# Sussex Bird Report

## No. 75, 2022


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| Editor | M Mallalieu |
| Editorial Team | G Hughes (Asst. Editor), CJR Barfield, DK Campbell, MJ Chattaway, P James, SH Linington, O Mitchell, Dr JA Newnham, L Pitcher, Dr KW Smith, D Thorns |


## Contents


3 Editorial
6 Review of 2022
13 Classified Records: Introduction
20 Systematic List
186 Escapes and Introductions
191 Breeding Bird Survey results
195 Sussex Winter Bird Survey results
200 First and Last Migrant Dates
203 Wealden Heaths Breeding Bird Survey
204 Finders' Accounts of Notable Species
209 Sussex Ringing Report
220 Trends in priority breeding species on West Sussex Wealden Heaths from 1998 to 2022: Alan Perry
238 Meadow Pipit roosts on Ashdown Forest: Hew Prendergast
248 BTO/RSPB Breeding waders of wet meadows 2021-2022: Dr Helen Crabtree & Jim Glover
256 Long term species trends at Beachy Head: flycatchers, redstarts, chats and related species: John Cooper & Anthony Quinn
268 SOS Breeding Nightingale survey 2022: Dr Ken Smith & Matt Twydell
275 Unusual Records
277 Contributors, acknowledgements and surveys
293 Index to species in the Systematic List




# Sussex Bird Report 2022



Sussex Ornithological Society

# Sussex Ornithological Society

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*Lapwings, Iford Brooks, 14 February (Brian Cox)*

## Sussex Bird Report 2021 – amendments and corrections

In the Black Redstart species account on page 167, the January minimum monthly total should be 30 (not 65). The date in the caption of the young Greenfinch photo on page 182 should have been 14 May (not 8 March) and the date of the Reed Warbler photo on page 264 should have read 27 August (not 5 March).

## Photography and Artwork

It's always difficult to choose an image for the front cover, although I think it's poignant where possible to reproduce a moment for which the year will be remembered and in the case of 2022 it's certainly the American Robin. Captured here feeding on berries amongst the ornamental shrubs of the gardens it frequented in February. An astonishing discovery and one which brings to mind the old cliche… "you never quite know where or when such a bird may appear".

As always the editorial team and myself would like to thank everyone who took the time to submit photographs and artworks for the report; as usual the standard was very high and made the selection difficult. The report is made richer by your generosity and talent.

Laurence Pitcher, Photographic Editor.

***Cover photo:*** *American Robin, Eastbourne, 9 February (Mark Rayment)*

## Editorial

*Mark Mallalieu*

This report retains the new look of last year's. I hope that it will both bring back good memories of birding in 2022 and be a helpful reference. If you would like to suggest any improvements, please email me at breditor@sos.org.uk.

**Acknowledgements**

We might have had a crisis arising from the need to find new account writers for a large number of species for various reasons, including the very sad death of David Howey, who had written many of the seabird accounts since 2006, but several members very generously and quickly stepped in to take on all the accounts for which new writers were needed. As ever, the work of the account writers forms the main body of the report and the Society thanks them all: CJR Barfield, VP Bentley, R Black, D Brothwell, DK Campbell, MJ Chattaway, J Curson, MC Daniel, C Davis, MR Eade, RJ Fairbank, J Franklin, A Glossop, D Green, AC Gutteridge, TD Hallahan, PK Holland, A House, BGR Ives, P James, SH Linington, M Mallalieu, JA Newnham, M Orchard-Webb, GA Osbourne, TW Parmenter, E Paxton, PJ Plant, AH Podmore, A Rowe, T Seabrook, KW Smith, L Smith, P Stevens, A Thomas, G Turvey and M Wright.

Joanne Chattaway, Graham Hughes and Simon Linington did all the primary proofreading, to a very high standard, for which I am most grateful. Thanks also to Owen Mitchell, who checked all the species accounts and the Review of the Year and offered many helpful suggestions. I would like to thank John Newnham, our Database Manager, for continuing to ensure that the database is as accurate and complete as possible, and that account writers are given all the help they need to draft accounts. This the single most important element of report production. Thanks also to Alex Glossop, who has continued to take on significant elements of database management.

Graham Hughes, Assistant Editor, diligently supervised the allocation, tracking and editing of species accounts, again easing the Editor's workload considerably. Graham also read through all the final species accounts and other sections of the report.

In addition to his other key contributions, John Newnham also undertook a check of every species account, updated the arrival and departure tables, produced the maps, and wrote the Classified Records and Contributors & Acknowledgements sections. I am grateful to Anthony Holden for writing the Review of the Year, his first one.

Five excellent papers are included in this report, involving eight authors and scientific papers editor, Ken Smith, all of whose hard work is much appreciated. The authors are: John Cooper and Anthony Quinn (Long term trends at Beachy Head of flycatchers, redstarts, chats and related species), Helen Crabtree and Jim Glover (Breeding waders of wet meadows 2021-2022), Alan Perry (Trends in priority breeding species on West Sussex Wealden Heaths from 1998 to 2022), Hew Prendergast (Meadow Pipit roosts on Ashdown Forest – counts and conjecture) and Ken Smith and Matt Twydell (Breeding Nightingale survey 2022). Thanks to the authors of the finder's accounts: that for the American Robin was written by Michael Clayton-Harding, the one for the Brown Booby by Clodagh Bannerman and the Penduline Tit account by David Thorns. Helen Crabtree provided the BBS data, Christine George those for the Sussex Winter Bird Survey. Together all these pieces of work combine with the species accounts to make a 2022 Sussex Bird Report that is full of valuable information.

The Society is most grateful to Robert Greenhalf (website: www.robertgreenhalf.co.uk), Stephen Message (website: www.message-wildlife-art.co.uk), Jan Wilczur (website: https://www.artnorfolk.co.uk/jan-wilczur.html, Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100070082351315,

Twitter: https://twitter.com/JWilczur, Instagram: https://www.instagram.com/janwilczur/) and Phil Jones (Twitter: https://twitter.com/philjo61) for allowing us to use their superb paintings in the report.

Many high quality photographs were offered for publication and Laurence Pitcher recommended those to be used in the main report and for the front cover. Thanks to Laurence for this work and for his design input with Chris Barfield on the front cover.

Chris Barfield typeset the whole publication, again to a very high standard. Many thanks to Chris for taking on this vital task once more. Thanks to Swallowtail Print Limited, our printers, (https://www.swallowtailprint.co.uk/), and to Swarovski Optik, our advertisers.

Some errors and omissions will inevitably remain and I take responsibility for those. Do please let me know of any that you notice at the email address above. If you would like to help in any way with future Sussex Bird Reports, please contact me via the same email address.

## Abbreviations

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **AON** | Apparently occupied nests | **km** | kilometres |
| **BBRC** | British Birds Records Committee | **LNR** | Local Nature Reserve |
| **BBS** | Breeding Bird Survey | **m** | metres |
| **BGBW** | Big Garden Bird Watch (RSPB) | **mo** | many observers |
| **BOU** | British Ornithologists' Union | **MoD** | Ministry of Defence |
| **BOURC** | BOU Records Committee | **MP** | Mill Pond |
| **BTO** | British Trust for Ornithology | **N,E,S,W** | compass points |
| **CES** | Constant Effort Site | **nc** | no count |
| **CP** | Country Park | **NR** | Nature Reserve |
| **Defra** | Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs | **nr** | near |
| | | **o/s** | offshore |
| **Fm** | Farm | **R** | River |
| **GBW** | Garden Bird Watch (BTO) | **Res** | Reservoir |
| **GC** | Golf Course | **RG** | Ringing Group |
| **GP** | Gravel Pit(s) | **RS** | Ringing Station |
| **GWCT** | Game and Wildlife Conservation Trust | **RSPB** | Royal Society for the Protection of Birds |
| **ha** | hectares | **SDFBI** | South Downs Farmland Bird Initiative |
| **Hbr** | Harbour | **SOSRC** | SOS Records Committee |
| **HPAI** | Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza | **SSSI** | Site of Special Scientific Interest |
| **hr** | hours | **SWBS** | Sussex Winter Bird Survey |
| **IOC** | International Ornithological Congress | **SWT** | Sussex Wildlife Trust |
| **IOU** | International Ornithologists' Union | **WeBS** | Wetland Bird Survey |
| **IUCN** | International Union for the Conservation of Nature | **WHBBS** | Wealden Heaths Breeding Bird Survey |
| | | **WTW** | Water Treatment Works |
| **JNCC** | Joint Nature Conservation Committee | **WWT** | Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust |

***Opposite**: Curlews and Lapwing, by Robert Greenhalf*



## Review of 2022

*Anthony Holden*

A total of 268 species was recorded in Sussex in 2022, compared to 258 in 2021. This is the highest annual total since the 271 recorded in 2012. Two species were added to the Sussex List, both in the first winter period: **Brown Booby** and **American Robin**. The booby was found at Hove Beach on 2 Jan. It was taken into care with a view to returning to its tropical home, but the outcome is unknown. The **American Robin** was located in Eastbourne on 8 Feb and stayed until the 27th.

### January to March

*January was a month of above average sunshine and well below average rainfall; temperatures were mainly on the mild side, although there were some frosty mornings. February was notable for the fierce Storm "Eunice" on the 18th which brought exceptionally strong winds from the south-west. The remainder of the month and March were mild with strong south-easterlies in the second week of March, some Saharan dust in the third week and fine weather for much of the rest, though there was snow and hail on the 31st.*

Several scarce birds found in 2021 lingered into the New Year. The long-staying **Little Bunting** at Poundgate (Ashdown Forest) remained until at least 12 Mar with one there again on 21 Apr, and the individual at Iping Common remained until 15 Jan. The long-staying Hooded Crow at Polegate was seen up to 11 Mar and another flew over Sullington on the 24th. The **Shore Lark** at Sovereign Hbr and then Pevensey Bay remained at the latter site until 26 Jan and perhaps the same individual was at Pett on 7 and 8 Feb. The **Siberian Chiffchaff** at Lidsey WTW was last seen on 12 Feb; one more was at Kingston WTW on 21 Feb. A **House Martin** at Woods Mill (Henfield) on 11 Feb may have overwintered somewhere in Britain.

The first quarter of 2022 was notable for the two county "firsts" already mentioned; other highlights of the year found in this period were the **Desert Wheatear** that graced the beach at Goring Gap on 20 Mar and a **Hume's Warbler** which arrived on 14 Jan and made its home in Holm Oaks on Eastbourne seafront until 18 Apr.

A **Green-winged Teal**, the first for the county since 2011, was at Rye Hbr from 2 to 14 Mar.

There were few records of scarce geese, but a single **Pink-footed Goose** joined the flock of **White-fronted Geese** wintering at Pett Level from 14 Jan to 5 Mar, and there was another at Iford Brooks from 22 Jan to 5 Mar. This bird was joined by three **Tundra Bean Geese** which stayed from 23 Jan to 10 Mar. A **Black Brant** was at Thorney Deeps between 27 Feb and 17 Mar. The small flock of **Bewick's Swans** in the Arun Valley consisted of between 11 and 16 birds, a similar number to 2021, but they were gone by 13 Feb, an early date. Five were at Rye Fm (Henfield Levels) on 3 and 9 Jan whilst in East Sussex 38 were at Walland Marsh on 10 Jan and presumably the same 38 at Scotney GP on the 23rd, these being very high counts for Sussex nowadays. Wetland Bird Survey (WeBS) counts showed a mixed picture with some waterfowl species having low February and March numbers compared to the 10-year averages, including **Brent Goose**, **Eurasian Wigeon** and **Eurasian Teal**.

An **Iceland Gull** was at Rye Hbr from 23 Feb to 6 Mar and up to ten **Caspian Gulls** were seen in January at the lower Adur and Cuckmere Valleys, West Rise Marsh (Eastbourne), Normans Bay, Hastings and Rye Hbr, with three more in February and March. Much rarer, a **Bonaparte's Gull** was a notable find at Chichester GP on 22 Mar, where it remained until 11 Apr.

**Glossy Ibis** is on the increase in Sussex, and there were several in the Pagham Hbr/Sidlesham area from mid-January, with numbers increasing from one on the 16th to six by the month end that remained through February and up to 13 Mar, after which numbers dropped until the last two on 24 Mar. There were also singles at Pett Level on14 Jan and at Arundel WWT from 23 Jan to 14 Feb.



*Bonaparte's Gull, Chichester GP, 23 March (David Campbell)*

**Cattle Egrets** are another species that is becoming well established in Sussex, and a mobile flock of up to 56 was in the Selsey Peninsula during the first winter period, plus up to nine in Chichester Hbr, six or seven in the Arun Valley and smaller numbers elsewhere.

At sea, noteworthy records in January included a **Puffin** flying east past Selsey Bill on the 22nd. Single **Red-necked Grebes** were frequently seen in the Selsey Bill/Pagham Hbr area in the first three months and into April, and others were at Worthing on 22 Feb and at Lancing on 24 Mar.

Winter raptor interest often centres on **Hen Harriers**, and sightings were as usual concentrated on the West Sussex downland and the Arun Valley. **Short-eared Owl** numbers in the county were rather below their 10-year average, the largest count being seven on Thorney Island on 25 Feb.

A **White-spotted Bluethroat** – quite a major rarity – was caught and ringed at Charleston Reedbed on 31 Mar. Up to five **Water Pipits** were at West Rise Marsh (Eastbourne) in January with up to eight in March, and other records comprised one at Waltham Brooks (19 Feb), Bulverhythe (4 Mar), Combe Valley CP (two on 9 Mar), Henfield Levels (singles on 14 and 21 Mar) and Rye Hbr (two on 20 Mar). Five **Common Redpolls** were at Old Lodge LNR (Ashdown Forest) on 8 Feb. **Lapland Buntings** were found at Pett Level on 12 Jan and at Rye Hbr on 25 Jan.

March sees the beginning of ornithological spring with early migrants starting to arrive. 2022 saw notably early arrival dates for **Osprey** at Brighton on the 10th, and **Sedge Warbler** at Pevensey on the 19th, both around 10 days ahead of their 10-year average. Closer to their expected dates were other March arrivals – **Sand Martin** at Bulverhythe (St Leonards) on the 4th, **Northern Wheatear** at Selsey Bill on the 10th, **Common Tern** also at Selsey Bill on the 25th, **Willow Warbler** at Horsted Keynes on the 21st, **Common Redstart** at High and Over (Seaford) on the 26th and **Ring Ouzel** at Ferring on the 28th.

Other eagerly awaited harbingers of coming summer were somewhat later than their 10-year averages with the first **Barn Swallow** coming in on 27 Mar (Robertsbridge) and the first **House Martin** two days later (Weir Wood Res).

## April to June

*After snow and frost on 1 Apr, temperatures increased, reaching 20°C on the 16th. There were periods of strong winds including south-easterlies on the 11th that were favourable for seawatching. There were warm days in May, though mixed with rain and strong winds, including more south-easterlies on the 9th. June was notable for a very hot spell in the middle of the month, but otherwise temperatures were only slightly above average and there were several showery days.*

April brings in most of our summer visitors, with many of the passerines arriving a few days late in 2022, probably owing to the cold weather at the beginning of the month. A **Reed Warbler** was at Waltham Brooks on the 8th and a **Garden Warbler** at St Leonard's Forest the next day. **Common Nightingales** were first reported on 11 Apr (Pulborough Brooks and Barcombe), and a later survey found a heartening 42 territories in the southern block at Knepp. Another Knepp speciality, **Turtle Dove**, was first reported on 10 Apr at Lewes Brooks, but nevertheless, most subsequent sightings were at Knepp, with a maximum count of five on 22 and 31 May. Regrettably, this summer visitor showed a further substantial decline over 2021. Also on the 10th came the first **Cuckoo** at Pagham Hbr, **Lesser Whitethroat** at Pulborough Brooks, **Common Whitethroat** at Pagham Hbr, and **Yellow Wagtail** at Combe Valley CP. A **Wood Warbler**, once a Sussex breeding species, but now a very scarce migrant, lingered at Powdermill Res from 11 to 21 April, while another was seen at Bishopstone on 15 May. Other arrivals included the first two **Tree Pipits** at Old Lodge LNR (Ashdown Forest) on the 12th, **Grasshopper Warbler** at Brede Levels on the 16th, and **Whinchat** at Climping Gap on the 18th.

The first **Common Swift** was over Highdown (Worthing) on 13 Apr, although there were then no further observations until the 20th when one over Hove heralded a more general arrival. The first two **Spotted Flycatchers** were at Pagham Hbr on 23 Apr. The first **Nightjar** was at Wiggonholt Common (Pulborough Brooks) on 8 May, a date very close to the 10-year average. **Quail**, though, appears to have been a notably late arrival with no observations until one on 16 Jun at Thorney Deeps.

The spring didn't bring in any more extreme rarities, although there was a good showing of scarce species from the continent. **Serins** were recorded on three occasions over the three months: 17 Apr, when one flew in from the sea at Selsey Bill, 26 May at Beachy Head and finally on 18 Jun at Fairlight. **Red-rumped Swallows** were at Cuckmere Haven on 20 Apr, Uckfield WTW on the 27th and 28th, and at Beachy Head on 14 May. A **Grey-headed Wagtail** was found in the lower Cuckmere Valley on 2 May.

Brightly-coloured visitors from the south during the period were **Bee-eaters,** with two at Beachy Head on 20 May and three at Angmering a week later, **Golden Orioles** at Beachy Head on 14 May and 8 Jun and between two and four at Winchelsea on 21 May, and **Hoopoes** at Sheffield Forest on 22 May, Shoreham Beach on 2 Jun and Church Norton on the 25th. Adult **Rose-coloured Starlings** were found at Beckley on 10 Jun and Brede on the 18th. **Purple Herons** were seen at Charleston Reedbed on 25 Apr and at Cuckmere Haven on 8 May.

**Glossy Ibises** reduced to three over this quarter – one at Rye Hbr on 7 May and two at Thorney Deeps on several dates from 1 to 30 Jun. **Red-necked Grebes** had a good showing in April with one east at Splash Point (Seaford) on the 11th, up to two at Goring from the 11th until the 18th, one at Climping between the 15th and 19th and one at Elmer Rocks (Middleton-on-Sea) on 21 Apr and 2 May.

There were three wader species of note – a **Kentish Plover** at Camber on 22 and 23 Apr, a **Temminck's Stint** at Pulborough Brooks on 4 May and a **Black-winged Stilt** on Down Level (Pevensey) from the 21st to the 23rd. A **Ring-necked Duck** was on a farm reservoir at Yapton from 14 to 17 Apr, whilst scarce terns included a **White-winged Black Tern** that graced Rye Hbr on 11 May and two **Roseate Terns**, including one off Selsey Bill on 11 May that was re-found, along with

another individual, at Church Norton later in the day, with one remaining until the 16th. Scarce raptors included three **Black Kites**, a good showing, with singles at Iford on 19 Apr, over Brighton on the 22nd and at Rye Hbr on 15 May.

Seawatchers were cheered by an above average spring for **Pomarine Skua** passage, with an estimated 24 in April and 146 in May. The best day was the 9th with 43 past Selsey Bill, 31 at Worthing, 72 at Brighton Marina, 51 at Splash Point and 82 at Birling Gap.

Spring arrivals are barely over before the first hints of autumn migration begin to show, and by mid to late June, returning birds of species such as **Green Sandpiper** and **Spotted Redshank** were being seen at sites such as Pulborough Brooks, Pagham Hbr and other coastal locations.



*Rose-coloured Starling, Brede Levels, 18 June (Mark Tomlins)*

## July to September

*July was dominated by settled anti-cyclonic conditions and also saw very high temperatures, culminating in a record-breaking heatwave on the 18th and 19th. There was virtually no rain in Sussex for the entire month, resulting in drought conditions, which continued into the first half of August, the second week of which was again very hot. The high pressure eventually moved away to leave more changeable and showery weather. Warm temperatures continued into September although after the 12th it became cooler and more autumnal, and the last few days were particularly chilly.*

In the harbours, **Common Terns** had good breeding success at Rye with 100 pairs producing 55 young, and there were 30 nests on rafts in Chichester Hbr. Although four pairs at Pagham Hbr fledged just one young, there was good success at this site for both **Sandwich Terns**, with 335 pairs fledging 148 young, and **Little Terns,** with 31 pairs raising 26 young. It was a disappointing year for the **Kittiwake** colony at Seaford Head, however, with the lowest total of 383 nests since it was established in 2011.

**Honey-buzzards** enjoyed an excellent breeding season with 15 pairs found, of which ten were breeding. From August onwards 56 outbound birds were seen at or close to the coast, with something of a bonanza on 11 Sep when four were seen at Beachy Head with another four at Brighton. It was also a good summer for **Marsh Harriers** with evidence of up to five pairs breeding.

One of the standout rarities of this period was the brief fly-by **Caspian Tern** at Dell Quay on 3 Jul, a typical date for this Baltic breeder. It later turned up in Hampshire. Two **White-rumped Sandpipers** arrived on 26 Jul, one at Sidlesham Ferry, the other at the Stilt Pool at Medmerry; this second bird remained until the 30th.

The weather conditions may have helped bring in more scarce herons from the continent, with a **Night-heron** at Waltham Brooks on 4 Jul and **Purple Herons** at Castle Water (Rye Hbr) from 28 and 29 Jul and 9 Aug and at Weir Wood Res on 28 Aug. A **Squacco Heron** stayed at Pagham Hbr from 29 Jul to 19 Aug. **Cattle Egrets** continued to be present over the summer, with record breeding numbers at Pagham Hbr, and there were two large groups in August with peak counts of 62 in Pagham Hbr on 27 Aug and 82 at Offham in the Arun Valley on 9 Sep. **Glossy Ibis** continued to be recorded in small numbers with one at Medmerry between 29 Jul and 5 Sep that was also seen at Pagham Hbr, and another at Bewl Water on 26 Aug. A **Hoopoe** was enjoying the hot weather in Singleton Forest on 13 Jul, while later in the quarter another was at Seaford Head on 3 Sep.

Interesting seabirds passing the county this quarter included two **Roseate Terns** at Rye Hbr on 24 Jul, a very early **Red-necked Grebe** past Selsey Bill on 21 Aug, and **Balearic Shearwaters** - of which five were seen between 21 Aug and 24 Sep, all at Selsey Bill apart from a couple at Fairlight on 8 Sep. **Temminck's Stints** were visitors to Sidlesham Ferry between 8 and 17 Aug and to Weir Wood Res on 14 and 15 Sep, while a **Red-necked Phalarope** was at Pett Level for four days from 2 Sep and another at Brighton Marina on the 30th that was briefly in the company of the year's only **Grey Phalarope**.

Southbound **Dotterels** turned up at Beachy Head on 16 Aug and over Waterhall (Brighton) on 7 Sep, while a **Corncrake,** also on its way south, was seen at Castle Hill LNR (Newhaven) on the 4th. A **Spotted Crake** was a good find at West Rise Marsh (Eastbourne) from 3 to 5 Sep.

A species once fairly common, but now very scarce in Sussex - a **Red-backed Shrike,** was at Alfriston on 21 Aug, and another was at Medmerry from 25 Sep to 8 Oct. **Yellow-browed Warblers** were found at Sheepcote Valley (Brighton) on 21 Sep and another at Beachy Head on the 29th. Earlier, another **Serin** was at Fairlight on 5 Jul, an **Ortolan Bunting** was at Newhaven Tide Mills on 2 Sep and the third **Rose-coloured Starling** of the year was at Rustington from 19 to 23 Sep. Right at the end of the period, a **Booted Warbler** at Beachy Head on 29 Sep was an outstanding find.

**Swifts** seem to have departed en masse at the end of July, with significant movement on the 24th. Thereafter, numbers declined rapidly and the last was seen at Pett Level on 25 Sep. Other departing migrants included a **Wood Warbler** at West Rise Marsh on 18 Aug, while the first **Wryneck** of the autumn was at Sheepcote Valley on the 16th and 17th, and others were seen over the following few weeks, the last being a very late lingerer at Barcombe between 4 and 15 Nov. **Osprey** was another species with a very protracted autumn migration period, with the earliest migrant seen at Bewl Water on 12 Aug, while the last, at Weir Wood Res on 5 Nov, was 11 days later than the 10-year average. Now a scarce breeder, flocks of **Yellow Wagtails** enrich autumn outings: there were 100 at Rye Hbr on 21 Aug, at Cissbury on 3 Sep, and 85 at Beachy Head on the 5th.

The last **Nightjar** of the year was at Pett on 26 Aug. Final dates for several other departing summer visitors were in September and included **Turtle Dove** at Knepp on the 12th, **Pied Flycatchers** at Amberley Wild Brooks and Graffham Down on the 16th and **Cuckoo** at Climping on the 24th.

## October to December

*Most of October and November were warmer than average, the last ten days of October particularly so. Both months were predominantly unsettled. December was the only colder than average month of 2022, with a very cold and frosty spell until the 17th. Rainfall was limited during the cold spell, but from*

*the 18th there was much more rain, bringing the total rainfall for the month almost up to the long-term monthly average.*

Most other summer visitors departed in October with last dates and sites including **Grasshopper Warbler** at Truleigh Hill on the 1st, **Garden Warbler** at Sheepcote Valley on the same date, **Tree Pipit** at Beachy Head on the 3rd, a late **Common Nightingale** also at Beachy Head on the 4th, **Sedge Warbler** at Lewes Brooks on the 8th, two **Spotted Flycatchers** at Pulborough Brooks on the 11th, **Yellow Wagtail** at Selsey Bill on the 18th, **Willow Warbler** at Pett Level on the 22nd, two **Reed Warblers** at Pett Level on the 25th and **Common Redstart** at Sompting on the 31st.

Among shore and waterbirds, the most noteworthy record was of a **Buff-breasted Sandpiper,** a vagrant species from America, which was at Medmerry between 2 and 3 Oct. Wildfowl rarities this quarter were limited to a **Green-winged Teal** at Iford Brooks between 27 and 29 Dec. For the second year, a **Black-necked Grebe** appeared on a small reservoir near Yapton, arriving on 7 Oct and being joined by a second on the 12th, with one being last seen on 29 Nov. **Red-necked Grebes** continued to drift into or past the county, with sightings at Selsey Bill on 22 Oct, 18 Nov and 24 to 31 Dec, and one at Elmer Rocks on 16 Dec. Another "red-neck", this one a **Red-necked Phalarope**, was at Rye Hbr from 16 to 30 Oct. The main gull interest involved a remarkable November influx of **Little Gulls**, which were seen at 40 sites in the county over the month with a concentration of records between the 21st and the 27th, the largest count being of 60 W at Brighton Marina on the 23rd. Apart from this, a **Sabine's Gull** was at Selsey Bill on 30 Oct, while a **Glaucous Gull** was at West Rise Marsh on 17 Dec.

Following the September sightings of this species, more **Balearic Shearwaters** were seen off Selsey Bill (7 and 17 Oct), while **Sooty Shearwaters** were seen on three occasions between 30 Oct and 5 Nov, passing the Bill and Worthing. In an excellent year for **Leach's Petrels**, five were found: one flew east at Splash Point on 30 Oct, 3 W at Brighton Marina on 8 Nov and one W there on the 23rd. November also produced sightings of **Little Auks** flying west past Goring on the 19th and Selsey Bill on the 23rd and 26th, while a **Puffin** flew west off Climping on the 22nd.

**Purple Heron** continued to feature, with one over Patcham on 30 Oct, as did **Glossy Ibis,** one of which was at Jury's Gap on the 2nd, while another lingered at Charleston Reedbed from 2 to 6 Dec. **Cattle Egret** numbers continued at a high level and up to 75 were in Pagham Hbr on 18 Nov.

A national influx of **Pallid Swifts** occurred at the end of October, and one was found at Peacehaven on 30 Oct, but sadly had to be taken into care. Swifts seen near Chidham the same day and the next day at Pett Level could not be identified to species.

It was a good autumn for several rare and scarce warblers. A **Barred Warbler** was found at Climping on 8 to 10 Oct, and this was followed by some good finds at Beachy Head towards the end of October – two **Radde's Warblers** between the 21st and 23rd, and a **Pallas's Leaf Warbler** from the 29th to 31st. Another **Pallas's Warbler** was at Pett Level on 22 Oct and one more at Sheepcote Valley (Brighton) on the 27th. These dates are very typical for the appearance of these Asian species in Sussex. Six more **Yellow-browed Warblers** were found in October: at Sheepcote Valley on the 3rd, 12th and 20th, at Telscombe on the 8th, Pevensey from the 24th to the 26th and at Selsey on 12 Nov. There were **Siberian Chiffchaffs** at Cissbury on 2 Oct, Coldwaltham WTW from 18 Nov to 6 Dec and Rackham Woods on 6 Dec.

A **Lapland Bunting** was at Pagham Lagoon on 24 Oct, then from 18 Nov, a number of **Penduline Tits** were found at West Rise Marsh. They remained into 2023 but were not easy to find! The numbers present fluctuated, but up to five birds were seen at any one time. Rarer still was the **Sardinian Warbler** in a Lancing garden from 3 Nov into 2023, one of the birds of the year, even though it was not "twitchable". **Water Pipits** included two at Combe Valley CP on 27 Oct and one



*Sardinian Warbler, Lancing, 3 November (David Campbell)*

on 2 Nov, up to eight at West Rise Marsh in November and three in December, two on Henfield Levels on 31 Oct and two at Pulborough Brooks between 26 and 30 Nov, with one there on the 30th.

With migration of southbound species coming to a close, it was a light year for autumn **Ring Ouzels**, birds trickling through during October, until the last one was seen on 5 Nov at Cadborough (Rye). Other last dates in November for summer visitors were a **Whinchat** at West Rise Marsh on the 4th, **Northern Wheatear** at Beachy Head on the 7th and **House Martin** at Goring Gap on the 14th. Even later was the last **Barn Swallow**, at Shoreham Hbr on 7 Dec.

Returning geese included a **Pink-footed Goose** at Scotney GP on 3 Dec, while the **Bewick's Swans** returned to the county from their Russian Arctic breeding grounds on 20 Dec when three arrived at Barnham Brooks, increasing to seven on the 22nd. A single **Whooper Swan** arrived at Combe Valley CP on 26 Nov, staying until 11 Dec. Counts of returning wildfowl and waders tended to be depressed through October and November, but flocks built up in December, with some species such as **Eurasian Teal** and **Golden Plover** then showing counts rather above average. Also of note were some impressively high figures of migrating **Redwings** in October, the highest count being 12,000 W at Brighton on the 19th.

As in the first winter period, the majority of records of **Hen Harriers** were from the Arun Valley and West Sussex downland, where three were probably present, with others between 12 Oct and 19 Dec at seven other coastal and inland sites. **Short-eared Owl** records came from nine sites in West Sussex and eight in East Sussex, the highest total being four at Pilsey Island (Chichester Hbr) on 9 Dec. As the year drew to a close, and following an 18 month absence, one, or possibly two, **Great Grey Shrikes** appeared in the north-west of the county with records in November and December at Black Down and Weavers Down (Liss).

Reflecting on the year, the fortunes of Sussex bird species continue to display trends likely to be connected with climate change and/or environmental deterioration on migration routes and in their winter or summer homes. The year was most memorable, perhaps, for the record breaking summer temperatures and associated drought conditions.

# Classified Records for 2022

*John Newnham*

This list covers all species in Categories A and C of the British Ornithologists' Union (BOU) checklist with records of Category D and E species listed separately. An index to all the Category A and C species included in the Systematic List is given on pages 293-296.

The Category A and C species are listed in the order published in the British List announced by the BOU in January 2020 and follows the International Ornithological Union's (IOU) IOC World Bird List (version 12.1).

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

## Seawatching records

Seawatching records were received from several sites and at three sites daily logs were locally maintained. Figures for Splash Point (Seaford) and Birling Gap were created from records received from other sources. The following table lists the hours watched in each month at five locations for which this information was available:

| | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Selsey Bill | 57 | 59 | 105 | 177 | 156 | 57 | 55 | 60 | 79 | 86 | 94 | 62 | 1045 |
| Worthing & Goring | 33 | 27 | 65 | 81 | 45 | 18 | 11 | 8 | 27 | 32 | 27 | 28 | 403 |
| Splash Point (Seaford) | 2 | 6 | 18 | 57 | 27 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 110 |
| Birling Gap | 11 | 12 | 58 | 64 | 37 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 182 |
| Fairlight | 0 | 25 | 41 | 53 | 18 | 4 | 2 | 3 | 8 | 11 | 9 | 38 | 210 |

## Wetland Bird Survey records

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, Royal Society for the Protection of Birds and 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 2022 the priority core count dates were 23 Jan, 20 Feb, 20 Mar, 17 Apr, 15 May, 19 Jun, 17 Jul, 14 Aug, 11 Sep, 9 Oct, 13 Nov and 11 Dec.

In the WeBS tables, "nc" signifies that the site was not visited or the species was not counted 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 presented

in the reports between 2004 and 2015 show only sites where this figure was reached during any of the core (September to March) monthly counts. From 2016 the sites shown are those where the sum of the core season counts are 5% or more of the sum of the county totals for the same January to March and September to December counts. The tables also show a 10-year average county total for each month to allow readers to place the current year's counts in context.

**Breeding Bird Survey data**

Results from the Breeding Bird Survey (BBS) are presented, for most the numbers or percentage of 1-km squares in which each species was recorded at least once during the year and a maximum count are reported. For some the totals of the maximum counts recorded from each square surveyed during the year are quoted. The maximum count is calculated for each species separately and is based on all birds seen and heard, including those in flight. 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. While these figures may provide a general indication of major changes in abundance and distributions over time, they do not provide a statistically robust measure of such changes because they do not take account of the BBS sampling strategy or of temporal variation in the sample of squares surveyed. Population trends are calculated using a method developed by the BTO for county-level analyses, and report percentage changes in populations over the entire period since the beginning of the survey in 1994, as well as the most recent inter-year differences. These trends for Sussex are reported in the table on page 194 along with upper and lower 95% confidence limits. Percentage changes since 1994 are plotted each year to produce trend graphs; the percentage changes are presented on these graphs as indices relative to an arbitrary index of 100 at the beginning of the survey in 1994. These trend graphs are presented for some species in the species accounts; each graph shows a smoothed trend line, a shaded 85% confidence interval and also actual annual index values. Index values for 2001 or 2020 are missing because Foot and Mouth Disease and COVID-19 restrictions resulted in reduced numbers of surveys being carried out. The BBS is organised by the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO), and jointly funded by the BTO, the Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC, the statutory adviser to Government on UK and international nature conservation, on behalf of the Council for Nature Conservation and the Countryside, the Countryside Council for Wales, Natural England and Scottish Natural Heritage) and the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds.

**Garden BirdWatch records**

Garden BirdWatch is organised by the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) and funded through the annual subscription paid by its participants. The aim to monitor the changing fortunes of birds and other garden wildlife through its network of 'citizen scientists'. BTO Garden BirdWatch was launched in autumn 1994 in readiness for recording to begin in January 1995. Participants are asked to record the birds and other wildlife using their gardens, at similar times each week, recording only species actively using the garden and not birds seen from the garden in flight. Participants record the maximum number of individuals of each species seen together at one point in time during the recording period.

**Database report**

Each species account in the systematic list is written by an individual using the records abstracted from the society's CoBRA2 (County Bird Recording Application) on-line database. As usual the dataset is a complex mixture of records received from online recording systems from the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO), the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology (eBird) and the Biological Record Centre (iRecord). Additionally the observations come from a miscellany of recording systems used by various groups and nature reserves and from individual observers.

The total number of records processed for the year was yet another record at 587,438; the relentless increase can be seen in the following figure.

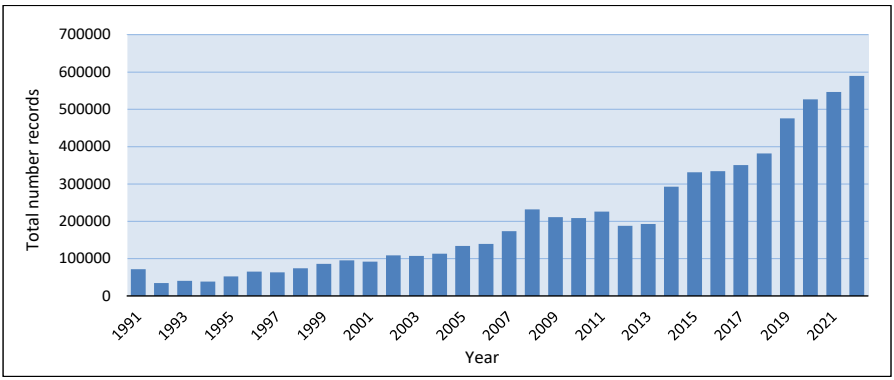



***Figure 1**. The numbers of records in the database for each year (1991-2022).*

In keeping with recent years over 90% of the records came from various on-line recording with about 56% of the records originated via the BTO. The number of records from each of the main on-line recording systems and largest contributing county databases are shown in Table 1.

| Online recording source name | Records | Other databases source name | Records |
|---|---|---|---|
| BTO BirdTrack data | 278191 | Horsham District Council Reserves | 13271 |
| Cornell University eBird | 197004 | Friends of Weir Wood Res. | 7290 |
| BTO Garden BirdWatch | 16404 | Ashdown Forest Bird Group | 6546 |
| WeBS on-line | 15061 | RSPB Reserves | 5955 |
| BTO Breeding Bird Survey | 9653 | Rye Hbr LNR Records | 3919 |
| Sussex Winter Bird Survey | 6883 | Selsey Bill Seawatch Log | 3909 |
| iRecord Records | 5640 | Sussex Biodiversity Records Centre | 2173 |

***Table 1.** The numbers of records sourced in 2022 from online recording systems (left) and the top other county databases (right).*

As before, the greatest number of records 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. However, eBird, administered by the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology (Ithaca, New York), continues as a popular recording medium whilst iRecord, operated by the Biological Records Centre as part of the work of the UK Centre for Ecology & Hydrology, is used to a lesser degree but by a large number of observers. Once again the observations from the BTO's Garden Bird Watch (GBW), Wetland Birds Survey (WeBS) and the Breeding Bird Survey (BBS) have been made available to be included in the species summaries in this report.

The marked rise in the number of observers contributing to the annual datasets was plotted in the 2021 Sussex Bird Report, over 2000 contributors in 2022 was yet another record number. All are acknowledged at the end of the report. As usual there was a large range of submissions; 130 observers generated over 1000 records and 362 contributors supplied just one record. Like recent years these figures exclude those participating solely in the WeBS, GBW or via iNaturalist.

As usual most records came from well watched locations such as Chichester Hbr (17,454), Pagham Hbr (44,443), Pulborough Brooks (43,104), Warnham LNR (21,079), Knepp Estate (13,018),

Ashdown Forest (18,281), Pett Level (18,055) and Rye Hbr (29,693). Over 191,000 records were from sites within the South Downs National Park and over 84,000 observations from the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The coverage of the county was once again excellent with at least one record coming from 956 (92%) out of the possible 1039 tetrads wholly or partially in Sussex. This figure is slightly down on recent years as observers are increasingly recording in larger areas encompassing more than one tetrad. The following map, plotting the records with tetrad or finer grid references, shows most have more than ten records with the usual pattern of the coastal plain, river valleys and Ashdown Forest being the most intensively watched.

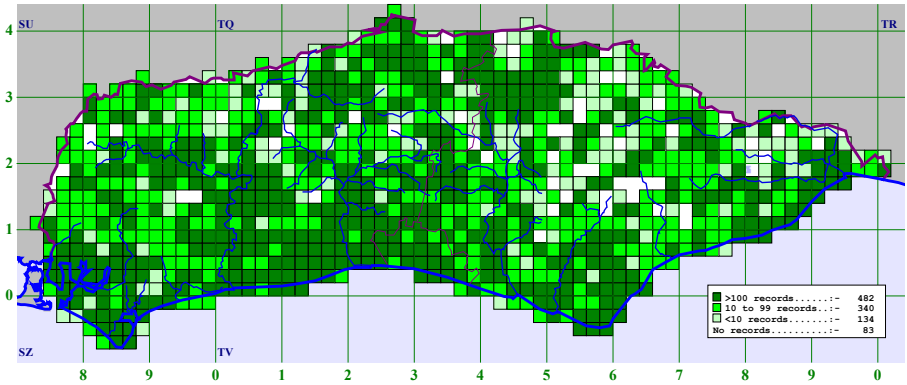



***Figure 2.*** *The number of records received for 2022 in each tetrad in Sussex. Dark green symbol, >100 records; mid-green symbol, 10-99 records; pale green symbol, 1-9 records.*

Using the same data and same scales it is possible to plot the number of species recorded in each tetrad and the following reveals the best recorded birding locations in the county.

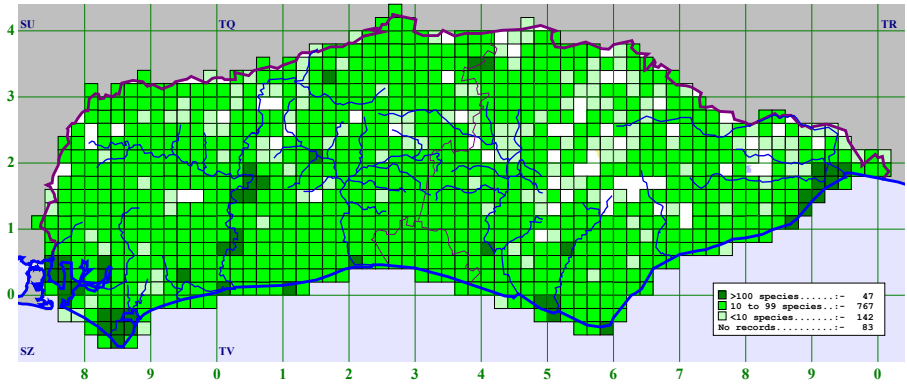



***Figure 3****. The number of species recorded in each tetrad in Sussex during 2022. Dark green symbol, >100 species; mid-green symbol, 10-99 species; pale green symbol, 1-9 species.*

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.

Over the decades the society has promoted and encouraged observers to record in more detail the precise grid reference and complete a field of breeding status, particularly during the breeding season. These aspects of recording are of great value when preparing reports to support or challenge planning applications and invariably six or eight character grid references are the most useful. From the conservation viewpoint the 'Gold Standard' would be for all records during the breeding season (April to July) of species of Conservation Concern (Red and Amber) or other designations such as Schedule 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) or Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (2006) to have a pin-point 100m grid reference and a breeding status code. Sadly, as figure 4 shows, there has been a steady decline from an already low point in this detailed recording during the past decade.

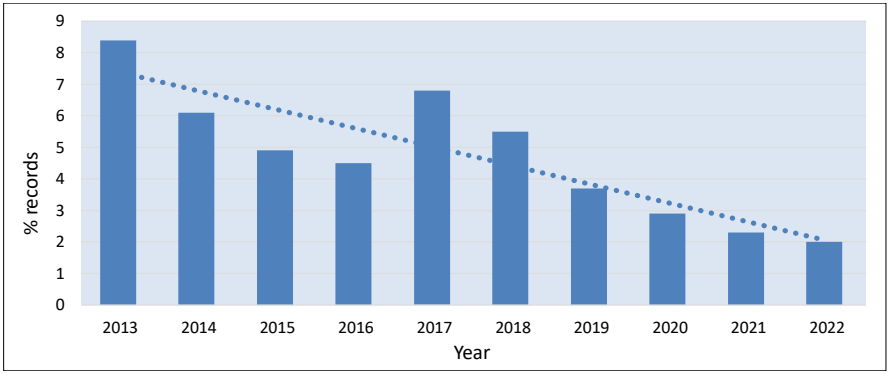



***Figure 4.*** *The percentage of April to July records of species of conservation interest with both breeding status and 100m grid reference recorded (2013-2022).*

With observers encouraged to submit full species lists when using Birdtrack or eBird it is not surprising that the widespread, numerous and easily detected species were the most frequently recorded. For 14 species over ten thousand records were received and for a further 28 species over 5000 records were submitted.

As always some records have been lost as supporting notes describing rare and scarce species or unusual "out of season" sightings have not been forthcoming. During 2022 there was minimal capture of postings on the society's website and only limited capture of details from blogs therefore some interesting and important observations may be lost to the county avifauna.

**Survey coverage**

Throughout this report there are references to the number of surveyed areas in which a species was recorded and the percentage shown is based on the following. In 2022 records were received from a total of 958 (92%) of the county's 1039 tetrads. There were reports from 254 different gardens participating in the BTO Garden BirdWatch (GBW); 185 1-km squares were surveyed for the Breeding Bird Survey (BBS) and in the Sussex Winter Bird Survey (SWBS) 149 1-km squares were surveyed in the January/February period and 139 in November/December. A total of 135 1-km squares were surveyed for the South Downs Farmland Bird Initiative (SDFBI) of which 103 were in Sussex and 32 in Hampshire. Where a number is quoted in the texts for the BBS the figure is the sum of the maximum count in each of the surveyed 1-km squares. Where tetrad counts and percentages are quoted from previous years these are calculated from the current dataset and may therefore differ from those published in earlier Sussex Bird Reports.

**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 a grid reference |
| Green squares | Peak count in each tetrad (all year), values in key |

**Tables**

Throughout the systematic list there are many tables showing the abundance of species in each month. For most of the scarcer species the approximate numbers can be calculated with relative certainty from the records but for the more numerous, and particularly migratory species, this can be difficult. In these instances a guide to their monthly abundance has been calculated by summing the maximum count in each tetrad in each month giving 'presence only' records a value of one. These figures can be compared with an average for the previous ten-year period calculated in the same way.



*Avocets and Wigeon, by Robert Greenhalf*



*Kestrel, Seaford, 10 April (Bob Eade)*

## Brent Goose *Branta bernicla*

***Very common winter visitor and passage migrant; very scarce non-breeder in summer. Amber-listed species of medium conservation concern. Section 41.***

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 | 11092 | 10340 | 6810 | 129 | 4 | 3 | 1 | - | 16 | 1531 | 5827 | 10291 |
| Chichester Hbr | 8977 | 8134 | 6590 | 125 | 1 | 2 | - | - | 16 | 1504 | 4964 | 4997 |
| Pagham Hbr | 2005 | 2075 | 55 | 3 | 1 | 1 | 1 | - | - | 10 | 671 | 1201 |
| Average county total 2012-2021 | 12241 | 13697 | 8211 | 57 | 10 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 346 | 5089 | 9303 | 11062 |

The WeBS counts were generally below the ten-year averages with birds moving out quite early and returning late, but the December figures were not far off the average. The vast majority of the wintering population was around the western harbours, with small outlying peaks of 40 in Cuckmere Haven on 3 Jan and 66 at Climping Beach on 10 Feb. Single-figure counts were recorded on a number of dates from Pett Level, Pevensey Levels and Rye Hbr, along with one on Lewes Brooks on 1 Jan, the only inland record.

A count of 96 E past Fairlight on 15 Jan was a very early start to spring migration, with a very obvious eastward movement tracked along the coast on the 25th including 97 at Selsey Bill, 114 past Elmer Rocks (Middleton-on-Sea), 83 at Worthing, 60 past Birling Gap, 65 past Fairlight and 30 past Rye Hbr. Few were recorded in February with 75 E at Worthing on the 15th, the best count until 261 passed Birling Gap on the 27th. Observed passage picked up in early March with a big movement on the 8th and 9th when 890 and 1060 passed Birling Gap on the two days, with 1022 past Worthing on the latter date. Further big days at Birling Gap were 1673 E on the 12th and 1559 E on the 21st when 900 also passed Fairlight. Unsurprisingly, April numbers were lower, with the 17th being the last reasonable day when 156 passed Selsey Bill and 200 passed Birling Gap. May was even quieter, with 38 past Worthing on the 8th being the month's best.

The monthly totals at the principal seawatching sites were as follows:

| | | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Selsey Bill | E | 155 | 187 | 2306 | 596 | 144 | | 2 | 57 | 31 | 53 |
| | W | 327 | 63 | 33 | 3 | - | | 122 | 1237 | 730 | 79 |
| Worthing & Goring | E | 108 | 172 | 3563 | 295 | 71 | | 1 | 1 | 2 | 39 |
| | W | 50 | 26 | 8 | - | - | | 211 | 165 | 222 | 26 |
| Splash Point (Seaford) | E | - | 1 | 1436 | 393 | 41 | | nc | nc | nc | nc |
| | W | - | - | - | - | - | | nc | nc | nc | nc |
| Birling Gap | E | 60 | 358 | 7535 | 508 | 62 | | nc | nc | nc | nc |
| | W | - | - | - | - | - | | nc | nc | nc | nc |
| Fairlight | E | nc | 3 | 1968 | 182 | - | | - | 2 | 2 | 9 |
| | W | nc | 7 | - | - | - | | - | 2 | 44 | 8 |

Unusually, there was no summering flock in Chichester Hbr, with just a single report of one bird on Thorney Island on 14 Jul, whilst one was present around Pagham Hbr from 16 Jun into September, with the other records being of one at Elmer Rocks on 6 Jun, before flying off west, and 2 E at Selsey Bill on 18 Aug.

The first four returning birds were in Chichester Hbr on the fairly early date of 10 Sep, rising to 34 the following day. Thereafter small numbers were recorded along the coast on an almost daily basis with 400 in Chichester Hbr on 22 Sep and 155 W past Goring Gap on the 30th the best counts.

Numbers built up very rapidly in Chichester Hbr, with 2000 back by 4 Oct and westward passage at Selsey Bill included 409 on 20 Oct. The first three-figure count in Pagham Hbr was not until 100 were seen on 3 Nov, though up to 2000 had arrived there by the 20th, when the full complement was back in Chichester Hbr, too.

As usual there was a scattering of reports from elsewhere along the coast, but also some unusually conspicuous overland movement noted, with 50 over High Cross Fm (Uckfield) on 31 Oct, and then, on 13 Nov, 178 over Barcombe Res, 330 over Weir Wood Res and 25 over Lower Standean. The only other inland birds were one at Amberley Wild Brooks on 2 Oct, one on Lewes Brooks on 18 Nov and 14 Dec, one at Arlington Res on 18 Dec and three at Weir Wood Res on 26 Dec.

**Black Brant *B. b. nigricans***

There was just one bird seen during the year, present intermittently at Thorney Deeps from 27 Feb until 23 Mar (CB Collins, MA Collins, N Crook, P Hughes).

**Pale-bellied Brent Goose *B. b. hrota***

There were a number of reports of this distinctive sub-species. At Selsey Bill during February two flew west on the 14th and two days later three flew east with 35 dark-bellied birds. Several were tracked along the coast in the spring. One seen in Pagham Hbr on 6 Mar may well have been the same bird passing Elmer Rocks on the 8th and then Splash Point (Seaford) and Birling Gap on the following day, with further reports of one at East Head (Wittering) on 14 Mar, one east past Birling Gap on 21 Mar and finally one past both Selsey Bill and Splash Point on 1 May.

The first of the autumn was at East Head on 25 Oct, with one in Pagham Hbr on 3 Nov, presumably the same individual going east and later west past Selsey Bill on 16 Nov and finally one at Climping Beach on 23 Dec. [A House]

## Canada Goose *Branta canadensis*

***Common introduced resident and partial migrant.***

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 | 4885 | 1787 | 1703 | 909 | 960 | 1038 | 657 | 2914 | 2243 | 3164 | 4251 | 3610 |
| Chichester Hbr | 256 | 117 | 51 | 45 | 20 | 53 | - | - | 74 | 199 | 274 | 146 |
| Arun Valley | 1024 | nc | 326 | 185 | 162 | 66 | 74 | 18 | 306 | 326 | 1845 | 60 |
| Lower Ouse valley | 690 | 213 | 69 | - | - | - | 24 | - | - | 196 | 110 | 752 |
| Cuckmere Haven | 300 | 100 | 300 | 275 | 320 | 240 | nc | 100 | nc | 800 | 250 | 350 |
| Bewl Water | 549 | 196 | 58 | nc | nc | nc | - | nc | nc | 155 | 147 | 205 |
| Rye Bay | 220 | 141 | 45 | 52 | 23 | 31 | 53 | 447 | 44 | 219 | 312 | 393 |
| Average county total 2012-2021 | 2537 | 1781 | 837 | 446 | 387 | 448 | 601 | 1801 | 2602 | 2295 | 2898 | 2854 |

Numbers were high during the year, with every month's WeBS count exceeding the ten-year average, and January's total of 4885 the highest total ever recorded. Counts of 1100 in the Cuckmere Valley on 10 Jan, and a combined total of 1100 between Pulborough Brooks and Amberley Wild Brooks on 24 Jan, with 570 at Knepp Estate on the same day are testament to the aforementioned figure, though numbers were much lower in February and March, with peak counts of 332 at Charleston Reedbed on 18 Feb and 300 at Cuckmere Haven on 28 Mar.

Birling Gap was the main site where offshore movement was recorded during the spring, with 12 E and 12 W between 15 and 28 Mar, and 1 W on 29 Apr, with one west past Selsey Bill on 8 Apr being the only other report.

Breeding was confirmed from around 28 widespread sites, mostly just of one or two pairs but with five pairs at Chichester GP, four at Worth Park (Crawley) and Cuckmere Haven and three at Medmerry being the exceptions. Display was first noted on 14 Mar at Ifield MP and the first goslings were reported on 26 Apr at both Pulborough Brooks and the Knepp Estate.

A count of 304 on Bewl Water on 12 Jul was the first big post-breeding flock, with numbers slower than usual to build up, though a flock of 300 at Arlington Res on 6 Aug had grown to 1145 on the 11th, peaking at 1200 on the 19th and with 1000 still present on 19 Sep. Elsewhere, numbers were a little lower than usual in August, with 441 at Scotney GP on the 14th and 381 at Barcombe Res on the 28th the highest. Numbers picked up again in September, with 800 at Medmerry on the 10th, 635 in the upper Cuckmere Valley on the 20th and 1000 at Pulborough Brooks on the 27th being the best tallies. There were some big counts during the autumn and second winter period from the regular haunts, with 800 at Cuckmere Haven on 18 Oct, 710 on Pulborough Brooks on 31 Oct, 1055 on Amberley Wild Brooks on 14 Nov and 600 on Pett Level on 27 Nov being the most noteworthy. [A House]

## Barnacle Goose *Branta leucopsis*

***Very scarce winter visitor, often in severe weather; increasingly common naturalised resident. Amber-listed species of medium conservation concern.***

After the previous December's unprecedented influx, it would seem that all seen in the early part of the year were from the naturalised populations, though one at Thorney Deeps between 28 Jan and 17 Feb may not have been.

The biggest naturalised flocks were at Scotney GP, with a peak of 69 on 23 Jan and Barcombe Res, with 62 recorded on several dates.

In the late autumn there were a few occurrences of birds potentially from other populations, including a flock of 20 heading west, well offshore from Medmerry on 4 Nov and a flock of ten that dropped into Pagham Hbr on 10 Dec. A flock of 55 that unexpectedly turned up at Weir Wood Res on 27 Dec were proved, from rings readable in the field, to be from a naturalised population in North Yorkshire. [A House]

## Greylag Goose *Anser anser*

***Increasingly common introduced resident and winter visitor; scarce passage migrant. Native population in the UK is an 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 | 2024 | 542 | 737 | 515 | 314 | 532 | 546 | 3047 | 1124 | 1749 | 1918 | 2286 |
| Arun Valley | 39 | nc | 74 | 66 | 46 | 16 | 68 | 11 | 258 | 133 | 145 | 228 |
| Lower Ouse Valley | 211 | 74 | 62 | 2 | 11 | - | 40 | - | - | 169 | 2 | 158 |
| Rye Bay | 1022 | 269 | 231 | 258 | 75 | 143 | 157 | 383 | 326 | 1201 | 1034 | 1117 |
| Average county total 2012-2021 | 1048 | 806 | 471 | 284 | 293 | 416 | 674 | 1595 | 1342 | 1359 | 1558 | 1265 |

The WeBS counts were broadly in line with last year, with the notable exception of August, which produced a new county record of 3047. All the biggest counts in the first half of the year were in January, including a peak of 500 at Cuckmere Haven on the 3rd, 303 at Pett Level on the 17th, 300 at both Rye Hbr and Warnham LNR on the 19th, 479 at Scotney GP on the 23rd and 257 at Ardingly Res on the 28th.

As ever, Greylag Goose remains a scarce species on seawatches, with a flock of 7 E past Selsey Bill on 4 Mar, and the only records at Birling Gap being 2 E on 22 Mar and 1 E on 15 Apr.

A total of 15 locations with confirmed breeding was similar to last year, and again they were spread throughout the county, with Rye Hbr, where at least seven pairs bred, being the only site to host more than three pairs. The first goslings were reported from Arundel WWT on 5 Apr.

A count of 200 at Scotney GP on 13 Jun was the first big gathering of the traditional summer build-up around Sussex, followed by 400 at Rye Hbr on 21 Jul and 392 at the Knepp Estate on 16 Aug, and then a huge total of 1500 at Arlington Res during the WeBS on the 19th, by far the biggest site count of the year.

At ten sites: Pulborough Brooks, the Knepp Estate, Warnham LNR, Henfield Levels and Ardingly Res in West Sussex, and Arlington Res, Pett Level, Rye Hbr, East Guldeford Level and Scotney GP in East Sussex, counts of at least 300 were made during the autumn and second winter period, with 970 at Scotney GP on 13 Nov being the highest. [A House]



*Pink-footed Goose, Iford Brooks, 29 January (Gary Faulkner)*

## Pink-footed Goose *Anser brachyrhynchus*

***Very scarce winter visitor and passage migrant; also recorded as a feral bird. Amber-listed species of medium conservation concern.***

Two settled in among mixed goose flocks early in the year, with one present on Pett Level between 14 Jan and 5 Mar (SJ Message) and the other on Iford Brooks between 22 Jan and 5 Mar (P Stevens). In the second winter period one at Scotney GP on 3 Dec (MC Casemore) was the only documented record. [A House]

## Tundra Bean Goose *Anser serrirostris*

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

A flock of three that took up residence on Iford Brooks between 23 Jan and 10 Mar were the only ones seen during the year (PC Stevens). [A House]



*Tundra Bean Geese, Iford Brooks, 29 January (Gary Faulkner)*

## 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. Section 41.***

After the previous autumn's bumper counts, it was back to a more typical first winter period this year with the usual strong easterly bias. Wintering flocks were at Lewes Brooks, where up to 16 were recorded regularly, then 17 on 8 Mar, ten the following day and just one remaining until the 20th. At Pett Level numbers peaked at 43 on 25 Jan, with the last 11 seen on 13 Mar whilst at Pevensey Levels up to 13 were present throughout, with nine on 18 Mar being the last record. There were several good counts at Scotney GP during January with the peak of 52 on the 23rd. Elsewhere in East Sussex two were at Combe Valley CP on 31 Jan, two were at Rye Hbr on 23 and one on 14 Mar, with a small skein seen flying over Flimwell on 26 Mar. One at Amberley Wild Brooks on 7 to 9 Jan and one at Petworth Park on 11 Feb were the only records from West Sussex.

From April through the summer and into the autumn one remained at Rye Hbr, apparently paired with a Greylag Goose.

Numbers during the autumn and second winter period were very low. One reported regularly from Pett Level, and once from Rye Hbr (on 13 Nov) was probably the one that summered there. The only other records were of 11 at Scotney GP on 3 Dec, five at Pett Level on 17 Dec, reducing to four on the 20th, and singles at both Pulborough Brooks and Arlington Res on 18 Dec. [A House]



*White-fronted Geese, Iford Brooks, 29 January (Gary Faulkner)*

## Mute Swan

***Cygnus olor***

***Fairly common resident.***

Mute Swans were recorded in 204 tetrads (21%), compared to the 10-year average of 188 (range 164 to 226). 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 | 531 | 369 | 356 | 288 | 332 | 324 | 321 | 442 | 542 | 572 | 535 | 466 |
| Chichester Harbour | 170 | 95 | 75 | 53 | 139 | 156 | 85 | 239 | 286 | 221 | 207 | 174 |
| Arun Valley (Arundel to L'hampton) | 56 | 55 | 52 | 15 | 17 | 16 | 35 | 9 | 15 | 23 | 24 | nc |
| Arun Valley north of Arundel | 18 | nc | 35 | 36 | 45 | 15 | 16 | 14 | 27 | 41 | 42 | 35 |
| Eastbourne Lakes | 39 | 42 | 32 | 20 | 26 | 20 | 32 | 23 | 20 | 35 | 34 | 29 |
| Rye Bay | 76 | 30 | 22 | 46 | 12 | 21 | 77 | 75 | 18 | 9 | 14 | 30 |
| Average county total 2012-2021 | 478 | 449 | 433 | 310 | 416 | 410 | 361 | 411 | 516 | 571 | 586 | 566 |

Overall the WeBS counts were similar to last year, with full counts at most sites throughout the year.

Notable first winter period counts in addition to the WeBS included 114 at Bosham (Chichester Hbr) on 1 Jan, 64 at Scotney GP on 23 Jan, 38 at Princes Park (Eastbourne) on 25 Feb, and 44 at Winchelsea on 12 Mar.

Breeding was confirmed in 44 tetrads and consistent with confirmed breeding in recent years. In addition, probable breeding was recorded in a further five tetrads. The first confirmed breeding record was of a bird on a nest at Hampden Lakes (Eastbourne) on 5 Mar, and a nest with eggs was found at Southwater CP on 7 Mar. Cygnets were seen at a minimum of 32 sites, which is similar to the 28 last year. These are low overall numbers though and several empty nests were reported. Nest predation by corvids and mustelids in particular is thought to be one of the main reasons for the lack of breeding success in some areas.

Non-breeding and post-breeding aggregations in summer were, as usual, high in Fishbourne Channel (Chichester Hbr) with 159 there on 5 Jun.

In the autumn and second winter period there were few significant counts; as usual Fishbourne Channel held the highest number with a peak count of 152 on 8 Oct. Elsewhere, 31 at Princes Park on 10 Nov, 23 in the lower Cuckmere Valley on 21 Dec and 31 on Glynde Level, also on 21 Dec were the most significant counts. [J Curson]

## Bewick's Swan *Cygnus columbianus*

***Scarce winter visitor and very scarce passage migrant. Red-listed species of high conservation concern. Schedule 1 species. Section 41.***

From 1 Jan until 6 Feb between 11 and 16 birds were seen regularly in the Arun Valley, between Warningcamp and Pulborough Brooks, but mainly from Burpham. These consisted of three juveniles and up to 13 adults. Nine of these (seven adults and two juveniles) stayed until 13 Feb. Elsewhere five, two adults with three juveniles, were at Rye Fm (Henfield Levels) on 3 and 9 Jan whilst in East Sussex an impressive 38 were at Walland Marsh on 10 Jan and presumably the same 38 at Scotney GP on 23 Jan.

The first in the second winter period were three at Barnham on 20 Dec, increasing to seven (four adults and three juveniles) on the 22nd, which then remained until the 26th.

Bewick's Swans have been in decline since the 1960s and this species is now classified as Endangered on the European Red List of Birds. Observers are asked to submit records of all sightings. [J Curson]

## Whooper Swan *Cygnus cygnus*

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

The only record was of an adult at Combe Valley CP from 26 Nov to 11 Dec (J Penfold *et al.*). [P James]

## Egyptian Goose *Alopochen aegyptiaca*

***Scarce introduced resident; bred for the first time in 2000.***

There were sightings from 143 (15%) tetrads during the year, a slight increase on 2021 and another record tally as the species consolidates its colonisation of the county. An impressive count of 100 at Scotney GP on 16 Jan was the highest of the first winter period.

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 | 180 | 59 | 127 | 109 | 99 | 129 | 96 | 126 | 231 | 207 | 207 | 102 |
| Tillington Res | 56 | 2 | 7 | 6 | 8 | 6 | 5 | 1 | 123 | 11 | 6 | 2 |
| Arun Valley N of Arundel | 8 | nc | 8 | 11 | 17 | 41 | 3 | - | 11 | 10 | 31 | 26 |
| Ardingly Res | 5 | - | 2 | 2 | nc | 8 | 6 | nc | 5 | 17 | 72 | 31 |
| Rye Bay | 54 | 29 | 29 | 35 | 12 | 27 | 28 | 75 | 22 | 64 | 40 | 11 |
| Average county total 2012-2021 | 23 | 19 | 21 | 23 | 18 | 28 | 32 | 36 | 42 | 37 | 32 | 32 |

Breeding was confirmed in 22 tetrads and probable in a further nine, with three broods at Pett Level the most of any site. A pair with four goslings were seen at Pulborough Brooks on 25 Mar and the next day a pair with two young were observed at Worth Park (Crawley).

A count of 123 at Tillington Res (Petworth), on 12 Sep was the highest ever recorded in Sussex and came after 119 there on 25 Aug and 110 nearby at Petworth Park on 23 Jul. In the autumn and second winter period, high counts included 90 at Pulborough Brooks on 4 Oct, 72 at Ardingly Res on 13 Nov and 55 at Balcombe on 4 Dec. [A Thomas]

## 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 | 818 | 544 | 634 | 553 | 235 | 146 | 40 | 40 | 54 | 41 | 307 | 449 |
| Chichester Hbr | 397 | 370 | 343 | 277 | 74 | 54 | - | - | 18 | 11 | 181 | 223 |
| Medmerry | 130 | 26 | 37 | 34 | 13 | 6 | 4 | - | 19 | 15 | 43 | 69 |
| Pagham Hbr | 129 | 61 | 130 | 145 | 77 | 28 | 27 | 6 | - | 7 | 46 | 94 |
| Rye Bay | 126 | 58 | 49 | 51 | 40 | 49 | 9 | 34 | 17 | 3 | 21 | 33 |
| Average county total 2012-2021 | 745 | 770 | 662 | 419 | 312 | 218 | 71 | 42 | 49 | 91 | 354 | 647 |

The January WeBS count was a little higher than the average for the previous ten years, but numbers dropped considerably in February and remained just below average in March. A count of 210 at Thorney Deeps on 17 Feb was the highest at a single site in the first winter period, with 78 at Scotney GP on 23 Jan notable away from the main sites.

In the breeding season, the first ducklings were seen at the Ouse/Glynde confluence on 19 May, with successful breeding also noted at Thorney Deeps (two broods), Medmerry, Pagham Hbr, Swanbourne Lake (Arundel), Cuckmere Haven (three broods), Pett Level, Rye Hbr (three broods) and East Guldeford Level (two broods). The May WeBS count was the lowest on record.

The highest counts later in the year were 200 at Pagham Hbr on 23 Nov and 200 in the Fishbourne Channel (Chichester Hb), on 4 Dec, but the December WeBS total was the lowest on record. The general downwards trend in all seasons continues.

Small numbers were seen passing seawatching sites during the year, 37 E at Birling Gap on 11 Apr being the highest single day count in what is typically the peak month for passage. [A Thomas]

## Mandarin Duck *Aix galericulata*

***Scarce introduced resident.***

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 | 55 | 25 | 40 | 43 | 36 | 44 | 79 | 27 | 25 | 16 | 35 | 40 |
| River Rother (West) | 15 | 17 | 21 | 11 | 4 | 3 | 5 | - | - | 1 | - | 5 |
| Arun Valley N of Arundel | 21 | nc | 3 | 11 | 4 | 1 | 14 | 11 | 3 | - | - | - |
| Slaugham MP | 2 | - | - | 3 | - | 3 | 2 | 4 | nc | 4 | 18 | nc |
| Ardingly Res | 15 | 4 | - | 2 | nc | 4 | 7 | nc | 4 | - | - | 8 |
| Weir Wood Res | - | 3 | 8 | 7 | 20 | 19 | 46 | 6 | 1 | - | 7 | 1 |
| Wadhurst Park Estate | - | - | 4 | 4 | 4 | 2 | 5 | 2 | 5 | 9 | - | 4 |
| Powdermill Res | - | - | - | 2 | nc | 9 | nc | - | - | - | - | 22 |
| Average county total 2012-2021 | 38 | 32 | 20 | 22 | 20 | 30 | 39 | 37 | 38 | 31 | 33 | 36 |

Records came from 85 tetrads (8.9%); as usual most were in the Weald and Arun Valley and very few along the coast.

The highest count in the first winter period was 48 at Maynards Green on 5 Feb, with 21 at R Rother (W) on 20 Mar, 19 at Swanbourne Lake (Arundel) on 24 Jan and 15 at Ardingly Res on 22 Jan.

Breeding was confirmed from eight tetrads, ducklings being seen at Cowdray Park, Selham (Petworth), Coldwaltham, Arundel, Leonardslee, Wivelsfield, Tidebrook and Weir Wood Res. The first ducklings were noted at Coldwaltham on 24 Apr. Fifteen at Lindfield on 26 Apr was a good spring count.

A count of 56 at Weir Wood Res on 29 Jun was the highest in the county during the year, and this reservoir remains one of the most reliable sites to see this species. Other peak counts included 31 at Fernhurst on 19 Nov, 21 at Arundel Park on 9 Nov and 18 at Slaugham MP on 13 Nov.

At the coast, one was in the Thorney Channel on 30 Sep [A Thomas]



*Garganey, West Rise Marsh, 4 September (Gary Faulkner)*

## Garganey *Spatula querquedula*

***Scarce passage migrant; very scarce summer non-breeder and rare breeder. Amber-listed species of medium conservation concern. Schedule 1 species.***

Garganeys were recorded in 41 tetrads (4.3%) which significantly exceeded the 10-year range of 16 to 30 tetrads. The first sighting of the year was of a drake on 14 Mar at Winchelsea Beach, which matched the 10-year mean arrival date. Minimum monthly totals were as follows:

| | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Monthly minima | 131 | 64 | 60 | 4 | 6 | 11 | 12 | 0 |
| No of sites | 17 | 11 | 6 | 2 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 0 |
| Average monthly total 2012-2021 | 15 | 26 | 12 | 6 | 6 | 7 | 4 | 1 |

Compared to recent years there was a marked increase in the number of birds observed passing the county's seawatching locations with March seeing counts of 10 or more on four separate dates, the highest day count being 24 E at Worthing on the 22nd. Three locations stood out for the number of sightings during the month with 42 E at Beachy Head, 53 E at Worthing and a remarkable 64 E at Brighton Marina.

A pair was at Pagham Hbr from 22 Mar to 3 Apr, with probably a different pair at Waltham Brooks from 3 Apr to the 13th and possibly two pairs at Pett Level during the breeding season, but there were no reports of confirmed breeding. Singles were reported at numerous locations throughout May and into July and there were three drakes at Rye Hbr on 6 May.

The autumn migration started with one at Rye Hbr on 14 Aug with other singles passing west at Selsey Bill on 23 Aug and present at Pett Level on the 24th, and a notable inland record from Weir Wood Res of one on the 28th.

The highlight of the autumn was at West Rise Marsh (Eastbourne) where five were seen on 3 Sep, one of which was photographed the next day, followed by three there on the 5th and 13th.

A single juvenile at Waltham Brooks on 15 Sep was the final report of the year, some 13 days earlier than the 10-year average. [ER Paxton]

## Shoveler *Spatula 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 | 1145 | 651 | 691 | 238 | 40 | 13 | 19 | 52 | 240 | 186 | 705 | 1190 |
| Pagham Hbr | 50 | 78 | 89 | 32 | 2 | - | - | - | - | 1 | 49 | 1 |
| Chichester GP | 63 | 112 | 33 | - | - | - | 1 | 24 | 36 | 2 | 52 | 4 |
| Arun Valley N of Arundel | 93 | nc | 40 | 17 | 8 | 2 | 3 | - | 23 | 41 | 62 | 131 |
| Eastbourne Lakes | 132 | 90 | 4 | - | - | - | - | - | - | 12 | 46 | 100 |
| Combe Valley CP | 175 | 60 | 15 | 28 | nc | - | - | nc | - | nc | nc | 150 |
| Rye Bay | 463 | 232 | 321 | 134 | 30 | 11 | 8 | 26 | 146 | 68 | 343 | 503 |
| Average county total 2012-2021 | 928 | 805 | 538 | 145 | 21 | 21 | 15 | 26 | 130 | 306 | 595 | 756 |

Shovelers were recorded in 108 (11%) tetrads in 2022, a marginally higher number than recent years. The WeBS revealed good winter totals; the December count was the second highest recorded behind 1344 in January 2020. Additional three-figure counts in the first winter period were 280 at Rye Hbr on 6 Jan, 140 at Pagham Hbr on the 14th and 320 at Pulborough Brooks on the 16th.

Between early March and early May at least 394 flew east along the coast, this figure more than twice the 10-year average. The following table of eastbound month totals and peak movements at the principal migration sites shows most were seen in March and April.

| | Mar | Apr | Peak movement |
|---|---|---|---|
| Selsey Bill | 57 | 115 | 107 E on 11 Apr |
| Worthing & Goring | 74 | 48 | 30 E on 8 Mar |
| Splash Point (Seaford) | 20 | 175 | 139 E on 11 Apr |
| Birling Gap | 110 | 154 | 95 E on 11 Apr |
| Fairlight | 25 | 56 | 55 E on 11 Apr |

Breeding was successful at three sites with broods of seven at Waltham Brooks and Rye Hbr on 17 and 18 Jun respectively and a brood of three at Chichester GP on 2 Aug. Breeding surveys on reserves revealed two pairs at Arundel WWT and Amberley Wild Brooks, seven pairs at Pulborough Brooks and c.40 pairs at Pett Level.

The first returning migrant was considered to be one at Shripney (Bognor) on 6 Aug, but it was not until the end of the month and the start of the autumn that numbers began to build with 110 found at Pett Level on 11 Sep.

The second winter period saw birds at all the regular inland and coastal sites with counts of fifty plus not uncommon; the largest were 200 at Amberley Wild Brooks on 27 Nov and in December three-figure counts of 193 at Rye Hbr on the 11th, 162 at Pett Level on the 18th, 150 at Combe Valley CP on the 10th and 130 at West Rise Marsh (Eastbourne) between the 13th and 16th. [BGR Ives]

## Gadwall *Mareca strepera*

***Very scarce breeder and 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 | 782 | 429 | 364 | 278 | 158 | 264 | 97 | 219 | 537 | 299 | 516 | 602 |
| Chichester GP | 61 | 31 | 4 | 4 | 12 | 40 | 18 | 14 | 74 | 34 | 26 | 16 |
| Burton & Chingford Pond | 32 | 43 | 35 | 21 | 10 | 19 | 32 | 41 | 34 | 33 | 53 | 84 |
| Arun Valley N of Arundel | 123 | nc | 125 | 76 | 63 | 28 | 18 | 25 | 124 | 62 | 105 | 148 |
| Bewl Water | 154 | 41 | 8 | nc | nc | nc | nc | nc | nc | 2 | 19 | 52 |
| Rye Bay | 251 | 227 | 110 | 98 | 51 | 163 | 18 | 98 | 175 | 103 | 150 | 142 |
| Average county total 2012-2021 | 812 | 714 | 289 | 127 | 96 | 114 | 92 | 167 | 270 | 310 | 466 | 736 |

Gadwalls were recorded in 107 tetrads (11%). Numbers in the January and February WeBS counts were below the 10-year average. However, there were good totals of 196 at Rye Hbr, on 8 Feb, 154 at Bewl Water on 21 Jan, 112 at Scotney GP on 23 Jan, 125 at Arundel Park on 1 Feb and 65 at Hailsham on 7 Feb. The January WeBS total of 61 at Chichester GP was the highest count of the year there at what used to be the prime county site.

In the breeding season, fledged young were recorded at Shripney, Swanbourne Lake (Arundel), Amberley, Waltham Brooks, Pett Level and Rye Hbr with the first ducklings seen at Swanbourne Lake on 4 Jun. The WeBS counts for April, June and September were the highest ever for those months. Further indications of a good breeding season were 70 at Peasmarsh on 31 Jul and 350 at Pett Level on 10 Sep, the latter the highest count of the year in Sussex.

Unusually, numbers then almost halved between the September and October WeBS counts and remained below the 10-year average to the end of the year. Notable counts included 148 at Bewl Water on 27 Dec, 130 at Swanbourne Lake on 12 Dec, 92 at Thorney Deeps on 24 Dec, 76 at Henfield Levels on 27 Dec, and 65 at Burton MP on 8 Dec. A total of 60 at Chichester GP on 20 Oct was the highest count of the year here at what used to be the prime county site.

At seawatching sites, there were a small number of birds seen on a few dates during the year, with most in March and April, and peak day counts of 15 E at Birling Gap on 21 Mar and 17 E at Splash Point (Seaford) on 11 Apr. [A Thomas]

## Eurasian Wigeon *Mareca penelope*

***Very 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 | 8730 | 4551 | 2356 | 305 | 5 | 10 | 1 | 7 | 1565 | 4282 | 5544 | 9840 |
| Chichester Hbr | 1269 | 624 | 736 | 218 | - | - | - | - | 680 | 1757 | 2097 | 2648 |
| Pagham Hbr | 1173 | 694 | 218 | 60 | - | - | 1 | - | 423 | 284 | 597 | 1092 |
| Arun Valley N of Arundel | 1179 | nc | 457 | 5 | 1 | - | - | - | 114 | 289 | 831 | 974 |
| Rye Bay | 2580 | 1683 | 401 | 14 | 4 | 10 | - | 2 | 120 | 459 | 1013 | 3059 |
| Average county total 2012-2021 | 9265 | 9631 | 4004 | 77 | 4 | 2 | 1 | 18 | 1269 | 5230 | 6388 | 8404 |

The January WeBS count was just under the 10-year average, but then slumped in February and March, with the February count less than half the average. The highest count at a single site in the first winter period was 1000 at Pagham North Wall on 19 Jan, with good counts of 700 at Iford Brooks on 1 Jan and 550 at Cuckmere Haven on 7 Feb. The last three-figure count of the spring was 162 at Pulborough Brooks on 1 Apr, with 60 at Pagham Hbr on 17 Apr.

During May to July, a scattering of birds around the county included double-figure counts of 15 at Pulborough Brooks on 6 May and ten at Rye Hbr on 19 Jun.

A count of 50 at Pett Level on 2 Sep was the first sizable count of returning birds, with numbers in Sussex building quickly: 300 were at Thorney Deeps on 7 Sep, 600 at Thorney Island on 10 Sep, 2000 at Thorney Deeps on 21 Sep, and 2200 there on 28 Sep, the highest count at a single site during the year.

In the second winter period, numbers were rather low compared to the average until December, which was the highest count for that month since 2016. High counts at single sites included 1500 at Amberley Wild Brooks on 27 Nov, 1276 at Rye Hbr on 11 Dec, 1215 at Scotney GP on the same date and 1002 at Medmerry on 9 Oct.

At seawatching sites, small numbers of birds were counted, with a spring peak of 52 E at Selsey Bill on 17 Mar. In the autumn, rather more birds were seen with a peak day count, again at Selsey Bill, of 75 W and 12 E on 11 Oct. [A Thomas]

## Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos*

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

Mallards were recorded in 436 tetrads (46%), a decrease of 3% on the previous year. The WeBS counts, shown in the following table, were in keeping with the 10-year averages.

| | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| County total | 3236 | 2055 | 1811 | 1443 | 1267 | 1630 | 2317 | 2802 | 3500 | 3932 | 2918 | 4351 |
| Chichester Hbr | 463 | 376 | 256 | 222 | 109 | 115 | 90 | 189 | 296 | 369 | 344 | 362 |
| Arun Valley N of Arundel | 489 | nc | 412 | 415 | 442 | 490 | 363 | 432 | 623 | 940 | 386 | 598 |
| Rye Bay | 260 | 180 | 136 | 110 | 45 | 167 | 136 | 300 | 261 | 195 | 252 | 334 |
| Average county total 2012-2021 | 3364 | 2834 | 1820 | 1280 | 1246 | 1652 | 2095 | 3067 | 3373 | 3812 | 3598 | 3685 |

In the first winter period high counts at sites not included in the table included 110 at Hampden Park (Eastbourne) on New Year's Day, 200 at Cuckmere Haven on 3 Jan and 218 at Bewl Water on the 21st. The period's highest count was 285 at Arundel WWT on 21 Mar. In the SWBS Mallards were found in 35% of squares surveyed with a maximum of 42 at North End Fm (Wardley) on 11 Feb. Surprisingly Mallards were recorded in 9.8% of participating GBW gardens during the year.

Few are recorded on spring passage; the total between March and May from all regularly watched sites was just 19 flying east.

Breeding was confirmed in 56 tetrads and was probable or possible in a further 53. The first ducklings were at Fishbourne Creek (Chichester Hbr) on 29 Mar, 12 juveniles were noted at Warnham LNR on 12 Apr and ten ducklings were seen at Arundel WWT on the 13th. Breeding was noted throughout the summer and autumn months with the last record of a bird sitting on eggs at Ivy Lake (Chichester GP) on 7 Sep. In the BBS they were found in 48% of squares surveyed with a maximum of 63 at Wivelsfield on 18 Jun.

Numbers at most sites built in the autumn with 420 at Angmering Decoy Ponds on 15 Sep, 278 at Balcombe Lake on the 18th and 279 at Bewl Water on 7 Oct notable. In the second winter period, the highest count was of 430 at Kneppmill Pond on 13 Dec and this was also the highest single location count of the year. In the late year SWBS Mallards were encountered in 19% of squares surveyed with a maximum of 50 at Balcombe on 16 Dec. [BGR Ives]

## Pintail *Anas acuta*

***Fairly common winter visitor; scarce on observed passage; occasionally summers and has bred. Amber-listed species of medium conservation concern. Schedule 1 species.***

The WeBS counts at the principal sites were:

| | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| County total | 180 | 367 | 226 | 128 | - | 2 | 3 | 5 | 156 | 188 | 178 | 621 |
| Chichester Hbr | 32 | 128 | 181 | 120 | - | - | - | - | 2 | 49 | 35 | 300 |
| Medmerry | 8 | 12 | - | - | - | - | - | - | 95 | 61 | - | - |
| Pagham Hbr | 85 | 128 | 8 | - | - | - | - | 2 | 28 | 58 | 100 | 195 |
| Arun Valley N of Arundel | 29 | nc | 6 | - | - | - | - | - | - | 16 | 40 | 44 |
| Rye Bay | 1 | 14 | 20 | 6 | - | 2 | 3 | 3 | 30 | 4 | - | 46 |
| Average county total 2012-2021 | 400 | 377 | 192 | 8 | - | - | - | - | 47 | 133 | 261 | 441 |

The December count was the highest month count since 2014 but was still considerably smaller than counts during the period 1994 to 2008 when in all bar two years the maximum count was in four figures with a peak of 1729 in February 2001.

In the first winter period large counts in West Sussex included 100 at Pulborough Brooks on 1 Jan, 300 at Amberley Wild Brooks on the 9th and 120 at Pagham Hbr on 13 Feb. The highest counts in East Sussex were 38 in Combe Valley CP on 23 Feb and 35 at Rye Hbr on 3 Mar.

The first migration noted was at Birling Gap when eight flew east on 4 Mar and an eastward movement of 100 was seen here, and at other coastal sites, on the 8th. Timings would suggest that the 45 seen at Selsey Bill on this date were different from those at other coastal sites and were probably some of the 84 E observed at Elmer Rocks (Middleton-on-Sea) later that day. Other significant eastward movements in the early spring included 22 past Splash Point (Seaford) on 10 Mar and 30 past Fairlight on the 11th whilst up to 210 moved along the Sussex coast on the 21st. Later spring migration included 43 E at Selsey Bill and 18 E at Birling Gap on 11 Apr.

Odd summering individuals continued to be noted at Pagham and Rye Harbours throughout June and July with the first four returning birds being recorded at Thorney Island on 1 Sep. Returnees continued to be recorded throughout the autumn with notable counts of 61 at Medmerry on 9 Oct, 30 at Rye Hbr on the 22nd and 88 at Pulborough Brooks on the 29th.

In the second winter period there were three-figure counts from Pagham Hbr, with a peak of 195 on 11 Dec, and at Pulborough Brooks which peaked at 281 on the 29th, the year's highest figure. In East Sussex the highest count was of 60 at Rye Hbr also on 29 Dec. [BGR Ives]

## 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 | 3387 | 2515 | 2060 | 462 | 11 | 27 | 39 | 93 | 1708 | 2121 | 4590 | 6627 |
| Chichester Hbr | 909 | 789 | 931 | 210 | - | - | - | - | 205 | 334 | 708 | 1254 |
| Medmerry | 130 | 50 | 31 | 4 | - | - | 13 | 18 | 256 | 658 | 285 | 386 |
| Pagham Hbr | 210 | 271 | 111 | 26 | - | - | - | 7 | 136 | 79 | 486 | 504 |
| Arun Valley N of Arundel | 523 | nc | 271 | 63 | - | 21 | 10 | 6 | 678 | 644 | 1846 | 1476 |
| Glynde Level | 260 | 247 | 200 | 27 | nc | - | - | 5 | 4 | 10 | 90 | 450 |
| Rye Bay | 662 | 653 | 226 | 66 | 11 | 3 | 9 | 47 | 235 | 146 | 469 | 589 |
| Average county total 2012-2021 | 5110 | 4369 | 2279 | 342 | 5 | 35 | 36 | 317 | 1177 | 2266 | 3656 | 4807 |

The WeBS counts for the first winter period were all well below the 10-year average for those months. The last three-figure count of spring was 100 at Pulborough Brooks on 29 Apr, down to 28 there just two days later.

There were no records of confirmed breeding, as is typical in recent years, although small numbers of birds continued to crop up around the main wetland sites during May to July, with peak counts of 21 at Pulborough Brooks on 20 Jun and ten at Rye Hbr the same day.

A count of 20 at Medmerry on 2 Aug was perhaps the start of return migration, with numbers starting to pick up in earnest at the end of the month when there were 100 at both Sidlesham Ferry and Pulborough Brooks on 29 Aug. By 13 Sep, 500 were back at Pulborough Brooks.

WeBS counts for the second winter period were all above the 10-year averages, and the highest counts of the year from single sites all came from this period, with 1500 at Pulborough Brooks on 8 Nov, 1000 at Beeding Brooks on 20 Nov, 1000 at Amberley Wild Brooks on 27 Nov and 1000 at Lewes Brooks on 29 Dec. Other notable counts included 547 at Henfield on 9 Dec, 450 at Glynde Level on 21 Dec, 436 at Medmerry on 9 Oct, and 400 at Lidsey Rife on 24 Dec.

Seawatching records were focused mainly between March to May and August to November, with a substantial proportion seen on 11 Apr when there were 85 E at Birling Gap, 82 E at Splash Point (Seaford) and 24 E at Selsey Bill. [A Thomas]

## Green-winged Teal *Anas carolinensis*

***Very rare vagrant.***

An at times elusive drake frequented Flat Beach (Rye Hbr) from 2 to 14 Mar (DK Campbell *et al.*). Another drake was at Iford Brooks between 27 and 29 Dec (IJ Whitcomb).The county total moves on to 17 with nine this century, the most recent as long ago as Dec 2011 at Thorney Deeps. Arrival dates have been in January (2), February (3), March (7), April (3), November (1) and December. [P James]

## Red-crested Pochard *Netta rufina*

***Possibly a rare winter visitor and passage migrant although most records probably relate to escaped or naturalised birds.***

This year saw an increase in records with sightings from seven different locations and in eight months, including a remarkable nine photographed on the sea at Pett Level on 16 Dec.

During January two were at Cuckmere Haven on the 3rd and one at Rye Hbr on the 9th, 25th and 31st. At Rottingdean two were recorded intermittently in six different months from 4 Jan through to 17 Dec. A pair at Chichester GP between 16 Mar and 9 Apr were observed displaying, passing food and mating on two separate occasions; the male was seen until at least 7 May and the pair reappeared on 25 May, the female also being seen between 26 Jun and 2 Jul. At Weir Wood Res a single female was seen on most days between 13 Nov and 26 Dec while at Burton MP there was one on 12 Nov. [ER Paxton]

## 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 | 608 | 357 | 58 | 42 | 37 | 67 | 49 | 271 | 192 | 175 | 343 | 308 |
| Chichester GP | 216 | 192 | 19 | 15 | 26 | 23 | 29 | 62 | 76 | 73 | 71 | 84 |
| Rye Bay | 275 | 112 | 20 | 18 | 2 | 37 | 19 | 207 | 110 | 79 | 203 | 176 |
| Average county total 2012-2021 | 397 | 365 | 128 | 39 | 30 | 39 | 68 | 133 | 115 | 149 | 235 | 383 |

Common Pochards were recorded in 52 (5.5%) tetrads in 2022, a similar figure to recent years. The WeBS totals exceeded the 10-year averages in eight of the months with the two strongholds for this species being Chichester GP and Rye Bay. The county total in January was the highest since 702 occurred in February 2012 but considerably fewer than the count of 1693 in January 1998. Peak counts at other locations during the first winter period were 60 at Chingford Pond on 22 Jan, 44 at Barcombe Res on 24 Jan and 26 on West Langney Lake (Eastbourne) on 22 Jan.

Five flew east at Splash Point (Seaford) on 11 Apr and were also seen a little later at Birling Gap.

Breeding was confirmed at five sites. At Chichester GP at least six broods were seen on four different pits, three pairs with broods of five, ten and three young on Drayton North Pit, one pair with four young on Drayton South Pit, an adult with two ducklings on Peckham Lake and five young juveniles on Ivy Lake. It is notable that the two first-mentioned sites, frequented by this nationally rare breeding bird, currently enjoy no designation or legal protection to safeguard them from development, and the longer-term outlook here is uncertain. Elsewhere six ducklings were seen at Arundel WWT on 11 May whilst five and an adult were at Rye Hbr on the 21st. On 15 July, two females and eight ducklings were observed at Amberley and up to three ducklings were at Pett Level in July.

Migrants began to return in late summer with 58 on Chichester GP on 13 Aug and 179 at Scotney GP on the 14th. Numbers continued to build through September particularly at Pett Level where there were 74 present on the 11th.

