 in four of the years. The highest count was of 120 birds on Iping Common in 2005.

Linnet This species is regularly recorded in flocks although these seldom exceed 30 birds. The highest single count was of 150 birds at Iping Common in 2006.

Lesser Redpoll and **Siskin** These species often make up mixed flocks feeding in the heath woodland. Single species maximum counts were, for Lesser Redpolls 50 at Lavington Common in 2011 and 44 at Iping Common in 2015, and for Siskins 150 at Iping Common in 2006 and 85 at Lavington Plantation in 2008. Reported numbers tended to be greater in irruption years.

Common Crossbill The winter population of this species is invariably unpredictable and dependent upon irruptive behaviour. In some years no more than two or three birds are recorded whereas in an irruption year numbers greatly expand. Typical of irruption years were the 75 found on Stedham Common in 1999, 100 on Lavington Plantation in 2002 and 50 also there in 2011. Numbers have been low since 2011 but 31 were recorded at Ambersham Common in 2013 and 20 at Lavington Plantation in 2014.

Yellowhammer This species is usually present in numbers seldom exceeding 10 annually. Iping Common has been the most productive heath with a highest count of a flock of 38 in 2011.

Reed Bunting Annual records of this species for most heaths have been in single figures although higher numbers have been recorded more consistently at Ambersham and Iping Commons with 32 recorded at the latter site in 2002. There was also an exceptional count at Iping Common in 2007, a year after a major fire, with 75 birds found feeding on the recovering heather.

Conclusions

The Wealden Heaths Breeding Bird Survey has monitored 21 bird species, including five priority heathland specialists, on the Greensand Wealden heaths in West Sussex over an 18-year period from 1998. The survey has focused on the eleven most regularly monitored sites. Sufficient data have been collected on the five priority heathland species and eight other species to enable population and distribution trends over the period to be discerned.

The data from the survey indicate that the five priority species reacted positively to the intensive restoration and management work, much of which occurred in the first five to six years of the survey period. Nightjars retained a stable population throughout the survey period whereas to varying degrees Woodlark, Tree Pipit and Stonechat numbers declined after initial increases. The Tree Pipit graph indicates a more persistent decline with a fall of 30% from the high point in 2000, although there has been some stability in numbers in the last five years. With habitat requirements not dissimilar to those of Woodlarks, this suggests that if a further decline does occur this will be due to factors other than the availability of breeding habitat.

Dartford Warblers, no doubt benefitting from a period of dry, relatively mild winters and work to encourage heather, had expanded swiftly until the severe winters of 2008-2009 and 2009-2010 decimated the population and no territorial males were recorded in 2010; encouragingly this species is experiencing a recovery and numbers are beginning to build again. Also affected by the two severe winters, Stonechats suffered badly during the 2013-2014 winter, one of the wettest on record. However, the highest count since 2008 was recorded in 2015, hopefully indicating a sustainable reversal. Woodlark numbers were not noticeably affected by the severe winters and although a decline was evident after 2006 (the year of the national survey) numbers did sharply increase in 2015 possibly as the species benefitted from more active management work of mowing and formation of bare areas on two of the heaths.

Of the remaining 16 species, eight in particular received excellent coverage and showed encouragingly either increasing or stable trends. Woodcock showed a decline, although assessing accurately the number of birds present from a simple observation of roding birds is a problem. Events that are likely to be responsible at least in part for population fluctuations in all or some of the surveyed species would include management regimes, weather, observer effort, occasional fires, and irruptions, the latter particularly relevant to Siskins and Common Crossbills.

A notable success story has been the increasingly recorded numbers of Green and Great Spotted Woodpeckers in line with county and national trends; the occurrence of surrounding woodland and stands within sites provides a favourable habitat especially for breeding.

Although many of the species are not restricted to heathland it can be assumed from the data that the management work has been to their benefit. For instance, the red-listed Yellowhammer and Linnet and also Common Whitethroat all have either improving or stable populations.

Records for species including Lesser Redpoll, Siskin and Common Crossbill have been sufficiently few in number that it is not possible to detect any meaningful population trends. However, noting the presence or otherwise of these species is important in understanding their distribution patterns. Possibly the survey protocol, which has concentrated on the five priority species, does not lend itself to monitoring some species accurately.

With an estimated open heath area of only 428 ha, the West Sussex Wealden Greensand heaths are, compared to those of the adjoining counties of Surrey and Hampshire, comparatively small and disjointed. As these heaths fall within the boundary of the South Downs National Park the recent HLF award to the SDNPA to restore and reconnect the heaths will be a vital step in ensuring their future viability. Despite the ongoing and future planned work, threats such as climate change with possible drought periods, uncontrolled fires and recreational pressures will remain. The latter is, from comments made by surveyors, one of the urgent challenges facing managers, with a particular problem being disturbance to ground-nesting birds by uncontrolled dog-walking during the breeding season. It is encouraging therefore that as part of the HLF scheme there is a project to work with dog-walkers to encourage responsible use of open heathland. The dichotomy is that as essential management work proceeds, restoration and removal of thick scrub leads to the heaths becoming more appealing for a diverse range of leisure pursuits.

Funding from the HLF and HLS schemes has been essential in saving and developing heathland but pressing challenges remain, not least the ability to balance the needs of both wildlife and people. Ground-nesting birds are the most vulnerable and pressure will continue to increase as, quite naturally, more and more people will wish to enjoy these spaces situated in the most visited national park in the country. Many of these heaths have magnificent panoramic views and they provide an environment with a sense of wilderness rarely found in the crowded south-east of England; let it be hoped that these heaths can continue to be enjoyed by wildlife and people alike.

Acknowledgements

For such a long-running survey the consistency of surveyors, particularly on some of the most important sites, has been remarkable. A turnover of surveyors is only to be expected and the loss to re-growth at some of the sites also had an effect, but overall the loyalty to sites has been inspiring and thanks are due to all of the past and present surveyors.

In the preparation of this article grateful thanks for their assistance are due to Graham Lawson and Clare Blencowe of the Sussex Biological Records Centre, Dr Richard Black of the RSPB, Alison Giacomelli of Natural England, Bruce Middleton of the South Downs National Park Authority, and Dave Burges, Dr John Newnham and Dr Helen Crabtree.

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Breeding House Martin survey 2015: numbers and distribution in Sussex and population trends

Helen Crabtree

Introduction

In 2015 the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) conducted a national survey of breeding House Martins *Delichon urbicum*. Long-term monitoring by the Common Birds Census (CBC) (1966–1999) and later the BTO/JNCC/RSPB Breeding Bird Survey (BBS) (1994 onwards) had indicated that the House Martin population in England declined by 69% between 1966 and 2013, with a particularly pronounced period of decline that began in the early 1980s, although the size of the CBC sample was small (Robinson *et al.* 2015); BBS results alone suggest a 10% decline in the UK between 1995 and 2013 (Harris *et al.* 2015). The species was moved from the green to the amber list of birds of conservation concern in 2002 (Eaton *et al.* 2015) because of a moderate decline indicated by CBC results for 1974–1999, and is listed as of European concern following declines elsewhere in Europe (BirdLife International 2004). Results from the Bird Atlas 2007–11 (Balmer *et al.* 2013) and the BBS show interesting geographical patterns to the declines, with larger declines in abundance in the south of the UK and increases in the north; the reasons for these patterns, and for the decline more generally, remain unknown. The main aim of the 2015 survey at a national level was to obtain a statistically reliable population estimate as a baseline against which the results of future surveys can be compared, and secondary aims were to investigate regional variations in population density and to collect information on colony sizes and preferred types of nesting locations.