The largest counts of the second winter period were during the WeBS at Scotney GP where 136 were found on 13 Nov and 103 on 11 Dec. The highest counts at non-WeBS sites were 21 at Rotherbridge Fm reservoir on 1 Nov and the same number on Barcombe Res on 16 Dec. [BGR Ives]

## Ring-necked Duck *Aythya collaris*

***Rare vagrant.***

An adult drake was on a farm reservoir near Yapton from 14 to 17 Apr (O Mitchell). The similarity with the sole record in 2021 (at Honer Res Pagham from 20 to 24 Apr) may suggest that it was the same bird. Previous Sussex records have been between early December and early May. The county total moves on to 15. [P James]

## 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 | 1220 | 751 | 693 | 356 | 323 | 232 | 248 | 322 | 280 | 453 | 757 | 743 |
| Chichester GP | 283 | 214 | 146 | 13 | 39 | 26 | 18 | 8 | 108 | 41 | 82 | 13 |
| Burton & Chingford Ponds | 120 | 83 | 64 | 32 | 27 | 27 | 16 | 27 | 12 | 24 | 49 | 87 |
| Arun Valley N of Arundel | 78 | nc | 70 | 77 | 75 | 42 | 27 | 18 | 27 | 32 | 95 | 57 |
| Southwater Quarry | 50 | 23 | 2 | nc | nc | nc | nc | nc | 4 | 32 | 50 | 156 |
| Rye Bay | 317 | 155 | 155 | 121 | 99 | 63 | 113 | 164 | 40 | 99 | 190 | 237 |
| Average county total 2012-2021 | 977 | 915 | 757 | 526 | 333 | 246 | 290 | 424 | 519 | 579 | 753 | 924 |

In the first winter period the highest counts from sites not included in the WeBS table were 126 and 97 at Bewl Water on 21 Jan and 19 Feb respectively, 80 at West Rise Marsh (Eastbourne) on 6 Jan and 51 at Barcombe Res on 24 Jan.

Few are seen on passage but 25, out of a month total of 38, flew east at Selsey Bill on 8 Mar. Additionally there were 2 E at Splash Point (Seaford) on 24 Mar, six at Jury's Gap on 9 Apr and 11 E at Birling Gap on the 11th.

Breeding was confirmed in eight tetrads, one higher than the previous year, and was probable or possible in a further 15. The earliest record of a juvenile was at Warnham LNR on 6 May, but it was not until mid-June that further broods appeared at Chichester GP, Chingford Pond, Swanbourne Lake and at Rye Hbr. The final confirmed breeding records of the year were of seven juveniles at Medmerry on 1 Aug and an adult with a well-grown juvenile and one chick at Rye Hbr on the 4th.

During the autumn and second winter period 430 at Pett Level on 18 Oct was the highest count in 2022. Elsewhere, the largest counts at sites not in the above table were 120 at Darwell Res on 11 Dec, 51 at West Rise Marsh on 15 Dec and 50 at Powdermill Res on 27 Dec. [BGR Ives]

## Greater Scaup *Aythya marila*

***Very scarce winter visitor and passage migrant; rare non-breeder in summer. Red-listed species of high conservation concern. Schedule 1 species. Section 41.***

Greater Scaup continued to decline in 2022 with just two sets of records. Two at Rye Hbr on 9 Jan were presumably the two female types seen offshore at Pett Level on the 13th; and on flooded fields at Rye Fm (Henfield) one was seen on the 25 Nov, whilst two were present on both 1 Dec and 4 Dec. [BGR Ives]

## Common Eider *Somateria mollissima*

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

During the first winter period most were recorded offshore at Church Norton or at Selsey Bill. At the former site the peak counts were eight on 2 Jan and ten on the 3rd. A good count of 21 (9 E and 12 offshore) was recorded at Selsey Bill on 9 Jan with 10 E there on the 14th, and up to 12 were logged on three consecutive days from 26 to 28 Jan. Two offshore at Pett Level on 21 Jan, four at Eastbourne on 27 Jan and one E at Birling Gap on 28 Feb were the only records from East Sussex in this period.

Between 4 Mar and 29 May at least 132 flew east past seawatch points, rather more than the 10-year average of 75. Peak movements in March were 10 E at Birling Gap on the 4th and 17 E at Selsey

Bill on the 17th. On 12 Apr 15 flew east close inshore along with Shoveler, being seen from several watchpoints including Ovingdean, Splash Point (Seaford), Birling Gap and Fairlight. Twenty two were initially offshore at Splash Point on 1 May before 13 moved off east and nine west.

The sole record of the summer period was of 2 E at Worthing on 24 Jul.

In the second winter period one was noted flying east at Selsey Bill on 5 Nov whilst a further 14 flew east there on the 18th. There were two at Fairlight on the 19th. A first winter bird was in White's Creek (Pagham Hbr) on 25 Nov and two drakes were offshore at Church Norton on 10 Dec with three females also present there on the 11th. One was offshore at The Midrips on 11 Dec and the last records of the year were on 29 Dec when an adult male and female were at Pagham Hbr and a single offshore at Selsey Bill and Brooklands (Worthing). [BGR Ives]

## 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.***

During the first winter period, between one and three were recorded on 11 dates from eight coastal locations. Between mid-March and 9 May, at least 108 flew east with two notable days. On 11 Apr, the eastbound totals were 21 at Selsey Bill, 29 at Splash Point (Seaford) and 27 at Birling Gap whilst on the 17th, there were 14 at Ovingdean, 20 at Splash Point and 43 at Birling Gap. The last cited is the largest movement since 56 E at Birling Gap on 28 Mar 2017 but considerably short of the 110 E there on 2 May 1976.

There were just five records from the last quarter. At Pett Level, one was offshore on 17 Oct, then seven on 25 Dec and three on the following day. Singles were at Fairlight on 30 Nov and at Selsey Bill on 13 Dec. [JA Newnham]

## Common Scoter *Melanitta nigra*

***Common spring passage migrant and fairly common winter visitor; scarce in summer and autumn. Very scarce inland. Red-listed species of high conservation concern. Schedule 1 species. Section 41.***

At the beginning of the year there were 150 in Rye Bay on 1 Jan and 320 there on the 5th but considerably fewer were recorded thereafter. Elsewhere peak counts were 50 at Thorney Island on 2 Jan and 25 in Norman's Bay on 10 Feb.

The highest numbers were recorded, as always, passing eastward during the spring. The March to May eastbound total of 9478 was slightly lower than the previous ten-year average of 10,718. The more detailed month figures for the year from five regularly watched locations are shown below.

| | | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Selsey Bill | E | 26 | 27 | 674 | 2310 | 1190 | 116 | 37 | 35 | 110 | 56 | 160 | 205 |
| | W | 49 | 27 | 13 | 74 | 17 | 1 | 15 | 19 | 69 | 32 | 108 | 70 |
| Worthing & Goring | E | 1 | 2 | 184 | 942 | 436 | 77 | - | 5 | 7 | 30 | 9 | 13 |
| | W | - | 3 | 2 | 16 | 29 | - | 7 | - | 5 | 15 | 3 | 10 |
| Splash Point (Seaford) | E | - | 4 | 555 | 2692 | 921 | nc | nc | nc | nc | nc | nc | nc |
| | W | - | - | - | - | - | nc | nc | nc | nc | nc | nc | nc |
| Birling Gap | E | - | 27 | 2019 | 3269 | 1562 | nc | nc | nc | nc | nc | nc | nc |
| | W | - | - | 6 | 17 | 7 | nc | nc | nc | nc | nc | nc | nc |
| Fairlight | E | nc | - | 180 | 333 | 60 | 30 | - | - | - | - | 45 | 4 |
| | W | nc | 5 | 1 | 80 | - | - | - | - | - | 60 | 17 | - |

On five spring days 500 or more Common Scoters were recorded flying east from any site; the details of these days, with the time watched to the nearest hour, are shown below with the highest counts typically seen from either Splash Point or Birling Gap.

| | 22 Mar | 6 Apr | 11 Apr | 12 Apr | 1 May |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Selsey Bill | 66 (4) | 89 (3) | 448 (12) | 337 (9) | 200 (11) |
| Worthing & Goring | 10 (1) | nc | 295 (6) | 192 (6) | 285 (4) |
| Splash Point (Seaford) | nc | 610 (2) | 650 (6) | 588 (6) | 742 (6) |
| Birling Gap | 587 (5) | nc | 686 (5) | 728 (4) | 1069 (5) |
| Fairlight | 77 (3) | 0 (3) | 50 (4) | 195 (3) | nc |

In the latter half of the year most were recorded in Rye Bay; 50 had gathered by 17 Sep, 80 by 18 Oct and 100 by the 22nd. Thereafter three-figure counts occurred on 17 days until the year end with a maximum of 250 on 18 Nov, 25 Nov and 9 Dec.

An immature male and a female at Weir Wood Res on 3 May and three there on 7 Jul were the only inland birds. [JA Newnham]

## Long-tailed Duck *Clangula hyemalis*

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

An adult female found in Southwick Canal on 4 Jan was a popular, well-watched and photographed bird that lingered in the area until 3 Apr. At Pagham Hbr one arrived on 5 Jan and by the 14th there were two, a male and a female, present off Church Norton beach. These remained in the area until the end of March when they apparently relocated to Selsey Bill, where they stayed until 10 Apr. No spring migration was noted other than 1 E at Birling Gap on 8 Mar.

In the second winter period one at Worthing and then Selsey Bill on 5 Nov was likely the bird that was at Medmerry from the 9th. This was another popular bird and it stayed in situ until the 11 Dec. A notable sighting in this period was of a first winter male inland at Rotherbridge Fm (Petworth), first seen on 13 Nov; this individual stayed until 17 Dec. The final record of the year was of one, a female, at Thorney Deeps on Christmas Eve. [BGR Ives]

## Goldeneye *Bucephala clangula*

***Scarce winter visitor; rare non-breeder in summer. Red-listed species of high conservation concern. Schedule 1 species.***

2021: The three birds on 10 Oct 2021 at Pulborough Brooks were considered escapes.

2022 The monthly WeBS counts at the principal sites were below the 10-year average in most months.

| | Jan | Feb | Mar | | Oct | Nov | Dec |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| County total | 8 | 4 | - | | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| Chichester Hbr | 4 | 2 | - | | - | 3 | 3 |
| Pagham Hbr | 2 | - | - | | - | - | - |
| Burton & Chingford Pond | - | - | - | | 2 | - | - |
| Rye Bay | 2 | 2 | - | | - | - | 1 |
| Average county total 2012-2021 | 19 | 23 | 6 | | 1 | 3 | 12 |

The highest counts in the first winter period were in Chichester Hbr: nine in Fishbourne Channel on 13 Feb and eight at Thorney Island on 2 Jan. Five at Rye Hbr on 8 Feb was the largest count in

East Sussex. Elsewhere two were at Newhaven Hbr on 5 Feb, one at Lidsey WTW on 12 and 22 Feb and one or two at Chichester GP on 11 dates between 22 Feb and 25 Apr. The latter was the last in this period.

The two counted during the WeBS at Chingford Pond on 6 Oct were possibly birds escaped from a Surrey collection particularly as they were nearly a month before the next which were 3 W at Selsey Bill on 5 Nov. Thereafter no more than three were recorded in Chichester, Pagham or Rye Harbours. One was at Pulborough Brooks on six dates between 25 Nov and 3 Dec, with two there on 2 Dec, and one was at Lewes Brooks on 29 Dec. [JA Newnham]

## [Smew] [*Mergellus albellus*]

***Very scarce winter visitor mainly to the east of the county. Red-listed species of high conservation concern.***

This is the first year since the society's inception that this species has not been recorded in the county. The decline of this species in Sussex was graphically displayed in the 2021 Sussex Bird Report and observers are reminded that this is now a taxon on the county description list. [JA Newnham]



*Goosander, Bramber, 9 February (Colin Holter)*

## Goosander *Mergus merganser*

***Scarce winter visitor and passage migrant.***

Goosanders were noted in just 28 (2.9%) tetrads in 2022, similar to the 10-year average.

There were four at Church Norton on 1 Jan rising to five on the 9th and it seems likely that these were some of the six offshore at East Head on 14 Jan. Another six were present at Wadhurst Park Estate on 24 Jan but the highest count of this period was of 13 at Troutbeck (Eridge) on 6 Feb. Five were on the Parham Estate lake on 25 Jan and four birds were recorded near Pulborough on 20 Feb,

at Pulborough Brooks on 1 Mar and at Arundel WWT on 12 Mar. The only offshore movements were singles flying west at Goring Gap on 30 Jan and at Selsey Bill on 14 Mar. A first winter drake was a regular in Pagham Hbr from mid-March and the last record of the late spring was of another male seen at Fittleworth on 7 May.

The first in the second winter period were two at Rye Hbr on 4 Nov with one at Pett Level, one at Pulborough Brooks and 3 W at Selsey Bill on the 5th; the last were likely the birds seen at Church Norton on 11 Nov. Three were back at Petworth Park on 5 Dec, four flew east at Selsey Bill on the 10th, and four were at Pulborough Brooks on the 11th. Five flying north over Watersfield on 16 Dec was the largest group in this period and the last record of the year was on Christmas Eve with two on the River Ouse at Southease. [BGR Ives]

## Red-breasted Merganser *Mergus serrator*

***Fairly common winter visitor and passage migrant along the coast; rare non-breeder in summer. Rare inland. Amber-listed species of medium conservation concern.***

As in previous years all records were from coastal sites, the majority of these in West Sussex. The highest counts in the first winter period were 40 at Goring Gap on 6 Jan, rising to 80 there on the 21st and 90 on the 23rd, this being the highest count of the period. At Selsey Bill the January total of 359 (152 E, 160 W and 47 offshore) was considered to be made up of local movements. Occasional birds were noted from East Sussex from early March.

Between 4 Mar and 9 May a total of 374 were recorded flying east from seawatch sites; most in March and peak eastward movements were from Selsey Bill with 49 on 13 Mar and 22 on 26 Mar. There was a good local count of 50 plus off Elmer Rocks (Middleton-on-Sea) on 5 March. Fewer were recorded later in the spring but there were 20 offshore and 13 E past Selsey on 2 Apr and 13 E past Birling Gap on the 11th. The last spring movement was 5 E at Birling Gap on 9 May.

The first returning birds were two at Pett Level on both 16 and 29 Sep. During the second winter period at the regularly watched coastal sites double-figure counts became more frequent but seldom exceeded 50, with 55 offshore at Goring Gap on 11 Dec the highest for the period. [BGR Ives]

## Ruddy Duck *Oxyura jamaicensis*

***Rare introduced resident and winter visitor; subject to culling to reduce numbers.***

One was at Pett Level on 26 Apr, the first record since 18 May 2019, when two were at Cuckmere Haven. BTO BirdFacts online states that the breeding population in southern England has been eradicated following a cull which took place to prevent wandering birds interbreeding with endangered White-headed Ducks *Oxyura leucocephala* in the western range of that species. [M Mallalieu]

## Grey Partridge *Perdix perdix*

***Scarce resident; much declined but benefiting locally through conservation effort. Red-listed species of high conservation concern. Section 41.***

Grey Partridges were recorded in 43 (4.5%) tetrads (33 in 2021), slightly fewer than the 10-year average of 48. Birds were recorded in every month on the Norfolk Estate, but numbers here and elsewhere in the county were consistently lower than in 2021. The highest count in the year was on this estate with 25 at The Burgh on 16 Jan. Few were recorded from East Sussex, away from Rye Hbr, but ten were on the downland at Foredown (Portslade) on 10 Jan, with further reports from this area in September, October and December.

Breeding was confirmed at Rye Hbr with an estimated three pairs, one with a brood of six

fledglings seen on 16 Aug; and at Bilsham (Yapton) where sightings of a pair were followed by one of three juveniles with two adults flushed from cover in September. Probable or possible breeding was recorded at four other sites. During the SDFBI the species was found in five of the 96 Sussex 1-km squares surveyed. During September ten were at Steyning Round Hill on the 19th. In the second winter period all the double-figure counts were from the area around The Burgh with a maximum of 25 on 30 Nov. At Rye Hbr there were peaks of nine on 23 Oct and again on 1 Dec and at Foredown a maximum of eight on 29 Dec. [G Turvey]

## Common Pheasant *Phasianus colchicus*

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

Common Pheasants were recorded in 544 tetrads (57%), more than the 10-year average of 455. High counts in this period were 50 at Angmering on 15 Jan and the same number at Cowdray Park (Midhurst) on 6 Mar. In the early year SWBS 283 were found in 48% of the 149 1-km squares surveyed. In the GBW, Common Pheasants were recorded in 24% of the 254 gardens surveyed during the year and in the BGBW, the species was the 26th most common bird, compared to 24th in the previous two years.

Breeding was confirmed in five tetrads, one fewer than in the previous two years, and probable in 18. The first juvenile was seen at Warnham LNR on 6 May and a female with six young was at the same location on 28 Jul.

As an introduced gamebird and a rather commonplace sight in certain areas, Common Pheasants are undoubtedly under-recorded. However, as Defra is currently under scrutiny about their failure to monitor compliance with regulations around gamebird releases in England and concern around the mass release of captive bred birds potentially damaging sites of high nature conservation value, all records are gratefully received.

Releases by shooting estates in the autumn led to the year's highest counts around the beginning of the shooting season on 1 Oct, with 200 in the lower Ouse Valley on Oct 14, 131 at Balcombe on 22 Oct and 100 at Kithurst Hill (Storrington) on 11 Nov. In the late year SWBS, 264 birds were found in 44% of the 139 1-km squares studied, a decrease from 2020 and 2021. [D Brothwell]

## 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.***

Quail were recorded from eight sites in 2022 involving ten birds. The first was calling at Thorney Deeps on 16 Jun, 23 days later than the 10-year average arrival date of 24 May. The following day another male was calling near Ditchling Beacon and between 19 and 21 Jun up to three were at Medmerry. A single male was calling from an arable margin at Wepham Down on 20 Jun. In July one was heard from a barley field at Greenway Bottom (Seaford) on the 5th with another at Frieslands (Washington) on the 24th. During August one was heard near Crawley on the 4th, one flew across a road and was watched on the roadside verge at Donnington (Chichester) on the 23rd and finally one was at Medmerry on the 28th. [G Turvey]

## Red-legged Partridge *Alectoris rufa*

***Common introduced resident. Population augmented annually by captive bred stock.***

Red-legged Partridges were recorded in 183 (19%) tetrads, down from the 204 of the previous year, but in keeping with counts from the recent few years.

In the early year SWBS, a total of 67 were found in just six of the 149 squares studied with a maximum of 44 in Cocking on 26 Jan. In the BBS, 98 were encountered in 28 (15%) of the squares studied with a maximum of 11 on the Angmering Park Estate on 17 Jun. Breeding was confirmed at two sites, recently fledged young being seen at Northlands (near Balcombe) and West Stoke (near Lavant), and was probable at a further eight.

In the late year SWBS, a total of 54 were found in seven squares with a maximum of 28 on 15 Dec in Firle. The highest count in the year was of 80 on 17 Dec at Lower Standean although the introduction of captive bred stock and subsequent loss to shooting makes interpretation of number fluctuations complex. [PJ Plant]

## Nightjar *Caprimulgus europaeus*

***Fairly common but localised summer visitor; rarely seen on migration. Amber-listed species of medium conservation concern. Section 41.***

As in 2021, this species was recorded in 46 tetrads (4.8%), which were mostly in the Wealden Heaths and Ashdown Forest areas, and very similar to the 10-year average of 44. The first record of the year was of a single bird calling and feeding at Wiggonholt Common (Pulborough Brooks) on 8 May, the same as the ten-year mean arrival date. This was followed by encounters of two at Rewell Wood (Arundel) and four at Hindleap Warren (Ashdown Forest), both on 12 May. The only coastal sighting during spring migration was of a male flying in off the sea at Brighton Marina on 18 May.

The first records for the Wealden Heaths were of two at Lavington Common on 13 May and one at Iping Common on 14 May. In the annual WHBBS, 67 pairs or territories were recorded (see page 203). These included 18 pairs or territories on Ambersham and Heyshott Commons, ten at Black Down (Fernhurst), nine each at Iping Common and the Lavington Commons complex, and six at Woolbeding Common. An RSPB reserve breeding survey and other observers reported up to four displaying or calling males at Wiggonholt Common. At least three territories were reported at Rewell Wood and the only evidence of confirmed breeding in Sussex for this year was a report of a recently fledged bird there on 15 Jul.

Although there were no records confirming breeding on Ashdown Forest again this year; Ashdown Forest Nightjar surveys identified 44 territories and there were reports of a further 19 churring males at other sites. At Broadwater Warren 11 churring or displaying males were identified. There were also reports indicative of probable breeding, in the form of displaying and/or churring males at Rackham Plantation, Fitzlea Wood (Selham), Stansted Forest, Chailey Common, Horncastle Wood (Sharpthorne) and Abbots Wood (Hailsham).

The last records of the year were of a single on the Knepp Estate on 25 Aug and a juvenile ringed at Pett Level on 26 Aug, 17 days earlier than the 10-year average last date. [A Rowe]

## Common Swift *Apus apus*

***Common summer visitor and passage migrant. Red-listed species of high conservation concern.***

There were records from 353 tetrads (37%), compared to the 10-year average of 333 (range 264-416). The first to arrive was one at Highdown (Worthing) on 13 Apr, just a day before the 10-year average, which has advanced by only two days this century. There were no further records until one at Hove on the 20th, two at Lewes the next day and one at Sullington on the 26th, followed by daily records. The first double-figure count was of 12 at Pulborough Brooks on the 29th, followed by 20 at Ivy Lake (Chichester GP) on 2 May. There were 100 at Weir Wood Res on the 13th and 125 at Rye Hbr on the 26th, the largest count in May.

Breeding was confirmed in 42 tetrads (the highest number since 83 in 2011) and probable in a further nine. In the BBS, there were records from 20% of the squares surveyed with a maximum of 12 at Firle on 28 Jun.

There were records of birds using nest boxes at Bury, Bognor Regis, Steyning, Henfield, Lewes and Forest Row. At Bury, where the first returning birds appeared on 6 May, four boxes with cameras were occupied, the first egg was laid on the 19th, the first young hatched on 10 Jun and the first fledged there on the 19 Jul. At Steyning fledging also occurred on this date. Lewes Swift Supporters carried out their organised survey for a fourth year, with a total of 81 active nests counted, and have now put up a total of 167 nest boxes in the town.

The highest count in June was of 200 at Weir Wood Res on the 1st, but the highest numbers of the year came as usual in July, with 380 at Fairlight on the 26th, 600 at Brighton on the 7th, and on the 24th 750 at Climping and a massive movement of 4000 W at Brighton, the highest Sussex count since 1995. Numbers declined steadily through August, and all September counts were single-figure except for ten at Rye Hbr on the 24th. The last bird of the year was one at Pett Level on the 25th, two days before the 10-year average, which in contrast to the average arrival date has advanced by 25 days this century. [CJR Barfield]



*Common Swifts, Beachy Head, 27 June (Laurence Pitcher)*

## Pallid Swift *Apus pallidus*

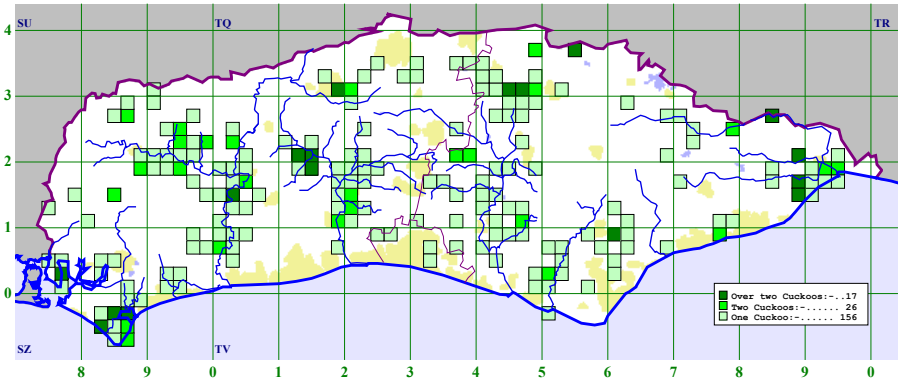
***Very rare vagrant.***

A juvenile taken into care at Peacehaven on 30 Oct is set to become the second for Sussex once BBRC have assessed the record, following the first over Church Norton on 13 Oct 2018. The outcome of the rehabilitation is not known. [DK Campbell]

## Common Cuckoo *Cuculus canorus*

***Fairly common but declining summer visitor. Red-listed species of high conservation concern. Section 41.***

Cuckoos were recorded in 199 tetrads (21%), compared to the 10-year average of 212 (range 169 to 263). Distribution is shown in the map below.




The first was on 10 Apr at Pagham Hbr, eight days later than the 10-year average first date, followed by one at Amberley Wild Brooks two days later. Encounters then became daily throughout April, mainly of singles and occasionally of two but there were three at Old Lodge LNR (Ashdown Forest) on the 21st, the Knepp Estate on the 22nd and 30th and Newenden on the 28th. The pattern was repeated during May with one to three being regularly seen and heard and up to eight on the Knepp Estate on the 5th and in June there were four at Newenden on the 1st and Pagham Hbr and Old Lodge LNR on several dates.

Breeding was confirmed at only one location, the Knepp Estate, where a youngster was begging and being fed by a Reed Warbler on 7 Aug but was considered probable in 13 tetrads and possible in another 76. Reserve breeding records suggest up to nine males at Pagham Hbr, two at both Medmerry and Pulborough Brooks and two or three at Rye Hbr.

One was seen to fly out to sea at Selsey Bill and then flew back again in on 17 Jul. There were two September records, one at Rye Hbr on the 16th and one at Climping on the 24th, 12 days later than the 10-year average last date. [T Seabrook, MJ Chattaway]

## Feral Pigeon *Columba livia*

***Common resident.***

Feral Pigeons were recorded in 316 tetrads (33%). In the first winter period, there was only one three-figure count with 100 at Arundel on 8 Feb, with flocks of 50 or more recorded at half a dozen other sites. In the early year SWBS birds were recorded in 16% of the squares surveyed.

Breeding was under reported with confirmation in just three tetrads. In the spring and summer periods, the highest count was for 200 at Arundel on 24 May. Feral Pigeons were found in 27% of the squares surveyed for the BBS.

During the autumn and second winter period, there were seven counts of over 100 with 250 at Palace Pier (Brighton) on 7 Sep being the highest. There were 16 other counts of 50 or more, with the majority, as usual, at or near the coast. In the late year SWBS, birds were found in 20% of the squares surveyed. [A Podmore]

## Stock Dove *Columba oenas*

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

The species was recorded in 504 tetrads (53%), much higher than the 10-year average of 383. In the first winter period, the highest counts were 200 on downland between Findon and Steyning on 31 Jan and 19 Mar. There were thirteen other counts of over 50 birds from eight further locations. During the early year SWBS, Stock Doves were found in 27% of the squares surveyed with a maximum of 43 at Battle on 25 Jan.

Breeding was confirmed in only four tetrads (14 in 2021) but considered probable or possible in a further 145 tetrads (161 in 2021). During the BBS the species was seen in 50% of the squares surveyed with a maximum of 13 at West Lavington on 18 Apr. Seven nest boxes were occupied by Stock Doves at Weir Wood Res on 24 May.

The highest count for the spring and summer was 150 at Steep Down (Lancing) on 20 Jun.

The peak numbers in the autumn were 1000 at the Burgh (Burpham) on 19 Oct and 500 heading south and west with some flying out to sea at Hastings CP on 5 Nov. There were no late winter counts of note with a maximum of 150 at the Burgh on 30 Nov and 150 at Watersfield on 15 Dec. In the late year SWBS, Stock Doves were encountered in 21% of the squares surveyed with a maximum of 60 at Sutton on 16 Dec. [A Podmore]

## Woodpigeon *Columba palumbus*

***Abundant resident and winter visitor. Amber-listed species of medium conservation concern.***

Woodpigeons were recorded in 770 tetrads (81%), more than the ten-year average of 689. In the first winter period, notable counts included 2000 at Chantry Hill on 15 Jan, 2000 at Warnham LNR on the 19th and 1500 at Poling on the 22nd. There were c.100 counts of over 100 birds (71 in 2021). In the early year SWBS the species was found in 99% of the squares surveyed with a maximum of 300 at Hartfield on 1 Feb. Woodpigeons were recorded in 98% of participating gardens for the GBW, with occupancy rates of 78% and 86% in East and West Sussex gardens respectively for the BGBW.

A count of 12,000 flying west over Brighton on 4 Apr constitutes the highest spring number recorded in the county. Although clearly widespread, breeding was confirmed in only ten tetrads (35 in 2021) but likely in a further 147 (154 in 2021). The species was found in 100% of squares surveyed for the BBS with a maximum of 123 at Peacehaven on 16 Apr.

Autumn movements were at their peak in November with 5000 moving in all directions at Fairlight on the 5th, 8000 E at Brighton on the 10th, 4720 E at Selsey Bill on the 12th, 5200 W at Brighton on the 14th, 22,500 E there on the 18th and 5000 at Flimwell on the 20th. The highest count in December was 545 at Itchingfield (Horsham) on the 29th. Woodpigeons were encountered in 99% of squares surveyed in the late year SWBS with a maximum of 248 at Streat (Plumpton) on 9 Dec. A juvenile was seen at Southwater CP on 27 Dec. [A Podmore]

## Turtle Dove *Streptopelia turtur*

***Scarce and declining summer visitor and passage migrant. Red-listed species of high conservation concern. Section 41.***

Turtle Doves were recorded in 32 (3.3%) tetrads. This is the lowest number ever and the noticeable decrease from 53 in 2021 is further cause for alarm. The 10-year average currently stands at 71 (range 53 to 97).

The first arrival was at Lewes Brooks on 10 Apr, four days earlier than the 10-year average first date. There were five other records for April, all from the Knepp Estate, including three on the 30th. As in previous years, sightings were made on a daily basis during May and June, although the majority of these were from the Knepp Estate with maximum counts of five on 22 and 31 May. Other counts of note included three at Kingley Vale on 27 May, with twos at Ringmer from 8 May to 26 Jun, Darwell Res on 14 May, Partridge Green from 15 May to 12 Jun, Woods Mill (Henfield) on 12 Jun, Peacehaven on 20 Jun, Amberley Wild Brooks on 23 Jun and at Ifold on 23 Jun.

There were no tetrads with confirmed breeding (none in 2021 also) while breeding was probable in two and possible in ten other tetrads (13 and nine in 2020). In the Knepp Southern Block (473.17 ha) several surveys were carried out across the breeding season and recorded an estimated 16 Turtle Dove territories, though none were recorded in either the Middle Block (280.5 ha) or Northern Block (236.67 ha) of the estate.

Allowing for duplication, there were a further 27 records for July, all of ones and twos, with birds still present at Kingley Vale, the Knepp Estate, Partridge Green, Woods Mill, Ringmer and Darwell Res. There were a dozen records for August including a juvenile coming to feed in a garden in Singleton from 9 to 20 Aug and a juvenile at the Knepp Estate on 13 Aug with the same or another there on the 16th. The only coastal record was one at Selsey Bill on 26 Aug.

There was just one record for September, from the Knepp Estate on the 12th, the last record for the year, three weeks earlier than the ten-year average of 3 Oct. [A Podmore]

## Collared Dove *Streptopelia decaocto*

***Very common resident.***

Collared Doves were recorded in 492 (51%) tetrads, compared to the 10-year average of 462. In the first quarter 20 or more were recorded on just six occasions with 30 at Hampden Park (Eastbourne) on 1 Jan and 36 at Eartham on 18 Mar being the highest. During the early year SWBS the species was recorded in 34% of the squares surveyed with a maximum of 21 at Westbourne Common on 17 Jan. They were found in 35% of East Sussex and 33% of West Sussex gardens in the BGBW and during the whole year they were found in 77% of participating gardens in the GBW.

Breeding was clearly under recorded having been confirmed in only one tetrad but possible or probable in a further 71. One pair was found nesting behind a satellite dish at Rye Hbr village on 18 May. Collared Doves were recorded in 58% of the squares surveyed for the BBS with a maximum of 14 at Peacehaven on 1 Jun.

During the autumn and second winter period, there were a dozen records for 20 or more birds from five sites with high counts of 50 at Iford Brooks on 4 Sep and 70 at Ditchling Beacon on 10 Nov. In the late year SWBS, Collared Doves were found in 29% of the squares surveyed with a maximum of 12 at West Wittering on 30 Dec. [A Podmore]

## Water Rail *Rallus aquaticus*

***Scarce resident; scarce winter visitor and passage migrant.***

Water Rails were recorded in 82 (8.6%) tetrads in 2022, exactly the same number as 2021. Only at Rye Hbr were birds recorded in every month but in most months at key sites such as Pagham Hbr, Waltham Brooks, Arundel WWT and Pett Level.

Winter numbers were characteristically small, the maxima being eight at Pagham Hbr on 14 Jan and six at Arundel WWT on the 26th. Breeding was confirmed at just two sites; fledged juveniles were seen at Waltham Brooks on 5 and 7 Jul and at West Rise Marsh (Eastbourne) on 1 Aug but breeding was considered probable or possible at another five sites. In the extensive wetlands at Pett

Level the normal c.50 pairs were present during the breeding season and at Rye Hbr calling was heard widely. Two pairs were at Amberley Wild Brooks.

From August through to the end of the year counts of five were at Rye Hbr on 21 Aug and 16 Oct and at West Rise Marsh on 27 Nov whilst four were recorded at a further six locations. [T Seabrook]

## Corncrake *Crex crex*

***Rare passage migrant; formerly bred. Red-listed species of high conservation concern. Schedule 1 species. Section 41.***

One seen briefly at Castle Hill LNR (Newhaven) on 4 Sep (NM Greenaway) was the first since 2019. The county total moves on to 13 this century. [P James]

## Spotted Crake *Porzana porzana*

***Rare passage migrant and winter visitor. Amber-listed species of medium conservation concern. Schedule 1 species.***

One at West Rise Marsh (Eastbourne) from 3 to 5 Sep (G Faulkner, AD Whitcomb *et al.*). The county total this century moves on to 19 although this is only the fourth bird to be recorded since 2013. Arrival dates since 2000 have been in February (1), April (2), May (2), August (4), September (7) and October (3). [P James]



*Spotted Crake, West Rise Marsh, 4 September (Gary Faulkner)*

## Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus*

***Very common resident; possibly fairly common winter visitor but status uncertain. Amber-listed species of medium conservation concern.***

The species was recorded in 355 (37%) tetrads, a little down on the 376 of the previous year. The monthly WeBS counts were as follows:

| | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| County total | 612 | 371 | 437 | 262 | 196 | 177 | 240 | 217 | 510 | 551 | 555 | 412 |
| Chichester Hbr | 53 | 48 | 36 | 21 | 14 | 12 | 6 | 10 | 35 | 36 | 59 | 30 |
| Chichester Canal | 40 | 41 | 41 | 40 | 30 | 23 | 21 | 31 | 53 | 54 | 62 | 37 |
| Arun Valley N of Arundel | 79 | nc | 48 | 38 | 37 | 27 | 29 | 30 | 55 | 75 | 42 | 42 |
| Southwater CP | 31 | 28 | 26 | nc | nc | nc | nc | nc | 44 | 42 | 37 | 39 |
| Ifield MP | 25 | 23 | 6 | 4 | 6 | nc | nc | nc | 38 | 38 | 30 | 22 |
| Alexandra Park (Hastings) | 39 | 37 | 29 | 33 | 20 | 27 | 26 | nc | 39 | 40 | 38 | 40 |
| Average county total 2012-2021 | 495 | 499 | 418 | 228 | 166 | 168 | 226 | 295 | 448 | 522 | 553 | 534 |

Unlike last year, when only in April was the county total higher than the average for the previous ten years, this year's totals were higher than the average in all but the months of February, August and December. In the early year SWBS Moorhens were found in 20% of the squares surveyed with a maximum of 21 on 24 Jan in Rustington.

During the BBS there were 132 total encounters from 49 (27%) of the squares surveyed with a maximum of eight on 17 Jun in Hastings. Breeding was confirmed in 62 tetrads and was probable in a further ten.

In the late year SWBS Moorhens were found in 26 (19%) of the squares studied with a maximum of 24 on 18 Dec in Hastings. An observation from Barcombe on 26 Mar was of a Moorhen catching a newt. [PJ Plant]

## Coot *Fulica atra*

***Fairly common resident and common winter visitor.***

Coots were recorded in 195 tetrads (20%), more than the 10-year average of 177. Monthly WeBS counts are shown in the table below. Coot numbers can, and often do, fluctuate year-on-year; although the January count was well above the previous decade average the totals in February, November and December were much lower.

| | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| County total | 3406 | 1928 | 1283 | 599 | 507 | 708 | 982 | 1404 | 1850 | 2925 | 2464 | 2398 |
| Chichester Hbr | 300 | 191 | 123 | 71 | 33 | 71 | 46 | 22 | 152 | 166 | 400 | 306 |
| Chichester GP | 732 | 466 | 253 | 42 | 154 | 58 | 102 | 95 | 808 | 1243 | 799 | 20 |
| Rye Bay | 1317 | 634 | 403 | 143 | 26 | 219 | 373 | 588 | 183 | 583 | 372 | 1331 |
| Average county total 2012-2021 | 2860 | 2467 | 1339 | 684 | 582 | 744 | 962 | 1490 | 2231 | 2826 | 2967 | 3240 |

In the first winter period the highest count by far was at Scotney GP where 804 were present on 23 Jan during a WeBS count. Notable counts not shown in the table were 195 at Burton MP on the 10 Jan, 271 at Bewl Water on the 21st and 300 at Pett Level on the 25th.

Breeding was confirmed in 33 tetrads, down from 38 in 2021, and was probable or possible in another 16. Coots were confirmed to have bred in six months of the year from March to August with the majority of records being from the spring and early summer periods. The first breeder of the year was seen on eggs at Burton MP on 7 Mar and the first fledglings (3) were seen at Medmerry

on the 25th. There were eight pairs at Medmerry, 12 at Pagham Hbr and breeding was described as 'widespread' at Rye Hbr. Breeding continued into the summer with the last record of a youngster at Pagham Hbr on 26 Aug.

In the second winter period counts rose at many locations as birds prepared to overwinter. At Runcton Lake (Chichester GP) 583 were present on 14 Nov and at Scotney GP 640 were on the water on 11 Dec. Other notable three-figure counts in this period included 235 at Rye Hbr on 11 Dec, 236 at Pett Level on Christmas Eve, and 155 at Bewl Water on 29 Dec. [BGR Ives]

## Little Grebe *Tachybaptus ruficollis*

***Scarce resident; passage migrant and fairly common winter visitor.***

Little Grebes were recorded in 120 (13%) tetrads, slightly more than 2021 and higher than the ten-year average of 108.

The WeBS counts at the principal sites were:

| | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| County total | 208 | 126 | 120 | 91 | 53 | 59 | 69 | 97 | 138 | 231 | 197 | 166 |
| Chichester Hbr | 35 | 29 | 24 | 21 | 8 | 12 | - | 8 | 28 | 61 | 30 | 48 |
| Chichester GP | 10 | 10 | 16 | 14 | 19 | 10 | 11 | 6 | 17 | 20 | 9 | 7 |
| Tillington Res | 4 | 6 | 7 | 6 | 3 | 9 | 17 | 18 | 33 | 20 | 14 | 5 |
| Burton & Chingford Pond | 25 | 23 | 14 | 14 | 3 | 8 | 5 | 15 | 9 | 7 | 9 | 14 |
| Cuckmere Haven | 31 | 17 | 2 | - | - | - | nc | 5 | nc | 16 | 15 | 10 |
| Rye Bay | 51 | 24 | 25 | 13 | 9 | 3 | 25 | 39 | 31 | 54 | 48 | 44 |
| Average county total 2012-2021 | 183 | 166 | 101 | 47 | 37 | 40 | 50 | 99 | 147 | 188 | 194 | 201 |

The county monthly totals exceeded their 10-year averages in eight of the months. A detailed count of waterbodies at Rye Hbr on 13 Jan, and separate from the WeBS, found 51 individuals. Peak counts at sites not in the above table were 12 at Pagham Lagoon on 23 and 30 Jan, 11 at Bewl Water on 21 Jan and ten at Chichester Canal on the following day.

Breeding was confirmed in 13 tetrads and was probable or possible in a further 15. The first fledglings were seen at Rustington on 16 Apr and then reported frequently from other sites through May to the end of August. At Wivelsfield, adults were accompanied by young chicks and a juvenile on 27 Jun, suggestive of a second brood.

In the last quarter the highest counts at sites not included in the WeBS table were 13 at Pagham Lagoon on 13 Oct, 11 on the lakes in the Gravetye Estate (West Hoathly) on 11 Oct and a maximum of eight on a farm reservoir near Yapton, at Brooklands (Worthing), Widewater (Lancing) and Weir Wood Res. [T Seabrook]

## Red-necked Grebe *Podiceps grisegena*

***Very scarce winter visitor and passage migrant. Red-listed species of high conservation concern.***

Red-necked Grebes are most frequently seen on the sea at Selsey Bill/Pagham Hbr and singles were reported there on 17 dates from 1 Jan to 30 Apr, 21 Aug and then on six dates from 22 Oct to 31 Dec (mo). Singles were at Worthing on 22 Feb (CA Holter) and at Lancing in summer plumage on 24 Mar (RJ Fairbank). During April one flew east at Splash Point (Seaford) on the 11th (RJ Fairbank), up to two were at Goring from the 11th until the 18th (R Simpson), one at Climping between the 15th and 19th (B Akinola, R Grimmett) and one at Elmer Rocks (Middleton-on-Sea) on 21 Apr and 2 May (O Mitchell).

A returning bird recorded flying west at Selsey Bill on 21 Aug (J Atkinson *et al.*) was nearly the earliest record for Sussex, the current earliest being 13 Aug in 2006. The next was again at Selsey Bill on 22 Oct (S Hill, BGR Ives) and further singles were reported there on 18 Nov (A House, SA Russell) and from 24 to 31 Dec (PS Bowley, S Hill). There was just one further record, one at Elmer Rocks on 16 Dec (O Mitchell). [C Davis]

## Great Crested Grebe *Podiceps cristatus*

***Fairly common resident; passage migrant and winter visitor.***

Great Crested Grebes were recorded in 139 tetrads (15%), the highest number recorded and well above the 10-year average of 116 (range 89 to 134). The WeBS counts are shown in the following table and in most months are similar to the 10-year average; the high January total boosted by the count offshore at Glyne Gap (Bexhill) on 23 Jan.

| | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| County total | 624 | 234 | 310 | 179 | 132 | 193 | 173 | 171 | 266 | 424 | 248 | 275 |
| Chichester Hbr | 15 | 23 | 45 | 46 | 12 | 12 | 3 | - | 33 | 25 | 30 | 42 |
| Chichester GP | 39 | 24 | 36 | 8 | 22 | 12 | 10 | 12 | 74 | 80 | 37 | 12 |
| Arlington Res | 25 | 15 | 20 | 16 | 12 | nc | 16 | 35 | 17 | 26 | 37 | nc |
| Bewl Water | 49 | 92 | 81 | nc | nc | nc | nc | nc | nc | 107 | 27 | 39 |
| Bexhill Glyne Gap | 408 | - | - | nc | nc | nc | nc | nc | - | - | - | 76 |
| Rye Bay | 11 | 6 | 21 | 34 | 23 | 28 | 31 | 21 | 32 | 87 | 46 | 78 |
| Average county total 2012-2021 | 362 | 422 | 260 | 162 | 144 | 140 | 176 | 341 | 426 | 361 | 320 | 281 |

Other non-WeBS high counts in the first winter period were all typically offshore with 100 at Pett Level on 16 and 17 Jan, 100 at Normans Bay on 28 Jan and 75 at Worthing, also on the 28th.

There was little offshore movement in spring and by April most birds had settled into their territories. Breeding was confirmed in 17 tetrads and was probable or possible in a further eight, similar to 2021. Display was first noted on 8 Feb at Weir Wood Res, one was on a nest at Ashburnham Place (Battle) on 23 Mar and the first fledglings were seen at Warnham LNR on 6 May and at Chichester GP the next day. Eleven pairs were present in the breeding season at Rye Hbr and at least five pairs bred at Chichester GP. Breeding continued across the traditional sites throughout the summer, peaking in July, and there was also an autumn record of a nest with young at Warnham LNR on 29 Sep.

As birds dispersed and gathered, post-breeding numbers rose at several inland sites including 107 at Bewl Water on 7 Oct and 48 at Weir Wood Res on the 11th. Offshore totals also started to build, particularly in December: 45 at Goring Gap on the 7th, 76 at Glyne Gap on the 11th, 25 behind the rock groynes at Elmer Rocks (Middleton-on-Sea) on the 16th and 92 off Pett Level on Christmas Eve. Inland the highest December count was 70 at Arlington Res on the 10th. [BGR Ives]

## Slavonian Grebe *Podiceps auritus*

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

Overall estimated totals were below average this year except in January and the approximate minimum monthly totals, taking the highest day count as the minimum, were as follows:

| | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | | Nov | Dec |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| County total | 29 | 11 | 7 | 5 | | 4 | 12 |
| Selsey Bill/ Church Norton | 24 | 6 | 4 | - | | 3 | 8 |
| Average county total 2012-2021 | 25 | 30 | 18 | 7 | | 11 | 18 |



*Great Crested Grebes, Rye Hbr, 9 June (Gary Faulkner)*

As usual, the prime area for Slavonian Grebes was on the sea between Selsey Bill and Church Norton, where they were recorded regularly throughout the first quarter, both offshore and occasionally flying past in either direction. Maximum counts during the period were at Pagham Hbr with 13 on 16 Jan and 24 on 28 Jan. Elsewhere the maximum counts were three birds at Climping on 10 Feb and two in summer plumage at Pett Level on 26 Apr which was the last spring record. Other records east of Lancing were singles at Pett Level on 23 Jan and 27 Mar, at Brighton on 2 Jan and 19 Feb, and one in summer plumage at Splash Point (Seaford) on 11 Apr.

The first returning winter visitor was a single bird at Selsey Bill on 12 Nov and the species was seen regularly in the usual Selsey Bill/Church Norton area throughout November and December, but in low numbers. The maximum at Selsey Bill was just eight birds on 10 Dec. In November, there was 1 W at Brighton Marina on the 23rd, whilst in December there were singles recorded at Goring, Bognor and Rye Hbr. There was one inland at Bewl Water on 9 Dec. [C Davis]

## Black-necked Grebe *Podiceps nigricollis*

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

Approximate minimum monthly totals were as follows:

| | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Monthly total | 4 | 1 | 16 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 4 | 3 | 1 |
| Average county total 2012-2021 | 3 | 3 | 6 | 9 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 3 |

One was at Rye Hbr in all months, already showing breeding plumage on 17 Feb, with possibly a second individual there on 27 Dec. One at Church Norton on 3 Jan increased to three on 14 Jan. Another was reported in summer plumage at Arlington Res on 11 Mar, followed by four at Pett Level and five in summer plumage at Brighton Marina on 16 Mar. Four were at Worthing and a total of three in summer plumage at Splash Point (Seaford) on 23 Mar. One was inland at Warnham LNR on 23 Apr.

A juvenile was at Worthing on 1 Oct and another, for the second year, on a farm reservoir near Yapton from 7 Oct, increasing to two (adult and juvenile) on 12 Oct and continuing to be reported there until 29 Nov when the juvenile was last seen. [C Davis]

## Stone-curlew *Burhinus oedicnemus*

***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. Schedule 1 species. Section 41.***

Stone-curlews were recorded in the four sites on the South Downs where they bred last year. As in previous years the Sussex Stone-curlew Project team worked with site managers making them aware of the locations of nest sites to give the birds the best chance of breeding successfully.

This year the first confirmed record was on 7 Mar. This was at the site where the ringed bird that was fledged locally in 2011 bred last year. However, there was a major disturbance incident at the site a week later and the birds disappeared. They were not seen again at this site in 2022. This was the first year since 2013 that the ringed individual was not positively identified.

At the site that has been occupied since 2015 there was a single bird present on 16 Apr. However, there was no sign of it a week later and despite return visits, including taping, it was not relocated.

At a third site that has been occupied since 2018 a single bird was sighted on 27 Apr. This was the only confirmed sighting this year but vocalisations were subsequently heard in the area. The pair

at this site have moved nest location every year and it is possible they bred but evaded detection.

At the final site, first known to be used in 2017, a pair was found with a nest on 10 May within a few metres of last year's nest. On the same day, about 750 metres away, a second pair was found with an active nest. The first pair successfully fledged one chick but the second pair had apparently lost theirs by 24 Jun. However, on 6 Aug the first juvenile, by now flying well, was joined by another youngster that was only very recently fledged. This suggests that either the second pair, despite appearances, had not lost their chick or else there was a third, undetected, pair in the area. The birds hung on at this site late into the year with a pair seen and another bird heard on 12 Dec.

In comparison to last year, 2022 was slightly disappointing with three of the known sites holding birds early in the season and then apparently being abandoned. However, it is possible that these birds simply relocated to new sites and remained present but undetected. It is certainly possible that more chicks were fledged than the two known from the fourth site. There was one further record from East Sussex on 14 Apr.

The Sussex Stone-curlew Project, actively supported by the RSPB and SOS, 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 still a long way to go before the recolonization 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 regulations that transpose the provisions of the EU Birds Directive, making it an offence to disturb or tape-lure birds without a licence. At this stage it is recommended that birdwatchers do not go out purposely attempting to find Stone-curlews in Sussex, however if birds are stumbled upon by accident please do pass the record on to the Project Team (contact: sussexstonecurlew@gmail.com). If sites are known and conservation measures can be implemented, the probability of successful breeding improves significantly. [RA Black, D Green]

## Oystercatcher *Haematopus ostralegus*

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

Oystercatchers were recorded in 111 (12%) tetrads during the year, compared to the 10-year average of 100. 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 | 2026 | 1095 | 1351 | 889 | 400 | 560 | 385 | 449 | 430 | 1172 | 1863 | 1535 |
| Chichester Hbr | 1530 | 550 | 878 | 526 | 166 | 370 | 52 | 88 | 101 | 861 | 1263 | 981 |
| Pagham Hbr | 61 | 184 | 67 | 67 | 53 | 63 | 58 | 89 | 52 | 82 | 187 | 87 |
| Rye Bay | 409 | 340 | 364 | 261 | 160 | 116 | 252 | 257 | 263 | 196 | 391 | 439 |
| Average county total 2012-2021 | 1553 | 1740 | 1192 | 800 | 535 | 501 | 677 | 1251 | 1221 | 1499 | 1763 | 1636 |

The monthly maxima roosting at Pilsey Island and Rye Hbr were often higher than the WeBS counts, particularly during the autumn, and these are shown below:

| | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Pilsey Island | 1100 | 1000 | 400 | 250 | 260 | 300 | 550 | 850 | 600 | 400 | 600 | 350 |
| Rye Hbr | 500 | 326 | 506 | 250 | 200 | 150 | 247 | 213 | 300 | 450 | 600 | 378 |

The highest counts away from the above sites were 70 at the Telscombe Cliffs high tide roost on 18 Jan and 40 at Cuckmere Haven on 3 Jan. Numbers along the West Sussex beaches were much lower than usual, with 29 at Littlehampton on 2 Mar the largest count.

The number of breeding pairs continues to increase slowly, with at least 84 this year. At Rye Hbr, about 40 pairs raised over 30 young and there were 24 pairs at Medmerry, a big increase on previous years. There were ten pairs at Pett Level, five at Pagham Hbr and one at Pilsey Sands (Chichester Hbr). There were no reports of the longstanding roof-nesting pair in Rye but a Shoreham pair was back for a 14th year on a roof in the town. A pair nested on the Osprey platform at Thorney Island and one of the two pairs at Arundel WWT chose the roof of the Sand Martin hide.

During the autumn and winter, the highest counts not in the above tables were 100 at Cuckmere Haven on 26 Oct, 97 at Fairlight on 8 Oct, 45 at Littlehampton on 14 Sep and 41 at Goring Gap on 12 Dec.

The only birds reported more than a few kilometres from the coast were singles at Pulborough Brooks from 25 Apr to 19 May and on 4 Dec, Arlington Res on 19 Aug, Storrington on the 28 Aug and Amberley Wild Brooks on 26 Nov. At Weir Wood Res, two were seen on 23 May and one on 4 Jul. [CJR Barfield]



*Oystercatcher, Rye Hbr, 9 June (Gary Faulkner)*



*Black-winged Stilts, by Jan Wilczur*

## Black-winged Stilt *Himantopus himantopus*

***Very scarce spring migrant. Bred in 2014 and 2021. Amber-listed species of medium conservation concern. Schedule 1 species.***

This former vagrant is now annual in spring with 2013 the last blank year in Sussex. The sole record in 2022 was of a pair at Down Level (Pevensey) from 21 to 23 May (CF Ball *et al.*).

The county total moves on to approximately 63, of which most (43) have been this century. [P James]

## Avocet *Recurvirostra avosetta*

***Scarce winter visitor and passage migrant; scarce and localised breeder. Amber-listed species of medium conservation concern. Schedule 1 species.***

Avocets were recorded in 49 (5.1%) tetrads during the year. The monthly WeBS totals at the principal sites were as follows:

| | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| County total | 100 | 76 | 129 | 115 | 69 | 99 | 10 | 12 | 2 | - | 50 | 75 |
| Chichester Hbr | 70 | 32 | 41 | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | 47 | 48 |
| Pagham Hbr | 30 | 29 | 3 | 4 | 10 | 1 | 1 | - | - | - | 3 | 26 |
| Rye Bay | - | 15 | 81 | 105 | 55 | 94 | 9 | 12 | 2 | - | - | - |
| Average county total 2012-2021 | 44 | 63 | 97 | 83 | 109 | 98 | 20 | 8 | 4 | 10 | 41 | 41 |

As in recent years, there was a large wintering flock in Pagham Hbr during the first two months, with a maximum of 68 on 9 Feb, declining rapidly later that month. Birds were noted at several sites in Chichester Hbr, where a regular high tide roost at Thorney Deeps held a maximum of 40 on 23 Feb. Elsewhere there was one at Newhaven Tide Mills on 29 Jan, four at Camber on 5 Feb with ten there on 15 Feb, and one at Cuckmere Haven on the 11 Feb. At Pulborough Brooks, in January, there were two on the 1st and singles on the 2nd and 9th.

Birds started arriving in breeding areas from late February but as usual only light offshore spring passage was noted with 6 E at Birling Gap on 28 Mar the highest day count. In spring, there were singles at Cuckmere Haven from 5 until 17 Mar, on the lower R Adur on 26 Mar and at Arlington Res on 27 Apr.

The county breeding population has declined slightly in recent years from a peak of 122 in 2017, with a total of at least 86 pairs this year, but Avocets still seem to be slowly spreading into new sites. Rye Hbr held about 50 pairs, with over 30 fledglings seen, and there were at least 18 pairs at Pett Level but no successful nests. In West Sussex two pairs fledged one young at Pulborough Brooks, 13 pairs fledged six at Medmerry and three pairs fledged two at Snowhill Marsh (Chichester Hbr) though Carrion Crows were seen predating chicks at the former two sites. There were birds present throughout the year at Sidlesham Ferry Pool but none bred.

In the last two months, Pagham Hbr held a maximum of 28 on 19 Dec and a flock again roosted at Thorney Deeps, with a maximum of 48 on 9 Dec. Elsewhere, there was one at Rye Hbr from 19 Nov to 14 Dec (with four on the 13th) and two at Camber on 29 Dec. On 20 Nov, six were recorded at Climping and presumably the same birds passed Selsey Bill later going west. There was also one at Newhaven Tide Mills on 20 and 29 Dec. [CJR Barfield]

## Lapwing *Vanellus vanellus*

***Scarce or fairly common resident and very common winter visitor. Red-listed species of high conservation concern. Section 41.***

Lapwings were recorded in 188 tetrads which is above the 10-year average of 175 (range 157 to 220). 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 | 17,657 | 2498 | 271 | 170 | 100 | 374 | 284 | 410 | 969 | 1886 | 7634 | 5787 |
| Chichester Hbr | 1642 | 154 | 43 | 27 | 21 | 41 | 5 | 28 | 267 | 164 | 948 | 159 |
| Medmerry | 186 | - | 3 | - | 2 | - | 1 | - | 11 | 58 | 299 | 1507 |
| Pagham Hbr | 2840 | 300 | 7 | 4 | 3 | 56 | 106 | - | 58 | 75 | 720 | 154 |
| Arun Valley N of Arundel | 2203 | nc | 59 | 45 | 49 | 24 | 13 | - | 126 | 347 | 1497 | 78 |
| Rye Bay | 8838 | 1329 | 104 | 65 | 4 | 177 | 51 | 254 | 309 | 894 | 3200 | 2162 |
| Average county total 2012-2021 | 10,662 | 9579 | 847 | 191 | 154 | 302 | 565 | 979 | 871 | 2486 | 5693 | 10,122 |

Although the December 2021 WeBS county total of 8989 had been below average, the January 2022 count was extraordinarily high at 17,657 mainly due to large numbers in the Rye Bay area comprising counts of 3400 at Newenden, 2500 at Scotney GP and 2938 others distributed elsewhere. A count of 2840 at Pagham Hbr was also significant. The last time a monthly WeBS total was higher was January 2006 when it was 20,806. Other places with sizeable flocks in the early weeks of the year were Thorney Deeps, Amberley Wild Brooks, R Adur, R Ouse and Pevensey Levels. By the February count, most had left and there were initial signs of breeding with a pair on Ashdown Forest on the 28th.

The results of the BTO/RSPB Breeding Waders of Wet Meadows 2021-2022 survey are shown on page 248. The first report of display was at Thorney Deeps on 3 Mar, the first nest was at Pulborough Brooks on 18 Mar and the first chick, also there, was on 16 Apr. Fledging data comprised: nine young produced by ten pairs at Pulborough Brooks; no young from six pairs at Amberley Wild Brooks; about two young from eight or nine pairs at Rye Hbr. The number of fledged young is low and the absence of fledging reports from other areas suggests a very poor year. The last birds still on their nests were on 3 Jun at Pagham Hbr and 4 Jun in Combe Valley CP.

As summer progressed, post-breeding gatherings built up, notably 145 at Pett Level on 27 Jun. In August, Weir Wood Res and Barcombe Res had 43 and 67 respectively which are sizeable counts for inland sites in this month. In West Sussex, the first three-figure flocks were not until 8 Sep with 112 at Pagham Hbr and then 177 at Thorney Deeps on 10 Sep. At Scotney GP, there were 400 on 9 Oct and 2000 on 13 Nov, the first four-figure count of the second half of the year. The December WeBS count was low though on other dates in the month, sizeable reports included 1500 at Thorney Deeps and 1370 at Pevensey Levels on the 24th, 1500 at Amberley Wild Brooks on the 26th, 1000 at Lewes Brooks on the 28th and 2000 at Pagham Hbr on the 29th. [PK Holland]

## Golden Plover *Pluvialis apricaria*

***Common winter visitor and passage migrant; rare in summer.***

Golden Plover was reported from 60 tetrads (6.2%) this year. The 10-year average is 48 with a range of 31- 63, showing how widely-distributed this species can be in years with cold weather movements. 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 | 4765 | 133 | 100 | - | - | - | - | 35 | 18 | 118 | 6566 | 3009 |
| Chichester Hbr | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | 30 | 1011 | 137 |
| Medmerry | 910 | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | 70 | 750 | 770 |
| Pagham Hbr | 200 | 35 | - | - | - | - | - | 10 | 5 | 13 | 800 | - |
| Rye Bay | 3655 | 98 | 100 | - | - | - | - | 25 | 13 | 5 | 4004 | 2030 |
| Average county total 2012-2021 | 1474 | 1636 | 486 | 17 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 68 | 150 | 945 | 2009 | 1377 |

In general, winter numbers at both ends of the year were well above average, particularly in West Sussex, where they were the highest for some years. The table below shows the maximum monthly counts from all sources at three sites.

| | Jan | Feb | Mar | | Oct | Nov | Dec |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Pagham Hbr | 1200 | 800 | 1000 | | 120 | 2000 | 2000 |
| Medmerry | 910 | - | 100 | | 150 | 750 | 700 |
| Rye Bay | 3000 | 2000 | 700 | | 2000 | 2000 | 2000 |

In the first three months, almost all records came from Rye Bay and the western harbours, except for regular reports from Pulborough Brooks of one to five (with 16 on 9 Feb), and 500 moving west off Selsey Bill on 16 Feb, a site record. During April up to five remained at Rye Hbr and six at Pagham Hbr, and there were further reports from Selsey Bill of birds on the move, the largest being 50 flying north on the 10th.

The last spring record was of one at Rye Hbr on 30 Apr, followed by a long gap until three there on 29 May, perhaps early returning non-breeders. Another long gap followed until 30 were recorded at Pagham Hbr on 18 Jul, but there were no further records until one at Pett Level on 11 Aug. The autumn saw numbers build gradually at the main sites, but there were only a few sightings of one or two elsewhere, by far the largest party being 20 at West Rise Marsh (Eastbourne) on 10 Oct.

The last two months were marked by good counts at the regular sites, but also by some significant cold weather movements. There was a flurry in mid-November, when 80 were recorded at Pulborough Brooks on the 8th, 105 flew south at Weir Wood Res on the 13th, and birds were sound recorded overnight at Storrington and Eastbourne. In early December there were up to 12 on Worthing Beach and 75 flew south at Amberley Wild Brooks on the 7th. Heavy snowfall on the 11th resulted in a much more widespread movement, with birds recorded across the county, including 250 in fields at Goring Gap, 200 at Sompting, 80 E at Iford Brooks and 59 S at Barcombe. There were further widespread sightings until the end of the month, including 30 at Petworth on the 20th and 56 at Horse Eye Level (Pevensey Levels) on the 24th. [CJR Barfield]

## Grey Plover *Pluvialis squatarola*

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

Grey Plovers were reported from 49 tetrads this year, which is exactly the 10-year average, reflecting a highly site-faithful winter population. 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 | 1177 | 603 | 893 | 117 | 16 | 7 | 11 | 18 | 199 | 363 | 1603 | 789 |
| Chichester Hbr | 808 | 219 | 305 | 6 | - | - | - | - | 144 | 181 | 1109 | 640 |
| Pagham Hbr | 308 | 308 | 568 | 104 | 16 | 7 | 10 | 18 | 54 | 114 | 423 | 91 |
| Average county total 2012-2021 | 1630 | 1297 | 950 | 173 | 60 | 38 | 53 | 250 | 346 | 615 | 1201 | 1503 |

In addition to the WeBS figures there were 400 at Pagham Hbr on 3 Jan, and the WeBS count of 577 at Chidham (Chichester Hbr) on the 1st was the largest count of the year. Along the western beaches, the highest counts in the first winter period were 63 at Climping on 18 Jan and 32 at Worthing on 9 Feb. In East Sussex, the highest counts were 100 at Rye Hbr on 28 Feb and six at Pett Level on 3 Jan.

Offshore spring passage was light as usual, the peak counts were 20 E at Birling Gap and 27 E at Selsey Bill, both on 8 May.

There were only five records in June, involving up to seven in Pagham Hbr and two at Rye Hbr. In July there were up to 23 in Pagham Hbr, the only other records being singles at Rye Hbr and Pett Level. During autumn passage 50 in Pagham Hbr on 28 Aug was the highest count anywhere that month and 200 roosted at Thorney Island on 11 Sep.

In the last two months, in addition to WeBS there were 200 at Pagham Hbr on 1 and 3 Dec, and the highest count in Chichester Hbr was 562 at Rookwood (West Wittering) on 26 Nov. Good counts on West Sussex beaches included 90 at Climping on 24 Dec and 40 at Goring Gap on the 1st whilst the maximum at Rye Hbr was 29 on 19 Nov and at Pett Level, eight on the 14th. One or two lingered at Cuckmere Haven from 25 Sep to 14 Oct.

Inland, there were two intriguing records from Petworth of two heard on 13 Nov and one seen on 20 Dec, and Pulborough Brooks hosted singles on 1 Nov and 21 Dec. [CJR Barfield]



*Ringed Plover, Cuckmere Haven, 19 August (Gary Faulkner)*

## Ringed Plover *Charadrius hiaticula*

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

Ringed Plovers were recorded in 73 tetrads (7.6%) during the year, compared with the 10-year average of 61. 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 | 109 | 75 | 122 | 54 | 210 | 36 | 28 | 26 | 400 | 212 | 219 | 212 |
| Chichester Hbr | 44 | 18 | 107 | 32 | 157 | 18 | 2 | 2 | 326 | 75 | 54 | 151 |
| Medmerry | - | - | - | - | 10 | - | 8 | - | - | 30 | 87 | 3 |
| Pagham Hbr | - | 42 | 2 | 4 | 33 | 6 | 8 | 5 | - | 18 | 31 | 10 |
| Lower Ouse Valley | 27 | 6 | 3 | 1 | 7 | - | - | - | 1 | 12 | 10 | 34 |
| Rye Bay | 17 | 8 | 10 | 17 | - | 12 | 10 | 1 | 33 | 71 | 37 | 6 |
| Average county total 2012-2021 | 176 | 181 | 99 | 75 | 185 | 46 | 53 | 564 | 316 | 136 | 150 | 151 |

At Pagham and Rye Harbours there were considerably higher non-WeBS counts in many of the months. The maximum counts from all sources at these two key sites are shown below.

| | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Pagham Hbr | 42 | 42 | 26 | 12 | 40 | 60 | 8 | 100 | 100 | 59 | 60 | 10 |
| Rye Hbr | 64 | 40 | 35 | 40 | 50 | 12 | 20 | 50 | 50 | 71 | 37 | 19 |

The highest counts elsewhere in the first winter period were 80 at Climping on 1 Jan and 36 at Lancing on 1 Feb.

A total of about 39 pairs bred, the lowest since 2012, with all but two on protected reserves. There were at least 20 pairs at Rye Hbr, nine at Pagham Hbr and seven at Medmerry, but a pair fledging two at Pilsey Island was the only breeding reported in Chichester Hbr. A pair at Climping raised two and the regular pair at Elmer Rocks (Middleton-on Sea) also nested, but the site at Brighton Marina has now been developed.

The autumn migration peak brought some good numbers in addition to the above tables, with 80 on the beach opposite Brooklands (Worthing) on 6 Sep, 70 on the R Adur (Shoreham) and 62 at Elmer Rocks on 24 Aug (with 60 there on 29 Oct). Also on the 24th 1050 were at Pilsey Island, the highest count there since August 2013.

In the second winter period there were no counts greater than in the tables, but the highest counts at other sites were 46 at Elmer Rocks on 20 Nov, 29 there on 8 Dec and regularly up to 25 at Goring Gap.

Inland, there was one at Arlington Res on 14 May, 31 Aug and 15 Sep, up to four at Pulborough Brooks from 17 Apr to 16 May, with singles on 12 Jul, 14 and 18 Aug. At Weir Wood Res, where low water levels made conditions attractive for waders, there were up to three from 18 to 26 May and up to four from 16 Aug to 6 Oct. [CJR Barfield]

## Little Ringed Plover *Charadrius dubius*

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

Little Ringed Plovers were recorded in 45 tetrads (4.7%) this year, the highest in the last ten years (average 28). The minimum monthly totals were as follows, with numbers well over the averages in all months.

| | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| No. of sites | 17 | 19 | 19 | 14 | 14 | 12 | 3 |
| No. of birds | 39 | 52 | 54 | 41 | 57 | 30 | 11 |
| Average county total 2012-2021 | 15 | 30 | 23 | 26 | 37 | 21 | 8 |

The first to arrive were two at Medmerry on 12 Mar, a day earlier than the 10-year average, followed by singles at Weir Wood Res on the 14th and Pulborough Brooks on the 16th.

Breeding was confirmed at seven traditional sites and possible at another four, involving a record total of at least 17 pairs. Pairs at the Breech Pool (Pagham Hbr), Gatwick Airport and Weir Wood Res all raised three young, and there were two pairs at Medmerry and Pulborough Brooks, with at least one young seen at both sites. There were six pairs at Rye Hbr, again with at least one young seen, but four pairs at Pett Level all failed. Records from Tillington Res (Petworth), Warnham LNR, West Chiltington and Scotney GP suggested attempted breeding.

There was evidence of post-breeding dispersal from early July, with ten at both Rye Hbr and Weir Wood Res on the 7th and a remarkable 13 at Sidlesham Ferry Pool on the 12th. All September records, bar one, came from Rye Hbr and Pulborough Brooks, where up to six and four respectively lingered until the 15th. The last bird was recorded at Climping on the 23rd, three days later than the 10-year average. [CJR Barfield]

## Kentish Plover *Charadrius alexandrinus*

***Very scarce spring and autumn passage migrant; formerly bred. Schedule 1 species.***

One made appearances on Camber Sands on the evenings of 22 and 23 Apr (SJ Message). Having been accepted by BBRC, this is the 36th Sussex record since the turn of the millennium. [DK Campbell]

## Dotterel *Charadrius morinellus*

***Very scarce spring and autumn passage migrant; one winter record. Red-listed species of high conservation concern. Schedule 1 species.***

After a blank year in 2021, there were two records in 2022. One flew west at Francis Bottom (Beachy Head) on 16 Aug (A Redman) and one flew east calling over Waterhall (Brighton) on 7 Sep (CA Holt). The county total this century moves on to 91. [P James]

## Eurasian Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus*

***Common passage migrant; very scarce non-breeding summering and wintering species. Red-listed species of high conservation concern. Schedule 1 species.***

Whimbrel were reported from 65 tetrads (6.8%) during the year, compared to a 10-year average of 62 (range 50-75). The WeBS counts from the principal sites were as follows.

| | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| County total | 5 | 1 | 2 | 27 | 24 | 7 | 13 | 67 | 28 | 5 | 6 | - |
| Chichester Hbr | 4 | - | 1 | - | 14 | 1 | 2 | 54 | 27 | 4 | 6 | - |
| Pagham Hbr | 1 | 1 | 1 | 17 | 9 | 1 | 4 | 2 | - | - | - | - |
| Average county total 2012- 2021 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 42 | 74 | 7 | 69 | 79 | 17 | 4 | 3 | 1 |

There were many reports of the wintering bird at Church Norton from 2021, which remained until at least the end of March. In Chichester Hbr two were at both Bosham and Pilsey Island during the WeBS on 1 Jan with one at Chidham on the 21st and one at Rye Hbr on the 31st.

The first notable influx was five in Pagham Hbr on 18 Mar and the first obvious migrants were two flying high NE at Elmer Rocks (Middleton-on-Sea) on the 21st, but passage in earnest began on 11 Apr. Numbers at Pagham Hbr peaked at 30 on 30 Apr, with the same at Itchenor on the 25th, and the occasional one or two were noted passing overhead well inland, by far the largest party was 25 NE at Barcombe on 23 Apr. At Pulborough Brooks, one or two were noted from 12 Apr to 15 May. The monthly totals of eastbound birds at the main seawatching sites are shown below.

| | Apr | May | Peak movement |
|---|---|---|---|
| Selsey Bill | 486 | 129 | 132 on 26 Apr (12 hr) |
| Worthing & Goring | 468 | 165 | 116 on 11 Apr (6 hr) |
| Splash Point (Seaford) | 461 | 64 | 192 on 26 Apr (3 hr) |
| Birling Gap | 469 | 84 | 150 on 26 Apr (3 hr) |

In June there were only 11 records of birds on the ground, with a maximum of five at Rye Hbr on the 19th, and one heard on nocturnal migration on 30 Jun at Troutbeck (Eridge).

Autumn migration generally only involved small numbers, the highest counts coming from Chichester Hbr, with 38 at Pilsey Island on 26 Jul and 40 on 12 Aug. The highest count of birds stopping off elsewhere was 16 at Cuckmere Haven on the 13 Aug. The last double-figure count was ten at Church Norton on 1 Oct.

October records were nearly all of ones or twos in Pagham Hbr and occasionally in Chichester Hbr, with two at Pett Level on the 5th and one on the R Adur at Shoreham from the 10th to the 17th. In the last two months one or two were seen on just six dates in either Pagham or Chichester Harbours with four at Pilsey Island on 26 Nov. [CJR Barfield]



*Whimbrel, Cuckmere Haven, 19 August (Gary Faulkner)*

## Curlew *Numenius arquata*

***Common passage migrant and winter visitor; formerly a very scarce breeder. Red-listed species of high conservation concern. Section 41.***

Curlews were recorded in 86 (9%) of tetrads this year, similar to the 10-year average of 85. 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 | 942 | 821 | 479 | 40 | 167 | 131 | 296 | 966 | 1052 | 1224 | 1039 |
| Chichester Hbr | 1057 | 550 | 723 | 404 | 15 | 140 | 39 | 162 | 830 | 961 | 965 | 787 |
| Pagham Hbr | 168 | 111 | 41 | 27 | 22 | 4 | 28 | 54 | 34 | 35 | 128 | 147 |
| Rye Bay | 313 | 250 | 37 | 33 | 3 | 23 | 46 | 70 | 76 | 46 | 35 | 52 |
| Average county total 2012-2021 | 1401 | 1401 | 1264 | 361 | 54 | 170 | 951 | 1236 | 1435 | 1228 | 1280 | 1364 |

The January county total was the highest since 2016, but most other months showed a decrease, continuing the 10-year downward trend illustrated in the 2020 Report. In the first two months there were no counts higher than in the table, but elsewhere there were again good numbers at Cuckmere Haven and Newhaven Tide Mills, with maximum counts of 60 on 3 Jan and 48 on the 30th respectively. During March, there were maximum non-WeBS counts of 96 at Pett Level on the 2nd and 120 at Pagham Hbr on the 14th. Spring seawatchers recorded only small numbers as usual, with a maximum day total of 14 E past Splash Point (Seaford) on 8 Mar.

This year was the first of a five-year Curlew 'headstarting' project organised by the Norfolk Estate and GWCT. A total of 37 birds hatched from eggs taken from vulnerable clutches in the north of England were raised on the estate near Arundel and released in July. It is hoped that at least some will return to breed in the area (Curlew regularly bred on Ashdown Forest up to 1990). Released birds are ringed and are fitted with a numbered yellow leg flag. One of the released birds was recorded in the lower R Adur from 18 Jul to 3 Aug, and three (X8, N3 and P8) were noted in the Pagham Hbr/Medmerry area from 6 Aug to 3 Sep. Observers are asked to send in any sightings, including the flag number if possible.

During the autumn migration peak there were counts significantly higher than the WeBS with 500 at Thorney Deeps on 15 Jul and 750 there on 13 Aug, but numbers were still down on the average, resulting in Chichester Hbr falling short of the numbers required to qualify this year as a site of national importance for Curlew.

In the last two months there were 108 at Rye Hbr on 17 Nov and 300 in the area on 29 Dec, considerably more than found during the WeBS. At Newhaven Tide Mills the maximum was 75 on 13 Nov and at Cuckmere Haven 45 on 15 Dec.

Inland, singles were noted at Alfriston on 17 Apr, the Knepp Estate on 2 Jul, Ashdown Forest on 25 Jul, Amberley Wild Brooks on 24 Aug, and at Pulborough Brooks occasionally between 5 Mar and 28 Oct, with two on 21 Apr. [CJR Barfield]

## Bar-tailed Godwit *Limosa lapponica*

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

Records were received from 41 tetrads (3.9%), two down on 2021, with most coming from established coastal and seawatching locations. Excluding passage migrants, the great majority of birds were recorded at Chichester Hbr as indicated by the monthly WeBS counts:

| | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| County total | 154 | 276 | 25 | 2 | 23 | - | 8 | - | 56 | 13 | 32 | 169 |
| Chichester Hbr | 152 | 268 | 22 | 2 | 6 | - | 8 | - | 54 | 13 | 30 | 169 |
| Average county total 2012-2021 | 490 | 482 | 235 | 45 | 55 | 14 | 22 | 54 | 41 | 119 | 245 | 378 |

During the first winter period, they were recorded on land at only four sites. The highest counts came from Chichester Hbr which hosted 152 on 1 Jan and 200 on 19 Feb. Otherwise only at Pagham Hbr were double-figure counts found with the peak of 60 on 21 Mar. Records elsewhere included one at Cuckmere Haven from 5 to 14 Jan, and up to three intermittently at Rye Hbr from 1 Jan to 22 Mar.

From late March, the focus shifted to seawatching sites. Taking the highest site count on a day as the minimum passage figure for that day, spring migration totalled 2688, all but 10 flying east. This was well above the ten-year average of 1,485. The following table gives the monthly totals at three of the main sites, the computed total from all sites and the ten-year average figures:

| | March | April | May |
|---|---|---|---|
| Selsey Bill | 9 | 735 | 137 |
| Worthing & Goring | - | 390 | 422 |
| Splash Point (Seaford) | - | 611 | 73 |
| Birling Gap | - | 1703 | 131 |
| All 2022 seawatching records | 9 | 2224 | 455 |
| Average county total 2012-2021 | 32 | 1078 | 373 |

Most spring passage occurred from 21 Apr to 2 May. The highest day count was 1001 E at Birling Gap in 5 hr on 21 Apr. Steady but less spectacular numbers were recorded at the main sites and other coastal locations such as Elmer Rocks (Middleton-on-Sea), Climping Gap and Ovingdean.

Most records on land in April and May came from established coastal sites. Peak counts included 33 at Medmerry on 22 Apr, 80 in Pagham Hbr on 23 Apr, 76 at Rye Hbr on 26 Apr, and 67 in Chichester Hbr on 3 May. Smaller numbers were recorded at other coastal locations including the R Adur, Widewater (Lancing), Cuckmere Haven and Pett Level. Inland one was at Frog Firle (Alfriston) on 17 Apr and at Petworth on 27 Apr.

During June up to 17 were at Pagham Hbr on six days, and one at Rye Hbr on the 5th and in July there were eight in Chichester Hbr on the 15th, six at Rye Hbr on the 26th and one at Pagham Hbr on the 28th. August numbers were low with the only double-figure count being 12 at Cuckmere Haven on the 26th. There was a modest increase in September when 54 were in Chichester Hbr on the 10th and 30 at Scotney GP on the 26th.

The second-winter period was unexceptional. Single birds were recorded in October on the R Adur, Climping Gap and Weir Wood Res; otherwise all records came from Chichester Hbr, Medmerry, Pagham Hbr and Rye Hbr. Only Chichester Hbr produced double-figure, or more, counts with a maximum of 242 on 5 Dec. [MC Daniel]

## 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. Schedule 1 species. Section 41.***

Records came from 62 tetrads (5.9%) compared to 57 in 2021, but the great majority of birds were recorded at Chichester Hbr, Pagham Hbr and Pulborough Brooks. The 1% threshold for the species being present at a nationally important level is 390 and was exceeded at all three sites. The monthly WeBS counts at the three sites are shown below:

| | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| County total | 417 | 367 | 746 | 366 | 67 | 39 | 31 | 66 | 799 | 1185 | 969 | 721 |
| Chichester Hbr | 410 | 213 | 576 | 263 | 42 | 6 | - | 30 | 654 | 1016 | 320 | 640 |
| Pagham Hbr | 2 | 154 | 164 | 95 | 19 | - | 19 | 5 | 100 | 68 | 237 | 52 |
| Arun Valley N of Arundel | 4 | nc | - | 3 | - | - | 4 | - | 27 | 15 | 412 | 21 |
| Average county total 2012-2021 | 784 | 574 | 421 | 185 | 50 | 46 | 89 | 245 | 265 | 585 | 688 | 854 |

Numbers at the start of the first winter period were high, with 800 counted at Pagham Hbr and 600 at Pulborough Brooks on 1 Jan. Birds often commute between these two sites but the counts took place at about the same time, indicating a total of 1400. Up to mid-January, most were seen at Pulborough Brooks and the nearby Amberley Wild Brooks. Thereafter, numbers in the Arun Valley fell and the highest counts came from Pagham Hbr with a maximum of 500 on 12 Mar, and Chichester Hbr with 576 on 4 Mar. One or two short-staying individuals were noted at seven other locations during the quarter.

In April, the only significant numbers were at Chichester and Pagham Harbours where peak counts were 263 on 2 Apr and 100 on 9 Apr respectively. The flock at Pagham Hbr increased to 150 by 12 May and elsewhere peak counts were of 62 at Pett Level on 19 May, 60 at Thorney Deeps on 1 Jun and 35 at Rye Hbr on 1 May.

Up to 100 were at Pagham Hbr throughout the third quarter. However, from late August most were in Chichester Hbr where 208 were counted on 28 Aug and 654 on 10 Sep. They were seen at 18 sites during the quarter, a notable record being 26 at West Chiltington on 21 Aug.

Chichester Hbr remained the main location at the start of the second winter period where 1016 were counted on 8 Oct. However, from November, the focus shifted to Pulborough Brooks where counts of 1000 were made on 14 and 27 Nov with 1200 on 3 Dec. A total of 1000 at Amberley Wild Brooks on 27 Nov almost certainly refers to the same birds while counts of 500 at Pagham Hbr on 23 Nov and 29 Dec both coincided with lower numbers at Pulborough Brooks, as did the count of 640 at Chichester Hbr on 10 Dec.

Few are recorded on seawatches; the only observation being 30 E at Splash Point (Seaford) on 17 May and at Selsey Bill 1 W on 3 Aug, 9 E on 10 Sep and 1 W on 5 Nov. [MC Daniel]

## Turnstone *Arenaria interpres*

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

Turnstones were recorded in 77 tetrads (8.0%), above the 10-year average of 73. The monthly WeBS counts at the principal sites were as below.

| | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| County total | 262 | 246 | 285 | 179 | 22 | 11 | 20 | 28 | 247 | 153 | 308 | 402 |
| Chichester Hbr | 182 | 67 | 145 | 60 | 18 | - | 2 | 4 | 46 | 50 | 186 | 345 |
| Pagham Hbr | 11 | 63 | 32 | 22 | - | 11 | 9 | 12 | 39 | 7 | 42 | 25 |
| Lower Adur Valley | 18 | 40 | 54 | 14 | nc | nc | nc | - | 63 | 20 | 2 | 6 |
| Bexhill Glyne Gap | 16 | 1 | 26 | nc | nc | nc | nc | nc | 45 | 18 | 5 | 3 |
| Rye Bay | 26 | 6 | 9 | 56 | 3 | - | 7 | 3 | 31 | 11 | 45 | 7 |
| Average county total 2012-2021 | 501 | 485 | 463 | 167 | 56 | 12 | 47 | 168 | 257 | 315 | 375 | 407 |

The numbers at the end of 2021 had been low and this remained so into January. The highest numbers reported in January, additional to the WeBS, were 121 at Climping on the 12th, 100 at

Fishbourne on the 28th, 80 at Pagham Hbr on the 1st, 80 at Rustington on the 11th, 75 at Dell Quay on the 24th and 25 at Rye Hbr on the 23rd. Later in the first winter period the maximum was 205 at Elmer Rocks (Middleton-on-Sea) on 17 Mar, the highest ever seen there. Between 50 and 100 were regularly seen from Worthing to Littlehampton with a maximum of 110 at Goring Gap on 28 Feb.

Only at Selsey Bill were any notable spring movements recorded with 176 E and 2 W during April and 53 E and 4 W in May; the peak of 60 E on 17 Apr. In May the largest count was 47 at Rye Hbr on the 11th.

At Pagham Hbr there were 31 on 2 Jul, a high count of mid-summer non-breeders. By 22 Jul there were 40 on the beach at Selsey Bill and 23 on the R Adur. In August, 55 were at Goring Gap on the 21st and 25 at Pett Level on the 24th. By 9 Sep, 87 were at Goring Gap and fairly evenly distributed along the coast as seen in the WeBS table for September. The highest count in October was 71 at Goring Gap on the 4th.

High counts in November were 160 at Littlehampton on the 25th, 134 at Pagham Hbr on the 27th and 80 at Rustington on the 22nd, whilst in December the largest counts were 210 at West Chidham (Chichester Hbr) on the 10th and 87 at Climping on the 24th. In East Sussex during this period, the highest count was 37 at Rye Hbr on 13 Nov. Overall numbers appeared to be up to the average seen over the last decade.

The only inland records were three at Pulborough Brooks on 11 May, one at Weir Wood Res on 31 Aug and another on 14 Sep. [PK Holland]



*Turnstone, Rye Hbr, 9 May (Barry Yates)*

## Knot *Calidris canutus*

***Fairly common winter visitor and scarce to fairly common passage migrant. Rare away from coast. 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 | 533 | 716 | 21 | - | 27 | - | 4 | 6 | 12 | 16 | 927 | 185 |
| Chichester Hbr | 30 | 401 | 10 | - | - | - | - | - | 11 | - | 850 | 185 |
| Pagham Hbr | 500 | 306 | 7 | - | 27 | - | 4 | 5 | 1 | 16 | 75 | - |
| Average county total 2012-2021 | 1063 | 1687 | 425 | 9 | 13 | - | 1 | 11 | 25 | 20 | 365 | 1245 |

In addition to the WeBS counts, on 1 Jan there were 1200 at Pagham Hbr; the highest count since 2018 when the same number were reported at Pilsey Island (Chichester Hbr) on 6 Jan. Numbers reported for the rest of the first winter period were fewer, with 500 at Pagham Hbr on 23 Jan and 400 at Pilsey Island on 19 Feb and the maximum at Rye Hbr was 35. The maximum anywhere during March was 100 on the 19th at Pagham Hbr.

Little coastal movement was noted except at Splash Point (Seaford) where there were 30 E on 22 Apr, 25 on the 27th and 80 E on 9 May. From then until August there were few records; 15 at Pagham Hbr on 27 Jun was the most notable. One was reported at Rye Hbr on three dates in June and July and one was at Southwick in breeding plumage on 9 Jun. Two juveniles appeared at Rye Hbr on 20 Aug and 12 were reported at Pilsey Island on the 24th.

The first three-figure flock in autumn and second winter period was 120 at Pagham Hbr on 15 Nov, then 200 at West Chidham (Chichester Hbr) on the 23rd and 650 at Pilsey Island on the 26th. In December there were 170 at West Chidham on the 10th and 435 at Pagham Hbr on the 29th. The largest count in East Sussex was 12 at Newhaven Tide Mills on 16 Dec. There were no inland reports. [PK Holland]

## Ruff *Calidris pugnax*

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

The maximum monthly totals from all sources at the main sites were as follows:

| | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| County total | 33 | 31 | 15 | 6 | 10 | 1 | 12 | 13 | 34 | 23 | 12 | 24 |
| Arun Valley N of Arundel | 7 | 6 | 6 | 1 | - | - | 2 | 5 | 6 | 6 | 2 | 2 |
| Rye Bay | 25 | 25 | 7 | 4 | 10 | 1 | 7 | 6 | 21 | 8 | 10 | 16 |
| Average county total 2012-2021 | 40 | 51 | 44 | 14 | 6 | 1 | 7 | 17 | 28 | 27 | 28 | 31 |

In the first three months Pett Level held the most birds, with up to 25 on 20 Jan and 7 Feb, up to seven at Scotney GP on 23 Jan and at Rye Hbr the maximum was six on 20 and 22 Mar. The only records at sites not in the table were one at Horse Eye Level (Pevensey Levels) on 3 Jan and two at Donnington (Chichester) on 29 and 30 Mar. During April there was one at Combe Valley CP on the 25th. The last May sighting was at Rye Hbr on the 20th.

The first returning bird was seen at Rye Hbr on 23 Jun, followed by a trickle of migrants in July and August, all at Rye Hbr and Pulborough Brooks apart from one at Weir Wood Res on 3 Jul. September brought higher numbers and a wider distribution, including 21 at Rye Hbr on the 20th, one at Pagham Hbr on the 25th, two at Thorney Deeps on the 21st and three at West Chidham on

the 10th. At Weir Wood Res, low water levels attracted birds from the 14th through to 10 Oct, with three from 29 Sep to 8 Oct.

In the second winter period Pett Level again held most, with a maximum of 15 on 24 Dec, though there were 16 at Rye Hbr on the 29th. The only sightings away from the main sites were four at The Midrips on 12 Nov, five at Iford Brooks on 11 Dec and one at Horse Eye Level on 24 Dec. [CJR Barfield]

## Curlew Sandpiper *Calidris ferruginea*

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

The number of Curlew Sandpipers can vary greatly from year to year. The estimated minimum monthly totals below indicate an above average year with an exceptionally high count in September:

| | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| No. of birds | - | 6 | 3 | 4 | 14 | 64 | 10 | - |
| Average county total 2012-2021 | 1 | 5 | 1 | 3 | 14 | 17 | 4 | <1 |

There were eight spring records with none reported in April and the first being seen at Pagham Hbr on 6 May, closely followed by two at Cuckmere Haven on 8 May.

One was at Rye Hbr on 23 and 24 Jun, but the first undoubted returning birds were in July with one at Pagham Hbr on the 17th followed by one at Rye Hbr on the 21st. The peak time for Curlew Sandpiper sightings is usually from mid-August to late September when the passage of juveniles reaches its maximum. Counts at this time were exceptional in 2022 with 14 in August dramatically rising to an estimated 64 in September when the largest counts were both in Chichester Hbr with 11 at Itchenor on 5 Sep and 13 at Pilsey Island on 29 Sep.

Inland during September, one was at Pulborough Brooks from the 2nd to the 6th, three were at Weir Wood Res from the 6th to 11th and two were there on the 17th. There were ten records in October, the highest count being four at Pagham Hbr from the 1st to 4th and the last for the year being two at Thorney Island on the 25th. [C Davis]

## Temminck's Stint *Calidris temminckii*

***Very scarce spring and autumn passage migrant. Schedule 1 species.***

Three were recorded in 2022: an adult photographed at Pulborough Brooks on 4 May (A Baker, W Buckthorpe), a long-staying adult at Sidlesham Ferry Pool from 8 to 17 Aug (BF Forbes, D Mason *et al.*) and one at Weir Wood Res on 14 and 15 Sep (A Gray *et al.*). The county total this century moves on to 57. [P James]

## Sanderling *Calidris alba*

***Fairly common winter visitor and passage migrant. Rare away from coast. Amber-listed species of medium conservation concern.***

There were c.75 in Chichester Hbr in early January, 100 at Rustington on 10 Jan and 100 at Rye Hbr on 28 Feb. Reports of 50 to 120 at sites along the coast between Worthing and Littlehampton culminated in c.200 on 28 Feb at Goring Gap, which was the largest count in the first winter period.

In April there were 90 at Pilsey Sands on the 4th, increasing to 200 by 13 May. Elsewhere there were reports of between one and 30. The only inland record for the whole year was one at Weir Wood Res on 11 May.