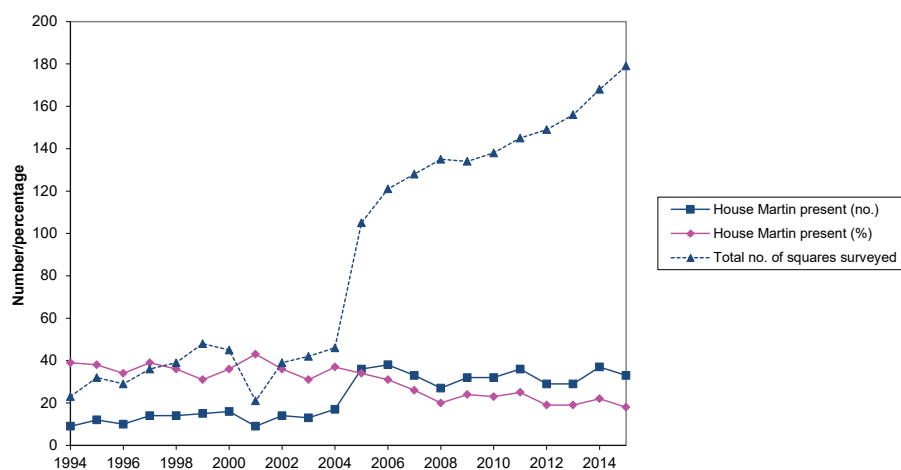


Figure 1. The total numbers of squares surveyed for the Breeding Bird Survey (BBS) in Sussex each year, the numbers of squares in which House Martins have been recorded each year, and the resulting percentages of BBS squares in which House Martins have been recorded each year since 1994.

BBS results suggest that the House Martin population in the south-east region of England declined by 59% between 1995 and 2013 (Harris *et al.* 2015) and it is possible that the decline in Sussex has been even more pronounced than this. House Martins are not recorded in sufficient numbers of BBS squares in Sussex for a county population trend to be calculated, but the percentage of BBS squares in Sussex in which House Martins have been recorded has decreased steadily since 1994 as shown in Figure 1. This does suggest a decrease in the Sussex breeding population although is based on records of presence of House Martins in squares and provides no information about whether birds are nesting in the squares or numbers of nests.

Results from the Bird Atlas 2007–11 project in Sussex show that House Martin nesting locations are widely distributed across Sussex as shown in Figure 2, although the number of tetrads in which breeding was confirmed or considered probable had reduced by approximately one-third since the previous atlas project in 1988–1992 (Newnham and Crabtree 2012, Thomas 2014). As with the BBS results, this suggests a decrease in the Sussex breeding population of House Martins but provides no information about numbers or exact locations of nests.

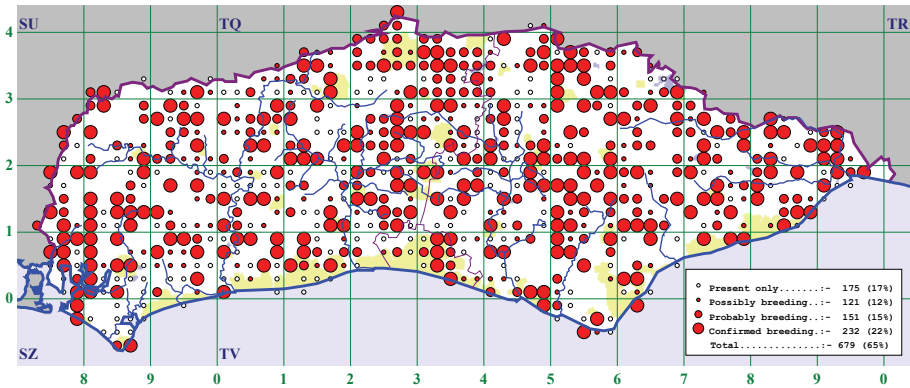


Figure 2. House Martin breeding distribution in Sussex during 2008–2011 inclusive.

With comprehensive information lacking in Sussex about House Martin numbers and exact nesting locations, the Sussex Ornithological Society (SOS) in 2015 decided not only to promote and support the national BTO survey as much as possible but also to collect further information. As described in detail below, the BTO survey involved the surveying of randomly-selected 1x1-km squares for the presence of House Martin nests, and in Sussex a much higher number of randomly-selected squares than required were surveyed by volunteers. In addition to this, casual records of House Martin nesting locations were collected; these casual records all included exact building addresses and numbers of nests so that the same buildings can be surveyed again in the future and changes assessed. Finally, as a result of an appeal for the casual records, the results of a long-running survey by one observer in a defined area covering three mid-Sussex villages came to light.

This article presents the results of the BTO survey in Sussex in 2015, in relation to the presence or absence of nesting House Martins in the randomly-selected squares. The distribution of nesting House Martins in 2015 as suggested by the available casual records, and the results of the long-running local study, are presented and discussed, and suggestions for future surveys are made.

BTO random-square survey 2015

Method The areas surveyed were randomly-selected 1x1-km grid squares which contained buildings or other potentially suitable natural nesting sites. In Sussex 232 squares were selected which covered a range of habitats including urban town centres, suburban estates, villages and rural areas where there are barns and other isolated buildings. Squares were prioritised in the order in which they were randomly selected and as many as possible were allocated to volunteers with an attempt to allocate the higher-priority squares first but also taking into account convenience for the volunteers.

Volunteers were asked to visit each of their allocated 1-km squares during mid- to late May to identify potentially suitable nesting habitat, to make an initial search for House Martin nests, and to speak where necessary to landowners and homeowners about the survey. Two further visits were then made to each square, one during the period 1 June to 24 June and another during the period 25 June to 19 July, with at least two weeks between the two visits. Volunteers were instructed that each visit should cover all suitable nesting habitat and could be made at any time during the day. If no House Martin nests were located during the initial search in May or during the first survey visit in June then a second survey visit was not required. Volunteers were asked to map all House Martin nesting colonies onto a pre-printed survey form and for each colony to note the number of complete nests (including artificial nests) and the number of nests that were occupied by House Martins. For the purposes of this survey a House Martin colony was defined as one or more nests on a single building or structure. Volunteers were also asked to note details of building types, nest locations and nest aspects.

Results Surveys were conducted in a total of 187 1-km squares in Sussex in 2015. Occupied nests were found in just 28 squares, as shown in Figure 3. Information from the surveys in Sussex on precise colony locations and numbers of occupied nests was incorporated with the casual records collected from elsewhere in the county (see below). Information on building types, types of nest locations and nest aspects was felt to be insignificant for the small number of squares involved in Sussex and was therefore not obtained for county analysis although this information will be invaluable for the national BTO analysis.

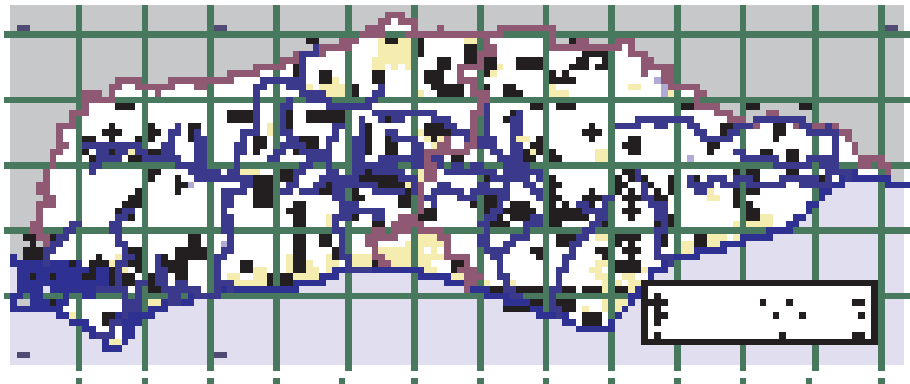


Figure 3. The locations of the sites surveyed for House Martin nests in 2015 (large red circles, at least one occupied nest found; smaller pink circles, no occupied nests found). Survey sites were 1-km squares but are mapped here at tetrad level for visual clarity.

Casual records submitted for 2015

The request for records of nesting House Martins in Sussex was given wide publicity and records were submitted for many locations; all records have been added to the database of the Sussex Ornithological Society. In line with the requirements of the BTO random-square survey a House Martin colony was defined as one or more nests on a single building or structure, and so each casual record included an exact building address and the number of active nests on that building. Colonies found through the random-square survey were included with the other casual records. Figure 4 shows the locations of the colonies recorded in Sussex in 2015.

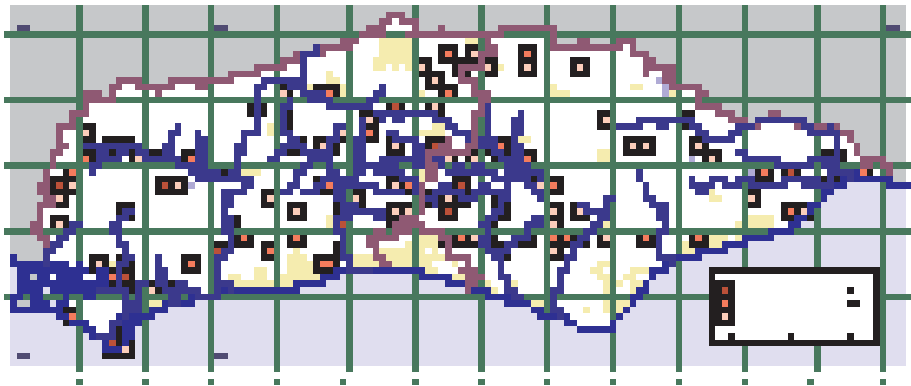


Figure 4. *The locations of active House Martin colonies recorded in 2015, mapped here at tetrad level for visual clarity, with total numbers of nests located within each tetrad.*

Several notable colonies and closely-associated groups of colonies were reported. These included at least 22 nests at Lancing College, 31 nests at the Towers Convent School in Upper Beeding, 30 nests at a farm near South Stoke, 35 nests at the Hickstead Hotel, 42 nests at a private house near Hurstpierpoint, 23 nests at Brantridge School in Staplefield, at least 34 nests at Plumpton College, 34 nests at Bede's School in Upper Dicker, and 32 nests at a farm near Udimore.

The casual records submitted for 2015 clearly do not constitute a complete record of all House Martin colonies in Sussex, and the distribution shown in Figure 4 cannot be compared with the distribution map in Figure 2, although it is worth noting that very few records were submitted in 2015 for urban areas and in fact there were several anecdotal reports of the absence of nesting House Martins in these areas. However, there now exists a list of colonies known to be active in 2015, including exact building addresses and numbers of active nests, and this will enable a repeat survey to be conducted in the future. It will be possible for volunteers to re-visit the same colonies to record numbers of nests, thus enabling a direct comparison with the numbers recorded in 2015.

Long-term study in Ditchling, Hassocks and Keymer

As a result of the appeal for casual records of House Martin nests, the results of a long-running survey by one observer in a defined area came to light (M. Le Grys *pers. comm.*). This observer had counted and recorded the exact locations of all House Martin nests in the mid-Sussex villages of Ditchling, Hassocks and Keymer in every year since 1976. Figure 5 shows the numbers of nests recorded in each year and also the numbers of buildings used in each year; both measures

show marked declines in numbers. Buildings where there had previously been nests were checked each year so that the declines can be considered to be real rather than as effects of diminishing survey effort. The maximum number of nests recorded was 100 nests on 42 buildings in 1977. Between 1976 and 1986 the numbers of nests were very variable, declining very slightly, but it was after this that the decline became much more rapid; by 1990 the number of nests had fallen to 52 nests on 31 buildings, and by 1998 the number had halved again with only 25 nests recorded on 17 buildings. The decline in numbers continued, and in 2015 only three House Martin nests could be found in the entire study area.

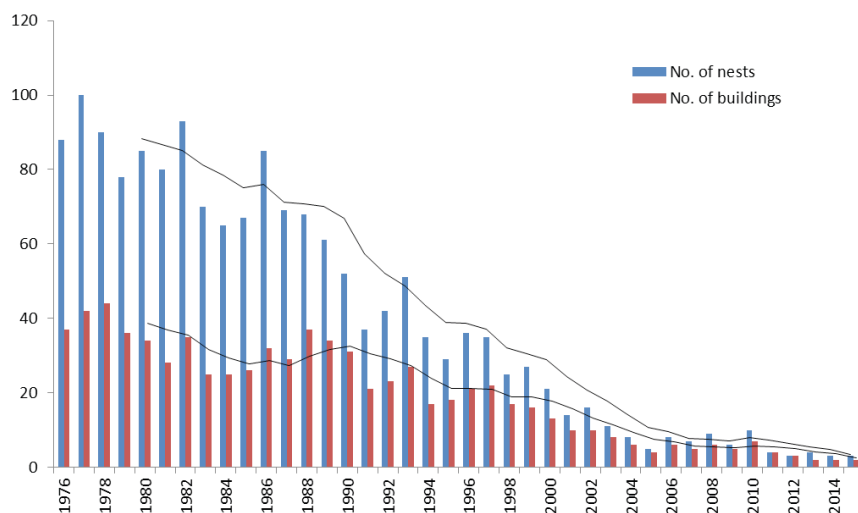


Figure 5. The numbers of House Martin nests and the numbers of buildings used in the villages of Ditchling, Hassocks and Keymer (combined), in the years 1976–2015 inclusive (Malcolm Le Grys pers. comm.). The solid lines are 5-year moving averages.