Spring coastal movements were moderate: the combined seawatch logs produced a total of 356 E in April and May with a peak of 42 E at Worthing on 9 May. After 104 at Pilsey Sands on 1 Jun and six at Elmer Rocks (Middleton-on-Sea) on 11 Jun there were no reports until 5 Jul when 14 were at Pagham Hbr (non-breeders or extremely early returning breeders). Then 108 were at Pilsey Sands on 22 Jul and 210 there on 23 Aug as more passed through. Few were recorded in September with a maximum of 30 at Thorney Island on the 30th. Wintering birds increased to 200 by 28 Oct on Pilsey Sands.

High counts in the second winter period were 140 at Goring Gap on 18 Nov, 120 at Rustington on the 20th to 22nd, 120 at East Head on the 26th and 100 on the beach at Goring Gap on 20 Dec. In East Sussex during this period Sanderlings were only reported from Rye Hbr with a peak of 42 on 26 Nov. [PK Holland]



*Sanderling, West Wittering, 28 September, (Gary Faulkner)*

## Dunlin *Calidris alpina*

***Very common passage migrant and winter visitor; scarce away from estuaries; scarce non-breeder in summer. 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 | 5750 | 6971 | 2501 | 83 | 354 | 6 | 85 | 117 | 228 | 1747 | 9583 | 8340 |
| Chichester Hbr | 5220 | 4543 | 2153 | 33 | 269 | 3 | - | - | 128 | 1227 | 7991 | 7183 |
| Pagham Hbr | - | 2145 | 196 | 37 | 56 | - | 61 | 82 | 64 | 377 | 1233 | 697 |
| Average county total 2012-2021 | 10749 | 8833 | 4700 | 296 | 530 | 32 | 396 | 849 | 526 | 2085 | 6042 | 9374 |

Totals were well below average for the second year in succession in all months except November. High counts in the first winter period not included in the above table were: 1000 at Church Norton on 3 Jan, 22 Jan and 24 Jan; 600 at Rye Hbr on 2 Jan; 250 at Pett Level on 16 Jan; and 170 at Goring Gap on 9 Feb.

Dunlin were present in every month of the year at Rye Hbr, Cuckmere Haven, Pagham Hbr and Pilsey Island (Chichester Hbr). During spring, the highest counts were all in May with 202 at Pagham Hbr on the 11th, 60 at Rye Hbr also on the 11th and 180 at Pilsey Island on the 13th. Between March and May a total of 204 were noted flying east at seawatch sites with the largest daily movement being 30 E at Selsey Bill on 11 Apr.

During the return migration and second winter period, notable counts additional to the WeBS were of 2500 at Pilsey Island on 7 Nov, 1310 at Church Norton on 29 Dec, 500 at Medmerry on 22 Dec and 215 at Goring Gap on 29 Dec. The largest East Sussex count was of 250 at Rye Hbr on 29 Nov.

Dunlin were recorded at a number of inland sites, usually ones or twos, but in greater numbers at river valley sites, notably Pulborough Brooks with 13 on 12 May rising to 16 on the 14th, Weir Wood Res with seven on 22 Feb and at Iford Brooks where four were present on 11 Dec. [T Seabrook]



*Dunlin, Rye Hbr, 8 September (David Gardiner)*

## Purple Sandpiper *Calidris maritima*

***Scarce winter visitor and passage migrant, very rare in summer. Red-listed species of high conservation concern. Schedule 1 species.***

The estimated minimum monthly totals for the main sites, computed on the basis that the highest single day count at any site during that month was the minimum, were as follows:

| | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| County total | 25 | 9 | 17 | 12 | 24 | - | - | 3 | 5 | 4 | 8 | 28 |
| Newhaven | 3 | 8 | 10 | 7 | 17 | - | - | - | - | - | 5 | 10 |
| Brighton Marina | 15 | - | 3 | 4 | 5 | - | - | 2 | - | 2 | 1 | 15 |
| Shoreham Hbr | 2 | 1 | 1 | 1 | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | 1 |
| Medmerry/Selsey Bill | 1 | - | 3 | - | - | - | - | 1 | 4 | 2 | 1 | 2 |
| Average county total 2012-2021 | 22 | 16 | 12 | 11 | 6 | 0 | <1 | 0 | 1 | 3 | 17 | 21 |

The highest count during the first half of the year (and 2022) was 17 at Newhaven on 1 May, followed by 15 at Brighton Marina on 10 Jan. In January (and December), more were at Brighton Marina than Newhaven. Notable records away from the main sites included four at Cuckmere Haven on 3 Jan and two at Pett Level on 6 May. The last record for the first winter period was five at Brighton Marina on 18 May which is 17 days later than the 10-year average.

The first returning birds in the second half of the year were much earlier than usual with two at Brighton Marina on 13 Aug followed by one at Selsey Bill on 17 Aug; the 10-year average return date is 10 Oct. The highest count for this half of the year was 15 at Brighton Marina on 26 Dec. Away from the main roosting sites at Brighton and Newhaven, counts were all in single figures, notably including singles at Rye Hbr on 18 Sep, Goring on 16 Nov and Pagham Hbr on 29 Dec, with the highest total being four at Selsey Bill on 10 Sep. [C Davis]

## Little Stint *Calidris minuta*

***Scarce passage migrant; very scarce in winter.***

As in recent years, records came mainly from Medmerry, Pagham Hbr, and Rye Hbr with a total of 42, very similar to that in 2021 and in a similar monthly pattern compared with the long-term averages. None were recorded at Cuckmere Haven but a number of records were from Climping and Pett Level. Again, there were no records from either end of the year.

| | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| No. of birds | 0 | 0 | 1 | 3 | 3 | 0 | 6 | 5 | 11 | 5 | 8 | 0 |
| Average county total 2012-2021 | <1 | <1 | 1 | 1 | 7 | 1 | 2 | 7 | 11 | 4 | 1 | <1 |

The earliest was at Pagham Hbr on 18 Mar followed by spring sightings of singles at Rye Hbr on 18 Apr and both 4 and 18 May, and at Weir Wood Res on 17 May.

The first returning individual was a month earlier than in 2021 with one at Pagham Hbr on 19 Jul. Further July records comprised three at Pilsey Island (Chichester Hbr) on the 22nd, and singles at Pagham Hbr on the 26th and Medmerry on the 28th. In August, singles were at Pett Level on the 7th, Pagham Hbr on the 8th and 9th, and Medmerry on the 12th. There was then a short gap until the next record at Rye Hbr on the 21st and a final record for the month at Pilsey Island on the 30th.

In September, one was at Pagham Hbr between the 3rd and 10th, with a second individual being seen on the 5th and 7th and the final record for the month there on the 23rd. At Rye Hbr singles were on several dates between the 11th and 20th but three on the 14th. Nearby at Pett Level, there was one on several dates from the 12th but four on the 19th. Three were at Climping between the 16th and

18th, two between the 19th and 20th, and one on the 21st and 23rd. These were followed by one at Medmerry on the 27th and two at Pilsey Island on the 29th.

After the September peak, the next records were singles at Pett Level and Pagham Hbr on 6 Oct with another at the former site on the 18th. There were also sightings of singles at Pulborough Brooks intermittently between 11 Oct and 4 Nov. November produced more records than usual. Three were at Scotney GP on the 13th while at nearby Rye Hbr, there were singles on the 4th, 6th and 12th and two on the 19th, 27th and 29th. Additionally, singles were at Goring Gap between the 16th and 18th, and Pagham Hbr on the 17th. [ER Paxton]



*Little Stint, Climping, 18 September (Gary Faulkner)*

## White-rumped Sandpiper *Calidris fuscicollis*

***Very rare vagrant.***

Two were recorded in 2022, remarkably both on the same date and within 3.5 km of one another: an adult at Sidlesham Ferry on 26 Jul (A House, D Rimes *et al.*) and an adult on the Stilt Pools (Medmerry) on 26, 27 and 30 Jul (SE Malcolm *et al.*). The birds were seen simultaneously. These are the first county records since 2018 taking the county total to 15. Records have been in July (2), August (6), September (2), October (2), November (2) and December (1). [P James]

## Buff-breasted Sandpiper *Calidris subruficollis*

***Rare autumn vagrant.***

A juvenile on the Stilt Pools and adjoining reserve at Medmerry on 2 and 3 Oct (K Hardy *et al.*) was the first since 2018 and the 20th county record, of which 12 have been this century. Records have fallen between 21 Aug (1934) and 14 Oct (1989) with arrival dates in August (1), September (13), October (5) and an unspecified autumn date (1). [P James]

## Woodcock *Scolopax rusticola*

***Probably fairly common resident and winter visitor. Red-listed species of high conservation concern.***

Woodcock were recorded in 86 tetrads this year, compared to a 10-year average of 79 and a range of 63-117, reflecting a high weather-related fluctuation in winter numbers. The minimum numbers of birds and sites for the two winter periods are shown below.

| | Jan | Feb | Mar | | Nov | Dec |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| No of birds | 39 | 27 | 12 | | 10 | 35 |
| No of sites | 31 | 22 | 10 | | 9 | 29 |
| Average monthly total 2012-2021 | 26 | 34 | 17 | | 16 | 22 |

In the first three months most sightings were of one or two and spread widely across the interior and downland, with a maximum of four at Udimore on 12 Jan. There were coastal records of singles from Chichester GP, Yapton, Brighton and Beachy Head.

Roding was first noted on 17 Mar at Worth. An estimated 37 territorial birds were recorded, compared to a 10-year average of 49, continuing a gradual decrease. About ten territories were found on Ashdown Forest, probably the lowest total ever, but numbers on the Wealden Heaths have remained stable, with 16 territories this year. Away from the traditional areas there were three displaying birds at St Leonard's Forest and the same at Worth, two at Wiggonholt Common (perhaps due to heathland restoration there) and singles at Rewell Wood (Arundel) and Broadwater Warren.

There were only four recorded in July, one in August and none in September or October. The first November record was not until the 12th at Robertsbridge, and numbers were low until mid-December, when a cold spell brought more regular sightings, including coastal records of one or two at Thorney Island, Pagham Hbr (being chased by a Peregrine), Bognor Regis, Climping, Brighton, Hastings and Pett Level. The largest group was three at Findon on the 17th. [CJR Barfield]

## Jack Snipe *Lymnocryptes minimus*

***Scarce winter visitor and passage migrant.***

Records of a minimum of 88 birds were received from 26 widespread tetrads (2.5%). The minimum monthly totals, computed by adding the highest monthly counts at each site, were as follows:

| | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| No of sites | 8 | 12 | 9 | 7 | | 1 | 1 | 7 | 16 |
| No of birds | 10 | 19 | 23 | 9 | | 1 | 1 | 11 | 27 |
| Average county total 2012-2021 | 18 | 14 | 10 | 4 | | 1 | 5 | 10 | 8 |

The first winter period saw a minimum of 50 at 26 sites, almost all of them established or well-watched coastal and wetland locations. The largest counts came from West Rise Marsh (Eastbourne) with seven on 9 Mar and Twineham with six on 20 Mar. There were four at Ashdown Forest on 13 Feb, four at Pilsey Island on 19 Feb, three at Climping Gap on 9 Jan and three at West Wittering on 2 Feb. All but three of the remaining records were of single birds, the exceptions being counts of two at Waltham Brooks, Glynde Level and Rye Hbr. The final records for the first winter period were single birds at Amberley Wild Brooks and Bury Watermeadows on 18 Apr, a week later than the 10-year average of 11 Apr.

A minimum of 38 were recorded at 24 sites during the second winter period. The first returning bird was at the Parham Estate on 27 Sep compared to the 10-year average date of 2 Oct. All but two of the records during the second-winter period referred to one or two birds. The exceptions were six at Pilsey Island on 10 Dec and three at West Rise Marsh on 22 Nov. [MC Daniel]



*Jack Snipe, Climping, 9 January (Ads Bowley)*

## Common Snipe *Gallinago gallinago*

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

The species was recorded from 149 tetrads (14%), five more than in 2021. The WeBS county totals in all but two months were higher than the 10-year averages. 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 | 336 | 166 | 239 | 29 | - | - | 5 | 3 | 39 | 127 | 351 | 872 |
| Chichester Hbr | 42 | 13 | 10 | 1 | - | - | - | - | 5 | 27 | 65 | 28 |
| Arun Valley N of Arundel | 36 | nc | 15 | 1 | - | - | - | - | 12 | 11 | 59 | 88 |
| Upper Adur Levels | 62 | 35 | 22 | - | nc | nc | nc | nc | 1 | - | 8 | 46 |
| Lower Adur Valley | 60 | 60 | 80 | - | nc | nc | nc | - | - | 30 | 60 | 160 |
| Lower Ouse Valley | 2 | 2 | 1 | 1 | - | - | - | - | - | 2 | 27 | 308 |
| Glynde Level | 1 | 11 | 29 | 19 | nc | - | - | - | 1 | 6 | 21 | 86 |
| Average county total 2012-2021 | 221 | 252 | 172 | 27 | - | - | 3 | 19 | 34 | 112 | 188 | 252 |

January saw several substantial counts including 89 on the Adur Saltings (Shoreham-by-Sea) on the 4th, 80 at Rye Hbr on the 7th, 49 at Etchingham on the 17th and 52 at Henfield Levels on the 30th. On the last date, 196 were counted at Hastings CP where the numbers had risen from 73 on the 4th and still 113 there on the 8 Feb. In March, the main counts included 80 on the Adur Saltings on the 3rd, 125 at West Rise Marsh (Eastbourne) and 60 at Rye Hbr on the 4th, 69 at Etchingham on the 9th and 60 again at Rye Hbr on the 17th.

By late March and during April, the only double-figure counts came from Rye Hbr, Pett Level, Etchingham, Glynde Level and Kneppmill Pond. Drumming was heard at one site and breeding considered possible but not confirmed in three tetrads.

One was at Pulborough Brooks on 3 Jul and by the end of the month Snipe were recorded at Medmerry, Horse Eye Level (Pevensey), Pett Level and Rye Hbr. Counts were generally low in August and September, but birds appeared at more sites and there was a build-up of numbers at Pulborough Brooks with 25 on 28 Aug and 50 on 30 Sep.

Numbers remained unexceptional for most of the late autumn and early winter with the highest counts including 50 at Pulborough Brooks on 7 Oct, 60 at Etchingham on 11 Nov, 41 at Chichester Hbr on 26 Nov and 100 at Rye Hbr on 27 Nov. However, numbers surged in December as a cold snap took hold, with counts including 74 at Henfield on the 6th, 340 at Iford Brooks on the 11th, 60 at Lidsey WTW on the 15th, 120 at Horse Eye Level (Pevensey) on the 17th, 86 at Glynde Level on the 21st and 160 on the Adur Saltings on the 24th. [MC Daniel]

## Red-necked Phalarope *Phalaropus lobatus*

***Rare spring and autumn passage migrant. Red-listed species of high conservation concern. Schedule 1 species.***

There were three records in 2022, the first since 2019: a juvenile at Pett Level Pools from 2 to 5 Sep (AJ Killick *et al.*), a juvenile that was joined briefly by a Grey Phalarope at Brighton Marina on 30 Sep (IJ Whitcomb) and a long-staying juvenile on pools at Harbour Fm (Rye Hbr) from 16 to 30 Oct (M Mullis, TL Turner *et al.*).

A total of 39 has been recorded since 1962, 13 of which have been this century, in May (2), June (2), August (3), September (5) and October (1). [P James]

## Grey Phalarope *Phalaropus fulicarius*

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

In another poor year for this species, the sole record was of a first-winter individual seen briefly with a Red-necked Phalarope at Brighton Marina on 30 Sep (IJ Whitcomb). The county total this century moves on to 77, the vast majority storm-driven birds in autumn and early winter. [P James]



*Common Sandpiper, Rye Hbr, 27 July (David Gardiner)*

## 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 74 tetrads (7.8%), close to the 10-year average of 71 (range 63 to 81).

In the first winter period maxima from the regular tidal river sites were three along the lower R Arun on 29 Jan and two there on eight further dates, two on R Adur on six dates, two on the R Ouse near the Glynde confluence on 27 Jan and two at Southease on 1 Feb. Singles were seen at 11 further locations.

Widespread migrants appeared in mid-April with single birds at Warnham LNR (13th), Pulborough Brooks (14th), Weir Wood Res (15th), a flooded field at Donnington (16th) and Camber on the 17th. At Arlington Res there were 14 on 5 May and three on the cascades waterfall at Sheffield Park on 13 May were notable. The last spring passage bird was probably one on 29 May at Pett Level.

The approximate monthly numbers derived as the sum of the highest number at each site that month were as follows:

| | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| No. of birds | 16 | 11 | 7 | 59 | 77 | 11 | 94 | 139 | 78 | 17 | 11 | 15 |
| Average county total 2012-2021 | 10 | 9 | 7 | 40 | 67 | 10 | 125 | 152 | 78 | 19 | 13 | 9 |

In June, singles were at Iford (12th), Brede High Woods (14th), Rye Hbr (19th), Pulborough Brooks (20th) and Pagham Hbr (25th) before clear return passage was seen with three in the lower Arun Valley on the 28th and reports in the county every day thenceforth. Peaks of 28 on the R Arun on 25 Jul, 35 at East Guldeford on 7 Aug, 30 along 8 km of the R Ouse around Piddinghoe on 27 Aug, ten in the upper Cuckmere Valley on 5 Sep and another 13 in the lower Arun Valley on 3 Oct are noteworthy. One at Weir Wood Res on 28 Oct was probably the last on passage.

Wintering birds seen in November included up to four in the lower Arun Valley which stayed through December. There were four at West Rise Marsh (Eastbourne) on 24 Dec and two at East Guldeford on 8 Dec. [PK Holland]

## Green Sandpiper *Tringa ochropus*

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

The following table shows the sum of the highest count in each month to indicate the pattern of occurrence through the year.

| | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2022 | 22 | 12 | 18 | 27 | 6 | 20 | 59 | 79 | 36 | 19 | 16 | 19 |
| Average county total 2012-2021 | 16 | 14 | 13 | 22 | 3 | 16 | 47 | 70 | 36 | 22 | 15 | 15 |

In the first winter period, there were records from 26 sites, mainly of single birds but, in January two at Cuckmere Haven on the 1st and 5th, four at Houghton Green (Playden) on the 7th, two at East Guldeford Level on the 17th, four at Scotney GP on the 23rd and two at Wadhurst Park Estate on the 24th. There were two at Hailsham WTW on 15 Feb and 27 Mar, two at Rotherbridge Fm (Petworth) on the 15 Feb, two at Wadhurst Park Estate on 20 Feb and 21 Mar, and two at Partridge Green on 19 Mar.

There were records from 21 sites between April and mid-May with the highest count being five at Great Bentley Fm (Balcombe) on 23 Apr and the last for this period was of three at Rye Hbr on 15 May.

One was at Pulborough Brooks on 4 Jun but it was the middle of the month before they began to return in numbers with records at multiple sites. From June to September, there were records from 45 sites with the highest counts at Pulborough Brooks (ten on 22 Jul) and the Wadhurst Park Estate (ten on 12 Sep). The most remarkable record was a party of six flying high and heading west over Seaford Head on 12 Aug, presumably on passage.

In the last winter period, there were records from 32 sites but only at Cuckmere Haven, Pulborough Brooks and the Wadhurst Park Estate were birds reported in all three months. The highest counts were five at the Wadhurst Park Estate on 10 Oct and four there on 14 Nov. [K Smith]

## Common Redshank *Tringa totanus*

***Scarce resident; common winter visitor and autumn passage migrant; fairly common spring migrant. Amber-listed species of medium conservation concern.***

Redshanks were recorded in 86 tetrads (9%) during 2022, slightly more than the 10-year average of 81. 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 | 1670 | 1044 | 1413 | 497 | 63 | 95 | 243 | 353 | 1478 | 1602 | 1961 | 1856 |
| Chichester Hbr | 1348 | 745 | 1091 | 340 | 21 | 67 | 119 | 196 | 1082 | 1206 | 1354 | 1476 |
| Pagham Hbr | 96 | 83 | 83 | 92 | 18 | 5 | 68 | 10 | 118 | 66 | 268 | 120 |
| Rye Bay | 95 | 105 | 131 | 39 | 15 | 15 | 36 | 111 | 146 | 220 | 175 | 67 |
| Average county total 2012-2021 | 1644 | 1806 | 1415 | 306 | 53 | 82 | 644 | 1319 | 1684 | 1868 | 2024 | 1864 |

As usual, the highest counts by far were in Chichester Hbr, where numbers exceeded the 1% national threshold number of 1200 in January, October, November and December. Overall, numbers were generally similar to last year across all sites. In addition to the WeBS counts, the regular flock at Newhaven Tide Mills peaked at 53 on 13 Mar, the high count on the lower R Adur was 45 on 3 Mar; at East Guldeford Level 83 on 20 Mar were part of the overall Rye Hbr WeBS count. It is interesting that the peaks at all these sites were in March. Numbers then declined at all sites during late March and April.

The county results of the national survey of breeding waders of wet meadows can be found on page 248. Numbers of non-breeding birds began building up at the beginning of July, with a very impressive 270 at Thorney Deeps on the 14th. Other notable counts in July were 40 at Rye Hbr on the 16th, 67 at Pagham Hbr on the 17th, building to 80 there on the 25th, and then 500 at Thorney Deeps on the 30th. Numbers increased further during August and September, with notable high counts away from the main areas, including 106 on East Guldeford Level on 7 Aug, 65 at Camber on 27 Aug, 30 on the lower R Adur on 12 Sep and 50 at Medmerry on 26 Sep.

Significant counts during the second winter period included peaks of 64 at Newhaven Tide Mills on 13 Nov (WeBS count), 61 on the R Adur Saltings on 5 Dec, 60 at Camber on 19 Nov, and 115 on East Guldeford Level on 13 Nov that formed part of the overall Rye Hbr WeBS count. [J Curson]

## Wood Sandpiper *Tringa glareola*

***Very scarce spring and scarce autumn passage migrant; very rare in winter. Amber-listed species of medium conservation concern. Schedule 1 species.***

Overall, this was an average year but there were higher numbers in May than in recent years. The sums of the maximum monthly counts at each site and the average for the previous decade are shown in the following table.

| | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2022 | 1 | 9 | - | 4 | 13 | 4 | - |
| Average county total 2012-2021 | 1 | 3 | 2 | 7 | 15 | 3 | 1 |

The first spring record was one at Pulborough Brooks on 17 Apr but it was May before the main arrival with the bulk of the records in the first third of the month. There were singles at Weir Wood Res on 1 and 9 May, Pulborough Brooks on the 3rd, 4th and 6th with two on the 5th, North Wall (Pagham Hbr) on the 8th, Sidlesham Ferry on the 10th, Cuckmere Haven on the 4th, Pett Level on the 8th, Horse Eye Level (Pevensey) two on the 8th and singles at Rye Hbr on the 1st and 14th with the last bird of spring there on the 22nd.

The first sign of the return passage was one at Rye Hbr on 9 and 10 Jul but it was later in the month before there were more records with one there on 23 Jul and on a further 11 days until 14 Aug. At Pulborough Brooks there was one on 29 Jul and then on 14 days between 5 Aug and 26 Aug with two on 20 Aug. There was a similar pattern at other well watched sites. At Medmerry there was one on 30 and 31 Jul and on seven days until 13 Aug. At Weir Wood Res there was one on 31 Jul and 1, 2 and 5 Aug with two on the 3rd and 4th.

At Winchelsea there was one on 4 Aug, singles at West Rise Marsh (Eastbourne) on the 18th and 19th, Lewes Brooks on the 19th, Pett Level on the 22nd and Cuckmere Haven on the 28th. The last records were in September with two vocal individuals at Rye Hbr on the 1st and one there on the 5th. Also on the 5th two were found on Fishbourne Channel (Chichester Hbr). [K Smith]

## Spotted Redshank *Tringa erythropus*

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

The approximate minimum monthly totals were as follows:

| | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| No. of birds | 9 | 5 | 10 | 8 | 2 | 5 | 3 | 9 | 15 | 12 | 4 | 6 |
| Average county total 2012-2021 | 11 | 9 | 9 | 7 | 3 | 3 | 8 | 11 | 14 | 11 | 9 | 9 |

In the first winter period there were up to three in the Fishbourne area, plus one or two elsewhere in Chichester Hbr, and twos at Pagham Hbr, in the lower Cuckmere Valley and at Scotney GP.

As is generally the case, the start of spring migration was complicated by lingering wintering birds. One at Fishbourne Channel on 23 Apr was probably the first spring migrant. Two that were present in the Pagham Hbr area from the end of March to 25 Apr could have been the two that wintered there but a third that joined them on 24 Apr was probably another migrant. Two of these were still present at Pagham Hbr the following day but there was then a gap of five days until another, presumably a different one, arrived on 30 Apr and stayed till 7 May. The only other spring birds were a single at Apuldram on 30 Apr and one at Pett Level on 10 May. This is a fairly typical showing as this species is more common as an autumn migrant.

The first returning birds were a single at Medmerry and three at Pulborough Brooks, both on 13 Jun. Birds were then present in the Pagham Hbr area throughout the autumn period, with regular counts of five and six. Elsewhere there was one at Rye Hbr on 14 Aug, then singles there on various dates until early October (with two there on 14 Sep), one at Rotherbridge Fm (Petworth) on 20 Aug, one at Medmerry on 28 Aug, one at Weir Wood Res from 9 to 11 Sep, one in the lower Cuckmere Valley on 12 Sep (with presumably the same bird being seen regularly until 21 Sep), one at Pett level on 19 Sep and three in the lower Cuckmere Valley on 28 Sep.

Three remained at Pagham Hbr until 14 Oct, with two of these staying until the end of the month and then one regularly until the end of the year. At the other regular wintering site, Fishbourne Channel, the first returning bird was seen on 28 Oct, joined by a second on 1 Dec. Elsewhere, there were two in the lower Cuckmere Valley on 25 Oct, with one seen there regularly until at least 26 Dec. One arrived at Rye Hbr on 12 Oct and was joined by two others on the 28th and one to three were seen through November. It is possible these were very late migrants as only one was seen there regularly until at least 12 Dec (and either that bird or another at Camber on 29 Dec). [J Curson]

## Greenshank *Tringa nebularia*

***Fairly common passage migrant; scarce in winter. Amber-listed species of medium 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 | 23 | 16 | 29 | 23 | 5 | - | 3 | 25 | 102 | 54 | 25 | 21 |
| Chichester Hbr | 21 | 13 | 26 | 16 | 2 | - | - | 9 | 89 | 51 | 20 | 18 |
| Average county total 2012-2021 | 22 | 23 | 22 | 15 | 4 | 2 | 36 | 82 | 73 | 55 | 28 | 22 |

As is normally the case, the highest number seen during both winter periods were at Thorney Deeps where there were 12 on 1 and 2 Jan and 11 then being seen regularly until early April. This number is quite consistent with numbers seen here in previous years. Elsewhere in Chichester Hbr there were up to five in the Fishbourne Channel, six at East Chidham on 2 Jan (and eight there on 5 Mar), and the usual ones and twos elsewhere in the harbour. At other locations during this period there were up to two at both Rye Hbr and Medmerry, plus singles in the lower Adur and Cuckmere Valleys and Pagham Hbr.

Spring migration starts early, and the situation is often confused by lingering winter birds; the 11 recorded at Thorney Deeps during the first winter period remained until 2 Apr, and presumably five of these were still there on the 8th. It is likely that five at Scotney GP on 11 Apr were the first spring migrants. Migration then continued through April and May, with birds seen at various coastal and inland locations. This mostly involved ones and twos, but notably higher counts included 12 at Fishbourne Channel on 23 Apr (increasing to 14 on the 28th), 11 at Arlington Res on 30 Apr and 15 Thorney Deeps on 3 May. Numbers then dropped off, with only singles recorded at various localities after 8 May.

As usual, June was the month with the fewest records with reports involving nine birds, and these were spread throughout the month making it difficult to tell when spring migration finished and autumn migration began. Birds were recorded virtually daily during July, mostly in low numbers (between one and four), but there were higher counts of 16 at Thorney Deeps on the 15th, 20 there on the 26th, and eight at Pagham Hbr on the 31st. Migration continued through August and September, mostly involving small numbers of one to three at a number of coastal and inland locations, but there were several higher counts, including 13 at Pagham Hbr on 11 Aug, four at Pulborough Brooks on 21 Aug and nine at Weir Wood Res on 24 Aug. In addition, there were the usual larger numbers in Chichester Hbr, which included high counts of 58 at Thorney Deeps on 11 Aug and 21 at Bosham on 27 Aug.

Migration continued into early October and was noticeable at Thorney Deeps where there were 31 on 8 Oct and still 30 on the 28th. After this numbers dropped there, to 17 on 9 Nov and then the regular wintering flock of ten during late November and December. There was the usual scattering of wintering birds elsewhere in Chichester Hbr, including five at both East Chidham and Itchenor (probably the same birds). Away from Chichester Hbr there were ones and twos at the regular wintering sites of Medmerry, Pagham Hbr and the lower Adur and Cuckmere Valleys. [J. Curson]

## 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.***

Kittiwakes were recorded at Selsey Bill in all months. The month totals from four seawatching sites are shown below. It should be noted that Kittiwakes are not countable at Splash Point once breeding pairs have settled on the cliffs, as birds are ever present and constantly flying back and forth.

During the first winter period, there were ten movements of over 100 birds. Nine of these movements were at Selsey Bill and one was 549 E at Splash Point (Seaford) in 4 hr on 9 Mar, which was the greatest. The peak movements from Selsey Bill were 539 E in 2 hr on 31 Jan and 478 W in 3 hr on 12 Feb. Over 100 were reported offshore at Lancing on four occasions with the maximum being 505 in 3 hr on 1 Feb. An unusual inland sighting was a single at Weir Wood Res on 19 Feb.

| | | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Selsey Bill | E | 574 | 41 | 47 | 57 | 77 | 8 | 10 | 1 | - | 10 | 89 | 23 |
| | W | 552 | 1106 | - | 25 | 34 | 32 | 1 | 6 | 4 | 140 | 893 | 98 |
| Worthing & Goring | E | 14 | 52 | 14 | - | - | - | - | - | - | 1 | 2 | - |
| | W | 48 | 119 | 8 | - | - | - | - | - | - | 2 | 25 | - |
| Birling Gap | E | - | - | 640 | 83 | - | nc | nc | nc | nc | nc | nc | nc |
| | W | - | - | - | - | - | nc | nc | nc | nc | nc | nc | nc |
| Fairlight | E | 17 | 3 | 47 | 10 | - | - | - | - | - | 2 | 4 | 247 |
| | W | 80 | 14 | - | 2 | - | - | - | - | - | - | 11 | 982 |

Seaford Head cliffs remain an important nesting site although the boat-based nesting survey recorded only 383 AON, which is the lowest figure since the colony become fully established in 2011. No obvious reason could be found for the decline in occupancy and the majority of nesting birds seemed confined to small clusters on the eastern edge of the cliff face with no lack of available nest sites (per the late DH Howey). The highest number of Kittiwakes recorded at Seaford was 800 on 30 April. There was no evidence for breeding at other locations.

In the second winter period there were again ten movements of over 100 birds, but only three were at Selsey Bill. Three large movements were recorded at Brighton and four at Pett Level/ Fairlight. The largest movements were from Brighton with 700 W on 22 Nov, 750 W on 23 Nov and 550 W on 26 Dec. There was a single recorded inland at Henfield on 26 Nov. [C Davis]

## Sabine's Gull *Xema sabini*

***Rare mainly autumn vagrant.***

A juvenile was photographed as it lingered close inshore at Selsey Bill between 12:00 and 13:00 on 30 Oct (R Lowe). The county total moves on to at least 75, of which 21 have been this century. [P James]

## Bonaparte's Gull *Chroicocephalus philadelphia*

***Very rare vagrant.***

A second-winter individual was discovered at West Trout Lake in the Chichester GP complex on 22 Mar (SE Malcolm). It was last seen on 11 Apr, having shown well for a steady stream of admirers most days. Having been accepted by BBRC, this bird represents the eighth record for Sussex and the first since 2013. [DK Campbell]

## 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 species was recorded in 421 (44%) tetrads; a similar figure and distribution to recent years.

As usual, the highest counts were of roosting birds at inland reservoirs with 27,500 at Bewl Water on 2 Jan, 3400 at Ardingly Res on 28 Jan and, at Arlington Res, 2000 on 1 Jan and 1500 on 15 Jan. Elsewhere there were 1500 at Iford Brooks on 1 Jan and 1000 near Bramber on 26 Feb. In March there were 2500 at Arlington Res on the 10th and 1000 there on the following day, 2000 at Bosham on the 28th, 1500 at Medmerry on the 19th and 1000 at both Pett Level on the 4th and Rye Hbr on the 6th. Between January and March over 100 Black-headed Gulls were recorded from 75 locations.

Between March and May seawatchers recorded 1989 E, well above the previous ten-year average

of 1002 E, with the peak movements of 150 E and 152 E at Birling Gap on 12 Mar and 30 Apr respectively. At Selsey Bill 351 flew west on 21 May.

A count on 16 Apr at Rye Hbr found about 125 breeding pairs but the total was probably around 150. Hatching success appeared to be good; as did survival with an estimated 75 young fledged. At Pett Level 1672 nests were counted, however both foxes and badgers managed to get into the colony causing much desertion but about 500 chicks fledged. In West Sussex breeding was confirmed at four sites. At Pagham Hbr 473 fledged from 1434 pairs, 55 nests were recorded on rafts on the west side of Thorney Deeps and a single nest was seen at another location in Chichester Hbr on 26 May. At Arundel WWT a total of 40 occupied nests were counted during the survey on 16 May and 44 in the repeat count on 15 Jun. Black-headed Gulls again nested, with Common Terns, on the roof of a commercial building near Quarry Lane (Chichester); on 3 Jul 13 pairs were estimated here, accompanied by young of varying ages.

By mid July flocks were recorded away from the breeding colonies with the most notable observations being 471 at Birdham (Chichester Hbr) on 15 Jul, 500 at Dell Quay (Chichester Hbr) on the 23rd, 700 at Cuckmere Haven on 22 Aug and 450 on the R Adur (Shoreham-by-Sea) on the same day. Larger numbers were recorded as the autumn progressed with 1400 at Fishbourne (Chichester Hbr) on 10 Sep, 1000 at Arlington Res also on 10 Sep with 1250 there on the 15th. There were 2550 again in Chichester Hbr on 8 Oct, 2000 at Henfield Levels on 14 Nov and at West Rise Marsh (Eastbourne) on 16 Nov and 1767 at Amberley Wild Brooks also on the 14th.

Typically, the largest counts at the end of the year were at the nocturnal roost at Bewl Water containing 3500 on 22 Dec and 25,060 on the 29th. [JA Newnham]

## 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 790 Little Gulls were seen, well above the average of 634 for the years 2012-21. The following table of monthly totals at both coastal and inland sites, and the number of days recorded, shows the pattern of occurrence with most, as usual, passing coastal locations during spring but with a notable movement during November.

| | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| No. of days recorded | 1 | 3 | 22 | 17 | 7 | 2 | 5 | 8 | 1 | 4 | 19 | 8 |
| Coastal | - | 2 | 26 | 392 | 27 | - | - | 6 | 1 | 1 | 282 | 28 |
| Inland | 1 | 1 | 2 | 6 | - | 2 | 2 | 1 | - | - | 9 | - |
| Total | 1 | 3 | 28 | 398 | 27 | 2 | 2 | 7 | 1 | 1 | 291 | 28 |
| Average county total 2012-2021 | 13 | 8 | 54 | 442 | 26 | 4 | 2 | 5 | 4 | 9 | 66 | 3 |

During the first winter period singles were recorded at Pulborough on 4 Jan, at Pagham Hbr on 1 Feb, Warnham LNR on 18 Feb and Selsey Bill on 19 Feb. Between 10 Mar and 18 May spring migrants were recorded from 20, mainly coastal, sites with inland records of two at Arlington Res on 21 Mar, one at Chichester GP on 11 Apr and at Weir Wood Res two on 3 Apr and three on the 12th. The peak days of coastal passage were all in April with 172 E at Birling Gap on the 10th, 35 E at Birling Gap and 41 E at Splash Point (Seaford) on the 17th and 113 E at Selsey Bill on the 23rd.

An adult was at Weir Wood Res on 7 Jun and one in first summer plumage was seen on many dates from 28 Jun until 20 Aug at a farm reservoir near Yapton. Few were seen until a notable influx during November when Little Gulls were recorded from 40 different sites. Several stayed for a few days and perhaps some then moved to other sites making a precise number difficult to assess. However, the approximate total was the highest since 2013 when c.352 were seen in the month. The



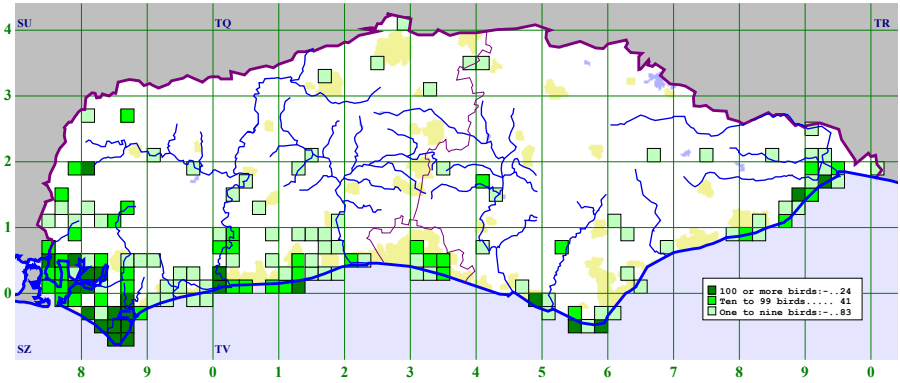
*Little Gull, Fishbourne Creek, 26 November (Ads Bowley)*

largest numbers were seen flying west at Brighton Marina with 55 on the 21st, 35 on the 22nd, 60 on the 23rd and 25 on the 24th. Elsewhere the highest counts were 27 W at Fairlight on the 20th and 33 at Scotney GP on the 28th. There were still 20 at this last site on 2 Dec but thereafter numbers dropped notably with up to three recorded on just six further December dates. [JA Newnham]

## Mediterranean Gull *Ichthyaetus melanocephalus*

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

Mediterranean Gulls were recorded in 148 (15%) tetrads during 2022 and, like recent years, most records and the highest numbers were from coastal sites and some inland locations mainly in West Sussex as shown in the following map.




The following table, showing the highest count in each month for sites in West and East Sussex, reveals the highest counts in West Sussex.

| | West Sussex | | | East Sussex | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Number | Site | Day | Number | Site | Day |
| Jan | 100 | Climping Gap | 8th | 2 | Pett Level | 10th |
| Feb | 100 | Climping Gap | 28th | 79 | Pett Level | 17th |
| Mar | 5000 | Bosham | 28th | 435 | Pett Level | 30th |
| Apr | 400 | Medmerry | 2nd , 17th | 300 | Pett Level | 1st |
| May | 100 | Pagham Hbr | 12th, 21st 28th | 46 | Splash Point (Seaford) | 1st |
| Jun | 1072 | Harting | 24th | 20 | Brighton | 18th |
| Jul | 400 | Climping Gap | 23rd | 115 | Rye Hbr | 12th |
| Aug | 1390 | West Wittering | 12th | 30 | Pett Level | 11th |
| Sep | 1201 | Chidham | 10th | 4 | Splash Point | 12th |
| Oct | 500 | Medmerry | 4th | 6 | Beachy Head | 27th |
| Nov | 45 | Selsey Bill | 24th | 4 | Fairlight | 19th |
| Dec | 28 | Goring Gap | 27th | 3 | Fairlight | 3rd |

During the previous six years there have been nine four-figure counts, all in August or September, so the extraordinary 5000 in Chichester Hbr in March and the large number following the plough near Harting in June are noteworthy.

At Pagham Hbr a total of 269 fledged from 282 pairs but at Rye Hbr breeding was not suspected. At Pett Level 19 nests were counted but both badgers and foxes broke into the breeding area causing this species to completely desert.

Coastal movements typically showed a predominantly eastward moment in spring and a westward passage in autumn. The following table of month totals, derived from the sum of the highest daily count flying in each direction, shows the scale of these movements.

| | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| East | 11 | 27 | 200 | 1029 | 108 | 6 | 44 | 345 | 71 | 30 | 9 | 33 |
| West | 16 | 8 | 16 | 85 | 53 | 39 | 79 | 281 | 44 | 306 | 159 | 25 |

The largest movements, all eastbound were 172 and 114 at Birling Gap on 10 and 17 Apr, 160 at Splash Point on 19 Apr and 197 at Selsey Bill on 22 Aug. [JA Newnham]

## Common Gull *Larus canus*

***Very common, sometimes abundant winter visitor and very common passage migrant; scarce in summer; bred until 1963 and then in 2006 and in some years since. Amber-listed species of medium conservation concern.***

Common Gulls were recorded in 254 (26%) tetrads; a similar figure to recent years, and as usual most records were from coastal, river valleys and downland locations. The highest counts, however, were from the nocturnal roosts with 28,840 at Bewl Water on 2 Jan and at Arlington Res 1500 on 15 Jan and 1200 on 11 Feb. Elsewhere there were 1000 at the Burgh (Burpham) on 5 Feb, 1000 at Pett Level on 9 Feb, 850 in the lower Adur Valley on 22 Feb and 800 there on 17 Feb, at Goring Gap on 26 Feb and Rye Hbr on 6 Mar, whilst 100 or more were seen at about 40 other locations during this period.

Coastal movements logged at the seawatch sites were small as shown in the following table. Peak movements were 147 W at Fairlight on 14 Feb, at Birling Gap 250 E on 12 Mar and 155 E on 23 Mar and 120 E at Splash Point (Seaford) on 6 Apr.

| | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| East | 6 | 33 | 719 | 319 | 30 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 6 | 1 | 14 |
| West | 107 | 203 | 2 | 12 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 10 | 35 | 82 | 112 |

Breeding was only recorded at Rye Hbr where a pair successfully raised two chicks.

This can often be a difficult species to find in the county during May and June but this year there were records on 40 dates with notable counts of 41 at Birling Gap on 9 May, 49 at Rye Hbr on 15 May and 30 at Swanbourne Lake (Arundel) on 9 Jun. The first 16 returned to Thorney Island on 14 Jul and by the 22nd 84 were roosting on the airfield. Thereafter, although the number of records increased, the counts remained low with the first 100 at Fishbourne on 4 Oct. During the last two months the highest counts were 400 near Cissbury on 26 Nov, 430 at Roedean on 15 Dec and 405 at Lyminster on 30 Dec. The roost count at Bewl Water on 29 Dec was 15,850 once again highlighting the national importance of this site. [JA Newnham]

## 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.***

Great Black-backed Gulls were recorded from 153 (16%) tetrads and as usual close to the coast, estuaries or river valleys. The highest counts in each month at five coastal sites are shown in the following table. Like most recent years the largest flocks were seen in the Cuckmere Valley where the highest counts, in chronological order, were 900 on 7 and 16 Jan, 1500 on 13 Oct, and 1500 at Arlington Res on 13 Dec. There were no three-figure counts from locations not included in the table or any notable coastal movements recorded.

| | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Selsey Peninsula | 220 | 55 | 30 | 21 | 35 | 15 | 20 | 20 | 42 | 100 | 100 | 87 |
| Lower Adur Valley | 94 | 92 | 12 | 36 | 10 | 10 | 35 | 70 | 74 | 62 | 115 | 37 |
| Seaford/ Cuckmere Haven | 900 | 550 | 90 | 18 | 30 | 6 | 1 | 6 | 320 | 1500 | 250 | 650 |
| Arlington Res | 150 | 179 | 85 | 25 | 10 | 1 | 3 | 15 | 6 | 35 | 37 | 1500 |
| Rye Bay | 250 | 295 | 40 | 28 | 13 | 12 | 6 | 14 | 250 | 47 | 103 | 85 |

This species remains as one of the scarcest breeding species in the county with single pairs recorded nesting in both Brighton and Hastings whilst at Rye Hbr no young fledged from three nesting pairs. [JA Newnham]



*Great Black-backed Gulls, by Jan Wilczur*

## Glaucous Gull *Larus hyperboreus*

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

In a poor year for 'white-winged' gulls, the only record was of a juvenile photographed standing on the ice at West Langney Lake (Eastbourne) on 17 Dec (K Gillam). [P James]

## Iceland Gull *Larus glaucoides*

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

A second winter at the mouth of the R Rother at Rye Hbr from 23 Feb to 6 Mar (CM George *et al.*) was the only record. The county total this century moves on to approximately 56. [P James]



*Iceland Gull, Rye Hbr, 24 February (Barry Yates)*

## Herring Gull *Larus argentatus argenteus*

***Very common resident; status uncertain as passage migrant and winter visitor. Red-listed species of high conservation concern. Section 41.***

As usual this was the most widespread recorded gull with records from 580 (61%) tetrads. The following table shows the WeBS monthly totals and the highest counts in each month at regularly counted locations where in excess of 800 had been recorded on at least one occasion.

| | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| WeBS total | 1694 | 3153 | 2989 | 1860 | 1178 | 953 | 1327 | 2504 | 3172 | 2082 | 1982 | 902 |
| Bognor area | 730 | 2060 | 30 | 192 | 41 | 60 | 50 | 38 | 300 | 299 | 486 | 350 |
| Lower Arun area | 255 | 80 | 280 | 300 | 130 | 50 | 223 | 85 | 320 | 808 | 86 | 45 |
| Lower Adur area | 600 | 500 | 710 | 270 | 270 | 80 | 650 | 1000 | 320 | 300 | 400 | 320 |
| Cuckmere area | 300 | 200 | 750 | 360 | 300 | 100 | 300 | 2000 | 45 | 150 | 250 | 150 |
| Arlington Res | 150 | 1000 | 1000 | 150 | 300 | 1 | 75 | 350 | 2000 | 100 | 250 | 150 |

The six four-figure counts, in chronological order, were 2060 SW over Bognor at dusk on 12 Feb, 1000 at Arlington Res on 18 Feb, 2000 at Cuckmere Haven on 11 Aug, 1000 at Widewater (Lancing) on 24 Aug and in September 1750 and 2000 at Arlington Res on the 10th and 15th

respectively. During the SWBS Herring Gulls were recorded in 58% of squares surveyed in January and February and 60% of those surveyed at the end of the year whilst in the BBS 70% of surveyed squares held this species.

Confirmed or probable breeding was recorded in just 23 tetrads, mostly from coastal sites but inland at Battle and Warnham LNR.

Those showing the characteristics of the nominate race *L. a. argentatus* were singles at Rye Hbr on 1 Jan, in the lower Adur Valley on 8 Jan, at Cuckmere Haven on 22 Jan and 11 Dec and at West Rise Marsh (Eastbourne) on 13 and 15 Dec. Twelve were at Cuckmere Haven on 6 Feb. [JA Newnham]

## Caspian Gull *Larus cachinnans*

***Scarce but regular winter visitor. Amber-listed species of medium conservation concern.***

No fewer than 50 Caspian Gulls were seen in Sussex with only three of these in West Sussex.

Throughout January, individuals were found in the lower Adur and Cuckmere Valleys, West Rise Marsh (Eastbourne), Normans Bay, Hastings and Rye Hbr, comprising a total of ten birds. A further three were seen in February and March. Spring records are very rare, so one (age not reported) flying east past Brighton Marina on 9 May was notable. There were no further records until August when a juvenile was at Brighton Marina on the 13th and another juvenile was along the R Adur on the 23rd; this plumage is rarely encountered in Sussex.

Two Caspian Gulls were at Rye Hbr on 19 Sep and in October three were at Cuckmere Haven on the 14th, with a further five there on the 22nd; the Cuckmere Valley supported at least three birds throughout the remainder of the month. Only two were seen in November, including a first winter at Goring Gap on the 21st. Into December, three were at Cuckmere Haven on the 11th and the same number were at West Rise Marsh on the 18th. This date saw the final record and highest site count of the year with eight birds at Arlington Res. [MR Eade]

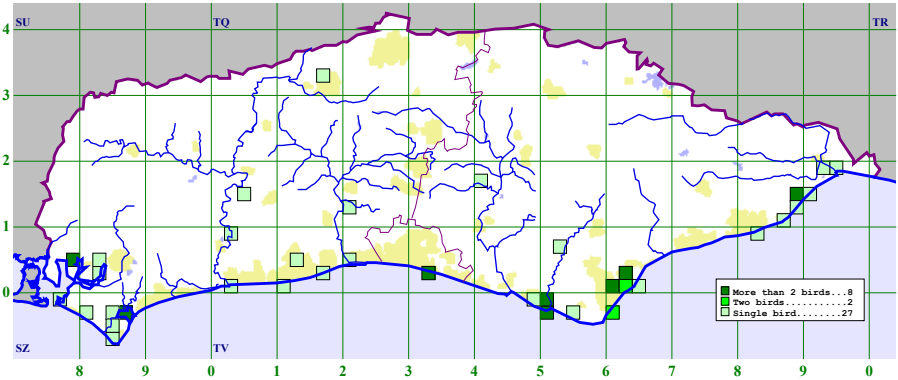


*Caspian Gull, Hastings, 11 January (Laurence Pitcher)*

## Yellow-legged Gull *Larus michahellis*

***Scarce but localised visitor; mainly in late summer and autumn. Amber-listed species of medium conservation concern.***

Yellow-legged Gulls were recorded in just 37 (3.9%) tetrads, a similar number to recent years, and mostly in small numbers from mainly coastal sites as shown on the following map.




Singles at Warnham LNR on 26 Oct and 22 Dec were the furthest from the coast. Most records involved between one and three, but there were four at Pett Level on 13 Mar, six in Chichester Hbr on 24 Jul, five at Cuckmere Haven on 20 Sep with four there on both 23 Oct and 20 Dec and five at West Rise Marsh (Eastbourne) on 18 Dec.

| | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Days recorded | 4 | 5 | 3 | 1 | 3 | 7 | 13 | 7 | 17 | 13 | 12 | 13 |
| Approx. county total | 5 | 4 | 5 | 1 | 5 | 10 | 15 | 6 | 17 | 13 | 13 | 22 |
| Average county total 2012-2021 | 3 | 4 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 16 | 16 | 17 | 5 | 6 | 9 |

The above table shows the pattern of occurrence with more recorded in the last three months than usual. It is difficult to know how many occurred in the county during the year but there may have been fewer than 50 individuals. [JA Newnham]

## Lesser Black-backed Gull *Larus fuscus*

***Fairly common passage migrant and winter visitor; scarce (mainly immatures) in summer and scarce breeder. Amber-listed species of medium conservation concern.***

The species was recorded in 197 (21%) tetrads during the year, a similar number to recent years. The following table of the peak counts in each month from six well watched areas and the WeBS monthly county totals, shows that the largest flocks were seen in the Cuckmere Valley.

| | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| WeBS county total | 6 | 94 | 35 | 33 | 15 | 6 | 36 | 47 | 8 | 47 | 36 | 18 |
| Selsey Peninsula & Chichester Hbr | 20 | 4 | 15 | 20 | 8 | 11 | 11 | 14 | 10 | 6 | 5 | 6 |
| Lower Adur Valley | 17 | 12 | 9 | 7 | 5 | 1 | 1 | 8 | 1 | 3 | 1 | 30 |
| Seaford/ Cuckmere Haven | 100 | 45 | 16 | 20 | 6 | 10 | 2 | 1 | 8 | 600 | 10 | 260 |
| Arlington Res | 100 | 85 | 25 | 10 | 5 | 1 | 30 | 5 | 4 | 10 | 40 | 500 |
| Eastbourne area | 5 | 10 | 18 | 2 | 7 | 5 | 4 | 50 | 30 | - | 15 | 4 |
| Rye Bay | 18 | 10 | 16 | 6 | 10 | 3 | 8 | 30 | 100 | 34 | 5 | 10 |

The highest counts were 600 at Cuckmere Haven on 14 Oct, 500 at Arlington Res on 18 Dec, 300 at Cuckmere Haven on 22 Oct and 260 there on 20 Dec. The only large count not shown in the table was 123 at Southwater Quarry on 22 Nov. There were no significant coastal movements recorded.

Confirmed or probable breeding was recorded in just 11 tetrads with confirmed breeding of single pairs noted at Chichester GP, Warnham LNR, West Worthing, Hove, Brighton, Eastbourne and St Leonards-on-Sea. [JA Newnham]

## Caspian Tern *Hydroprogne caspia*

***Very rare vagrant.***

One flew south past Dell Quay and Chichester Marina at 10.15am on 3 Jul (I McKerchar). Presumably the same bird was seen at Normandy Lagoon, Hampshire, early afternoon that day. The first Sussex record since 2005, BBRC have accepted the bird as the 17th for the county. Among these, seven have now occurred in July, clearly making it the best month to stand a chance of finding one of these spectacular terns. [DK Campbell]

## Sandwich Tern *Thalasseus sandvicensis*

***Fairly common although localised breeding summer visitor and common passage migrant; very scarce winter visitor. Amber-listed species of medium conservation concern.***

The monthly totals at the principal sea-watching sites were as follows:

| | Mar | | Apr | | May | | Jun | | Jul | | Aug | | Sep | | Oct | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | E | W | E | W | E | W | E | W | E | W | E | W | E | W | E | W |
| Selsey Bill | 198 | 14 | 3382 | 1 | 116 | 894 | - | 16 | 93 | 205 | 246 | 159 | 293 | 184 | 28 | 46 |
| Worthing & Goring | 50 | 20 | 1265 | 63 | 208 | 51 | 17 | 17 | 8 | 14 | 6 | 2 | 107 | 77 | 10 | 5 |
| Birling Gap | 35 | - | 2429 | - | 211 | 1 | nc | nc | nc | nc | nc | nc | nc | nc | nc | nc |
| Splash Point (Seaford) | 28 | - | 1932 | - | 223 | - | nc | nc | nc | nc | nc | nc | nc | nc | nc | nc |
| Fairlight | - | - | 587 | 12 | 5 | 1 | 4 | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | 7 |

This species now seems a permanent feature in the west of West Sussex, with single-figure counts received almost daily from the Selsey Bill/Pagham Hbr area and Chichester Hbr during January, peaking with ten at Selsey Bill on the 23rd and five in Chichester Hbr on the 1st. There was a marked influx on 9 Feb, with 31 off Selsey Bill and a further 11 off Church Norton with 32 at the former site on the 12th and 15th, though after 22 at the latter site on the 26th numbers dropped back down again until well into March. Elsewhere the species remains scarce in winter, with one off Pett Level on 17 Jan, one off Rustington on the 23rd and three off Elmer Rocks (Middleton-on-Sea) and Climping on the 26th the only records.

The first eight were back in Rye Hbr on 5 Mar, and there was a slight but steady passage along the coast all month, with 50 back in Pagham Hbr by the 27th and 130 in Rye Hbr by 4 Apr.

After a slow start, there was an exceptional eastward movement on 11 Apr, creating a new site day record of 1348 at Selsey Bill, with 850 E at Splash Point (Seaford), 900 E at Birling Gap and 480 E at Fairlight also logged during the day. Good numbers were recorded on the following day, too, including 232 past Selsey Bill, 400 E at Splash Point and 565 E at Birling Gap. Passage waned thereafter, with 275 E at Selsey Bill on 27 Apr the last big count, though there was still movement into May, including 126 E at Birling Gap on the 9th.

There was sadly no evidence of breeding at Rye Hbr this year, with barely a handful of birds present before late July. Fortunately, it was a very different tale at Pagham Hbr where, despite Avian

Influenza hitting the colony quite hard and clearly reducing productivity, a record 335 pairs still managed to fledge 148 youngsters.

Up to 30 were recorded regularly at Rye Hbr from July into September, whilst in Pagham Hbr numbers fell away quite rapidly from a peak of 300 on 20 Jul to 60 on the 31st, and the only double-figure count in the area after that was 35 at Medmerry on 14 Aug, though small numbers were recorded off Selsey Bill throughout and on into the autumn. Away from these core sites there were just a few records, the biggest counts being of 80 at Pilsey Island (Chichester Hbr) on 4 Sep and 43 E at Worthing on the 13th.

A small wintering population returned to the usual sites with a November peak of ten off Selsey Bill on the 26th, before an evident arrival in late December producing a high count of 20 there on the 26th. The only other records were of one seen off Fairlight on 20 Nov and four in the Worthing/Goring area on 14 and 15 Dec. [A House]

## Little Tern *Sternula albifrons*

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

It was generally a quiet spring for eastward migration, with very few recorded away from Selsey Bill, where the first two of the year were seen on the late date of 11 Apr, followed by one in Pagham Hbr the next day. Sightings were almost daily thereafter, with small numbers passing Selsey Bill among those lingering offshore, and 128 of the spring's total of 198 moving between 26 and 30 Apr, the peak being 48 on the 29th. There were very few elsewhere, with just six past Splash Point (Seaford) on four dates between 17 Apr and 9 May, one past Climping on 23 Apr, three past Ovingdean on 30 Apr and one past Goring Gap and ten past Beachy Head on 9 May.

Despite the low spring numbers, both breeding colonies had a very good year, with several May counts of 60 adults in Pagham Hbr, translating into 31 pairs on the newly created shingle islands near the harbour mouth, which managed to fledge a record total of 26 youngsters. The colony at Rye Hbr succeeded for the second consecutive year, after a run of failures, with nine pairs fledging up to seven young.

At Pagham Hbr, the first fledged juveniles were four seen on 8 Jul, with a high count of 70 birds, including at least ten juveniles, on the 20th, and 30 on the 24th, but by the month's end only four remained. Big counts of 25 on 1 Aug and 16 on the 21st (the last seen in the harbour) most likely referred to migrants from elsewhere, with only four other dates producing records.

There was a small westward passage noted at Selsey Bill, with 16 on 15 Jul a very modest peak, and a last report of three there on 28 Aug, whilst the usual small post-breeding gathering on Pilsey Island (Chichester Hbr) peaked at 33 on 26 Jul, with the last of three further reports from there of five on 26 Aug.

The only other site to hold late summer birds was Rye Hbr, where small numbers were recorded into early August, after a peak of 15 on 21 Jul, but after the 5th were of singles on the 13th and 28th, followed by one on nearby Pett Level on 11 Sep and finally, one at Rye Hbr on the 23rd and 24th, eight days beyond the ten-year average. [A House]

## Roseate Tern *Sterna dougallii*

***Very scarce passage migrant and non-breeding summer visitor. Red-listed species of high conservation concern. Schedule 1 species. Section 41.***

One seen off Selsey Bill on 11 May (D Gornall) was re-found, along with another individual, and photographed at Church Norton later in the day (SA Russell, RM Turner), with one remaining in the vicinity until the 16th. The only other record was of two metal-ringed birds at Rye Hbr on 24 Jul (BJ Yates). [A House]



*Common Terns, Rye Hbr, 16 August (Barry Yates)*

## Common Tern *Sterna hirundo*

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

One past Selsey Bill on 25 Mar was the first of the year, followed by one at East Head (Chichester Hbr) the following day and then two at Pett Level on the 30th, but no more were seen until 8 Apr, when there was 1 E at Selsey Bill and two at Chichester GP. From 11 Apr modest numbers were reported from coastal sites with 112 E past Splash Point (Seaford) on 26 Apr, 176 E at Selsey Bill on 2 May and 574 E at Selsey Bill on 9 May being the peaks. Inland birds were recorded in small numbers from Chichester GP, Warnham LNR and Weir Wood Res throughout April and May, along with four records from Ardingly Res, but all three sites also held breeding populations, making passage numbers hard to divine.

It was quite a productive breeding season, particularly at Rye Hbr, where at least 100 pairs produced a minimum of 55, and possibly as many as 80, fledged young whilst at nearby Pett Level the 27 pairs all deserted. Elsewhere there were at least 30 occupied nests on rafts in Chichester Hbr, four pairs fledging just one youngster in Pagham Hbr, at least ten occupied nests had young on a corrugated roof top near Chichester GP, three pairs fledging three young at Warnham LNR, at least nine young fledged at Weir Wood Res and two pairs fledging two young at Ardingly Res.

A count of 135 at Rye Hbr on 4 Aug, including a few pairs still feeding young, was the last three-digit count there, as birds began to disperse, with small numbers reported from many sites before some more obvious movement late in the month, including 35 W past Selsey Bill on the 23rd, 100 on Pilsey Island (Chichester Hbr) on the 24th and 100 on Climping on the 25th.

Numbers fell away very quickly in September, with eight at Selsey Bill on the 18th the highest count. One at Widewater (Lancing) on 3 Oct, eight west past Selsey Bill on 7 Oct, three at East Head (Wittering) on 9 Oct and a juvenile lingering at Cuckmere Haven from 25 Oct to 3 Nov were the last of the year. [A House]

## Arctic Tern *Sterna paradisaea*

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

The first two of the spring flew east past Splash Point (Seaford) on 11 Apr, four days behind the ten-year average, with two more there the next day, one off Selsey Bill on the 15th and then two at Chichester GP and one off Langney Point on the 17th. Totals of 20 E past Selsey Bill on 22 Apr and 17 E at Splash Point on 30 Apr were the best figures, with 11 past the former site on 15 May the last of a very modest spring coastal passage. A late one was well inland, at Weir Wood Res on 27 May.

Surprisingly, the only autumn birds were all in November, including a flurry of reports from Medmerry, with a juvenile seen there on the 6th, two present together on the 12th and then one again on the 18th; there was also 1 E at Worthing on the 7th and the last of the year flew west past Brighton Marina on the 23rd. [A House]

## Common/Arctic Tern *Sterna hirundo/paradisaea*

Due to the difficulties in separating Common and Arctic Terns passing seawatching sites, primarily brevity of view and distance, many are recorded as 'Commic' Terns.

Below is a summary of the combined totals of Common, Arctic and 'Commic' Terns from the principal seawatching sites for the year:

| | Apr | | May | | June | | Jul | | Aug | | Sep | | Oct | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | E | W | E | W | E | W | E | W | E | W | E | W | E | W |
| Selsey Bill | 571 | - | 1291 | 23 | 6 | 1 | - | 15 | 45 | 93 | 8 | 15 | - | 10 |
| Worthing & Goring | 29 | - | 86 | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | 1 | - | - | 1 |
| Splash Point (Seaford) | 292 | - | 826 | - | nc | nc | nc | nc | nc | nc | nc | nc | nc | nc |
| Birling Gap | 201 | - | 3635 | - | nc | nc | nc | nc | nc | nc | nc | nc | nc | nc |
| Fairlight | 18 | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |

Numbers heading east were low throughout April, with no big days and a peak of just 166 past Selsey Bill on the 23th. May continued slowly, with 176 E there on the 2nd the best, until, finally on the late date of the 9th, there was by far the biggest eastward movement of the spring, accounting for over three quarters of the spring's totals at the key sites, including 880 birds past Selsey Bill, 2995 past Brighton Marina and 3579 past Beachy Head. After that, the only other day with any volume of movement was 17 May, when 880 birds flew east past Brighton Marina. [A House]

## White-winged Black Tern *Chlidonias leucopterus*

***Rare vagrant.***

A fine adult in summer plumage spent about three hours hawking over Flat Beach (Rye Hbr) on the afternoon of 11 May (S Humphrey *et al.*). The county total moves on to 55 although only eight have been this century, the most recent in Jul 2020 at Pett Level. Arrival dates since 2000 have been April (1), May (2), July (2), August (2) and October (1). [P James]



*Black Tern with Common Terns, Climping, 25 August (Adam Huttly)*

## Black Tern *Chlidonias niger*

***Scarce passage migrant. Schedule 1 species.***

The approximate monthly totals were as follows:

| | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2022 | 4 | 41 | - | - | 15 | 20 | - |
| Average county total 2012-2021 | 20 | 47 | 1 | 1 | 12 | 6 | 1 |

The table shows it was a poor spring with a maximum of 45 eastbound individuals noted. After the first past Goring Gap on 18 Apr, two flew past Selsey Bill on the 24th and one past Birling Gap on the 26th. All, bar one bird, in May occurred on the 9th, when there were 6 E at Selsey Bill, 1 E at Splash Point (Seaford), 12 E passed Birling Gap and 40 E at Brighton Marina. The only other bird was seen passing Selsey Bill and then at Pagham Hbr on the 14th.

Two at Rye Hbr on 1 Aug were followed by three offshore at Pagham Hbr on the 21st and birds were seen regularly there and at Selsey Bill over the next month with peaks at the latter site of four

on 29 Aug, seven on 10 Sep, two on the 13th and the last of the year in the county on the 21st.

Elsewhere, three were at Pilsey Island (Chichester Hbr) on 24 Aug, with further reports from the harbour of one on 27 Aug and two on 7 Sep. Two were at Climping on 25 Aug, with one there three days later, one was at Sovereign Marina (Eastbourne) on 3 Sep, and three there on 17 Sep; three were at Shoreham Hbr on 4 and 5 Sep, with two remaining until the 8th. The only two inland records of the year were of one at Arlington Res on 5 Sep and one at Weir Wood Res on 12 Sep. [A House]

## Great Skua *Stercorarius skua*

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

An annual total of 137 was obtained by adding (a) the maximum daily counts travelling along the coast in one direction, (b) birds staying offshore but only on their arrival date and (c) birds seen away from the coast. The average over the previous ten years is 210 though that is heavily skewed by 612 seen in 2012.

Two were seen off Fairlight and three off Selsey Bill during the first two months of the year. Spring passage (predominantly eastward) commenced in March with a single seen off Splash Point (Seaford) and Birling Gap on the 9th followed by another off Worthing on the 24th. As usual, peak passage was in April with 105 recorded. There were a further 16 in May. There were no exceptional movements with the highest being 18 E with an additional bird offshore at Selsey Bill on 23 Apr. Up to four were recorded staying offshore there between 22 Apr and 2 May and it is difficult to be certain how many individuals were involved. The last of the spring was one off Elmer (Middleton-on-Sea) on 26 May.

During the remainder of the year, singles were off Fairlight on 26 Jul, Selsey Bill on 27 and 28 Aug, Worthing on 11 Sep and Selsey Bill the next day, Rye Hbr on 18 Sep and Selsey Bill on 5 Nov and 25 Dec. Less expectedly, one was at Chichester Hbr on 15 Oct. [SH Linington]

## Pomarine Skua *Stercorarius pomarinus*

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

An estimated 170 flew east up the Channel during the spring with 24 in April and 146 in May. Numbers were estimated by adding the highest daily counts from coastal sites but taking into account obviously additional birds based on timings. The comparable totals from the previous ten years are shown below.

| 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 | 2019 | 2020 | 2021 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 75 | 50 | 182 | 20 | 189 | 170 | 89 | 88 | 83 | 61 |

April passage commenced on the 11th (12 days earlier than the 10-year average first date) with three seen at Selsey Bill and two each off Worthing and Splash Point (Seaford). A further two were reported along the coast on the 12th with another seen on the 14th. There was then a gap in sightings until two on 24th followed by small daily counts until the month end. In early May, significant counts included nine at Birling Gap on the 1st, 21 at Brighton Marina on the 2nd and 13 at Selsey Bill on the 8th. A notable passage occurred on the 9th with 43 at Selsey Bill, 31 at Worthing, 72 at Brighton Marina, 51 at Splash Point and 82 at Birling Gap plus smaller numbers elsewhere. Subsequent counts included five at Brighton Marina on the 10th, two at Selsey Bill on the 14th, one at Splash Point on the 17th and 12 at Brighton Marina on the 18th.

There were no other reports. [SH Linington]

## Arctic Skua *Stercorarius parasiticus*

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

An annual total of 341 was obtained as described under Great Skua. The average over the previous ten years is 295.

The first record was one off Birling Gap on 12 Mar representing the start of the easterly spring passage along the coast. A further four were then noted during March. As usual, the main passage was in April and May with totals of 199 and 82 reported, respectively, from the usual sea-watching sites. Peak counts in April comprised: 22 at both Selsey Bill and Splash Point (Seaford) on the 11th; 22 at Birling Gap on 12th and 24 there next day; 16 at Selsey Bill on the 17th and 18 there on the 26th; and 14 at Birling Gap on the 29th. In May, both peak counts were at Birling Gap with 14 on the 1st and 17 on the 9th. A total of five were seen in June through to the 17th.

Returning birds seen on the coast comprised six in July, three in August, eight in September, 14 in October and 14 in November. Day counts only exceeded three on 5 Nov when five flew west past Selsey Bill. During the autumn, one was seen harassing waders in Chichester Hbr on 13 Oct and one was at Pulborough Brooks on 11 Nov. Finally, three singles were observed off Selsey Bill in December. [SH Linington]

## Little Auk *Alle alle*

***Very scarce autumn passage migrant and winter visitor.***

There were three records in 2022, all in late November: 1 W at Goring Beach on the 19th (RA Ives) and singles west past Selsey Bill on the 23rd (A House, I Pitts) and the 26th (S Hill, BGR Ives *et al.*). These are first county records since 2019 taking the total this century to 145. [P James]

## Common Guillemot *Uria aalge*

***Fairly common winter visitor and passage migrant; last bred in 1904. Amber-listed species of medium conservation concern.***

The monthly and annual totals have been calculated using the method described for Red-throated Diver (see page 97). The annual total of 779 is the fourth highest in the last decade, 26% higher than the 620 recorded in 2021 but 13% fewer than the 2012 - 2021 10-year average of 901. The table below shows the monthly totals which include birds feeding offshore while the peak number relates solely to the many fewer birds identified moving along the coast.

| | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Monthly total * | 383 | 306 | 5 | 19 | 19 | 5 | - | - | 14 | 12 | - | 16 |
| Peak no. | 2 | 11 | 1 | 6 | 5 | 1 | - | - | 1 | 4 | - | 3 |
| Peak day | - | 4th | - | 11th | 4th | - | - | - | - | 18th | - | 31st |
| *adjusted to compensate for duplication | | | | | | | | | | | | |

Most records during the first winter period were feeding off the East Sussex coast although several were present in Chichester Hbr during the first half of January, including six off Ella Nore on the 10th. Flocks included 250 off Bexhill on 23 Jan, 50 off Eastbourne on 27 Jan and 200 off Beachy Head on 11 Feb while the year's largest movement was 11 W at Widewater (Lancing) on 4 Feb. Only eight were recorded in the second half of February and five in March, the latter including one at West Chidham (Chichester Hbr) on the 5th. April's total included 6 E at Splash Point (Seaford) on the 11th with Selsey Bill providing most May and all June records, the last being on 24 Jun. The first of the autumn was also at Selsey Bill with 1 E on 7 Sep. Eight singles were along the coast from 18 Sep and five were off

Pett Level on 21 Sep. Following two off Beachy Head on 5 Oct, all other October sightings were from Selsey Bill. None were recorded in the county in November (for the first time since 2010) and all those in December were from the 17th at Selsey Bill except one at Beachy Head.

Records of Guillemots in tidal harbours or rivers close to the sea are not uncommon but one at Scots Float Sluice on the R Rother at East Guldeford Level on 27 Sep is noteworthy being over 6 km upriver from the sea. There are three previous records of 'inland' Guillemots, all on tidal rivers: on the Arun at Ford in December 2000; the R Ouse at Lewes in January 1997 and the R Ouse at Rodmell in January 2014. [RJ Fairbank]

## Razorbill *Alca torda*

***Common winter visitor and fairly common passage migrant; last bred in 1878. Amber-listed species of medium conservation concern.***

The monthly and annual totals have been calculated using the method described for Red-throated Diver (see page 97). The annual total of 7896 is the second highest in the last decade and almost twice the 2012 - 2021 10-year average of 4024. The table below shows the monthly totals including birds feeding offshore while the peak number relates solely to birds moving along the coast.

| | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Monthly total * | 3868 | 798 | 12 | 36 | 32 | 1 | - | 1 | 14 | 2947 | 53 | 134 |
| Peak no. | 2140 | 144 | 2 | 11 | 3 | 1 | - | - | 2 | 802 | 12 | 27 |
| Peak day | 31st | 9th | 16th | 23rd | 8/9th | 9th | - | - | 19/29th | 15th | 5th | 17th |
| * adjusted to compensate for duplication | | | | | | | | | | | | |

Small numbers, mostly fewer than ten, were seen along the coast throughout January. Large movements were generally in the west of the county while feeding flocks were in the east. These included 167 W at Selsey Bill on the 11th, 200 W at Pett Level on the 16th, 500 off Bexhill on the 23rd, 130 off Beachy Head on the 24th, 108 W at Widewater (Lancing) on the 27th and 2140 W there on the 31st. The latter is the county's third highest day total, being exceeded twice in January 2019 at Selsey Bill. Movements continued in early February and included 113 W at Selsey Bill on the 1st, 140 W at Widewater on the 4th and 145 W at Selsey Bill on the 9th but only 21 were recorded in the second half of the month and 12 in March including four off Fairlight on the 9th. April records included 8 E at Splash Point (Seaford) on the 11th and 11 W and 7 E at Selsey Bill on the 23rd. The latter site also provided most May records, and the single ones in both June and August. The latter was offshore on the 21st and is only the fourth August record in the last decade. The 14 recorded in September included a juvenile in Shoreham Hbr on the 12th, four at Sovereign Hbr (Eastbourne) on the 17th and one at high tide at the Adur Saltings on the 28th, the latter about as far from the open sea as this species gets. October saw almost daily movements at Selsey Bill, including 684 W on the 7th, 802 W on the 15th, 258 W on the 22nd and 158 W on the 26th, but very few elsewhere. Records in November and December were more widely scattered with the highest counts being 15 at Selsey Bill on 5 Nov, 15 off Worthing on 7 Dec, 10 at Glyne Gap (Bexhill) on 11 Dec and 21 W at Selsey Bill on 17 Dec. [RJ Fairbank]

## Puffin *Fratercula arctica*

***Very scarce visitor; most frequently recorded in spring. Red-listed species of high conservation concern.***

There were two records in 2022: 1 E past Selsey Bill on 22 Jan (J Atkinson, BGR Ives *et al.*) and 1 W past Climping Gap on 22 Nov (B Akinola, O Mitchell). The county total this century moves on to 37. [P James]

## Auk species

The approximate numbers of Common Guillemots, Razorbills and those auks not identified to species are shown in the table below. The figures in the table have not been adjusted to compensate for duplication between sites so should not be taken as an accurate assessment of overall numbers but simply as a means of comparison with previous years. The total of all auks recorded in 2022 was 53,944, 45% more than the 2012 - 2021 10-year average of 37,187 but less than 40% of last year's highest ever annual total of 143,038.

| | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Monthly total | 29,094 | 7759 | 320 | 1349 | 355 | 6 | - | 4 | 69 | 12,538 | 235 | 2248 |
| Peak no. | 9684 | 1528 | 114 | 269 | 120 | 1 | - | 4 | 18 | 2011 | 71 | 355 |
| Peak day | 31st | 4th | 11th | 11th | 10th | - | - | 21st | 19th | 7th | 19th | 26th |

Fewer than 400 auks were recorded during the first 10 days of January but big movements followed during the month with 692 W and 107 E at Selsey Bill on the 11th, 815 W and 210 E at Worthing on the 19th, 2521 E and 608 W at Selsey Bill on the 22nd, 1790 E at Selsey Bill and 1270 E at Worthing on the 23rd, 1540 E at Fairlight on the 24th and 5449 W and 202 E at Selsey Bill and 3905 W at Widewater (Lancing) on the 31st. Numbers decreased during February with 1521 W at Widewater on the 4th, 716 E at Selsey Bill on the 5th, 491 W there on the 9th and 453 W at Widewater on the 10th. The last three-figure counts during the first winter period were 266 W at Worthing on 12 Feb and 253 off Eastbourne and 233 W at Widewater on 15 Feb. Only 320 were recorded during March with peaks of 78 E at Birling Gap on both the 9th and the 11th. Numbers picked up in April with all the highest counts from Birling Gap: 134 E on the 11th, 156 E on the 16th, 148 E on the 17th and 120 E on the 25th. Beachy Head provided the bulk of May records too including 99 E on the 10th.

Just ten auks were recorded in the summer months, all at Selsey Bill which also had the majority of September and October records. In October, these included 853 E on the 4th, 1733 W on the 7th, 1030 W and 168 E on the 8th and 1444 W and 223 E on the18th. The highest November count was 70 W at Fairlight on the 19th while subsequent three-figure counts included 314 W there on 1 Dec and 256 W at Selsey Bill on 26 Dec. The total numbers of auks recorded in seawatching logs are shown below:

| | 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 | 5983 | 45 | 9641 | 217 | 1 | 181 | 3 | - | 7 | 2258 | 62 | 9332 | 309 | 16 | 761 |
| Worthing & Goring | 1983 | - | 2524 | 5 | - | 6 | - | - | - | 206 | 1 | 76 | 9 | 30 | 58 |
| Birling Gap | 367 | 603 | 60 | 1019 | 17 | 4 | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Fairlight | 2434 | 426 | 941 | 77 | 19 | 3 | - | - | - | 15 | - | 203 | 630 | 91 | 462 |

Eighty-one percent of the auks recorded during the year remained unidentified. Of those that were, Razorbills outnumbered Common Guillemots by 10:1, a similar proportion to 2021 although in the past decade this has varied between 1.3 and 18.4 Razorbills identified for every Common Guillemot. [RJ Fairbank]

## Red-throated Diver *Gavia stellata*

***Fairly common winter visitor and passage migrant. Schedule 1 species.***

2022 saw a return to normality for Red-throated Diver in Sussex, following 2021, which produced the highest numbers for almost two decades. The estimated total has been calculated by taking the highest daily count of birds recorded moving either east or west along the coast during the month, plus the month's highest offshore count, added to any inland records. Using this metric, approximately 2374 birds were recorded in Sussex throughout 2022, a significant decrease from

2021 (4445), but still marginally more than the 10-year average of 2178. The estimated monthly totals, calculated using the method explained above, were as follows:

| | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2022 | 627 | 235 | 614 | 266 | 39 | | 1 | 12 | 55 | 525 | 2374 |
| Average 2012-2021 | 310 | 611 | 391 | 318 | 23 | | 2 | 6 | 55 | 460 | 2178 |

The year began well with excellent numbers recorded in January, including a notable movement of 168 E past Fairlight in 1½ hr on the 20th. Although this did maintain its status as the year's maximum count, there were also large movements in the second winter period. Hardy observers were rewarded for skipping Christmas festivities with 117 W and 19 E from Selsey Bill on 25 Dec and 145 W past Brighton Marina on the 26th. The rest of the year followed a typical pattern, with numbers broadly conforming to the 10-year average, excluding February that is, when notably few birds were seen, despite January and March both exceeding their averages.

The final bird of spring departed earlier than usual and the first bird of autumn arrived behind schedule, although the differences were not great. Both birds were observed at Selsey Bill, the former on 14 May, 15 days before the 10-year average for departure dates (29 May) and the latter on 20 Sep, seven days after the 10-year average arrival date (13 Sep).

The estimated monthly totals at the principal seawatching sites were as follows:

| | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Monthly Total* | 602 | 205 | 611 | 262 | 38 | | 1 | 11 | 40 | 503 |
| Selsey Bill | 424 | 145 | 217 | 123 | 24 | | 2 | 12 | 37 | 505 |
| Worthing & Goring | 207 | 25 | 93 | 50 | 2 | | - | 2 | 4 | 22 |
| Splash Point (Seaford) | 0 | 8 | 110 | 85 | 10 | | nc | nc | nc | nc |
| Birling Gap | - | 30 | 533 | 188 | 18 | | nc | nc | nc | nc |
| Fairlight | 571 | 257 | 148 | 60 | - | | - | - | 20 | 425 |
| * adjusted for duplication in direction and between sites | | | | | | | | | | |

As usual, the majority of sightings came from coastal watchpoints and there were no inland records. [A Glossop]

## Black-throated Diver *Gavia arctica*

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

It was another lean year for Black-throated Divers in Sussex, continuing the trend of decline. From 2000 to 2014, only one year (2010) returned an estimated annual total of more than 100 birds, but there have been no three-figure counts since. In fact, three of the last eight years have failed to breach 50. The 49 recorded in 2022 represents the equal lowest haul since the turn of the century. The estimated monthly totals, calculated using the same method as those for Red-throated Diver, were as follows:

| | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | | Nov | Dec | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2022 | 2 | 2 | 8 | 23 | 11 | | 1 | 2 | 49 |
| Average county total 2012-2021 | 5 | 5 | 7 | 35 | 16 | | 2 | 5 | 77 |

The last spring sighting, 10 E past Brighton Marina on 17 May, also proved to be the year's maximum count. This date aligned almost exactly with the 10-year average for final departures (17 May). Conversely, the earliest arrival date for the second winter period was noticeably delayed,

occurring on 21 Nov, 34 days after the 10-year average (18 Oct). This foreshadowed a barren winter, with only eight further sightings before the end of the year, none concerning multiple birds.

As usual, the majority of records came from the primary seawatching sites at Selsey Bill, Worthing, Splash Point (Seaford) and Birling Gap. There were no inland records, but two birds, an adult and a first-winter, spent three days in Chichester Hbr from 10 to 12 Jan, with one remaining until the 21st. [A Glossop]

## Great Northern Diver *Gavia immer*

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

2022 proved to be another good year for Great Northern Divers, with counts pushing double figures during the first winter period, spring and the second winter period. The Selsey Peninsula maintained its status as an important wintering ground for the species, continuing to provide the vast majority of the county's sightings. Approximate monthly totals were as follows:

| | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | | Oct | Nov | Dec |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Monthly total | 11 | 9 | 8 | 12 | 8 | 1 | | 2 | 11 | 8 |
| Maximum in Selsey area | 9 | 8 | 7 | 9 | 7 | 0 | | 2 | 7 | 6 |

Having delighted photographers at the back end of 2021, the obliging individual in Sovereign Hbr (Eastbourne) chose to remain during the start of 2022, last being sighted on 23 Feb. Selsey Bill provided reliable sightings throughout the first winter period, including a peak count of nine offshore on 30 Jan. Spring passage was relatively light, but 8 E past Selsey Bill on 10 Apr, which, when added to a further four birds on the sea, constituted the year's maximum count. The final bird of spring passed the same site on 8 Jun. Despite falling just six days after the 10-year average (2 Jun), this was the second-latest departure date since 2013.

It was no surprise that Selsey Bill also registered the first returning bird, 1 W on 21 Oct. This strayed little from the 10-year average for return dates (15 Oct). Notable records from the second winter period included one at Rye Hbr on 26 Nov and a rare inland record at Weir Wood Res from 10 Nov to 2 Dec. [A Glossop]

## Diver species

Some distant divers cannot be identified as to species and in these cases they are logged as 'Diver species'. In 2022, 4.6% of all divers observed fell into this category. The numbers of divers recorded at four seawatching locations during the periods January to May and October to December are shown below.

| | Diver sp | | R-T Diver | | B-T Diver | | Total | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | J - M | O - D | J - M | O - D | J - M | O - D | J - M | O - D |
| Selsey Bill | 135 | 16 | 966 | 563 | 12 | - | 1113 | 579 |
| Worthing & Goring | 26 | 2 | 404 | 41 | 10 | - | 440 | 43 |
| Splash Point (Seaford) | 53 | - | 222 | 1 | 15 | - | 290 | 1 |
| Birling Gap | 35 | nc | 809 | nc | 20 | nc | 864 | nc |
| Fairlight | - | - | 1096 | 518 | - | - | 1096 | 518 |

The numbers recorded for each site have been prepared by adding the monthly figures for birds flying both east and west, plus those recorded as 'offshore'. No allowance has been made for duplication at or between sites, so no attempt should be made to total the columns. [A Glossop]

## Leach's Petrel *Hydrobates leucorhous*

***Rare vagrant. Red-listed species of high conservation concern. Schedule 1 species.***

A total of five was recorded comprising 1 E past Splash Point (Seaford) on 30 Oct (R Johnson), three singles west past Brighton Marina on 8 Nov and 1 W there on 23 Nov (IJ Whitcomb). The county total since 2000 moves on to about 78. Records have been in Feb (2), May (1), Oct (9), Nov (c.54) and Dec (12) though only ten have been recorded since 2010. Five in a year constitutes the best annual total since 2009 when 28 were recorded.

Leach's Storm Petrel remains a tricky bird to see in Sussex. Gale force south to southeast winds in late autumn are optimal with most recent records from Brighton eastwards. [P James]

## Fulmar *Fulmarus glacialis*

***Scarce breeding species and passage migrant. Amber-listed species of medium conservation concern.***

As is usual, birds were already back around their nest sites from early January, with four at Cliff End (Pett Level) on 1 Jan, 12 at Saltdean on 9 Jan, 35 at Beachy Head on 13 Jan and 15 at Newhaven Cliffs on 27 Jan, with numbers rising to 30 at Cliff End on 1 Feb and other peaks comprising pairs at Roedean from 4 Feb and Peacehaven from 11 Feb, 20 at Telscombe Cliffs on 23 Feb, 18 at Rottingdean on 28 Feb, 12 at Seaford Head on 8 Mar and 20 at Ovingdean on 11 Apr. Away from the breeding sites, numbers were typically low, with 15 past Fairlight on 20 Feb, and 11 on 6 Feb and 12 on 22 Apr at Selsey Bill the only double-figure counts.

There was no full breeding survey but six AON were counted between Brighton and Saltdean, one at Ovingdean, and five at Peacehaven; additionally small numbers of birds were reported regularly through the summer from the vicinity of all the colonies. Ten past Selsey Bill on 4 Jun was the only notable tally from elsewhere.

By the end of August all the birds had left the breeding areas, with the last one at Beachy Head on 2 Sep, and one past Selsey Bill on the 12th was the last until one was back at Rottingdean on 11 Nov. Thereafter there were two at both Langney Point (Eastbourne) and Cliff End on 24 Nov with 13 at Hastings on 14 Dec and 15 at Newhaven on 24 Dec the highest counts at the year end. [A House]

## Sooty Shearwater *Ardenna grisea*

***Very scarce autumn visitor.***

A total of three was recorded in late autumn comprising 1 W past Selsey Bill on 30 Oct (S Hill, BGR Ives), 1 W distantly past Worthing on 1 Nov (DK Campbell) and 1 W past Selsey Bill on 5 Nov (S Hill, L & P Hunter). [P James]

## Manx Shearwater *Puffinus puffinus*

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

Adding all of the daily counts (as described under Great Skua) gives a disappointing annual total of 61 birds as exemplified by the annual totals over the previous ten years shown below.

| 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 | 2019 | 2020 | 2021 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 487 | 137 | 46 | 171 | 209 | 133 | 446 | 268 | 235 | 159 |

Winter records are unusual but one flew east off Fairlight on 18 Jan and one was offshore at Birling Gap on 11 Feb. Totals of 30 were reported in April and 19 in May, with all records coming

from Selsey Bill and Birling Gap. The largest count was 9 W at Selsey Bill on 26 May. During the summer and early autumn, a total of just ten was reported with 5 W at Selsey Bill on 7 Sep, both the largest and last count. [SH Linington]

## Balearic Shearwater *Puffinus mauretanicus*

***Very scarce spring to autumn visitor. Considered critically endangered by IUCN. Red-listed species of high conservation concern. Section 41.***

There was no repeat of the exceptional numbers recorded in 2021. Apart from 2 W past Fairlight Cliffs on 8 Sep (A Parker), all records were from Selsey Bill where there were 2 singles west on 21 Aug (J Atkinson, S Hill, A House, BGR Ives) and further singles west on 10 Sep (J Atkinson, PS Bowley *et al.*), 24 Sep (J Atkinson, BGR Ives, S Hill), 7 Oct (BGR Ives) and 17 Oct (A House, MA Orchard-Webb, S Russell). [P James]

## White Stork *Ciconia ciconia*

***Rare vagrant mainly in spring. Most records from 2017 onwards likely to relate to deliberate releases, their fledged young, or escapes.***

All records probably related to released individuals and their young. At the Knepp Estate ten pairs nested with nine successfully raising 19 young to fledging in July (from 40 eggs laid and 34 chicks). All nests were in mature oak trees, except by one pair which built on the castle chimney before moving on to a nearby cedar tree. A cohort of 37 juveniles raised and brought from the Cotswold Wildlife Park were released at Knepp in September. For the first time two pairs nested at Wadhurst Park, one of the project satellite sites, with one pair raising a single chick. As an example of their post fledging dispersal a 2019 fledged female GB46 (aka Doris) was recorded in Wiltshire, Norfolk, the Netherlands and Scotland before returning to nest, albeit not fledging any young.

The largest flock away from the release sites was 52 at Beachy Head on 15 Sep; they had been reported over Preston Park earlier in the day. White Storks were at Pulborough Brooks in all months from March to October, except June, with the largest count being 17 on 10 Sep, and elsewhere the largest groups were also in open wetland habitats including Amberley Wild Brooks, the lower Adur Valley and Rye Hbr.

White Storks from the project, including young birds, are ringed with a blue Darvic ring starting with a GB on the left tibia and a BTO metal ring on the right tarsus. Sightings can be reported at https://www.whitestorkproject.org/report-a-sighting. [S Chapman, M Mallalieu]

## Gannet *Morus bassanus*

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

The movements recorded during the year at five key seawatching sites are shown below.

The biggest counts at the beginning of the year were 210 E past Fairlight on 14 Jan, 256 W past Selsey Bill on 16 Jan and 300 off Worthing the following day. The largest movement of the winter occurred on 31 Jan when 805 W at Widewater (Lancing) and 873 W at Selsey Bill. Counts of 225 W past Widewater on 1 Feb and 316 W past Selsey Bill on 12 Feb were notable, but numbers tailed off thereafter, with 141 E past Birling Gap on 27 Feb and 116 E past Fairlight on 11 Mar the best, and possibly indicative of birds migrating towards the North Sea. A sustained eastward push between 11 and 16 Apr, including 1476 birds past Birling Gap during this period, and a moderate eastward flow of birds along the coast on into May was further evidence of migration.

| | | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Selsey Bill | E | 182 | 68 | 185 | 1724 | 1143 | 323 | 102 | 639 | 399 | 376 | 41 | 185 |
| | W | 1827 | 959 | 147 | 536 | 432 | 205 | 189 | 1278 | 900 | 2557 | 333 | 1219 |
| Worthing & Goring | E | 257 | 52 | 73 | 288 | 78 | 35 | 1 | 76 | 60 | 244 | 5 | 28 |
| | W | 436 | 302 | 92 | 23 | 21 | 14 | 37 | 50 | 148 | 969 | 90 | 3 |
| Splash Point (Seaford) | E | - | 3 | 39 | 1027 | 190 | nc | nc | nc | nc | nc | nc | nc |
| | W | - | - | - | 14 | 3 | nc | nc | nc | nc | nc | nc | nc |
| Birling Gap | E | - | 145 | 278 | 2359 | 390 | nc | nc | nc | nc | nc | nc | nc |
| | W | 8 | 1 | - | 119 | 11 | nc | nc | nc | nc | nc | nc | nc |
| Fairlight | E | nc | 129 | 455 | 508 | 13 | 16 | - | - | 8 | 213 | - | 283 |
| | W | nc | 14 | 9 | 47 | 15 | 2 | - | 20 | 9 | 67 | 331 | 254 |

Most of the summer records came from West Sussex, where peaks of 88 off Selsey Bill on 8 Jun and 96 off Goring Gap on 10 Jun compared with just 35 off Splash Point (Seaford) on 25 Jul. During August and September there were some large counts from Selsey Bill that were not replicated elsewhere, including 425 W on 3 Aug, 420 offshore on 28 Aug and 237 W on 18 Sep. The highest count elsewhere was 100 offshore at Rye Hbr on 28 Sep.

In the last quarter of the year most were again recorded from West Sussex, particularly at Selsey Bill where there were some big days in October, including 382 W on the 7th, 167 W and 300 offshore on the 23rd and 337 W on the 30th. There was also a big westward movement over the Christmas period, with 387 W on the 25th, and a further 671 recorded up to the year's end. [A House]

## Brown Booby *Sula leucogaster*

***Very rare vagrant.***

The first for Sussex and sixth for Britain was found on Hove beach on 2 Jan (C Bannerman). It was taken into care and no further information on subsequent events was made public. The record has been accepted by BBRC, making Sussex the only recording area in Britain and Ireland that has been graced by both of the booby species on the British List, after the Red-footed Booby in 2016. The finder's account is on page 205 of this report. [DK Campbell]

## Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo*

***Fairly common but localised resident and common winter visitor.***

Cormorants were recorded in 317 tetrads (33%), more than the 10-year average of 237. The records are mainly from sites along the coast, but also from river valleys and water bodies including fishing lakes further inland. Cormorants are increasing, the county totals were higher in all months, compared to both 2021 and the 10-year average totals. 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 | 911 | 797 | 895 | 862 | 786 | 743 | 822 | 872 | 1013 | 1228 | 1046 | 828 |
| Chichester Hbr | 73 | 70 | 33 | 21 | 14 | 15 | 4 | 6 | 41 | 147 | 149 | 164 |
| Medmerry | 59 | 30 | 67 | 44 | 73 | 23 | 82 | 83 | 67 | 106 | 52 | 33 |
| Rye Bay | 368 | 420 | 477 | 619 | 548 | 605 | 616 | 678 | 639 | 466 | 467 | 244 |
| Average county total 2012-2021 | 809 | 657 | 571 | 469 | 549 | 487 | 577 | 740 | 839 | 891 | 740 | 583 |

High counts in addition to the WeBS in the first winter period were: 660 W off Fairlight on 14 Jan, 1000 at Pett Level on the 16th, 1218 in the roost at Rye Hbr on the 19th and 200 W off Shoreham and Lancing early on the 31st. Inland there were 72 at Weir Wood Res on 21 Jan, 73 on 5 Feb and 52 on 20 Mar.

Breeding was confirmed from six sites with 302 AON, compared to 386 at four sites in 2021. There were 171 nests at three sites in Rye Hbr (down from 284 in 2021), 47 at Medmerry (up from 26 in 2020), 31 at New Lake (Chichester GP) (59 in 2021), 30 at Scotney GP (on the Sussex side for the first time), 22 at Weir Wood Res (17 in 2021) and one at Kneppmill Pond, a new breeding site.

High non-WeBS counts during the second half of the year included Pett Level (250 on 27 Sep), Scotney GP (157 on 6 Nov), Thorney Deeps (Chichester Hbr) (226 on 9 Nov), and 1424 coming to roost at Rye Hbr on 24 Dec. [L Smith]

## Shag *Gulosus aristotelis*

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

Shags were reported from 17 coastal tetrads with records in all months; most records were from Selsey Bill. The aggregate monthly totals are shown in the following table together with the totals from the three previous years. Most daily records were of one or two with a maximum of 72, (20 W and 52 E) on 7 Oct, though this may double-count birds that were on feeding and roosting movements.

| | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2019 | 4 | 7 | 7 | 9 | 2 | - | - | 18 | 148 | 516 | 74 | 36 |
| 2020 | 11 | 6 | 4 | 2 | - | - | 2 | 12 | 3 | 6 | 3 | 7 |
| 2021 | 12 | 9 | 40 | 30 | 3 | - | - | - | 9 | 15 | 3 | 25 |
| 2022 | 20 | 5 | 18 | 7 | 13 | - | - | 2 | 165 | 575 | 35 | 10 |

Elsewhere in the first winter period records of two or more included two offshore at Worthing on 23 Jan and three on 22 and 28 Feb, two at Birling Gap on 11 and 28 Feb and three immatures at Brighton Marina on 14 Mar.

In April and May singles were seen from Splash Point (Seaford) on 13 Apr and 1 and 9 May, Pett Level on 18 Apr, Chichester Hbr on the 25th, Brighton on 2 May and Beachy Head on the 26th. In summer, singles were seen from Worthing on 5 Jun and Sovereign Hbr (Eastbourne) on 9 Aug.

In autumn, records of two or more included Splash Point (two on 12 Sep), Climping Gap (four on 28 Sep) and Pagham Hbr (five on 8 Oct). In the second winter period singles were reported from Worthing on 2 Nov, Splash Point on 4 Nov and Pagham Hbr on 3 Dec. [L Smith]

## Glossy Ibis *Plegadis falcinellus*

***Very scarce but increasing visitor.***

In January there were singles at Pett Level on the 14th (SJ Message) and Arundel WWT from the 23rd until 14 Feb (PS Bowley) whilst at Pagham Hbr there was one from the 16th to the 27th (A House, A Wilkes), two on the 28th and 29th (G Hicks) and then six from the 30th (S Hill, CR Janman *et al.*). The six remained at Pagham Hbr until 13 Mar decreasing to four on the 14th, three on the 17th and two until the 24th. There were no further records until 7 May when there was one at Rye Hbr (I Bradshaw). Two were seen intermittently at Thorney Deeps from 1 to 30 Jun (CB & MA Collins).

Singles at Medmerry between 29 Jul and 15 Sep (D Rimes), Pagham Hbr on 1 Aug (DK Campbell) and Sidlesham Ferry on 2 Aug (A House) seem likely to have been the same bird. Different however were one at Bewl Water on 26 Aug (M Hicks), one at Jury's Gap on 2 Oct (S Bain) and two at Charleston Reedbed from 2 to 6 Dec (P Martin).

Assuming 16 birds were recorded in 2022, the county total moves on to approximately 102, of which 60 have been this century. [P James]



*Glossy Ibis, Medmerry, 19 Aug (Bob Brewer)*

## Spoonbill *Platalea leucorodia*

***Very scarce visitor; most frequent in summer and autumn. Amber-listed species of medium conservation concern. Schedule 1 species.***

The approximate totals in each month and the 10-year averages are shown in the following table.

| | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| County total 2022 | 3 | 3 | 5 | 1 | 1 | 3 | 5 | 6 | 12 | 8 | 1 | 1 |
| Average county total 2012-2021 | 3 | 2 | 5 | 7 | 5 | 3 | 2 | 3 | 9 | 11 | 3 | 2 |

Long-staying individuals from 2021 remained in the Pagham Hbr/Medmerry area until 9 Feb, and at Rye Hbr until 20 Mar. Other than these, one was seen flying over Scotney GP on 3 Feb, and

in March, one was at West Rise Marsh (Eastbourne) on the 5th, two flew east past Worthing on the 10th and one was seen passing both Selsey Bill and Worthing on the 15th.

Oddly, there was just one in April, at Rye Hbr on the 17th, and two in May also from Rye Hbr, where one was present on the 1st and 15th, with one there on 17 Jun. One at Pulborough Brooks remained there from 23 Jun until 3 Jul. Another one was at Rye Hbr from 14 to 21 Jul, whilst two, and then three toured the PaghamHbr/Medmerry area on the 27th. There were no more until four turned up at Pett Level on 23 Aug, with one to four recorded almost daily there and at nearby Rye Hbr, (including a report of six at the former site on 10 Sep) until 8 Oct, after which just one remained to the year's end.

Elsewhere, there were surprisingly few during the autumn, with two seen circling over Beachy Head on 26 Aug, two that remarkably dropped onto the exposed rocks and shingle a mile offshore at Selsey Bill before heading east on 10 Sep, one in Pagham Hbr on 12 Sep, two adults that flew west at Climping on 17 Sep, three at Medmerry the following day, and several subsequent reports of one in that area until 1 Oct. One was at Scotney GP on 9 Oct and finally two at Weir Wood Res on 20 and 21 Oct, with one still present on the 22nd. [A House]

## Eurasian Bittern *Botaurus stellaris*

***Scarce winter visitor; rare outside the winter months. Amber-listed species of medium conservation concern. Schedule 1 species. Section 41.***

The monthly totals and the 10-year average are shown in the following table.

| | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| County total 2022 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| County average 2012-2021 | 4 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |

It was a really poor year for the species, At Rye Hbr just one was reported on a single date in March, two dates in April, two dates in May and on three dates in June, with booming heard just once there on 14 May. One seen sitting out on the edge of a reed-bed there on 15 Dec was the sole record in the second half of the year.

The only other record was of one on the roadside verge of the Arundel by-pass on 30 Apr. This was the same date as a bird was seen flying over Seaford last year, suggesting that maybe a bit of late, and largely undetected, migration takes place at this time of year. [A House]

## Night-heron *Nycticorax nycticorax*

***Rare vagrant.***

An adult at Waltham Brooks on 4 Jul (P Davy, MS Phelps) was only the fourth to be recorded in the county since 2012, the most recent also being at Waltham Brooks (May 2019). An accessible, long-staying individual would seem overdue. The county total moves on to 39, of which 11 have been this century with arrival dates in April (3), May (3), July (2) and August (3). [P James]

## Squacco Heron *Ardeola ralloides*

***Very rare vagrant.***

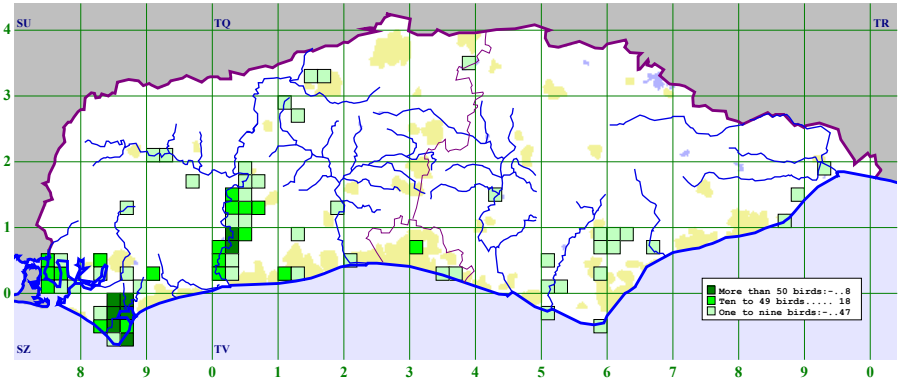
An adult stayed around the North Wall area at Pagham Hbr between 29 Jul and 19 Aug (S Frettsome, T Morgan, RE Smith), inviting speculation that the bird from 2019 may have returned. However, there were no sightings in 2020 or 2021 and nothing visibly identified it as the same individual, so it is reasonable to assume that the 2022 record involved a new bird, the eleventh for Sussex. The record has been accepted by BBRC. [DK Campbell]

## Cattle Egret

***Bubulcus ibis***

***Scarce resident; increasing visitor and bred for the first time in 2020. Amber-listed species of medium conservation concern.***

Cattle Egrets were recorded from 73 tetrads, an increase from 59 in 2021. The bulk of the records were from the Selsey Peninsula and the Arun Valley as shown in the following distribution map.




Maximum monthly counts, including some further sites, are shown in the following table.

| | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Chichester Hbr | 2 | 3 | 9 | 13 | 8 | 10 | 11 | 14 | 15 | 2 | 2 | 3 |
| Selsey Peninsula | 50 | 52 | 56 | 56 | 20 | 25 | 59 | 62 | 30 | 50 | 75 | 20 |
| Arun Valley | 7 | 6 | 6 | 5 | 8 | 12 | 37 | 73 | 82 | 45 | 44 | 35 |
| Cuckmere Valley | - | - | - | 1 | 1 | - | - | - | - | 1 | - | 1 |
| Pevensey Levels area | 3 | 1 | 5 | 2 | - | - | 1 | - | 1 | 4 | 4 | 3 |
| Rye Bay area | 1 | - | - | - | 1 | - | - | - | 3 | 6 | - | 1 |

In the first winter period a mobile flock of up to 56 moved around fields on the Selsey Peninsula, favouring Marsh Fm (Sidlesham) and Pagham Hbr, and roosting in Owl Copse. In Chichester Hbr there were nine at Emsworth Hbr on 9 Mar and a few records from Thorney Island (maximum of four on the 17th). Six or seven were seen regularly in the Arun Valley area. Elsewhere one was at Burton MP on 10 Jan and four going to roost on 1 and 14 Feb. One at Goose Green (Warnham) on 26 Feb was later seen under a garden bird feeder and was then at Warnham LNR until 25 Mar roosting with the Little Egrets.

Breeding was confirmed at Pagham Hbr, with a remarkable 14 nests in the Little Egret colony at Owl Copse, where 56 were counted in the roost on 15 Apr. Throughout this period birds were seen at the other main sites and, in addition, at Cowdray Park (Midhurst), Beachy Head and Combe Valley CP (two from 19 Apr to 8 May).

Post breeding small groups and feeding flocks of 50 or more moved around the Selsey Peninsula and Arun Valley with a maximum of 62 at Pagham Hbr on 27 Aug, 37 on water meadows at Arundel on 7 Jul and 73 in the roost at Arundel WWT on 31 Aug. On 30 Jul 26 flew west over Goring and three were at Weir Wood Res on 20 Aug.

In the autumn and the second winter period small groups and larger feeding flocks were seen regularly foraging with cattle in the Chichester Hbr area, mainly Thorney Island, and on the Selsey Peninsula. There was a maximum of 75 in the fields around Marsh Fm on 18 Nov.

The numbers in the Arun Valley were much higher than the six or seven in 2021 with peaks of 82 at Offham on 9 Sep, 66 on the Arundel water meadows on the 20th and 35 at Arundel WWT on 7 Dec. One or two were seen regularly at Pulborough Brooks, with seven on 1 Sep and three on 19 and 20 Oct. Elsewhere birds were seen at Singleton (two on 14 Dec), Ovingdean (one or two between 16 and 31 Dec). Further east there were a few sightings from Rye Hbr (maximum of three on 5 Oct) and Pett Level (maximum of six on 7 Oct). [L Smith]



*Cattle Egret, Medmerry, 3 June (Bob Brewer)*

## Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea*

***Fairly common resident.***

Grey Herons were recorded from 411 tetrads (43%), more than the 10-year average of 341. They were recorded in 40 (16%) of 254 gardens participating in the GBW surveyed during the whole year. The monthly WeBS counts at the principal sites are shown in the table below. The counts were higher than the 10-year average in all months except February.

| | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| County total | 151 | 101 | 146 | 146 | 96 | 109 | 110 | 116 | 153 | 255 | 172 | 132 |
| Chichester Hbr | 15 | 14 | 15 | 14 | 10 | 11 | 2 | 14 | 27 | 90 | 25 | 24 |
| Arun Valley N of Arundel | 14 | nc | 12 | 16 | 9 | 10 | 9 | 4 | 21 | 30 | 25 | 24 |
| Weir Wood Res | 14 | 27 | 35 | 27 | 22 | 18 | 34 | 24 | 15 | 7 | 3 | 2 |
| Rye Bay | 18 | 1 | 6 | 18 | 4 | 14 | 4 | 15 | 14 | 18 | 20 | 11 |
| Average county total 2012-2021 | 101 | 114 | 122 | 85 | 81 | 80 | 92 | 101 | 137 | 140 | 121 | 107 |

Away from heronries, large reservoirs and harbours, most records were of one to three at ponds, streams and marshy areas. In the first winter period, in addition to the WeBS, there were 12 each at Lewes Brooks on 1 Jan, at Cuckmere Haven on the 3rd and at Warnham LNR on 3 Feb, 13 at Charleston Reedbed on the 9th and 16 at Northpark Wood (Parham) on the 22nd.

During the breeding season 310 nests were counted at 32 sites as part of the BTO Heronries Survey, the details are in the table below. This compares with 297 nests at 35 sites in 2021. Breeding was reported from two new sites: Drayton House (Chichester GP) and Pett Level.

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Thorney Island Little Deeps | 3 | Warnham LNR | 36 | Troutbeck (Eridge) | 3 |
| Itchenor (Ch) | 0 | Stretham Manor (Henfield) | 2 | Hampden Park (Eastbourne) | 6 |
| Old Park Wood (Fishbourne) | 8 | Badgerhole Shaw (Coombes) | 5 | Glyndley Manor (Hailsham) | 19 |
| Norton Priory | 0 | Hammonds Mill Fm (Burgess Hill) | 3 | Wadhurst Park Lake | 8 |
| Owl Copse (Pagham Hbr) | 5 | Ardingly Res | 17 | Wartling | 9 |
| Chichester GP Drayton House | 2 | Weir Wood Res | 46 | Burwash | 18 |
| Hoe Farm (Flansham) | 7 | Rodmell/Southease, R Ouse | 5 | Combe Valley CP | 5 |
| First Wood (Littlehampton) | 2 | Decoy Pond (Firle Park) | 4 | Alder Shaw (Brede Level) | 5 |
| Warningcamp | 4 | Hempstead Wood (Uckfield) | 5 | Pett Level (Carter's Fm) | 1 |
| Northpark Wood (Parham) | 6 | Cuckmere Valley (2 sites) | 3 | Winchelsea | 17 |
| Ham Manor GC (Angmering) | 0 | Hadlow Down | 7 | Bosney Farm (Iden) | 0 |
| Kneppmill Pond | 35 | Old Park (Eridge) | 13 | Houghton Green (Playden) | 1 |

In autumn 12 were seen on 2 Oct during a 4 km walk round Medmerry, and an unusual flock of 13 flew over The Ridge (Ashdown Forest) on the12th.

In the second winter period the highest non-WeBS counts were ten at Lewes Brooks on 18 Nov and nine in the lower Adur Valley on three dates in November. On the 13th Nov six were feeding on the exposed mud and pools in the recently drained Drayton House North GP. [L Smith]

## Purple Heron *Ardea purpurea*

***Rare vagrant. Schedule 1 species.***

It was a remarkable year for this overshooting southern heron with a total of five recorded, comprising an adult in ditches north of Charleston Reedbed on 25 Apr (A Harris *et al.*), one along the west side of the lower Cuckmere Valley on 8 May (NJN Pope), a first summer at Castle Water (Rye Hbr) on 28 and 29 Jul and again on 9 Aug (DR King, J Tomlinson), a juvenile at Weir Wood Res on 28 Aug (A Gray *et al.*) and a juvenile seen in flight over Ashlye Close (Patcham) on 30 Oct (TJ Toohig). The county total moves on to 77, of which 29 have been this century. [P James]

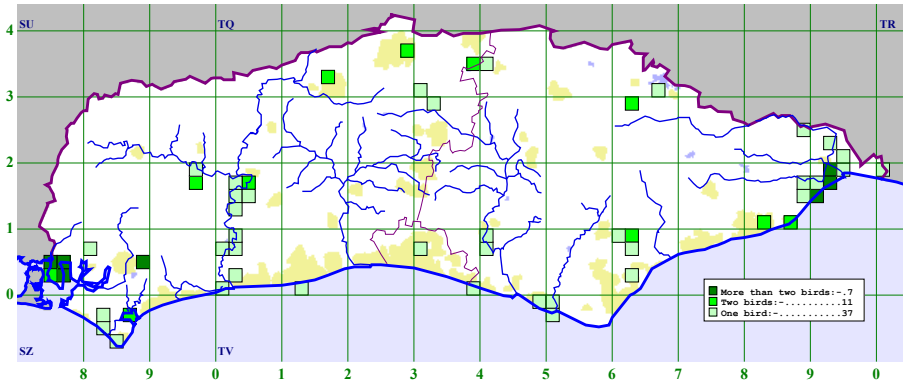


*Purple Heron, Litlington, 25 April (James Wooldridge)*

## Great White Egret *Ardea alba*

***Scarce but increasing visitor. Amber-listed species of medium conservation concern.***

Great White Egrets were recorded in 55 tetrads (5.3%), fewer than the high of 80 tetrads in 2020. The map shows where most were found.



There was a stable population at Rye Hbr throughout the year, with a maximum of eight recorded on 1 Aug, while each winter period had a maximum of five. It wasn't until the second half of the year that Great White Egrets took up some form of residence in Chichester Hbr, with a maximum count of four at Thorney Island on 25 Sep. At Chichester GP, one of the Drayton House pits was drained for a while and attracted many herons. On 13 Nov four Great White Egrets were there and four again on 4 Dec, with two or three birds present almost continually in the interim and occasional singles on the adjacent pit.

Coastal movement included two E at Hastings on 3 Apr, one E at Brighton on 1 May, one W at Splash Point (Seaford) on 3 May and one E at Brighton on 8 Aug. In addition, one flew in off the sea at Selsey Bill on 9 Apr. There was also an unusual record of two flying low over Crawley on 20 Oct.

There was no suggestion of possible breeding. Sightings of this species will likely increase further in Sussex in future. [MR Eade]

## Little Egret *Egretta garzetta*

***Scarce and increasing resident and probably scarce autumn visitor; status as winter visitor uncertain.***

Little Egrets were recorded from 222 tetrads (23%), fewer than the record high in 2021 but more than the 10-year average of 190. Birds are seen throughout the year, mainly alone, along the coast in all the estuaries and river valleys, with the highest numbers at Chichester Hbr, Pagham Hbr, the Arun, Adur and Cuckmere Valleys, Pett Level and Rye Hbr.

The monthly WeBS counts at the principal sites are shown in the table below. The numbers show an increase over the 10-year average in the latter part of the year.

| | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| County total | 120 | 73 | 160 | 177 | 95 | 161 | 155 | 195 | 387 | 356 | 194 | 116 |
| Chichester Hbr | 60 | 42 | 64 | 76 | 46 | 70 | 40 | 53 | 238 | 221 | 77 | 61 |
| Pagham Hbr | 4 | 5 | 13 | 19 | 6 | 31 | 30 | 42 | 28 | 12 | 14 | 3 |
| Rye Bay | 11 | 5 | 24 | 33 | 9 | 15 | 26 | 32 | 46 | 47 | 25 | 20 |
| Average county total 2012-2021 | 73 | 78 | 110 | 67 | 59 | 85 | 156 | 202 | 322 | 281 | 157 | 96 |

In the first winter period, high counts in addition to the WeBS were at Burton MP (17 on 19 Jan and 18 on 1 Feb) and Cuckmere Haven (22 on 6 Feb).

During the breeding season at least 46 occupied nests were counted at nine sites, compared with 65 nests at nine colonies in 2021. The number of nests may be an underestimate as they are difficult to count in the dense foliage at some sites. The details are in the table below.

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Thorney Island Little Deeps | 3 | Warningcamp (Arundel) | 2 | Cuckmere Valley/Friston Forest | 1 |
| Old Park Wood (Fishbourne) | 3 | Badgerhole Shaw (Coombes) | 9 | Hampden Lakes (Eastbourne) | 3 |
| Owl Copse (Pagham Hbr) | 12 | Rodmell/Southease (R Ouse) | 5 | Rye Hbr (Castle Point) | 8 |

Post breeding concentrations during August through to October included Thorney Island (30 throughout but 80 on 9 Oct and 103 on the 10th), Pagham Hbr (100 on 7 Aug), and Cuckmere Haven (56 on 10 Sep). On 3 Oct, 23 were on the beach at Goring. In the second winter period high non-WeBS counts included 26 at Arundel WWT on 9 Nov, and 20 each at Cuckmere Haven on 19 Nov and at Pulborough Brooks on 6 Dec. [L Smith]

## Osprey *Pandion haliaetus*

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

The approximate monthly totals are shown in the following table and compared with the average for the previous decade.

| | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| No. of birds 2022 | 4 | 10 | 4 | 2 | 1 | 8 | 18 | 5 | 2 |
| Average county total 2012-2021 | 3 | 8 | 8 | 3 | 2 | 14 | 19 | 6 | 0 |

The first Osprey of the spring was one that came in off the sea and headed east over Brighton seafront on 10 Mar; this is the third earliest arrival date recorded in the last ten years (the 10-year average arrival date is 23 Mar). The next was at Weir Wood Res, a traditional site for Ospreys, on 19 Mar and it seems likely that this was the one that accounted for many records there through the spring and summer months and into the autumn. The first in West Sussex was one at Tilgate Forest on 28 Mar whilst another was at Waltham Brooks on the 29th. There were two different birds at Pilsey Sands (Chichester Hbr) on 4 and 5 Apr.

In the summer period the long staying bird at Weir Wood Res was noted nearby at Sharpthorne on 3 Jun, southbound migrants were at Bewl Water on 12 Aug and two were seen together at Pilsey Island on the 24th. One was at Medmerry on 31 Aug and this well-watched bird remained until 9 Sep.

Outward migration continued with one heading south from Selsey Bill on 9 Sep, another was fishing offshore before moving west there on the 10th and one was also noted distantly on the 18th. The largest group count of the year was of three at Thorney Island on 22 Sep, at least one of which was a juvenile. Individuals continued to be recorded into the late autumn at sites such as Pagham Hbr, Pulborough Brooks and Pevensey Levels. The last sighting of the year was appropriately at Weir Wood Res where one was noted on 5 Nov, the third latest departure date in the last ten years and 11 days later than the 10-year average last date. [BGR Ives]

## Honey-buzzard *Pernis apivorus*

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

There were no sightings of coastal migrants in May, but in the early breeding season, individuals were seen flying north-east over Brighton in June on the 13th, 15th and 17th, all presumably non-breeders. It was a record breeding season, with ten confirmed breeding pairs and five non-breeding pairs. In addition, between 25 and 35 other adults were seen in suitable habitat during the breeding season, the identification of different individuals being based mainly on photographs. Five young were ringed, two at each of two nests and one at a third nest.

In the late summer and autumn, a remarkable total of about 56 migrants were seen at or near the coast. The removal of Honey-buzzard as a description species in Sussex certainly contributed to this high number, though it does genuinely seem to have been an exceptional autumn for the species. The first was at Beachy Head on 18 Aug and the last at Pagham Hbr on 18 Oct. The highest daily totals were four at Brighton on 27 Aug and 11 Sep, and four at Beachy Head, also on 11 Sep. At least seven of these autumn migrants were juveniles, the first two being seen at Brighton on 9 Sep and the last also there, on 28 Sep. [M Mallalieu]



*Honey-buzzard, Beachy Head, 18 August (Alex Brookes)*

## Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus*

***Common resident and passage migrant. Amber-listed species of medium conservation concern.***

Sparrowhawks were recorded in 423 tetrads (44%), compared to the 10-year average of 392. They were recorded in 49% of participating gardens during the GBW and during the early year SWBS, they were encountered in 7% of squares studied with a maximum of two at Edburton on 28 Jan.

Breeding was confirmed in only six tetrads and probable in 17, significantly fewer than the 20 and 28, respectively, recorded in 2021. Display was first observed on 9 Feb at Warnham LNR, a male was seen carrying food to a nest site on 28 May at Thorney Island and the first juveniles were seen and heard on 31 Jul at Castle Hill (Falmer). During the BBS, the species was found in 7.6% of squares surveyed with only singles observed.

The highest counts in August and September were of only three (at Kingley Vale, Climping Gap, The Burgh, Brighton, Beachy Head and Rye Hbr) but four were at Pett Level on 29 Sep. There were then no counts higher than three, with most records of one, during the rest of the year. In the late year SWBS, Sparrowhawks were encountered in 3.6% of squares surveyed with only singles seen.

There were no records of birds flying in off or out to sea. Prey species caught included Starling, Robin and House Sparrow. [MJ Chattaway]



*Sparrowhawk, Seaford, 24 April (Bob Eade)*

## Goshawk *Accipiter gentilis*

***Scarce but increasing resident. Schedule 1 species.***

At least 50 territories were found, the same as in 2021, and 12 pairs were confirmed breeding. However, there was much less effort expended in monitoring the population compared to recent years and the true population may now be over 60 pairs. In some parts of the county, this is now the most frequently seen bird of prey after Common Buzzard. The core breeding areas are the western Weald, parts of the South Downs, and the Weald of central and eastern Sussex. Extensive mature coniferous and mixed woodland is preferred, but there is evidence that the species is starting to spread into less densely wooded areas. Almost all records throughout the year came from within the breeding range although there was a remarkable record of a juvenile male flying out to sea from Pagham Hbr at 1459 hr on 28 Sep, the first evidence from Sussex of migration across the English Channel.

About 31 different juveniles were seen in the summer and autumn. The first fledged young were in trees near a nest on 15 Jun and a juvenile was flying above the canopy at this location on 4 Jul. Prey items recorded included juvenile Common Buzzard, Corvus spp., Jay, Magpie, Great Spotted Woodpecker and Grey Squirrel. Unsuccessful pursuits of Woodpigeon, Stock Dove and Chaffinch were also recorded. [M Mallalieu]

## Marsh Harrier *Circus aeruginosus*

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

Marsh Harriers were recorded in 78 tetrads (8.2%) compared to the 10-year average of 68 (range 50 - 86). Records were received in every month of the year from Thorney Deeps, Pagham Hbr, the Arun Valley, Pett Level and Rye Hbr. Approximate numbers of birds in Sussex are shown in the following table and in each month, except May, the figures are higher than the 10-year average.

| | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| No. of birds | 25 | 22 | 21 | 19 | 11 | 14 | 21 | 20 | 28 | 25 | 20 | 33 |
| Average county total 2012-2021 | 22 | 18 | 17 | 14 | 13 | 12 | 12 | 16 | 21 | 17 | 19 | 24 |

Most records in the first winter period were from the above named sites with the highest counts being seven in the Arundel area on 12 and 28 Jan, six at Pett Level on 27 Feb and five at Rye Hbr on 25 Jan. An adult male was seen to fly in off the sea on 22 Mar at Brighton Marina and presumably the same was seen over Ovingdean.

Breeding was confirmed at two East Sussex sites with two fledged young seen at each. At one West Sussex site, three young fledged. At a second West Sussex site, an adult was seen with food but no further details are available and at a third site, display and regular food carrying into a reedbed was noted, with two juveniles flying from June that were considered highly likely to be from a successful nest there.

In August, the first sign of autumn passage was one high over the sea off Climping drifting west on the 4th. From the 6th, juveniles began to be seen in a number of locations including Medmerry, Pulborough Brooks, Chichester Hbr, the Parham Estate and at Worthing where one flew in off the sea on the 10th. One surprised the observer by rising from woodland at Bedham (Fittleworth) on the 11th, an unusual location. Most September records were from the usual broad sites with up to seven in the Arun Valley, but five and three flew east over Brighton on the 9th and 11th, respectively. Also on the 11th, two were at Beachy Head. Another two were there on the 29th. Singles were seen at Cissbury on the 14th and 30th and at Climping Gap on the 17th.

Thereafter until the end of the year, records were from the usual sites. In October, the highest count was ten in the Arundel area on the 1st. Numbers peaked there at 13 on 20 Dec. Maximum counts elsewhere were: five at Pulborough Brooks on 18 Nov; four in the Amberley Wild Brooks area and at Pett Level on several dates and Pagham Hbr on 26 Oct; and three at Thorney Island, Chichester Hbr and Rye Hbr on multiple dates, West Rise Marsh (Eastbourne) on 13 Dec and Pevensey Levels on 24 Dec. [MJ Chattaway]

## Hen Harrier *Circus cyaneus*

***Scarce winter visitor and passage migrant. Red-listed species of high conservation concern. Schedule 1 species. Section 41.***

Hen Harriers were recorded in only 35 tetrads (3.8%) compared to the 10-year average of 43 (range 34 - 62). The conservative sum of the estimated monthly totals shown in the following table is only 39. Few annual totals over the previous ten years were lower (range 33 - 57). Unfortunately, the species continues to suffer from persecution on some grouse shooting estates in northern Britain which presumably influences the numbers of birds in Sussex.

| | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| County total | 7 | 4 | 6 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 4 | 5 | 7 |
| Average county total 2012-2021 | 7 | 6 | 4 | 4 | 2 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 6 | 7 | 6 |

All observations in January were of singles except for two seen at Waltham Brooks on the 1st and 2nd. Most records for the month were from the Arun Valley and West Sussex downland. Where indicated by observers, all were ringtails except for males at Shripney (Bognor Regis) on the 16th and Ashdown Forest from the 26th into March. One was seen at Thorney Island on the 19th and 28th. In February, all sightings were of singles, including at Henfield on the 19th, except for two at The Burgh on the 5th. The Ashdown Forest male was reported intermittently and was also present

in fields near Weir Wood Res on 14 Feb. In March, sightings were predominantly from the Arun Valley and were mostly of one bird but two were seen at Findon on the 15th and probably the same two at Steyning Roundhill on the 22nd. A male was at Rye Hbr on the 4th. The last report from Ashdown Forest was on the 8th but it or another was at Weir Wood Res on the 28th. All April records were from the Arun Valley (5th to 19th) and may relate to the same ringtail.

There was a male at Pulborough Brooks on 23 May followed by records of one from Friston Forest on 2 Jun, 1 W offshore at Selsey Bill on 3 Jul and one at Beachy Head on 20 Aug.

Autumn records were few: one at Rye Hbr on 17 Sep and 8 Oct; one at Rackham on 9 Oct; one on Ashdown Forest and Ashurstwood (Forest Row) on 12 Oct that were likely to be the same bird; and one at Medmerry on 18 Oct. Second winter period records were mostly from the Arun Valley and West Sussex downland and were all of singles but probably involved three birds including a male. Other locations were: Pevensey Levels on 14 and 26 Nov and 19 and 24 Dec; Selsey Bill on 17 Nov; Rye Hbr on 11 Dec; Lewes Brooks on 14 Dec; and West Marden on 19 Dec. [MJ Chattaway]

## Red Kite *Milvus milvus*

***Scarce or fairly common breeding resident (first bred in 2004) and fairly common and increasing visitor. Schedule 1 species.***

Red Kites were recorded in 437 tetrads (46%), the highest number ever; the 10-year average being 284 with the vast majority of records from inland sites and west of a line between Beachy Head and Ashdown Forest.

In the first winter period the only double-figure counts were on downland between Storrington and Burpham where 35 were counted on 9 Jan, as part of a pan-European Red Kite roost survey, and on the 22nd when 50 were seen to gather from a wide area before taking to skies together enabling an accurate count to be made. On 9 Feb three were seen thermalling with three Common Buzzards over Pagham Hbr, where they can still be a relatively scarce bird, and on 14 Mar one was being harassed by a Short-eared Owl at Thorney Island. Many inland sites held one to four birds in this period. In the early SWBS they were recorded in 6% of squares surveyed with a maximum of two. During March 120 were seen flying over Brighton with a peak of 19 E on the 25th. Coastal movement was also seen at Beachy Head; initially seven on 17 Mar, then eight on the 21st and 11 on the 23rd. One came in off the sea at Selsey Bill on 17 Jul. As in previous years it is difficult to be certain if any or all of these birds are genuine migrants or dispersing birds from the UK population looking to set up new territories. In this context an orange wing-tagged individual seen at Hastings CP on 19 Apr originated from either Yorkshire or Cumbria.

Breeding was confirmed in three tetrads, two in West Sussex and one in East Sussex and probable in a further eight tetrads. The county population is far higher, being estimated in the 2020 Sussex Bird Report at perhaps over 100 pairs.

The highest count of the late summer period was of eight at the Parham Estate on 21 Aug and seven was notable at Danehill (Ashdown Forest) on 10 Aug. In the SDFBI summer survey Red Kites were found in 34% of the squares studied. Sightings of interactions in the autumn included two being harassed by a Marsh Harrier at Thorney Island on 11 Oct and one pursuing a Kestrel at Pulborough Brooks on the 15th.

In the second winter period it was again the West Sussex downland where the largest numbers were seen with 56 noted coming into roost there on 30 Nov. In the late year SWBS Red Kites were found in 6.5% of squares surveyed whilst in the same period SDFBI they were found in 33% of the squares surveyed. [BGR Ives]



*Red Kite, Beachy Head, 18 April (Laurence Pitcher)*

## Black Kite *Milvus migrans*

***Rare vagrant.***

There were three records in 2022: 1 N over Iford Hill on 19 Apr (AJ Williams), 1 NNE over Brighton seafront near the i360 on 22 Apr (IJ Whitcomb) and 1 N over the Discovery Centre at Rye Hbr on 15 May (CH Dean). The county total moves on to 52, of which 33 have been this century. [P James]

## White-tailed Eagle *Haliaeetus albicilla*

***Rare vagrant. Reintroduction scheme on the Isle of Wight. Amber-listed species of high conservation concern. Schedule 1 species.***

Ten White-tailed Eagles from the Isle of Wight (IoW) reintroduction scheme were recorded in Sussex, in some cases only being detected through satellite telemetry, with one pair remaining resident for most of the year. From the 2021 cohort of releases, three females and two males were recorded, mostly making short visits, but G801 (female) made numerous excursions to both West and East Sussex and visited Chichester Hbr, the Selsey Peninsula, Newhaven and Burgess Hill. Also from this cohort, G816 (male) made several short visits to the South Downs National Park and G818 (female) settled for a short period west of Eastbourne before heading north and remaining in the Cairngorms for much of the year.

From the 2020 cohort, female G405 and male G471 formed a territorial pair during 2022, having met for the first time since their release on the 21 Mar in the South Downs and following a period of exploration across much of the county they settled in West Sussex. G463 (male) spent much of the year in continental Europe, on his return to the UK briefly travelled along the East Sussex coast and then up the Adur Valley, being seen over Brighton on 21 Mar. G466 (female) made two visits during late 2022, being displaced by the newly formed territorial pair in West Sussex on each occasion.

Information from southern England on prey of the IoW individuals shows that birds form the largest percentage of prey by number (36%) followed by mammals (26%) and fish (21%). The proportion of carrion reduces as the eagles become older, with predated and pirated prey forming a higher percentage of food as birds gain experience.

All the details above were provided by Steve Egerton-Read, project manager, and the SOS is very grateful to him and to the project for sharing them.

There were no sightings of eagles from established wild populations, but many observers saw released IoW ones with many records from all months except January; interesting notes included one seen flying west off Goring on 30 Apr being mobbed by three Arctic Skuas and one in the Arun valley on 18 May that was attacking a Fox. [M Mallalieu]



*White-tailed Eagle, Upper Dicker, 3 April (Laurence Pitcher)*

## Common Buzzard *Buteo buteo*

***Fairly common and increasing resident; probably scarce passage migrant.***

Common Buzzards were recorded in 680 tetrads (71%), the second highest number ever. There were 50 counts of ten or more; 37 in West Sussex and 13 in East Sussex, a similar distribution to recent years. The highest counts were 31 at Spithurst (Barcombe) on 10 Sep, 20 at Horsham on 17 Mar and 18 at Angmering on 15 Apr. During the early year SWBS, the species was found in 59% of squares surveyed with a maximum of seven at Oving. One appeared to fly in off the sea on 30 Mar at Cuckmere Haven.

Breeding was confirmed in 20 tetrads and probable in a further 69. A displaying pair was first noted at Mountfield on 28 Jan, nest building observed on 28 Feb at Steep Down (Lancing) and a bird was seen bringing unidentified prey to a nest site on 2 Apr at Wick Bottom (Woodingdean). The first fledgling was seen at Saltdean on the early date of 30 May with most records of fledged young being from late June through to late August. Four pairs nested at Thorney Island. During the BBS, Common Buzzards were encountered in 61% of squares studied with a maximum of seven at Pevensey Levels on 28 May.

There were only six double-figure counts in the summer months through to 31 Aug, the highest being 16 at Amberley Wild Brooks on 14 Aug and 12 at Ringmer on the 27 Aug. In September, apart from the 31 at Spithurst already highlighted, the highest counts were of ten at four sites. Most records until the end of the year were of fewer than five though the highest counts comprised 15 on the Norfolk Estate on 20 Nov and 11 at both Maynards Green on 9 Oct and Balcombe on 4 Dec. During the late year SWBS, encounters with Common Buzzards occurred in 48% of squares surveyed with a maximum of five at Almodington on 12 Nov.

A Common Buzzard was observed hawking dragonflies at Pulborough Brooks on 6 Jul. Other prey species recorded were a rabbit and earthworms. [MJ Chattaway]

## Barn Owl *Tyto alba*

***Fairly common resident. Schedule 1 species.***

Barn Owls were reported from 122 tetrads (13%), the lowest number this century and well down on the 10-year average of 179, but a large dataset was not available to the SOS, so this may not reflect a genuine decrease. Breeding was confirmed in only 11 tetrads and 54 other, confidential sites. Probable breeding was identified from six further tetrads and possible breeding from one.

2022 was not an apex breeding year. One hundred and thirty six chicks were ringed in Sussex Barn Owl Study Group boxes, producing a mean average brood size of 2.6 compared with an average brood size of 3.2 in 2021.

Normally a sedentary species, one adult re-trapped in a box at a south coast site had moved 25 km from a mid-Sussex box.

Prey recorded in boxes included Short-tailed Vole, Yellow-necked Mouse, Common Shrew, European Mole and Skylark. [TD Hallahan]

## Little Owl *Athene noctua*

***Fairly common but declining resident.***

Little Owls were recorded in only 38 tetrads (3.9%), the fewest on record and compared to the 10-year average of 65. There was confirmed breeding in only three sites: at Runcton (Chichester), Pagham Hbr and Warnham, and probable breeding at a further four. The Knepp Estate still proves to be the most reliable site to see this declining bird.

Intensive farming practices, the decline in invertebrate numbers, as well as competition for nesting sites by Jackdaws, may be contributing to this significant decline. [MR Eade]

## Long-eared Owl *Asio otus*

***Scarce resident and very scarce passage migrant and winter visitor.***

Long-eared Owls were recorded from six sites during the year, and at four of these during the first winter period. Three small roosts were located in an area of West Sussex downland that is a stronghold of this species and which has historically held a large communal roost of up to 12 birds,

although this roost now appears to have disbanded. Two were present at one roost site on 2 Jan, and at another nearby roost two more were noted between 2 Jan and 24 Jan, while a single bird was recorded at a further location on 5 Jan. In East Sussex a bird was discovered roosting in a gorse bush on downland on 3 Mar. No spring migrants were recorded.

Breeding season records were received from two sites with breeding success confirmed at both. An adult and three calling young were recorded between 14 May and 11 Jun at a scrubby downland site with the young roaming widely once fledged. Breeding success was also confirmed from a downland site on the edge of a housing estate where the distinctive call of a young bird was heard clearly through an open bedroom window on 28 May and 23 Jun.

No autumn migrants were seen, and no birds were recorded in the second winter period. This species is very rarely encountered by chance and without widespread and concerted recorder effort throughout suitable habitat it will continue to be under-recorded, so these records likely represent a significant understatement of the species true numbers and range in Sussex. [D Green]

## Short-eared Owl *Asio flammeus*

***Scarce winter visitor and passage migrant; last bred 1922. Amber-listed species of medium conservation concern.***

Short-eared Owls were recorded from 34 tetrads (3.7%) slightly lower than 2021 (38) and well below the 10-year average of 56.

The approximate monthly totals are shown in the following table.

| | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| West Sussex | 5 | 9 | 5 | 2 | 3 | | - | 3 | 2 | 5 | 9 |
| East Sussex | 4 | 3 | 2 | 2 | - | | 1 | 4 | 3 | 5 | - |
| Total no. of birds in 2022 | 9 | 12 | 7 | 4 | 3 | | 1 | 7 | 5 | 10 | 9 |
| Average county total 2012-2021 | 21 | 15 | 12 | 10 | 6 | | 4 | 6 | 17 | 17 | 19 |

Consistent first winter period sightings from West Sussex were from Thorney Island where four were seen on several occasions and seven on 25 Feb, and one at Pagham Hbr and Medmerry, whilst in East Sussex birds roaming the lower Cuckmere Valley were seen regularly with a peak of four on 12 Jan.

May records, presumably passage migrants, were of single birds from coastal locations: between the 2nd and 10th at Pagham Hbr, on the 6th at Medmerry and on the 11th at Ovingdean. Autumn and second winter reports were from nine sites in West Sussex and eight sites in East Sussex with the highest count of four roosting at Pilsey Island (Chichester Hbr) on 9 Dec. [TD Hallahan]

## Tawny Owl *Strix aluco*

***Common resident. Amber-listed species of medium conservation concern.***

Tawny Owls were recorded in 215 tetrads (23%), a decrease on the 253 in 2021 and close to the 10-year average of 217. They were recorded from 12% of participating gardens in the GBW during the year.

There was confirmed breeding in ten tetrads, probable breeding was identified in ten and possible in a further 31.

Pre-breeding season encounters involving more than two birds in the first winter period included four at Pagham Hbr and three at The Burgh, Arundel WWT, Pulborough Brooks and Ifield (Crawley).

The following table, showing the sum of the maximum monthly counts in each tetrad, demonstrates most were recorded in May, the month with the greatest difference from the 10-year average calculated in the same way.

| | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2022 | 47 | 18 | 47 | 40 | 81 | 38 | 26 | 45 | 42 | 42 | 38 | 31 |
| Average county total 2012-2021 | 37 | 30 | 34 | 39 | 62 | 47 | 31 | 35 | 39 | 39 | 37 | 34 |

In the autumn and second winter period records of four birds came from Pagham Hbr, Arundel Watermeadows, Storrington and Pulborough Brooks and three from Petworth Park, Weir Wood Res and Robertsbridge. [TD Hallahan]

## Hoopoe *Upupa epops*

***Very scarce spring and even scarcer autumn passage migrant; has bred. Schedule 1 species.***

As last year, there was no repeat of the extraordinary influx of Hoopoes in 2020, with just five recorded. The first was in Sheffield Forest on 22 May (M Alfred-Ranson), followed by one in a garden on Shoreham Beach on 2 Jun (C Cushing), a brief view of one in flight at Church Norton on 25 Jun (I Pitts) and then one in Singleton Forest on 13 Jul (KM Budd). There was one autumn record, at Seaford Head on 3 Sep (P Evans). [PJ Plant]



*Hoopoe, by Stephen Message*



*Kingfisher, Cuckmere Haven, 26 August (Gary Faulkner)*

## Kingfisher *Alcedo atthis*

***Fairly common resident and possibly very scarce winter visitor. Schedule 1 species.***

Kingfishers were recorded in 199 tetrads (21%), the most ever, compared to the 10-year average of 154.

They were recorded in every month of the year at Arundel WWT, Pulborough Brooks, Warnham LNR and Weir Wood Res and in 11 months at Pagham Hbr, Ardingly Res and Rye Hbr. In the first winter period most records were of one or two, but three were at Pagham Hbr on 16 Jan, Chichester GP on the 23rd and Arundel WWT on 21 Mar.

Confirmed breeding records came from Arundel WWT (the earliest of a bird with food on 10 May), Pagham Hbr, Burton MP, Warnham LNR, Weir Wood Res, Troutbeck (Eridge) (first fledglings on 4 Jun) and Mountfield. The highest summer counts were seven in the Brede Valley on 12 Aug and five at Arundel WWT on 15 Aug.

In the autumn there were counts of four from the lower Arun Valley, Arundel WWT, Pagham Hbr, Warnham LNR, Pett Level and Rye Hbr, For the second winter period counts were mainly of one or two with three from five locations. [T Seabrook]

## Bee-eater *Merops apiaster*

***Very scarce visitor, mainly in spring; bred once in 1955. Schedule 1 species.***

There were three records totalling six individuals in 2022 though none lingered. Two flew east at Beachy Head on 20 May (L Pitcher), three flew south-east over Angmering on 27 May (R Simpson) and one flew east over Blakers Park (Brighton) on 6 Aug (IJ Whitcomb). The total recorded this century moves on to at least 114 with records in all but two years since 2000. [P James]

## Wryneck *Jynx torquilla*

***Very scarce passage migrant; most in autumn; last bred in 1944. Schedule 1 species.***

It was a good year for the species with above average numbers in both spring and autumn and one staying until mid-November, as shown in the table below.

| | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2022 | 2 | - | - | - | 4 | 14 | 1 | 2 | 22 |
| Average county total 2012-2021 | 2 | <1 | - | - | 7 | 10 | 1 | <1 | 18 |

There were two spring records with one at Sheepcote Valley (Brighton) on 24 Apr and one at Rye Hbr on the 25th.

The autumn passage started slightly early with one at Sheepcote Valley on 16 and 17 Aug, one ringed at Pett Level on the 24th and singles at Telscombe on the 30th and Seaford Head on the 31st. Numbers increased in September with singles at Sheepcote Valley on the 2nd and 5th, Crowlink on the 2nd, Beachy Head on the 2nd, 3rd and 5th and Burgess Hill on the 3rd. One at Church Norton was present from the 4th to 6th with two on the 5th. Singles were at Cissbury from the 6th to 10th, Angmering on the 8th, Newhaven Tide Mills and South Stoke on the 11th, Upper Beeding on the 14th, Hastings CP and North Chailey on the 15th. There was a long staying bird at Church Norton from 19 Sep and last recorded on 1 Oct and one at Hodcombe (Beachy Head) on 29 Sep. Finally there was one South Heighton on 4 Nov and one that lingered in gardens at Barcombe Cross from 4 to 15 Nov, this being the latest date ever recorded in Sussex. [K Smith]



*Wryneck, Pagham Hbr, 24 September (Ads Bowley)*

## Lesser Spotted Woodpecker *Dryobates minor*

***Scarce resident. Red-listed species of high conservation concern. Section 41.***

The species was recorded in 35 tetrads in 2022, a small decrease from 2021. It was a good year for evidence of breeding which was confirmed in five tetrads, probable in six and possible in a further five.

In January and February there were records from six sites. At Pippingford Park (Ashdown Forest) there was one on 1 Jan, two on 12 Feb and one on 17 Feb and at Hindleap Warren (Ashdown Forest) one on 27 Feb. The male at Pulborough Brooks first reported in late 2021 was there on 3 Jan and on the 20th, 27th and 28th, was drumming on 2 Feb and still there on the 8th. At Worthlodge Forest there were singles on 10 Jan and the 27th, two drumming birds on 19 Feb and a single on the 22nd. Singles were at Brightling Down on 7 Feb and Tilgate Forest on the 22nd.

The first drumming bird was at Pulborough Brooks on 2 Feb (see above) but most drumming was reported in March and April with the last at Fernhurst on the very late date of 17 Jun.

During the breeding season from March to mid-June there were records from 28 sites thinly spread over Sussex: Ardingly College, Ashburnham Place (Battle), Ashdown Forest (four sites), Balcombe, Balls Cross (Kirdford), Bayham, Beckley Woods, Bells Yew Green, Brightling Down, Broadwater Warren, Burton MP, Clapham Wood, Cowdray Forest, Etchingham, Felpham, Fernhurst, Graffham Common, the Knepp Estate, Little Strudgate (Balcombe), Minepit Copse (Fernhurst), Netherfield Place, Oldhouse Warren, Three Corner Copse (Hove), Waltham Park and Westdean Woods.

On Ashdown Forest two nests were found, one successfully fledging three young and the other was probably successful but too high in a Beech tree to be inspected. Elsewhere in East Sussex four young were fledged from one nest. In West Sussex three young were fledged from one nest and at another site an adult was found with recently fledged young on 4 Jun suggesting a nest had been nearby. Also in West Sussex a male was discovered excavating a cavity on 11 Apr but this was not used. This bird drummed persistently until May suggesting that it had failed to find a female.

From mid-June until the end of the year there were records from eight sites, usually of single birds. Unusually, on 17 Jun, there were a male and female at Fernhurst with the male drumming. There was one at Mardens Hill (Ashdown Forest) on 13 Jul, at Brantridge Park (Balcombe) on the 21 Jul and 27 Aug, at Berwick on 26 Jul, one at Rackham Woods on 9 Oct and Danehill on 11 Oct. At Lordship Wood (Cripps Corner) there was one on 27 Aug and again on 13 Nov. There having been no records at Pulborough Brooks since February, one was there on 24 Sep with records thereafter in each month to the end of the year. [K Smith]

## Great Spotted Woodpecker *Dendrocopos major*

***Very common and increasing resident.***

The species was recorded in 612 tetrads (64%), slightly down from 2021, but more than the 10-year average of 565.

In the first winter period the highest timed counts were seven at Pulborough Brooks on 1 Jan, nine at Warnham LNR on the 2nd and seven at Lavington Common on the 17th. There were eight at Burton MP on 28 Feb and 7 Mar and nine at Pippingford Park (Ashdown Forest) on 14 Mar. In the early year SWBS, Great Spotted Woodpeckers were recorded in 58% of squares surveyed with a maximum of six at Pallingham. As now seems to be the norm, drumming was widespread from the beginning of the year with records from Barcombe Cross, Chelwood Vachery (Ashdown Forest), Knowlands Wood (Barcombe) and Wivelsfield on 1 Jan.

In April and May there were maximum counts of nine at Blackham (Hartfield) on 8 Apr, seven at Guildenhurst (Billingshurst) and Whites Green (Lurgashall) on the 24th and seven at Ifold on 31 May. There was confirmed breeding in 34 tetrads and probable breeding in a further 59, a small overall decrease from 2021. On RSPB reserves there were three pairs at Broadwater Warren, one at Pagham Hbr and seven at Pulborough Brooks. The highest summer counts were nine on the Knepp Estate on 12 Jun with six there on 26 and 30 Jul, six at Edburton on 19 Jun, eight at Northpark Wood (Parham) on 21 Jun and six at St Leonard's Forest on 20 Aug. In the BBS they were recorded in 70% of squares surveyed with a maximum of nine at Blackham reported above. The first fledgling was seen on 19 May at Steyning Levels.

In the second winter period there were six at Pulborough Brooks on 18 Nov and six at St Leonard's Forest on 24 Dec, the latter encountered during the late year SWBS where they were recorded in 48% of squares surveyed. At year end, drumming was reported at Knowlands Fm (Barcombe) on 11 Dec, Wivelsfield on the 11th and 18th and Waltham Brooks on the 24th.

The species is a frequent visitor to garden feeders and in 2022 was recorded in 173 (68%) of the 254 gardens contributing to the BTO Garden Bird Watch during the year. [K Smith]

## Green Woodpecker *Picus viridis*

***Common resident.***

Green Woodpeckers were recorded in 531 (55%) tetrads, similar numbers to 2021 and more than the 10-year average of 499. In the first winter period the highest counts were during timed surveys with six at the Knepp Estate on 1 Jan, five at Pulborough Brooks on the same day, six at Petworth Park on 2 Feb, seven at Hanlye (Cuckfield) on 3 Feb and five at Edburton on 3 Feb. Overall, in the early year SWBS, they were recorded in 41% of squares surveyed matching the 2021 results, with a maximum of seven mentioned above.

Breeding is greatly under-recorded but was confirmed in 19 tetrads, largely because of the presence of noisy or recently fledged young, and probable in a further 35, the same overall total as in 2021. There were single nests at Ford Prison, Fitzlea (Selham) and Little Common (Tillington). High territory counts included four on Thorney Island, five at Medmerry, five at Pulborough Brooks and five at Lavington Common. There were some high counts during the breeding season (April to June) usually during timed surveys or BBS surveys when eight was the maximum at Petworth Park on 7 Jun. Five were reported from the Knepp Estate on the 9th, 10th and 15th Apr, six at Fishbourne on the 9th, five at West Lavington (Midhurst) on the 18th, five at Boxgrove on the 19th, five at Pallingham (Pulborough) on the 23rd and five at Byworth (Petworth) on the 21st. The first fledglings were seen on 12 Jun at the Knepp Estate.

The highest late summer/autumn counts were nine at Northpark Wood (Parham) on 26 Jul, nine at the Knepp Estate on the 30th and eight at Edburton on the 31st. In the second winter period there were four each at Medmerry on 4 Oct, Church Norton on the 11th and 13th, Pulborough Brooks on 15th and 31st, Climping on the 15th, Pagham Hbr on the 18th, Northpark Wood (Parham) on the 25th, West Lavington on 25 Nov and Kingley Vale on the 30th. There were five on the Knepp Estate on 14 Oct, Petworth Park on 11 Nov and Edburton on 2 Dec. In the second winter period SWBS, Green Woodpeckers were recorded in 35% of squares surveyed with a maximum of five at Petworth Park on 19 Nov.

Green Woodpeckers were recorded in 89 (35%) of the 354 gardens contributing to the BTO Garden Bird Watch. [K Smith]

## Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus*

***Fairly common or common resident and passage migrant. Amber-listed species of medium conservation concern.***

Kestrels were recorded in 480 tetrads (50%), the highest since 2011. The 10-year average is 391. They were recorded in more tetrads than Sparrowhawk (423) but fewer than Common Buzzard (680). Most reports during the first winter period were of one or two though six were reported at three locations: Lychpole (Cissbury) on 5 Jan, Medmerry on 18 Mar and Thorney Island on 28 Mar. Four were at Cuckmere Haven on several dates. During the early year SWBS, they were found in 18% of squares surveyed with a maximum of three at Petworth Park.

Breeding was confirmed in 12 tetrads and probable in a further 21. Display was first reported on 3 Jan at Waltham Brooks and copulation noted on the early date of 22 Jan at Angmering. A bird with food was observed on 24 Mar at Pulborough Brooks and the first fledglings were seen there on 9 Jun, and the next day on the cliffs at Newhaven. Brood sizes reported were of either two or three. A nest was reported atop a power cable post at Rodmell Brooks. Two pairs were present at both Medmerry and Pulborough Brooks during the breeding season. During the BBS, Kestrels were recorded in 21% of squares surveyed with a maximum of three at Hartfield on 11 Apr.

The highest summer count was ten at Thorney Island on 26 Jul followed by seven at Petworth Park two days later and six at three further locations (Devils Dyke, Cuckmere Haven and Beachy Head). In September, there were seven at Beachy Head on both the 1st and 22nd, and Cissbury on the 17th. Ten were counted in the Arun Valley north of Arundel on 18 Oct but thereafter until the end of the year, the highest counts were seven in the Arun Valley on 17 Nov and six at Thorney Island on 13 Nov. During the late year SWBS, Kestrels were found in 22% of squares surveyed with a maximum of three at Steyning Roundhill on 8 Dec.

An unusual prey item was a slow worm caught by a Kestrel at Ashdown Forest on 8 Jul. At Weir Wood Res, there were several records of a female catching Pied Wagtails. [MJ Chattaway]

## Merlin *Falco columbarius*

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

Merlins were recorded in 41 tetrads (4.3%), fewer than the 10-year average of 46. They were noted in all months bar June and July. The approximate monthly totals are shown below.

| | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| No. of birds 2022 | 11 | 13 | 10 | 5 | 1 | - | - | 1 | 14 | 16 | 13 | 16 |
| Average county total 2012-2021 | 12 | 8 | 8 | 5 | 1 | - | - | 2 | 10 | 16 | 10 | 11 |

Birds recorded in the first week of January were at Rye and Pagham Harbours; both lingered at their respective sites throughout January and February. Notable sightings in this period were of one chasing Meadow Pipits on Ashdown Forest on 26 Jan, one hunting Starlings at Pulborough Brooks on 19 Feb and a pair working together that caught a Skylark at Thorney Island on 15 Mar.

There was little spring movement other than one possibly hunting offshore at Selsey Bill on 11 Apr and one moving north and then west at Splash Point (Seaford) on 9 May, the latter being the last record for the first half of the year. The only summer record was of one at Pagham Hbr on 14 Aug.

In the early autumn single Merlins were at Thorney Island, Pagham Hbr and Rye Hbr and by 9 Sep were back at Pulborough Brooks with one, notably, being harassed by two Hobbies there on the 14th. Incoming birds were noted at Selsey Bill on 11 and 14 Sep and one was at Beachy Head on 19

Sep. Two together were at Medmerry on 3 Oct whilst two were at Amberley Wildbrooks on the 22nd and these were possibly the two seen at Pulborough Brooks on 2 Nov. One flew in off the sea on 28 Oct at Elmer Rocks (Middleton-on-Sea).

Arrivals continued in the second winter period including one at Lewes Brooks on 3 Nov, one in from the sea at Selsey Bill on both the 5th and 10th and one at Widewater (Lancing) on the 8th. Later in this period a bird was recorded chasing waders at Pilsey Island (Chichester Hbr) on 26 Nov, two chased a Green Sandpiper at Brooklands (Worthing) on 15 Dec, and finally one was at Bewl Water on 29 Dec. [BGR Ives]

## Hobby *Falco subbuteo*

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

Hobbies were recorded in 166 tetrads (17%), more than the 10-year average of 157 (range 127 to 196). Birds were later arriving than in 2021 with no records in March. The first was at Waltham Brooks on 11 Apr, ten days later than the 10-year average first date. Incoming migrants were noted at Beachy Head on 18 Apr and at Selsey Bill on the 23rd, with three at Pulborough Brooks on the 25th, Rye Hbr on the 26th and Manxey Level (Pevensey Levels) the day after that. Four were seen to fly in off the sea at Selsey Bill on 2 May.

As spring progressed, Hobbies continued to be noted at the regular sites with noteworthy sightings including 17 on Pevensey Levels on 28 May during a BBS. There were also good counts at Weir Wood Res in this period with a maximum of 14 on 15 May, at least 11 of which lingered in the area until the 26th.

Summer records included one hunting House Martins at Bury on 9 Jul and another chasing Sand Martins at Rotherbridge Fm (Petworth) on the 28th.

Breeding was confirmed in five tetrads and probable or possible in a further 25. Two fledglings were noted near Woolbeding on 27 Aug, whilst on 28 Aug an adult was seen visiting a nest near Battle. In the Burwash area several fledglings were seen on the 29th and a family was noted near Groombridge on the 31st. A pair with a juvenile were watched at Broadwater Warren on the same day.

There were no large counts during the autumn; the highest being five at Amberley Wild Brooks on 10 Sep. Records tailed off in late autumn as birds returned to wintering grounds, with the last individual seen at Pett Level on 25 Oct, two days later than the 10-year average last date. [BGR Ives]

## Peregrine *Falco peregrinus*

***Scarce breeding resident. Schedule 1 species.***

It was another highly productive year for Peregrines overall. The species was recorded in 206 (22%) tetrads, similar to recent years and was confirmed as breeding in 12 tetrads with probable or possible breeding in a further 15. The population remains buoyant with a further increase in reported nest locations; successes were recorded in all types of habitat. Nesting attempts included sites on sea cliffs, inland quarries, pylons and various buildings such as castles, blocks of flats, industrial buildings, colleges and the Amex football stadium, showing the potential for this species to adapt to many habitats. There are annually varying numbers of successful fledglings, failure of eggs to hatch and early death of chicks can occur for many reasons, one of those is perhaps Avian Influenza, which seems to be gaining a foothold in some bird populations and will affect birds at the top of the food chain. One incident was noted where an adult female was observed feeding young but was later found dead near the nesting site. The presence of a third or even fourth bird at a nest site in the breeding season was recorded again; these intruders can influence normal hunting and incubating behaviours.

The nest boxes at Chichester and Sussex Heights produced chicks again. The pair at Chichester Cathedral laid four eggs between 27 Mar and 3 Apr. Two eggs hatched on 4 May with a third hatching on the 5th, but one had died by the 7th. The two remaining young, one male and one female, survived to fledging and were ringed on 25 May. The Sussex Heights nest box in Brighton fared a little better. Four eggs were laid between 16 and 23 Mar. The first hatched on 26 Apr followed by two more seen on the 28th and the fourth egg did not hatch. All three male young were ringed on 18 May.

Peregrines were observed hunting a range of prey, but not always successfully, these included Black-tailed Godwit, Greenshank, Teal, Woodcock, Magpie, Rook, Black-headed Gull, Oystercatcher, Lapwing, Starling, Racing and Feral Pigeons. Some other species were identified when the young were ringed and these included waders, plovers and woodpeckers, a varied diet.

Two adults were observed in the Emsworth Channel area, working as a pair to attack waders in August. Juveniles were also seen harassing waterfowl on several occasions in the Thorney Island area with one observer noting a juvenile male and female together 'causing havoc' in the area in October, perhaps the Chichester young? There was an interesting record of a Peregrine mobbing a White-tailed Eagle over Stakes Island (Chichester Hbr). Other mobbing records by Peregrines included a Great Black-backed Gull, numerous Ravens and also harassment of a Great White Egret. [J Franklin]

## Ring-necked Parakeet *Psittacula krameri*

***Scarce introduced resident; has bred.***

A continuing increase in observations with over 80 records throughout the year from 30 (3.1%) tetrads, the second highest on record. Sightings were all of one or two except for nine at Ifield MP on 20 May, 14 at Crawley on 21 Jun and eight at Gatwick Airport on 6 Dec.

As usual, the majority of sightings were either from the coastal towns (Worthing, Shoreham, Portslade, Brighton, Seaford and Eastbourne) or the Crawley/ Gatwick conurbation, although other records were received from the Angmering Park Estate, the Knepp Estate, Henfield, Cuckfield, Balcombe, Five Ashes and the Robertsbridge and Etchingham area. [A Podmore]

## Red-backed Shrike *Lanius collurio*

***Very scarce passage migrant; formerly a breeding summer visitor. Red-listed species of high conservation concern. Schedule 1 species.***

There were two records in 2022: a first-winter photographed at Alfriston on 21 Aug (EJC Cross, AM Schumann) and another first-winter at Medmerry from 25 Sep to 8 Oct (D Mead, H Rowe *et al.*). The latter was very confiding and was seen and photographed by many observers during its extended stay. The county total this century moves on to 59 with records in all but five years. The last blank year was 2014. [P James]

## Great Grey Shrike *Lanius excubitor*

***Very scarce winter visitor and passage migrant.***

Following an absence of this species in 2021 single Great Grey Shrikes were recorded from two locations. The first was at Black Down on four consecutive days from 9 to 12 Nov before disappearing to then reappear briefly on 12 Dec. The second, or possibly the same individual, was perched on wires near Weavers Down (Liss) on 24 Nov. [T Seabrook]



*Red-backed Shrike, Earnley, 1 October (Ads Bowley)*

## Golden Oriole *Oriolus oriolus*

***Rare passage migrant and summer visitor; may have bred in 1965. Schedule 1 species.***

At least four were recorded in 2022: a female/first summer male at Beachy Head on 14 May (L Pitcher), two but possibly as many as four at Winchelsea on 21 May (J Young) and one heard singing but not seen at Beachy Head on 8 Jun (ME & RH Charlwood). The county total this century moves on to 47 with records in all but four years. The last blank year was 2014. [P James]

## Jay *Garrulus glandarius*

***Very common resident.***

Jays were recorded in 537 (56%) tetrads, less than last year but above the 10-year average of 437. During the GBW, they were recorded in 127 (50%) of the participating gardens. In January and February, the SWBS recorded a total of 78 birds in 52 (35%) of the 149 squares surveyed. These figures suggest a slight reduction since last year but within the general variation of this widespread woodland species.

The BBS recorded 140 individuals in 84 (45%) of the squares surveyed. Breeding was confirmed in eight tetrads and was probable in a further 21. Mutual feeding was reported at Aldwick on 29 Mar. Carrying food was seen at Warnham LNR on 22 Apr and at Henfield on 8 May. Other means of confirming breeding were sightings of recent fledglings with the earliest being at Combe Valley CP on 21 Jun and the latest at Middleton-on-Sea on 3 Aug. There were no records of more than six during the summer.

In September and October, the highest number reported was eight at North Marden on 18 Oct. In the second winter period, the highest number reported was nine at West Lavington on 25 Nov. The SWBS recorded 98 birds spread over 47 (41%) of the 139 squares surveyed. [PK Holland]

## Magpie *Pica pica*

***Very common resident.***

Magpies were reported in 687 (71%) tetrads, slightly less than last year but above the 10-year average of 596. Through the year they were reported in 235 (93%) of the participating GBW gardens.

In the first winter period, 700 were recorded in the SWBS from 132 (89%) of squares surveyed. The highest count was 50 on 3 Jan at Cuckmere Haven. The next day, 28 were recorded at Hastings CP.

In the BBS, 1525 birds were recorded across 166 (90%) squares, a similar percentage to last year. Nesting activity was first reported on 2 Feb from Hove and building nests or carrying sticks was reported over the next three months especially from towns where the activity is more likely to be reported. Fledged young were first seen on 6 May at Warnham LNR and then were seen widely to 28 Jul when the last report was from Combe Valley CP. Breeding was confirmed from 16 tetrads and probable in a further 41, down from 23 and 58, respectively, last year. The highest count from April to September was 40 at Ferring on 20 Sep.

From 8 Oct to 12 Nov, some movements were reported from seawatchers at Selsey Bill with a maximum of 35 E on 12 Nov. A count of 20 was made at Goring Gap on 29 Nov. The late year SWBS recorded 671 over 128 (92%) squares surveyed.

On 31 Mar, one attacked and probably killed a brown rat at Warnham LNR. [PK Holland]

## Jackdaw *Coloeus monedula*

***Very common resident.***

For the third year in succession Jackdaws were recorded in 73% of the county tetrads. Yet, despite their undoubted widespread distribution, in 2022 there were none of the very high four-figure counts reported in previous years. In the first winter period, 100 or more were recorded at 27 sites with the highest counts being: up to 900 flying to roost on three occasions at Barcombe in January, 700 at Rye Hbr on 1 Jan, 500 at Pulborough WTW on 4 Feb, 350 at Mountfield on 1 Feb heading to roost, 300 at Cissbury on 16 Jan and 200 recorded heading to roost at Upper Beeding on 23 Jan. During the early year SWBS Jackdaws were present in 81% of squares studied with a maximum of 290 on 28 Feb at Firle.

During the BBS, 2964 were recorded across 86% of the squares surveyed with a maximum count of 164 at Petworth Park on 19 Apr. Breeding was confirmed in 19 tetrads and probable or possible in 82, with not much change to the previous three years.

Nesting behaviour was first observed on 19 Feb with birds investigating nesting holes at Pulborough Brooks. At Arlington Res on 3 Apr two pairs were seen using an owl box. Three pairs were recorded nesting in separate chimneys at East Grinstead on 15 Apr and one was recorded entering a chimney at Henfield on 2 May. The first young were heard calling from old tree holes on 13 May at the Knepp Estate, and at Weir Wood Res on the 24th two nestboxes were holding two young each. Along the cliffs five pairs were noted between Birling Gap and Cuckmere Haven on 22 May whilst at Rye Hbr, 30 pairs nested in the castle.

In the GBW Jackdaws were recorded in 65% of the 254 gardens surveyed and in the late year SWBS, they were recorded in 80% of the 1-km squares studied, a similar total to those reported in the previous two years. The highest counts in the second half of the year were again associated with birds flying to roosts with 900 at Sheepcote Valley on 12 Oct and 400 at Weir Wood Res on 20 Aug. [D Brothwell]

## Rook *Corvus frugilegus*

***Very common resident. Amber-listed species of medium conservation concern.***

Rooks were recorded in 484 (50%) of tetrads, 3% less than 2021 but identical to 2020. During the first quarter of the year there were 31 counts of 100 or more with the highest being 900 at Beeding Hill on 8 Feb, 500 at both Steyning and Findon on 31 Jan and 270 at Iford Brooks on 20 Jan. In the early year SWBS the species was recorded in 62 (42%) of the 149 1-km squares studied with a maximum of 229 at Rodmell on 21 Jan.

Between April and September, there were 24 counts of 100 or more with the highest being 682 at Racton on 28 May, recorded on a BBS late survey. Elsewhere there were 300 at Steep Down on 25 Jun and 254 at Glynde Level on 6 Jun. In the GBW, the species was recorded in 24% of the gardens surveyed, this proportion varying little to the previous three years. The first nesting behaviour was noted at Lewes when an adult carrying a stick was seen on 14 Feb and at Walderton on 4 Mar noisy activity was noted at a nesting site. Rooks were observed carrying food to nests from 19 Apr, with the first record of two fledglings at Lewes on 18 May. Later in the year at Lewes a flock of 65 on 30 Aug included juveniles still begging for food from adults. Breeding was confirmed in 54 tetrads and probable in 12, significantly lower than in 2021 (80) but greater than in the two years previous to that. There were 35 rookeries surveyed with a minimum total of 764 nests. The largest were at Edburton (130), Litlington (up to 90), East Dean (82), Hambrook (78), Iford (57) and Pett Village (50). The 20 nests at Etchingham were considered to be a new rookery and two pairs attempted to establish a new rookery at Elmer but were driven off by Carrion Crows.

During the second winter period there were 18 counts of 100 or more with the highest being 300 at Lancing Clump on 6 Dec and 260 at Balcombe on the 4th. In the late year SWBS, birds were recorded in 54 (39%) of the 139 1-km squares studied with a maximum count of 174 at Ovingdean on 22 Nov. [D Brothwell]

## Carrion Crow *Corvus corone*

***Very common resident.***

Carrion Crows were recorded in 774 (80%) tetrads, compared to 754 in 2021 and 748 in 2020. In the first half of the year there were seven counts of 100 or more with the highest being 700 at Goring Gap on 17 Jan while elsewhere there were 300 at West Dean on 8 Feb and 200 at Cuckmere Haven on 3 Jan. In the early year SWBS the species was recorded in 143 (96%) of the 149 1-km squares studied with a maximum of 124 at Firle on 28 Feb. In the GBW, the species was recorded in 75% of the gardens surveyed during the year.

Nesting behaviour was first noted in March with nest material seen being carried at New Salts Fm (Lancing) on the 12th, at both Barcombe Cross and Itchingfield on the 22nd and Worthing on the 24th. The first occupied nest was recorded at Ladywell (near Coombes) on the 26th followed by Tilgate Forest, Furnace Green (Crawley) and New Salts Fm on the 28th, 29th and 31st respectively. During the BBS, the species was found in 176 (95%) of the squares with a maximum count of 73 at Plumpton on 18 Apr. Breeding was confirmed in 21 tetrads and was probable or possible in a further 96. The first fledged young were seen at Ashdown Forest on 5 Jun and on the 9th a local pair were seen feeding two well grown fledglings on the beach at Elmer Rocks (Middleton-on-Sea).

In the late year SWBS, birds were recorded in 134 (96%) of the 139 1-km squares studied with a maximum count of 59 at Firle on 15 Dec. In the second half of the year, there were seven counts of 100 or more with the highest being 250 at Rogate on 1 Oct, 160 at Combe Valley CP on 18 Sep and 150 at Easebourne (Midhurst) on 26 Aug and at Pagham Hbr on 29 Dec. [D Brothwell]

## Hooded Crow *Corvus cornix*

***Rare winter visitor and passage migrant.***

The well watched individual at Polegate, first seen on 13 Jul 2021, was recorded regularly until 11 Mar. The only other record was of one that flew high west over Manor Fm (Sullington) on 24 Mar (DK Campbell). The county total this century moves on to 13. [P James]

## Raven *Corvus corax*

***Fairly common breeding resident; first bred in modern era in 2001.***

Ravens were recorded in 390 tetrads (41%), a slight decrease from the previous year but more than the 10-year average of 276 (range 173 to 406). However, this population is still remarkable considering it is more than double that of ten years ago when birds were recorded in 19% of tetrads. In the first winter period, locations with counts of ten or more included the Chilgrove area, The Burgh, Chantry Hill, and Eridge with the highest count being 20 at Westdean Woods on 1 Feb. In the early year SWBS, Ravens were found in 12% squares studied with a maximum of four in the Cuckmere Valley on 18 Feb.

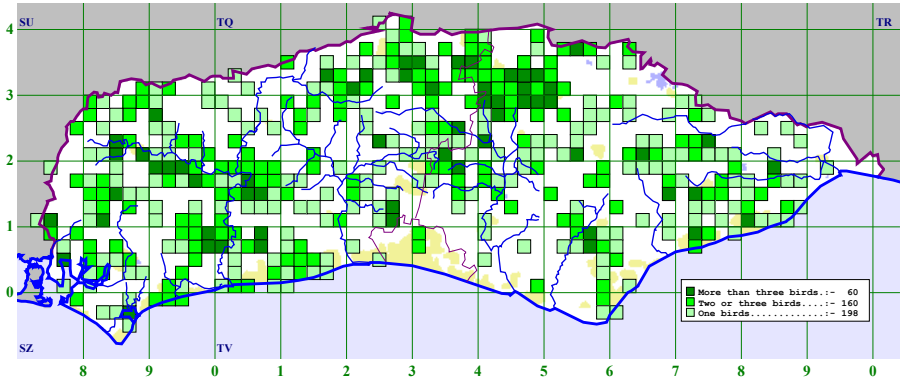
Breeding was confirmed in 11 tetrads, probable in 16 and possible in 12, indicating a stable breeding population. The first fledglings were recorded on the early date of 13 Mar at Telscombe Cliffs and another family including two young were seen at Netherfield on 22 Mar. Most records of adults with young included two or three fledglings, but four were noted at Broadwater (Worthing) on 8 May and Seaford Head on 24 May. In the BBS they were encountered in 11% of squares surveyed with a maximum of three at Firle on 8 Apr. Notable gatherings in the late summer and autumn were 30 at Dallington Forest on 23 Aug, the highest count of the year, and 19 at Bepton on 19 Aug.

Many observers reported Ravens tumbling or rolling while flying which was variously considered to be display, pair bonding or just having fun. Some of the highest counts of the year were associated with birds gathered to feed on carcasses with 25 at a sheep carcass at East Guldeford Levels on 11 Jun and 13 gathered at a Roe Deer carcass at Graffham Down on 16 Sep. Other prey items noted included a Kittiwake chick predated at Splash Point (Seaford) on 25 Jul.

In the late year SWBS Ravens were found in 17% of the squares studied with a maximum of eight at Harting Down on 26 Dec. The only location with counts above ten in this period was Westdean Woods with a maximum of 19 on 8 Nov. [D Brothwell]

## Coal Tit *Periparus ater*

***Very common resident.***



Records were submitted from 418 tetrads (43%) in 2022, the lowest figure since 2017, but still in excess of the 10-year average (394 tetrads). The map above gives an indication of relative abundance across the county.

During the early year SWBS, Coal Tits were found in 40 squares (27%), including a maximum count of 16 on 11 Feb at Nutley. This exceeded the returns from the late year SWBS, which found 30 occupied squares (22%) and a peak count of 14 at West Lavington (Midhurst) on 25 Nov. Participants in the GBW observed the species in 61% of the gardens surveyed throughout the year, a marginal decrease from both 2021 (63%) and 2020 (64%). During the BBS Coal Tits were found in 26% of squares studied. The first confirmation of breeding took the form of an occupied nest in East Grinstead (12 May), shortly followed by the first fledged young, in Ashdown Forest (24 May).

For the second consecutive year, there were no records of the continental race *P. a. ater*, extending the gap since its last appearance in Sussex in February 2020. [A Glossop]

## Marsh Tit *Poecile palustris*

***Very common resident. Red-listed species of high conservation concern. Section 41.***

Marsh Tits were recorded in 254 tetrads (26%), well above the 10-year average of 210, with most records from the Wealden woods. There were coastal records from Fairlight Glen in six months of the year. There were also two unusual records, of two at Elmer (Middleton-on-Sea) on 8 Oct and one at Climping on 20 Oct. During the year they were recorded in 13% of participating gardens in the GBW. The highest count in the first winter period was of seven at both Pippingford Park (Ashdown Forest) on 21 Jan and Steyning Roundhill on 7 Feb, the latter during an early year SWBS, where they were found in 9.4% of squares surveyed.

Breeding was confirmed in 12 tetrads and probable in a further 28. During the breeding season the species was detected in 159 locations where breeding was likely and the 2020-2021 county survey showed that the species breeds in much greater numbers than these records suggest. January songsters were heard at Kirdford on the 14th, Ardingly Res on the 22nd and Bexleyhill (Lodsworth) on the 28th, nest building observed on 15 Apr at Balcombe and the first fledged young seen on 1 May at Westdean Woods. During the BBS they were encountered in 7% of squares surveyed with a maximum of six at Graffham Down on 18 Jun.

Most post breeding records were of one or two but ten were seen at Wannock (Eastbourne) on 12 Aug and at Graffham Down on 10 Sep. The highest second winter period count was 12 at Black Down on 20 Nov. During the late year SWBS Marsh Tits were found in 7.9% of squares surveyed with a maximum of nine at Steyning Roundhill on 8 Dec. [MJ Chattaway]

## Blue Tit *Cyanistes caeruleus*

***Abundant resident.***

Blue Tits were recorded in 744 tetrads (77%) compared with a 10-year average of 668 (range 584 to 769). During the first SWBS they were encountered in 96% of the squares surveyed. During the BGBW they were recorded in 78% of participating gardens in West Sussex and in 75% in East Sussex and in 95% of participating gardens in the GBW.

The earliest sign of breeding activity was in Steyning on 9 Feb when a pair was seen entering a nest box regularly. Nest building was noted in Haywards Heath on 14 Mar. The first fledged young were recorded at Southwater CP on 28 Apr. During the BBS Blue Tits were found in 97% of the 185 squares surveyed with a maximum of 59 at Wivelsfield Green on 15 Apr. During the second SWBS Blue Tits were encountered in 93% of the squares surveyed. [M Mallalieu]

## Great Tit *Parus major*

***Abundant resident.***

Great Tits were recorded in 695 tetrads (72%) compared with a 10-year average of 649 (range 561 to 747). During the first SWBS they were encountered in 91% of the squares surveyed. During the BGBW they were recorded in 51% of participating gardens in West Sussex and in 48% in East Sussex and in 89% of participating gardens in the GBW.

Nest building was first reported on 24 Mar at Worthing. Carrying of food or faecal sac was seen at Worthing on 19 Apr and the first fledged young was recorded at Warnham LNR on 6 May. During the BBS Great Tits were found in 95% of the 185 squares surveyed with a maximum of 25 at Plumpton Green on 18 Apr. During the second SWBS they were encountered in 81% of the squares surveyed. [M Mallalieu]

## Penduline Tit *Remiz pendulinus*

***Rare vagrant.***

At West Rise Marsh (Eastbourne) one was sound recorded on 18 Nov. Three were present the following day feeding on reedmace, increasing to five on 26 Nov, with two remaining until 13 Dec that were also seen in the New Year (D Thorns, KB Gillam, A Redman *et al.*). Many observers were finally able to add this delightful species to their county list although often at the expense of wet feet as the area that the birds frequented was knee deep in water at the time! These are the first to be recorded in Sussex since 2013 and take the county total to 38. Five is the largest party to date exceeding the four trapped together at Pett Level on 12 Nov 2009. A finder's account is on page 207 of this report. [P James]



*Penduline Tit, West Rise Marsh, 29 November (David Thorns)*

## Bearded Tit *Panurus biarmicus*

***Scarce breeding resident; very scarce passage migrant and winter visitor. Schedule 1 species.***

As in the previous year, most records were from East Sussex where Bearded Tits were found in every month at Pett Level and in nine months at Rye Hbr. In West Sussex they were found in eight months at Thorney Deeps. The highest monthly counts outside of the breeding season from the seven locations where they were recorded are shown in the following table.

| | Jan | Feb | Mar | | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Thorney Island and Deeps | 1 | - | 2 | | - | 8 | 6 | - | - |
| Pagham Hbr | - | - | - | | 1 | - | - | - | - |
| Knepp Estate | - | - | - | | - | - | - | - | 1 |
| Eastbourne Lakes | 5 | - | 6 | | - | - | 12 | 10 | 7 |
| Pevensey Levels | - | - | - | | - | 2 | - | - | - |
| Pett Level | 4 | 1 | 12 | | 6 | 12 | 12 | 1 | 3 |
| Rye Hbr | - | 1 | - | | 2 | - | 10 | 1 | - |

Breeding was confirmed at three locations. At Rye Hbr there were at least four pairs and two adults and four young seen there on 28 Apr. At Pett Level fledged young were seen on two dates in August. Five juveniles were seen at Thorney Deeps on 1 Jun.

There were many records from West Rise Marsh (Eastbourne) but none from early March until mid-October. There were no records this year of "high flying". [MJ Chattaway]

## Woodlark *Lullula arborea*

***Scarce resident and very scarce passage migrant. Schedule 1 species. Section 41.***

Woodlarks were recorded in 91 tetrads (8.8%), an increase from the previous year, again surpassing the 10-year average of 62.

Large wintering flocks of Woodlark were present at Rushlake Green (14) and Pulborough Brooks (15), with smaller numbers at the West Sussex commons and Ashdown Forest in the first winter period. The first singing birds were heard at Balcombe on 27 Jan, but it wasn't until February that singing birds were located at many of their traditional haunts.

During the breeding season, no fewer than 24 sites on Ashdown Forest held multiple birds and results from the WHBBS found territories on all the commons surveyed, (see page 203) including nine at Iping Common. Breeding also occurs in farmland and this year produced the first confirmed nest at Weir Wood Res, in an adjacent wheat field. During the autumn, Woodlarks were found at several migration watch points, with highest counts being five at Sheepcote Valley (Brighton) on 13 Oct, four at Selsey Bill on the 18th and another four at Sheepcote Valley on the 31st. In the second winter period, some impressive flocks were in stubble fields, with 25 at Balcombe, 13 at Worth Forest and nine at Cuckfield, ending what had been an exceptional year for this species. [MR Eade]

## Skylark *Alauda arvensis*

***Very common but declining resident; probably common passage migrant and winter visitor. Red-listed species of high conservation concern. Section 41.***

Skylarks were recorded in 443 tetrads (46%), compared to the 10-year average of 365. During the first winter period three-figure flocks were recorded at only two locations: 200 at Rodmell on 17 Jan and 100 at Rye Hbr on 17 Mar. Counts of 50 and above came from four further locations but most

flock sizes were in low double figures. During the first SWBS they were recorded in 30% of squares surveyed with a maximum of 32 at Hangleton on 27 Feb.

Breeding was confirmed in only seven tetrads, with probable breeding in 54 and possible breeding in 114. Singing males were noted from early January; the first bird with food was seen at Rotherbridge Fm (Petworth) on 4 May and the first fledged young were observed at Saltdean on 30 May. During the BBS Skylarks were encountered in 54% of squares surveyed with a maximum of 38 in the Lullington/Filching area on 13 Apr. At Medmerry 128 pairs were recorded and at Rye Hbr there were 32. In the SDFBI 931 birds were counted in 82 of the 96 squares surveyed with a maximum of 57 at Tegdown Hill (Brighton).

The largest summer count was 35 at Rodmell on 2 Jul but most reports were in single figures. It was not until mid-October that a count exceeded that, with 42 at Steyning Round Hill on the 19th and then 50 at Steep Down (Lancing) on the 28th.

In the second winter period flocks grew in number with reports of 110 feeding along the shoreline at Pilsey Sands on 4 Nov, 100 at Medmerry on 12 Nov and 150 there on 10 Dec. Also in December, 70 were at both Lancing Clump on the 6th and Cuckmere Haven on the 15th and 120 at Priesthawes (Pevensey) on the 18th. During the SWBS Skylarks were recorded in 18% of squares surveyed with a maximum of 23 at Toads Hole Valley (Hove) on 16 Dec. In the winter SDFBI 469 were counted from 33 of 55 squares surveyed with a maximum of 115 at Annington. [T Seabrook, MJ Chattaway]

## Shore Lark *Eremophila alpestris*

***Rare autumn migrant and winter visitor. Amber-listed species of medium conservation concern. Schedule 1 species.***

The Shore Lark first seen at Sovereign Hbr on 7 Nov 2021 and along the beach at Pevensey Bay from 10 Dec 2021 remained until 26 Jan (mo). What was conceivably the same bird was seen on the sea wall at Pett Level on 7 and 8 Feb (AJ Killick *et al.*). [P James]

## Sand Martin *Riparia riparia*

***Scarce or fairly common summer visitor and very common passage migrant.***

Sand Martins were found in 112 tetrads (12%), six fewer than last year but more than the 10-year average of 92. The first returning bird was seen at Bulverhythe (St Leonards) on 4 Mar, six days earlier than the 10-year average first date. The largest group in March was five at Rotherbridge Fm (Petworth) on the 31st. April influxes increased on the 12 Apr with 42 again at Rotherbridge Fm and the largest count of the spring was 120 there on 11 May.

Breeding was only confirmed at three sites: at Arundel WWT, Duncton Common and at Rock Common (Washington) where 80 nest holes were being visited.

A flock of 30 at Medmerry was moving west along the beach on 4 Jul and 50 S at Waltham Brooks the same day were early signs of outward migration. Towards the end of the month 240 were at Rye Hbr on the 26th and 350 at Medmerry and 175 at West Rise Marsh (Eastbourne) the next day. Peak counts at coastal locations were 2000 at Medmerry on 14 Aug, 600 at Pett Level on 24 and 26 Aug and 500 at Pagham Hbr on 27 Aug and 13 Sep. The maximum day count at Selsey Bill was 464 E on 11 Sep and the last three-figure count was 120 at Beachy Head on 29 Sep. Twenty was the highest October count at East Guldeford Level on the 4th and the last Sand Martin of 2022 was at Pett Level on the 18th, five days earlier than the 10-year average last date. [PD Stevens]



*Shore Lark, Pevensey Bay, 24 January (Laurence Pitcher)*

## Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica*

***Common summer visitor and abundant passage migrant.***

Barn Swallows were found in 518 tetrads (54%), more than the 10-year average of 473. Individuals were recorded from 1 Jan through to the end of Feb at several locations: Medmerry, Pagham Hbr, Sidlesham Ferry and Porthole Fm (Sidlesham), which could have been the same bird. One was at Pulborough Brooks on 15 Jan.