Discussion

There is clear evidence that the House Martin breeding population in Sussex has declined considerably in recent decades; BBS results show a gradual decline in the numbers of squares where House Martins are seen each year, atlas distribution maps show a decrease in the numbers of tetrads in which breeding was confirmed or considered probable, and the long-running survey in Ditchling, Hassocks and Keymer demonstrates a shocking decline in numbers of nests. There is no reason to believe that this latter study is not representative of the situation elsewhere in Sussex, although casual records collected in Sussex in 2015 have demonstrated that some large House Martin colonies do still exist, and in some areas there are still reasonable numbers of more scattered nesting sites.

The reasons for the decline in House Martin numbers in Sussex, and indeed the decline in numbers in the whole of the south of the UK, are unknown. Possible reasons are changes in building designs and building construction meaning that fewer suitable nest sites are available, reduced numbers of insects either because of pesticide use or climate change, a reduced availability of mud for nest construction due to changes in farming practices, and a decreased tolerance of homeowners towards the presence of House Martins, often resulting in the destruction of nests.

Only further research into the breeding ecology of House Martins and their nest site and food preferences can hope to pinpoint the causes of the population decline. The BTO House Martin nest study in 2016 will hope to address some of these issues.

This is the first time that such a comprehensive list of House Martin nesting sites in Sussex has been compiled. Although not all colonies active in 2015 were recorded, the exact locations of many colonies are now known and so it will be possible for volunteers to re-visit the same colonies to record numbers of nests in the future thus enabling a direct comparison with the numbers recorded in 2015. In the meantime, individuals can play a valuable role by recording the locations of House Martin nesting sites anywhere in Sussex, preferably in a manner consistent with those records collected in 2015, including building addresses and numbers of nests on each single building or structure. Further long-running studies like the one reported here in Ditchling, Hassocks and Keymer could be initiated. Individuals can also encourage House Martins to nest on their own homes by the provision of artificial nests or by making mud available during dry weather. Individuals and nature conservation organisations can help to conserve the current House Martin population in the county by promoting amongst all owners and users of suitable buildings a better tolerance of House Martin nesting activity and better protection of existing nests.

Acknowledgements

Many thanks are due to all of the 95 observers who conducted the surveys of random squares in Sussex, who are identified in the list of contributors, as well as to landowners and homeowners who kindly allowed volunteers to carry out surveys on their land and properties. Many thanks are also due to the many observers who submitted casual records of nesting sites, all of whom are also identified in the list of contributors, and to Malcolm Le Grys for compiling and allowing the publication of the results of his long-running survey. Sincere thanks are due to Ian Woodward at the BTO for providing the results of surveys conducted in Sussex, and to Dr John Newnham for providing the maps used in this article. Further thanks are due to members of the Sussex Ornithological Society scientific committee for helpful comments.

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The BTO Cuckoo tracking project: update on tagging and satellite-tracking Cuckoos in Sussex

Clare Buckle

Introduction

The Sussex Ornithological Society (SOS) agreed in 2012 to sponsor the tagging of one Cuckoo *Cuculus canorus* as part of the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) Cuckoo tracking project. The catching and tagging of the Cuckoo 'Sussex' on the Ashdown Forest in 2013 and the subsequent migration of 'Sussex' were described in detail in the 2013 Sussex Bird Report, along with information about the conservation status of the Cuckoo and the tagging technology used.

Unfortunately by November 2013 it appeared that 'Sussex' had perished in Africa, providing information on just one migration journey, from Sussex to the Central African Republic, from where his last transmissions were received.

In early 2014 the SOS agreed to sponsor two further BTO tags with the aim of adding to the body of data on Cuckoo migration being collected by the BTO through their tracking project.

Sussex Cuckoo tagging 2014

Plans were put into place to tag two Cuckoos, again on the Ashdown Forest, in late May 2014. On 29 May the BTO, assisted by a small team of SOS members, tagged a Cuckoo at a location on the Ashdown Forest. However, despite hearing a number of Cuckoos at various locations, a second bird eluded the team, necessitating a separate visit to the Ashdown Forest on 5 Jun, when a second Cuckoo was tagged at a different location.

Both tagging locations again met the habitat criteria provided by the BTO, being sites with low vegetation (such as reedbeds or scrub) with an isolated tree or bush, into which a tape lure and decoy were placed.

The tagged Cuckoos were given names by two Ashdown Forest primary schools; the first Cuckoo was named 'Ash' by pupils at Nutley Primary School, and the second 'Chester' by pupils at High Hurstwood Primary School.

Migration routes of 'Ash' and 'Chester'

Summer/autumn 2014 Having involved the tagging of over 50 Cuckoos, the BTO tracking project has now revealed two major migration routes for Cuckoos leaving the UK (Hewson *et al.* 2016). One group have been found to migrate to Africa using a south-easterly route through Italy, as had been anticipated from ringing data. However, another group have been found to travel along a more south-westerly route through France and Spain.

'Ash' and 'Chester' each followed different migration routes, with 'Ash' following the south-easterly route and 'Chester' leaving first but ultimately taking the south-westerly route.

Both birds remained on the Ashdown Forest following their tagging in late May/early June and proved to be fairly mobile, their estimated locations even overlapping each other on a couple of occasions, but then on 19 Jun tagging data from 'Chester' showed that he had arrived in north-west France. 'Ash' left a few days later and was in northern France by 22 Jun. 'Chester' progressed in a southerly direction from north-west France, passing near to Tours and Limoges and crossing the border between France and Spain some time between 30 Jun and 1 Jul. By 4 Jul he was south of Madrid, remaining in that area until 18 Jul. He then backtracked on his migration route, travelling

slightly further north-east again, possibly in an attempt to find better food sources. He was settled in his new location for three weeks before moving south again, arriving in Algeria on 14 Aug.

From here he moved south and then south-west through Mauretania and Mali to Burkina Faso, where he had an extended stop-off until 21 Oct. Although Burkina Faso is further west than the route taken by most of the Cuckoos taking the south-westerly route, this did allow 'Chester' a much shorter crossing over the Sahara.

By 21 Oct 'Chester' was in Cote D'Ivoire. Three weeks later he was in Ghana, close to Lake Volta. This is a region known to be used by Cuckoos on migration, although more usually on their return route to the UK in spring. He finally arrived in his wintering grounds in the Congo rainforest area of Gabon on 3 Dec, having left Ghana on 17 Nov and flown over Togo and Benin, stopping off for two weeks in Nigeria and then continuing via a route over the sea off Cameroon, and then over Equatorial Guinea.

In contrast, 'Ash' arrived at his wintering grounds in the Democratic Republic of Congo on the much earlier date of 6 Oct, despite having left the UK a few days later than 'Chester'.