Spring arrivals appeared to start on 27 Mar with one at Robertsbridge followed by one at Weir Wood Res on the 29th. The first double-figure count was ten on 3 Apr at Rye Hbr. The largest spring counts were 344 N at Selsey Bill on 29 Apr, 200 at both Porthole Fm on 27 Apr and Ivy Lake (Chichester GP) on 10 May, the latter encountered during a BBS.

Breeding was confirmed from 31 tetrads and was probable or possible from another 46. The first to return to a nest site was on 19 Apr at Bury (Pulborough), a pair were seen mating on 25 Apr at Wivelsfield and the first eggs recorded were on 28 May at Bury. The first fledglings were seen on 16 Jun at the Llama Fm (Ashdown Forest) and the latest were at Punnett's Town on 10 Sep, although there were three chicks still in a nest on 11 Sep at Catsland Fm (Woodmancote).

The earliest signs of larger post-breeding gatherings were 400 at Beeding Brooks and 100 at Medmerry, both on 29 Jul. The largest count of the autumn was 5000 at Pagham Hbr on 13 Sep.

Other four-figure counts included 1500 at Medmerry on 10 Sep, 3088 E at Selsey Bill (in 3.5 hrs) the next day, 1000 at Hastings CP and 3500 E at Kingley Vale, both on the 14th, 1820 at Fairlight on the 15th, 1725 at Amberley on the 22nd and in October 3500 E at Worthing (in 1.5 hrs) on the 3rd and 1000 over Uckfield on the 7th. Subsequently numbers dropped with the last three-figure count being 100 at Cuckmere Haven on 10 Oct.

Barn Swallows were still being seen on most days in early November, with nine the highest number at Beachy Head on the 9th. There were seven coastal records in December, all of singles with the last one at Shoreham Hbr on the 7th. [PD Stevens]



*Barn Swallow, Beachy Head, 5 August (Roger Charlwood)*

## House Martin *Delichon urbicum*

***Common but declining summer visitor and abundant passage migrant. Red-listed species of high conservation concern.***

House Martins were found in 330 tetrads (35%), more than the 10-year average of 307. As there continues to be evidence of the decline of this species, observers are encouraged to submit all records, particularly if breeding evidence is obtained.

The first House Martin was seen at Woods Mill (Henfield) on 11 Feb; this is ten days later than the earliest first date. It is not known whether this bird overwintered in the UK or was a very early arrival but the species was not reported again in Sussex until 29 Mar when one was at Weir Wood Res. The first double-figure record of 16 at Kneppmill Pond occurred on 19 Apr. The highest spring passage counts were 100 at both Ivy Lake (Chichester GP) on 10 May and at Porthole Fm (Sidlesham) on 18 and 31 May.

Breeding was confirmed in 20 tetrads and probable in a further 18. On 30 Apr birds were visiting nest sites at Bury and the first confirmed breeding were birds using artificial nests at Charlton (Chichester) on 17 May and the next day at Arundel. The first fledgings were observed on 15 Jun

at Bury when four chicks left one artificial nest cup. The largest colony was again at The Warren (Eridge Green) with 27 occupied nests recorded on 1 Jul, two more than 2021, but still down on the 38 in 2020.

Most counts in July were of fewer than 20 but the highest was 150 at Walstead (Lindfield) on the 29th. The first signs of autumn migration may have been 150 gathered on roofs and vessels around Northshore Boatyard at Itchenor (Chichester Hbr) on 1 Aug, followed by 100 at Red House Common (Chailey) on the 11th, 70 at Weir Wood Res on the 18th and 130 at Pulborough Brooks on the 30th.

The largest outgoing count, by a long way, was 5000 at Church Norton on 13 Sep. Other high totals in September were 1000 at Sidlesham on the 12th, 900 at Mill Hill (Shoreham) on the 15th, 700 at Hastings CP also on the 15th, 800 at Goring Gap on the 25th, and 500 at Cuckmere Haven on the 28th. The September total at Selsey Bill was 2678 with a maximum of 864 E on the 25th. On 3 Oct there were 1200 E at Worthing but thereafter numbers dropped with the last three-figure count being 180 at Cadborough (Rye) on the 14th. There were five at Fairlight Glen on the 31st and only one record in November of 1 W at Goring Gap on the 14th, which is one week earlier than the 10-year average last date. [PD Stevens]

## Red-rumped Swallow *Cecropis daurica*

***Rare but increasing vagrant.***

There were three records of this now near annual spring overshoot. The first flew west at Cuckmere Haven on 20 Apr (BR Cox) and was followed by others at Uckfield WTW on 27 and 28 Apr (ER Paxton *et al.*) and at Beachy Head on 14 May (ME & RH Charlwood). First recorded in 1967, the county total moves on to 57, of which 22 have been in April, 31 in May and 39 this century. The last blank year was 2018 but there have been records in nine of the last ten years. [P James]

## Cetti's Warbler *Cettia cetti*

***Fairly common and increasing resident; passage migrant and winter visitor. Schedule 1 species.***

This year saw Cetti's Warblers recorded in the highest number of tetrads to date, with a total of 142 (15%), 11% more than in 2021 and surpassing 137 in 2017, the year in which a Cetti's Warbler survey was conducted. In the first winter period there were records from 35 broad locations, five fewer than in 2021, and the species was encountered in 2% of the 149 squares visited in the first SWBS. Five were at Rye Hbr on New Year's Day and later in the month seven were reported at Combe Valley CP on the 23rd. Seventeen singing birds were heard at Thorney Island on 15 Mar.

During the BBS the species was found in over 11% of the squares surveyed, reflecting the general increase in its abundance, with a maximum of 13 on 23 Apr in a square on Pevensey Levels. Breeding was confirmed in four tetrads, and was probable or possible in another 61. On 15 Apr Combe Valley CP held 19 while 22 singing birds were reported at Thorney Island. Breeding season counts of singing males at RSPB reserves were of six at Pagham Hbr, eight at Medmerry, and a combined total of eight at Amberley Wild Brooks and Pulborough Brooks, while Rye Hbr held 20 singing males; rather surprisingly all these figures were lower than the previous year's. The first fledged young were noted at Thorney Island on 1 Jun when three or more were heard giving alarm calls from a bramble bush and two other broods were reported from another area of the island on the 11th. Young birds were also at Arundel on 8 Jun and Ladywell (Coombes) on 16 Jul.

Cuckmere RG trapped 43 different individuals at Charleston Reedbed, of which nine were definitely hatched prior to 2022. At Pett Level the Rye Bay RG ringed 102, 40 more than last year. By way of comparison, ten years ago, only 41 were ringed in the whole of the county (Sussex Bird

Report 65:233) In addition four were ringed at Ladywell, ten at The Mumbles (Steyning) and 20 at two other sites in East Sussex.

During the second SWBS Cetti's Warblers were found in 5% of the squares surveyed, with a maximum of five on Christmas Eve in the same square at Pevensey Levels as in the BBS. Two different observers recorded ten at West Rise Marsh (Eastbourne) on 27 and 30 Nov. [VP Bentley]

## Long-tailed Tit *Aegithalos caudatus*

***Very common resident.***

Long-tailed Tits were recorded in 572 tetrads (59%) compared with a 10-year average of 522 (range 442 to 577). During the first SWBS they were encountered in 44% of the squares surveyed. During the BGBW they were recorded in 15% of participating gardens in both West and East Sussex and in 71% of participating gardens in the GBW.

Nest building was seen at Ambersham Common on 9 Mar and carrying of food or faecal sac was noted at Worthing on 4 Apr. Fledged young were first seen on 26 Apr at Cripps Corner. During the BBS Long-tailed Tits were found in 50% of the 185 squares surveyed with a maximum of 15 at Northbrook Fm (Worthing) on 29 May. During the second SWBS they were encountered in 46% of the squares surveyed. [M Mallalieu]

## Wood Warbler *Phylloscopus sibilatrix*

***Very scarce passage migrant. Rare in summer with no confirmed breeding records since 2010. Red-listed species of high conservation concern. Section 41.***

There were two spring records. The first was at Powdermill Res between 11 and 21 Apr (M Allison) and the second was trapped and ringed at Bishopstone (near Seaford) on 15 May (T Hallahan). In the autumn one was at West Rise Marsh (Eastbourne) on 18 Aug (D Thorns). [TW Parmenter]

## Hume's Warbler *Phylloscopus humei*

***Very rare vagrant.***

A popular and very vocal bird was present in Eastbourne between 14 Jan and 18 Apr along the promenade opposite Bolsover Road (per County Recorder). This record has been submitted to BBRC and acceptance will take the Sussex total to nine birds. [DK Campbell]

## Yellow-browed Warbler *Phylloscopus inornatus*

***Very scarce visitor, mostly in late autumn. Amber-listed species of medium conservation concern.***

Two Yellow-browed Warblers were found in September, the first at Sheepcote Valley (Brighton) on the 21st and another at Beachy Head on the 29th. There were a further six in October, with individuals at Sheepcote Valley (Brighton) on the 3rd, 12th and 20th, at Telscombe on the 8th and Pevensey from the 24th to the 26th. The final record was at Selsey on 12 Nov. [MR Eade]

## Pallas's Leaf Warbler *Phylloscopus proregulus*

***Rare visitor, mostly in late autumn.***

There were three typical records in 2022, all in late October. The first, trapped and ringed at Pett Level on the 22nd (CM George, PE Jones, J Willsher *et al.*), was followed others at Sheepcote Valley (Brighton) on 27 Oct (IJ Whitcomb) and at Horseshoe Plantation (Beachy Head) from the 29th to the 31st (J MacCallum-Stewart *et al.*). The county total moves on to 109, of which 54 have been at Beachy Head and 47 this century. [P James]



*Hume's Warbler, Eastbourne, 7 February (Laurence Pitcher)*



*Radde's Warbler, Beachy Head, 22 October (Roger Charlwood)*

## Radde's Warbler *Phylloscopus schwarzi*

***Very rare vagrant.***

There were two records in 2022, both at Beachy Head. One at Heathy Brow from 21 until 23 Oct (D Thorns *et al.*) was followed remarkably just a day later by another at Shooters' Bottom on 22 and 23 Oct (S Humphrey *et al.*). The former was uncharacteristically confiding and even tolerated

runners participating in the Beachy Head Marathon passing just a few metres away whereas the latter was more typically elusive. Both were photographed. The county total moves on to 16 since the first in 1974. Arrival dates have been in September (1), October (14) and November (1). 2005 was the last year in which two were recorded though there were three in 1995. [P James]



*Willow Warbler, Beachy Head, 15 August (Laurence Pitcher)*

## Willow Warbler *Phylloscopus trochilus*

***Common but declining summer visitor and passage migrant. Amber-listed species of medium conservation concern.***

Willow Warblers were recorded in 246 tetrads (26%). There were only three records for March; two at Horsted Keynes on the 21st and singles at Ferring Rife on the 29th and 30th, all later than the 10-year average first date of 16 Mar.

The species became widespread in April, notable figures included 11 at Climping Gap on the 10th, nine at Beachy Head on the 14th, 14 at Broadwater Warren on the 16th and 15 at Old Lodge LNR (Ashdown Forest) on the 22nd. The only double-figure counts in May came from Ashdown Forest and Broadwater Warren with the highest number being 19 in the Old Airstrip area on the 27th.

Breeding was confirmed in only three tetrads and probable in a further ten. A breeding survey at Broadwater Warren counted 31 pairs and during the BBS Willow Warblers were encountered in 11% of squares with a maximum of 12 at Old Lodge LNR on 21 Apr.

The first returning migrants were evident from 23 Jul with a single at Whitbread Hollow (Beachy Head) followed by two at Cissbury the next day. August began with 25 at Whitbread Hollow on the 1st, 40 there on the 4th and 31 at Charleston Reedbed. At Ladywell (Coombes) 54 were trapped and 30 were at Cissbury, both on the 6th. Sheepcote Valley (Brighton) held 90 on the 10th and the

14th produced some good figures with 20 at Cissbury, 34 at Hope Gap (Seaford Head) and 30 at Brighton Wild Park. Similar numbers of double figures were recorded from the 18th to the 23rd but thereafter numbers dwindled with the exception of Pett Level where 50 were ringed on the 27th. In September there were only four double-figure counts; 24 trapped at Ladywell on the 10th was the highest number ever ringed at this site in this month. Annual ringing totals included 697 at Pett Level, 505 at Charleston Reedbed, 173 at Ladywell, 111 at Whitbread Hollow, 66 at Cissbury and 25 at the Knepp Estate.

In October there were records from 13 sites involving a minimum of 17 birds, with the last record from Pett Level on the 22nd, the same date as in 2021 and two days later than the 10-year average last date. [TW Parmenter]

## Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus collybita*

***Very common summer visitor and passage migrant; small numbers winter.***

Chiffchaffs were recorded in 656 (68%) tetrads and were present in every month of the year continuing the trend of overwintering of this species. Through January and February there were double-figure counts at four sites, the highest being 20 at both Lidsey WTW and Waltham Brooks. There was a slow but steady influx of birds in early March with the highest tally of 12 at Pulborough Brooks and Warnham LNR. Later in the month numbers increased with, notably, 30 at Broadwater Warren on the 23rd, 20 at Novington (nr Plumpton) on the 24th and 20 near Lewes on the 29th and through April with peaks of 26 at Balcombe on the 7th, 31 at Knepp on the 10th, 23 at Park Wood (Udimore) on the 12th, 37 at Nutley on the 22nd and 30 at Pulborough Brooks on the 23rd.

Breeding was confirmed in 22 tetrads and probable in a further 60. Breeding survey counts for singing males were: 19 each at Arundel WWT, and Rye Hbr, and for pairs: 14 at Amberley Wild Brooks, 18 at Broadwater Warren, 14 at Fore Wood (Crowhurst), eight at Medmerry, 23 at Pagham Hbr and 47 at Pulborough Brooks. Elsewhere the highest number of birds was 51 at Knepp on 12 Jun. During the BBS the species was encountered in 90% of the squares surveyed.

The summer months were quiet with more than ten recorded at few sites, the maximum being 25 at Pulborough Brooks on 30 Aug. The signs of emigration strengthened at the beginning of autumn with increasing numbers reported from coastal sites. All ringing groups reported daily ringing totals of double figures, notably 67 at Ladywell (nr Coombes) on 18 Sep, 85 at Whitbread Hollow (Beachy Head) on the 19th and 84 at Charleston Reedbed on the same day. The highest single day count was 150 at Whitbread Hollow on both 19 and 29 Sep. The highest count at an inland site was of 40 at Cissbury between 12 and 17 Sep. October was relatively quiet by comparison although double-figure counts were returned from 26 sites, with peaks of 30 at Brooklands (Worthing) and 45 at Beachy Head on the 3rd.

During the winter period double-figure sightings were returned from sites including Lidsey WTW, Cissbury and Ladywell. The highest counts were in December and related to the water treatment works near Coldwaltham and Amberley Wild Brooks where between ten and 20 birds were present between the 2nd and 29th. [TW Parmenter]

**Siberian Chiffchaff, *P. c. tristis***

The bird first recorded at Lidsey WTW on 15 Dec 2021 was seen again on 3 and 12 Feb (O Mitchell). The only other record for the early part of the year was of one photographed at Kingston Hollow WTW on 21 Feb (PC Stevens). In the latter part of the year, one was trapped and ringed at Cissbury on 2 Nov (VP Bentley, DK Campbell). Subsequent records were of singles at Coldwaltham WTW from 18 Nov to 6 Dec (BF Forbes, MS Phelps) and at Rackham Woods on 6 Dec (BF Forbes). [P James]

## Sedge Warbler *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus*

***Fairly common summer visitor and very common passage migrant. Amber-listed species of medium conservation concern.***

Sedge Warblers were recorded in 95 tetrads, a decline from the 105 tetrads in 2021 but comparable to the 10-year average of 89. The first record was of one at Horse Eye Level (Pevensey) on 19 Mar, 11 days earlier than the 10-year mean arrival date and just two days later than the earliest county record in 2020. This was followed by singles at Pagham Hbr on the 25th and 26th, Burton MP on the 29th and Rye Hbr on the 30th. There was the usual trickle of ones and twos at the beginning of April then four at Pett Level and Rye Hbr on the 12th and six at Waltham Brooks on the 13th. Maximum numbers during this month included eight at Pagham Hbr on the 15th, nine at Arundel WWT on the 16th, 20 at Waltham Brooks on the 21st, ten at Pevensey on the 23rd and 20 at Rye Hbr on the 28th. May is the month for the main arrival of this species; 12 were at Pulborough Brooks on the 3rd with 12 also at Amberley Wild Brooks and 18 at Winchelsea on the 5th. Numbers at Rye Hbr rose to 14 on the 7th, 12 were at Waltham Brooks on the 18th and 11 at New Bridge (Pevensey) on the 28th.

Breeding surveys at reserves estimated the following numbers of pairs present: 12 at Medmerry, 13 at Pagham Hbr, 17 at Pulborough Brooks and 49 at Rye Hbr. There were no pairs reported at Amberley Wild Brooks. Between four and nine pairs were present at Arundel WWT. Breeding was confirmed again at Charleston Reedbed, for the third year running after an absence of several years.

Autumn migration was first noted at Whitbread Hollow (Beachy Head) with two there on 23 Jul. A total of 11 birds were trapped and ringed at this site during the autumn. Large numbers were then recorded at Charleston Reedbed and ringing totals there included 56 on the 27 Jul, 63 on the 29th, 39 on 1 Aug, 98 on the 4th and 40 on the 20th. A year total of 685 were trapped at this site. At Pett Level the year total ringed was 1844 with the highest recorded counts in August of c.120 on the 22nd, 60 on the 26th and 50 on the 23rd, 24th and 27th. Elsewhere there were no significant counts during this period or during September. Only one bird was recorded in October, at Lewes Brooks on the 8th, seven days earlier than the 10-year mean departure date. [TW Parmenter]

## Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus scirpaceus*

***Common summer visitor and very common passage migrant.***

Reed Warblers were recorded from 146 tetrads, a significant drop from the 171 in 2021 and 156 in 2020. The first birds of the year were one at Waltham Brooks on 8 Apr, two at Darwell Res on the 10th and at Pagham Hbr on the 12th. Thereafter reports were widespread across the county. High counts during this period included eight at Lewes Brooks on 13 Apr, 12 at Drayton House North Pit (Chichester GP) on the 15th, 20 at Lewes Railway Land Reserve on the 21st and 15 at Ashburnham Place (Battle) on the 27th followed by 14 in the upper Cuckmere Valley on the 28th and finally 16 at Lewes Brooks on the 30th. In May 48 were counted along Lidsey Rife (Barnham) on the 13th and among 20 counted on the 14th at Lewes Brooks, two birds were carrying nesting material. An unusual May record was of one at Cissbury on the 14th, only the third ever Reed Warbler trapped in this month in over 35 years of ringing there.

Breeding was confirmed in 11 tetrads and probable in a further 14. Breeding surveys on reserves reported the following numbers of pairs present: 23 at Medmerry, 18 at Pagham Hbr, eight at Arundel WWT, three at both Amberley Wild Brooks and Pulborough Brooks and 152 at Rye Hbr.

The first obvious returning migrants were three at Whitbread Hollow (Beachy Head) on 21 Jul and of the 45 trapped at Charleston Reedbed on the 23rd many would have been passage birds as would some of the 81 trapped there on the 27th. August records included 20 Pagham Hbr on the 6th and at Whitbread Hollow on the 7th and 15th. Numbers trapped at Charleston Reedbed were

consistently high during the month indicating a good breeding season. Ringing totals for the year included 2068 at Pett Level, 1007 at Charleston Reedbed, 66 at Whitbread Hollow, 78 at Ladywell (nr Coombes) and 53 at the Mumbles (Steyning). For the second consecutive year low counts were recorded during late August and much of September. However, 39 birds were trapped at Charleston Reedbed on 24 Sep. In October only seven or eight Reed Warblers were recorded, the last two of the year being at Pett Level on the 25th. [TW Parmenter]

## Booted Warbler *Iduna caligata*

***Very rare vagrant.***

The eighth for Sussex was discovered at Beachy Head 300m south of the Heathy Brow car park on 29 Sep (D Thorns). It was only seen briefly but was photographed. Three of the previous Sussex records also involved birds that arrived in the second half of September, though Beachy Head's one previous sighting involved a singing male in June 1994. BBRC have accepted the record. [DK Campbell]



*Booted Warbler, Beachy Head, 29 September (David Thorns)*

## Grasshopper Warbler *Locustella naevia*

***Very scarce and declining summer visitor and fairly common passage migrant. Red-listed species of high conservation concern. Section 41.***

The species was recorded in 20 (2.1%) tetrads this year, three more than in 2021, but six fewer than in 2020; breeding was probable in one, and possible in another two. The first report was of one at Brede Levels on 16 and 17 Apr, 13 days later than in 2021 and eight days later than the 10-year average first date. It was present only for two days as there were no subsequent reports from this site. Scrub at Selsey GC produced the first reeling bird for West Sussex on 20 Apr. Possibly

two different birds were holding territory at Amberley Wild Brooks in May, and there was a single report from Arundel WWT on 3 Jun.

Return passage was evident from mid-July. Reeling was heard at Rye Hbr on 14 Jul. The first individual to be trapped at Charleston Reedbed arrived on the 17th, to be followed by a further 100, with a maximum of 32 on the 27th. Beachy Head RS trapped 24 different birds, with all but one being first year birds. The total of 379 ringed at Pett Level was an increase over 355 in 2021. Just eight were ringed in West Sussex, one each at Ladywell (Coombes), Cissbury and Warnham LNR, and five at the Knepp Estate. September brought eight records from six locations, and the final bird of year was at Truleigh Hill on 1 Oct, eight days earlier than in 2021 and five days earlier than the 10-year average last date. [VP Bentley]



*Blackcap, Battle, 4 November (David Gardiner)*

## Blackcap *Sylvia atricapilla*

***Very common summer visitor and passage migrant; scarce winter visitor.***

Blackcaps were recorded in 586 (60%) tetrads during the year, a slight, but not significant, decrease over 2021. It is a shame that no breeding evidence was noted for almost 60% of these when even a singing male suggests "possible breeding". While the species was only recorded in two of the 149 squares surveyed for the SWBS, it has become increasingly common in gardens during the early months of the year and at least one was seen in 75 (35%) of 216 gardens surveyed for the GBW during the first quarter. The majority of these records were of single birds, but six were seen in gardens at High Salvington and West Tarring in the latter half of January. On 2 Feb eight must have visited the High Salvington garden, as the observer saw four females at a suet feeder, then four males shortly after!

During the BBS Blackcaps were recorded in 88% of the 185 squares surveyed with a maximum of 28 on 22 Apr at Nutley. Breeding was confirmed in only 18 tetrads, but was probable or possible in a further 224. There were 37 pairs at Pulborough Brooks and at least 18 singing males were reported from Rye Hbr during the breeding season. The first fledglings were five seen on 2 Jun at Cuckmere Haven followed by two at Lidsey Lodge on the 9th.

Numbers moving through the county on autumn migration are always impressive; 2300 were ringed at Pett Level, and Cuckmere RG trapped 304 different individuals on a single day on 24 Sep at Charleston Reedbed. At Beachy Head RS Blackcaps represented 38% of the year's total, while at Cissbury the percentage was 40%. At this latter site, a bird ringed as an adult female in 2018 was recaptured on 22 Oct; her pre-migration weight was 25.2g, 30% greater than her average weight on four previous encounters. Migrating birds were still passing through in numbers during October, when an estimated 100 were at Beachy Head on the 14th.

During the final quarter the species was recorded in 52 (28%) of the 187 gardens surveyed for the GBW, but in just three of 139 1-km squares visited for the SWBS and maxima in the West Tarring and High Salvington gardens were five and three respectively. [VP Bentley]

## Garden Warbler *Sylvia borin*

***Common summer visitor and passage migrant.***

The species was recorded in 172 (18%) tetrads in 2022, 17 fewer than in 2021, and disappointing after two years of increase in 2019 and 2020. The first report was of a single bird in St Leonard's Forest on 9 Apr, three days later than in 2021 and four days later than the 10-year average first date. Two were at the same location on the 13th and individuals were reported from three different sites on the 15th. Most records in April were of one, though five were counted at the Knepp Estate on the 29th, six at Lurgashall on the 30th, and in May ten were at Abbots Wood (Hailsham) on the 5th, the same number at Ardingly Res on the 15th, while the Knepp Estate held 19 on the 8th.

During the BBS the species was found in 17% of the 185 squares surveyed, 3% lower than in 2021, with a maximum of four in a square near Petworth on 30 Apr. Breeding was confirmed in only three tetrads, though was probable or possible in a further 66. An adult was seen carrying food at Weir Wood Res on 2 Jun, and reports of fledged birds came from Pulborough Brooks on the 8th and Cowdray Forest on 1 Jul.

Migrant birds were trapped at the main ringing sites in the county, but in much smaller numbers than is the case with Blackcaps. Rye Bay RG ringed a total of 224, a very similar number to 2021; totals at Beachy Head RS, Charleston Reedbed and the Knepp Estate were 24, 38 and 37 respectively; the vast majority being first year birds.

There were reports from ten sites in September, mostly of singles and the final sighting of the year was of an individual at Sheepcote Valley (Brighton) on 1 Oct, six days earlier than in 2021 and ten days earlier than the 10-year average final date. [VP Bentley]

## Barred Warbler *Curruca nisoria*

***Very scarce autumn visitor.***

A juvenile at Climping Gap from 8 to 10 Oct (B Akinola *et al.*) was seen by many observers during its three day stay and was the first 'twitchable' bird in Sussex since 2009. The county total moves on to 66, of which 21 have been this century. Dates have ranged from 17 Aug to 15 Nov with nine in August, 42 in September, 14 in October and one in November. [P James]



*Barred Warbler, Climping, 8 October (Ads Bowley)*



*Lesser Whitethroat, Beachy Head, 5 August (Laurence Pitcher)*

## Lesser Whitethroat

***Curruca curruca***

***Fairly common summer visitor and passage migrant.***

Lesser Whitethroats were recorded in 157 tetrads (16%), fewer than the previous year but more than the 10-year average of 140. The first report was one at Pulborough Brooks on 10 Apr, one day earlier than in 2021 but a day later than the 10-year average arrival date. Two seen at Combe Valley CP and singles at Seaford Head, Westfield and Rye Hbr on the 15th were the first in East Sussex. From mid-month there were singing males reported in many different locations, including ten at Rye Hbr on the 28th, with four on the Knepp Estate and five at Thorney Island on the 30th. The Knepp Estate habitat of "a mix of grassland and thorny scrub consisting primarily of bramble, blackthorn, and hawthorn" (Knepp Castle Estate Bird Ringing Report 2022) seems well suited to the species' requirements; 24 were counted from 8 am to 3.30 pm on 9 May and a total of 80 new birds ringed there, the highest number from any of the ringing sites in Sussex.

During the BBS Lesser Whitethroats were encountered in 25 (14%) of the 186 squares surveyed, with a maximum of six on 7 May in a square at Rye Hbr which also held the greatest number of Common Whitethroats found in the survey. Breeding was confirmed in seven tetrads, though was probable or possible in a further 92. The breeding season count at Rye Hbr was of 19 singing males, and there were three pairs at Medmerry. The count from Pagham Hbr was of only two pairs which, compared with 20 the previous year, seems a dramatic drop, though the warden noted that

in 2022 "The lack of Lesser Whitethroats around the site has been commented on by the local birders". A bird with food was seen at Barcombe on 25 May and the first recently fledged bird was at Pulborough Brooks on 9 Jun.

During August the maximum number at any single site was on the 14th, when 18 were seen at Hope Gap (Seaford Head). Other than 12 at Rye Hbr on the 12th, September records were all in single figures. There seemed to have been mixed evidence regarding breeding success this year. Cuckmere RG trapped 49 different individuals, 15 of which were adults and 34 first year birds, at Cissbury four of the six birds ringed were adults, while at Beachy Head RS all 11 individuals ringed were first-years and at Pett Level 90% of the catch of 70 were juveniles. There were reports from four different sites in October, with the final sightings at Sheepcote Valley (Brighton), one on the 10th and a later one on the 31st, 18 days later than in 2021 and 14 days later than the 10-year mean departure date. [VP Bentley]

## Sardinian Warbler *Curruca melanocephala*

***Very rare vagrant.***

An adult male visited feeders in a front garden in North Lancing between 3 Nov 2022 and 17 Jan 2023 (D Livingstone). Unfortunately, it was not possible to accommodate visitors at the property to view the bird. Having been accepted by BBRC, this becomes the sixth record for Sussex and Britain's 85th. It is the second instance of Sardinian Warbler wintering in Britain, after a pair at Skegness, Lincolnshire, in 2003-2004. [DK Campbell]

## Common Whitethroat *Curruca communis*

***Very common summer visitor and passage migrant. Amber-listed species of medium conservation concern.***

Whitethroats were recorded in 397 (42%) tetrads in 2022, fewer than in 2021 though the previous four years had all seen an increase, but more than the 10-year average of 371. The first sighting was not until 10 Apr, at Pagham Hbr seven days later than the 10-year mean arrival date and 11 days later than in 2021. The following day records came in from four other locations, including a singing male at Henfield Levels, and the main influx followed over the next few days. Eleven were counted at both Amberley Mount and Willingdon (Eastbourne) on the 15th, and 25 at Climping Gap on the 18th. On the 25th 17 were at Steep Down (Lancing) singing, in display flight or churring from scrub.

During the BBS Whitethroats were encountered in 58% of the 185 squares surveyed, with a maximum count of 15 on 7 May in a square at Rye Hbr. There were 44 at Sheepcote Valley (Brighton) and 52 at Medmerry on 6 May, and the highest single count on the Knepp Estate was 60 on the 9th. At Rye Hbr 63 territories were mapped, seven fewer than in 2021, a percentage drop which mirrored that of the total tetrad count. RSPB reserves breeding surveys reported 30 pairs at Pagham Hbr, 35 at Broadwater Warren and 89 at Medmerry; counts in 2021 were 61, 40 and 54 respectively, broadly similar if combining the totals for the two adjacent reserves on the Selsey Peninsula. Pulborough Brooks held 23 pairs. Breeding was confirmed in 24 tetrads and was probable or possible in a further 174. The first fledglings were noted at Beachy Head on 23 May, and juveniles were among a count of 16 at Beachy Head on 8 Jun.

As migrating birds start to move south, many are trapped at the county's ringing sites. At Pett Level 570 were ringed, just three fewer than in 2021, Beachy Head RS doubled their catch with 98 of which all but one were birds hatched in 2022. Cuckmere RG ringed 138 with just 14 of these being hatched prior to 2022, and 267 new birds were ringed at the Knepp Estate. Autumn passage was underway by the middle of August with maximum counts of 50 at Seaford Head on the 13th,

85 at Sheepcote Valley on the 14th, 50 at Beachy Head on the 15th and 60 at Pett Level on the 22nd. There were records throughout September, though in lower numbers. In October individuals were reported from four coastal sites, with the final record at Medmerry on the 9th. This is the earliest final date since 2014, 25 days earlier than in 2021 and 19 days earlier than the 10-year average latest date. [VP Bentley]



*Common Whitethroat, Goring Gap, 1 May (Dorian Mason)*

## Dartford Warbler *Curruca undata*

***Scarce to fairly common but localised resident. Amber-listed species of medium conservation concern. Schedule 1 species.***

Dartford Warblers were recorded in 80 tetrads (8.4%), the highest on record and much higher than the 10-year average of 36. This indicates a trend of continued recovery of the Sussex population following the particularly cold weather in February and March 2018.

Coastal or near-coastal sightings in January and February were of one or two birds each at Medmerry, Pagham Hbr, the Beachy Head area, West Rise Marsh (Eastbourne), and Hastings CP. Heathland sightings in West Sussex included up to eight at Iping Common, two at Lavington Common and one at Hesworth Common. There were reports from at least 12 sites on Ashdown Forest, including eight at Old Lodge LNR on 11 Feb. Singles were seen at Sheepcote Valley (Brighton) on 1 and 28 Jan and at Cissbury and Silver Hill (Hurst Green), both on 22 Feb.

A single pair was at Medmerry and adults with juveniles were then reported on 28 and 30 Jul, including three fledglings on the latter date, confirming the first known breeding at this site. In the annual WHBBS 51 territories were recorded on heathland in West Sussex (see page 203), although the only evidence of confirmed breeding was a report of two juveniles and two recently fledged birds at Lavington Common on 15 Jul.

Records indicated at least 34 instances of probable breeding at sites across Ashdown Forest. Breeding was confirmed by two adults carrying faecal sacs or food at one site and three fledged

young were reported at one site in June and then four in August. Four fledglings at Hartfield on 21 Jul confirmed breeding in this area. Twelve pairs were at Broadwater Warren, a substantial increase on the five recorded in 2021, although there was no confirmation of breeding. Successful breeding at Hastings CP was confirmed by sightings of an adult with three juveniles on 5 Jul and adults with juveniles on 8 and 14 Aug.

There were sightings, including juveniles, across Ashdown Forest throughout September and October. Elsewhere inland, there were reports, mostly of singles, at Black Down, Waltham Brooks, Pulborough Brooks, Cissbury, Steep Down (Lancing), Sheepcote Valley, Wick Bottom (Woodingdean) and Firle Park during this period. Autumn sightings on or near the coast were mainly of one or two, at Medmerry, Chichester Hbr, Pagham Hbr (three on 31 Oct), Elmer (Middleton-on-Sea), Climping (four on 14 Oct), Charleston Reedbed, Beachy Head, West Rise Marsh, Pevensey Levels, and Hastings CP (three birds on 29 Sep and four on 13 Oct).

During November and December, there were 14 at Black Down on 13 Nov, the highest count of the year, and between one and three each from at least 12 locations on Ashdown Forest. Other sightings during this period were mostly of one or two at Leechpool and Owlbeech Woods (Horsham), Glynde Level and at numerous sites on or near the coast in both West and East Sussex. [A Rowe]



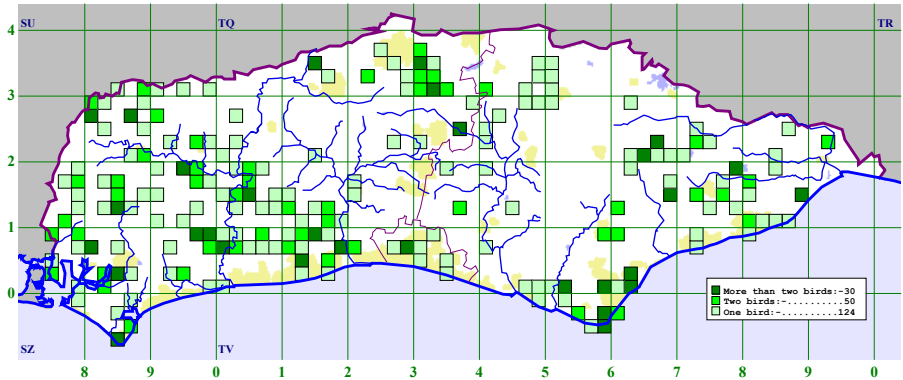
*Dartford Warbler, Climping, 20 December (Adam Huttly)*

## Firecrest

*Regulus ignicapilla*

***Fairly common breeding resident and summer visitor; passage migrant and winter visitor. Schedule 1 species.***

Firecrests were recorded in 204 tetrads (21%), slightly down from 2021, although still higher than the 10-year average of 173. The widespread distribution is clearly shown in the following map.




During the first winter period the largest count was seven at Swanbourne Lake (Arundel) on 14 Jan followed by five at both Warnham on 25 Feb and Patching Hill on 5 Mar.

Breeding was confirmed in only five tetrads and a further 18 tetrads had probable breeding. The first fledglings seen on 5 Jun in Houghton Forest. In the absence of any targeted survey work there were no large counts in spring or summer, the highest being six at Darwell Res on 14 Jun. However, the true breeding population could now exceed 1000 pairs.

There were numerous coastal records of Firecrests on migration, especially in the late autumn, but the highest count was of only seven, at Princes Park (Eastbourne) on 9 Nov. [MR Eade]



*Firecrest, Beachy Head, 2 November (Laurence Pitcher)*

## Goldcrest *Regulus regulus*

***Very common breeding resident; common passage migrant and winter visitor.***

Goldcrests were recorded in 470 tetrads (49%) compared with the 10-year average of 452. They were encountered in 35% of the squares surveyed in the first SWBS, very similar to 2021, with a maximum of 15 at Bookers Fm (Bolney) on 28 Jan. The biggest counts made in the first winter period included 20 at Worth Forest on 14 Jan and 25 Feb and 20 at Tilgate Forest on 22 Feb and 9 Mar, with counts of ten and above from five other locations.

In the BBS, Goldcrests were encountered in 41% of squares studied with a maximum of ten at Stedham Common on 27 Apr. The species' breeding performance appeared to be better than in the previous year, with confirmed breeding from 15 tetrads compared to two in 2020. However, if confirmed, probable and possible are combined, the total number of tetrads was 122, much the same as the 121 in the previous year.

Autumn passage was generally poor. The maximum number recorded at Beachy Head was 20 on both 12 and 14 Oct. During the second SWBS Goldcrests were encountered in 36% of squares surveyed with a maximum of ten at Telham on 11 Nov. [MC Daniel]

## Wren *Troglodytes troglodytes*

***Abundant resident. Amber-listed species of medium conservation concern.***

Wrens were recorded in 715 tetrads (75%), more than the 10-year average of 644. In the early SWBS the species was recorded in 79% of the squares surveyed, similar in percentage terms to the previous two years, with a maximum of 13 at Steyning Round Hill on 7 Feb. Notable high counts in the early year period were 21 at Burton MP on 20 Mar, 20 at Balcombe on 11 Mar and 20 at Pulborough Brooks on 18 Mar.

During the GBW, birds were recorded in 84% of gardens surveyed during the year, similar to previous years. Wrens were the 18th most common bird recorded in the BGBW, the same as in 2021. The first evidence of breeding was one regularly visiting a nest box at Angmering on 12 Mar. Nest building was observed at Iford Brooks on 20 Mar and the first fledglings were seen at Chichester Hbr on 23 May. Breeding was confirmed in 27 tetrads and probable in 53, similar totals to 2021 and 2020. In the BBS Wrens were recorded in 97% of the 185 squares surveyed, a similar number to previous years with the highest count being 34 at Westfield (Hastings) on 15 Apr. Fifteen singing males were recorded in Henfield on 2 May and 16 at Oreham Common on 14 May.

In the late SWBS Wrens were encountered in 83% of the 134 squares studied with a maximum of 17 at Battle on 6 Dec, which was the joint highest count in this period. There were no records of communal roosting, which is likely the result of milder winters. [D Brothwell]

## Nuthatch *Sitta europaea*

***Common resident.***

Nuthatches were recorded in 441 tetrads (46%) compared to the 10-year average of 415. During the GBW they were recorded in 46% of participating gardens during the year. In the early SWBS they were found in 43% of squares surveyed with a maximum of seven at Friars Gate (Ashdown Forest) on 7 Feb. The highest counts during the first winter period were 12 at Stansted Forest on 30 Mar and ten at Balcombe on 19 Feb.

Breeding was confirmed in 12 tetrads and probable or possible in a further 75. Singing was first noted on 2 Jan at Fittleworth and at Rackham Woods the next day and display observed on the 18th near Arundel. Nest building was seen on 19 Mar at Weir Wood Res and a bird was seen entering an

occupied nest site there on 2 Apr and the first fledged young were observed on 29 May at Southleigh Forest (Emsworth). During the BBS Nuthatches were encountered in 47% of squares studied with a maximum of 11 at West Lavington on 18 Apr.

From mid-August the only location with counts of ten and above was Balcombe with a high of 12 on 12 Aug. Elsewhere the highest count was eight at Pulborough Brooks on 31 Oct. During the late SWBS Nuthatches were found in 35% of squares surveyed with a maximum of six at Harting Down on 26 Dec. [MJ Chattaway]

## Eurasian Treecreeper *Certhia familiaris*

***Common resident.***

Treecreepers were recorded in 313 tetrads (32%) a little down from the previous two years (315 and 344) but still higher than the 10-year average of 287. A total of 37 were recorded in the early SWBS from 23 (15%) of squares surveyed with the highest count of six in Petworth Park on 2 Feb. Throughout the year the species was recorded in 21 (8.3%) of 254 gardens surveyed for the GBW.

Breeding was confirmed in 14 tetrads but was probable in a further 16. At Warnham collection of nest material was noted on 27 Mar followed by a male feeding a female on 29 Apr and young were observed being fed there on 15 Jun. The first fledglings were noted at Henfield on 12 May and at Tilgate on 7 Jun. During the BBS the species was found in 24% of the squares studied with a maximum count of ten on 30 Jun in a square near Loxwood. The highest count in the second half of the year was of nine at Black Down on 20 Nov. In the late SWBS 26 were reported from 23 squares (17% of those surveyed). [PJ Plant]

## Rose-coloured Starling *Pastor roseus*

***Rare vagrant.***

There were three typical records in 2022: adults photographed in a Beckley garden on 10 Jun (A Roffey) and at Brede Levels on 18 Jun (M Tomlins) and an at times elusive juvenile with Common Starlings around Sea Lane (Rustington) from 19 to 23 Sep (A Huttly *et al.*). The county total moves on to 55 with 30 this century. The last blank year was 2015. [P James]



*Rose-coloured Starling, Rustington, 19 September (Adam Huttly)*



*Common Starling, West Rise Marsh, 30 March (Laurence Pitcher)*

## Common Starling *Sturnus vulgaris*

***Common but declining resident and very common to abundant winter visitor. Red-listed species of high conservation concern. Section 41.***

Starlings were recorded in 605 tetrads (63%) during the year, more than the ten-year average of 533 (range 491 to 635). They were reported from 79% of gardens participating in GBW. In the first SWBS a total of 2814 was found in 65% of squares surveyed compared with 3055 in 64% of squares the previous year. In the BGBW they were seen in 47% and 43% of participating sites in West and East Sussex respectively.

During the first winter period four-figure flocks occurred in 14 tetrads. Over 8200 were counted at West Pier (Brighton) on 25 Feb and 4300 at the neighbouring Palace Pier on 9 Jan. Other murmurations and roosting flocks were 2000 at Widewater (Lancing) on 1 and 13 Jan and 11 Feb, 1500 at Worthing Pier on 14 Jan, 250 flying NE to roost at Weir Wood Res on 17 Jan, 2000 at Pulborough on 4 Feb and 1200 at Eastbourne Pier on 26 Feb. Flocks elsewhere were 2000 at Amberley Wild Brooks and 3000 at Cissbury on 1 and 16 Jan, 1700 at Iford Brooks on 2 Jan and a flock of 1500 at Amberley Wild Brooks was flushed by a Marsh Harrier on 3 Jan. At Newstead Fm (Handcross) three flocks totalling 1000 were present on 9 Jan and several hundred at Scotney GP

on 3 Feb. In March 2000 were counted at Thorney Island on the 4th, 1000 at Pett Level the following day and at Arlington Res on the 10th. The farmer at Pitsham Fm (Midhurst) reported: 'There were so many starlings on the power lines near the dairy on Sunday morning 9 January just after 9am that the wires touched causing an explosion and half of Petersfield lost power momentarily. A number of the birds were killed and a lot more were stunned but recovered. I have never seen anything like it before. I saw it happen and so did the tractor driver who was feeding the cattle in the field at the time.'

Passage was observed at Hastings where over 2000 were counted flying N or NE between 28 Feb and 25 Mar. Breeding was confirmed in 67 tetrads and was probable or possible in a further 40. Nest building was observed at Uckfield on 10 Mar and the first fledged birds were seen at Bognor Regis on 4 May. In the BBS this species was seen in 69% of squares surveyed with a maximum of 147 on Pevensey Levels on 25 May. Already by the end of July three-figure flocks were present at 14 sites. Thereafter flocks increased to 500 at Medmerry on several dates in August, 600 at Rye Hbr on 21 Aug and 1000 at Thorney Island on 6 Sep. The roost at Waltham Brooks held 450 on 12 Aug.

Possible signs of an influx were 300 W at Seaford Head on 25 Oct and migrating flocks were 58 on 13 Nov and 225 the following day at Weir Wood Res and 300 W on 26 Nov at Cissbury. On 29 Oct 1200 were at Scotney GP and Pulborough Brooks held 1000 on 8 and 14 Nov. On 4 Dec 1000 were at Balcombe and on 9 Dec there was a murmuration of 5000 at Amberley Wild Brooks. The highest roost count at the Weir Wood Res was 900 on 10 Dec and at Palace Pier (Brighton) 2800 on 14 Dec and 3500 on 26 Dec. The last large flock of the year was over 900 at St Leonard's Forest on 27 Dec.

On 12 Feb a leucistic bird was present at Ferring and on 29 Jun nearby at Kingston Gorse, presumably one of the 2021 birds. A bird with some white tail feathers was at Mountfield (Robertsbridge) during March. [AC Gutteridge]

## Song Thrush *Turdus philomelos*

***Very common but decreasing resident and partial migrant; common passage migrant and winter visitor. Amber-listed species of medium conservation concern. Section 41.***

Song Thrushes were present in 655 tetrads (69%), more than the 10-year average of 591. A small decrease from 2021 was noted in the first SWBS with the species encountered in 70% of the squares surveyed, with a maximum of 14 at Danehill on 2 Feb. During the GBW Song Thrushes were present in 62% of surveyed gardens during the year.

The BBS results were similar to 2021 with Song Thrushes reported in 86 of surveyed squares with a maximum of 21 at Harting Down on 5 May. Breeding was confirmed in 31 tetrads and probable in a further 45. Nest building was first noted on 28 Mar at Wivelsfield, a bird carrying food was seen on 10 Apr at Warnham LNR and the first fledglings were at Stopham on 23 Apr with the latest report of fledglings being on 17 Aug at Wivelsfield Green.

Migration was apparent with overnight contact calls recorded in Storrington: 143 recorded on 9 Oct and 164 on 19 Oct. Other notable counts were 17 at Sheepcote Valley (Brighton) on 14 Oct, 30 at Beeding Brooks on 3 Dec, 23 at Paddockhurst (Worth) on 10 Dec, 25 at Gillshaw Fm (Rye) on the same day and 40 in frozen fields at Medmerry on 16 Dec. Song Thrushes were found in 53% of surveyed squares in the second SWBS with a maximum of eight at Steyning Round Hill on 8 Dec. [DM Wright]

## Mistle Thrush *Turdus viscivorus*

***Common resident and partial migrant. Red-listed species of high conservation concern.***

Mistle Thrushes were recorded in 418 tetrads (44%), fewer than in 2021 but higher than the 10-year average of 359. In the first SWBS Mistle Thrushes were found in only 22% of surveyed squares, a considerable decrease from the 32% in 2021.

During the BBS they were encountered in 42% of surveyed squares with a maximum of five at Petworth on 11 Feb. Breeding was confirmed in 15 tetrads and probable in a further 26. Singing was reported from mid-January, a bird with food was seen at Barnham on 11 Apr and the first fledglings observed at Devils Dyke (Brighton) on 2 May.

Flocks of Mistle Thrushes are often a feature of July and August and 2022 was no exception with the largest being of 48 at Weir Wood Res on 30 Aug, 26 at Old Lodge LNR (Ashdown Forest) on 2 Jul, 24 at Patching Hill on 15 Aug, and 22 at Arundel Park the next day.

Most records in the autumn were in single figures; the highest counts were 15 at Little Strudgate Fm (Balcombe) on 28 Oct and 11 at Weir Wood Res on 25 Oct. Second winter period counts were mostly in single figures but 21 were at Coopers Green (Uckfield) on 2 Nov and ten at Cowdray Park (Midhurst) on 22 Dec. In the second SWBS Mistle Thrushes were found in 21% of squares surveyed with a maximum of nine at Ditchling Common on 2 Dec. Singing was reported from several locations in November and December. [DM Wright, MJ Chattaway]



*Mistle Thrush, Camber Castle, 9 June (Gary Faulkner)*

## Redwing *Turdus iliacus*

***Common, occasionally very common, passage migrant and winter visitor. Amber-listed species of medium conservation concern. Schedule 1 species.***

Redwings were recorded from 408 tetrads (43%) fewer than in 2021 but greater than the 10-year average of 364. During the first SWBS Redwings were reported in 40% of surveyed squares with a maximum of 313 at Cocking on 26 Jan. The following table of approximate minimum monthly totals, derived by summing the highest count in each tetrad in each month, reveals greater numbers in both winter periods than the previous decade averages, particularly in October when the total was more than four times the 10-year average.

| | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2022 | 4779 | 2687 | 1363 | 336 | - | - | - | 1 | 35 | 17224 | 2076 | 2427 |
| Average 2012-2021 | 3252 | 2765 | 2019 | 229 | - | - | - | - | 6 | 3638 | 2178 | 2962 |

In January and February there were no flocks larger than the 313 reported above, but there were gatherings of 100 or more from 13 further locations. Migration was well underway in March and only 336 were reported in April; most being125 at Cedar Fm (Flimwell) on the 1st. The last was one at Pulborough Brooks on the 13th, one week earlier than the 10-year average departure date.

There were no further reports until a single Redwing flew over Sheepcote Valley (Brighton) on 29 Aug, 22 days earlier than the 10-year average arrival date. The next was one at Hampden Park (Eastbourne) on 19 Sep with an additional 34 reported during the rest of September until substantial numbers arrived in October. The first high counts were of 130 at Amberley Mount, an overnight total of 389 at Storrington and an impressive 12,000 W at Brighton, all on the 19th. By the end of October a massive total of 17,224 Redwings had been reported. The highest counts for the second winter period were 293 at Storrington overnight on 11 Nov, 250 at Southwater on 5 Dec and 200 at Cedar Fm on 8 Dec. During the second SWBS Redwings were encountered in 47% of squares surveyed with a maximum of 86 at Rusper on 26 Dec. [DM Wright]



*Redwing, Battle, 12 January (David Gardiner)*

## Blackbird *Turdus merula*

***Abundant breeding resident; very common or abundant winter visitor; status uncertain as passage migrant.***

There were records from 762 tetrads (79%) compared with the 10-year average of 682 (range 605 to 785). During the first SWBS Blackbirds were encountered in 96% of squares surveyed. During the BGBW they were recorded in 83% of participating gardens in West Sussex and in 79% in East Sussex and in 96% of participating gardens in the GBW.

Nest building was first noted in Haywards Heath on 1 Mar and a female was seen collecting food at Mountfield on 23 Mar. The first fledged young, accompanied by both adults, was seen in Worthing on 26 Apr. A juvenile with tail not yet fully grown was in a Haywards Heath garden on 30 Sep, the last record in the year of a recently fledged bird. During the BBS Blackbirds were found in every one of the 185 squares surveyed.

Autumn counts suggestive of inward migration included 25 at Cissbury on 22 Sep, 30 in Sheepcote Valley (Brighton) on 14 Oct, 18 at Beachy Head on 23 Oct and 27 at Sheepcote Valley on 14 Nov. During the second SWBS Blackbirds were encountered in 94% of the squares surveyed. [M Mallalieu]

## Fieldfare *Turdus pilaris*

***Common, occasionally very common, passage migrant and winter visitor. Red-listed species of high conservation concern. Schedule 1 species.***

Fieldfare were reported from 267 tetrads (28%), slightly fewer than the 10-year average of 282. Approximate monthly totals were considerably lower than the 10-year average in all months except October and are shown in the table below, calculated using the same method as for Redwing.

| | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2022 | 1455 | 691 | 421 | 60 | - | - | - | - | - | 2016 | 1317 | 2042 |
| Average 2012-2021 | 4569 | 3012 | 1743 | 184 | - | - | 1 | - | 2 | 1051 | 2997 | 2444 |

The weak January counts included several small flocks totaling c.250 on the Upper Adur Levels on 12 Jan, but generally flocks during the first four months of the year were in low double figures. Exceptions were 120 at both Amberley Wild Brooks and Arlington Res on 14 and 15 Jan respectively and 100 at Malling Down (Lewes) on the 26th. The last spring record was one at Houghton (Amberley) on 19 Apr, three days earlier than the 10-year average last date. During the first SWBS Fieldfares were recorded in 15% of squares surveyed with a maximum of 90 at Petworth on 11 Feb.

The first returning Fieldfare was on 7 Oct at East Grinstead, followed by 12 at West Marden the next day; this was eight days later than the 10-year average first date. Return passage picked up considerably from mid-October to give a monthly total of 2016, almost double the 10-year average. Peak October counts were 100 at Beachy Head on the 20th, 200 at Black Down on the 22nd, 250 at Marsh Fm (Sidlesham) on the 25th and 150 at Old Ditcham (Harting) on the 26th. There were 220 at Cissbury on 2 Nov, 115 at Winchelsea on 14 Nov and 300 at Cedar Fm (Flimwell) in 8 Dec. The highest count of the year, 874 at Clayton Fm (Rye) on 5 Dec, was encountered during the second SWBS, in which Fieldfares were found in 28% of the squares surveyed. [DM Wright, MJ Chattaway]

## Ring Ouzel *Turdus torquatus*

***Passage migrant; very scarce in spring; scarce to fairly common in autumn. Red-listed species of high conservation concern. Section 41.***

Ring Ouzels were reported in 45 tetrads (4.7%), the majority of which were at downland or coastal locations, representing stop-over points on spring or autumn passage. The first of the year was at Ferring on 28 Mar, a similar date to that for 2021 (29 Mar). During April most sightings were at or near the coast although two were well inland at Danehill on 3 Apr and one was at Burwash on the 11th. On 25 Apr a group of 12 were reported feeding around the Long Man of Wilmington. It appears that many remained for a few days with seven on the 26th, eight on the 27th, ten on the 28th, and finally four on the 29th. Spring passage continued unto 5 May with one at Rye Hbr and four at Beachy Head. The approximate monthly totals are shown in the following table.

| | Mar | Apr | May | | Sep | Oct | Nov |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| No. of birds 2022 | 2 | 37 | 5 | | 9 | 43 | 11 |
| Average county total 2012-2021 | 1 | 24 | 2 | | 10 | 360 | 7 |

Autumn passage was light; the first was one heard at night at Hampden Park (Eastbourne) on 19 Sep, followed by five on the 21st at Sheepcote Valley (Brighton) and a further three at Beeding Hill on the 26th. The majority of sightings were in October from mainly coastal and downland sites. Nine were at Beachy Head on 4 Nov, which was the highest count of the autumn and the last at Cadborough (Rye) on 5 Nov. [DM Wright]



*Ring Ouzel, Beachy Head, 4 May (Laurence Pitcher)*

## American Robin *Turdus migratorius*

***Very rare vagrant.***

The first for Sussex was found at the west end of Hill Road, Eastbourne, on 8 Feb, where it remained until 27 Feb (M & R Clayton-Harding *et al.*). The bird proved popular with birders from Sussex and far beyond, providing an example of a smooth urban twitch. The record, the 28th for Britain, has been accepted by BBRC and was arguably the highlight of the year. [DK Campbell]

## 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. Section 41.***

Spotted Flycatchers were recorded in 192 tetrads (20%), the highest since 2011 and much higher than the 10-year average of 148.

The first sighting of the year was of two at Pagham Hbr on 23 Apr, two days earlier than the 10-year average first date, followed by singles at Bognor and Climping on the 30th. Thereafter mainly ones and twos were seen throughout May, but there was a notable arrival on the 13th when at least 51 were recorded including 12 in the Lidsey area, 11 between East Preston and Goring Gap and 12 on the downs north of Sompting. This was the largest single day total in May this century.

Breeding was confirmed in 16 tetrads, probable in a further four and possible in 18. A bird with food or faecal sac was seen at Screens Wood (Arundel) on 14 Jun and the first fledged young were seen at Ambersham Common on 20 Jun. In July and August family groups were observed at Lurgashall MP, Petworth Park, Pulborough Brooks, Rackham Woods, Stopham, Washington, Chanctonbury Ring, Worth Forest, Paddockhurst, Wivelsfield, East Grinstead and Bells Yew Green. It seems to have been a good year for breeding Spotted Flycatchers in Sussex.

During August ten or more were recorded at eight sites, the highest count being 28 at Chanctonbury Ring on 27 Aug. Numbers began to dwindle through September, but 12 were at Graffham Down and ten at Lychpole (Cissbury), both on the 10th and 15 at Rewell Wood (Arundel) on the 14th. There were records on six dates in early October with the last two at Pulborough Brooks on the 11th, two days later than the 10-year average last date. [T Seabrook]

## Robin *Erithacus rubecula*

***Abundant resident; probably common passage migrant; mainly in autumn; status uncertain as winter visitor.***

Robins were seen in 752 (79%) tetrads in the year, similar to recent years. The species was recorded in 80% and 83% of BGBW sites in East and West Sussex respectively and in over 97% of GBW locations. During the first SWBS Robins were found in 95% of the squares studied with a maximum of 36 at Nutley on 11 Feb. Other high counts in the first quarter included 50 at the Knepp Estate on 1 Jan, 42 at Stansted Forest on 30 Mar and 40 at Pulborough Brooks on 16 Mar.

Breeding was confirmed in 58 tetrads, probable in 45 and possible in a further 137. On 3 Apr in Itchingfield one was seen carrying food to a probable nest and feeding a partner. At Steyning on 4 Apr a bird was reported visiting a nest, on the 16th a bird was seen on its nest at Etchingham and on the 24th the first fledglings were recorded at Lancing. Thereafter fledglings were reported throughout the summer months and into early September. In the BBS Robins were found in 98% of squares surveyed with a maximum of 41 on 29 May at Southleigh Forest (Emsworth). The highest count elsewhere during this period was of 56 at the Knepp Estate on 12 Jun.

During October 39 were recorded at Balcombe on the 15th and 32 at Pagham Hbr on the 21st. Robins were found in 96% of the squares studied during the second SWBS with a high count of 52 at Danehill on 26 Dec. [T Seabrook]

## Bluethroat *Luscinia svecica*

***Very scarce spring and autumn visitor. Schedule 1 species.***

An adult male of the form cyanecula (White-spotted Bluethroat) was trapped and ringed at Charleston Reedbed on 31 Mar (JAG Dunlop, T Hallahan). This is the first accepted record of this form in Sussex since it was added to the list of taxa for which BBRC requires descriptions. [DK Campbell]

## Common Nightingale *Luscinia megarhynchos*

***Fairly common summer visitor and infrequently seen passage migrant. Red-listed species of high conservation concern.***

Nightingales were seen in 162 (17%) tetrads in 2022, well above the 10-year average of 129 due to the county survey of this species. First arrivals of the year were singing males at Pulborough Brooks and Barcombe on 11 Apr, six days later than the 10-year average, increasing to two and three, respectively, the following day. Records increased rapidly through April with highs of eight at Pulborough Brooks and ten at the Knepp Estate on the 14th.

Details of the county-wide survey of Nightingales are in this report (see pages 268-272), revealing seven 1-km squares with double-figure counts peaking at 15 each in squares at Ebernoe and Plaistow. In the Knepp Southern Block (473.17h) several structured surveys were carried out across the breeding season and recorded an estimated 42 Nightingale territories with eight territories around the nearby Shipley village. Fifteen territories were found in the Barcombe parish and 12 pairs were at Pulborough Brooks. Breeding was confirmed in just five tetrads but considered probable in 58 and possible in a further 57. Adults with fledglings, in three separate locations, were first reported at Etchingham on 8 Jun and the last reported sighting of fledglings was at Edburton on 26 Jul. Surprisingly, at the unlikely site of the Old Airstrip (Ashdown Forest), during an evening Nightjar excursion on 30 Jun, a Nightingale burst into song from a dense clump of trees.

One at Cuckmere Haven on 25 Jul was the first at a coastal site in the autumn and thereafter Nightingales were recorded at 14 sites on 29 dates with the highest counts being four at Cuckmere Haven on 14 Aug and three at Sheepcote Valley (Brighton) on 16 Aug. Singles at Hastings CP on 19 Sep and at Beachy Head on 4 Oct were the only records for these months; the last being 23 days later than the 10-year average departure date. [T Seabrook]

## Pied Flycatcher *Ficedula hypoleuca*

***Scarce passage migrant; more numerous in autumn than spring. Has bred. Amber-listed species of medium conservation concern.***

Pied Flycatchers were recorded in 70 tetrads (7.3%), the second highest number ever and considerably more than the 10-year average of 48. The approximate monthly totals are shown in the following table.

| | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2022 | 2 | - | - | 1 | 79 | 33 | - |
| Average 2012-2021 | 10 | 2 | - | 2 | 40 | 22 | 1 |

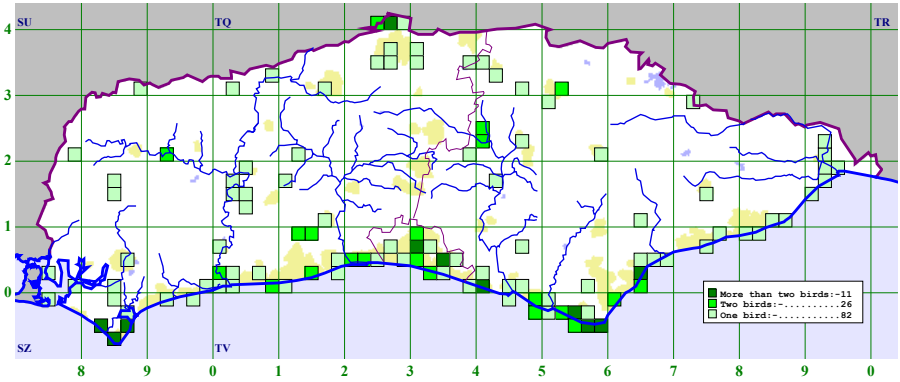
The first record of the year was at Beachy Head on 28 Apr, 18 days later than the 10-year average first date, followed by one at Burpham on the 30th. These were the only spring records.

For the return migration sightings began with one at Beachy Head on 26 Jul. Then, throughout August one or two were a regular occurrence although there were three at Seaford Head on the 13th, Beachy Head on the 18th, Pagham Hbr on the 19th and 27th and Barcombe Cross on the 28th. In September there were four at Steep Down (Lancing) and three at Sompting, both on the 10th. The final records of the year were on 16 Sep with one at both Amberley Wild Brooks and Graffham Down, these being 15 days earlier than the 10-year average last date of 1 Oct and the earliest last date recorded. [T Seabrook]

## Black Redstart *Phoenicurus ochruros*

***Rare resident; scarce passage migrant and very scarce winter visitor. Amber-listed species of medium conservation concern. Schedule 1 species.***

Black Redstart records were submitted from 114 tetrads (12%), a significant increase on both 2021 and the 10-year average of 72. This was due in no small part to a proliferation of inland sightings, although most records continued to come from the coast, as expected. This is illustrated below, by plotting the maximum count in each tetrad.




Birds were present throughout the year. Minimum monthly counts, estimated by summing the peak count in each tetrad, were as follows:

| | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2022 | 17 | 17 | 73 | 38 | 10 | 10 | 1 | 4 | 10 | 16 | 61 | 29 |
| Average 2012-2021 | 16 | 10 | 26 | 19 | 3 | 3 | 1 | 3 | 2 | 39 | 36 | 16 |

The year began with an unusual inland record; a female spent from 27 Jan until 10 Feb on St Mary's Church in Horsham. All told, the first winter period returned standard counts, but spring migration proved exceptional, with notably high numbers in both March and April. In March, the 30th proved to be the zenith, with the Beachy Head area alone hosting 14 birds, nine at Birling Gap (the year's highest count) and five at Horseshoe Plantation. Five more were at Sheepcote Valley (Brighton), while Seaford Head and Crowborough also produced multiple birds on the same date.

A productive summer followed, with breeding confirmed in four sites. On 9 Jun, fledged young were again observed at Gatwick Airport, where birds were present throughout the year. Having provided Sussex's first inland breeding record for over a decade in 2021, this corroborates the site's importance to the species. Breeding was also proven near Brighton (adult with two juveniles on 28 May); a pair in Eastbourne (16 Jun until 1 Aug) produced two broods in a private garage; and near Hastings one was feeding young in a nest on 19 Jun. Considering that there were just four breeding

records in Sussex from 2009 to 2020, it is justifiable to judge this a welcome, albeit localised, recovery for the species. Breeding was probable or possible at three further locations.

October, usually a peak month for autumn passage, produced below average numbers for the second year running, but the second winter period brought better returns. A minimum of 29 birds were recorded in December, well above the 10-year average (16), suggesting a strong wintering presence. Most of the traditional, coastal sites held individuals during this time, including Medmerry, Widewater (Lancing), Brighton and Beachy Head. [A Glossop]



*Black Redstart, Birling Gap, 24 March (Laurence Pitcher)*

## Common Redstart *Phoenicurus phoenicurus*

***Scarce or fairly common summer visitor and fairly common passage migrant. Amber-listed species of medium conservation concern.***

Common Redstarts were recorded in 122 tetrads (11%), this being the highest number of tetrads to date, although breeding was confirmed in only seven and probable in a further ten. Ashdown Forest continues to be the stronghold for this attractive species.

The first of the year was a male on 26 Mar at High and Over (Seaford), five days earlier than the 10-year average arrival date. There were oddly no further records until 10 Apr when one was at Felbridge, although there was a significant arrival in the coming days, emphasised by 26 birds on territory at two sites on Ashdown Forest by 18 Apr.

Results from the WHBBS revealed territories at the following commons in West Sussex: Ambersham Common (2), Black Down (6), Chapel Common (Liphook) (3), Linchmere and Stanley Common (3) and Weavers Down (Liss) (4). A survey in the Pippingford Estate (Ashdown Forest) on 7 May found 22 singing males on territory. The first fledglings were seen in the Four Counties area of Ashdown Forest on 19 Jun and at Old Lodge LNR the following day.

The first Common Redstart on return passage was at Climping Gap on 3 Jul, but numbers increased significantly from mid-August and at most regularly watched coastal locations multiple birds were recorded, with the highest site count of the autumn being nine at Cissbury Ring on 22 Aug. The final record of the year was at Sompting on 31 Oct, six days later than the 10-year average departure date. [MR Eade]



*Whinchat, Beachy Head, 3 September (Laurence Pitcher)*

## Whinchat *Saxicola rubetra*

***Fairly common passage migrant. Rare summer visitor; last bred in 1999. Very rare in winter. Red-listed species of high conservation concern.***

Whinchats were recorded in 104 tetrads (11%) compared to the 10-year average of 89. Using the total of peak counts in each tetrad gives a guide to the monthly occurrence and how this year compares with the average for the previous decade. These figures and the number of days they were recorded are shown in the following table.

| | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2022 | - | 10 | 29 | - | 8 | 182 | 252 | 6 | 1 |
| Average county total 2012-2021 | - | 18 | 17 | 1 | 8 | 163 | 184 | 20 | - |
| Number of days in 2022 | - | 8 | 15 | - | 8 | 29 | 30 | 6 | 1 |

The first arrival was on 18 Apr at Climping Gap, nine days later than the 10-year average first date, followed by one at Hope Gap the next day. Before the end of the month singles were seen at eight further locations, then three at Yapton on 2 May and four at Beachy Head on the 4th. Most May records were of singles; the last of the spring was one at Climping Gap on the 21st. There were no June records.

The first returning Whinchat was at Cuckmere Haven on 9 Jul. Sightings became almost daily towards the end of the month with two at both Cissbury on the 23rd and Cuckmere Haven on the 29th. Numbers increased in August. The highest count was at Beachy Head of nine on the 26th with eights recorded at Cissbury on the 20th, Cuckmere Haven on the 24th, Pulborough Brooks on the 26th and Thorney Island on the 27th and 28th.

In September there were six counts of ten and above, the highest being 19 at Thorney Island on the 10th and 13 at Beachy Head on the 2nd. There were counts of between five and nine at 15 further locations. In October there were two at Pulborough Brooks on the 2nd but all other records were of one. The last Whinchat was seen at West Rise Marsh (Eastbourne) on 4 Nov, which is nine days later than the 10-year average last date. [MJ Chattaway]

## Eurasian Stonechat *Saxicola rubicola*

***Fairly common resident and partial migrant.***

Stonechats were recorded in 275 tetrads (29%), compared to the 10-year average of 206. A guide to the monthly occurrence, produced by summing the highest count in each tetrad in each month, is shown in the following table. In every month more were recorded than the average for the previous decade.

| | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2022 | 264 | 180 | 186 | 155 | 256 | 181 | 149 | 226 | 453 | 625 | 293 | 202 |
| Average 2012-2021 | 134 | 131 | 110 | 104 | 136 | 138 | 95 | 127 | 237 | 322 | 173 | 152 |

The highest first winter period counts were 20 in the Wych Cross area of Ashdown Forest on 9 Feb, 16 in both the lower Cuckmere Valley on 3 Jan and Beachy Head on 17 Mar, with counts of ten and above at five further locations. Records indicate that more birds were present on Ashdown Forest during this period than is usual due to the mild winter weather. During the first SWBS Stonechats were found in 8.1% of squares surveyed with a maximum of ten at Old Lodge LNR (Ashdown Forest) on 12 Jan.

Breeding was confirmed in 26 tetrads and probable in a further 38. Most locations were on Ashdown Forest but confirmed breeding occurred elsewhere at 30 sites. On the West Sussex Commons 72 pairs or territories were identified (see page 203). At Medmerry 22 pairs were counted and at Broadwater Warren 17. A male was seen with nesting material on the exceptionally early date of 12 Jan at Old Lodge LNR, the first confirmed breeding record was of a bird with food or faecal sac on 21 Apr at Cuckmere Haven and the first fledglings were observed on 6 May at Pulborough Brooks. On Ashdown Forest the highest counts at specific locations during the breeding season were 18 at Old Lodge LNR on 27 Jun and 13 at Roman Road on 2 Jul. Elsewhere there were 18 at Beachy Head on 3 Jun, 15 in the lower Cuckmere Valley on 15 Jul and 20 at Crowlink on 1 Aug. During the BBS the species was encountered in 8.1% squares surveyed with a maximum of five at Old Lodge LNR on 21 Apr.

The highest September counts at Beachy Head were 40 on the 2nd and 39 on the 22nd. Elsewhere 36 were at Steep Down (Lancing) on the 28th, 25 at Old Lodge LNR on the 26th, 19 at Hastings CP on the 21st, 22 at Cissbury on the 25th and 18 at Beeding Hill the same day. High counts continued into October; the highest being 50 on the 9th at Beachy Head, 40 at Medmerry on the 29th, 36 at Porthole Fm (Sidlesham) on the 8th and 26 at Beeding Hill on the 25th.

Second winter period counts were much lower with the highest being 20 at both Beeding Hill on 1 Nov and Church Norton on the 5th. Most December records were in single figures and from the coast or river valleys. The last records from Ashdown Forest were on 8 Dec. During the second SWBS Stonechats were found in 12% of squares surveyed with a maximum of six at Steyning Roundhill on 8 Dec. [MJ Chattaway]

## Northern Wheatear *Oenanthe oenanthe*

***Very scarce breeding summer visitor and common passage migrant; very rare in mid-winter. Amber-listed species of medium conservation concern.***

Wheatears were recorded in 138 tetrads (14%), fewer than the 10-year average of 153. The first arrival was on 10 Mar at Selsey Bill, three days later than the 10-year average, followed by a widespread arrival in the following week. The first double-figure count was also at Selsey Bill with 13 on 29 Mar. The only other notable counts were 12 at Lychpole (Cissbury) on 5 May and ten at Pagham Hbr on 10 Apr.

Rye Hbr is the only location with confirmed breeding in recent years, but disappointingly it seems unlikely that successful breeding occurred in 2022. Birds were seen in suitable habitat in May but there were no records from mid-May until late July and no records of young birds.

Autumn passage began in late July and then increased in August, with counts of six at Medmerry on 5 Aug, eight at Thorney Island on the 6th and nine at Findon on the same date. The highest counts during August were 21 at Chanctonbury Ring on the 16th, 12 at Beachy Head on the 19th and 20 at Thorney Island on the 26th.

The largest counts in September were 19 at Goring Gap on the 9th, 18 at Thorney Island on the 4th, 16 at Beeding Hill on the 2nd and 16 at Medmerry on the 9th. Passage continued during October with 54 reported in total. There were three in November with the last from Beachy Head on the 7th, the same as the 10-year average last date.

**Greenland Wheatear *O. o. leucorhoa***

Individuals with characteristics of this race were seen at Rustington on 19 Apr, Beachy Head on 6 May and East Preston on 12 May, and in the autumn at Telscombe Cliffs on 25 Aug, Pagham Hbr on 14 Sep and Sidlesham on 11 and 12 Sep.

Observers are reminded that nominate birds from Russia and Fenno-Scandian tundras can resemble *leucorhoa* in early spring and autumn, and safe identification of genuine *leucorhoa* generally involves trapping and measuring (Collins Bird Guides, 2nd Ed., p.282). [D Brothwell]

## Desert Wheatear *Oenanthe deserti*

***Very rare vagrant.***

A first-winter male was discovered on the beach at Goring Gap on 20 Mar (SP Simpson), attracting a steady stream of admirers. There was no sign of the bird the next day. The record has been submitted to BBRC and acceptance will take the Sussex total to nine birds. The last accepted record was at Cooden Beach in November and December 2016. There has only been one other spring record, a male at Beachy Head in April 1966; all other previous Sussex birds turned up in late October or November. [DK Campbell]

## Tree Sparrow *Passer montanus*

***Much declined and now very scarce resident; scarce passage migrant and winter visitor. Red-listed species of high conservation concern. Section 41.***

Tree Sparrow continues to decline in Sussex with only a handful of records this year. Notably visits to former strongholds such as Scotney GP failed to locate the species. Almost all the records were from East Sussex. For the third year in a row none were reported from Pevensey Levels which previously held a self-sustaining population.

On 11 Mar a single bird was recorded with House Sparrows and Chaffinches at Arlington Res. On 15 Mar two were at East Guldeford Level. This is a known breeding site and further records

came on 14 May and 11 Jun when breeding was proved for this year.

The highest count was at Broomhill Level where 12 were seen at Red House on 30 Mar. Breeding at this site is probable as six birds were still present on 24 Apr.

The only record for West Sussex was of three birds caught in a mist net at Hardham on 3 Sep. These consisted of one adult and two juveniles from different broods. One of the juveniles was only very recently fledged suggesting an undiscovered local colony.

The continued reduction in both the number of sites and the size of counts suggests a bleak outlook for the future of this charming species in Sussex. This is a bird of high conservation concern and observers are asked to report all sightings, particularly if breeding evidence is encountered. [RA Black]



*Desert Wheatear, Goring, 20 March (Adam Huttly)*

## House Sparrow *Passer domesticus*

***Very common but possibly declining resident. Red-listed species of high conservation concern. Section 41.***

House Sparrows were recorded in 610 tetrads (64%) during the year compared with the 10-year average of 531 (range 473 to 622). As in 2021 they were present in 85% of gardens participating in the GBW. A garden in Rodmell averaged 59 House Sparrows in the first winter period with a maximum of 70 in week beginning 20 Feb. In the BGBW they were present in 63% and 66% of sites in West and East Sussex respectively. In the first SWBS, 1364 were recorded in 66% of the squares

surveyed, with a maximum of 88 at Westbourne Common on 17 Jan. The only very large flock in the first winter period was of c.150 at New Salts Fm (Lancing) on several dates in March. These large numbers were maintained until mid-June when they reached 200.

During the BBS House Sparrows were recorded in 75% of squares surveyed with a maximum of 77 at Ridgewood (Uckfield) on 9 Jun. Investigation of nest boxes was noted at Itchingfield on 11 Feb and nest building at Preston Park (Brighton) on 20 Mar. Breeding was confirmed in 30 tetrads and probable in a further 50. The first fledglings were recorded at Bognor Regis on 7 May. The largest post-breeding flock was 425 at Selsey Bill on 15 Sep. Other three-figure post-breeding flocks occurred at Goring, New Salts Fm and Combe Valley CP.

In the second SWBS 1038 were counted in 57% of squares surveyed with a maximum of 97 at Chelwood Common (Danehill) on 26 Dec. The only three-figure flock held 110 at West Chidham on 8 Oct. [AC Gutteridge]

## Dunnock *Prunella modularis*

***Very common resident. Amber-listed species of medium conservation concern. Section 41.***

Dunnocks were recorded in 650 tetrads (67%) down from the 684 in 2021, but above the 10-year average of 590. In the GBW they were recorded in 219 (86%) of participating gardens with the average weekly count of two birds. In the first SWBS a total of 345 was found in 110 squares (74%) with a maximum count of 16 on 2 Feb in Danehill. The highest counts in the first quarter were of 43 in Sheepcote Valley (Brighton) on 4 Mar and 32 at Medmerry on 15 Mar.

Breeding was confirmed in 22 tetrads and was probable in a further 46. Display was recorded at various locations from the very start of the year and nest building noted on 9 Mar in Worthing. The first recently fledged young were reported from Haywards Heath on 18 Apr and a bird with a brood patch was found at Ladywell (Coombes) on the same day. A nest with young was found at Weir Wood Res on 6 Jun. During the BBS there were 744 total encounters from 86% of those squares studied with a maximum count of 13 on 14 Apr in Ridgewood (Uckfield).

In the second SWBS 228 were found in 77 (55%) of the squares studied with a maximum count of 18 on 26 Dec in Danehill. [PJ Plant]

## 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. Section 41.***

Yellow Wagtails were recorded in 95 tetrads (10%), similar to 94 in 2020 and the 10-year average of 90 (range 73 to 112), although there were noticeably fewer birds recorded.

The first of the year was at Combe Valley CP on 10 Apr, 13 days later than the 10-year average, followed by almost daily records throughout the county, but with lower numbers than usual with the highest counts being 11 at Rye Hbr on the 26 Apr, ten at Scotney GP on the 20 Apr and nine at Winchelsea on 3 May. Coastal spring passage included a total of 39 at Selsey Bill in April all headed north with a maximum of 27 on the 29th.

It was a disappointing year for breeding records with breeding confirmed at just one site and probable at two, compared to confirmed in three and probable in six in 2021. There were no records from East Guldeford Level where eight singing males were heard in 2021. Two recently fledged young were seen at Rye Hbr on 28 Jun. At Pevensey Levels there was a pair acting territorially on 19 Jun and there were ten at Scotney GP in suitable habitat on 13 Jun.

The end of August and beginning of September is the best time to see this species on passage in the county with high counts coming from wetland reserves, coastal headlands and high points on the South Downs. There were 96 records of ten or more during August and September including high counts of 100 at Rye Hbr on 21 Aug and Cissbury on 3 Sep. There were 85 at Beachy Head on 5 Sep including a flock of 70 flushed by a Hobby. Fifty-five were at Pagham Hbr on 12 Sep, 60 at Goring Gap on 29 Aug and 50 at Climping Gap on the 14 Sep.

Migration watchers logged a total of 297 during the autumn with 187 at Selsey Bill in September (112 E, 74 W) and a maximum of 36 on 13 Sep. The last record was at Selsey Bill on 18 Oct, nine days earlier than the 10-year average. [D Brothwell]

**Grey-headed Wagtail, *M.f. thunbergi***

A female showing characteristics of this race which breeds in Scandinavia was photographed in the lower Cuckmere Valley on 2 May (BR Cox). The first county record since 2019 and the eleventh in total. [P James]



*Yellow Wagtail, Beachy Head, 26 August (Laurence Pitcher)*

## Grey Wagtail *Motacilla cinerea*

***Fairly common resident, passage migrant and winter visitor. Amber-listed species of medium conservation concern.***

Grey Wagtails were recorded in 305 tetrads (32%), a slight decrease on the two previous years but more than the 10-year average of 248. In the first SWBS, birds were found in three (2%) of the 149 1-km squares studied (cf. 3.3% in 2021 and 5.6% in 2020) and in 10% of gardens surveyed during the GBW throughout the year. Six were recorded going to roost at Warnham LNR on 2 Feb.

Breeding was confirmed in 16 tetrads, probable in 24 and possible in 13 which is consistent with previous years. During the BBS, birds were found in 9.2% of the squares studied. The first evidence of breeding was of individuals carrying food at Weir Wood Res and Barcombe Res, both on 19 Apr. The first juveniles were noted at Weir Wood Res on 15 May and Pulborough Brooks on 29 May. At Midhurst, on the River Rother, there were five juveniles and three adults on 23 Jun from an estimated three nests on this stretch of river. At Warnham LNR, seven were recorded fledging from two nests. The highest post breeding count was of eight at Lewes Brooks on 22 Aug comprising of four adults and four juveniles. Overall, there is evidence the population is stable in the county with seemingly good breeding success in optimal habitat.

Autumn passage is predominantly westward and peaked in September with 52 (14 E, 38 W) and then 12 (1 E, 11 W) in October at Selsey Bill, with smaller numbers at other coastal sites. In the second SWBS, 12 were found in nine (6.5%) of the 139 squares studied (cf. 5.7% in 2021 and 5.4% in 2020) with a maximum of three at Ditchling Common on 2 Dec. [D Brothwell]

## Pied Wagtail *Motacilla alba yarrellii*

***Common resident; passage migrant and winter visitor.***

Pied Wagtails were found in 523 tetrads (55%), compared to the 10-year average of 463. In the first SWBS they were recorded in 32% of the 149 1-km squares studied with a maximum of 47 at Battle on 25 Jan. Highest counts in the first winter period were 150 at Arundel WWT on 14 Jan, 100 at both Porthole Fm (Sidlesham) on 26 Jan and Goring Gap where they were feeding in a field of an emerging cereal crop on 13 Feb. There were few high counts of roosts in the first winter period perhaps due to mild temperatures, but a roost of 100 was recorded in Hastings on 9 Feb.

Breeding was confirmed in 28 tetrads, probable in 12 and possible in 15. During the BBS birds were recorded in 88 (48%) of the 185 squares studied with a maximum of six at Chalvington on 19 Apr. The species was recorded in 24% of gardens in the GBW. Nest building was first observed in Henfield on 16 Apr and the first juveniles were recorded at Cooden, also on 16 Apr, an early date. At Weir Wood Res on 7 Jun there were 13 birds which included juveniles.

Coastal movements peaked on 8 Oct with 62 W at Selsey Bill and a total of 391 were seen in October at this location. In the second SWBS 199 were recorded in 43% of the 139 1-km squares studied, a similar total to the previous two years, with a maximum of 35 at Battle. In the second winter period, the largest count was of 200 at Haywards Heath on 7 Dec with 170 at Arundel WWT on 9 Nov.

**White Wagtail, *M. a. alba***

An average year for White Wagtails with approximately 26 individuals recorded. The monthly totals, which assume birds seen on close dates at the same site were the same are as follows:

| | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2022 | - | - | 7 | 3 | - | 1 | - | 1 | 5 | 6 | 3 | - |
| Average 2012-2021 | - | - | 7 | 11 | 5 | 2 | - | 1 | 4 | 5 | 1 | - |

Typically, one of the earliest returning migrants, the first was one at West Rise Marsh (Eastbourne) on 8 and 9 Mar. There was a peak of records in the final week of March with birds seen at Iford Brooks, Rye Hbr, Goring Gap, Weir Wood Res and Partridge Green. The highest count of the year was four at Weir Wood Res on 5 Oct. After 2020's first confirmed breeding, disappointingly there were very few summer records. [D Brothwell]



*Pied Wagtails, Beachy Head, 6 June (Roger Charlwood)*

## 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 324 tetrads (34%) compared to the 10-year average of 282. The highest counts in January, by a long way, were all from Ashdown Forest: 134 flying to an Isle of Thorns roost on 19 Jan and 180 at Poundgate on the 27th and in February 111were seen going to roost in the Hindleap Warren area on the 11th. Elsewhere during this period there were 94 at Legsheath Fm (Weir Wood Res) flying into a roost on the 10 Feb, 50 at Little Spray's Fm (Netherfield) on 25 Jan and 44 at Hoads Common (Petworth) on 5 Feb. During the first SWBS they were recorded in 17% of squares studied with a maximum of 16 at Mount Pleasant (Woodingdean) on 21 Jan.

Passage was observed in March with the monthly total at Selsey Bill being 413 (406 N and 7 E); the highest day total there was 103 on the 27th. Sixty were in the Arun Valley on the 4th and 50 N at Goring Gap on the 22nd.

Breeding was confirmed in only seven tetrads and probable in a further 14. Display was first recorded on 7 Mar at Rye Hbr, a bird with nesting material was observed on 19 Apr at Wolstonbury Hill (Pyecombe) and one carrying food was first seen at Stonehill (Ashdown Forest) on 30 Apr. Fledged young were first observed on Ashdown Forest on 23 Jun. During the BBS Meadow Pipits were recorded in 8.1% of squares surveyed with a maximum of 13 at West Firle on 28 Jun.

Post breeding flocks through to the end of August did not exceed 40 (Portslade on 22 Aug). At Selsey Bill on 10 Sep there were 146 (121 W, 25 N) in 5½ hr and three days later 1600 flew east at Sheepcote Valley (Brighton), which was by far the largest count of the year. Other notable counts in September were 360 at Fairlight on the 15th and 150 at both Medmerry and West Rise Marsh

(Eastbourne), also on the 15th. The monthly total at Selsey Bill was 957 with a maximum of 146 on the 10th. The largest counts in October were 400 at Sheepcote Valley on the 12th, 200 at Medmerry on the 2nd and 170 at Ferring Rife the next day.

Two hundred at Medmerry on 16 Dec was the highest number recorded in the second winter period and the highest roost count on Ashdown Forest was 109 on 19 Nov. During the second SWBS Meadow Pipits were recorded in 28% of squares with a maximum of 34 at Pevensey Levels on 24 Dec. A paper on Meadow Pipit roosts in Ashdown Forest is on pages 238-247 of this report. [MJ Chattaway]

## Tree Pipit *Anthus trivialis*

***Fairly common but local summer visitor; fairly common passage migrant. Red-listed species of high conservation concern. Section 41.***

Tree Pipits were recorded in 63 tetrads (6.6%), fewer than 2021 but similar to the 10-year average of 64. There were more records from East Sussex than West Sussex, partly a reflection of the species' stronghold on Ashdown Forest, with the first being two on 12 Apr at Old Lodge LNR (Ashdown Forest), nine days later than the 10-year average first date. Thereafter they were seen on most days at their breeding sites through to mid-July.

Breeding was confirmed in only two tetrads, which is a reduction on the six in 2021 and was probable in a further ten. Display was first recorded at Street Hill (Westmeston) on 14 Apr, nest building was seen on 20 Apr at Old Lodge LNR, a bird was seen carrying food on 30 May at Lavender Platt (Ashdown Forest) and fledglings were observed at Old Lodge LNR on 27 Jun. Nineteen pairs or territories were counted on the West Sussex Heaths (see page 203). The highest count during the breeding season was eight at Old Lodge LNR on 4 May.

The first indication of autumn migration was two at Patching Hill on 8 Aug followed by one at Eastbourne on the 12th. Ten was the peak count at Cissbury on 10 Sep but 25 flying east at Sheepcote Valley (Brighton) on 13 Sep was the highest count of the year anywhere. Thereafter most records were of one or two with the last being one at Beachy Head on 3 Oct, 11 days earlier than the 10-year average last date. [M J Chattaway]

## Water Pipit *Anthus spinoletta*

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

At West Rise Marsh (Eastbourne), a traditional site for this species, up to five were recorded in January, eight in March and one on 3 Apr but at Combe Valley CP, another traditional site, the only records were of two on 9 Mar and one on 10 Apr. Other records for the first half of the year were of at least one at Waltham Brooks on 19 Feb (MS Phelps), one at Bulverhythe on 4 Mar, one at Henfield Levels on 14 Mar (D Buckingham) and 21 Mar (VP Bentley), two at Rye Hbr on 20 Mar, four at Pevensey Levels on 2 Apr, one at Down Level on 3 Apr and one at Pett Level on 10 Apr.

In the second half of the year, there were two at Combe Valley CP on 27 Oct and one on 2 Nov whilst at West Rise Marsh there were up to eight in November and three in December. Elsewhere, there were at least two on Henfield Levels on 31 Oct (A Rosenfield) and two at Pulborough Brooks on 26 Nov (S Baines, MS Phelps), with one again on the 30th. [P James]

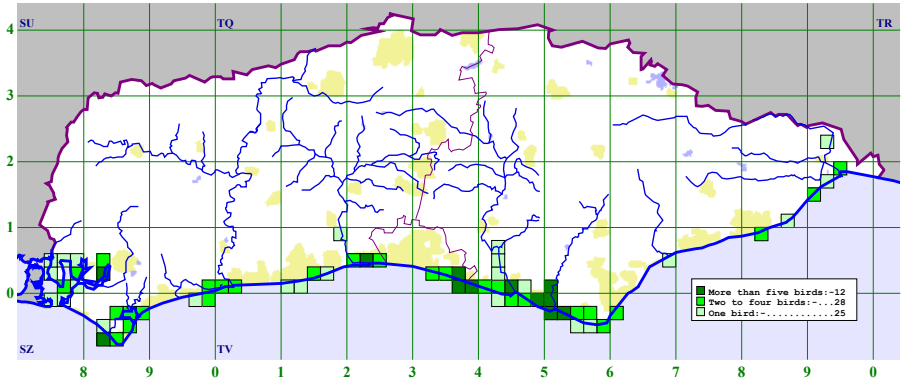


*Rock Pipit Cuckmere Haven, 21 September (Karen Weston)*

## Rock Pipit *Anthus petrosus*

***Scarce resident and scarce winter visitor; very rare away from the coast.***

Rock Pipits were recorded in 65 tetrads (6.7%) compared to the 10-year average of 53, with all records coming from the coast or near coastal locations, including the Ouse Valley as far as Rodmell Brooks and the Cuckmere Valley as far as Litlington. There were records in every month of the year from Cuckmere Haven and in eleven months from Splash Point (Seaford), Seaford Head and Beachy Head. The highest counts of the first winter period were 23 at Cuckmere Haven on 10 Jan, 17 at Rottingdean on 28 Feb and 13 at Seaford on 24 Mar.



Breeding was confirmed at three sites and probable in a further seven. Pairs were noted from early March and display was first recorded on 24 Mar at Beachy Head. Birds with food or faecal sac were seen on 24 May at both Seaford Head and Cuckmere Haven and at Beachy Head on 30 Jun. Fledged young were observed at Cuckmere Haven on 23 Jun. Post breeding the largest count was 15 at Cuckmere Haven on 27 Jul.