After arriving in France on 22 Jun, 'Ash' initially appeared to be taking the south-westerly route, like 'Chester', but then his tag signals showed that by 4 Jul he had made a 90-degree turn and flown due east to the northern tip of Corsica. He then continued east towards Italy after two days, but did not remain in Italy for long, arriving in Croatia by 9 Jul. Here he stayed for almost four weeks but by 3 Aug was in Libya, having taken a direct route across the Mediterranean. A day later he was in Chad where he remained until 19 Sep. On 20 Sep his signal showed that he had flown south within Chad and was close to the border with the Central African Republic. Following another stopover here of two weeks, he continued to the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Spring 2015 Both birds remained in their wintering grounds until February 2015, when 'Ash' was the first to move. Signals from his tag showed that he had moved north to the Congo rainforest by 4 Feb, continuing to Nigeria by the 8th and Ghana by the 10th. He enjoyed an extended stopover in Ghana and neighbouring Cote D'Ivoire until 19 Apr, and then by the morning of 20 Apr his tag showed that he had flown 1465 miles in two days and had made most of the Sahara crossing to Algeria. He did not rest there, however, and by the evening of 20 Apr was already in southern Spain, by 22 April arriving on the western coast of France near Nantes. The next day he was in Lower Normandy and by 25 Apr he was back on the Ashdown Forest, the fourth of the BTO tagged Cuckoos to arrive back in the UK that spring.

In contrast, 'Chester' was still in his Gabon wintering grounds on 21 Mar, and it was not until the next day that he began his journey north, moving to Nigeria over 6 weeks later than 'Ash' had made his first migration move. Here he remained for a month before making a one-day crossing of the Sahara, reaching the border between Algeria and Morocco on 22 Apr. Five days later on 27 Apr he had moved north-east to the north of Algeria. He crossed the Mediterranean to southern Spain on 2 May, where he stopped over for a week before flying directly to the UK between 10 and 11 May, back to the Poundgate area of the Ashdown Forest. On this date 'Ash' was west of Wych Cross and had been back on the Ashdown Forest for over two weeks.

Summer/autumn 2015 Sadly, following a final transmission signal from the tag of 'Chester' on 4 Jun, no more data was received from him, and by 31 Jul the BTO concluded that he must have died on his breeding grounds in early June. This was unusual and the first time this had been recorded for a Cuckoo that had already made one migration trip to Africa and back following his tagging. Although there had been a forest fire in the Poundgate area where the last transmission came from, the BTO concluded that he was already dead by then. They believed the most likely cause was the cold wet spring that had been experienced in 2015.

One of the surprise findings of the BTO Cuckoo tracking project has been just how short a period of time ‘our’ Cuckoos remain in the UK. The earliest departure date was recorded as 3 Jun, and in each year more than 50% of the tagged Cuckoos had left the country by the end of June.

Indeed in 2015 ‘Ash’ began his return journey to Africa on 15 Jun, arriving in northern France by the 16th. He had been in the UK for just 51 days. He continued south through France, transmissions showing his position as east of Lyons on 20 Jun and then just inside Italy by 21 Jun. He appeared to be taking the same south-easterly route as in the previous year. He moved to Slovenia by 24 Jun. The BTO reported that this was quite an easterly position, although some Cuckoos had gone as far east as this, but more usually by travelling south through Germany. Three days later ‘Ash’ moved further south to Croatia.

Unfortunately, the more usual stop-over area for migrating Cuckoos, in the Po watershed area of Italy, suffered severe droughts in summer 2015, and this may be why some Cuckoos such as ‘Ash’ moved further east in an attempt to find more favourable conditions. By 11 Aug the BTO reported that they had received no more signals from ‘Ash’ since a series of poor quality signals in early July. However, they noted that ‘Ash’ had been alive during the last transmissions, and therefore his tag may have failed, leaving some hope that he had not succumbed to the effects of drought conditions or predation.

Conclusions

Following the sponsorship of a BTO-tagged Cuckoo ‘Sussex’ in 2013, the SOS sponsored two further tags in 2014, and the two Cuckoos were named ‘Ash’ and ‘Chester’. Their migration journeys through 2014 and 2015 highlighted some of the difficulties facing migrating Cuckoos and contribute to the body of data about Cuckoo migration being gathered and analysed by the BTO. ‘Ash’ and ‘Chester’ took different routes to Africa, reflecting the finding that there are two main migration routes for UK Cuckoos travelling south, but just one main route back north, the south-westerly route.

The BTO study suggests the south-westerly route is the riskier for Cuckoos travelling south (Hewson *et al.* 2016), but this may be due to weather conditions over this route during the period of the tagging project to date, and future studies may reveal new information.

The 51 days that ‘Ash’ spent in the UK in summer 2015 is typical of the short period we now know that Cuckoos spend in the UK during the breeding season. Data from another BTO-tagged Cuckoo, ‘Chris’, shows that just 15% of the year on average is spent in the UK. Cuckoo tagging is also providing important information about the areas that Cuckoos use for stop-overs on migration in both Europe and Africa.

The BTO Cuckoo tracking project continues, with the aim of gathering data over a longer period and monitoring individual birds over longer periods of time. Areas of focus to further the understanding of Cuckoo migration include gaining a bigger sample of birds from different UK regions to look at the routes taken, and (once tags are small enough) studying the migration of juvenile and female birds.

Reference

Hewson, C.M., Thorup, K., Pearce-Higgins, J.W. and Atkinson, P.W. 2016. Population decline is linked to migration route in the Common Cuckoo, a long-distance nocturnally-migrating bird. *Nature Communications* 7:12296.



Bee-eaters, Littledene, June 2015 (Luke Dray)



Great Northern Diver, Weirwood Res, November 2015 (Alastair Gray)



Red-necked Phalarope and Black-headed Gull, Sidlesham, May 2015 (Dave Sadler)



Wood Sandpiper, Pagham Hbr, August 2015 (Dorian Mason)



Hudsonian Whimbrel, Church Norton, June 2015 (Dorian Mason)

UNUSUAL RECORDS

All records of the unusual species listed below are required to be considered by the Records Committee and it may be assumed that those published in the annual Sussex Bird Report have been fully authenticated.

Whooper Swan	Dotterel	Willow Tit
Bean Goose (both races)	Temminck's Stint	Greenish Warbler
Pink-footed Goose	White-rumped Sandpiper	Pallas's Leaf Warbler
American Wigeon	Buff-breasted Sandpiper	Yellow-browed Warbler
Green-winged Teal	Pectoral Sandpiper	Radde's Warbler
Ring-necked Duck	Red-necked Phalarope	Dusky Warbler
Ferruginous Duck	Grey Phalarope	Wood Warbler*
Lesser Scaup	Pomarine Skua (not spring)	Barred Warbler
Surf Scoter	Long-tailed Skua	Subalpine Warbler
All pheasants (except Common)	Puffin	Icterine Warbler
White-billed Diver	Black Guillemot	Melodious Warbler
All shearwaters (except Manx)	Little Auk	Blyth's Reed Warbler
All petrels (except Fulmar)	White-winged Black Tern	Marsh Warbler
Night Heron	Roseate Tern	Rose-coloured Starling
Cattle Egret	Sabine's Gull	Dipper
Great White Egret	Ring-billed Gull	Bluethroat
Purple Heron	Caspian Gull	Red-breasted Flycatcher
White Stork	Iceland Gull	Citrine Wagtail
Glossy Ibis	Glaucous Gull	Richard's Pipit
Red-necked Grebe*	Alpine Swift	Olive-backed Pipit
Honey-buzzard	Bee-eater	Water Pipit
Black Kite	Red-footed Falcon	Common Rosefinch
White-tailed Eagle	Golden Oriole	Twite
Montagu's Harrier	Red-backed Shrike	Common (Mealy) Redpoll
Goshawk	Woodchat Shrike	Parrot Crossbill
Rough-legged Buzzard	Chough	Serin
Spotted Crake	Hooded Crow	Lapland Bunting
Common Crane	Penduline Tit	Cirl Bunting
Stone-curlew	Shore Lark	Ortolan Bunting
American Golden Plover	Short-toed Lark	Little Bunting
Kentish Plover	Red-rumped Swallow	*new additions for 2017

In addition, descriptions are required for all races other than the normally occurring one including: Black Brant, 'Baltic' *fuscus* Lesser Black-backed Gull, 'Northern' *argentatus* Herring Gull (except Rye Bay), Kumlien's Gull, 'Scandinavian' *littoralis* Rock Pipit, Yellow Wagtail, 'Continental' *ater* Coal Tit, 'Siberian' Chiffchaff and 'Northern' Willow Warbler. However, descriptions are not required for the following sub-species/races: Pale-bellied Brent Goose, *intermedius* Lesser Black-backed Gull, White Wagtail and Greenland Wheatear.

It should also be noted that descriptions may be required for any species seen in unusual circumstances or on an unusual date.

Records of unusual species should be submitted on the forms available from the SOS website or from the Recorder. Completed forms should be sent to the Recorder, preferably by e-mail although postal submissions will also be accepted.

Reports of national rarities as defined by the British Birds Rarities Committee should be submitted to the Recorder either in the same format as above or on forms available from the Secretary of the BBRC.

Observers are encouraged to submit photographs in support of their records but these should accompany a Scarce Records Form and not be in place of a written description.

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Who are we and what do we do?

The Society was formed in 1962 to promote the recording, study, conservation and enjoyment of birds in Sussex.

We encourage our members to keep records of birds seen in Sussex and to submit these to our county database. This has over two million records which are vitally important in helping us monitor our changing bird populations; they are also regularly used for conservation purposes.

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Membership of the SOS entitles you to receive four quarterly newsletters a year, plus a copy of the award-winning annual Sussex Bird Report, which has accounts of all the species recorded in Sussex during the previous year, as well as articles on recent Sussex bird surveys and on a variety of interesting Sussex ornithological matters. You can also attend the society's ever-popular conference each January and go on some 30 outings a year which are led by some of Sussex's best birders. Membership of the society is open to anyone and your membership fee contributes to our important conservation work to help Sussex's birds.



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NB: For an explanation of the superscripts, see the footnote below the table.

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A Allum ^W	D Bangs	JH Bingley ^T	P Bray ^T
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LEF Ambler ^{BCMT}	MI Banks	K Birch ^X	MT Breaks ^T
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D Andrews	E Barber ^T	LR Bird	A Brennan ^W
J Ansley	LJ Barber ^T	M Bird ^T	D Bridges ^X
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C Ash ^C	DJ Barnes ^T	P Bishop	C Brooks ^{BCT}
RF Ash	E Barnes ^T	DJ Bissett ^T	R Brooks
D Asher ^{BCT}	N Barnes	RA Black ^{BEM}	W Brooks
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J Burgess ^T	P Chandler ^X	R Comerford ^T	P Davies ^T
M Burgess ^M	AP Chapman	J Comford	S Davies ^X
SJ Burgess ^T	CB Chapman ^T	R Comont ^X	A Davis
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ANM Burns ^{BCMT}	M Chapman ^M	S Conway ^T	MH Davis
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M Burnside ^M	WN Chapman ^{TX}	MR Cooke ^X	A Davis ^X
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H Butler	PD Chattaway	S Cooper ^T	M Delap
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C Butt ^T	J Chubb	S Cooper ^B	P Denyer ^{CEMTW}
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NA Calbrade ^T	FC Clark ^T	S Costeloe	J Dickens
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MB Caldwell ^W	PJ Clay ^T	JR Cowser ^{BCHMTW}	J Dickinson
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J Camp ^T	FA Clements ^T	HM Crabtree ^{BCHMTW}	JW Dodd
DK Campbell ^T	J Clements ^T	D Cracroft	J Dollow
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P Carter ^T	TA Collett	L Curson ^{BMTX}	N Duggan ^T
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A Litvinoff ^T	JM Maskell ^T	KJ Morgan ^T	P Nunn
D Livingstone	SP Maskell	K Morley	CR Nye
AH Lloyd ^W	D Mason	D Morris	R Nye ^T
E Lloyd ^X	S Mason	NG Morris	B October ^X
SIH Lloyd ^T	PH Massini ^{MW}	S Morris	C OFlynn ^T
P Loader	W Masters ^T	T Morris ^W	J O'Hanlon ^T
R Lockyer ^W	P Maton	P Morrison-Price ^X	M Oldfield ^X
C Lodge ^T	PD Matson ^T	C Mortimer ^T	A Orland ^T
D Long	R Maxwell	D Mortimer ^X	P Osborn ^T
M Love ^{BM}	B McAllister	SD Morton ^T	G Osborne ^{BC}
M Lovell ^T	NV McCanch ^T	T Morton ^T	LA Osgerby ^T
RE Lowe	J McConochie ^M	S Muggleton ^M	N Ostler
P Lower ^M	SFH McCullagh ^{BCMT}	MF Mullen ^{BCM}	RA Oswald
AR Loweth ^T	JI McCulloch ^{TX}	MJ Mullis	S Otterley ^X
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P Lynch ^X	M McManus ^{ETW}	BE Murray	MP Owen ^{BC}
ME Lynn ^{BC}	H McMillan	AJ Musgrove ^{TX}	RC Owen ^B
G Lyons ^X	R McMillan	D Muters ^T	M Padmore ^T
D Macbeth	S McMullagh ^W	J Mycock ^{MT}	CG Page
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T MacLeod	S McWilliam ^X	A Needham ^T	SD Page ^T
DJ Madgin ^T	D Meagher ^M	P Needham	S Palme ^M
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T Mansfield	GA Michelmores ^{BCT}	DK Newnham	PJ Papps ^T
MV Mansson ^X	S Miles ^T	JA Newnham ^{BCMWTW}	A Parfitt ^{TWX}