In the autumn and second winter period the highest count was of 20 at Cuckmere Haven and the lower Cuckmere Valley on 30 Sep and 24 Oct; it was the only location with double-figure counts. Eight each were at Seaford Head on 19 Sep, Medmerry on 26 Sep and Rottingdean on 8 Dec. [MJ Chattaway]

**Scandinavian Rock Pipit, *A. p. littoralis***

There were eight records of single birds of this subspecies. The Norwegian ringed individual, present each winter since 2019, was seen on 1 Jan at Nutbourne (Chichester Hbr). Another was at Fishbourne Channel (Chichester Hbr) on 2 Mar. In East Sussex a colour-ringed bird from Norway was seen at Splash Point on 10 Mar, one was at Cuckmere Haven on 12 Mar and it, or another, at Seaford Head on 1 May. At Rye Hbr one was seen on 20 Mar. At the end of the year the Norwegian ringed bird was back at Nutbourne on 24 Dec. [MJ Chattaway]

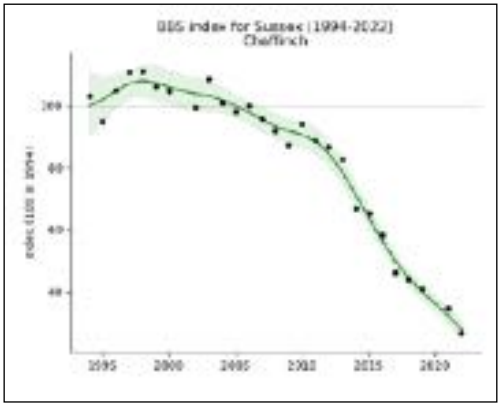
## Chaffinch *Fringilla coelebs*

***Abundant resident; probably very common passage migrant and winter visitor.***

Chaffinches were recorded in 633 tetrads (66%), very similar to the 10-year average of 628. In the GBW birds were recorded in 64% of gardens surveyed during the year and in the first SWBS Chaffinches were found in 63% of the squares surveyed with a maximum of 320 at Edburton on 28 Jan. In the first winter period, other high counts were at The Burgh where flocks of 250 were counted on 5 and 12 Jan and at Bewl Water where 150 were present on 6 Feb. A notable record was of c. 400 Chaffinches, at least 60 Linnets and a minimum of ten Bramblings, as well as Yellowhammers and Reed Buntings, near Arlington on 6 Mar, the majority of which had been present since January. Sadly, the fields used by these birds are being considered for housing development.

Spring movements at Hastings were, as in 2021, of good numbers, beginning on 5 Mar with 955 NE and continuing with 746 E/NE on 18 Mar, 410 E/NE on the 25th and 660 E/NE on the 27th. In total 3254 Chaffinches were observed moving north-east over Hastings throughout this period.

Breeding was confirmed in nine tetrads and was probable or possible in another 184. The BBS data for the year revealed birds in 83% of squares surveyed with a maximum of 13 at Pevensey Levels on 20 Apr. The trends for this species based on the BBS shows a declining picture.




Territories began to be established in the first winter period with the first singing male on Ashdown Forest on 14 Jan and the first nest building noted at Arundel on 24 Mar. The first fledglings were at St Ann's Well Gardens (Hove) on 20 May and the last reported were at Frant 24 Aug.

Most counts in June and July were of fewer than ten; 30 at both Rotherbridge Fm (Petworth) on 28 Jul and Edburton on the 31st were the highest. There were no counts higher than this until 50 at Balcombe on 21

Sep. There was little coastal movement reported in this period until 80 E at Beachy Head on 4 Nov. At Selsey Bill there were just 18 E and 7 W through October.

There were only four three-figure counts in the second winter period; 200 at New House Fm (Paddockhurst) on 10 Dec was the highest. In the second SWBS Chaffinches were encountered in 50% of squares studied with a maximum of 120 at Petworth on 11 Dec. [BGR Ives]

## Brambling *Fringilla montifringilla*

***Fairly common winter visitor and passage migrant. Schedule 1 species.***

Bramblings were recorded in 121 tetrads (13%), the second highest number ever; the 10-year average is just 67. The largest count in the first winter period was one of at least 300 at Eartham Woods on 3 Jan, with the observer describing the encounter as "at times a blizzard of Bramblings flying through the trees!". Further three-figure counts were 150 at Balcombe on 16 Jan (and 100 there on 9 Mar), 100 at Penhurst Lane (Netherfield) on 8 Feb and 100 at Charleston Forest on 6 Mar. At Balcombe, there were double-figure counts throughout this period which were captured on a trail camera at a baiting site. Elsewhere, notable counts were 50 at Henfield on 12 Feb, 41 at Edburton on 28 Jan, and 25 at both Selhurst Park and East Dean on 9 Jan and in the Hindleap Warren area of Ashdown Forest on 8 Feb. In April, there were four double-figure counts, the highest being 35 in the Hindleap Warren area on the 5th and the last record of the spring was one at Old Lodge LNR (Ashdown Forest) on the 20th, five days later than the 10-year average last date.

One at Hastings CP on 28 Sep was the first returning bird, two days earlier than the 10-year average. It was followed by one at Pett Level the next day and one at Beachy Head the day after that. There were then widespread records, mostly in single figures during October with the highest counts being 42 at Black Down on the 15th and 30 at Sheepcote Valley (Brighton) on the 12th.

There were no large counts in the second winter period but 26 were at Black Down on 12 Nov and 20 were at both New House Fm (Paddockhurst) on 10 Dec and Whiteways Lodge (Arundel) the next day. All other records during this period were of between one and six. [MJ Chattaway]



*Brambling, Beachy Head, 5 April (Roger Charlwood)*



*Hawfinch, Balcombe, 11 February (Mark Mallalieu)*

## Hawfinch *Coccothraustes coccothraustes*

***Scarce breeding resident and in most years scarce passage migrant and winter visitor; occasionally more numerous. Red-listed species of high conservation concern. Section 41.***

Hawfinches were found in 59 tetrads (6.1%), only slightly fewer than the record 65 tetrads in 2021, despite the failure of the Hornbeam seed crop in southern England in 2022. In the first winter period, records came from 15 sites with the highest counts being 35 at Penhurst Lane (Netherfield) on 25 Jan, 15 at Knowlands Wood (Barcombe) on 7 Jan, 15 near Balcombe on 2 Mar and 11 at Monkton (West Dean) on 13 Jan. The last double-figure count in the period was of 15 at Penhurst Lane on 14 Mar. The only coastal records of migrants in the spring were of one at Pagham Hbr on 27 Mar and one at a garden feeder in Woodingdean on 10 Apr.

Finding breeding Hawfinches is a challenge, but they were detected at nine potential breeding sites between mid-April and September: Kingley Vale, Westdean/Monkton, Charlton Forest, Milland, Heyshott Down, Graffham Down, Arundel and two locations around Burwash. In addition, split cherry stones at Selham on 5 Jul and near Burton MP on 8 Jul suggested the presence of Hawfinches and there was an intriguing report of one at Stanmer Park (Brighton) on 26 Jul, a probable former breeding site. Breeding was proved at Monkton, Kingley Vale, Graffham Down and Burwash, with juveniles being seen at each site. Counts of the post-breeding gathering at Monkton included 37 on 18 Aug and 28 on 15 Sep, lower than in recent years. Another post-breeding gathering was 24 at Graffham Down on 3 Sep.

In the second winter period, there was an unusual sighting of two in Ash trees behind Lancing on 13 Nov. Very few were recorded in the east of the county due to the failure of the Hornbeam crop, with just one at Penhurst Lane, on 8 Dec. At Etchingham up to three were found, probably feeding at least partly on sloes, between 26 Nov and 1 Dec; two were at Westfield on 30 Nov and one was at Robertsbridge on 27 Nov. Likewise, Hornbeam sites in central Sussex held no wintering flocks, with just three near Balcombe on 26 Oct and one near Ardingly on 24 Dec. West Sussex held more, the highest counts being 24 at West Dean on 28 Oct, six at Graffham Down on 16 Dec and four at Arundel on 18 and 19 Dec, with mainly singles at another six sites. During the year, foods taken by Hawfinches included Hornbeam seeds (January – March), Ivy berries (December), Cherry stones (July) Yew seeds (September) and Whitebeam seeds or flesh of fruit (September). [M Mallalieu]



*Bullfinch, Battle, 20 May (David Gardiner)*

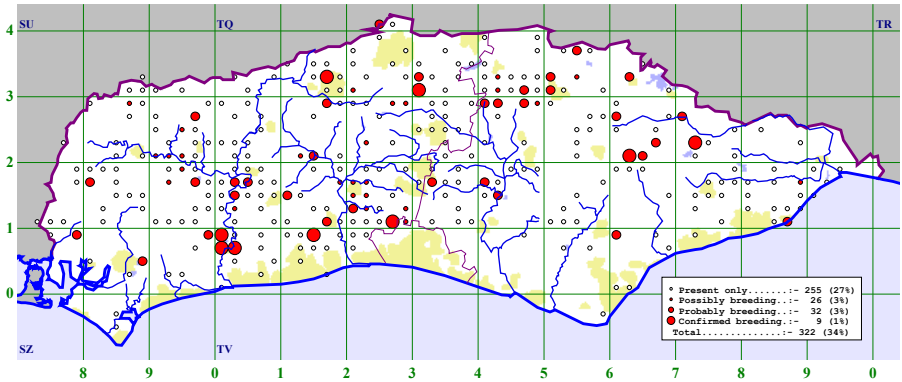
## Bullfinch *Pyrrhula pyrrhula*

***Fairly common or common resident. Amber-listed species of medium conservation concern. Section 41.***

Bullfinches occur across Sussex, mainly away from the coast and were recorded in 322 tetrads (34%), a slight decrease from 2021 and the 10-year average of 349 (range 275 to 370). They were recorded in 22% of gardens participating in GBW surveyed during the whole year (compared with 23% in 2021, 24% in 2020 and 33% in 2019).

In the first SWBS, 43 were recorded in 17% of the squares surveyed compared to 24% in 2022, with a maximum of four at Hanlye (Cuckfield) on 3 Feb. In the second SWBS, 59 were found in 20% of the squares surveyed with a maximum of seven at Verdley Place (Fernhurst) on 20 Nov.

The map shows the tetrads in which Bullfinch was recorded and the symbols show the breeding status, based on that supplied with the record(s), in each tetrad. There were records of confirmed breeding in only nine tetrads, probable breeding in a further 32 and possible in 26. The first fledgling was seen on 6 May at Warnham LNR. During the BBS they were recorded in 17% of the squares surveyed with a maximum of five on 28 Apr at St Leonard's Forest.

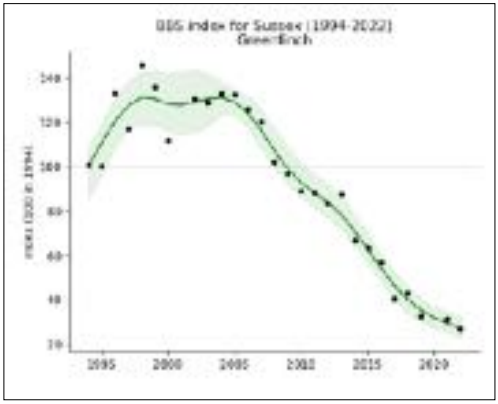



Bullfinches do not form flocks and records tend to be of ones or twos, often pairs. Any higher numbers reflect the size of the area recorded and/or the length of time of observations in the field. For example, nine were recorded on an 8 km walk round the Knepp Estate taking 209 minutes on 19 Jul. [L Smith]

## Greenfinch *Chloris chloris*

***Very common resident and possibly fairly common passage migrant and scarce winter visitor. Red-listed species of high conservation concern.***

Greenfinches were recorded in 500 tetrads (52%), more than the 10-year average than 484 (range 453 to 529). In the first quarter most sightings were in single figures but double-figure counts occurred on 46 occasions in a number of well watched areas. In the first SWBS they were recorded in 27% of the squares studied with a maximum of ten at West Lavington on 1 Feb. An excellent record of 12 in a garden in Worthing on 27 Jan was a highlight of the early year for the observer. The highest double-figure counts were at Kingley Vale (maximum of 18) Bosham (maximum of 20), Stopham (maximum of 25), Pagham Hbr (maximum of 47), Aldwick (Bognor) (maximum of 35) and Cuckmere Haven (maximum of 20) but the highest was 75 at Chichester on 10 Jan. In the GBW, birds were seen in 61% of participating gardens during the year, another modest rise from the previous year, but the peak weekly counts were predominantly in single figures.




In the spring during the BBS birds were found in 51% of the study squares with a maximum of nine at Tillington (Petworth) on 26 Apr. The county BBS shows this species continues to decline.

Breeding was confirmed in 15 tetrads and was probable in a further 43. A display flight was seen at Barcombe on 8 Feb and then wheezing at Ferring on the 11th. The first report of a fledged juvenile was on 28 Apr at Warnham LNR.

Birds were regularly seen on feeders throughout the year, with sunflower seeds noted as a popular feed type. A notable mid-summer count was a ground feeding flock of 35 at Kithurst Hill (Storrington) on 3 Jul and 20 were at Cuckmere Haven on the 20th, with other smaller flocks up to 18 being seen around Sussex. The first large autumn flocks were at Medmerry with 45 reported on the 2 Aug and 50 the following day. Other autumn counts included 32 at Highdown (Worthing) on 18 Aug and 30 at Medmerry on 17 Sep. In October 25 were at Newhaven Tide Mills on the 7th and 20 at Shoreham on the 24th.

In the second winter period there were 21 at Pagham Hbr on 12 Nov, 27 at Sheepcote Valley (Brighton) on the 14th, 65 at Newhaven Tide Mills on the 24th, and finally the largest count of the year of 90 there on the 29th. The large numbers at the latter site continued into December with 50 on the 12th. The benefit of winter feeding saw 61 on a sunflower field at Balcombe on 4 Dec. Other high counts in December were 40 at Waltham Brooks on the 6th and 32 at Lewes on the 14th. [ER Paxton]

## Linnet *Linaria cannabina*

***Common but decreasing resident and partial migrant. Red-listed species of high conservation concern. Section 41.***

Linnets were recorded in 411 tetrads (43%) compared to the 10-year average of 348. In the first winter period, there were 26 counts of 100 or more with the largest flocks all in January. These included 500 at Kingley Vale on the 14th and 400 there on the 30th, 340 at Edburton on the 28th and 250 at The Burgh (Burpham) on the 16th. In February, the highest count was 200 at Porthole Fm (Sidlesham) on both the 9th and 22nd. The highest roost count on Ashdown Forest was 166 on 9 Feb. During the first SWBS, they were found in 9.4% of squares surveyed with a maximum of 340 at Edburton, mentioned above. Spring migration at Selsey Bill totalled 213 in March and April with a peak count of 31 on 27 Mar.

Breeding was confirmed in 16 tetrads and probable in a further 67. The first songster was heard at Chelwood Vachery (Ashdown Forest) on 13 Feb, nest building was noted on 17 Apr at Lewes Brooks, a bird with food or faecal sac was seen at Sheepcote Valley (Brighton) on 6 May and the first fledglings were observed at Varncombe Hill (Brighton) on 17 May. During the BBS, Linnets were recorded in 40% of squares surveyed with a maximum of 26 at Rye Hbr on 7 May.

Numbers increased from June and in August there were six counts of 100 or more, the highest by a long way (and the highest count of the year) was one of 1200 feeding in stubble at Lancing Clump on the 23rd. Notable counts in September were 425 at Medmerry on the 17th, 400 at both The Burgh on the 25th and at Steep Down (Lancing) on the 28th, and 300 at Weir Wood Res on the 8th. In October, a total of 2643 were logged at Selsey Bill with a maximum of 617 on the 27th. At Sheepcote Valley, 1100 flew east on the 9th and 500 were at Climping the same day. On the 27th, 500 were at Sidlesham and on the 29th, 500 were at Medmerry and 410 were at Edburton.

In the second winter period, the highest count was one of 450 coming in to roost at Waltham Brooks on 17 Dec. There were four counts of 300: at Staplefield on 2 Nov, Medmerry on 12 Nov and Paddockhurst on both 24 Nov and 10 Dec. Further counts of 100 or more were recorded at five other locations. During the second SWBS, Linnets were encountered in 13% of squares surveyed with a maximum of 172 at Oving on 22 Nov. [MJ Chattaway]

## Common Redpoll *Acanthis flammea*

***Very scarce visitor. Amber-listed species of medium conservation concern.***

Five, some of which were photographed, at Old Lodge LNR (Ashdown Forest) on 8 Feb (PC Stevens) was the only record. The county total moves on to 140, of which 130 have been this century including 62 in the 2013 influx. [P James]

## Lesser Redpoll *Acanthis cabaret*

***Scarce breeder and common passage migrant and winter visitor. Red-listed species of high conservation concern. Section 41.***

It was a poor year for Lesser Redpolls in Sussex; they were recorded in only 95 tetrads (10%), well down on the 10-year average of 118 (range 81 to 151). In the first winter period, there were only 17 counts of ten or more of which 55 at Weir Wood Res on 1 Jan and 70 at Balcombe on 26 Mar were the highest. Twenty one was the most seen on Ashdown Forest (at Old Lodge LNR on 27 Mar) during this period. In the first SWBS, they were recorded in only three squares with a maximum of ten at Battle on 25 Jan.

Numbers during the breeding season were very low with a maximum of only nine on Ashdown Forest on 26 May. There were no records of confirmed breeding and it was considered probable in only eight tetrads, six on Ashdown Forest and two on the West Sussex commons. In the BBS, they were found in only two squares with a maximum of four at Old Lodge LNR on 21 Apr.

Autumn coastal migration records were few and all day totals at individual sites were in single figures. The highest counts were nine at Fairlight on 31 Oct and seven at Sheepcote Valley (Brighton) on 25 Oct. Autumn ringing totals were also low with the maxima being ten at Cissbury on 16 Oct, seven at Whitbread Hollow (Beachy Head) on 31 Oct and 12 at Charleston Reedbed on 2 Nov. Elsewhere, the highest count was 12 at Hartfield on 19 Oct.

Numbers did not improve in the second winter period and the maximum counts were just ten at Cissbury on 2 Nov and Rotherbridge Fm (Petworth) on 10 Dec. In the second SWBS, they were found in only two squares with a maximum of three at Petworth Park on 19 Nov. [MJ Chattaway]

## Common Crossbill *Loxia curvirostra*

***Irruptive species; usually a scarce visitor but fairly common in some years. Very scarce breeder in some years. Schedule 1 species.***

It was a poor year for Common Crossbill, recorded in only 41 tetrads (4.3%), down from 60 (6%) in 2021, with juveniles seen at only one site.

During the first winter period, the largest flock was 16 at Worth Forest on 28 Mar, while smaller numbers were scattered thinly across their usual haunts, chiefly in West Sussex: Westdean Woods, Ambersham Common, Coates Common, Black Down, Balcombe and various locations on Ashdown Forest. Most notable was a migrating flock of 18 flying southeast over Pett Level on 6 Mar.

On 20 Apr, 35 were at Balcombe feeding in Oaks and the next day 70 were there, mainly in Norway Spruce, including several juveniles. Other flocks comprised 17 at Black Down on 10 May and 28 at Old Lodge LNR (Ashdown Forest) on 1 Jun.

From the summer and into the second winter period, Common Crossbills were very scarce, numbers remained in single figures from the ten locations where they were found and they proved very difficult to find. [MR Eade]

## Goldfinch *Carduelis carduelis*

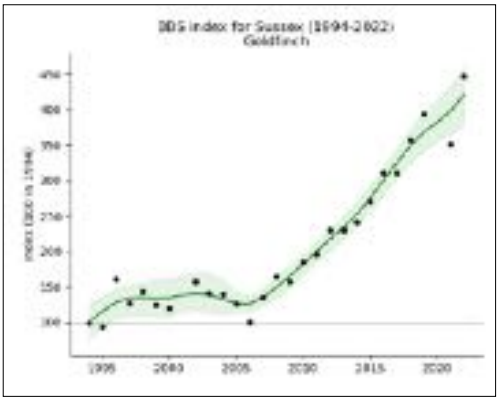
***Probably fairly common resident; common summer visitor and passage migrant and fairly common winter visitor.***

Goldfinches were recorded in 681 tetrads (71%), more than the 10-year average of 613. In the GBW they were found in 84% of participating gardens during the year.

In the first SWBS birds were found in 65% of squares surveyed. The highest day count of the period was at Medmerry where 100 were feeding along the paths on 13 Jan whilst 80 were at Paddockhurst on 2 Jan, 75 at Old Lodge LNR (Ashdown Forest) on 27 Mar and 69 were at both Balcombe on 8 Jan and Balls Cross on 5 Feb. There were counts of 50 at four further locations.

In the spring there was less coastal movement than in 2021 with just 15 observed over Beachy Head on 17 Mar and only four noted, heading north, at Selsey Bill on the 27th.

Breeding was confirmed in 30 tetrads and was probable or possible in a further 108. In the BBS Goldfinches were found in 90% of the squares surveyed with a maximum of 43 at Catsfield on 24 May. The trends shown by the BBS in Sussex continue on an upward trajectory.




A bird visiting a probable nest site was first noted on 2 Apr at Horsham, a nest containing eggs was seen at Steyning WTW on 5 May and the first fledgling was observed at Warnham LNR the next day. Breeding continued through the summer months and into the early autumn and the year's last record of fledglings was at Glynde Level on 14 Sep.

Numbers increased from late June and the first three-figure count was 100 at West Rise Marsh (Eastbourne) on 16 Jul, increasing to 175 by the 22nd. On the 27th there was a flock of 100 mostly juveniles at Cuckmere Haven and in August there were 11 counts of 100 or more; the highest being 160 at Thorney Island on the 26th.

In the autumn period good counts were noted from the coastal sites as birds dispersed. There was clearly a large movement on 3 Oct when up to 1800 birds were noted heading east along the Sussex coast from Worthing to Brighton whilst another 500 flew east over Church Norton on the 11th. At Goring Gap, on the 19th, there were 720 E and another 1630 E there on the 31st. Birds continued to move in November with 400 E at Beachy Head on the 4th and 254 E at Goring Gap on the 14th.

Later in the second winter period there were no three-figure counts, two highs of 70 were noted at Watersfield on 3 Dec and at Worth Forest on the 7th. In second SWBS Goldfinches were found in 59% of squares surveyed with a maximum of 42 at Steyning Round Hill on 8 Dec. [BGR Ives]

## Serin *Serinus serinus*

***Very scarce passage migrant; has bred. Schedule 1 species.***

There were four records of this spring overshoot in 2022. One flew north at Selsey Bill at 17 Apr (BGR Ives, I Pitts *et al.*), a male was at Beachy Head on 26 May (ME & RH Charlwood), one was seen in flight three times at Fairlight Cliffs on 18 Jun and another was heard calling there as it flew over on 5 Jul (both A Parker). The total this century moves on to a minimum of 95. [P James]



*Goldfinch, Hassocks, 13 December (Gary Faulkner)*

## Siskin *Spinus spinus*

***Common winter visitor and passage migrant. Fairly common breeder.***

Siskins were recorded in 231 tetrads (24%), more than the 10-year average of 208. They were found in 19% of the participating gardens in the GBW during the year. In the first winter period, there were 20 counts of between 50 and 99, and nine counts of 100 or more. In January, there were 100 at Staplefield on the 2nd, 120 at Burton MP on the 10th and 100 there on the 16th, 200 at Battle on the 25th, and in February, 100 at Worth Forest on the 8th and 10th. In March, 100 were at both Balcombe on the 6th and at Tilgate Forest on the 10th, and 108 were seen on passage moving E/NE at Hastings on the 27th. On the last date, 94 E were also logged at Worthing. Numbers dropped in April. In the first SWBS, they were found in 10% of squares with a maximum of the 200 at Battle mentioned above, which was the highest count during the year in Sussex.

Breeding was confirmed in only one tetrad, at Mardens Hill (Ashdown Forest) where fledglings were seen on 31 Jul. Breeding was probable in ten tetrads. In the BBS, they were encountered in just 3.8% of squares with a maximum of five at Dallington on 19 Jun. Numbers during the summer and early autumn were typically low with no counts above ten.

September was quiet with the only double-figure counts being ten at Crowborough on the 11th and 15 W at Selsey Bill on the 16th. Movement was more apparent in October and the most notable counts were: 32 E at Worthing on the 3rd; 31 N at Selsey Bill on the 7th; 25 at Sheepcote Valley (Brighton) on the 12th; 30 at Rye on the 19th; 60 E at Fairlight on the 29th; and 77 E at Goring Gap on the 31st.

During the second winter period, the highest count was 50 at Weir Wood Res on 26 Dec. In addition, there were 35 at Gatwick Airport on 2 Dec, 30 at both Mountfield on 27 Nov and at Balcombe Lake on 22 Dec, and 25 at Darwell Res on 11 Dec. In the second SWBS, Siskins were found in only two squares with a maximum of three at Fernhurst on 20 Nov. [MJ Chattaway]

## Lapland Bunting *Calcareus lapponicus*

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

After a blank year in 2021, there were three records. One was seen briefly on the seawall at Pett Level on 12 Jan (SJ Message), one flew over Rye Hbr on 25 Jan (J Gowers, SH Linington) and one flew over Pagham Lagoon on 24 Oct (P Trodd). The county total this century moves on to approximately 125, 70 of which were recorded during the exceptional influx in autumn 2010. [P James]

## Snow Bunting *Plectrophenax nivalis*

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

The tame male which was first seen on 23 Dec 2021 on downland at Alciston died on 6 Jan. The only other sighting of the first winter period was, unusually, well inland at Cedar Fm (Flimwell) on 13 Mar. In the second winter period one was present at Pagham Hbr from 10 Nov to 26 Dec with a second bird present on 29 and 30 Nov and 4 and 5 Dec. Another was on the sea wall at Pett Level from 15 to 20 Dec. [AC Gutteridge]

## Corn Bunting *Emberiza calandra*

***Fairly common resident. Red-listed species of high conservation concern. Section 41.***

Corn Buntings were recorded in 96 tetrads (10%), a little below the figure for the last two years but still considerably above the 10-year average of 84 (range 67 to 101). Double-figure flocks were recorded in ten sites in the first winter period, the largest being 180 at Lychpole (Cissbury) on 15 Jan with 70 at Chantry Hill (Storrington) on the same day. At Crowlink a pre-roost flock of 65 gathered on a fallow field on 28 Feb and at Steyning Round Hill there were 45 on 24 Jan. Smaller flocks were recorded near the coast at Medmerry (maximum of 12), 30 on 17 Jan at East Guldeford Level and 20 at Rye Hbr on 20 Feb. As late as 15 Apr a flock of 32 was present at Balmer Down (Lewes).

Breeding was confirmed at Medmerry, Chantry Hill, Steep Down (Lancing) and Devil's Dyke (Brighton). Probable breeding occurred in a further seven tetrads. Corn Buntings were recorded in 76 tetrads during the breeding season compared with 79 in 2021. In the BBS Corn Buntings were found in 3.2% of squares surveyed with a maximum of 11 at Annington (Bramber) on 15 Jun.

Flock sizes increased in September with 60 at Beachy Head on the 2nd, 130 at Steep Down on the 10th, and 40 at Chantry Hill on the 19th. In the second winter period double-figure counts came from ten locations, and the largest counts were 200 at Woodingdean on 12 Dec, 51 at Steyning Round Hill on 4 Nov and 45 at Storrington on 19 Nov.

A total of 127 was recorded in 30 (31%) of SDFBI squares surveyed and although the sample size is small there appears to be a steady rise since 2016 in the number of occupied 1-km squares detected by this survey. [AC Gutteridge]

## Yellowhammer *Emberiza citrinella*

***Common resident. Red-listed species of high conservation concern. Section 41.***

Yellowhammers were recorded in 336 tetrads (35%), considerably fewer than the 395 (40%) of 2022 but still slightly above the ten-year average of 331. In the first winter period flocks in double figures were reported from only 19 sites but there was an impressive flock of 100 in a cover crop at Sidlesham on several dates in January and at West Dean a scattered flock of 200 was feeding on millet on 8 Feb. In the first SWBS a total of 58 was recorded in 12% of squares surveyed with a maximum count of only nine at Hangleton on 27 Feb.

Breeding was confirmed in ten tetrads and probable in a further 46 tetrads. During the BBS Yellowhammers were found in 37% of squares surveyed with a maximum of 33 at Edburton on 25 Apr. In the SDFBI they were found in 63% of squares surveyed. The first signs of nesting were detected on 13 Apr at Cissbury; on 18 May adults were feeding young at Pagham Hbr and the first fledged birds were observed on 20 Jun at Rotherbridge Fm (Petworth).

From August to the end of the year there were 22 double-figure counts, the largest being 55 at Arundel Park on 11 and 13 Dec, up to 50 at Edburton on 2 Dec during a SWBS and 40 at Falmer on 1 Dec. In the second SWBS Yellowhammers were recorded in only 5.8% of squares surveyed. [AC Gutteridge]



*Yellowhammer, Battle, 12 April (David Gardiner)*

## Ortolan Bunting *Emberiza hortulana*

***Very scarce visitor mainly in the autumn.***

One seen briefly at Newhaven Tide Mills on 2 Sep (J MacCallum-Stewart) flew towards the beach and was not relocated. The county total moves on to 88, including four in 2016 and six in 2018. [P James]

## Little Bunting *Emberiza pusilla*

***Rare vagrant.***

The Little Bunting first seen at Iping Common on 11 Dec 2021 remained until 15 Jan. Likewise the bird at Poundgate (Ashdown Forest) on 14 Nov 2021 remained until 12 Mar (mo). Another seen briefly at Isle of Thorns (Ashdown Forest) on 21 Apr (RS Kelly) was presumed to be different. The county total moves on to 23, of which 14 have been this century. Arrival dates have been in January (1), February (1), March (1), Apr (3), September (1), October (8), November (4) and an unspecified autumn date (1). [P James]

## Reed Bunting *Emberiza schoeniclus*

***Fairly common resident; passage migrant and winter visitor. Amber-listed species of medium conservation concern. Section 41.***

Reed Buntings were reported from 186 (18%) tetrads during the year compared with 212 the previous year and a 10-year average of 194. During the first winter period double-figure counts were received from 33 sites. Up to 100 were recorded in a cover crop at Porthole Fm (Sidlesham) throughout the period reducing to 30 on 20 Mar, and 50 were at Pagham Hbr on 22 Jan. The highest roost count of the period was 36 at Weir Wood Res on 15 Jan. In the first SWBS the species was found in 8.1% of squares surveyed with a maximum of 12 on 28 Jan near Edburton.

Breeding was confirmed in ten tetrads and probable in a further 39. Territory counts in defined areas (2021 figures in brackets) were 14 at Medmerry, 12 (17) at Pagham Hbr, 12 at Pulborough Brooks, eight at Amberley Wild Brooks and 22 (27) at Rye Hbr. The first young were seen on 30 Jun at Cuckmere Haven. During the BBS the species was encountered in 10% of squares surveyed with a maximum of 11 on Pevensey Levels on 23 Apr.

An early migrant was seen at Seaford Head on 31 Aug and the largest autumn movement detected was a total of 73 W at Fairlight with a peak of 17 on 18 Oct. On 24 Oct 65 were counted leaving the Weir Wood Res roost and numbers there peaked at 113 on 24 Nov, declining to 24 on 10 Dec. The only other roosting noted was 16 at Ardingly Res on 14 Dec. Elsewhere double-figure flocks were encountered at 11 sites during the second winter period, the largest being 50 at Medmerry on 7 and 16 Dec, and at Gillshaw Fm (Rye) on 10 Dec. During the second SWBS Reed Buntings were found in 6.5% of squares covered with a maximum of 12 on 24 Dec on Pevensey Levels. [AC Gutteridge]

# ESCAPES AND INTRODUCTIONS

All records of BOU Category D and E species, primarily probable or certain escapes from captivity (but not those clearly in captivity) and introduced species without self-sustaining wild populations in the area from which the bird originated, will be welcomed by the County Recorder for this annual feature. In order to track individual birds or flocks, observers are reminded to include the age, sex, hybrid evidence and any other distinctive features when submitting records.

Note that records of White Stork and White-tailed Eagle are included in the main list in recognition of the very special interest that they attract.

The following escaped or introduced birds, other than those Category C species in the main list, were recorded in the county in 2022. It should be noted that the identity of these birds is largely unchecked. Species' names and order follow IOC World Bird Names (V 13.2) available online at https://www.worldbirdnames.org/new/.

## Fulvous Whistling Duck *Dendrocygna bicolor*

***Occurs widely in central and southern America, sub-Saharan Africa and the Indian sub-continent.***

One was at Weir Wood Res on 29 and 30 Mar.

## Red-breasted Goose *Branta ruficollis*

***Breeds in Arctic Siberia, mainly on the Taymyr Peninsula, with smaller populations in the Gyda and Yamal peninsulas and winters along the northwestern shores of the Black Sea in Bulgaria, Romania and Ukraine. A very rare vagrant but it is common in captive wildfowl collections; escapees outside its usual range are fairly frequent.***

Two unringed birds were recorded on 47 dates between 7 Jul and 27 Dec at Pett Level. They were seen mixing with a family of Egyptian Geese, with Coots, Mallards and with Brent Geese.

## Cackling Goose *Branta hutchinsii*

***Breeds in NE Russia, Alaska, northern Canada and Greenland and winters mainly in western USA. B. hutchinsii includes the subspecies hutchinsii, leucopareia, minima and taverneri. Self-sustaining population in the Netherlands.***

One was at Pagham Hbr on 6 Feb and up to three were in the Arundel area on various dates from February through to June. Later in the year one was at Medmerry on 15 Aug and another was at Pulborough Brooks on 2 Dec.

## Bar-headed Goose *Anser indicus*

***Breeds in central Asia; migrates to northern India for winter. Naturalised populations in NW Europe, especially the Netherlands. Commonly kept in wildfowl collections.***

One was at Pett Level on 2 Mar.

## Emperor Goose *Anser canagicus*

***Breeds mainly in Alaska. Present in many wildfowl collections.***

One was at Barcombe Res on 27 Mar and 3 Apr.

## Black Swan *Cygnus atratus*

***Breeds in Australia and New Zealand. Naturalised populations in western Europe. Commonly kept in wildfowl collections and on ornamental lakes. Has bred in Sussex.***

Up to six birds were again at Benbow Pond, Cowdray Park on various dates throughout the year, and a pair bred raising a single cygnet. They were records from Chichester Hbr throughout the year, mostly singles but with two on several dates during the summer. One was at nearby West Ashling on several dates and three were there, including a juvenile, on 7 Feb. Up to three were seen at various sites in the Arun Valley during the winter months, and one was seen regularly at Chichester GP during the winter months, being joined by a second on 3 Nov.

Elsewhere, there were two at Bodiam on 12 Jan, one at Scotney GP in March and April, with two there in July, August and September, two at Pett Level on 31 Aug and 5 Sep, and singles at Ashburnham Place (Battle) on 16 Apr (and also one at nearby Egerton Park on 7 Jun), Princes Park (Eastbourne) on several dates in April, May, August and October, Stanes Fm (Funtington) on 21 Apr, West Rise Marsh (Eastbourne) on 16 Jul, Medmerry on 21 Aug and Amberley Wild Brooks on 14 Nov.

## Ruddy Shelduck *Tadorna ferruginea*

***Breeds in SE Europe and across central and east Asia with naturalised populations in central Europe. Rare vagrant from wild or naturalised populations or escape from captivity.***

Three were at Midhurst on 23 Feb, with one there on 1 Jun; one was at Weir Wood Res on 11 and 12 Jul and then on 29 Nov; one at Pulborough Brooks on 28 Aug; one at Ardingly Res on 24 Nov; one at Amberley Wild Brooks on 7 Dec; and finally one at Partridge Green on 10 Dec.

## South African Shelduck *Tadorna cana*

***Occurs widely in southern Africa.***

One was reported at Cuckmere Haven on 31 Dec.

## Muscovy Duck *Cairina moschata*

***Native to Mexico and Central and South America. Widespread in its domesticated form.***

Singles were seen at Caldbec Hill (Battle) on 5 Jan, Arundel Park on 23 Jan and 11 Feb, nearby Swanbourne Lake on 9 Mar, Brede on 11 Apr and Barns Green on 17 Dec. Two were seen at Falmer Pond regularly from January to June.

## Wood Duck *Aix sponsa*

***Widespread in North America. Occurs widely as an introduced species and escape in Europe, including Britain, but none of the populations are considered to be self-sustaining.***

Up to three were seen at Weir Wood Res on several dates in December.

## Helmeted Guineafowl *Numida meleagris*

***Resident in Africa, mostly south of the Sahara. Widely introduced and domesticated. Roosts in trees like pheasants and takes 'siesta' in shade.***

There were no reports of the small population near Newick that has been there for several years. Birds were seen at the Burgh in January and June, with a maximum of seven on 16 Jan. Elsewhere, there were four at Elsted on 18 Apr, two near Midhurst on 8 May, two at Lodsworth on 14 May, one at Cocking on 12 Jun and one at Charlton Forest on 10 Nov.

## Lady Amherst's Pheasant *Chrysolophus amherstiae*

***Resident in north-eastern Myanmar, south-eastern Tibet and south-western China.***

A male was in a garden in Sedlescombe on 9 Apr.

## Indian Peafowl *Pavo cristatus*

***Wild birds are restricted to the Indian subcontinent. A traditional favourite in ornamental gardens.***

Indian Peafowls were reported as follows (singles unless otherwise stated): Telham (near Crowhurst) on 17 Jan and 26 Apr, Climping Beach on 10 Feb, West Firle (2) on 8 Apr and one on 15 Dec, Saint Hill (near East Grinstead) on 23 Apr, Hurstpierpoint on 2 May, Holme Farm (Stansted) on 18 May, Catsfield on 24 May, St Leonard's Forest (Colegate) (2) on 26 May, The Burgh on 17 Jun, Henfield on 25 Jul, Brinsbury Estate (2) on 10 Sep, and Herstmonceux Castle on 6 Oct.

## Violet Turaco *Musophaga violacea*

***Occurs in West Africa, from Senegal to Nigeria, with an isolated population in Chad and Central African Republic; occurs in tropical savannas, wetlands, woodlands and forests. Locally common but vulnerable to trapping for the pet trade.***

One seen at Worthing on 7 May was presumably the same bird that was seen in the area last year.

## African Spoonbill *Platalea alba*

***Occurs in Sub-Saharan Africa and Madagascar.***

One was seen at Rodmell on17 Jan.

## Red-tailed Hawk *Buteo jamaicensis*

***Breeds commonly throughout much of North America and the Caribbean, some move south to winter in Central America.***

The individual which has been at Cocking for several years was seen again in January, May, June and July. Singles were at Waltham Brooks on 31 Jan, on the Knepp Estate on 1 Apr and 24 Nov, at Barham House, East Hoathly on 16 Oct and at Pulborough Brooks on 18 and 19 Oct.

## Lord Derby's Parakeet *Psittacula derbiana*

***Resident on the Indian subcontinent and SW China.***

One was seen at Shoreham-by-Sea on various dates throughout the year and was, presumably, the same one that had been there at the end of last year. In addition, one was photographed at Haywards Heath on 17 Oct.

## Alexandrine Parakeet *Psittacula eupatria*

***Resident on the Indian subcontinent and in SE Asia. Naturalised populations in NW Europe, especially Germany.***

One was at Cliff End (near Pett) on 20 Nov and presumably the same individual at Fairlight Cove on 7 Dec.

## Red-billed Leiothrix *Leiothrix lutea*

***Resident in southern China and the Himalayas but widely introduced, including in several European countries.***

One was at Heathfield on 25 Jun.

## Canary *Serinus canaria*

***Native to the Canaries, Azores and Maderia, but kept in captivity worldwide.***

One was at Corner Pools (Rye Hbr) on 16 Jul.



*Sedge Warbler, West Rise Marsh, 14 June (Gary Faulkner)*

# BTO Breeding Bird Survey (BBS) results for Sussex 2018 - 2022

*Helen Crabtree*

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 are shown in the table below, for the period 2018-2022. 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 and amber listed species of conservation concern are shown in the relevant colours in column 1.

| | | Year (and total no. of squares surveyed) | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | 2018 (174) | | 2019 (170) | | 2020 (128) | | 2021 (176) | | 2022 (184) | |
| | | n | % | n | % | n | % | n | % | n | % |
| | Red-legged Partridge | 23 | 13 | 25 | 15 | 9 | 7 | 26 | 15 | 28 | 15 |
| | Grey Partridge | - | - | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | - | - | - | - |
| | Pheasant | 148 | 85 | 134 | 79 | 84 | 65 | 145 | 82 | 141 | 77 |
| | Canada Goose | 39 | 22 | 33 | 19 | 20 | 16 | 47 | 27 | 37 | 20 |
| | Greylag Goose | 19 | 7 | 14 | 8 | 12 | 9 | 24 | 14 | 27 | 15 |
| | Greylag Goose (domestic) | - | - | 2 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 4 | 2 |
| | Mute Swan | 18 | 10 | 19 | 11 | 13 | 10 | 19 | 11 | 14 | 8 |
| | Egyptian Goose | 6 | 3 | 9 | 5 | 4 | 3 | 9 | 5 | 10 | 5 |
| | Shelduck | 9 | 5 | 7 | 4 | 2 | 2 | 7 | 4 | 5 | 3 |
| | Mandarin Duck | 5 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 3 | 2 | 6 | 3 | 7 | 4 |
| | Gadwall | 5 | 3 | 4 | 2 | - | - | 5 | 3 | 4 | 2 |
| | Mallard | 77 | 44 | 70 | 41 | 39 | 31 | 75 | 43 | 68 | 37 |
| | Mallard (domestic) | 1 | 1 | - | - | - | - | 1 | 1 | 3 | 2 |
| | Tufted Duck | 5 | 3 | 4 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 4 | 2 | 4 | 2 |
| | Swift | 2 | 1 | 5 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 4 | 2 |
| | Cuckoo | 40 | 23 | 34 | 20 | 14 | 11 | 33 | 19 | 33 | 18 |
| | Feral Pigeon | 29 | 16 | 32 | 19 | 22 | 17 | 35 | 20 | 41 | 22 |
| | Stock Dove | 70 | 41 | 70 | 41 | 51 | 40 | 86 | 49 | 85 | 46 |
| | Woodpigeon | 170 | 98 | 169 | 99 | 124 | 97 | 176 | 100 | 183 | 99 |
| | Collared Dove | 110 | 63 | 93 | 55 | 71 | 55 | 97 | 55 | 104 | 57 |
| | Turtle Dove | 3 | 2 | 2 | 1 | - | - | 2 | 1 | - | - |
| | Moorhen | 49 | 28 | 43 | 25 | 31 | 24 | 48 | 27 | 49 | 27 |
| | Coot | 23 | 13 | 23 | 14 | 15 | 12 | 17 | 10 | 21 | 12 |
| | Little Grebe | 7 | 4 | 5 | 3 | 2 | 2 | 6 | 3 | 6 | 3 |
| | Great Crested Grebe | 3 | 2 | 3 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 5 | 3 | 5 | 3 |
| | Oystercatcher | 4 | 2 | 4 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 4 | 2 | 4 | 2 |
| | Lapwing | 15 | 9 | 12 | 7 | 7 | 5 | 8 | 5 | 9 | 5 |
| | Whimbrel | - | - | 1 | 1 | - | - | 2 | 1 | - | - |
| | Curlew | 2 | 1 | 3 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 5 | 3 | 3 | 2 |
| | Redshank | 5 | 3 | 6 | 4 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 4 | 2 |
| | Black-headed Gull | 15 | 9 | 18 | 11 | 8 | 6 | 18 | 10 | 12 | 7 |
| | Mediterranean Gull | 4 | 2 | - | - | - | - | 2 | 1 | 4 | 2 |

| | | Year (and total no. of squares surveyed) | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | 2018 (174) | | 2019 (170) | | 2020 (128) | | 2021 (176) | | 2022 (184) | |
| | | n | % | n | % | n | % | n | % | n | % |
| | Common Gull | - | - | 3 | 2 | - | - | 2 | 1 | 3 | 2 |
| | Great Black-backed Gull | 4 | 2 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 5 | 3 | 5 | 3 |
| | Herring Gull | 48 | 28 | 62 | 36 | 33 | 26 | 64 | 36 | 63 | 34 |
| | Lesser Black-backed Gull | 4 | 2 | 10 | 6 | 7 | 5 | 9 | 5 | 6 | 3 |
| | Sandwich Tern | 2 | 1 | - | - | - | - | 2 | 1 | 2 | 1 |
| | Common Tern | 1 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| | Cormorant | 11 | 6 | 4 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 8 | 5 | 2 | 1 |
| | Grey Heron | 21 | 12 | 17 | 10 | 13 | 10 | 23 | 13 | 18 | 10 |
| | Little Egret | 6 | 3 | 7 | 4 | 5 | 4 | 9 | 5 | 9 | 5 |
| | Sparrowhawk | 4 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 8 | 5 | 5 | 3 |
| | Marsh Harrier | - | - | - | - | - | - | 2 | 1 | - | - |
| | Red Kite | 2 | 1 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 3 | 2 | 5 | 3 |
| | Common Buzzard | 53 | 31 | 61 | 36 | 33 | 26 | 57 | 32 | 69 | 37 |
| | Barn Owl | 3 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 3 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 3 | 2 |
| | Tawny Owl | 8 | 5 | 8 | 5 | 6 | 5 | 11 | 6 | 6 | 3 |
| | Little Owl | 3 | 2 | - | - | 2 | 2 | 4 | 2 | 2 | 1 |
| | Kingfisher | - | - | 1 | 1 | - | - | 1 | 1 | 3 | 2 |
| | Lesser Spotted Woodpecker | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| | Great Spotted Woodpecker | 118 | 68 | 116 | 68 | 76 | 60 | 120 | 7 | 122 | 66 |
| | Green Woodpecker | 102 | 59 | 84 | 49 | 46 | 36 | 105 | 60 | 103 | 56 |
| | Kestrel | 29 | 17 | 22 | 13 | 19 | 15 | 19 | 11 | 22 | 12 |
| | Hobby | 1 | 1 | - | - | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 1 |
| | Peregrine | - | - | 1 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 3 | 2 |
| | Jay | 71 | 41 | 77 | 45 | 31 | 24 | 56 | 32 | 70 | 38 |
| | Magpie | 148 | 85 | 146 | 86 | 99 | 56 | 155 | 88 | 160 | 87 |
| | Jackdaw | 136 | 78 | 138 | 81 | 86 | 67 | 140 | 80 | 148 | 80 |
| | Rook | 83 | 48 | 87 | 51 | 40 | 31 | 79 | 45 | 79 | 43 |
| | Carrion Crow | 166 | 95 | 165 | 97 | 118 | 92 | 167 | 95 | 170 | 9 |
| | Raven | 7 | 4 | 9 | 5 | 8 | 6 | 15 | 9 | 11 | 6 |
| | Coal Tit | 68 | 39 | 65 | 38 | 24 | 19 | 52 | 30 | 47 | 25 |
| | Marsh Tit | 21 | 12 | 23 | 14 | 7 | 5 | 16 | 9 | 13 | 7 |
| | Blue Tit | 171 | 98 | 162 | 96 | 117 | 91 | 168 | 95 | 179 | 97 |
| | Great Tit | 170 | 98 | 162 | 95 | 104 | 81 | 166 | 94 | 173 | 94 |
| | Woodlark | 1 | 1 | 3 | 2 | 4 | 3 | 8 | 5 | 7 | 4 |
| | Skylark | 74 | 43 | 73 | 43 | 60 | 47 | 88 | 50 | 89 | 48 |
| | Swallow | 44 | 25 | 55 | 32 | 31 | 24 | 32 | 18 | 40 | 22 |
| | House Martin | 6 | 3 | 9 | 5 | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 4 | 2 |
| | Cetti's Warbler | 13 | 7 | 14 | 8 | 10 | 8 | 18 | 10 | 21 | 11 |
| | Long-tailed Tit | 83 | 48 | 91 | 54 | 29 | 23 | 81 | 46 | 90 | 49 |
| | Willow Warbler | 23 | 13 | 29 | 17 | 14 | 11 | 20 | 11 | 21 | 11 |
| | Chiffchaff | 159 | 91 | 147 | 86 | 102 | 80 | 152 | 86 | 165 | 90 |
| | Sedge Warbler | 9 | 5 | 12 | 7 | 8 | 6 | 11 | 6 | 13 | 7 |

| | | Year (and total no. of squares surveyed) | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | 2018 (174) | | 2019 (170) | | 2020 (128) | | 2021 (176) | | 2022 (184) | |
| | | n | % | n | % | n | % | n | % | n | % |
| | Reed Warbler | 20 | 11 | 21 | 12 | 17 | 13 | 20 | 11 | 21 | 11 |
| | Blackcap | 150 | 87 | 154 | 90 | 102 | 80 | 157 | 89 | 160 | 87 |
| | Garden Warbler | 30 | 17 | 33 | 19 | 24 | 19 | 37 | 21 | 30 | 16 |
| | Lesser Whitethroat | 22 | 13 | 24 | 14 | 13 | 10 | 18 | 10 | 25 | 14 |
| | Whitethroat | 97 | 56 | 97 | 57 | 82 | 64 | 94 | 53 | 106 | 58 |
| | Firecrest | 4 | 2 | 5 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 13 | 7 | 13 | 7 |
| | Goldcrest | 65 | 37 | 68 | 40 | 35 | 27 | 77 | 44 | 74 | 40 |
| | Wren | 168 | 96 | 164 | 96 | 124 | 97 | 169 | 96 | 178 | 97 |
| | Nuthatch | 93 | 53 | 89 | 52 | 42 | 33 | 85 | 48 | 84 | 46 |
| | Treecreeper | 40 | 23 | 38 | 22 | 20 | 16 | 40 | 23 | 44 | 24 |
| | Starling | 99 | 57 | 109 | 6 | 66 | 52 | 119 | 68 | 110 | 60 |
| | Blackbird | 174 | 100 | 169 | 99 | 125 | 98 | 173 | 98 | 184 | 100 |
| | Song Thrush | 150 | 86 | 148 | 87 | 96 | 75 | 148 | 84 | 158 | 86 |
| | Mistle Thrush | 52 | 30 | 48 | 28 | 30 | 23 | 58 | 33 | 72 | 39 |
| | Spotted Flycatcher | 5 | 3 | 5 | 3 | 4 | 3 | 6 | 3 | 6 | 3 |
| | Robin | 170 | 98 | 163 | 96 | 118 | 92 | 174 | 99 | 180 | 98 |
| | Nightingale | 12 | 7 | 12 | 7 | 7 | 6 | 15 | 9 | 17 | 9 |
| | Common Redstart | - | - | 2 | 1 | - | - | 3 | 2 | 3 | 2 |
| | Stonechat | 5 | 3 | 8 | 5 | 4 | 3 | 14 | 8 | 14 | 8 |
| | Wheatear | 11 | 6 | 4 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 8 | 5 | 3 | 2 |
| | House Sparrow | 133 | 76 | 128 | 75 | 93 | 73 | 131 | 74 | 139 | 76 |
| | Dunnock | 145 | 83 | 150 | 88 | 93 | 73 | 150 | 85 | 159 | 86 |
| | Yellow Wagtail | 2 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 1 | - | - |
| | Grey Wagtail | 8 | 5 | 12 | 7 | 5 | 4 | 11 | 6 | 15 | 8 |
| | Pied/White Wagtail | 64 | 37 | 70 | 41 | 32 | 25 | 66 | 37 | 83 | 45 |
| | Meadow Pipit | 10 | 6 | 12 | 7 | 9 | 7 | 14 | 8 | 14 | 8 |
| | Tree Pipit | 2 | 1 | 2 | 1 | - | - | 2 | 1 | 2 | 1 |
| | Chaffinch | 157 | 90 | 156 | 92 | 102 | 80 | 157 | 89 | 151 | 82 |
| | Bullfinch | 41 | 24 | 39 | 23 | 17 | 14 | 36 | 20 | 31 | 17 |
| | Greenfinch | 94 | 54 | 94 | 55 | 55 | 43 | 95 | 54 | 92 | 50 |
| | Linnet | 57 | 33 | 53 | 31 | 36 | 28 | 63 | 6 | 61 | 33 |
| | Lesser Redpoll | 1 | 1 | - | - | - | - | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| | Common Crossbill | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| | Goldfinch | 136 | 78 | 148 | 87 | 91 | 71 | 149 | 85 | 154 | 84 |
| | Siskin | 5 | 3 | 8 | 5 | 1 | 1 | 3 | 2 | 3 | 2 |
| | Corn Bunting | 6 | 3 | 7 | 4 | 7 | 5 | 6 | 3 | 6 | 3 |
| | Yellowhammer | 59 | 34 | 60 | 35 | 42 | 33 | 57 | 32 | 66 | 36 |
| | Reed Bunting | 22 | 13 | 20 | 11 | 18 | 14 | 20 | 11 | 19 | 10 |
| | Number of species | 127 | | 121 | | 111 | | 125 | | 120 | |

## BTO Breeding Bird Survey (BBS)
## Sussex population trends 1994 - 2022

Sussex BBS population trends for 1994-2022 are shown in the table below, along with those for 2021-2022. Statistically significant trends are indicated by an asterisk in the 'sig' columns. The size of the difference between the upper 95% confidence limit (UCL) and the lower 95% confidence limit (LCL) for each trend gives an indication of the precision of the trend. The sample size is the mean number of squares per year in which each species was recorded during 1994-2022.

| | | Sample size | % change 1994-2022 | sig | LCL | UCL | % change 2021-2022 | sig | LCL | UCL |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Blackbird | 109 | -4 | | -16 | 10 | -3 | | -9 | 3 |
| | Blackcap | 90 | 189 | * | 129 | 267 | 0 | | -8 | 10 |
| | Blue Tit | 107 | 4 | | -14 | 27 | -3 | | -12 | 8 |
| | Carrion Crow | 107 | 67 | * | 30 | 125 | -2 | | -18 | 21 |
| | Chaffinch | 104 | -68 | * | -73 | -23 | -23 | * | -32 | -13 |
| | Chiffchaff | 94 | 72 | * | 37 | 120 | 17 | * | 8 | 27 |
| | Coal Tit | 34 | -4 | | -38 | 67 | -12 | | -33 | 16 |
| | Collared Dove | 67 | -30 | | -47 | 11 | -12 | | -27 | 6 |
| | Cuckoo | 32 | -82 | * | -88 | -72 | -2 | | -31 | 34 |
| | Dunnock | 92 | -18 | | -38 | 5 | -2 | | -13 | 11 |
| | Goldcrest | 44 | 22 | | -21 | 101 | -7 | | -24 | 17 |
| | Goldfinch | 79 | 247 | * | 162 | 389 | 27 | * | 12 | 47 |
| | Great Spotted Woodpecker | 72 | 146 | * | 79 | 243 | -4 | | -21 | 11 |
| | Great Tit | 104 | 21 | | -1 | 53 | -7 | | -16 | 2 |
| | Green Woodpecker | 71 | 0 | | -23 | 28 | -7 | | -21 | 9 |
| | Greenfinch | 77 | -73 | * | -79 | -62 | -14 | | -27 | 3 |
| | House Sparrow | 82 | 6 | | -21 | 43 | -4 | | -14 | 7 |
| | Jackdaw | 89 | 146 | * | 61 | 286 | -5 | | -17 | 8 |
| | Jay | 50 | -30 | | -52 | 5 | -22 | | -17 | 42 |
| | Linnet | 40 | 2 | | -38 | 63 | 10 | | -36 | 11 |
| | Long-tailed Tit | 51 | -32 | | -52 | 9 | 31 | * | 0 | 65 |
| | Magpie | 98 | 34 | * | 5 | 63 | 12 | | -1 | 25 |
| | Mallard | 60 | 141 | * | 17 | 355 | -17 | | -34 | 6 |
| | Mistle Thrush | 38 | -39 | * | -60 | -10 | 3 | | -23 | 37 |
| | Moorhen | 37 | -31 | | -62 | 9 | 1 | | -26 | 30 |
| | Nuthatch | 51 | 10 | | -20 | 57 | -4 | | -19 | 13 |
| | Pheasant | 88 | 61 | * | 32 | 103 | -29 | * | -41 | -14 |
| | Pied Wagtail | 47 | 29 | | -15 | 88 | 32 | * | 3 | 62 |
| | Robin | 107 | 12 | | -6 | 36 | -6 | * | -13 | 0 |
| | Rook | 60 | 37 | | -17 | 120 | 1 | | -36 | 51 |
| | Skylark | 57 | -14 | | -47 | 39 | -7 | | -19 | 8 |
| | Song Thrush | 96 | -2 | | -20 | 22 | -6 | | -14 | 4 |
| | Starling | 78 | -62 | * | -75 | -49 | -10 | | -29 | 12 |
| | Stock Dove | 41 | 67 | | -1 | 286 | -11 | | 25 | 8 |
| | Swallow | 72 | -18 | | -44 | 12 | 8 | | -12 | 40 |
| | Swift | 31 | -89 | * | -94 | -67 | -20 | | -56 | 52 |
| | Whitethroat | 64 | 8 | | -27 | 52 | -3 | | -16 | 12 |
| | Woodpigeon | 109 | 47 | * | 20 | 84 | -12 | * | -21 | -3 |
| | Wren | 105 | -1 | | -18 | 21 | 11 | * | 6 | 18 |
| | Yellowhammer | 45 | -36 | | -61 | 4 | -18 | * | -34 | -25 |

# Sussex Winter Bird Survey (SWBS) results Nov 2020 - Feb 2023

*Christine George*

The Sussex Winter Bird Survey (SWBS) was set up by the Sussex Ornithological Society in November 2011 with the aim of monitoring annual fluctuations in winter populations of common birds. Since then, the survey has been repeated annually, with the winter of 2022-2023 being the twelfth winter for the survey. Standardised counts from randomly-distributed 1-km squares form the basis of this survey, with many of these squares also being surveyed annually in the breeding season for the national Breeding Bird Survey (BBS), organised by the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO). As with BBS, birds are recorded along the same route (2 x 1-km transects) twice every winter.

The results of the past three winters are shown in Table 1 below. The first column 'Rank 2022/23' shows each species ranked by the percentage of 1-km squares in which they were recorded during winter 2022/23, with the most frequently recorded species being ranked 1. All species recorded in at least thirty surveyed 1-km squares in Winter 12 have been included. Stonechat, though recorded in less than 30 surveyed 1-km squares in recent years, has been included to highlight the increase in population over the 12 years of the survey (see graph 5). The figure in parentheses is the mean ranking for all twelve winters.

For each 'winter' there are three columns:

**Column 1** (Total squares) is the total number of 1-km squares surveyed for SWBS during that winter in which the species was recorded.

**Column 2** (% of squares) is the percentage of 1-km squares surveyed for SWBS in which the species was recorded.

**Column 3** (Mean/sq visit) is the mean encounters per single visit to a surveyed 1-km square. This number is derived from the total number of encounters over the two surveys, divided by the total number of squares surveyed that year, and further divided by two.

Both column 2 and column 3 facilitate year to year comparison.

***Table 1.*** *Comparative results for the commonest species, recorded in at least thirty surveyed squares.*

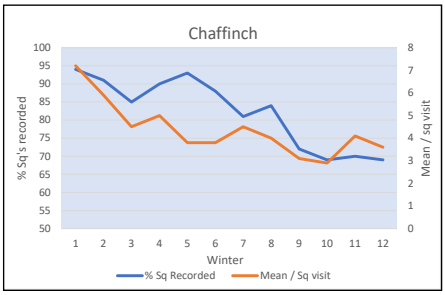
| | | WINTER 10 (2020/21) | | | WINTER 11 (2021/22) | | | WINTER 12 (2022/23) | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1-km squares surveyed | | 153 | | | 163 | | | 151 | | |
| Number of observers | | 97 | | | 106 | | | 96 | | |
| Species recorded (Including esc/feral) | | 115 | | | 119 | | | 121 | | |
| **Rank 2022/23** | **Species** | **Total squares** | **% of squares** | **Mean/ sq visit** | **Total squares** | **% of squares** | **Mean/ sq visit** | **Total squares** | **% of squares** | **Mean/ sq visit** |
| 1 (2) | Woodpigeon | 149 | 97 | 30 | 163 | 100 | 31.4 | 150 | 99 | 35.5 |
| 2 (3) | Carrion Crow | 152 | 99 | 10.0 | 157 | 96 | 9.4 | 148 | 98 | 9.2 |
| 3 (4) | Robin | 150 | 98 | 8.1 | 157 | 96 | 8.6 | 146 | 97 | 8.3 |
| 4 (4) | Blue Tit | 143 | 94 | 9.0 | 158 | 97 | 10.9 | 145 | 96 | 9.8 |
| 5 (3) | Blackbird | 150 | 98 | 7.7 | 161 | 99 | 8.4 | 144 | 95 | 7.3 |
| 6 (6) | Magpie | 146 | 95 | 4.3 | 154 | 95 | 4.3 | 140 | 93 | 4.7 |

| | | WINTER 10 (2020/21) | | | WINTER 11 (2021/22) | | | WINTER 12 (2022/23) | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Rank 2022/23 | Species | Total squares | % of squares | Mean/ sq visit | Total squares | % of squares | Mean/ sq visit | Total squares | % of squares | Mean/ sq visit |
| 7 (7) | Great Tit | 133 | 87 | 4.4 | 150 | 92 | 5.1 | 140 | 93 | 4.7 |
| 8 (9) | Wren | 133 | 87 | 2.6 | 145 | 89 | 2.7 | 135 | 89 | 2.7 |
| 9 (10) | Jackdaw | 131 | 86 | 15.6 | 146 | 90 | 15.8 | 134 | 89 | 14.2 |
| 10 (12) | Song Thrush | 115 | 75 | 1.6 | 121 | 74 | 1.4 | 118 | 78 | 1.5 |
| 11 (13) | Goldfinch | 117 | 77 | 4.3 | 129 | 79 | 5.3 | 112 | 74 | 3.5 |
| 12 (11) | Dunnock | 123 | 80 | 2.0 | 126 | 77 | 1.6 | 110 | 73 | 1.8 |
| 13 (13) | Common Starling | 116 | 76 | 23.8 | 124 | 76 | 26.3 | 104 | 69 | 26.1 |
| 14 (11) | Chaffinch | 105 | 69 | 2.9 | 114 | 70 | 4.1 | 104 | 69 | 3.6 |
| 15 (17) | Herring Gull | 104 | 68 | 8.8 | 116 | 71 | 8.9 | 103 | 68 | 7.8 |
| 16 (18) | Common Buzzard | 100 | 65 | 0.8 | 121 | 74 | 0.9 | 100 | 66 | 0.8 |
| 17 (15) | House Sparrow | 109 | 71 | 7.7 | 114 | 70 | 6.8 | 99 | 66 | 7.7 |
| 18 (18) | G S Woodpecker | 98 | 64 | 0.9 | 112 | 69 | 0.9 | 94 | 62 | 0.9 |
| 19 (21) | Long-tailed Tit | 82 | 54 | 1.9 | 91 | 56 | 1.9 | 90 | 60 | 1.9 |
| 20 (23) | Redwing | 90 | 59 | 10.0 | 93 | 57 | 7.1 | 90 | 60 | 6.5 |
| 21 (17) | Com Pheasant | 94 | 61 | 2.4 | 99 | 61 | 2.1 | 85 | 56 | 2.0 |
| 22 (24) | Gr Woodpecker | 76 | 50 | 0.5 | 90 | 55 | 0.5 | 80 | 53 | 0.6 |
| 23 (22) | Jay | 76 | 50 | 0.7 | 97 | 60 | 0.6 | 77 | 51 | 0.6 |
| 24 (23) | Rook | 78 | 51 | 10.0 | 94 | 58 | 13.1 | 76 | 50 | 10.9 |
| 25 (26) | Goldcrest | 69 | 45 | 0.7 | 81 | 50 | 0.8 | 76 | 50 | 0.8 |
| 26 (25) | Pied Wagtail | 87 | 57 | 2.0 | 90 | 55 | 1.3 | 76 | 50 | 1.0 |
| 27 (25) | Black-headed Gull | 74 | 48 | 8.7 | 82 | 50 | 10.5 | 72 | 48 | 6.8 |
| 28 (29) | Nuthatch | 68 | 44 | 0.7 | 82 | 50 | 0.7 | 70 | 46 | 0.8 |
| 29 (29) | Collared Dove | 65 | 43 | 1.3 | 69 | 42 | 1.0 | 63 | 42 | 1.0 |
| 30 (30) | Fieldfare | 63 | 41 | 3.8 | 47 | 29 | 2.3 | 59 | 39 | 5.9 |
| 31 (35) | Kestrel | 57 | 37 | 0.3 | 52 | 32 | 0.2 | 53 | 35 | 0.2 |
| 32 (35) | Mistle Thrush | 62 | 40 | 0.5 | 50 | 31 | 0.4 | 53 | 35 | 0.5 |
| 33 (35) | Coal Tit | 47 | 31 | 0.4 | 47 | 29 | 0.5 | 52 | 34 | 0.5 |
| 34 (33) | Mallard | 50 | 33 | 3.0 | 65 | 40 | 2.3 | 51 | 34 | 2.1 |
| 35 (37) | Stock Dove | 48 | 31 | 1.4 | 56 | 34 | 1.3 | 50 | 33 | 1.5 |
| 36 (35) | Skylark | 54 | 35 | 2.1 | 57 | 35 | 1.1 | 48 | 32 | 1.2 |
| 37 (40) | Meadow Pipit | 48 | 31 | 2.0 | 45 | 28 | 0.9 | 48 | 32 | 1.5 |
| 38 (30) | Greenfinch | 44 | 29 | 0.6 | 50 | 31 | 0.6 | 43 | 28 | 0.5 |
| 39 (53) | Raven | 31 | 20 | 0.2 | 34 | 21 | 0.2 | 41 | 27 | 0.3 |
| 40 (39) | Moorhen | 26 | 17 | 0.4 | 42 | 26 | 0.6 | 40 | 26 | 0.7 |
| 41 (41) | Treecreeper | 32 | 21 | 0.2 | 38 | 23 | 0.2 | 39 | 26 | 0.2 |
| 42 (36) | Bullfinch | 42 | 27 | 0.4 | 47 | 29 | 0.4 | 36 | 24 | 0.3 |
| 43 (42) | Feral Pigeon | 35 | 23 | 4.7 | 40 | 25 | 2.3 | 31 | 20 | 3.2 |
| 44 (46) | Grey Heron | 25 | 16 | 0.1 | 26 | 16 | 0.2 | 31 | 20 | 0.2 |
| 45 (44) | Common Gull | 27 | 18 | 2.7 | 32 | 20 | 2.9 | 30 | 20 | 2.7 |
| 46 (52) | Stonechat | 28 | 18 | 0.2 | 27 | 17 | 0.2 | 27 | 18 | 0.2 |

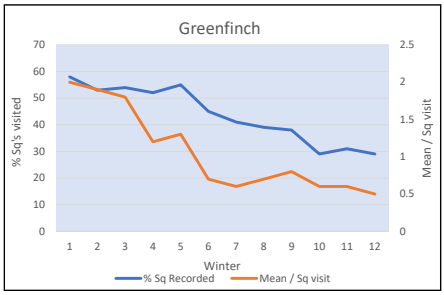
By way of illustration, data has been extracted from all years of SWBS, for three finch species which are showing declines, and another which had until winter 12 largely shown an upward trend. Data from all winters has also been used to illustrate two species showing an upward trend (Meadow Pipit and Stonechat).

On the graphs below the blue line shows the percentage of 1-km squares in which the species was recorded for each of the twelve winters of the survey. (Table 1, column 2) and the orange line, the mean encounters per single survey visit (Table 1, column 3). Please note, the axis values vary from one species to another.

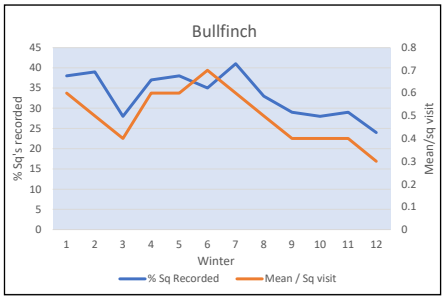
**Graph 1**. *Chaffinch*



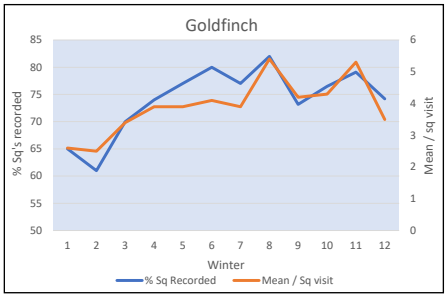

**Graph 2**. *Greenfinch*




**Graph 3**. *Bullfinch*

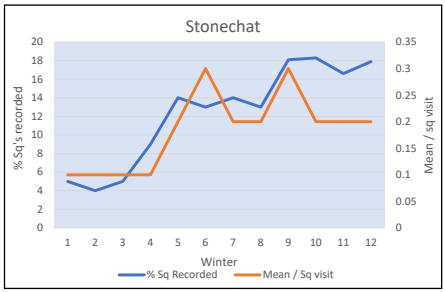



**Graph 4.** *Goldfinch*

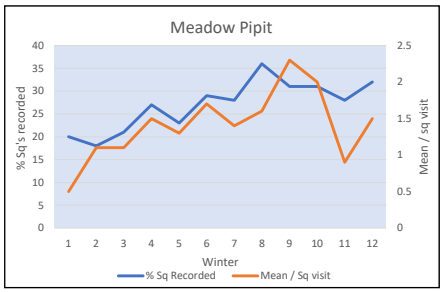



Two heathland / rough grassland species which the SWBS data suggests are increasing are Stonechat and Meadow Pipit.

**Graph 5**. *Stonechat*




**Graph 6.** *Meadow Pipit*



A table containing results for all species encountered, for each of the twelve years of the survey, is available digitally as an excel spreadsheet. Please email the SWBS organiser at sussex.wbs@gmail.com.

Other species recorded during SWBS, but occurring in 27 or less surveyed 1-km squares are shown in Table 2

**Table 2.** *Other species encountered during SWBS 2022/23, along with the number of squares (in parentheses) in which that species was encountered. Shown in descending order of occupancy.*

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Linnet (27) | Kingfisher (6) | Woodcock (2) |
| Canada Goose (26) | Barnacle Goose (5) | Green Sandpiper (2) |
| Cormorant (24) | Common Shelduck (5) | Great White Egret (2) |
| Red Kite (24) | Tufted Duck (5) | Tawny Owl (2) |
| Sparrowhawk (21) | Oystercatcher (5) | Dartford Warbler (2) |
| Chiffchaff (21) | Common Redshank (5) | Lesser Redpoll (2) |
| Yellowhammer (21) | Mediterranean Gull (5) | Corn Bunting (2) |
| Marsh Tit (20) | Great Black-backed Gull (5) | Ruddy Shelduck (1) |
| Lapwing (19) | Marsh Harrier (5) | Goosander (1) |
| Mute Swan (16) | Peregrine (5) | Avocet (1) |
| Egyptian Goose (16) | Greylag (Dom) (4) | Turnstone (1) |
| Coot (15) | Gadwall (4) | Ruff (1) |
| Little Egret (15) | Little Grebe (4) | Dunlin (1) |
| Greylag Goose (14) | Woodlark (4) | Jack Snipe (1) |
| Eurasian Teal (13) | Shoveler (3) | Lesser Black-backed Gull (1) |
| Firecrest (13) | Common Pochard (3) | White Stork (1) |
| Grey Wagtail (13) | Grey Partridge (3) | Cattle Egret (1) |
| Reed Bunting (12) | Great Crested Grebe (3) | Goshawk (1) |
| Common Snipe (11) | Grey Plover (3) | Hen Harrier (1) |
| Cetti's Warbler (10) | Blackcap (3) | Short-eared Owl (1) |
| Red-legged Partridge (8) | Hawfinch (3) | Merlin (1) |
| Siskin (8) | Mandarin Duck (2) | Black Redstart (1) |
| Eurasian Wigeon (7) | Mallard (Dom) (2) | Brambling (1) |
| Curlew (7) | Water Rail (2) | Indian Peafowl (1) |
| Brent Goose (6) | Golden Plover (2) | Bar-headed Goose (1) |



*Fieldfare, Pulborough, 11 Dec (Bob Brewer)*

## Arrival and departure dates of summer visitors, 2022

| | First recorded date | | | Last recorded date | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 2022 | 1960-2021 | 10-yr average (± SD in days) | 2022 | 1960-2021 | 10-yr average (± SD in days) |
| Garganey | 14 Mar | 02 Feb | 14 Mar (±9) | 15 Sep | 17 Dec | 28 Sep (±22) |
| Quail | 16 Jun | 06 Feb | 24 May (±28) | 28 Aug | 15 Nov [2] | 15 Aug (±35) |
| Nightjar | 08 May | 14 Apr [14] | 08 May (±5) | 26 Aug | 05 Nov | 13 Sep (±10) |
| Common Swift | 13 Apr | 07 Apr | 14 Apr (±4) | 25 Sep | 24 Nov | 27 Sep (±10) |
| Common Cuckoo | 10 Apr | 21 Mar [4] | 02 Apr (±6) | 24 Sep | 23 Oct [5] | 12 Sep (±14) |
| Turtle Dove | 10 Apr | 05 Feb | 14 Apr (±10) | 12 Sep | 18 Dec | 03 Oct (±17) |
| Little Ringed Plover | 12 Mar | 06 Mar | 13 Mar (±5) | 23 Sep | 08 Oct | 20 Sep (±9) |
| Wood Sandpiper | 17 Apr | 11 Feb | 04 May (±14) | 05 Sep | 16 Nov | 02 Oct (±20) |
| Little Tern | 11 Apr | 30 Mar | 06 Apr (±4) | 24 Sep | 04 Nov | 16 Sep (±10) |
| Roseate Tern | 11 May | 17 Apr | 07 May (±14) | 24 Jul | 05 Oct | 05 Aug (±24) |
| Common Tern | 25 Mar | 14 Mar | 25 Mar (±5) | 03 Nov | 26 Nov | 21 Oct (±16) |
| Arctic Tern | 11 Apr | 24 Mar | 07 Apr (±7) | 23 Nov | 31 Dec | 14 Oct (±25) |
| Common/Arctic Tern | 08 Apr | 10 Mar | 01 Apr (±4) | 09 Oct | 31 Dec | 30 Sep (±8) |
| Black Tern | 18 Apr | 09 Mar | 15 Apr (±15) | 21 Sep | 16 Nov [3] | 24 Sep (±13) |
| Pomarine Skua | 11 Apr | 10 Mar | 21 Apr (±5) | - | 31 Dec | 31 Oct (±42) |
| Osprey | 19 Mar | 04 Mar | 23 Mar (±10) | 05 Nov | 09 Dec | 26 Oct (±9) |
| Wryneck | 24 Apr | 22 Mar [18] | 17 Apr (±8) | 15 Nov [1] | 02 Nov [6] | 03 Oct (±14) |
| Hobby | 11 Apr | 21 Mar | 01 Apr (±6) | 25 Oct | 09 Nov | 23 Oct (±6) |
| Sand Martin | 04 Mar | 27 Feb | 10 Mar (±8) | 18 Oct | 01 Dec [7] | 23 Oct (±10) |
| Barn Swallow | 27 Mar [19] | 04 Feb [17] | 03 Mar (±14) | 07 Dec | 31 Dec [17] | 09 Dec (±15) |
| House Martin | 11 Feb | 01 Feb [17] | 18 Mar (±7) | 14 Nov | 31 Dec [17] | 21 Nov (±17) |
| Wood Warbler | 11 Apr | 04 Apr | 24 Apr (±11) | 18 Aug | 07 Oct | 04 Sep (±14) |
| Willow Warbler | 21 Mar | 04 Mar | 16 Mar (±6) | 22 Oct | 27 Nov | 20 Oct (±4) |
| Sedge Warbler | 19 Mar | 17 Mar | 30 Mar (±8) | 08 Oct | 01 Nov | 15 Oct (±7) |
| Reed Warbler | 08 Apr | 01 Apr | 07 Apr (±4) | 25 Oct | 01 Dec | 25 Oct (±10) |
| Grasshopper Warbler | 16 Apr | 02 Apr | 08 Apr (±5) | 01 Oct | 01 Nov | 06 Oct (±6) |
| Garden Warbler | 09 Apr | 28 Mar | 05 Apr (±6) | 01 Oct | 16 Nov | 11 Oct (±13) |
| Lesser Whitethroat | 10 Apr | 04 Apr [17] | 09 Apr (±4) | 31 Oct | 18 Nov [10] | 17 Oct (±13) |
| Common Whitethroat | 10 Apr | 19 Mar [17] | 03 Apr (±5) | 09 Oct | 17 Dec | 28 Oct (±22) |
| Ring Ouzel | 28 Mar | 04 Feb [11] | 23 Mar (±19) | 05 Nov | 26 Dec | 14 Nov (±13) |
| Spotted Flycatcher | 23 Apr | 10 Apr [15] | 25 Apr (±6) | 11 Oct | 18 Nov | 09 Oct (±6) |
| Common Nightingale | 11 Apr | 21 Mar | 05 Apr (±3) | 04 Oct | 14 Oct [12] | 11 Sep (±13) |
| Pied Flycatcher | 28 Apr | 01 Apr | 10 Apr (±7) | 16 Sep | 01 Nov | 01 Oct (±12) |
| Common Redstart | 26 Mar | 05 Mar | 31 Mar (±7) | 31 Oct | 26 Dec | 25 Oct (±26) |
| Whinchat | 18 Apr | 18 Feb | 09 Apr (±11) | 04 Nov | 02 Dec | 26 Oct (±10) |
| Northern Wheatear | 10 Mar | 13 Feb | 07 Mar (±8) | 07 Nov | 31 Dec | 07 Nov (±10) |
| Yellow Wagtail | 10 Apr | 12 Feb | 28 Mar (±8) | 18 Oct | 23 Nov [13] | 27 Oct (±11) |
| Tree Pipit | 12 Apr | 24 Mar [16] | 03 Apr (±5) | 03 Oct | 09 Nov | 13 Oct (±7) |

**Notes:** [1] county record early or late date; [2] excludes historic December records; [3] excludes one in Cuckmere Valley 13-21 Nov 1954; [4] excludes one at Fairlight Cove on 15 Mar 1936; [5] excludes one at Goodwood on 11 Nov 1928; [6] excludes one at the Crumbles on 5 Nov 1947; [7] excludes record from unknown location on 5 Dec 1911; [10] excludes one at Burgess Hill on 21 Nov 1957 and known wintering birds; [11] excludes one at Mannings Heath on 2 Feb 1905; [12] excludes one at North Bersted on 19 Oct 1943; [13] excludes one at Sidlesham between 11 Dec 1960 and 14 Jan 1961; [14] excludes one at Pulborough on 8 Apr 1912; [15] excludes one at Hastings on 8 Apr 1909; [16] excludes record from unknown location on 17 Mar 1922; [17] excludes known wintering individuals; [18] excludes one on 9 Mar 1908 and on 10 Mar 1918 both at Pulborough; [19] excludes wintering individual on the Selsey Peninsula.




*Sand Martins, by Stephen Message*

## Departure and arrival dates of winter visitors, 2022

| | Last recorded date | | | First recorded date | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 2022 | 1960-2021 | 10-yr average (± SD in days) | 2022 | 1960-2021 | 10-yr average (± SD in days) |
| White-fronted Goose | 26 Mar [6] | 29 May | 08 Apr (±28) | 03 Dec [6] | 04 Sep | 19 Oct (± 31) |
| Bewick's Swan | 13 Feb | 26 Apr | 27 Feb (±7) | 20 Dec | 06 Oct | 24 Nov (± 14) |
| Velvet Scoter | 09 May | 15 Jun | 09 May (±11) | 17 Oct | 02 Aug | 15 Oct (± 14) |
| Long-tailed Duck | 10 Apr | 14 Jun | 23 Apr (±40) | 05 Nov | 12 Aug | 28 Oct (±13) |
| Goldeneye | 25 Apr | 31 May | 21 Apr (±23) | 05 Nov | 06 Aug | 21 Oct (±14) |
| Smew | - | 24 Apr | 28 Feb (±20) | - | 22 Oct | 03 Dec (±17) |
| Goosander | 07 May | 23 Jun | 23 Apr (±44) | 04 Nov | 01 Sep | 16 Oct (±21) |
| Red-necked Grebe | 02 May | 19 Jun | 07 Apr (± 26) | 21 Aug | 13 Aug [2] | 30 Oct (±25) |
| Slavonian Grebe | 26 Apr | 28 Jun | 22 Apr (± 17) | 12 Nov | 02 Aug | 20 Oct (±9) |
| Purple Sandpiper | 18 May | 04 Jun | 01 May (±18) | 13 Aug | 01 Jul | 10 Oct (±32) |
| Jack Snipe | 18 Apr | 19 May | 11 Apr (±14) | 27 Sep | 11 Aug | 02 Oct (±27) |
| Red-throated Diver | 14 May | 23 Jun | 29 May (±16) | 20 Sep | 07 Aug | 13 Sep (±8) |
| Black-throated Diver | 18 May | 21 Jun | 17 May (±8) | 21 Nov | 03 Aug | 18 Oct (±13) |
| Great Northern Diver | 08 Jun | 21 Jun | 02 Jun (±7) | 21 Oct | 16 Sep | 15 Oct (±14) |
| Hen Harrier | 02 Jun | 19 Jun | 25 May (±14) | 20 Aug [7] | 04 Aug | 25 Aug (±15) |
| Great Grey Shrike | - | 5 May [4] | 27 Mar (±25) | 09 Nov | 26 Sep [3] | 19 Oct (±17) |
| Redwing | 13 Apr | 26 May [5] | 20 Apr (±15) | 29 Aug | 06 Aug | 20 Sep (± 12) |
| Fieldfare | 19 Apr | 5 Jun | 22 Apr (± 5) | 07 Oct | 06 Aug | 29 Sep (± 7) |
| Water Pipit | 10 Apr | 28 May | 12 Apr (± 7) | 27 Oct | 01 Sep | 18 Oct (±9) |
| Brambling | 28 Apr | 12 May | 15 Apr (±10) | 28 Sep | 03 Sep | 30 Sep (±5) |
| Snow Bunting | 13 Mar | 09 Jun | 09 Mar (±36) | 10 Nov | 17 Sep | 27 Oct (± 17) |

**Notes:** [1] earliest or latest county record [none in 2022]; [2] excludes one off Brighton on 3 Aug 1872; [3] excludes one at The Crumbles on 7 Sep 1899; [4] excludes one at Rye Hbr on 14 May 1950; [5] excludes two undated historic records of birds found dead in June; [6] excludes known summering individual; [7] excludes one at Selsey Bill on 3 Jul.

## 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 ten-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.

## Wealden Heaths Breeding Bird Survey 2022
## Summary of counts in West Sussex

| | AC | BD | BH | CC | IC | LC | LP | LS | SC | WC | WD |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Woodcock | 1 | 8 | 1 | - | - | - | 2 | 1 | - | 2 | 1 |
| Stock Dove | - | 7 | 3 | 2 | 4 | 2 | 4 | 6 | 3 | - | 2 |
| Turtle Dove | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Nightjar | 18 | 10 | 2 | 3 | 9 | 9 | 3 | 1 | 3 | 6 | 3 |
| Green Woodpecker | 4 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 4 | 6 | 2 | 3 | 2 | - | 3 |
| Great Spotted Woodpecker | 10 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 4 | 6 | 4 | 4 | 3 | 6 | 3 |
| Hobby | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Woodlark | 8 | 7 | 3 | 4 | 9 | 5 | 4 | 1 | 2 | 8 | 5 |
| Skylark | - | - | 1 | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Common Whitethroat | 2 | 9 | 4 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 7 | 1 | 4 | 11 | 5 |
| Dartford Warbler | 8 | 10 | 2 | 9 | 10 | 5 | 2 | 1 | - | 2 | 2 |
| Common Redstart | 2 | 6 | - | 3 | - | - | - | 3 | - | - | 4 |
| Eurasian Stonechat | 15 | 11 | 3 | 5 | 9 | 5 | 4 | - | 2 | 6 | 12 |
| Tree Pipit | 4 | - | - | 2 | 5 | - | - | 4 | 2 | 1 | 1 |
| Meadow Pipit | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Linnet | 6 | 10 | 2 | 3 | 6 | 5 | 4 | 1 | 1 | 4 | 11 |
| Lesser Redpoll | 2 | - | - | - | - | - | - | 2 | - | - | - |
| Common Crossbill | 2 | 9 | - | - | - | - | - | 2 | - | - | - |
| Siskin | 3 | 5 | - | - | - | 2 | - | 6 | 1 | - | 4 |
| Yellowhammer | 4 | - | 4 | - | 6 | 4 | 5 | - | 1 | 22 | - |
| Reed Bunting | - | - | 2 | - | 3 | - | 5 | - | - | - | - |

Figures relate to pairs or territories. The small hyphen (-) indicates that no territories were identified.

### Key to sites

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| AC | Ambersham & Heyshott Commons | LP | Lord's Piece (Coates) |
| BD | Black Down (Fernhurst) | LS | Linchmere & Stanley Commons |
| BH | Broad Halfpenny (Coates) | SC | Stedham Common |
| CC | Chapel Common | WC | Woolbeding Common |
| IC | Iping Common | WD | Weaver's Down (Liss) |
| LC | Lavington & Duncton Commons | | |

The above heathland sites were the only ones surveyed this year

## Finders' Accounts of Notable Species

# American Robin, Eastbourne, 8 to 27 February 2022

***Michael Clayton-Harding***

My wife Rebecca told me she had been watching a strange bird in the garden, on my return home that Tuesday morning. We have a feeding station in front of the kitchen window and she was able to clearly describe what she had seen. A thrush-sized bird, with an orange breast, greyish back, darker head with white eye-markings. Her description reminded me of the Robin from Mary Poppins, which to any British viewer has always looked strange. I showed her the entry for American Robin from my copy of Britian's Birds and she was immediately certain this is what she had seen. An anxious few hours passed, before I spotted it, feeding in some berberis bushes across the road. Then a further extremely tense few minutes until I managed a decent photo. After that I could breathe again and try to decide what to do next. Fortunately I chose to get advice from some experienced local birders. They suggested managing the release of the news through Birdguides and the setting up of an online charitable fund for the local foodbank, for the use of the anticipated visitors.

Over the next few weeks the bird seemed to divide its time between nearby fields and local gardens, seemingly favouring ours. We often enjoyed fantastic views of it from the kitchen window, as it hid in a shrub, no doubt much to the frustration of the large numbers of keen birdwatchers gathered in the street.

A non-birding neighbour caused some confusion when he claimed the bird had been around for several weeks, but the photo he sent me was of a Chaffinch. Later on I met a reliable source who had a glimpse of the bird in Whitbread Hollow, the Sunday before the Tuesday in question.

The bird stayed for several weeks. Early reports that it seemed unwell were thankfully unfounded. By the end of its stay it rarely came to the garden and seemed to spend much more time in the nearby field. Despite the inconvenience of the crowds, it was a real privilege to have such a rarity in the garden for those few weeks.



*American Robin, by Phil Jones*

## Brown Booby, Hove Beach, 2 January 2022

*Clodagh Bannerman*

On 2 January, a normal Sunday morning dog walk along an overcast seafront took an unexpected turn when my dog Marla made an exotic discovery on the beach in Hove, not far from the old pier.

The beach was showing signs of the previous few days' stormy seas. We had found an enormous live sea snail, a lot of plastic debris and, most strangely, a whole pineapple – plenty for the dog to get interested in. I didn't pay attention to her scampering away and was quite startled to notice her sniffing round a fairly substantial bird, which was hugging the cobbled wall at the back of the beach. A small group of people were collected at a little distance.

I was automatically expecting it to be a European Herring Gull – which are omnipresent in Brighton – but noticed with surprise it was the wrong colour, this bird being a dark and slightly dusty brown. It also had fuller tail feathers than a gull, which became slightly darker towards the tips. It was lovely, soft and shiny and not noticeably scrawny or scruffy to my eye – a beautiful specimen. Looking even closer the feathers were a little looser than a gull's, and the head looked almost shorn in a comically, almost skinhead-esque style. We were all slightly awestruck by this surprising looking creature.

The face was eye-catching, with clear pale blue orbital rings which gazed quite calmly at us. It had a long, sharply-pointed and curved beak. It wasn't opening the beak or making calls or sounds and didn't seem distressed, except for the fact that it occasionally hid its head under its wing, which I took to mean it was as surprised and overwhelmed as we were.

I suggested to the onlookers that we give it more space so it may choose to make an escape – I didn't want my dog to scare it. Other people present said it had been approaching and following them a few moments before so, as there were plenty of dogs around, I think there was a protective element to staying close to it, while we decided as a group what to do.

The bird was taking the odd step back and forth and I remember noticing its large pale yellow webbed feet. Again, with gulls as such a familiar point of reference, the feet were much bigger and seemed more delicate, flexing and moulding themselves over the pebbles as it walked. The legs were fairly short and as I looked more closely, the neck had a definite curve to it, not unlike a heron, but more pronounced – almost strikingly a bit like a Dodo.

We discussed various options for next steps. Someone tried to make contact with a local wildlife organisation called Roger's Wildlife who take in and rehabilitate wounded animals. No joy. I called the local PDSA and we made a plan to take it there. Another onlooker went to get a box and towels.

At this point I regretfully had to leave for a shift at the local hospital, but I was pleased and relieved to hear that the bird was taken by volunteers to a safe place where it was cared for. Colleagues on the Cardiac Care Unit used an app to identify the bird as a Brown Booby, and it was only then that I realised I'd been a witness to something special. Presuming it was most likely male due to the eye colour, and juvenile because of the colouring, I felt a bit heartbroken for this lovely little being who had got so badly lost and separated from his group and was such a long way from home.

I'm left feeling regret that I couldn't spend a bit longer with the bird, profoundly relieved that my dog was gentle with him, and thrilled and lucky to have had this rare experience at all.