JC Parish ^x	L Pitcher	M Redford	E Rowsell ^w
N Park ^{BCMT}	I Pitts	A Redman	BJ Ruddock ^T
A Parker	PJ Plant ^{BMT}	B Reed	SJR Rumsey
M Parker	R Platt ^T	C Reed ^T	MG Russell
J Parkin ^{MW}	D Plummer	R Rees	MJ Russell ^{CT}
S Parmenter	AH Podmore	B Reeve ^H	SA Russell ^{BCMT}
TW Parmenter ^{MT}	S Pont ^T	J Reeve ^x	H Rutherford ^T
R Parsons ^w	CR Poole ^{BCT}	JP Reeves ^{TX}	ND Rutherford ^{BCMW}
F Partridge ^x	NJN Pope	R Reeves	S Ryan ^{BM}
G Pascoe ^T	DA Potter ^T	A Reid ^T	T Ryder
RA Pask	GR Potts	Reigate & Redhill Grp	CMP Ryland ^x
S Patmore ^T	DG Powell ^T	RF Rettke-Grover ^T	K Rylands ^T
R Patterson ^x	J Power ^x	JP Richards ^T	D Sadler
F Pattinson ^x	D Powles ^x	JE Richardson ^{ET}	R Samways
PN Paul ^T	HDV Prendergast ^{MT}	L Richardson ^{BH}	D Sandell
E Paxton	L Prevost	S Ridley ^x	JF Sanderson ^B
D Payne ^T	A Price	M Ringwood	RJ Sandison
K Pearson	J Price ^x	JR Rivoire ^T	C Sandom ^x
M Pearson	R Price ^{WX}	C Roach ^T	N Sawyer ^x
R Peck ^T	A Priest ^B	ET Roberts ^T	J Scarfe-Becket
D Pedley	T Priest ^B	GCM Roberts ^T	A Schofield
A Pedliham ^T	C Prince ^w	H Roberts ^w	B Scott
C Pedroza	E Prior	M Roberts ^T	C Scott ^x
A Pendry ^M	DM Pritchard ^T	P Roberts ^x	E Scott ^T
RF Penticost ^{BCMTW}	D Pritty	J Robertson ^T	M Scott-ham ^{BHT}
RT Pepper ^T	K Pritty ^x	DJ Robinson ^T	T Seabrook ^w
L Percival ^w	S Pryor ^x	MC Robinson ^T	R Seargent ^T
A Perry ^{CEMTX}	H Pude ^T	PA Robinson ^T	J Searle ^B
AS Perry ^T	RN Pulley	D Robinson ^T	CM Seaton ^B
R Perry	RHA Putnam ^T	A Robjohns ^T	RC Self
L Perryman ^T	B Puttock ^{TW}	A Roffey	C Sell ^T
M Perryman	RJ Pyrah ^T	BM Rogers	J Sellwood ^T
JN Peters ^T	E Quinto-Ashman ^T	DP Rogers ^{BCMTW}	RJ Senior ^w
NR Peters	AR Quinton ^M	J Rogers ^B	MV Sennitt ^{MTX}
RH Petley ^x	C Rackham	MD Rolfe ^T	K Seymour ^T
G Pett ^M	M Radford ^T	K Rome ^T	M Shaft ^H
CB Peverett ^T	I Rafiq ^T	J Ross ^{BMTX}	PJ Sharp ^T
AP Phillips ^x	B Rainbow ^x	MK Rossor	RJW Shaw ^{TX}
D Phillips	A Ransom	MM Roterman	MD Shaw ^{BCHTW}
J Phillips	NM Ratcliffe ^{MT}	H Rouse	CR Shawyer
M Phillips	N Ratsey ^x	P Rouse ^T	H Shearer
MJ Phillips ^w	J Rawles ^T	AM Rowe ^T	R Sherrington ^C
SM Phillips	ND Rawlings ^T	P Rowe	EM Shilland ^T
A Piccolo ^T	T Rawlings	AJ Rowland ^T	JRD Shillitoe ^T
R Pike	S Rayburn ^T	D Rowland	B Short ^T
J Pilcher	D Readfern	S Rowland ^x	G Siddle
N Pinder ^x	C Reay ^{CMT}	S Rowledge ^x	MJ Silk
C Piper	J Redford	C Rowney	M Sillence ^T

M Simmonds	D Stobart	GA Tocher	R Walker
T Simon ^{MT}	A Stocker ^T	P Toe	D Walker ^W
D Simpson ^T	O Stone-Lee	M Tomlins ^W	SF Walsh
RN Simpson ^T	N Stonestreet ^T	MP Toms ^T	LA Walther ^X
SP Simpson ^{BCTW}	PJ Strangeman ^{BMT}	EF Tooth ^T	D Warburton ^T
T Simpson ^X	S Streeter ^M	S Topham	GC Ward ^T
A Simpson ^X	G Stride ^X	L Tozer	PC Warden ^T
R Sims ^X	L Stronge ^X	B Tragett ^T	HM Warne ^T
PA Sketch ^T	E Stubbs	P Treagust ^X	N Warne ^B
AJ Skinner ^{BCMW}	N Sturt	P Treen ^T	D Warner ^T
C Skinner	F Sugg	S Trenerry ^T	J Warren
J Smallwood ^T	PA Sullivan ^T	G Trew ^W	M Warren
CA Smith	M Surgey	CE Trollope ^{MT}	N Warwick ^M
DI Smith	JA Sutherland ^T	D Trott ^T	D Washington
P Smith ^B	E Sutton	JE Trowell ^W	GM Waterman ^T
PA Smith ^T	LA Sutton	L Trownson ^X	T Waters ^{HMW}
R Smith	P Sutton ^T	WH Truckle	D Watkins ^B
RJ Smith ^T	S Sutton ^{HX}	K Tubb	AB Watson ^{HX}
M Smith ^W	RK Sutton	A Turk ^X	J Watson ^X
S Smith ^W	JL Swallow ^T	M Turner ^W	PJ Watts ^T
S Smith	M Sweeney ^X	P Turner ^T	R Webb ^T
S Smith ^B	RW Swift ^T	PC Turner ^X	S Webb
AC Smithen ^{BCMTW}	WIE Tagg ^X	S Turner ^M	PJ Webster ^T
D Sneller ^M	A Taylor ^T	J Turner-Moss ^X	P Welch
A Snelling ^T	CA Taylor ^X	F Tusa	M Welcome ^W
MA Snelling ^T	K Taylor ^T	D Tutt ^T	P Wellings
TG Snow ^{BCT}	RE Taylor ^T	WM Twitchett ^T	J Wells
J Sokhy	RJ Taylor ^T	HL Twizell ^B	TJ Wells ^T
S Solly	SR Taylor ^{BMW}	M Twydell	PJ Wells
E Sopp ^W	Y Taylor	D Tyler ^T	AJ Wende ^{MT}
P Sopp	LJ Taylor ^T	P Tyler ^T	DR West ^{CMT}
B Southon	R Taylor	ST Underdown	L West
A Spiers ^X	G Taylor	J Underwood	R West ^T
P Spiers ^W	CR Tazzyman	C Upton	JD Weston ^W
G Stacey ^T	C Teague ^X	G Upton ^T	MJ Wheeler ^T
T Stachnicki ^T	S Teale	P Upton	L Whiston ^B
C Stanbridge	M Temple ^W	ED Urquhart	AD Whitcomb
I Standivan ^W	T Thomas ^{BTWX}	R Usher	IJ Whitcomb
M Stanford	D Thompson	H Vaughan ^B	PJ Whitcomb ^{TX}
AJ Steele ^T	J Thompson ^X	H Venables ^T	C White ^{MT}
MJ Stenning ^B	PS Thompson	DJ Viles ^T	M White ^T
P Stent	S Tillman ^X	C Vince ^W	P White
P Stephens	PA Tinning ^X	C Vine ^W	G Whitehead ^T
S Stephens	PC Tinning ^X	M Vivian ^X	JH Whitman
L Stevens ^{BM}	R Tipper ^X	G Waldron	P Whittaker ^T
P Stevens ^{MWX}	T Titchmarsh	BJ Walker ^T	K Whittleton ^T
PR Stevens ^T	G Tite	H Walker ^{BT}	M Wiggins ^T
S Stevens ^{BCT}	J Tite	LJ Walker	Wildcall Recorder ^X