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*Brown Booby, Hove seafront, 2 January (Clodagh Bannerman)*

# The Penduline Tits at West Rise Marsh, 18 November 2022 to 21 February 2023

***David Thorns***

Sitting at home, late in the afternoon on 18 Nov, I was reflecting on what had been an excellent day's birding at nearby West Rise Marsh: I'd had a scarce Lesser Redpoll flying over, great views of Bearded Tits again, a Kingfisher, a good smattering of ducks and, pride of place, my first ever Jack Snipe at the site! Oh yes, and there'd been that close calling Water Pipit that I'd sound-recorded as it flushed from my feet along the Langney Sewer… I made a mental note to search for that later, and save what would surely be a decent recording. (For a while now, I'd made it a habit to wear a microphone when birding, just in case anything spectacular happens. Of course, nothing spectacular ever happens. However, little did I know that, on this particular occasion, something very spectacular *had* in fact happened…).

Later that night, upstairs on the computer, I started searching for that pipit recording. This consisted of trawling my eyes across the screen, looking for the various black smudges and streaks representing the calls and songs of birds in visual form. At one point a particular mark on the screen caught my attention and I scrolled back to listen to it. Suddenly I was caught in shock and excitement – I couldn't believe my ears – an unmistakable, thin downward-sounding "tssiuu"…this just *had* to be a Penduline Tit no less!

Aware that this was a real rarity in Sussex I immediately sent the sound-file by email to local birders Kris Gillam and Laurence Pitcher and asked for a second opinion. There was quickly a collective agreement about the identification, and Kris's local knowledge of the site was to be key: his hunch was that, based on the time and place of the recording, the bird was likely to be at, or near, a certain wooden pagoda structure inside the reedbed which was surrounded by fairly extensive stands of Reedmace, a delicacy particularly favoured by Penduline Tits!

At dawn the following morning Kris and Allsworth Redman were duly at the spot, and while slowly searching the edges of the reedbed their hunch, suddenly and incredibly, paid off: the thin, wispy, descending whistles of Penduline Tits could be heard nearby! The birds were there, tantalizingly out of sight, but definitely there, moving towards them. Eventually the birds came into view (there were *three* of them!) and both observers had brief but good views before the tits flew off together. The flying birds were also seen at this point by Chris Ball, Ian Barnard and Jake Everitt who were standing nearby and had been alerted. Although the tits dropped into reeds, they were, frustratingly, only to be seen in flight again as they took off once more, climbing high into the sky and disappearing as tiny specks to the southwest. Nevertheless, five people had now seen them and the news was duly put out to the various bird information services. With such favourable habitat at hand the birds would surely stay a while – twitching was imminent!

And indeed they did stay, up to five of them appearing intermittently in the pagoda area over the winter, the last sighting being on 21 Feb 2023. However, for many birders the five Pendulines proved to be the most difficult, frustrating and exasperating birds ever known. Never before have I heard such terrible insults thrown at such small and defenseless passerines! The birds were unpredictable and irregular; they were usually *not* seen; the weather was cold; they had chosen an isolated and flooded spot that was a nightmare to reach - many a Wellington Boot was overtopped as people waded through the cold, deep and muddy water, only to stand quietly for hours on end seeing nothing. Some ill-equipped (but brave) souls would even take off shoes and socks and roll up trousers before "going in".

However, for me personally, I held no bad grudge against the little fellows: the difficulties involved were certainly entertaining, and made them just that little bit more special. They felt like they were

"my birds", even though I still hadn't seen one, or even heard one of them in real life. Eventually, on 29 Nov, some 11 days after that little blip on the computer screen, I was lucky enough to find one at last, feeding in full view on top of a reed stem – it had all been worth it!



*Penduline Tits, West Rise Marsh, 28 November (David Campbell)*

# The Sussex Ringing Report 2022

*Val Bentley*

Fortunately restrictions due to the COVID-19 pandemic had been lifted in 2021, though obviously caution was still necessary in specific circumstances. However, during 2022 it became apparent that there was an outbreak of Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI), which was having a devastating effect, initially on seabird populations in Scotland, but then spreading through the UK and Ireland. The BTO suspended seabird ringing in Scotland and Ireland in July, and in Wales from early August. Restrictions were lifted by the end of the year, but strict precautions were still in place. In addition the RSPB did not allow any seabird ringing on their reserves from mid-July, which called a halt to the tern colour-ringing project initiated by Peter Potts at Pagham Hbr in 2019. While the majority of Sussex ringing involves passerines and near passerines, those involved had to follow strict guidelines with regard to sanitising clothing and equipment, especially if moving items from one site to another, and mist nets had to be sprayed with sanitiser after each session, a bag could only be used for one individual bird and had to be washed before reuse.

The Met Office summary of weather for 2022 concludes that it was a relatively dry year, the warmest in the UK since their records began in 1884, with an extremely hot and dry July, though there were five named storms in January and February. The ringing sites in Sussex which suffered badly from flooding during the early part of 2021 were able to commence activities earlier this year, and dry weather during migration time was also helpful. However, in December an extremely cold spell was followed by heavy rain and flooding once again, affecting winter ringing at reedbed sites.

The final total of birds ringed in East and West Sussex was 34,186, which was 3852 more than in 2021, representing 3.75% of the UK and Ireland total of 912,160, with Rye Bay RG contributing 37% of the county total.

Most ringers kindly provide further information, which gives a more detailed picture of ringing activity in the county. It is much appreciated that the team at the Knepp Estate made their Report for 2022 available.

The primary source of the following table is the BTO Online Ringing Report which is available at http://www.bto.org/volunteer-surveys/ringing/publications/online-ringing-reports. Totals may be subject to adjustment if data is received after the initial publication.

| Species | 2018 | 2019 | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | Species | 2018 | 2019 | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Mute Swan | 12 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 0 | Long-tailed Tit | 322 | 364 | 228 | 213 | 446 |
| Mallard | 70 | 15 | 7 | 14 | 19 | Wood Warbler | 3 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Eurasian Teal | 5 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 1 | Pallas's Leaf Warbler | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Nightjar | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | Willow Warbler | 1544 | 1584 | 1874 | 1320 | 1663 |
| Common Swift | 0 | 2 | 4 | 4 | 5 | Chiffchaff | 2941 | 3091 | 3854 | 3356 | 3231 |
| Common Cuckoo | 4 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 5 | Sedge Warbler | 2935 | 1720 | 2869 | 2885 | 2661 |
| Stock Dove | 51 | 41 | 19 | 46 | 62 | Reed Warbler | 2928 | 2749 | 3090 | 2849 | 3434 |
| Woodpigeon | 24 | 29 | 46 | 56 | 28 | Grasshopper Warbler | 545 | 363 | 606 | 359 | 515 |
| Turtle Dove | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 9 | Blackcap | 6109 | 9448 | 7122 | 5563 | 6625 |
| Collared Dove | 13 | 12 | 25 | 15 | 12 | Garden Warbler | 389 | 441 | 352 | 358 | 360 |
| Water Rail | 13 | 3 | 8 | 5 | 12 | Lesser Whitethroat | 175 | 248 | 256 | 200 | 260 |
| Moorhen | 14 | 4 | 14 | 7 | 18 | Com Whitethroat | 764 | 1399 | 962 | 1067 | 1213 |
| Coot | 17 | 2 | 0 | 3 | 1 | Dartford Warbler | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 |

| | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Lapwing | 52 | 47 | 0 | 58 | 46 | Firecrest | 47 | 67 | 67 | 22 | 71 |
| Curlew | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 22 | Goldcrest | 591 | 631 | 479 | 130 | 493 |
| Turnstone | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 4 | Wren | 436 | 442 | 422 | 372 | 487 |
| Woodcock | 1 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 1 | Nuthatch | 57 | 59 | 51 | 36 | 41 |
| Jack Snipe | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | Eurasian Treecreeper | 27 | 62 | 45 | 30 | 46 |
| Common Snipe | 3 | 4 | 3 | 8 | 4 | Common Starling | 80 | 161 | 254 | 263 | 170 |
| Black-headed Gull | 80 | 19 | 0 | 80 | 1 | Blackbird | 544 | 539 | 361 | 545 | 455 |
| Mediterranean Gull | 1 | 7 | 0 | 22 | 0 | Fieldfare | 9 | 12 | 3 | 5 | 3 |
| Herring Gull | 2 | 3 | 3 | 8 | 7 | Redwing | 200 | 159 | 80 | 231 | 83 |
| Less Black-backed Gull | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | Song Thrush | 266 | 241 | 199 | 213 | 218 |
| Sandwich Tern | 3 | 53 | 0 | 58 | 0 | Mistle Thrush | 0 | 1 | 1 | 7 | 4 |
| Little Tern | 5 | 22 | 0 | 37 | 0 | Spotted Flycatcher | 6 | 13 | 15 | 19 | 20 |
| Common Tern | 7 | 10 | 5 | 8 | 5 | Robin | 633 | 815 | 718 | 748 | 717 |
| White Stork | 0 | 0 | 4 | 14 | 20 | Bluethroat | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Honey-buzzard | 4 | 5 | 5 | 4 | 5 | Common Nightingale | 21 | 23 | 41 | 34 | 28 |
| Sparrowhawk | 17 | 11 | 28 | 21 | 25 | Pied Flycatcher | 5 | 1 | 3 | 3 | 3 |
| Common Buzzard | 7 | 5 | 1 | 6 | 1 | Black Redstart | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 2 |
| Barn Owl | 312 | 259 | 201 | 213 | 183 | Common Redstart | 5 | 9 | 16 | 14 | 12 |
| Tawny Owl | 5 | 6 | 3 | 8 | 9 | Whinchat | 5 | 2 | 5 | 4 | 4 |
| Little Owl | 7 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 4 | Eurasian Stonechat | 9 | 3 | 48 | 22 | 19 |
| Kingfisher | 34 | 17 | 20 | 14 | 30 | Northern Wheatear | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Wryneck | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | Tree Sparrow | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3 |
| Great Sp Woodpecker | 78 | 75 | 70 | 87 | 58 | House Sparrow | 157 | 248 | 322 | 416 | 252 |
| Green Woodpecker | 6 | 12 | 7 | 8 | 15 | Dunnock | 429 | 512 | 458 | 433 | 476 |
| Kestrel | 33 | 29 | 18 | 36 | 17 | Yellow Wagtail | 0 | 0 | 0 | 14 | 11 |
| Hobby | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | Grey Wagtail | 25 | 24 | 17 | 16 | 9 |
| Peregrine | 14 | 5 | 0 | 3 | 5 | Pied/White Wagtail | 15 | 2 | 41 | 55 | 71 |
| Jay | 5 | 13 | 6 | 12 | 10 | Meadow Pipit | 29 | 17 | 41 | 110 | 72 |
| Magpie | 15 | 10 | 24 | 20 | 24 | Tree Pipit | 42 | 18 | 27 | 35 | 24 |
| Jackdaw | 117 | 234 | 123 | 236 | 78 | Chaffinch | 377 | 273 | 205 | 174 | 197 |
| Rook | 37 | 33 | 66 | 71 | 40 | Brambling | 1 | 6 | 1 | 3 | 121 |
| Carrion Crow | 1 | 0 | 4 | 0 | 2 | Bullfinch | 96 | 93 | 109 | 85 | 78 |
| Coal Tit | 109 | 141 | 82 | 35 | 92 | Greenfinch | 684 | 367 | 572 | 269 | 289 |
| Marsh Tit | 64 | 102 | 37 | 50 | 45 | Linnet | 83 | 118 | 108 | 271 | 33 |
| Blue Tit | 3099 | 3893 | 2553 | 2873 | 2531 | Lesser Redpoll | 176 | 28 | 3354 | 279 | 68 |
| Great Tit | 1437 | 1474 | 1026 | 934 | 1219 | Goldfinch | 2407 | 2328 | 2736 | 1429 | 2496 |
| Bearded Tit | 17 | 8 | 22 | 12 | 3 | Siskin | 37 | 5 | 31 | 20 | 4 |
| Skylark | 2 | 2 | 4 | 1 | 0 | Yellowhammer | 11 | 15 | 40 | 61 | 10 |
| Sand Martin | 121 | 219 | 58 | 2 | 414 | Reed Bunting | 300 | 318 | 358 | 463 | 337 |
| Barn Swallow | 822 | 226 | 1022 | 52 | 1002 | | | | | | |
| House Martin | 29 | 162 | 274 | 85 | 76 | Total | 33436 | 36378 | 38428 | 30334 | 34186 |
| Cetti's Warbler | 108 | 125 | 170 | 98 | 171 | Number of Species | 108 | 95 | 91 | 94 | 102 |

***Table 1.*** *Species ringed in Sussex 2018-2022*.*

*For 2018-2021 the total and number of species include the following other species ringed in limited numbers or years (year/s, number ringed):
Common Shelduck (2018, 25; 2019, 6) Canada Goose (2019, 1) Greylag Goose (2020, 1) Mandarin Duck (2018, 2; 2019,1) Pintail (2018, 3) Common Pochard (2018, 2) Tufted Duck (2018, 41) Stone Curlew (2018, 1; 2019, 3) Ringed Plover (2018, 1; 2021, 1) Common Sandpiper (2018, 5; 2019, 1) Cormorant (2018, 2) Long-eared Owl (2020, 1) Hume's Warbler (2020, 1) Yellow-browed Warbler (2019, 1; 2020, 5) Dusky Warbler (2020, 1) Marsh Warbler (2018,1; 2021,1) Barred Warbler (2018, 1) Hawfinch (2018, 2) Common Rosefinch (2018, 1) Common Redpoll (2020, 1) Redpoll sp (2020, 5) Corn Bunting (2020, 4) Rustic Bunting (2021, 1) Ortolan Bunting (2018, 1).

For some of the less frequently ringed species captured in 2022, the following further information has been made available by the ringers. The Nightjar was found at Pett Level by Rye Bay RG, as was one of the Cuckoos; the other four Cuckoos were all at Knepp. The single Coot was at Warnham LNR and the Jack Snipe ringed by Ian Standivan at Glyne Gap Marsh. Three of the Common Tern chicks were at Warnham LNR and the other two at Loder Valley NR. The Common Buzzard chick was at Wakehurst Place, the Wryneck at Rye Bay RG, and the Hobby at Knepp. Rye Bay RG captured the Bearded Tits and the Pallas's Leaf Warbler, while the only Wood Warbler was ringed by Terry Hallahan at Bishopstone, and the Dartford Warbler and Bluethroat by Cuckmere RG. The latter bird was one of five ringed in the UK & Ireland in 2022. The four Mistle Thrushes were pulli ringed by Rye Bay RG; very few of this species are ringed, just 200 in Britain & Ireland this year, compared with 5377 Song Thrushes. All three Tree Sparrows were captured at Hardham by Martin Lanaway.

Most of the regular groups or sites saw a slight increase in birds ringed compared with the previous year. Cuckmere RG benefited from the retirement from employment of the lead ringer, enabling more visits to be made. Where numbers were lower in 2022, the reasons were due to individual circumstances.

| Site/Ringing Group | 2018 | 2019 | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Beachy Head Ringing Station | 2403 | 3048 | 1588 | 2075 | 1376 |
| Hardham | 1825 | 1731 | 2177 | 2009 | 1952 |
| Cuckmere Ringing Group | 5626 | 3522 | 4616 | 3596 | 6807 |
| Knepp Estate | 1924 | 2001 | 2329 | 1310 | 1855 |
| Ladywell | 2252 | 2523 | 2373 | 1343 | 1687 |
| Rye Bay Ringing Group | 11997 | 15151 | 17618 | 12420 | 12756 |
| Steyning Ringing Group | 2073 | 2455 | 2390 | 1894 | 2235 |

**Table 2.** *Comparison of main ringing site/group totals 2018-2022*

## Summer migrants

As in previous years, Blackcaps are the most frequently ringed species in Sussex, as they move through the county on migration. Numbers were up by nearly 20% compared with 2021, and again represented 10% of the national total, but were still below both those of 2019 and 2020; 93% of the 6632 ringed were hatched during the year. Similarly, Sussex-ringed Common Whitethroats comprised 10% of the national numbers. Many Sedge and Reed Warblers are trapped at the county's reedbed sites, leading to Sussex totals contributing 11% and 14% respectively of those overall. Rye Bay RG is particularly successful in capturing Grasshopper Warblers at Pett Level with 379 passing through their hands in 2022. Together with a Cuckmere RG record catch of 101 and a handful of birds at other sites, the Sussex total of 515 was 24% of that for Britain & Ireland this year, of which 479 were first year birds. Sussex-ringed Chiffchaffs and Willow Warblers were both approximately 7% of the national totals, but while 91% of the Willow Warblers ringed in the county were first year birds, this was the case with only 55% of the Chiffchaffs. It was a different story nationally with first year birds making up 68% of the Willow Warbler captures and 76% for Chiffchaff.



White-spotted Bluethroat, Charleston Reedbed, 31 March (Terry Hallahan)

The year saw a better catch of Barn Swallows at 1002 thanks to efforts by Rye Bay RG and at the Knepp Estate, and the most Sand Martins ringed since 2013, with Rye Bay RG contributing 399 of the 414 birds. Of these 88% of Barn Swallows and 91% of Sand Martins were young birds.

## Resident species

Of our common residents ringed in 2022, there were more Great Tits, Long-tailed Tits, Wrens and Dunnocks than the previous year, with both Wren and Long-tailed Tit numbers being the highest in the past five years. Blue Tit and Blackbird totals were lower than that for 2021, while that for Robin was similar to the past two years. There were slightly more Chaffinches and Greenfinches ringed than in 2021, but the totals were lower by 48% and 58% respectively than in 2018; however, national figures for the two years are broadly similar. Both Rye Bay RG and Martin Lanaway ringed over 900 Goldfinches, restoring the usual level after a significant drop in 2021.

The percentages of juveniles and first year birds ringed were markedly different for these residents. The highest percentage was for Wren at 79%, followed by Robin and Dunnock at 78% and 74%. Blue Tit and Great Tit came next with 69% and 68%, broadly similar to 2021. Young Greenfinches and Goldfinches made up 60% of the total catch for the species, young Blackbirds 52%, while young Chaffinches languished at 26%, though the national percentage was 45%.

Greenfinches are still known to be suffering the effects of the parasitic disease Trichomonosis, first reported in 2006 (BTO Garden Birdwatch). Crusty growths on legs caused by the Fringilla papillomavirus afflict Chaffinches, affecting their mobility, and I know from personal experience of Bullfinches trapped at Cissbury that many of this species can also be badly affected once they are past their first year of life.

## Colour-ringing and other projects

***Cuckoo satellite tagging***

In May 2022 two of the four Cuckoos trapped at Knepp were fitted with a satellite tag and given individual names. "Charles" had left Knepp by 1 Jun and had reached southern France by the 22nd, subsequently travelling south west through Spain before heading over the Sahara. It appears that he perished in the desert, with the last recorded movements in Mali in early July. "Bluey" was more successful, despite a worrying failure of the tag. He had arrived in France by 17 Jun, and took a similar south-western route to Charles, but successfully crossed the Sahara to arrive in Senegal by 12 Jul. No further updates were received and in October it was assumed that he had also perished. However, he was recaptured at Knepp in 2023, fitted with a new tag and also managed the journey across the Sahara in 2023.

***Gulls and terns at Pagham***

No ringing was allowed on RSPB reserves due to HPAI concerns at the appropriate time of the year. However, a Black-headed Gull hatched in 2021 at Pagham Hbr was at Pett Level in early April, and Sandwich Tern "white 322" ringed on 21 Jul 2021 was seen and photographed at Kartong, in The Gambia on 16 Sep 2022.

***Lapwing***

The BTO figures show that 46 Lapwing chicks were ringed in 2022 on the Norfolk Estate. However no further information has been provided on this project.

***Curlew headstarting project***

A Sussex-based project is gathering evidence regarding the use of 'headstarting' as a potential conservation tool for Curlew. To do this, the project has established a new headstarting programme on the Norfolk Estate (Arundel). Eggs are taken from stable Curlew populations in North Yorkshire,

from nests that are at risk of destruction from agricultural practices, and hatched in Sussex. At approximately 55 days of age Curlew were released at two undisclosed locations on the South Downs. Of the 31 Curlews that were released, 16 were GPS-tagged to follow their post-release movements. Tagged Curlews dispersed to a range of locations along the south coast – ranging from Pagham Hbr and Medmerry in the east, to the Exe Estuary and Newquay in the west. Overwinter survival for 2022/23 has been encouragingly similar to that of wild Curlews. As expected, all tagged juveniles remained at their wintering sites during the spring/summer of 2023 (Curlews are not expected to attempt breeding until their second year). All headstarted birds have been colour-ringed, and we request that any sightings are returned to cheward@gwct.org.uk

Thank you to Chris Heward (Game & Wildlife Conservation Trust) for this summary of the project.

***Greenshank and Redshank***

There were no captures of these species in Sussex in 2022. However there was a sighting at Jury's Gap on 16 May of a bird ringed in Guinea Bissau on 8 Feb 2018.

***White Stork***

Details of the introduction and colour-ringing project at the Knepp Estate can be found at https://www.whitestorkproject.org/news.

***Honey-buzzard***

Five Honey-Buzzard chicks were colour-ringed from three nests, two broods of two and a single from a nest where one juvenile had already fledged.

***Sussex Barn Owl Study Group (SBOSG) report***

The group visited 149 boxes, making a total of 181 box visits; 53 boxes were occupied by Barn Owls where chicks were safe and suitable for ringing. It was noted that more Barn Owls had started breeding earlier in 2022 and at 11 boxes the group had clearly missed broods and found fledged young often accompanied by adults.

A total of 136 chicks were ringed, all of which were healthy weights, indicating another good 'prey year', and the average brood size found was 2.56. Only one brood was found where all the young had died of starvation. In addition five new adults were trapped and ringed at nest box sites. Five adults were retrapped, one moving 25km from a site near Rudgwick to a South Downs site near Lancing College.

There were eleven recoveries of Barn Owls, of which five were birds ringed in 2022. Eight were deaths due to road traffic accidents, one was found dead in a cattle trough. Two of these had survived well past the average Barn Owl lifespan of four years, being from broods ringed in 2014 and 2015 in West Sussex.

Other species encountered in Barn Owl boxes were Kestrel, Stock Dove, Tawny Owl, Jackdaw, and Mandarin Duck. Three boxes contained European Hornet nests, and one a Grey Squirrel.

Thank you to Terry Hallahan of SBOSG for the above information

***Peregrine***

Two broods were ringed this year, three males at Sussex Heights, Brighton, and a male and female at Chichester Cathedral.

All sightings of colour-ringed Peregrines are greatly appreciated, send to: Graham.C.M.Roberts@btinternet.com



Peregrine chicks, Chichester Cathedral, 22 May (Graham Roberts)

## Recoveries and controls

The Recoveries and Controls part of the BTO Online Ringing Report had not been published at the time of writing in October, so the following information has been provided by ringers and other individuals who have reported ringed birds during 2022. When the BTO data is released, any additional information will be posted to the SOS website.

Where no year is stated, the record relates to 2022. A control is a ringed bird captured and released at another ringing site, or where a colour ring has been read in the field and reported; a recovery is a bird found, usually dead, by a member of the public. Recoveries and controls provide information on the age of the bird involved and included below are details of individuals which have survived longer than the species' typical life span, some of which were retrapped at the site where they were first encountered. Typical life spans and longevity records referred to are as shown on BTO BirdFacts https://www.bto.org/understanding-birds/welcome-birdfacts The latter refers to the time elapsed between ringing and recovery or control and is thus only an accurate reflection of the age of the individual if it was ringed as a nestling (or pullus).

There were just two recoveries of wildfowl, both ringed at Pett Level by Rye Bay RG; a **Shelduck** ringed on 9 Mar 2018 was found dead there on 10 Jan, and a **Mallard** ringed on 20 Sep 2017 was shot near Hastings on 4 Jan. A species which suffered badly from the HPAI outbreak was the **Gannet**, and two were found washed up on Shoreham Beach in March. Both had been ringed as nestlings on the Channel Islands, one at Les Etacs on 25 Jun 2016 and the other at Ortac on 13 Jun 1999. A Pett-ringed **Cormorant** which had survived for 18 years since being ringed as a chick on 19 May 2004 was found dead near Hawkhurst on 30 Oct.

Three colour-ringed **Avocets** were reported at Pett Level; all had been ringed elsewhere as chicks, one in Cumbria in 2021, a second in Suffolk in 2011 and the third in France as long ago as 2007. This

particular individual has been seen regularly in the Rye Hbr/Pett Level area since 2010, though will need to survive for some time yet to beat the species' current longevity record of 27 years. Also noted at Pett Level was a **Dunlin** ringed in Borth (Wales) on 3 Jul 2019, but from further afield was a one at Chichester Hbr in mid-September, one of a brood of three ringed on 22 Jul at a NE Greenland study site, in a poor breeding year according to the Danish scheme contact. A **Ruff** ringed on 3 Sep 2021 at Revtangen Observatory, Norway was seen at Pett Level in both February and March. Returning to Pett Level for the third consecutive January was a **Curlew** ringed as an adult bird at Shellness in August 2007, and a **Redshank** seen on 6 Jul had been ringed, also as an adult, on 2 Aug 2011, at Sandwich Bay. Of two **Black-tailed Godwits** at Pagham Hbr the older bird, seen on 21 Jan, was ringed in 2015 in Essex, while the second, on 17 Jul, was ringed this year in The Netherlands.

As well as the Pagham Hbr-ringed bird mentioned under the Project section, two **Black-headed Gulls** ringed at Pitsea Marshes (Essex) in 2015 returned once again to Pett in the early part of the year. In West Sussex a bird ringed in March in The Netherlands was at Worthing Beach on 18 Nov, and a well-travelled individual ringed in Poland in October 2016 had previously visited Southwater, Goring-by-Sea, Littlehampton and, on 6 May this year, St Petersburg (Russia), before turning up again at Goring on 4 Oct.

Following a dramatic range expansion in recent decades (Thomas 2014), sightings of colour-ringed **Mediterranean Gulls** have increased remarkably. At Pett Level a total of 126 different individuals were noted, 61 from Belgium, 26 from the Netherlands, 21 from Germany, 4 from Poland, 1 from the Czech Republic, as well as 13 from the UK. One of the Belgian-ringed birds was ringed in 2002, though not seen at Pett until 2019. Having survived nearly 20 years since it was ringed as a chick, it has already exceeded the species longevity record currently stated on BTO BirdFacts! Other individuals were seen in West Sussex. Of five at Elmer beach on 5 Aug, two came from France, two from Belgium and one from The Netherlands, while another seen on 13 Jul had been ringed in Germany in 2016. A **Herring Gull** colour-ringed as an adult in 2007 at Sussex University was still in residence there on 16 Oct.

A **Common Tern** ringed as a chick in Gloucestershire in 2018 was seen at Pett Level on 14 Jul.

Most of the corvids ringed in Sussex are by Rye Bay RG. Found dead in the locality 11 and 12 years respectively since being ringed, were a **Jackdaw** and a **Rook**, both outliving their average lifespans by six years.

Of nine **Sand Martins** controlled at Pett Level in late August, all bar one appeared to be travelling south. However, heading in a different direction one was ringed on Jersey on 21 Jul and trapped at Pett on 24 Aug.

One **Willow Warbler** was controlled in France; the bird took just nine days to fly 449 km from Pett Level to Loire-Atlantique in August. One long-lived individual ringed at Charleston Reedbed on 11 Aug 2018 was found at Langwathby (Cumbria) on 17 May. All **Chiffchaff** controls and recoveries reported were within Great Britain.

A few of the many **Sedge Warblers** ringed in the county are controlled or recovered on the continent, mostly in western France. Sixteen birds from Pett Level were controlled in France, one in Belgium and one in Spain, while four ringed by Cuckmere RG at Charleston Reedbed were found in France. Four French-ringed Sedge Warblers were controlled here, two each at Charleston and Pett Level. Surviving six return migrations was an individual ringed in its first year at Pett on 6 Aug 2016, controlled at Milton Keynes on 30 Apr. Three **Reed Warblers** ringed on the continent were trapped at Pett Level; one ringed in Portugal in August 2021 was caught on 15 Jul, another from Denmark took just five days to reach Pett on 1 Sep, and a nestling ringed on 14 Jul in Poland arrived on 2 Sep. Five Reed Warblers ringed in 2017 at Charleston Reedbed were retrapped there in intervening years and again in 2022,



Turnstones, Newhaven, 1 March (Terry Hallahan)

but an even older individual ringed on 24 Jul 2014 turned up for only the third time almost eight years later on 23 Jun, this time noted as a female with a brood patch. On 25 Sep at Charleston Reedbed, Cuckmere RG ringed a **Blackcap**, which was found in Coimbra (Portugal) a month later, and another ringed at Cissbury on 13 Sep 2020 was controlled on the Isle of Arran on 7 Jul.

**Redwings** ringed in England in winter have been recovered in subsequent winters in England, southern France, western Iberia and western Italy (Wernham 2002). One ringed at Hardham on 28 Nov 2021 should maybe have returned there in 2022 rather than heading to Toledo (Spain) where it was shot on 17 Dec. A ringer in Haywards Heath was able to read the ring of a **Song Thrush** seen in his garden on 19 Dec; the bird was ringed in Jersey on 23 Oct 2021. **Robins** also travel across the Channel, as evidenced by one trapped at Ladywell on 10 Apr, ringed on 8 Oct 2019 in The Netherlands.

Breeding migrants that winter south of the Sahara are known to be declining, and many perish on the challenging return journey of many thousands of miles. It is heartening when some survive for several years, often going back to their natal site. A first year **Nightingale**, ringed on its outward journey at Pett Level on 13 Aug 2017 was controlled in both April 2019 and April 2022 at a site in Northamptonshire, which must be near the northern edge of the species' current breeding range.

For the fifth consecutive winter, a **Rock Pipit** from a Norwegian colour ringing scheme was seen in the same general location in Chichester Hbr. It was ringed at Giske Ornithological Station as a first year bird in Aug 2018.

Beachy Head RS ringed 374 **Lesser Redpolls** in 2020 and another 76 in 2021. Two of these were recaptured in Wales; one ringed in October 2020 in Conwy on 16 Apr and the second, ringed in November 2021, in Gwynedd on 4 Aug. Not quite so far away in terms of distance, but crossing the Channel, was one from Pett Level, ringed on 27 Oct 2020, trapped again on 15 Nov at Walshoutem (Belgium), between Brussels and Liège.

With over 3700 **Goldfinches** ringed in Sussex in 2021 and 2022, recoveries elsewhere are to be expected as they are "quintessential partial migrants" (Wernham et al 2002). One ringed at Plumpton in January 2019 was seen on 2 Jan in LLanfyllin (Powys) and another, ringed at Hardham on 4 Nov 2020, was found dead on 13 Jun, 871 km away at Dunnet (Scotland) not far from John o' Groats. Another individual, ringed in Dumfries & Galloway on 1 May 2021 was captured in Icklesham village on 10 Jan.

**Acknowledgements**

Thanks are given to all ringers and non-ringers who have provided the data which have contributed to this report. In particular, several people have provided further information and advice. They include A de Potier, G Dunlop (Cuckmere RG). RDM Edgar (Beachy Head RS), P Hughes, PE Jones (Rye Bay RG), J Maskell, R & M Lanaway, O Mitchell, Dr JA Newnham, J Proctor, The Knepp Estate and the late Dr AB Watson. Project details were provided by C Heward (GWCT), TD Hallahan (SBOSG), M Mallalieu, PM Potts (Farlington RG) and GCM Roberts.

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Juvenile Redstart, Cissbury, 31 March (Val Bentley)



Brambling, Netherfield, 8 February (Mark Mallalieu)

# Trends in priority breeding species on West Sussex Wealden Heaths from 1998 to 2022

*Alan Perry*

The Wealden Heaths Breeding Bird Survey (WHBBS) commenced in 1998 as a joint venture between the Surrey, Sussex, Hampshire and Berkshire bird societies, with 2022 marking the 25th anniversary of the survey in Sussex. The original aim was to assess the status on the Wealden Heaths of 21 bird species, five of which (**Nightjar** *Caprimulgus europaeus*, **Woodlark** *Lullula arborea*, **Dartford Warbler** *Curruca undata*, **Tree Pipit** *Anthus trivialis* and **Stonechat** *Saxicola rubicola*) were priority species for a possible Special Protection Areas (SPA) designation. When the joint venture finished in the early 2000s Sussex continued with the survey. This paper provides a summary of the overall status of the five priority species and makes comparison with data for the UK and England; it also provides a brief comment on their status on individual heathlands.

The paper includes data from 1998 to 2022. The survey was maintained even through the COVID-19 restrictions in 2020 and 2021 although the Foot & Mouth outbreak prevented any survey work in 2001. The full report with data and comment on all the 21 species and further comment on the status of the heathland sites together with additional habitat photographs is available on the SOS website https://www.sos.org.uk/. For the previous detailed report, covering 1998-2015, see Perry (2016).

## Introduction

There are ten heaths within the survey: **Weavers Down**, **Chapel Common**, **Lynchmere & Stanley Commons**, **Black Down**, **Iping Common**, **Stedham Common** (although close these latter two sites are treated as being separate), **Woolbeding Common**, **Ambersham & Heyshott Commons** (including **Goldballs Plantation**), **Lavington Common/Plantation & Duncton Common**, and **Coates Common** including **Lords Piece.** They are under various ownerships: private, National Trust, County Council or Sussex Wildlife Trust. Figure 1 overleaf shows the location of these heaths.

Subsequently two clear felled sites at Graffham and Broad Halfpenny were added but kept separate in the reporting for data reasons. One obvious omission from the survey is the RSPB owned heath adjoining the Pulborough Brooks Reserve, as the organisation monitors it themselves following major restoration work.

## Method

Once the Society decided to continue the survey, it was agreed that the original methods and species should remain to ensure the long-term consistency of the data. The surveyors are asked to undertake visits from late February through to the middle of July with an aim to cover all parts of each site on at least four occasions and on at least one evening visit between late May and mid-July to locate Nightjar and Woodcock, then to plot the location of pairs or territorial males on the provided maps and assess the total number of pairs/territorial males of each species in each 1-km square. Additionally, they are asked to note any major habitat changes/restoration work.

## Trends and Comparisons

Two methods to express the overall changes in numbers on the survey sites have been used. Where appropriate, linear regression to give the % change in the total numbers recorded from 1998 to 2022 and where there was no clear linear trend the ratio of the mean counts in 1998/99 and 2021/22 as a measure of change over the whole period (two-year means are used to limit the impact of annual fluctuations). These WHBBS trends have been compared with figures from the

BTO BirdFacts (BTO 2022) database for the UK and where relevant England. The WHBBS spans the 25 years 1998-2022 and whilst the latest figures from BirdFacts are for 1998-2021, this is close enough to provide robust comparisons.

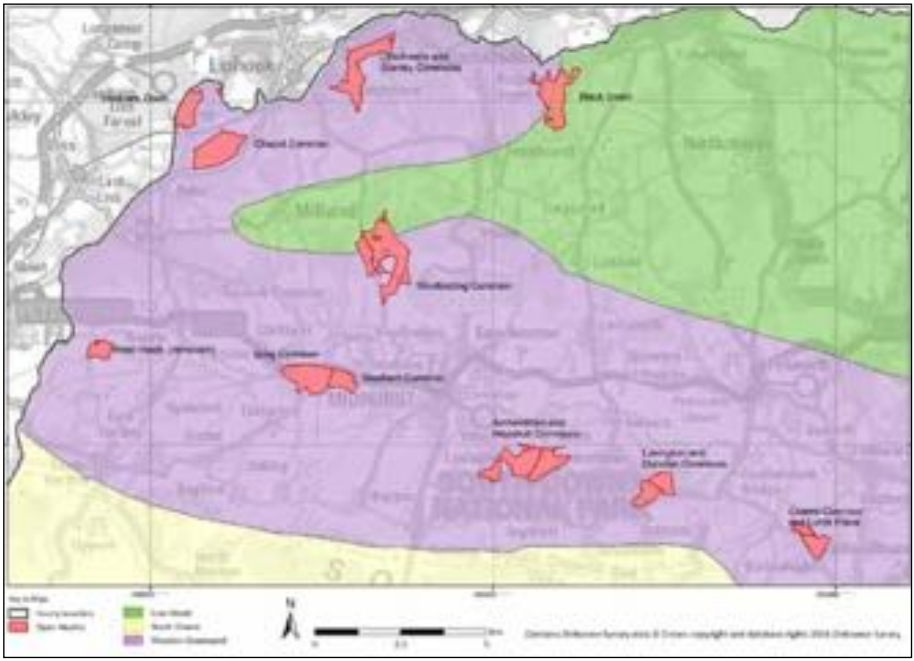


***Figure 1.*** *Map showing location of principal heaths surveyed.*

## Priority Species

### *Nightjar*

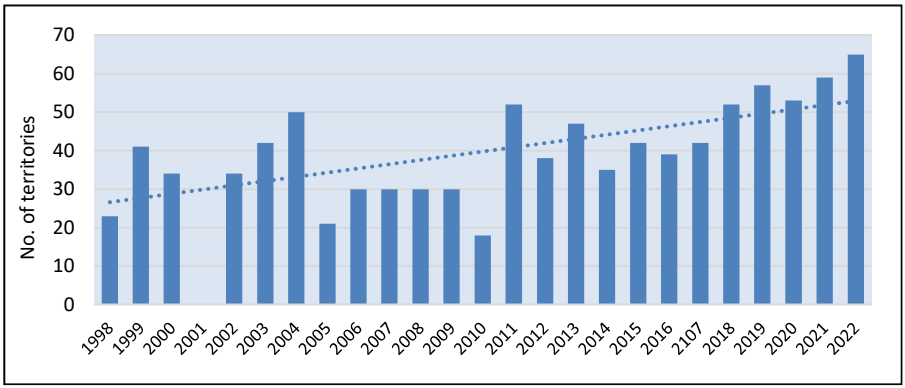



**Figure 2.** *Numbers of Nightjars recorded by the WHBBS in each year 1998-2022 (blue columns) and the dotted blue line is the linear regression trend.*

A crepuscular species that arrives from Africa in early May and leaves normally no later than mid-September (Thomas 2014). This is the one bird of the five priority species that despite being a migrant has provided a consistently increasing trend perhaps benefitting from warming summers and the restoration/management works, particularly on the larger heaths. In 2022, 65 territories were recorded, the survey's highest annual count. The only national data available are from the results of periodic atlas surveys (Balmer *et al.* 2013). These results showed that the number of 10-km squares occupied and with evidence of breeding, during periodic breeding distribution atlases (1968–72 to 2008–11) was +45.5%. The WHBBS 25-year trend is +104%. In 2015 the species was moved from the Red to the Amber list in Birds of Conservation Concern 5 (Stanbury *et al.* 2021).

In 2022 all ten WHBBS sites site reported territorial activity with unsurprisingly the largest site, Ambersham/Heyshott, the most productive with 18, followed by Black Down ten, Iping and Lavington Common & Plantation nine each. Low numbers of between one and three were found at Weavers Down, Lynchmere/Stanley and Coates/Lords Piece perhaps reflecting management issues and/or leisure usage.

***Woodlark***

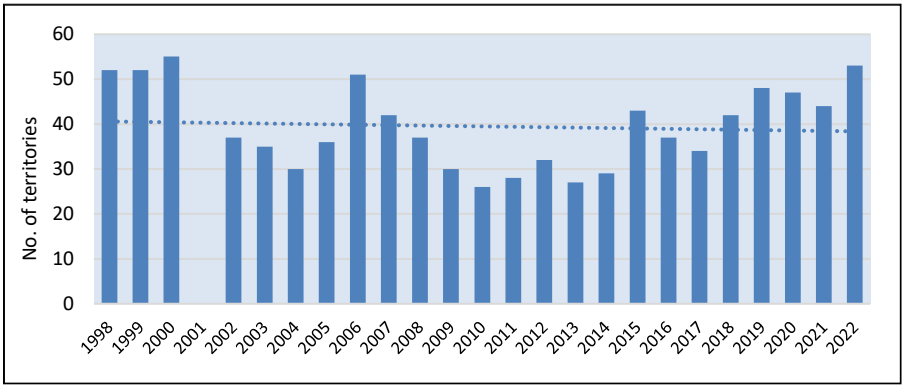



**Figure 3.** *Numbers of Woodlarks recorded by the WHBBS in each year 1998-2022 (blue columns) and the dotted blue line is the linear regression trend.*

Although occasionally detected on the heaths through the early winter period, territories are normally claimed from mid-February. Numbers increased dramatically 1998-2000 with the extensive restoration undertaken providing an ideal habitat of low swathes of heather, cut bracken and bare earth areas. Thereafter until 2015 the population experienced a fluctuating trend but since that date territory numbers have been over 30 and in the last five years over 40. The 2022 total of 53 territories was the second highest count of the survey. Possibly on-going management work, inhibiting extensive regrowth and favourable weather conditions, have assisted the recent increases. The only national data available are from the results of periodic atlas surveys (Balmer *et al.* 2013). These results showed that the number of 10-km squares occupied and with evidence of breeding during periodic breeding distribution atlases (1968–72 to 2008–11) was -23%. Despite some volatility the overall WHBBS 25-year trend was -7%.

In 2022 nine of the ten heathlands held between three and nine territories. Lynchmere/Stanley Commons have throughout the survey been disappointing with 2022 producing only one territory.

### *Dartford Warbler*

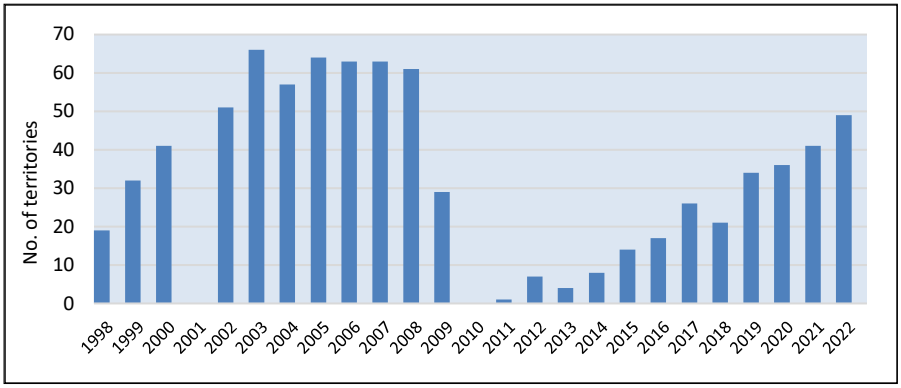



**Figure 4.** *Numbers of Dartford Warblers recorded by the WHBBS in each year 1998-2022 (blue columns).*

Reliant on an open heather and gorse habitat it is resident and consequently is susceptible to harsh winters. There is no doubt that restoration of heathland, favourable weather conditions and ongoing management of scrub such as birch and pine, especially at the turn of the century, enabled the population to expand swiftly until it was brought abruptly to a halt by the catastrophically bad winters of 2009/10 and 2010/11 which obliterated the breeding population in 2010. None were found in 2010 and only one in 2011. Thereafter the population has gradually recovered but is yet to return to the 2003-2008 levels. The only national data available are from the results of periodic atlas surveys (Balmer *et al.* 2013). These results showed that the number of 10-km squares occupied and with evidence of breeding during periodic breeding distribution atlases (1968–72 to 2008–11) was +380.5%. A more useful statistical trend for the West Sussex Wealden Heaths is that the population has continued to climb since the 2010 total wipe-out and in 2022 was within 25% of the peak count of 66 recorded in 2003.

The 2022 results show that two of the best managed sites, Black Down and Iping, with extensive heather and gorse habitat, had the highest counts at ten each, followed by Chapel Common (nine), Ambersham/Heyshott (eight) and Lavington (five). Only Stedham had a nil return. However, the lack of numbers particularly on Lynchmere/Stanley, Woolbeding and Weavers Down is disappointing.

### *Tree Pipit*

An Afro/Palearctic migratory species arriving in the UK at the end of March or early April (Thomas 2014), it is the only one of the priority species not to show a stable or positive trend. It has steadied since 2012 but at very low numbers and remains absent from many sites with what appears to be perfectly good habitat. An example is Woolbeding Common which between 1998-2003 provided annual counts of between ten and 20, but only one was found in 2022 after three years absence. Although extensive management had caused some disturbance to the habitat at this heath it does appear to be ideal now. In 2022 seven sites held territorial males but totals were all in single figures. Iping was the highest with five and remains the most reliable site. Although the reasons for the fall in population are not fully understood, as a long-distance migratory species it maybe that the problems lie in the African wintering grounds and/or on the migration route or due to climate change and food availability. Additionally, nest predation has been recorded as a reason

for low productivity for a population in the Brecks of East Anglia (Burton 2009). Like many other long-distance migrants, Tree Pipits are doing less badly in Scotland and northern England. The overall UK trend according to BTO BirdFacts (BTO 2022) is -24% but there is a steeper decline for England only of -66%. The WHBBS 25-year trend is -81% but numbers appear to have stabilised, albeit at a low level, since 2010.

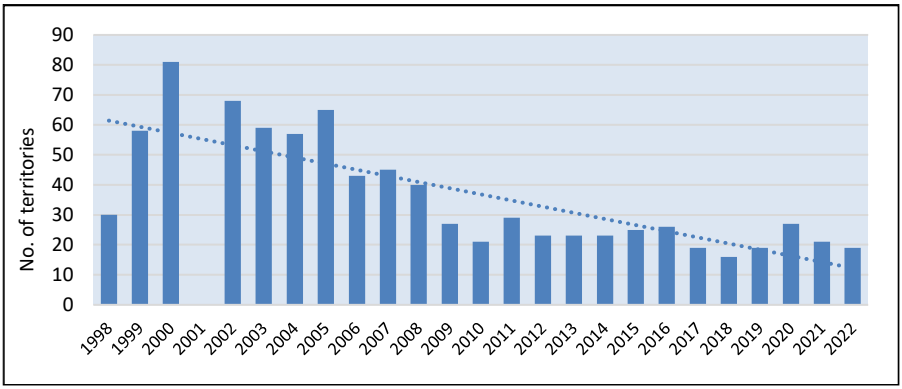



**Figure 5.** *Numbers of Tree Pipits recorded by the WHBBS in each year 1998-2022 (blue columns) and the dotted blue line is the linear regression trend.*

### *Stonechat*

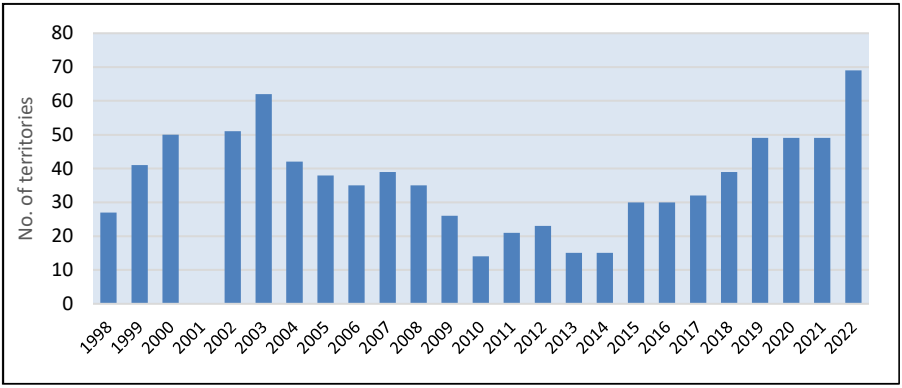



**Figure 6.** *Numbers of Stonechats recorded by the WHBBS in each year 1998-2022 (blue columns).*

Associated in Sussex with either the Downs or heathland (Thomas 2014) the species is often first heard giving its alarm call similar to two flints chinking together, and such is its bold persona that it often acts as a sentry to other species especially Dartford Warbler *(pers. ob.)*. The species did well at the beginning of the survey, but numbers decreased thereafter and were exacerbated by the appalling winters of 2009/10 and 2010/11 and harsh spring of 2013. The subsequent recovery has resulted, encouragingly, in the highest count of the survey in 2022 of 69 territories. Surprisingly absent from Lynchmere/Stanley Commons, the heaths of Black Down, Iping and Ambersham/ Heyshott produced the highest numbers. The overall UK trend according to BTO BirdFacts (BTO 2022) is +144%. The WHBBS 25-year trend is +76%.

## The individual heaths

**Weavers Down.** Area 83 ha. Conservation Status: part falls within the Wealden Heath's Phase 11 SPA. The same area is also designated as part of Woolmer Forest SSSI. Private ownership. Underlying geology: Folkestone Sands.

Apart from the occasional spike (an exceptional 12 Stonechat were recorded in 2022) overall numbers are low for the priority species. Four of these species are decreasing, whilst Nightjar is stable although with low numbers of between one and four.

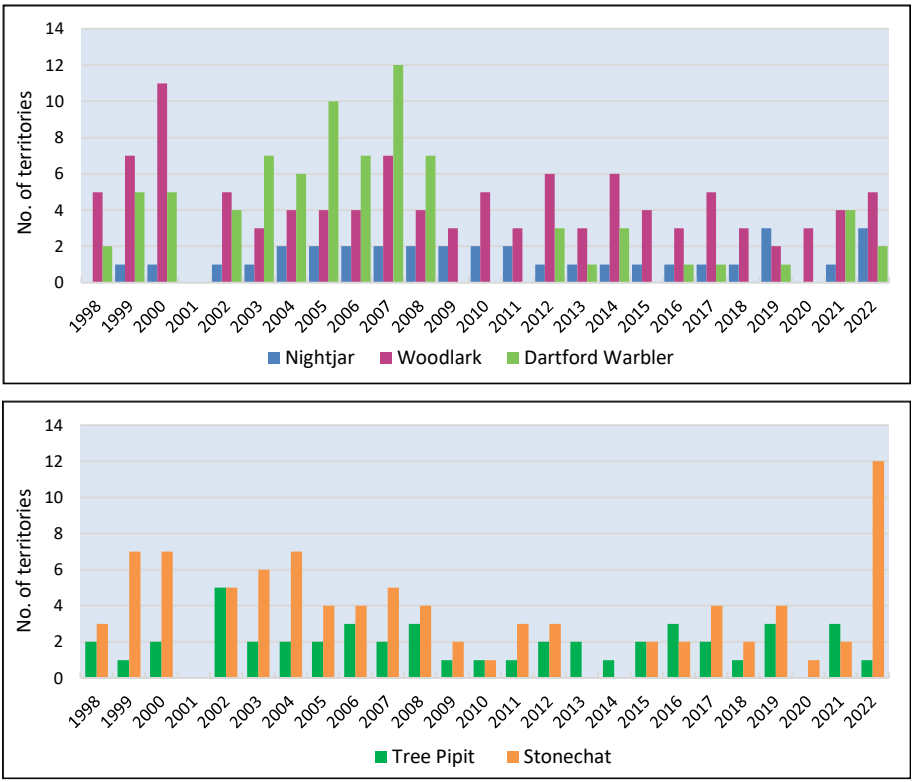



**Figure 7.** *Numbers of territories of the five priority species recorded at Weavers Down.*

**Chapel Common.** Area 98 ha. Conservation status: SSSI. Private ownership. Underlying geology: Hythe Beds.

Nightjar and Dartford Warbler have slight increasing trends, as does Stonechat after recovering from the 2009/10 and 2010/11 winters. Woodlark numbers were excellent at the beginning of the survey; numbers fell away thereafter, but have stabilised since 2018. The Tree Pipit population has typically decreased but remains present, two being recorded in 2022. Despite little heathland management and with continuing leisure activities a problem, the results from 2022 have been encouraging.

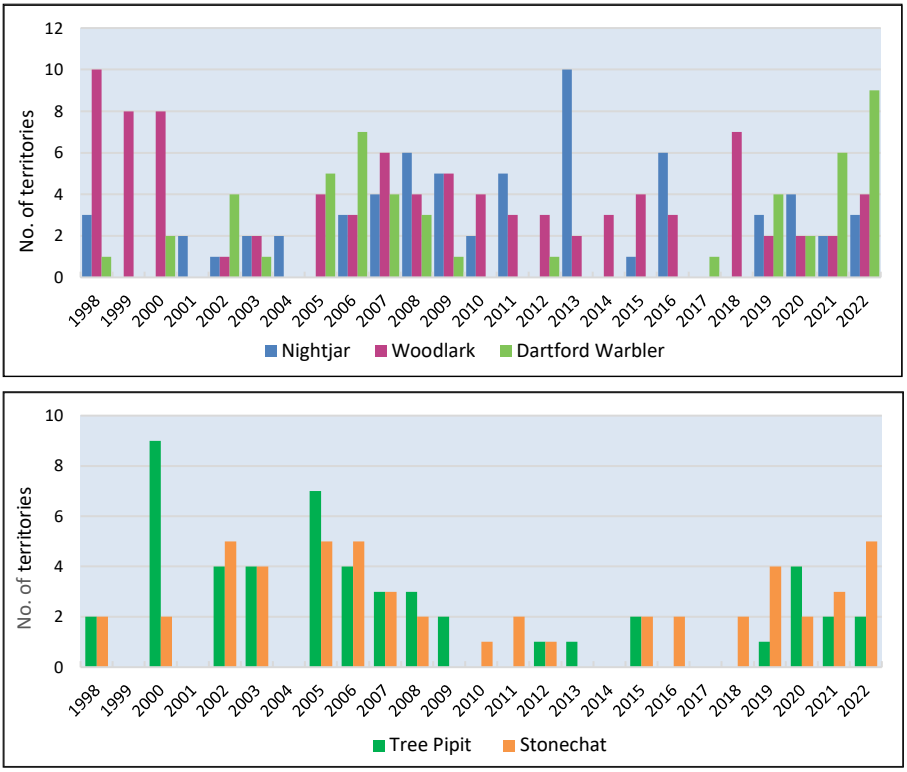



**Figure 8.** *Numbers of territories of the five priority species recorded at Chapel Common.*

**Lynchmere and Stanley Commons.** Area 106 ha. Conservation status: LNR. Ownership: The Lynchmere Society. Underlying geology: Hythe Beds.

The priority species results have been very poor with all showing decreasing trends, the only bright spot being a stable Tree Pipit population over the past four years. Particularly disappointing is the fact that only two Stonechat have been recorded in the entire 25 years. Woodlark did well initially but in 2022 only one was found which was also the case for Nightjar and Dartford Warbler. This heathland and particularly the Stanley Common section should hold reasonable numbers of the priority species based upon the habitat; it is likely that pressure from leisure activities particularly dog walking and especially on Lynchmere Common, are having a deleterious effect.




**Figure 9.** *Numbers of territories of the five priority species recorded at Lynchmere & Stanley Commons.*



***Figure 10.*** *Lynchmere Common in need of management.*

**Black Down.** Area 91 ha. Conservation status: LNR. Ownership: National Trust (NT). Underlying geology: Hythe Beds.

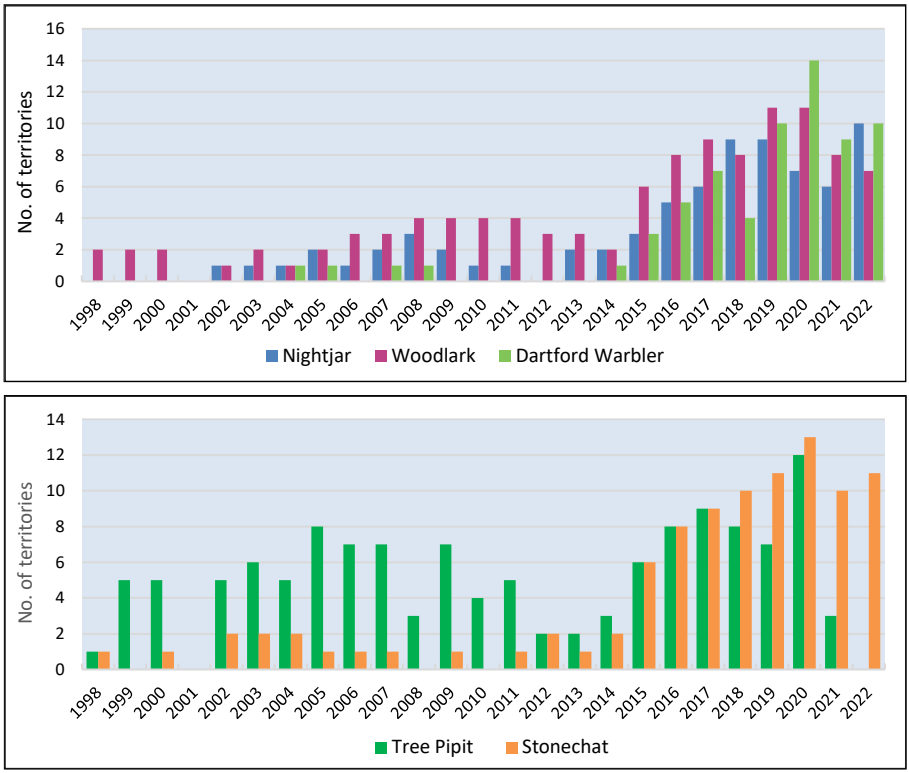



**Figure 11.** *Numbers of territories of the five priority species recorded at Black Down.*



**Figure 12.** *Black Down dew pond & heath beyond.*

Other than Tree Pipit which oddly disappeared in 2022 from what had been a healthy population in previous years (there is no obvious reason for such a swift collapse), the priority species have recorded strong positive trends since 2015.

**Iping Common.** Area 41 ha. 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.

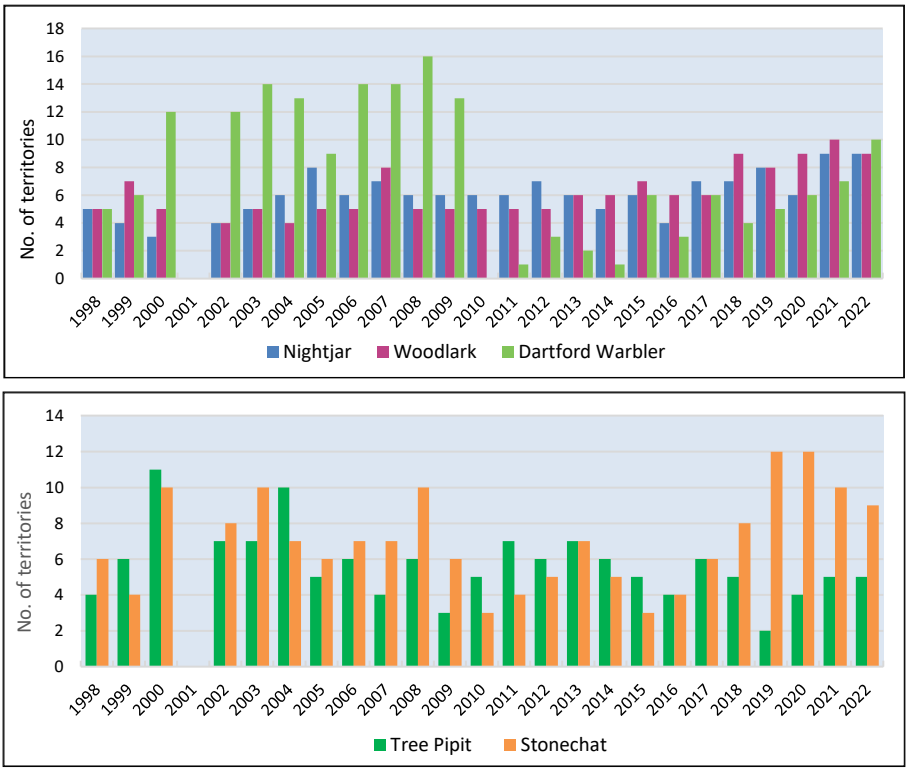



**Figure 13.** *Numbers of territories of the five priority species recorded at Iping Common.*

The overall trends have been positive on this site. Having been one of the best sites for Dartford Warbler until the devastating winters of 2009/10 and 2010/11, numbers are re-building gradually, ten being recorded in 2022. Nightjar and Woodlark have remained stable throughout most of the survey period but are now trending positively. Tree Pipit peaked in 2000 and although now at lower numbers it is present annually. Stonechat has prospered, peaking in both 2019 and 2020 at 12.

**Stedham Common.** Area 35 ha. Conservation status: SSSI and LNR. Ownership: SWT. Underlying geology: Folkestone Sands.

A smaller heathland than Iping it has the advantage of being less popular for dog walkers etc. as it is situated over the road from the main car park. Despite this advantage numbers of the priority species are low. In 2022 none exceeded three territories and surprisingly Dartford Warbler was absent and is only present intermittently.

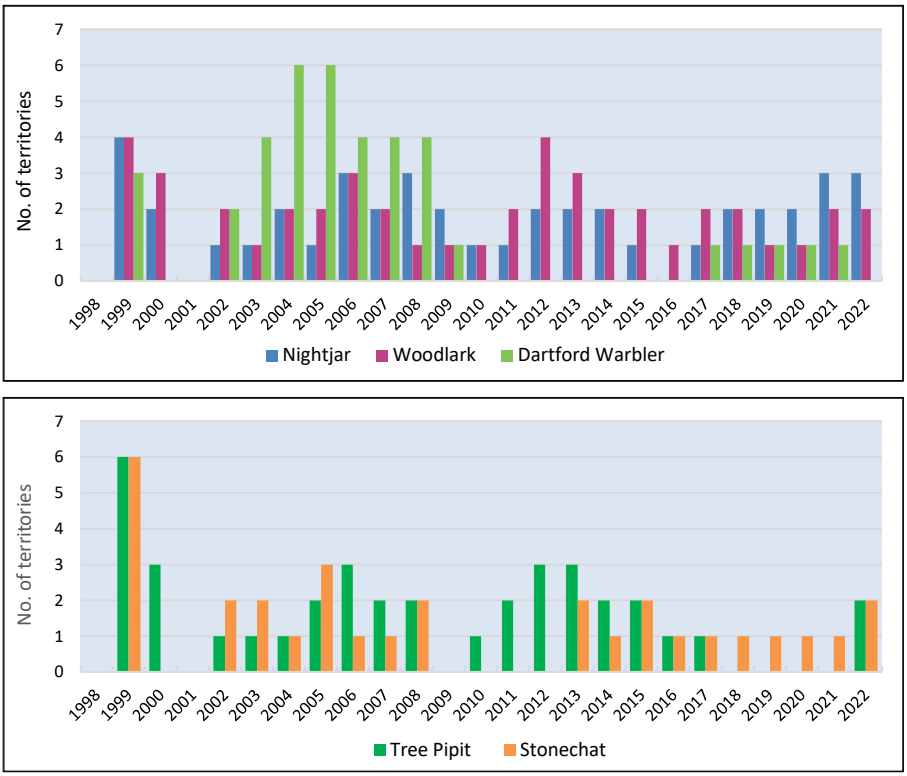
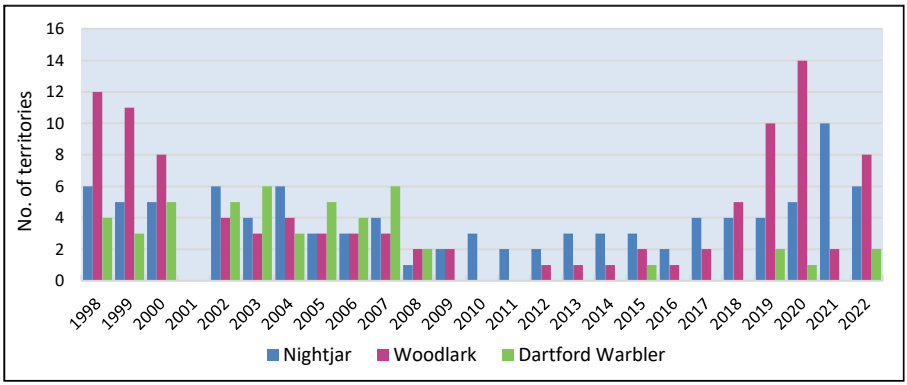



**Figure 14.** *Numbers of territories of the five priority species recorded at Stedham Common.*

**Woolbeding.** Area 190 ha. Common Conservation status: SSSI. Ownership: National Trust. Underlying geology: Hythe Beds.

Despite it being the second largest site in the survey and well managed, the priority species numbers have been disappointing. However, in the past five years Nightjar and Stonechat have improved, Woodlark in particular has returned relatively strongly after being absent 2010-2011, but Dartford Warbler has only been recorded in four years since 2009 and then no more than two annually. Tree Pipit peaked at 20 in 2000 but for the past decade has not exceeded three annually with only one in 2022.



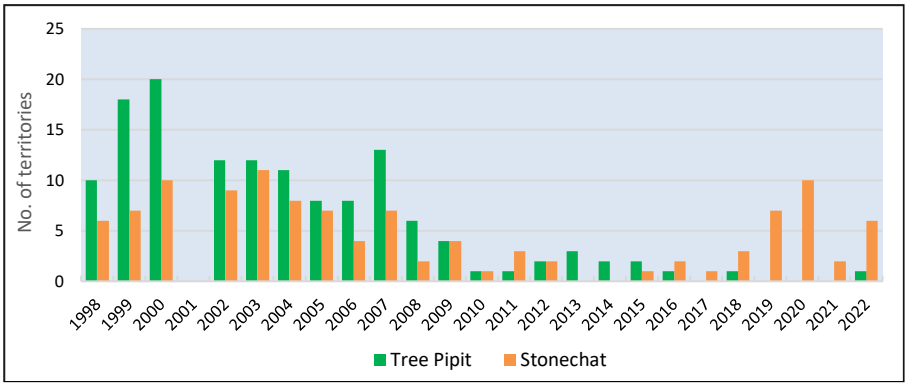




**Figure 15.** *Numbers of territories of the five priority species recorded at Woolbeding.*



**Figure 16.** *Woolbeding Common. Gorse & heather should be perfect for Dartford Warbler (note NT's mosaic heather mowing on left of photo to encourage variable age structure).*

**Ambersham and Heyshott Commons including Goldballs Plantation.** Area 450 ha. Conservation status: partly SSSI (SSSI area 146 ha). Ownership: Cowdray Estate. Underlying geology: Folkestone Sands.

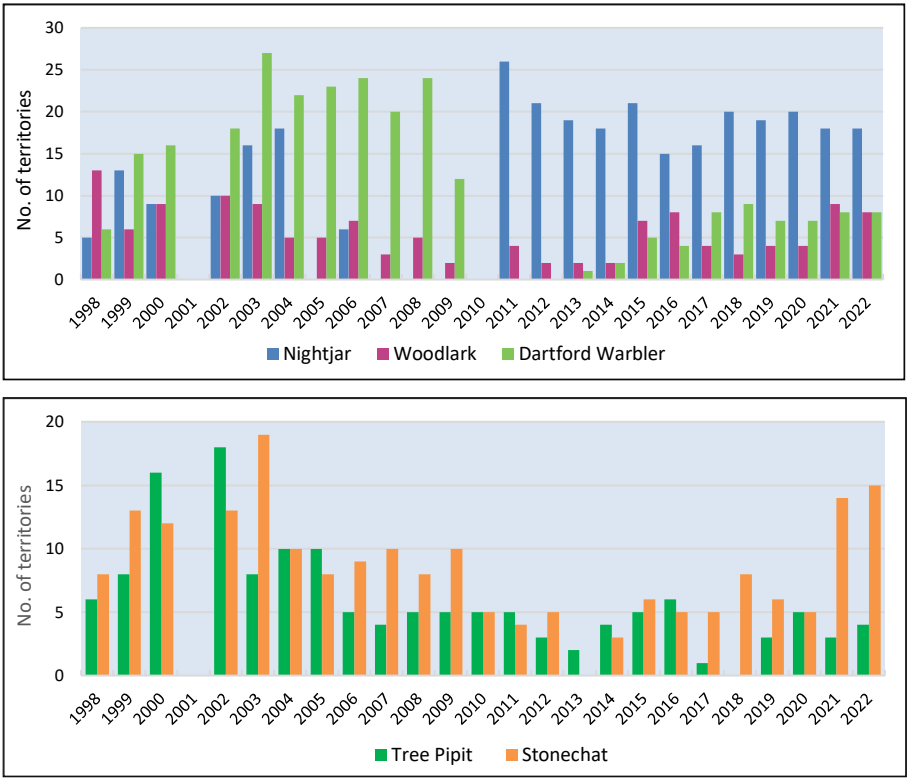



**Figure 17.** *Numbers of territories of the five priority species recorded at Ambersham and Heyshott Commons including Goldballs Plantation.*

Nightjar has an increasing trend over the 25 years and currently this is the best heathland for the species in the survey area. Stonechat numbers were high at the beginning of the survey and after suffering in the adverse winters of 2009/10 and 2010/2011 have built up again with 2021 and 2022 reporting 14 and 15 respectively. Woodlark has remained stable albeit at low numbers as has Tree Pipit since 2006. Once the premier WHBBS site for Dartford Warbler, recovery after 2009/10 has been gradual, with eight territories recorded in 2021 and 2022 respectively.

**Lavington Common, Lavington Plantation and Duncton Common.** Areas: Lavington Common 31.11 ha, Lavington Plantation 33.65 ha, Duncton Common 60.79 ha. Conservation status: Lavington Common, SSSI; Duncton Common, LWS. Ownership: Lavington Common and Plantation, the National Trust; Duncton Common, Leconfield Estate plus a privately owned parcel of wooded heath. Underlying geology: Folkestone Sands.

Nightjar, Woodlark, Dartford Warbler and Stonechat all show increasing trends with Tree Pipit the only negative. In 2002 the latter species numbered nine territories but since 2016 only one has been recorded. With nine found in 2022 it is possible that Nightjar are reaching an optimum

density although Duncton does offer further opportunities when felling occurs. Dartford Warbler has slowly recovered from the 2009/11 winters.

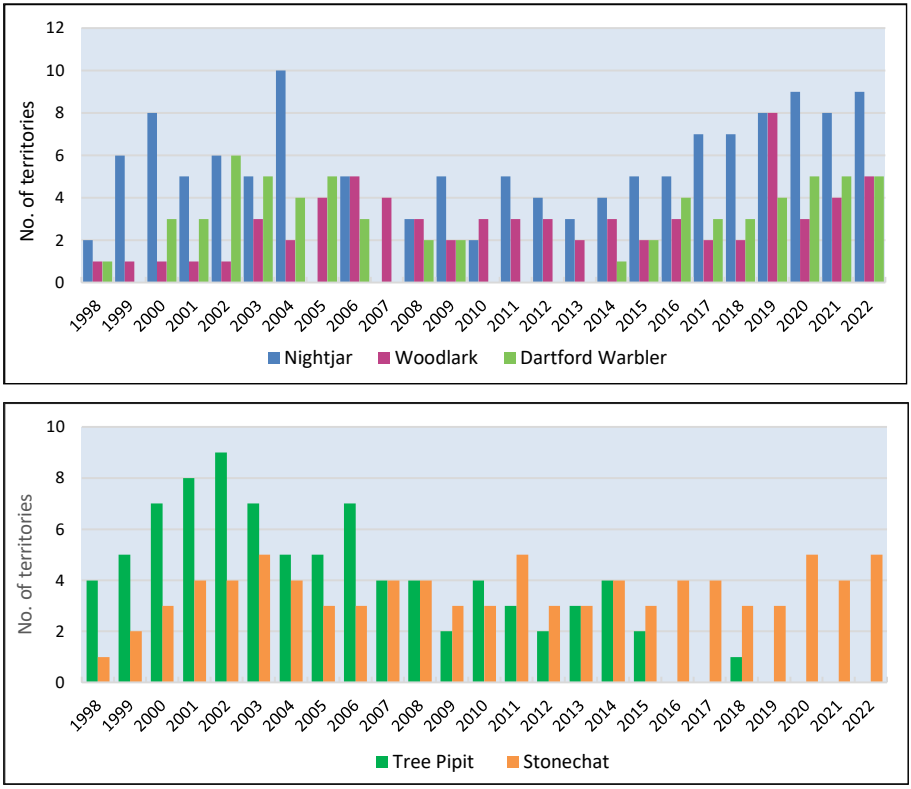



**Figure 18.** *Numbers of territories of the five priority species recorded at Lavington Common, Lavington Plantation and Duncton Common.*



**Figure 19.** *Lavington Common 20 years after heath restoration project commenced.*

**Coates Common/Lords Piece.** Area 89.7 ha. Conservation status: SSSI. Ownership: Barlavington Estate. Underlying geology: Folkestone Sands.




**Figure 20.** *Numbers of territories of the five priority species recorded at Coates Common/Lords Piece.*



**Figure 21.** *Lords Piece is principally grazed and mowed low to encourage Field Crickets.*

The bare areas and low sward of Lords Piece have encouraged a stable Woodlark population whilst Stonechat numbers have recently improved with four in 2022. In 2021 Nightjar returned and in 2022 Dartford Warbler was recorded for the first time.

## The additional sites

**Broad Halfpenny.** Area 14.5 ha. Ownership: Bignor Estate. Added to the survey in 2012 after the clearance of a coniferous plantation, the area was prior to becoming a plantation a rough grazing matrix of grassland/heath/pasture and woodland for centuries before that. After clearance it has been cut to a low swathe and grazed to primarily encourage Field Cricket *Gryllus campestris*. It has the advantage of no public access and is fully fenced. In the first year of its inclusion immediately after clearance Woodlark occupied the site but only in the last two years have Nightjar, Dartford Warbler and Stonechat been recorded.

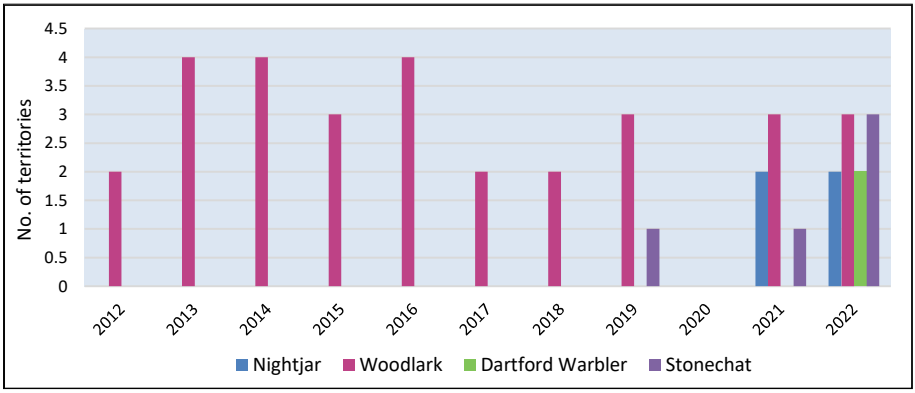



**Figure 22.** *Numbers of four priority species recorded at Broad Halfpenny.*

**Graffham Common (E & W).** Area 38 ha. Conservation Status: Site of National Conservation Importance. Ownership: Sussex Wildlife Trust. There are two sites, on either side of the Graffham/Selham road, that make up the reserve, which is part of the wider area that was once Graffham and Selham Commons. Purchased 2009/10 (SOS supported the purchase) to be part of the key link in the historic chain of Greensand Heaths, restoration has taken place to revert the pine plantation back to heathland and heath-pasture. Monitoring for WHBBS commenced 2016 with one to two Nightjar territories (2016-2019) and one to three Woodlark territories (2016-2021), but there has been limited reporting 2020-2022.

## Species population summary

Overall, the Nightjar has the most positive increasing trend on the WHBBS sites with an increase of 104% and an outstanding 18 on Ambersham/Heyshott Commons in 2022. Unfortunately, by contrast Tree Pipit, the biggest declining UK sub-Saharan migrant species is down -81%, worse than the -24% reported by BTO BirdFacts (2022) for England. Both Dartford Warbler and Stonechat suffered collapses during the 2009-2011 severe winter (also in the 2013 spring for Stonechat) but since then both are recovering strongly. The overall Woodlark population is stable and had a strong 2022 performance returning almost to the highest count recorded at the outset of the survey. Although there is no room for complacency it appears, particularly over the last 5-year period of the survey, that other than Tree Pipit, there can be some optimism for four of the priority species. There is little doubt that such a trend will be dependent on continuing effective management and climatic conditions. A harsh winter will negatively affect particularly Dartford Warbler and Stonechat.

## Distribution of priority species summary

To assess the latest population distribution an analysis was undertaken of the last five years of the survey and separately 2022. The results show that the bulk of the population of the priority species occupied a limited number of heathlands with Ambersham & Heyshott Commons having 21%, Black Down 20.5%, and Iping 18%. Consequently, these three heathlands held almost 60% of the priority species population. Of the others only Lavington Common/Plantation/Duncton reached double figures at 10%. Obviously, size influences numbers yet with less than half the area Iping almost matches Black Down and Ambersham for numbers. Particularly disappointing is Woolbeding at 8% as this is not only a large heath at 190 ha, but well managed. The 106 ha of Lynchmere & Stanley Commons at under 3% is another heathland that appears to have unrealised potential and requires urgent maintenance work. The 2022 results largely bear out the five year averaged results but encouragingly some of the smaller heaths reported better figures reducing the three prime sites to approximately 47% of the total.

## Conclusion

This survey has shown strong positive trends for four of the five key heathland species and is a tribute to all the organisations and individuals who have worked, largely successfully, to maintain the sites in positive conservation condition. The 25 years of this survey have coincided with not just the realisation of the importance of heathland and its diverse taxa communities, but also funding was found to undertake extensive restoration and detailed management work. The WHBBS heathlands are diverse in size, elevation, habitat mosaic, and management regimes, as a consequent the survey results have highlighted differences between their individual avian populations and distribution. Not surprisingly the larger well managed sites tend, although not exclusively, to hold the greatest abundance but even between these sites there are differences, some of which are difficult to explain. For instance, why should Woolbeding, a well-managed site comprising an apparently ideal habitat of extensive open heather and gorse have such low Dartford Warbler numbers compared with Black Down, another high heath, or the nearby Ambersham/Heyshott and Iping heaths? The same question can be asked of Lynchmere and Stanley Commons. Issues such as disturbance, climate, pollution or possibly in the Tree Pipit's case migration/wintering problems are part of the answer.

There are constant surveyors' comments about the overuse of these sites for leisure activities, particularly dog walkers who do not keep their dogs under control. Such pressure could have an adverse effect on both numbers and breeding productivity of the key species (see for instance Burton 2009) but it is extremely challenging to collect direct evidence of such adverse impacts of disturbance. Yet counter intuitively a site such as Iping, which is an extremely popular dog walking site and crisscrossed with pathways, has despite these obvious negative aspects, excellent population numbers and diversity of species.

Whether privately or conservation owned these heaths will only continue to remain in favourable condition with funding and knowledgeable managers overseeing contractors, and willing staff and volunteers. Let us hope that the difficult financial situation being experienced at the time this paper is written will alleviate sufficiently to enable the necessary funding to be released to ensure the long-term future of these beautiful and ecologically valuable places.

## Acknowledgements

My thanks to the current surveyors Jonathan Mycock, Andie Timms, Matt Eade, Paul Matson, Dr Alan Buckle, Alan Hines and Mark McManus, and of course to those of the past, either retired or sadly no longer with us, for all their hard work (some for over 20 years), and for putting up with me chasing them annually for results. Thanks also to Colin Carre, Project Manager, the South Downs National Park Authority for his helpful advice and to Dr Ken Smith for his guidance and patience.

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*Nightjar, by Stephen Message*

# Meadow Pipit roosts on Ashdown Forest – counts and conjecture

*Hew Prendergast*

## Introduction

From October to March the Meadow Pipit *Anthus pratensis* is common and widespread in Sussex, in 2020 and 2021 occurring in 316 and 276 tetrads respectively (JA Newnham pers. comm.; see also George 2021). On Ashdown Forest, however, they are largely absent by day (pers. obs.). As previously reported (Prendergast & Poole 2017), Meadow Pipits flight in at dusk to roost on Forest heaths. Counts at three sites from January to March 2017 produced maxima of 120, 124 and 146 birds while dawn counts of departing birds at seven roost sites in October and November 2009 produced a total of 550 Meadow Pipits (not 532 as stated), the largest numbering 160 birds. According to 2018-2021 *Sussex Bird Reports*, seven of the county's 14 winter counts of >100 came from Forest roost sites, the highest being 207 on 17 November 2021. Birds can be difficult to count accurately at dusk due to their often sudden descent from height; the diffuse nature of their flocks (in contrast to those of Linnets *Linaria cannabina* and Starlings *Sturnus vulgaris* for example); the possibility of double counting as they circle before dropping to the ground; their return to flight when disturbed; and fading light.

From mid-October to March 2017-2023 I made evening observations of Meadow Pipits on Ashdown Forest, focused initially on answering "where are they roosting?" and "how many are there?", with an eventual view to understanding the total winter population. With time, however, other questions arose, especially regarding the extent to which bird arrival times change through the winter.

## Background and Methods

The 'nibbled doughnut' appearance of the public access parts of Ashdown Forest managed by the Board of Conservators (the darker green in Figure 1) largely represents the remnant of the late 17C sell-off by the Crown of about half of the original (late 13C) Forest area of some 5000 ha. The sold-off extent, under multiple ownership, comprises woodland, permanent pastures and, especially in the MoD training ground of Pippingford, a significant heathland, but most heathland, some 1500 ha, lies within the public access areas where this study took place.

Other than seeing departing birds in the morning (not covered here), finding roosts requires no more than careful watching for incoming Meadow Pipits from early evening onwards, or scanning tree-tops where they might settle prior to going to ground. In line with the primary aims, observations from 2017 to early 2022 were spread thinly and unevenly across the Forest, i.e. no attempt was made – or even possible – to cover all sites systematically and consistently. On discovery, sites were counted for birds on the basis of i) ease, and accuracy, of observations, ii) relatively low risk of human disturbance, and iii) ease of access. In late 2022 and 2023, after preliminary analysis of arrival time data, the frequency of observations increased, with a focus on sites 1 and 4 in Figure 1.

Observation points were chosen to avoid deterring incoming birds from landing, and to maximise conditions for spotting them – in practice so that birds traversed the arc of sight against the sky rather than a backdrop of trees where birds could be difficult to see. Counts were started 60–75 minutes before sunset (sometimes more), in time to observe the first incoming birds, and thereafter in 15 minute slots in relation to it. Unless 15 minutes had elapsed since the last bird, counting continued for a further 15 minutes beyond sunset, and (rarely) for longer if birds were still arriving or were thought likely to do so.

Also recorded were the main direction of the birds' approach, where possible, and ambient conditions (wind strength and direction, and cloud cover). Counting was avoided in poor visibility conditions, e.g. heavy rain or fog.

In order to gauge the general status of Meadow Pipits in and around the Forest in the winter months (October-December and January–March), complete datasets of the species' records in squares encompassing and adjacent to the Forest (TQ32, 33, 42, 43, 52, 53) were obtained from BirdTrack (January 2017-December 2022) and the Sussex Winter Bird Surveys (November/December 2017 and January/February 2022 [November and December 2022 data were not compiled at the time of writing] - these being the months of the surveys). These sets largely overlap with the timing of most of the winter roost counts studied here.

## Results

**Roost sites**

Figure 1 shows the sites of roosts located on Ashdown Forest with details of each in Table 1. Although they were sought on most Forest heaths, there may well be others due to a strong element of 'hit-or-miss', especially as sites may at times fall out of use as occurred with site 9, abandoned after a fire in early 2019. Roost sites may also change due to heathland management (e.g. grazing and scrub clearance) and to weather events such as that of mid-December 2022 when snow covering all of the Forest (and much of Sussex) led to the complete absence of birds during four evenings of observation at four different sites.

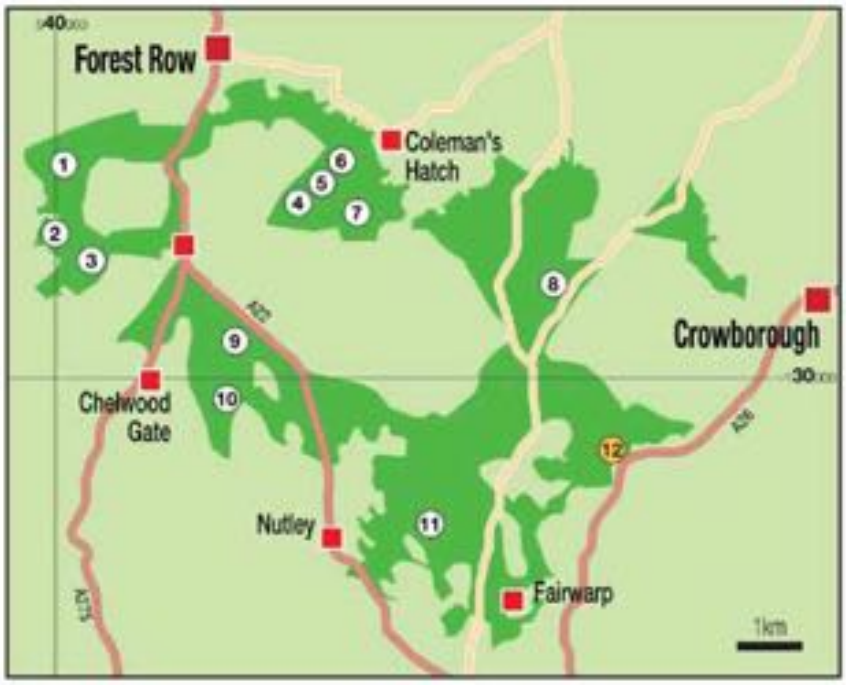


***Figure 1.*** *Sites of located Meadow Pipit roosts (see Table 1) on Ashdown Forest. There were insuffcient data from site 12 for analysis. The darker green areas denote the open access areas managed by the Board of Conservators. Map courtesy of* www.mappingideas.co.uk.

Individual roost sites had a range of aspects (Table 1) and covered areas of varying size but with extremities in some cases up to 300m apart. All were on open heathland (although at some sites birds settled within ca 20m of woodland edge) with mixes of heathers (Ericaceae; always present), purple moor-grass *Molinia purpuraea* and bracken *Pteridium aquilinum*. Birds were neither seen descending into moor-grass nor bracken alone, nor into locally abundant gorses *Ulex* spp. The critical presence was that of the heathers, particularly Ling *Calluna vulgaris* which dominated sites 1, 2, 4, and 11 and was a prominent feature of all others; Cross-leaved Heath *Erica tetralix* also covered much of site 10.



***Figure 2.*** *Part of roost site 4 (Broadstone West). (Hew Prendergast)*

As apparently suitable areas for roosting are scattered across the Forest, the incoming direction of birds suggested that the sites selected may simply have been the first such ones they encountered on arriving from daytime feeding haunts elsewhere (Figure 1 and Table 1). The corollary of this was that site selection also depended on the location of these haunts.

**Arrival behaviour**

On arrival birds either first circled overhead closely or widely enough to be lost to sight (thus jeopardising count accuracy), flew straight and steeply to ground or, at sites 1, 3, 5 and 7 (and sometimes 2, 4 and 10), landed in the upper branches of trees (Rowan *Sorbus aucuparia*, Pedunculate Oak *Quercus robur*, birches *Betula* spp., Scots Pine *Pinus sylvestris* – and, at site 10, a 5m high trunk of a dead Pine) adjacent or central to the roost site prior to going to ground up to tens of minutes later, occasionally after some preening. Counting these birds descending to perch in such 'focal' trees was often easier than those flying straight to ground. When disturbed, already grounded birds often returned to the trees, so were excluded from analysis to prevent double counting. Wind direction did not appear to influence the direction from which birds came in to roost. No calls were ever heard.

| Site no. (see Figure 1) and name | Grid ref. [TQ] | Aspect | Main direction(s) of incoming birds | No. of counts | Range of counts |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 Legsheath | 398332 | Slightly NE | N/W | 12 | 3-95 |
| 2 Cripps | 399322 | SW | S/SW | 4 | 2-36 |
| 3 Twyford | 402318 | SW | S/SW | 2 | 17-101 |
| 4 Broadstone West | 437326 | N | WNW-N | 20 | 2-225 |
| 5 Broadstone East | 442328 | NW | N | 26 | 3-165 |
| 6 Golf Course | 443331 | N | N | 4 | 2-35 |
| 7 Tabell | 445325 | SE | N | 25 | 4-104 |
| 8 Black Hill | 477317 | NE | N | 1 | 19 |
| 9 Fiveways | 426308 | Flat | S | 4 | 6-107 |
| 10 Airstrip South | 424304 | Slightly SW | SW | 8 | 12-134 |
| 11 Misbourne | 456283 | SE/SW | S/SE/N | 2 | 18-66 |
| 12 Poundgate | 488288 | W | N | | |
| | | | | Total 108 | |

***Table 1.*** *Details of sites indicated in Figure 1 (the grid references are the approximate centre points) and counts at them, including main direction of incoming birds. Site 11 occupied, on different dates, opposite sides of a valley. Counts comprise only those with birds (i.e. no zero counts, as in December 2022 – see under* Roost sites*) and where there was no disturbance (39 counts were excluded from analysis, usually because of disturbance). No data from Site 12 were used (see text).*

Birds arrived in numbers from singles to loose groups of up to low double figures. Exact figures for the latter were often impossible to ascertain, especially during the higher evening counts of October and November (Table 2), when apparently small groups transpired to be parts of a larger one. Figure 3 shows flock sizes when their extents were easier to determine in 2023's low count months of January to March. Of a total of 274 observations of 805 birds, 115 (42%) were of lone birds and 62 (23%) were of pairs. The 239 birds included within these two flock sizes represent 30% of the total. Three of the largest four flocks (15, 22 and 25 birds) were recorded in March, and one (17 birds) in late (31) January.