L Wilding	RLC Williamson ^W	V Wood ^{BT}	D Wright ^T
G Wilkerson ^W	J Willmott ^X	T Wood ^X	E Wright ^T
J Wilkes	C Wilson	L Woodgate	KJ Wright ^W
V Wilkes ^X	KD Wilson	R Woods	M Wright ^{BT}
J Wilkinson ^T	PJ Wilson	I Woolsey ^{HM}	BJ Yates ^H
M Wilkinson	TJ Wilson	JA Worrall ^{BHM}	E Yeats ^X
J Wilks	I Wiltshire ^B	L Wren ^T	S Young ^X
JD Willett ^T	JS Winder	P Wren	S Young
DC Williams	A Witts ^T	R Wren ^T	S Younger ^W
S Williams	J Wolsey-Cooper	A Wright	D Zeuner ^M
C Williamson ^T	M Wood ^M	CH Wright	
J Williamson ^T	R Wood	CMV Wright ^{BCMTW}	

The superscripts in the above table indicate the particular survey(s) in which contributors participated, as follows:

B	Breeding Bird Survey (BBS)
C	Sussex Winter Bird Survey (SWBS)
E	Wealden Heath Breeding Bird Survey (WHBBS)
H	Heronries Census
M	House Martin Survey
T	Contributors via BirdTrack
W	Wetland Bird Survey (WeBS)
X	Contributors via Sussex Biodiversity Records Centre

ASSISTANCE TO RECORDER

The society thanks all who enter their observations through the various online recording systems particularly those based with the BTO. The Recorder and Database Manager thank contributors for submitting their records through one of the online recording systems or providing the society with digitised records. Particular thanks to the following team of helpers for capturing records submitted on paper or preparing datasets for importing into the society database: CJR Barfield, CB Chapman, JR Cowser, JA Hobson, NP Hutchinson, T Howard-Jones, E Ludick, BJ Ruddock and JH Whitman.

SURVEYS

Society members again gave a great deal of their time during the year to a wide range of national, county and local surveys. Their invaluable support and contributions are acknowledged with grateful thanks. Details of the surveys and the Sussex organisers follow.

Breeding Bird Survey (BBS): This BTO annual national breeding survey, based on selected 1-km squares, is organised in Sussex by Dr Helen Crabtree, 3 Myrtle Cottages, Ardingly Road, Cuckfield, West Sussex, RH17 5HD (hcrabtree@gmail.com). Thanks are due to the 136 observers involved who are indicated by ^B in the above table.

Sussex Winter Bird Survey (SWBS): This county survey based, like the BBS, on selected 1-km squares, is organised in Sussex by Christine George (sussex.wbs@gmail.com). Thanks are due to the 88 observers involved who are indicated by ^C in the above table.

South Downs Farmland Bird Initiative: This survey started in 2014 with the aim to monitor the farmland birds within the South Downs National Park. This survey is organised by Dr Helen Crabtree (contact details above) and involves a BBS-like survey of randomly selected 1-km squares containing at least 50% farmland habitat. BBS squares in the national park are included in this survey.

Wealden Heaths Breeding Bird Survey: This continuing survey of heaths and heath woodlands is undertaken in collaboration with the RSPB and the bird clubs of Berkshire, Hampshire and Surrey. The Sussex organiser is Alan Perry, Edgehill Barn, Byworth, Petworth, West Sussex, GU28 0HR (alan@alanperry.uk.com). Thanks are due to the 12 observers involved who are indicated by ^E in the list of contributors.

Heronries Census: This long-standing national census is organised in Sussex by Dr Helen Crabtree (contact details as above). Counts of known heronries are given in the systematic list. Thanks are due to the 27 contributors who are indicated by ^H in the above table.

House Martin Survey: This national survey organised by the BTO involved volunteers visiting 'random' (i.e. pre-selected) 1-km squares throughout the UK in order to record the occupied nests of House Martins. In Sussex additional effort was made to record nesting House Martins throughout the county. The survey was organised by Dr Helen Crabtree (contact details as above) and the 132 participants are indicated by ^M in the above table.

Wetland Bird Survey (WeBS): Monthly counts were carried out for this BTO/WWT/RSPB/JNCC survey and organised by Dr Helen Crabtree (contact details as above) and Dave Boddington, 193 Hartington Road, Brighton, BN2 3PA (davebodds@yahoo.co.uk). Coordinating the counts in large areas has been undertaken by local reserve wardens as shown below. Thanks are due to these and the 127 counters who are indicated by ^W in the list of contributors.

Coordination of Seawatching Records: The annual coordination of these records for the society is carried out by Dr JA Newnham, 61 Grand Avenue, Worthing, West Sussex, BN11 5BA (j.newnham1@ntlworld.com).

Ringling: Thanks are due to VP Bentley for maintaining detailed records of ringling in the county and to all ringers who contributed data.

SUMMARIES OF OBSERVATIONS

We are grateful for the organisation of survey work and summaries of detailed observations at: Chichester Harbour from J Parkin; Thorney and Pilsey Islands from CB Collins; Medmerry and Pagham Hbr from IM Lang; Selsey Bill from J Atkinson; Arundel WWT from P Stevens; Norfolk Estate from GR Potts; Pulborough Brooks and the Arun Valley from D Andrews and P Spiers; Worthing from Dr JA Newnham; Knepp Estate from P Green; Horsham District Council reserves from J Everitt; Weir Wood Reservoir from RJ Johnson; Ashdown Forest from P Johnson; Telscombe Cliffs from DH Howey; Splash Point (Seaford) from BR Gilmore; Seaford Head from M Eade; Beachy Head from RDM Edgar and D & JF Cooper; Hastings area migration watches from A Parker; Bewl Water from MG Freeman; and Rye Harbour from Dr BJ Yates. We also thank Mrs C Blencowe and R Foreman at the Sussex Biodiversity Records Centre for providing ornithological records from the centre, iRecord and Living Records involving 160 observers (marked ^X in the above table). The online recording of the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) surveys provided a plethora of records; the 548 Sussex contributors to BirdTrack are marked with a ^T in the above table. The records from Birdguides for 2015 were channelled through BirdTrack. Thanks are due to the BTO for the county BirdTrack records, as well as county records for the Breeding Bird Survey and the Wetland Bird Survey.

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