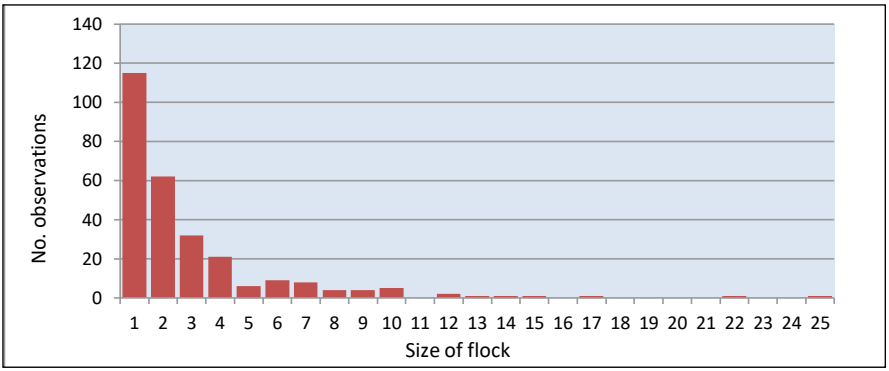


***Figure 3.*** *Size of flocks arriving at roost, January-March 2023. n=274 flocks and 805 birds.*

**Counts**

Coverage of 11 sites was uneven (see Background and Methods). In total 5596 birds were counted on 108 evenings in the winter months from 2017-2023 (Table 2). Higher overall, mean and maximum counts occurred in October and November than in later months. A hundred or more birds were counted at six sites – the highest being 225 birds on 16 October 2017 (NB not referenced in the 2017 *Sussex Bird Report*) at site 4 - but there was a very high degree of unpredictability. At the same site, for example, high counts of 190 and 207 occurred on the successive evenings of 16 and 17 November 2021; by contrast 91 birds on 30 November 2022 were followed by just 16 two evenings later.

| Half-month/ month period | No. of counts | Combined counts in 15 minute periods up to and after sunset | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | 75-60 | 60-45 | 45-30 | 30-15 | 15-0 | 0-15 | Total | Mean | ⁺Range |
| Oct 16-31 | 8 | 0 | 31 | 193 | 225 | 165 | 27 | 641 | 80 | 38-225 |
| Nov 1-15 | 11 | 7 | 65 | 129 | 217 | 405 | *133 | 956 | 87 | 40-165 |
| Nov 16-30 | 10 | 0 | 5 | 81 | 252 | 539 | *148 | 1025 | 103 | 14-207 |
| Dec 1-15 | 9 | 0 | 1 | 3 | 31 | 60 | *122 | 217 | 24 | 7-40 |
| Dec 16-31 | 11 | 0 | 0 | 7 | 22 | 113 | 113 | 255 | 21 | 4-63 |
| Jan 1-15 | 9 | 0 | 0 | 20 | 117 | 173 | 15 | 325 | 36 | 2-67 |
| Jan 16-31 | 14 | 0 | 3 | 26 | 132 | 261 | 159 | 581 | 41 | 4-62 |
| Feb 1-14 | 13 | 3 | 109 | 304 | 312 | 135 | 11 | 874 | 67 | 18-120 |
| Feb 15-28 | 10 | *27 | 174 | 138 | 61 | 7 | 0 | 407 | 41 | 3-161 |
| March 1-31 | 13 | *36 | 71 | 128 | 67 | 13 | 0 | 315 | 24 | 3-63 |
| Total | 108 | 73 | 459 | 1029 | 1436 | 1871 | 728 | 5596 | 52 | |

***Table 2.*** *Combined half-monthly counts of incoming birds in 15 minute slots up to and after sunset (=0) from 11 sites, mid-October-March 2017-2023. ⁺Counts of zero birds are excluded (see Table 1). *Nos include birds arriving > 15 minutes after sunset: 2, Nov 1-15; 6, Nov 16-30; 3, Dec 1-15; 1 90-75 minutes before sunset Feb 15-28; and 12 90-75 minutes before sunset March (NB no counts were made on 29 February 2020).*

By displaying the half-monthly (and monthly in the case of March) 15 minute counts in Table 2 as *percentages* of their respective totals (Figures 4 and 5) a pattern emerges of a progressively shortening and latening of arrival periods as daylength decreased (NB up to 31 December; Figure 4). Thus the peak period in October was 30-15 minutes before sunset, in November 15 minutes before sunset, and in December it was equally divided between the 15 minutes before and after.

Post New Year (Figure 5) the reverse trend took place with the peak period of both January half-months being the 15 minutes before sunset. For the first half of February the peak periods were almost equally divided between 45-30 and 30-15 minutes while in the second half the peak was reached between the even earlier period of 60-45 minutes. By contrast, March bucked the trend with its peak period between 45-30 minutes before sunset.

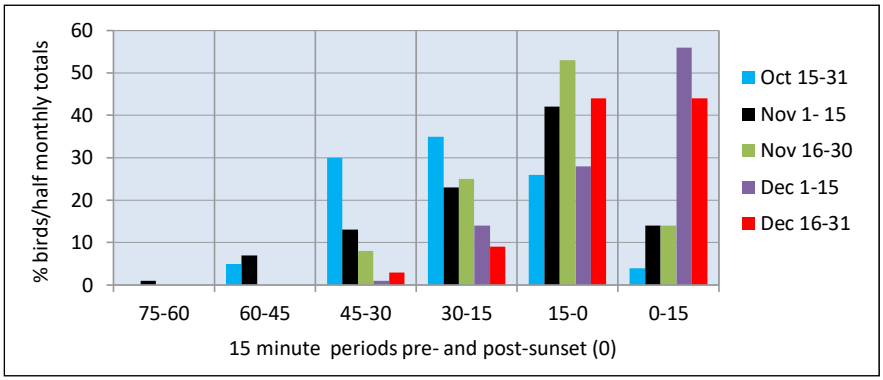


***Figure 4.*** *Half-monthly percentages of summed totals of birds (see Table 2) arriving at roost in 15 minute periods in relation to sunset; e.g. peak arrival period for October 15-31 is 30-15 minutes before sunset.*

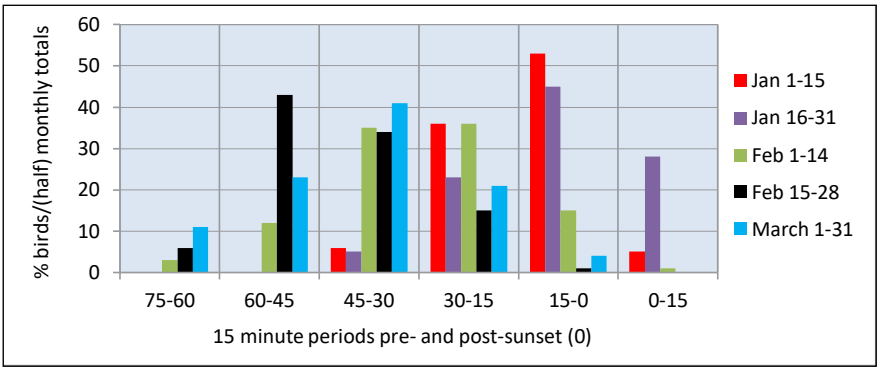


***Figure 5.*** *Half-monthly (and the whole of March) percentages of summed totals of birds (see Table 2) arriving at roost in 15 minute periods in relation to sunset; e.g. peak arrival period for January 1-15 is the 15 minutes before sunset.*

## Discussion

Establishing the winter roost population of Meadow Pipits on Ashdown Forest is impossible without simultaneous blanket coverage of all sites (including any not found in this study). Might it, however, be very approximately gauged at least in *relative* terms by multiplying the six year mean count for each half-month by the number of sites (see Table 2): thus for 16-30 November the figure would be 1030 (10x103) and for 16-31 December 231 (11x21) – a >four-fold difference? Passage birds possibly account for much of this difference but e*arly* October counts might feasibly reveal an even greater one - the Forest thus hosting thousands of roosting passage birds, albeit relatively briefly?

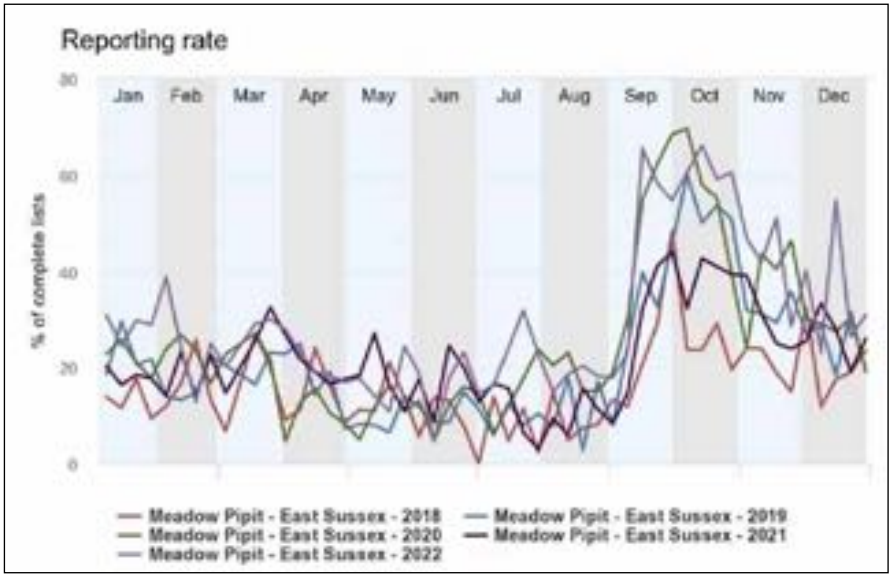


***Figure 6***. *Monthly BirdTrack reporting rates (NB* not *numbers) as percentages of complete lists, for Meadow Pipits in East Sussex, 2018-2022.*

The higher roost counts of (late) October and November (Table 2) are certainly mirrored by the higher BirdTrack reporting rates for East Sussex as a whole for those months (Figure 6), peaks encompassing passage birds being followed by a general levelling off of an over-wintering population. A similar picture emerges from BirdTrack records of Meadow Pipits in 10-km squares encompassing and immediately surrounding the Forest (Table 3) – late October's 772 being ca 2.5 times that of late December's 302. Notably, neither set shows any marked 'pulse' of northbound passage birds in March.

| Jan 1-15 | Jan 16-31 | Feb 1-14 | Feb 15-28 | Mar 1 -31 | | Oct 16-31 | Nov 1-15 | Nov 16-30 | Dec 1-15 | Dec 16-31 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 357 | 394 | 261 | 286 | 262 | | 772 | 448 | 250 | 208 | 302 |

***Table 3***. *Summed half-monthly (March, monthly) 2018-2022 individual BirdTrack counts of Meadow Pipits (almost all from complete lists, and excluding the author's roost counts) for the 10 km squares encompassing, and immediately surrounding, the Forest (TQ32, 33, 42, 43, 52 and 53), a total of 3540.*

Other than showing that roost counts of Meadow Pipits very approximately reflect numbers in surrounding areas, neither series of BirdTrack data actually helps determine where birds roosting on the Forest might have spent the previous hours of daylight. Eleven Sussex Winter Bird Surveys of four at least partly heathland 1-km square locations on the Forest in the winters 2017/2018-2021/2022 recorded just six birds (data from Christine George, pers. comm.). A ringing scheme at a roost on Padworth Common, Berkshire showed "a high turnover of birds" (only one bird out of 97 was retrapped – and that in one year's separate winter periods; Reading and Basingstoke Ringing 2010) but did not seek out daytime haunts. However, if, as proposed, incoming birds on Ashdown select the first suitable site they encounter, it follows, from the variable numbers recorded at these

sites, that individual birds are daily moving around in different parts of the surrounding landscape. For Sussex as a whole Thomas (2014) stated that "many tend to be seen in the river valleys" and coastal locations (notably levels and Medmerry) feature prominently in *Sussex Bird Reports*.

Data are scant on the distances flown to and from roosts by native passerines, with the unsurprising exception of the Starling which disperses to feeding areas up to 50 km away (Summers & Feare 1995 and references therein) and, as an introduced species in California, up to 80 km (Hamilton & Gilbert 1969). For the Pied Wagtail *Motacilla alba* Broom *et al.* (1976) found that most of the >3000 ringed birds at a Reading, Berkshire roost fed within 12 km of the roost and only two >15 km away. In central Sweden the maximum distance to roost of Jackdaws *Coloeus monedula* was 35 km (Gyllin & Källander 1976) and for Bramblings *Fringilla montifringilla* in Switzerland it was up to 45 km (Jenni 1991). There are apparently no data for Meadow Pipits.

A similar lack of data pertains to the influence on daily movements of light intensity levels (for a study of the latter for Rooks *Corvus frugilegus* see Swingland 1976), the departure time of pipits from daytime feeding haunts to evening roost sites, and the distances between them. Is it possible to gauge what these might be on the basis of arrival times on any particular evening? Thus, when on 3 February 2023 the first bird flew in at 1555 and the last at 1702 – a span of 67 minutes - had they been feeding at widely different distances from the Forest? At 8 m/sec (480 m/min, nearly 30 km/hour) recorded for the non-migratory flight speed of Meadow Pipits (Bruderer & Boldt 2001), a 15 km flight, comparable to those of Pied Wagtail referred to above, would take about half an hour. How far are Meadow Pipits prepared to fly in order to reach the Forest and how large, therefore, is the latter's 'catchment' for roosting birds?

Whatever the actual size of the catchment these heathland roosts are clearly important to Meadow Pipits. Furthermore, from mid-October to March, the coldest and shortest days on which to find food (see Table 4), they spend the greater portion of the time at roosts and flying to and from them. In the absence of such preferred (optimal?) roosts, would they effectively abandon the surrounding landscape during the winter months or settle in sub-optimal roosting sites?

| Date | % of day between sunrise and sunset | Date | % of day between sunrise and sunset |
|---|---|---|---|
| 15 October | 44 | 15 January | 35 |
| 15 November | 37 | 15 February | 42 |
| 15 December | 33 | 15 March | 49 |
| 21 December | 33 | | |

***Table 4.*** *% of day between sunrise and sunset at Hartfield (on the Forest boundary). Source of times: https://sunrisesunset.willyweather.co.uk/se/east-sussex/hartfield.html.*

While the counts obtained at roost sites offer glimpses of Forest-wide Meadow Pipit abundance, the differing percentages of birds arriving in 15 minute time slots provide some insight into their overall behaviour. Despite a wealth of variables (winters [six], roost sites [11], evening observations [108], ranges in numbers at each site, cloud cover and [unrecorded] temperature), it is clear that on the shortest days birds arrived comparatively late at roosts, even after sunset (Figures 3 and 4), thereby maximising daytime foraging. On longer days, by contrast, they arrived much earlier, up to more than one hour before sunset, presumably having reached the energy reserves required to last them through the night. March arrival times, their peak later in the evening (in the 45-30 minute pre-sunset period) compared with the 60-45 one for the second half of February, challenge this hypothesis. One explanation for this apparent change in behaviour could be a change in the

birds themselves, passage ones now joining and/or replacing the diminishing numbers of wintering birds (the last roost, observed on 27 March 2023, contained just four birds). Overall, however, the interaction between distance to roost sites and arrival time there remains unknown.

In a summary of the evolution of communal roosting Beauchamp (1999) suggested a number of selective advantages such as detection/dilution effect ("Presence of companions increases predator detection and dilutes individual predation risk"), thermoregulation benefits ("Presence of nearby companions reduces energetic demands" - Wrens *Troglodytes troglodytes* crammed into a nest box might be a good example), and geometry ("Birds on the edge of a roost provide a buffer from predation to more centrally roosting birds"). Given that the area of Meadow Pipit roosts observed on the Forest can be extensive (with extremities up to 300m apart, more in the case of Site 11), resulting in a low density of individuals, the most plausible explanation would be so-called patch-sitting: "representing chance aggregations of individuals that are searching independently for roosting sites with similar characteristics" and where the "number of optimal sites is limiting" – i.e. in this case areas dominated by Ling. Although the 2017 Sussex Bird Report mentions 110 birds roosting in "long grass" at Poundgate on the east side of the Forest (was there Ling among the grass?), the preference for Ling noted here may lie in its dense branching system that not only may offer some protection against ground and aerial predators but also reduces wind velocity and consequent convective heat-loss, an energetic advantage worth the flight time to reach on short, cold winter days. For presumably similar reasons thickets of European Gorse *Ulex europaeus* on Forest heaths are favoured by Linnets and Pied Wagtails (pers. obs.). Observation of morning departures from roosts might test the information transfer hypothesis ("Unsuccessful birds follow companions to food patches").

Just how gregarious is the Meadow Pipit outside the breeding season? The concise answer of Cramp (1988) was "at times". More detailed listed observations referred only to behaviour during migration (elsewhere Helbig *et al.* (1987) stated that "Meadow Pipits migrate singly or in small groups"), with the sole reference of wintering birds, on Malta, being "normally solitary during the day". Analysis of the individual BirdTrack data summed in Table 4 (January-March and October–December 2018-2022) showed that 23% of the submitted observations (101 of 446) were of single birds - although single birds could also of course be subsumed within recorded data of 2 birds. These 101 birds, however, comprised just under 3% of the actual number (3540). In this study, the overall low numbers (see Table 2) of January-March 2023 may explain both the higher proportion of single bird observations (42%; Figure 2), compared with those in the Birdtrack data, and the comparatively higher proportion of the total number of birds these represent (30%). How feeding flock size relates to roosting flock size, however, remains, once again unknown.

## Conclusions

The Meadow Pipit is a difficult species to study for roosting behaviour (corvids are understandably popular in this respect), although a site-specific flight path of incoming birds (Table 1) can be helpful for their initial detection as does a tendency to settle in trees prior to dropping to ground (see https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3c4V2-rGn44 for pre-roost gathering, and preening, in trees at Bovey Heath, Devon, by John Walters).

What started as finding roosts and counting their users evolved into probing and revealing the daylength-dependence of the pipits' pattern of arrival and into wondering how far they fly, the energetic advantages offered by Ling, and to what extent numbers at roost may provide an index of abundance in the local landscape. Although unable to provide any overall count of Meadow Pipits on the Forest, from a conservation perspective this study may just add roosting sites as an important and perhaps somewhat neglected feature of heathland. *Sussex Bird Reports* from 2013

onwards mention heathland roosts at Lavington and Iping Commons, at the latter of which Brian Rogers (*pers. comm*. 2018) made yearly counts from 2000-2015, with a maximum of >120 in December 2006. These, and other smaller and more easily observable, heathland sites than those of Ashdown Forest, would be much better for any further in-depth studies of Meadow Pipit winter roost behaviour, especially in tandem with ringing. As the Discussion has shown, there are certainly many questions to answer.

## Acknowledgements

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# BTO/RSPB Breeding waders of wet meadows 2021-2022

*Dr Helen Crabtree and Jim Glover*

## Introduction

In the 2021 and 2022 breeding seasons the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) organised a survey of breeding waders in lowland wet grassland in England and Wales in partnership with the RSPB and commissioned by Natural England. The purpose of the survey was to assess the importance of both existing and new wet lowland grassland and also other lowland breeding wader habitats as provided by agri-environment schemes (AES) for declining breeding waders including Lapwing *Vanellus vanellus*, Common Redshank *Tringa totanus*, Curlew *Numenius arquata* and Common Snipe *Gallinago gallinago*. The survey was a repeat of similar surveys in England and Wales in 1982 and 2002 with the aim of determining changes in breeding wader numbers since those surveys. In Sussex the primary aim was to survey as many lowland wet grassland breeding sites as possible for Lapwing and Redshank; Curlew and Snipe did not feature in the survey in Sussex as Curlew do not breed and Snipe may possibly breed but in insignificant numbers.

This survey was initially planned to take place in 2020 but was cancelled that year due to COVID-19 restrictions. The survey then went ahead in 2021 and most sites in Sussex were covered in that year. The survey continued in 2022 so that overall coverage across England and Wales could be increased and this allowed further sites to be covered in Sussex.

This article presents the results of the survey in Sussex, with a focus on breeding Lapwing and Redshank in lowland wet grassland, and discusses them in relation to the results of previous surveys of breeding waders in wet meadow grassland in Sussex and also the results of the Bird Atlas 2007-2011 project.

## Methods

The sites selected as priorities to be surveyed were all those occupied in the 2002 and subsequent similar surveys. In addition, new sites were included where AES and other conservation management has been undertaken to provide breeding wader habitat in lowland farmland, including creation of wet meadow grassland. Finally, some sites were included where there are Lapwing plots in arable farmland.

Volunteers were asked to visit each site three times during the breeding season: once between 14 Apr and 30 Apr; once between 1 May and 21 May; and once between 22 May and 24 Jun. All visits were to be made in the morning in fine conditions with good visibility and wind speed below 13-18 mph. The April visit was considered especially important for locating breeding Lapwings. At sites where breeding Snipe were considered possible an evening visit during the period 1 May to 31 May was required; this visit was largely irrelevant in Sussex where Snipe may possibly breed but in insignificant numbers.

On each visit volunteers were asked to view the entire site or at least all areas where access was permitted or adequate viewing possible from a distance. Volunteers were provided with site maps showing each site divided into numbered fields. Habitat and land-use details were recorded for each numbered field and on each visit the exact locations and numbers of all waders and their young were recorded. Volunteers were also asked to record whether young birds were suspected to be present (indicated by adult behaviour) and to estimate the numbers of pairs present of each wader species. In addition, volunteers were asked to record all species of duck present and also Yellow Wagtail and Meadow Pipit.

## Results

Records of waders breeding in lowland wet grassland in Sussex are considered here. All records of ducks, Yellow Wagtail and Meadow Pipit collected through this survey are available in the Sussex Ornithological Society database but are not considered further here. There were no breeding records of Snipe or Curlew in Sussex collected through this survey. There were records of 13 breeding Lapwing pairs from five of the 26 Lapwing plot sites surveyed and these are included here as casual records but insufficient Lapwing plot sites were surveyed in Sussex for any meaningful conclusions to be drawn about numbers in relation to habitat and other factors and so these sites are not discussed further here.

Table 1 gives the numbers of breeding pairs of wader species found through this survey at the main lowland wet grassland sites in Sussex. The numbers given here are those calculated by the BTO using established methodology for the species concerned and are not necessarily the same as those estimated by the volunteer surveyors based on their observations at the sites.

| | L. | RK | OC | AV | RP | LP |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Thorney Island | 5 | 3 | 1 | | | |
| Snow Hill Marsh (East Head) | | | | 10 | | |
| Medmerry RSPB | 7 | 2 | 5 | 21 | 3 | |
| Pagham Harbour RSPB | 5 | 4 | | | | |
| Pulborough Brooks RSPB | 11 | 9 | | 2 | | 1 |
| Amberley Wild Brooks | 11 | 1 | | | | |
| River Arun Houghton to Arundel | 11 | | 1 | | | |
| Adur Levels | 7 | | | | | |
| Upper Ouse Isfield to Hamsey | 3 | | | | | |
| Lewes Brooks | 6 | | | | | |
| Lower Ouse Valley | 2 | | | | | |
| Glynde Levels | 2 | | | | | |
| Cuckmere Valley | | | 1 | | | |
| Pevensey Levels | 23 | | | | | |
| Combe Haven | 3 | | | | | |
| Brede Levels | 18 | | | | | |
| Pett Level (incl. Pannel Valley) | 23 | 4 | 6 | 10 | | 1 |
| Rye Harbour SWT | 8 | 9 | 42 | 40 | 22 | 3 |
| Other minor sites | 5 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| **Total number of pairs** | **150** | **32** | **56** | **83** | **25** | **5** |

***Table 1.*** *The numbers of breeding pairs of wader species found at lowland grassland sites in Sussex surveyed for the Breeding Waders of Wet Meadows survey 2021-2022. L., Lapwing; RK, Redshank; OC, Oystercatcher Haematopus ostralegus; AV, Avocet Recurvirostra avosetta; RP, Ringed Plover Charadrius hiaticula; LP, Little Ringed Plover Charadrius dubius.*

Figure 1 shows the locations of all the sites surveyed in Sussex in 2021 and 2022 including the Lapwing plot sites and also the numbers of Lapwing pairs located at each site. The sites plotted are 1-km squares for simplicity although the actual site areas varied widely and for large sites the central 1-km squares are plotted here. Figure 2 shows the numbers of Redshank pairs located at the same sites (although not including the arable Lapwing plot sites which are not suitable habitat for breeding Redshank).

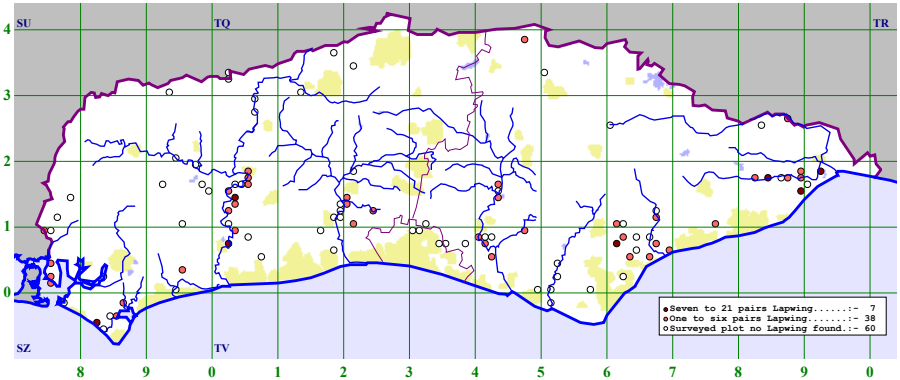


***Figure 1.*** *The locations of the lowland wet grassland and arable Lapwing plot sites surveyed for breeding Lapwing in 2021 and 2022. Dark red circle, 7-21 pairs of Lapwing present; pale red circle, 1-6 pairs of Lapwing present; empty circle, site surveyed but no breeding Lapwing present.*

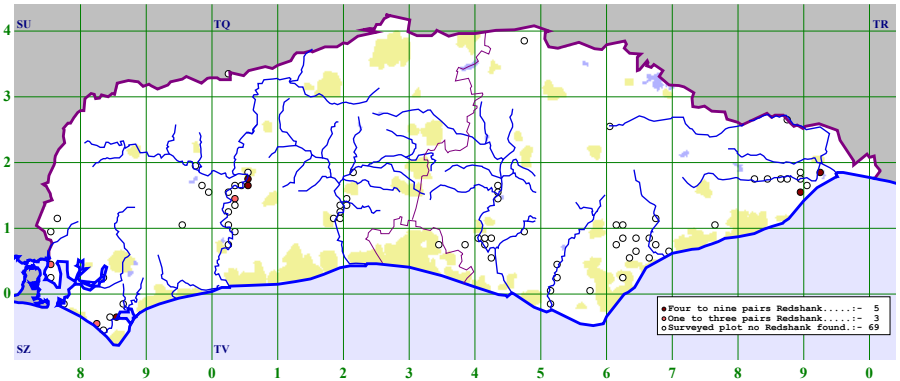


***Figure 2****. The locations of the lowland wet grassland sites surveyed for breeding Redshank in 2021 and 2022. Dark red circle, 4-9 pairs of Redshank present; pale red circle, 1-3 pairs of Redshank present; empty circle, site surveyed but no breeding Redshank present.*

Most breeding Lapwing pairs were found in areas of the Arun, Adur, Ouse and Brede river valleys (including Rye Harbour SWT) and also across the Pevensey Levels; none were found in the Cuckmere river valley. Pairs were also found at Thorney Island, Medmerry RSPB, Pagham Harbour RSPB, Aldingbourne Rife and Combe Haven. Breeding Redshank pairs were found in the Arun valley and the Brede valley (including Rye Harbour SWT) but were absent from all the other main river valleys and the Pevensey Levels. Pairs were also found at Thorney Island, Medmerry RSPB and Pagham Harbour RSPB.

Figure 3 shows the tetrad distribution of all breeding records for Lapwing in Sussex in 2021 and 2022 combined; this includes all the records collected through the current survey as well as other casual records. In addition to the breeding sites within the main river valleys this distribution shows a sparse scattering of farmland breeding sites across the county. An insignificant number of arable farmland breeding sites were recorded through the current survey (because of the inclusion of only a small random selection of sites with Lapwing plots) but casual recording has not resulted in many more arable breeding sites being found. There are also some breeding records along the eastern Rother river valley that were not identified through the current survey. Figure 4 shows the tetrad distribution of all breeding records for Redshank in Sussex in 2021 and 2022 combined; this includes all the records collected through the current survey as well as other casual records. This distribution is essentially the same as that obtained through the current survey with breeding largely limited to some parts of the Arun and Brede river valleys, Thorney Island, Medmerry RSPB and Pagham Harbour RSPB. There is an additional breeding record within the eastern Rother river valley.

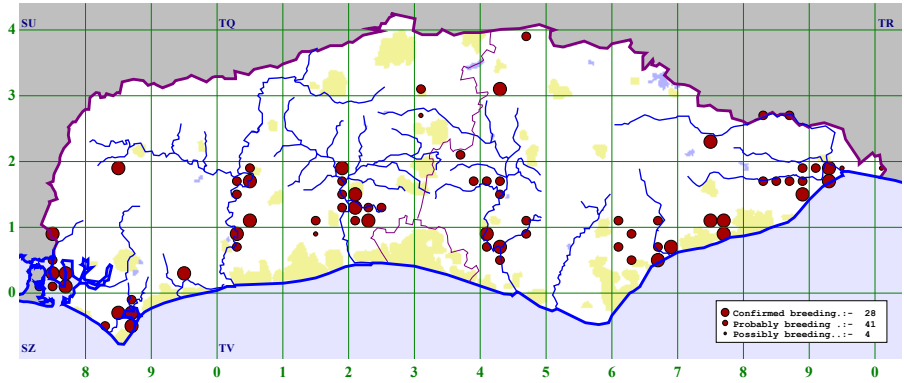


***Figure 3.*** *Tetrad distribution of all breeding records for Lapwing in 2021 and 2022 including records collected through the current survey and all other casual records.*

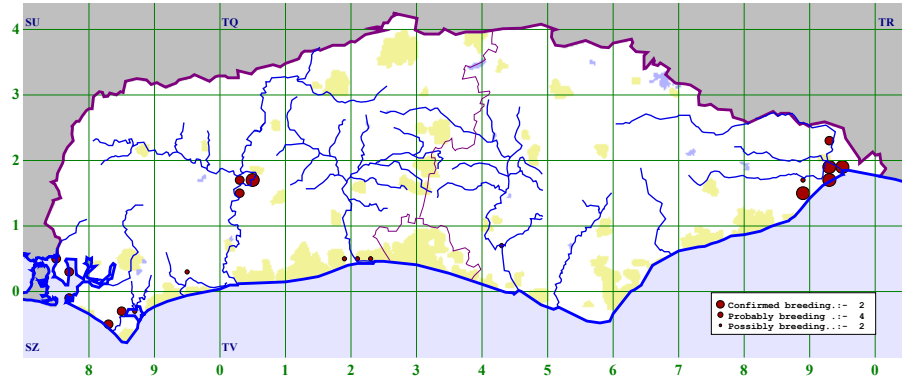


***Figure 4.*** *Tetrad distribution of all breeding records for Redshank in 2021 and 2022 including records collected through the current survey and all other casual records.*

## Discussion

The results of this survey can be compared with those from previous surveys of breeding waders in wet meadow grassland in Sussex and also the results of the Bird Atlas 2007-2011 project (Newnham and Crabtree 2012). Figures 5 and 6 show the breeding distribution maps for Lapwing and Redshank resulting from the Bird Atlas 2007-2011 project and plotted using all breeding records for the breeding seasons 2008-2011 inclusive.

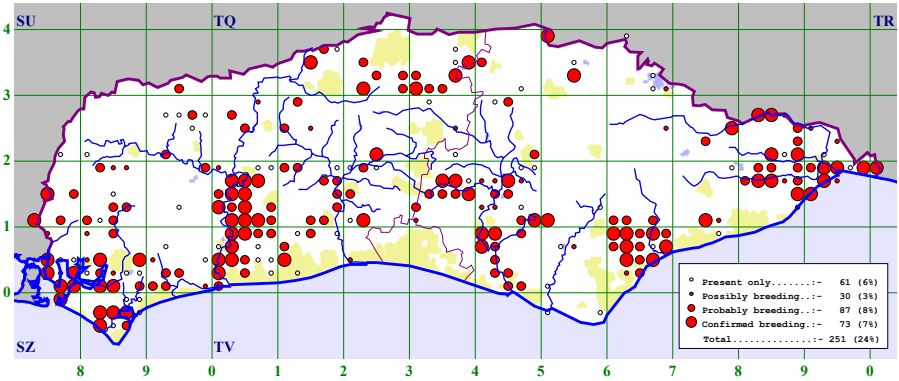


***Figure 5.*** *Lapwing breeding distribution in Sussex during 2008-2011 inclusive.*

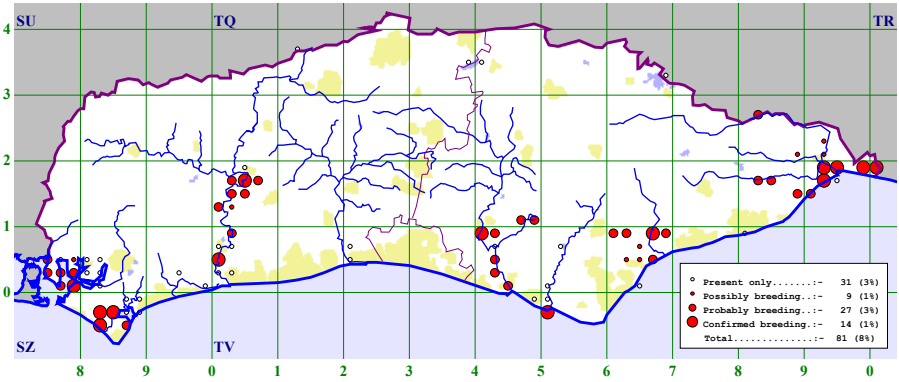


***Figure 6.*** *Redshank breeding distribution in Sussex during 2008-2011 inclusive.*

Comparing the Lapwing distribution map for 2021-2022 with that for 2008-2011 it is clear that although all of the same main river valleys are being used by breeding pairs there is now an absence of breeding in the lower parts of the Arun and Ouse river valleys and also breeding is much reduced across the whole area of the Arun river valley. There has also been a significant reduction since 2008-2011 in downland and other farmland breeding sites although this is difficult to quantify because the current survey was not principally concerned with these breeding habitats.

Comparing the Redshank distribution map for 2021-2022 with that for 2008-2011 it is clear that Redshank has been lost as a breeding species from the lower Arun valley, the entire Ouse river valley and the entire Pevensey Levels.

The previous most recent BTO Breeding Waders of Wet Meadows survey was in 2002 (Yates 2003) and this was a repeat of a similar survey in 1982 (the results of which were noted in the Sussex Bird Report for 1982 but not published in detail). In 1980-1981 the Sussex Ornithological Society conducted a survey of breeding Redshank and Snipe in Sussex using a similar approach (Mitchell 1981). Table 2 summarises the numbers of breeding pairs of wader species found through these surveys at the main lowland wet grassland sites in Sussex and compares these numbers with the total numbers of breeding pairs found through the current survey. Numbers of Ringed Plover and Little Ringed Plover breeding pairs found in 1980-1981, 1982 and 2002 are not available.

| | 1980-1981 | 1982 | 2002 | 2021-2022 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Lapwing | - | 399 | 208 | 150 |
| Redshank | 212 | 133 | 81 | 32 |
| Oystercatcher | - | 27 | 20 | 56 |
| Avocet | - | 0 | 1 | 83 |
| Snipe | 74 | 18 | 4 | 0 |
| Curlew | - | 0 | 0 | 0 |

***Table 2.*** *The numbers of breeding wader pairs found through an SOS survey in 1980-1981 and the BTO Breeding Waders of Wet Meadows surveys in 1982, 2002 and 2021-2022.*

There has clearly been a significant and steady reduction in numbers of breeding pairs of Lapwing since 1982 and Redshank since 1980-1981. The number of breeding pairs of Redshank found in Sussex in 1980-1981 had also declined since previous survey work in the 1960s found at least 250 pairs (Shrubb 1967). The number of breeding pairs of Snipe has also steadily declined since at least 100 pairs were estimated in the county in the 1960s (Shrubb 1967) and Snipe may no longer breed in Sussex at all. These numbers are difficult to compare exactly for a number of reasons. In particular the numbers and areas of the sites surveyed have been very different in the 1980-1981, 1982, 2002 and current surveys. Yates (2003) noted that the number and area of survey sites in Sussex more than doubled between the 1982 and 2002 surveys with the area increasing from 4612 ha to 9879 ha due to newly created sites. In the current survey the total area of the sites surveyed was 9252 ha although because of access restrictions at some sites the actual area surveyed was only 7795 ha. Whether the reduction in area surveyed between 2002 and the current survey is due to the reduced existence of lowland wet grassland in Sussex or due to incomplete coverage is difficult to ascertain from the data available. In addition to the differences in areas surveyed there have obviously been changes in the individuals conducting the surveys, differences in weather conditions and water levels, and differences in survey dates. Comments from survey volunteers at several important sites in Sussex suggest that breeding wader numbers in 2021 and 2022 were representative of the normal current situation and not out-lying results.

The decline in numbers of Lapwing and Redshank breeding in wet meadow habitats in Sussex is difficult to explain because there are so many possible factors; these include changing climate and land use, under-grazing, water abstraction, flooding, excessive drainage, predation, pollution, disease, disturbance and nest trampling. These factors may all have an impact and the actual causes will vary from year to year and also vary with species and location. The Pannel valley and Rye Harbour SWT are currently important areas for breeding Lapwing and Redshank and it is likely that this is due to habitat management along with effective predator control; currently there is predator control at both of these sites but predator control is probably declining across Sussex

and this may partly explain the loss or reduction of breeding waders at some sites (P. Jones pers. comm.). Land management on Thorney Island is thought to be the reason for breeding wader success in the wet grassland habitats there as pools and in-field wet features have been created (P. Hughes pers. comm.) although it is noted that waders breed on arable and shingle habitats on Thorney Island as well as in wet grassland.

Besides the surveys already mentioned covering all wet grassland in Sussex, the Arun river valley has been the subject of further breeding wader surveys, partly due to its importance for breeding waders and partly because there are both RSPB and WWT sites within the valley with interests in managing land for breeding waders. Amberley Wild Brooks was a stronghold for breeding Lapwing, Redshank and Snipe in the 1960-70s but breeding wader declines were recorded in the 1980-90s and attributed by many to increased drainage in the area. The RSPB acquired Pulborough Brooks in 1989 and it was this additional wet grassland habitat with its controlled grazing and water levels which complemented Amberley Wild Brooks and drew in flocks of wintering waterfowl including Lapwings resulting in Special Protection Area (SPA) and Ramsar designation. However, the conservation importance of the very small numbers of local breeding waders was not fully appreciated in the 1980s. The tens of thousands of Lapwings wintering in the Arun river valley returned to their breeding areas in Europe leaving a small and rapidly decreasing local breeding population. Breeding Lapwing are not dependent upon wetland habitat and in the 1990s it was noted that Lapwing bred at Pulborough Brooks RSPB a month or more later than the Lapwing which used to breed then in good numbers on arable land on the South Downs; these were possibly failed nesters as a consequence of corvid predation on the arable land which were then making second attempts down on the new wetland reserve (T. Calloway pers. comm.). Allen (1997) reported on breeding wader surveys in the Arun river valley in 1996 covering an area of 1589 ha and using the same methods as used in the current survey. The 1996 survey found 76 pairs of Lapwing, 86 pairs of Redshank and 37 pairs of Snipe in the Arun valley and Allen noted that Lapwing numbers had remained stable when compared with the results of a similar survey in 1991 whilst Redshank numbers had decreased by 11% and Snipe numbers had decreased by 58%. Allen also reported that the declines in the breeding numbers of Redshank and Snipe in the entire Arun valley between 1991 and 1996 were probably significant but that numbers of both species had increased in some areas of the Arun valley (notably Pulborough Brooks RSPB) and declined in other areas. These differences were thought to relate to water levels and various land use and vegetation differences. Since 2017 annual wader surveys have been conducted in the Arun river valley by a coordinated group of landowners and land managers in an attempt to understand the factors affecting breeding waders and their nesting success rates. Some areas of the Arun valley can be very dry during the breeding season and it is significant that in 2021 the breeding Lapwing and Redshank pairs at Amberley Wild Brooks were located beside a created pool and also in intertidal swamp areas beside the river. The absence of breeding Snipe in the Arun river valley in 2021 and 2022 can also be at least partly attributed to this problem of low water levels. Breeding Snipe were abundant in the Arun river valley until their dramatic decline in 1997; one or two birds remained annually for quite a few years but none have been heard drumming since 2015. Amberley Wild Brooks were mostly dry in 2022 and unsuitable for breeding Snipe at the time of the second survey visit; the late-wintering Snipe recorded on the first survey visit had disappeared. The reasons for the decline in numbers of breeding waders in the Arun river valley in recent years are therefore probably excessive water drainage and water abstraction along with predation by corvids and foxes. Wetland management at Pulborough Brooks RSPB over the years has developed in response to the need to maintain wet areas for waders even in dry years. Pools or lagoons have been created to provide wet margins suitable for feeding waders although the river water which was clean and available to maintain the reserve in the 1990s is now too polluted to use.

The future for breeding waders in wet meadow habitats in Sussex is not necessarily one of continuing decline. In addition to the measures mentioned above being implemented in the Arun river valley as well as on Thorney Island and in the Pannel valley and at Rye Harbour SWT, coordinated groups of landowners and land managers exist or are coming together to consider land management issues in other wet grassland areas such as the Cuckmere river valley and the Pevensey Levels. Another positive sign is that new wader species including Avocet and Little Ringed Plover have become established at some sites.

## Conclusions

The BTO/RSPB Breeding Waders of Wet Meadows survey in 2021-2022 achieved good coverage of lowland wet grassland in Sussex. In total 150 pairs of Lapwing and 32 pairs of Redshank were found breeding at lowland wet grassland sites with these numbers representing significant declines since the most recent similar survey in 2002 and previous surveys. There were no breeding records of Snipe or Curlew in Sussex collected through this survey. The distribution of breeding Lapwing across Sussex was found to be similar to the distribution recorded by the Bird Atlas 2007-2011 project but with an absence of breeding in the lower parts of the Arun and Ouse river valleys and also much less widespread breeding across the whole area of the Arun river valley. The distribution of breeding Redshank across Sussex has become very restricted and this species has been lost as a breeding species from the lower Arun valley, the entire Ouse river valley and the entire Pevensey Levels. Possible reasons for the continuing declines in numbers of breeding Lapwing and Redshank at lowland wet meadow sites have been discussed here and are most likely to be related to water levels and drainage as well as insufficient predator control. Measures are being put in place particularly at protected sites across the county in efforts to reverse the declines in breeding wader numbers. Continued coordinated monitoring of breeding wader numbers across wider areas such as the Arun river valley and the Pevensey Levels as well as at protected sites is essential.

### Acknowledgements

Many thanks are due to all of the observers who conducted surveys and who are identified in the list of contributors, as well as to the landowners who kindly allowed volunteers to carry out surveys on their land. Many thanks are also due to the observers who submitted casual records, all of whom are also identified in the list of contributors, and to Dr John Newnham for providing the maps used in this article. Further thanks are due to Phil Jones, Chris Barfield, Peter Hughes, Dr John Newnham and Rob Hukin for helpful comments.

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# Long term trends at Beachy Head of flycatchers, redstarts, chats and related species

*John Cooper and Anthony Quinn*

## Introduction

Beachy Head is one of a number of major headlands on the south coast which are used by migrants both arriving at and departing from the UK. In 1960, a group of six birdwatchers, resident in what is now SW London, believed that there was an opportunity to study migration at the site and develop it as a ringing station. Prior to that, local birdwatchers had preferred Langney Point and The Crumbles to the east of Eastbourne which, at that time, had excellent habitat for migrants and opportunities for sea watching. Closer still, the late DD Harber used a private area of Holywell as a ringing site in autumn, trapping a few rarities. In 1962, with financial support from the recently formed Sussex Ornithological Society, DD Harber gained permission from Eastbourne Borough Council for our group to build a Heligoland trap in Whitbread Hollow and this was completed in 1963. This represents the formation of The Beachy Head Ringing Station, currently led by Robert Edgar. Prior to this, our limited ringing efforts had been at what is colloquially known as 'The Old Trapping Area', which still attracts the occasional rarity (see Fig. 1 for the locations mentioned in the text). Our activities attracted other Sussex birdwatchers and the Head is now a well-known migration hotspot favoured by birdwatchers and with a long history of regular bird counts, especially through the spring (March to the end of May) and autumn (August to the end of October) migration periods (see annual Sussex Bird Reports).

## Methodology

In this paper we have selected a group of species (the flycatchers, redstarts and chats) and analysed the trends in maximum numbers recorded. Where possible, these are compared with the trends found in the integrated national monitoring schemes of the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO-Common Bird Census (CBC) and the Breeding Bird Survey (BBS)) (Massimo *et al*. 2022). These are shown on the chart legend as 'CBC/BBS' and the axis on the right reflects the actual values. Trend lines use Poisson Regression which deals well with the prevalence of low and zero counts especially in more recent years. They are intended only as a guide. They include early years not covered by BTO surveys but may be less reliable in that period. For example, in the years 1960-62, visits were mostly once a week.

One of us, John Cooper, has been collecting ornithological data from Beachy Head since he moved into Sussex from Lincolnshire in 1970. He was an original member of the group from 1960 to 1964 and on his return, briefly lived in a Chalet on the Head and then in Eastbourne and Burgess Hill. The data from 1970 onwards were a collection of his own and other observers' records. Prior to that data were derived from personal records, the Beachy Head Bird Report (Quinn & Clement 1972) and relevant Sussex Bird Reports. Other records from the Sussex Ornithological Society's database were used to fill some gaps.

The area covered in the following species analyses is shown in Fig. 1 below and is defined to the north by a dashed line. About four miles of coastline is involved. At a maximum, the northern boundary is about one mile inland, but only rarely are fields and hedgerows covered beyond the first ones north of the coast road. With the species below, counts can be considered to be within this more limited area. Field boundaries, formerly with barbed wire and fence posts are as they were. Predominantly, fields were arable, but now are pasture grassland except for a set aside field near

Birling Gap. South of the coast road, apart from one, once arable field, the habitat is mainly short grassland and scrub, and is little changed. Gorse is common west of the Head and there is a small mature deciduous wood.

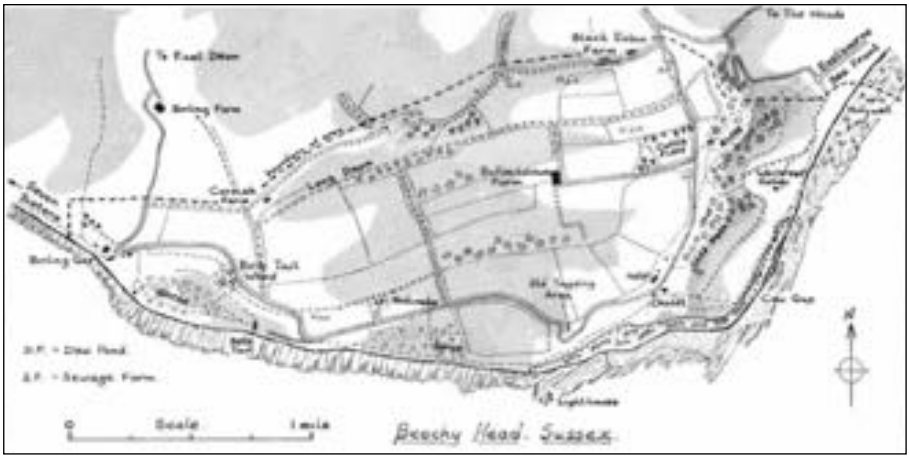


***Figure 1.*** *Area covered by fieldwork.*

## Species Analyses

### **Spotted Flycatcher** *Muscicapa striata*

The regression line in the spring chart (Fig. 2) below shows a 66% (62% from 1966) decline but shows that sizeable spring falls, five up to 1975, have become less frequent, perhaps due to fewer days with mist, drizzle and fog, with which these falls were associated. Breeding occurred in Belle Tout Wood in several years in the 1970s until 1977.

The national monitoring schemes (Fig. 2 CBC/BBS) suggest a greater decline of about 92% for UK and 95% for England (Massimo *et al.* 2022) in the period from 1967-2020. The Beachy Head regression line relates to the BTO results from 1993 but then departs considerably. Some of the higher counts prior to this tend to match the BTO data. The 2008-11 atlas (Balmer *et al.* 2013) shows that the breeding strongholds are now to the north and west, but the breeding density has declined in many other areas.

The autumn chart (Fig. 3) regression line shows a similar overall decline of around 68% (65% from 1966) but with occasional high counts in the late 1970s and early 1980s. In general, conformity with the BTO results (Fig 3. CBC/BBS) is quite good. The timing of the problems in the Sahel region of Africa in the late 1960s and early 1970s appears to be reflected in the declines at Beachy Head between 1970 and 1972 but this is not reflected in the BTO results. British birds winter in sub-Saharan West Africa.

It is thought that most are emigrants from Britain rather than continental birds (Wernham *et al.* 2002, Spina *et al.* 2022). There have been five recoveries of birds ringed in autumn at the Head, three from Britain in summer, one from the near continent and one from Spain, near Gibraltar, all in autumn.

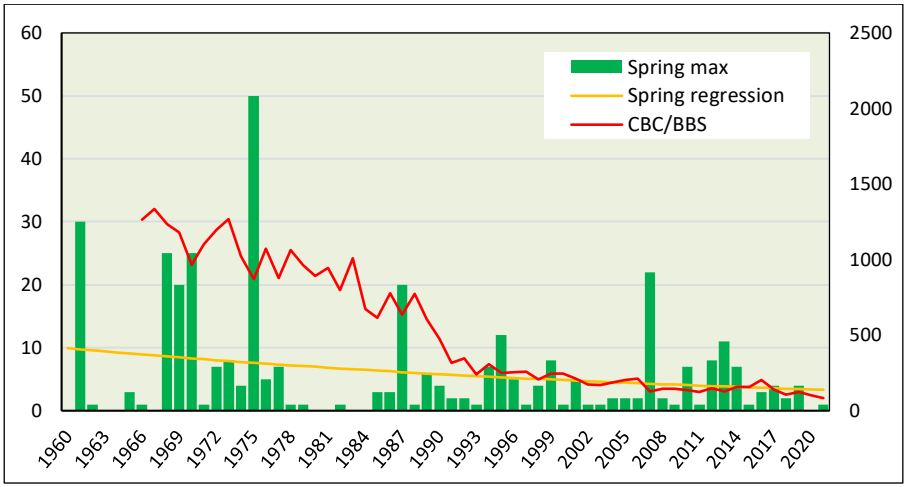


***Figure 2.*** *Spotted Flycatcher - Spring daily maximum*

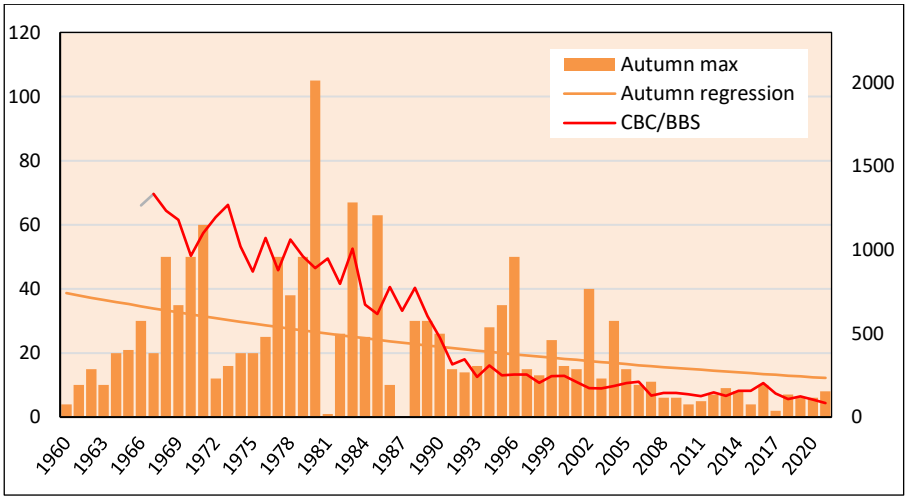


***Figure 3.*** *Spotted Flycatcher - Autumn daily maximum*

**Common Nightingale** *Luscinia megarhynchos*

The spring chart (Fig 4. Spring regression), shows a decline of 83% from 1960 to 2021 (80% from 1966), with records in most years up to the 1980s but in only around half the years in the 2010s. The BTO CBC/BBS data (Massimino *et al.* 2022 and Fig. 4), with a high degree of confidence, indicates a devastating decline of 91% (similar to Spotted Flycatcher) between 1966 and 2021. The Beachy Head regression follows the BTO data quite well from about 1977. Prior to this the national decline is greater. The breeding distribution of Nightingale is confined to south and east England, and density here has decreased in recent decades.

Up to 1971 the breeding population in Whitbread Hollow was usually two singing males, but occasionally one, and perhaps three in one year. It was thought not to have bred there in 1973, but

a singing male, probably breeding, was in Shooters Bottom to the west. Breeding ceased in 1978, but it may have again bred in Whitbread Hollow in 2010. Spring migrants appeared in most years.

The autumn decline (Fig 5. Autumn regression) is far less severe at only 21% (19% from 1966). (See also CBC/BBS). A possible explanation for this is that the habitat suits this species, and a higher proportion of the population of first year birds use the site to feed, prior to their migration. This scenario has already been proposed (Quinn & Clement 1972) for other species, such as Blackcap, which use Beachy Head far more than other headlands e.g. Dungeness or Portland Bill. Recoveries of autumn ringed birds have been from East Sussex, Hampshire and Essex in subsequent summers.

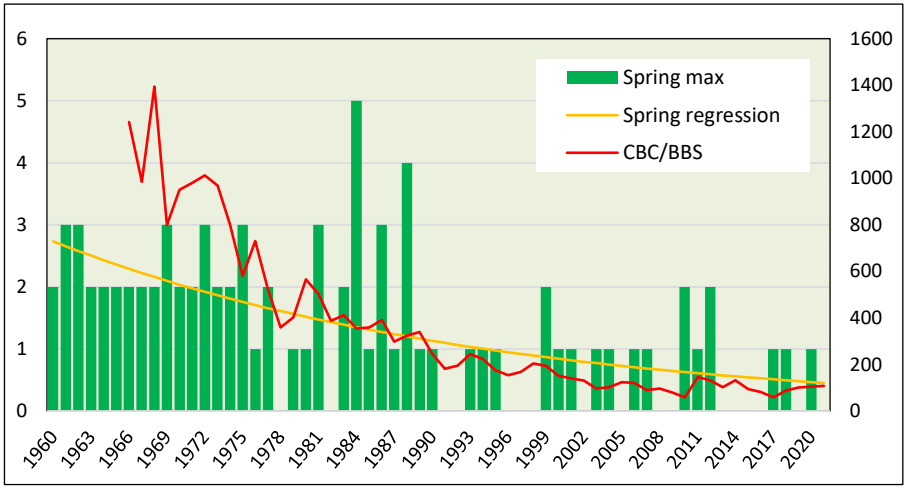


***Figure 4.*** *Nightingale - Spring daily maximum*

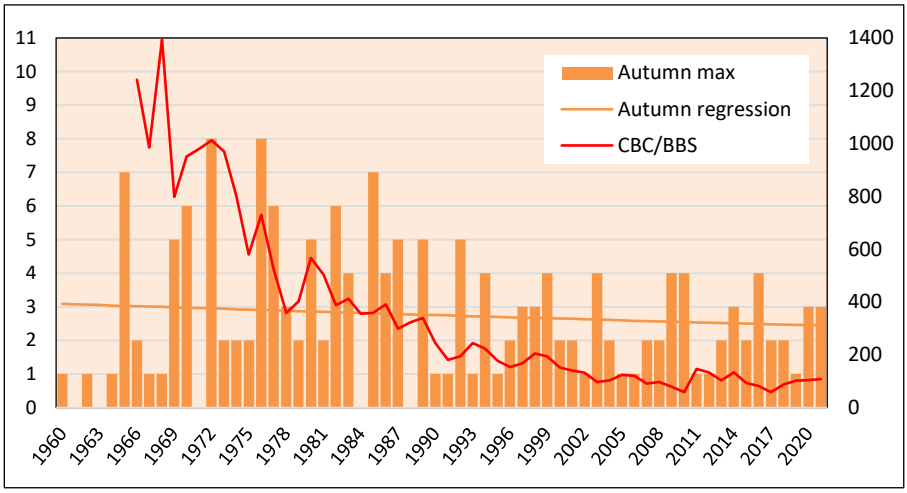


***Figure 5.*** *Nightingale - Autumn daily maximum*



*Nightingale, Beachy Head (Laurence Pitcher)*



*Pied Flycatcher, Beachy Head (Laurence Pitcher)*

**Pied Flycatcher** *Ficedula hypoleuca*

A scarce but quite regular migrant in spring (Fig. 6 plots the total number of birds not maximum), although there are a few years with no records. The regression line (Fig. 6) suggests a decline of 42%. The BBS data available from the BTO (Fig 6. BBS x Spring factor) shows some similarity with the Beachy Head counts. Perhaps coincidentally the Beachy Head decline between 1995 and 2021 is 50% against 56% for the BBS.

The upper areas of the Head were much preferred by this, and some other species, over Whitbread Hollow, where, due to habitat and food availability, it is more attractive to warblers. The autumn regression line (Fig. 7) shows a decline of 84% overall from 1960 to 2021. As with spring there is some similarity between the high counts at Beachy Head and the BBS (Fig. 7 BBS x Autumn factor). Interesting but speculative, a projection of the exponential regression (not reproduced) of BBS x Autumn factor back to 1960 suggests a decline of 82%, very similar to the 84% of Beachy Head. A strong continental contingent is indicated at times. A bird ringed on Heligoland on 8 Aug 1978, was controlled at Whitbread Hollow twelve days later. Equally there are recoveries of Beachy Head ringed birds from Devon and Wales to the west or north-west in the breeding season.

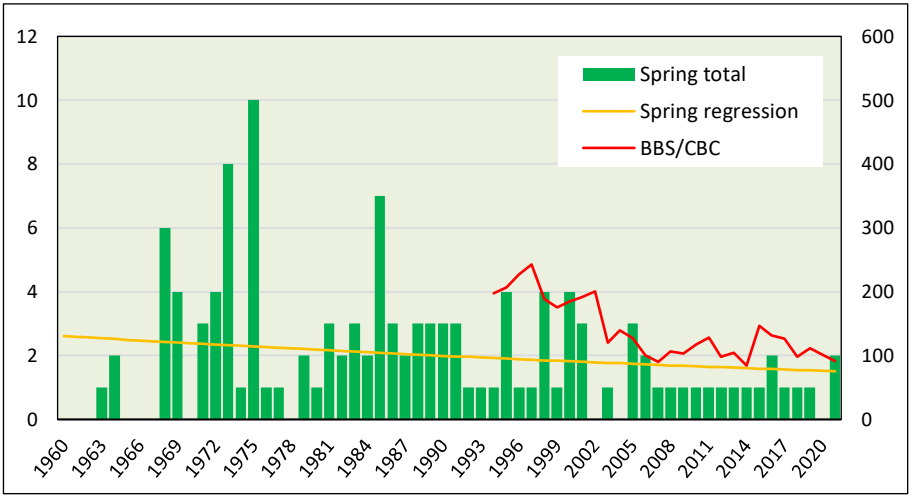


***Figure 6.*** *Pied Flycatcher - Spring total birds*

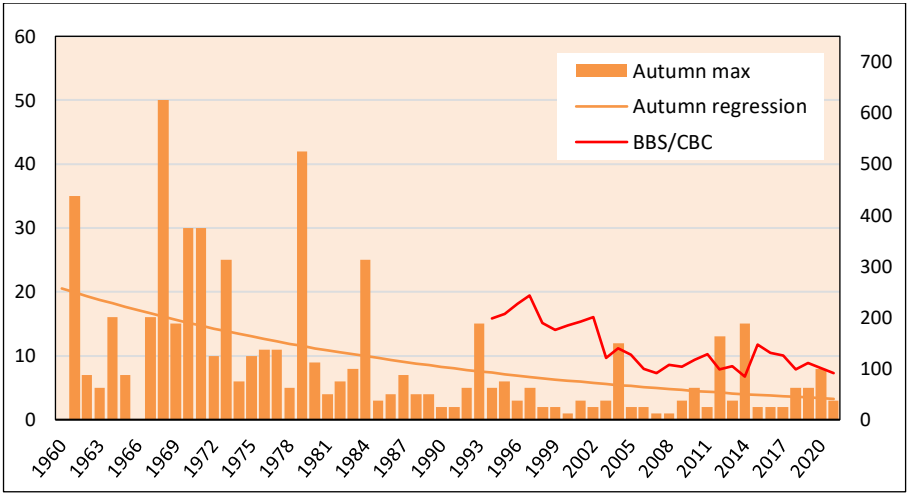


***Figure 7.*** *Pied Flycatcher - Autumn daily maximum*

**Black Redstart** *Phoenicurus ochruros*

The Black Redstart is a rare breeding species in Britain so no annual trend data are available from BTO monitoring schemes although data submitted to the Rare Breeding Birds Panel show a marked decrease since the 1980s. The large Beachy Head counts in the late 1960s and early 1970s (Fig. 8) greatly contribute to the overall circa 40% decline in spring.

Large autumn counts (Fig. 9) in the 1960-80s resulted in a greater overall decline of about 57%. A rare, but not unique recovery of one ringed at Hodcombe on 11 Apr 1974, and recovered in Switzerland in June, 63 days later might suggest that, as with Blackcap and Water Pipit, it could have been a continental bird wintering in Britain or perhaps displaced on spring migration.

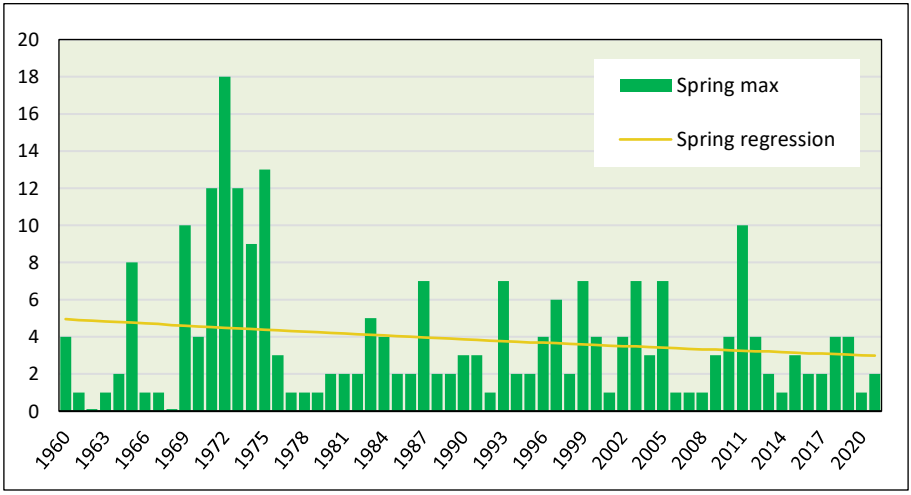


***Figure 8**. Black Redstart - Spring daily maximum*

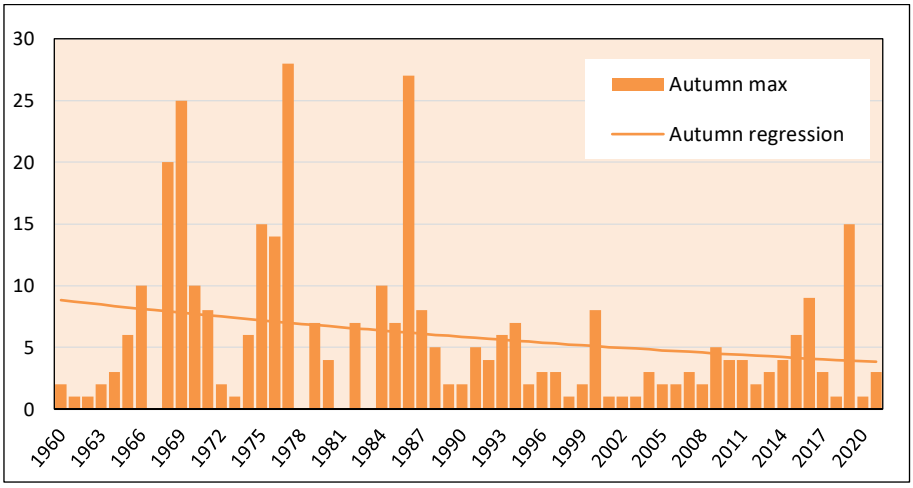


***Figure 9**. Black Redstart - Autumn daily maximum*

**Common Redstart** *Phoenicurus phoenicurus*

The overall decline at Beachy Head in both spring and autumn is similar at 83% and 76% respectively. Large falls of birds, particularly in autumn, were frequent until 1993 but have since become less so, involving lower numbers. Figs. 10 and 11 (CBC/BBS) show an overall decline of only 15% between 1964 and 2021 but a significant increase in the trend since the 1970s. This exceptional case does illustrate how the two methods of analysis can conflict. The 80% decline over seven years from 1967 (Fig. 11) was attributed to climatic problems in the Sahel region (Marchant *et al.* 1990) and is reflected in the Beachy Head results. Particularly since the 1990s, the recovery of the breeding population as illustrated by the BTO results (Figs. 10 and 11) is not reflected at Beachy Head.

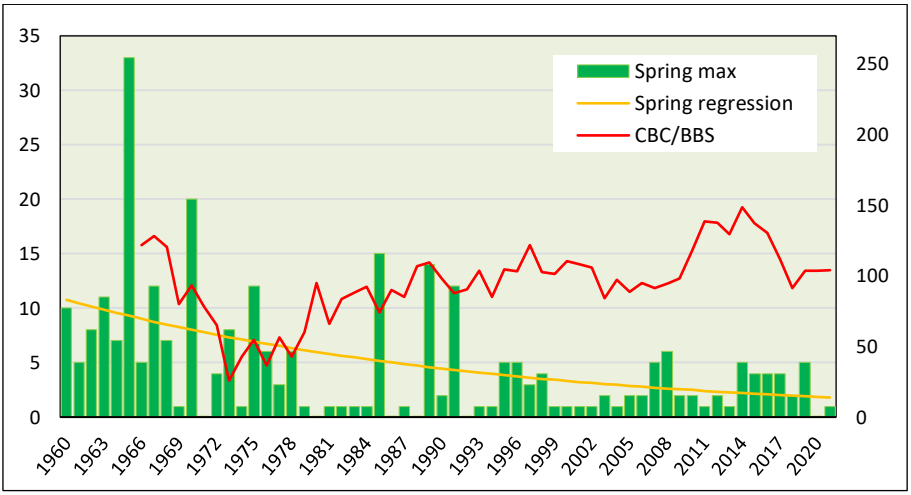


***Figure 10.*** *Common Redstart - Spring daily maximum*

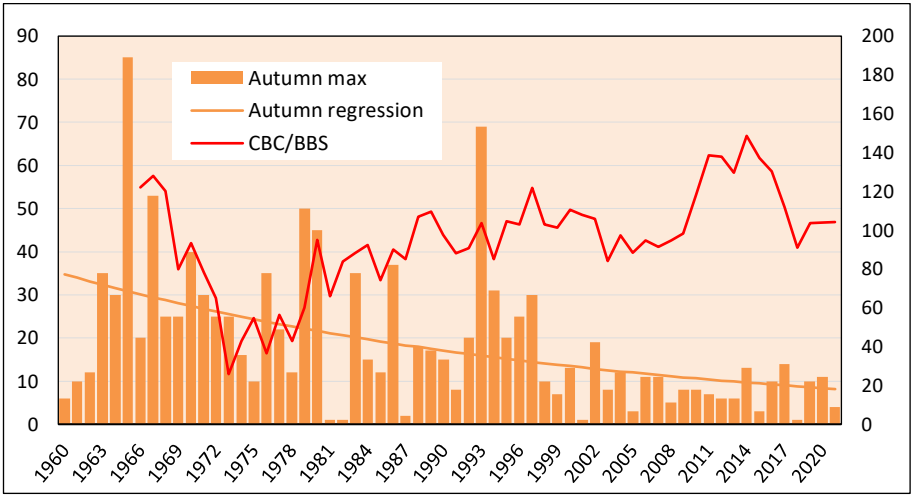


***Figure 11****. Common Redstart - Autumn daily maximum*

Comparing the resulting distribution maps between the 1968-71 and 2008-11 Atlases, there has been a distinct decline of the breeding population in lowland eastern England which probably accounts for the lower numbers at the Head. We feel the best explanation for the decline of our migrants is that where the breeding population has increased, a more westerly route in and out of the UK is used, and perhaps was always used by the more westerly population (Spina *et al.* 2022).



*Common Redstart, Beachy Head (Laurence Pitcher)*

**Whinchat** *Saxicola rubetra*

Whinchat has, surprisingly, never been a common breeding species in Sussex and yet into the early 1960s it was fairly common in other counties, breeding locally even in low areas of Surrey and Middlesex (pers. obs.). Again, the BTO Atlas projects show that the breeding distribution has moved north and west. Spring falls of this species have always been erratic, but clearly there have been no sizeable ones since 1984 (note 56 max. in 1978). Overall, from 1960 to 2021, the spring decline at the Head is around 82% (Fig. 12 Spring regression). In autumn the pattern is similar to spring with a slightly higher overall decline of about 86% (Fig. 13 Autumn regression); note actual counts of 25, 300 and 500. Speculatively, a projection of the exponential regression for both spring and autumn (not reproduced) of BBS x Spring factor and BBS x Autumn factor back to 1960 is almost identical to that of Beachy Head regressions.

The Euring Migration Atlas (Spina *et al.* 2022) suggests that there may be a similar situation to Common Redstart, with birds exiting Britain further west, but there is less evidence with Whinchat. At least some of this species cross the Sahel to reach wintering grounds in Ghana and the autumn chart suggests a possible problem.

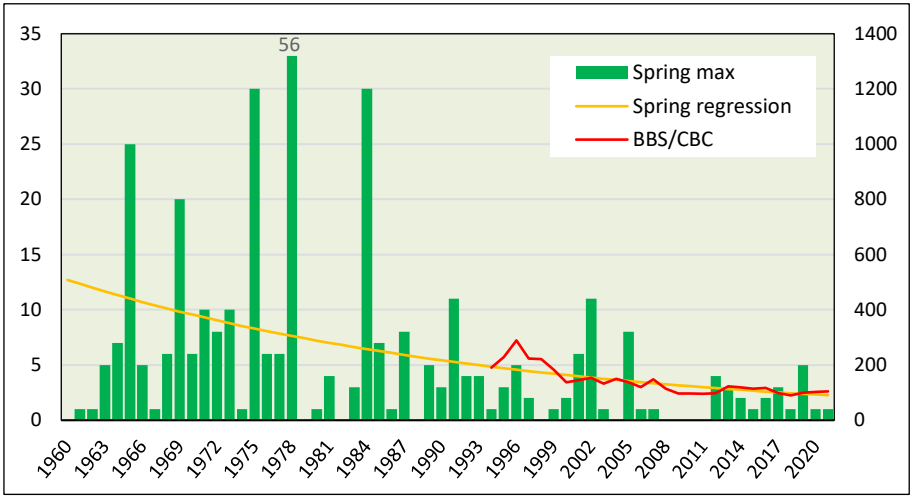


***Figure 12**. Whinchat - Spring daily maximum*

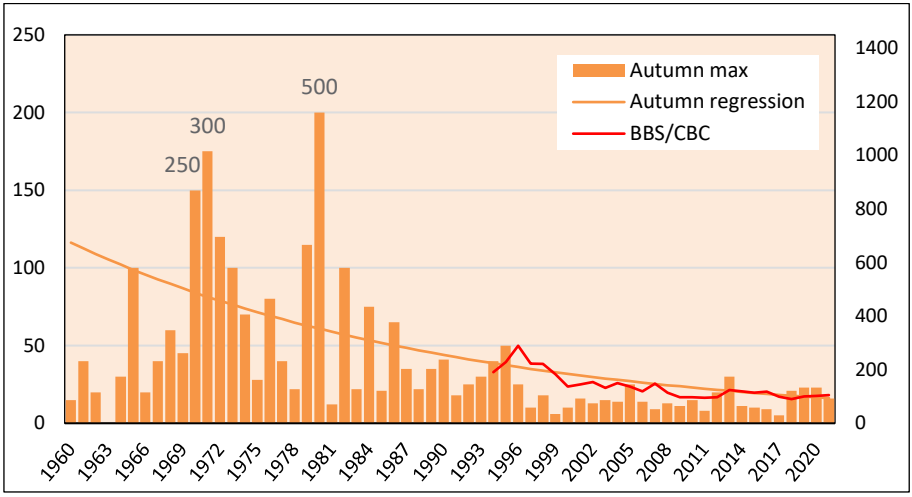


***Figure 13.** Whinchat - Autumn daily maximum*

**Northern Wheatear** *Oenanthe oenanthe*

The spring decline at Beachy Head is about 52% (Fig. 14 Spring regression) since 1960. The BTO data (BBS x spring factor) follows the Beachy Head regression well and a projection of the exponential regression (not reproduced) of BBS x Spring factor back to 1960 is almost identical to that of the Beachy Head regression (note actual counts of 100 and 120).

Again, the Atlas projects show that the species has declined in east and south-east England. As with most other species under consideration, this suggests that a more westerly entry and exit is preferred. The Euring Migration Atlas project (Spina *et al.* 2022) tends to support this theory.

The autumn shows a similar 56% decline overall. The BTO data (BBS x Autumn factor) follows

the Beachy Head regression moderately well. Again, speculatively, a projection of the exponential regression (not reproduced) of BBS x Autumn factor back to 1960 gives a decline of 51%, very similar (note actual counts of 500 in two years).

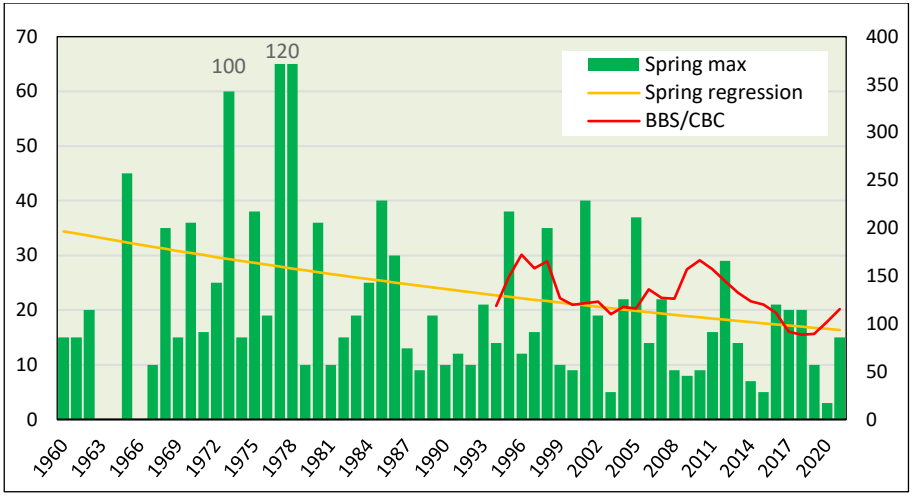


***Figure 14.*** *Wheatear - Spring daily maximum*

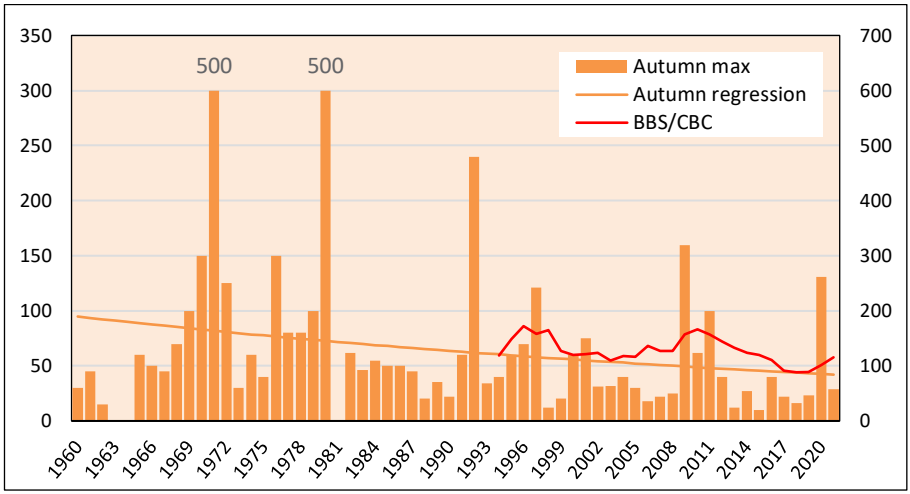


***Figure 15.*** *Wheatear - Autumn daily maximum*

## Discussion

It is not often that datasets collected over a period of 60 years are available for analysis but John Cooper's data from Beachy Head are a stark reminder of the big national declines in breeding birds that have occurred over this period. The counts of these migrant birds passing through the Head have not only declined on average but the big 'falls' of birds that were common in the 1960s and 1970s are now less frequent with fewer birds involved.

The methods of collating data between Beachy Head and the BTO are substantially different. One day a year for each season (except Pied Flycatcher spring) for Beachy Head, with autumn birds almost entirely young. For the BTO multiple breeding sites and several visits each year, although for these relatively scarce species the number of BTO sites are probably few. Obviously the BTO method is far superior but, perhaps surprisingly, the Beachy Head data correlates quite well.

Further support for the scale of the decline comes from ringing by RH and E Charlwood in a garden on the headland from 1968 to 1971. The higher areas, where this garden is located are preferred by these species over Whitbread Hollow, which has more suitable habitat for warblers. In the 1960s and some of the 1970s this garden was virtually surrounded by spring sown wheat fields, all fenced and harvested in August and September. There has been little or no arable since about the mid-1990s. Below (Fig. 19) are just the autumn annual ringing totals from that garden, some of which, we would suggest, now exceed the annual totals recorded from the whole Head.

| | 1968 | 1969 | 1970 | 1971 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Spotted Flycatcher | 49 | 34 | 62 | 80 |
| Pied Flycatcher | 71 | 35 | 23 | 15 |
| Redstart | 40 | 27 | 41 | 19 |
| Whinchat | 44 | 133 | 81 | 71 |
| Wheatear | 164 | 98 | 160 | 175 |

**Figure 16.** *Autumn ringing totals in a headland garden, 1968-1971.*

Perhaps some of the more spectacular falls of these species will never be repeated. Nevertheless, regular watching at the headland will certainly be repaid by the appearance of migrants, unusual or rare for Sussex.

## Acknowledgements

Thanks are due to The British Trust for Ornithology for access to their data; Ken Smith for his comments, guidance and further input, particularly with trends; Dr John Newnham for providing additional data from the Society's archive to enable completion of the charts; Paul Forsdick and Robert Edgar for providing details of ringing recoveries; and all observers, past and present whose records will have enabled this report.

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# SOS Breeding Nightingale Survey 2022

*Dr Ken Smith and Matt Twydell*

The Common Nightingale *Luscinia megarhynchos* was placed on the Birds of Conservation Concern Red List (Stanbury *et al.* 2021) because it had declined by more than 50% and had suffered a moderate loss of range. The latest trend graphs from the BTO show that the decline was mainly from 1995 to 2007 with relative stability since (Harris *et al.* 2022). The range decreased from 457 occupied 10-km squares in the 1988-91 national atlas to 367 in 2008-11 (-20%) (Harris *et al.* 2022). However, the loss of occupied 10-km squares was mainly on the edges of the range in the Midlands and East Anglia with little change in the southeast including Sussex (Balmer *et al.* 2013, Holt *et al.* 2012).

Sussex is a key county for the species with a long history of county surveys (Merritt 1978, Newnham 1980, Newnham & Sennitt 1999 and Crabtree & Brooks 2013) with population estimates ranging from about 600 to 1000 singing males. Soon after the last atlas the BTO organised a national Nightingale survey in 2012/13 which resulted in a population estimate of 5550 singing males (Hewson *et al.* 2018). In Sussex coverage for this survey was extremely good with a total of 852 singing males reported (Crabtree & Brooks 2013) which was the source for the population estimate of 860 published in the Sussex atlas (Thomas 2014).

Given the importance of the county for the species and the uncertainty about the trends in numbers, SOS organised a breeding Nightingale survey some ten years since the last one. The aims of the survey were to count the numbers of singing male Nightingales in a sample of 1-km squares (monads) in 2022 to compare the numbers with those found in 2012/13. In addition, we planned to use the data to make a new estimate of the total county population.

## Methods

The survey methods followed those used in the last BTO survey. Observers were asked to survey their monad twice between 21 April and 20 May in the early morning and cover all suitable habitat before 08:30. There were two important changes from the BTO methods. Firstly, as well as asking observers to carry out dawn or dusk surveys the BTO also requested additional nocturnal visits. Nightingales sing mainly around the early and late part of the day but also overnight when they are often most audible for non-birdwatchers. It has been suggested that the males singing through the night are unpaired birds trying to attract a mate whereas those singing during the day are the breeding males (Amrhein *et al.* 2007)). In the 2012/13 survey the BTO wished to investigate this pattern at the national scale but for the SOS survey in 2022 we were interested in counts of breeding birds so did not request any nocturnal counts.

Our second departure from the BTO survey methods is that we based the SOS survey on full surveys of monads. The BTO survey was based on tetrads but in our experience, it is extremely challenging to survey a whole tetrad before 08:30 whilst covering all the potential Nightingale habitat. Surveys of monads were a much more practical proposition.

We recorded habitat around the singing males using the same categories as those used in 2012/13 BTO survey. Observers were asked to record the main habitat within 50m of the singing birds but could also include subsidiary habitats. Browsing by high numbers of deer has been shown in some circumstances to have a negative impact on Nightingale habitat and numbers (Holt *et al.* 2010) so we asked observers to record any observations on deer and the signs of deer in their monads.

## Sampling strategy

It was impossible to count all the singing Nightingales in Sussex so we needed a framework to sample suitable areas that would allow us to extrapolate the results to the whole county as well as having a robust measure of change. We were fortunate that the coverage for the 2012/13 survey was extremely good in Sussex and the data were archived in the SOS database at the monad level (Figure 1). We were therefore able to use the 2012/13 results as the basis for the random selection of monads to be surveyed in 2022.

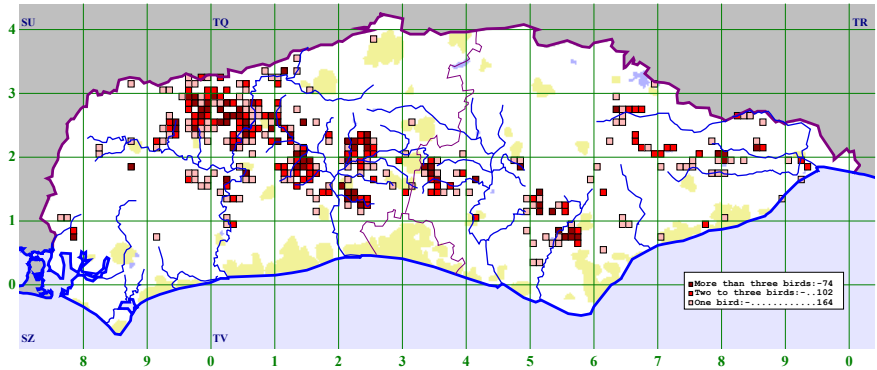


**Figure 1.** *The distribution of singing Nightingales found in the 2012/13 survey mapped at the monad scale. These data were the basis for our sampling strategy for the 2022 survey. The categories of monads (>3 singing birds, 1-2 and one) match our survey strata.*

We based the selection on the numbers of singing male Nightingales in the monads in 2012/13.

**Tier 1.** Monads with >3 singing males in 2012/13; a total of 74 monads with 30 randomly selected for survey.

**Tier 2**. Monads with 2-3 singing males in 2012/13; a total of 102 monads with 30 selected for survey.

**Tier 3**. Monads with one singing male in 2012/13; a total of 164 monads with 30 selected for survey.

**Tier 4.** Monads which were within positive tetrads in 2012/13 but where no singing males were reported; a total of 417 monads with 40 selected for survey. Our thinking was that if there had been any increase in numbers or distribution between 2012/13 and 2022 this was most likely to be close to existing populations.

In addition, we used the SOS database to identify any monads with records of singing Nightingales from 2014-21 which were not in tiers 1 to 4. This resulted in a total of 83 monads 30 of which were selected for survey (Tier 5).

We set a up a website (http://sosnightingales.birdsurvey.org.uk) where observers could select monads they wished to survey and download the required maps, recording forms and instructions.

When we came to carry out the data analysis, as a final check, we looked at all the records of singing Nightingales submitted to SOS in 2022 to look for any extra birds in the randomly selected monads. In addition, we looked for any records that were in monads not included in any of the five tiers. These would represent extra Nightingales not captured by the sampling strategy.

## Analyses

We carried out two analyses. Firstly, we compared the counts in the selected monads in 2012/13 and 2022 to look for change over the decade. Secondly, we extrapolated the sample counts to estimate the total Sussex population in 2022. We also looked at the habitats where the birds were recorded to compare the two periods.

## Results

Of the 180 monads in our original random selection, observers were allocated to 140 (78%) and of these we received results from 114 monads (81%) (Figure 2).

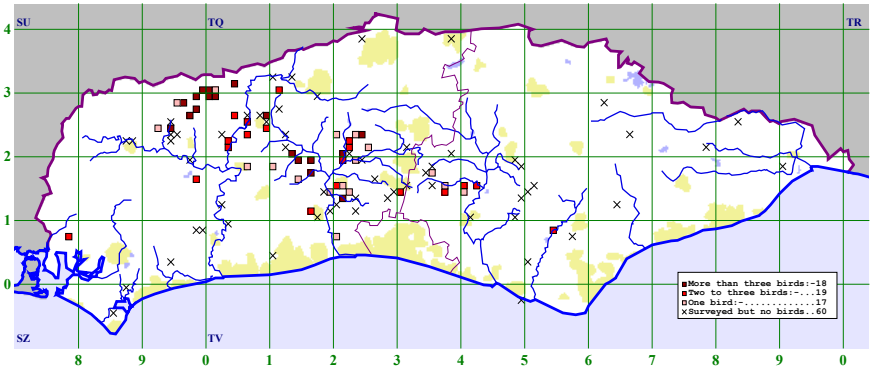


**Figure 2.** *The distribution of monads surveyed and the numbers of singing Nightingales reported in each one.*

The results are shown in Table 1 which also includes the numbers from the same monads in 2012/13. Overall, 215 Nightingale territories were found in the 114 monads surveyed compared with 199 in the same monads in 2012/13, an 8% increase. In both the 2012/13 and 2022 surveys there were big ranges in the numbers per monad from zero to a maximum of 15. The tier 1 monads showed a small decrease in the mean numbers of singing males (from 5.8 in 2012/13 to 4.9 in 2022) whereas all the other tiers showed increases. The biggest increase was in tier 4; those monads with no singing birds in 2012/13 but within positive tetrads and therefore adjacent to occupied monads.

Using the densities of singing males in the five tiers our overall population estimate for Sussex in 2022 was 1089 singing males (95% range 523-1778). In addition, the SOS database showed there were 97 singing birds in 61 monads which were not included in any of the survey tiers. This brings the population estimate to 1186 singing males (95% range 620-1875).

Habitat information was provided for 188 of the 215 territories and in Table 2 we compare the principal habitats for the 2012/13 and 2022 surveys. The mix of habitats in the two surveys is similar except there is a significant decrease in the fraction of birds in broadleaved woodland and coppice in 2022 with the associated increase in birds in scrub. This is perhaps not surprising given the increases in birds in places like the Knepp Estate and SWT Butcherlands where scrub is being allowed to develop.

The presence or absence of deer was reported for 64 of the 114 monads surveyed. Deer of any species was reported in 44 (69%) of the 64 monads with the most frequent species being Roe and Fallow Deer (30 and 17 monads respectively) with Red and Reeves' Muntjac reported in one monad each. There was no evidence of a negative impact of the deer. The mean numbers of singing Nightingales was actually higher in the monads with deer present (deer present 3.25, deer absent 1.35) but the variation was so high that the difference was not statistically significant.

| | 2022 survey | | | 2012/13 survey | | 2022 population estimates (95% range) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Number of monads | Number of Nightingales | Mean per monad | Number of Nightingales | Mean per monad | |
| Tier 1 | 22 | 107 | 4.86 | 128 | 5.82 | 364 (221-525) |
| Tier 2 | 25 | 64 | 2.56 | 54 | 2.16 | 264 (136-408) |
| Tier 3 | 17 | 20 | 1.18 | 17 | 1.00 | 192 (57-385) |
| Tier 4 | 32 | 19 | 0.59 | 0 | 0 | 246 (104-404) |
| Tier 5 | 18 | 5 | 0.28 | 0 | 0 | 23 (5-56) |
| Total | 114 | 215 | | 199 | | 1089 (523-1778) |

**Table 1.** *The numbers of singing Nightingales in 2022 and the calculations leading to the overall population estimate. The numbers found in the same monads in 2012/13 are also given. The 95% ranges for the population estimates were calculated using a 'bootstrap' procedure.*

| Habitat | Nos. of territories in 2012/13 (%) | Nos. of territories in 2022 (%) |
|---|---|---|
| Broad-leaved woodland | 172 (27) | 25 (13) |
| Broad-leaved woodland: active coppice | 22 (3) | 10 (5) |
| Coniferous woodland | 2 (0) | 0 |
| Mixed woodland | 4 (1) | 5 (3) |
| Carr (broad-leaved, waterlogged) | 41 (6) | 0 |
| Scrub | 318 (50) | 110 (59) |
| New plantation (<5m tall) | 13 (2) | 4 (2) |
| Farmland hedgerow | 56 (9) | 25 (13) |
| Gardens | 3 (1) | 0 |
| Other (disused orchard) | 4 (1) | 0 |
| Other (unspecified) | 2 (0) | 9 (5) |

**Table 2.** *Primary habitat at Nightingale singing locations in 2012/13 and 2022.*

## Discussion

The numbers of singing birds are consistent with previous estimates for the county and there is certainly no evidence of any big change in the Sussex population over the last forty years. In 1976, 661 territories were identified (Merrit 1978) and a survey in 1980 gave 858 territories (Newnham 1980). In a further survey in 1999, 692 territories were counted in Sussex with a tentative county population estimate of 1000 territories (Newnham & Sennitt 1999). These are all consistent with the 852 counted in 2012/13 (Crabtree & Brooks 2013). Our estimate is higher than these largely because we surveyed a random sample of squares with a clear sampling strategy and were able to extrapolate the numbers to allow for uncovered monads. As a result of the sampling, the estimate comes with wide confidence intervals which in any case overlap all the previous estimates.

There are two further sources of evidence for the comparative stability of the Nightingale population in Sussex. Firstly, the two published tetrad atlases (James 1996 & Thomas 2014) reported 288 occupied tetrads in 1988-92 and a small decrease to 248 in 2008-11. Secondly, the BTO/RSPB/JNCC Breeding Bird Survey has been running since the mid-1990s and in Sussex the coverage

has been excellent increasing from 32 randomly selected monads surveyed in 1995 to 185 in 2022 (see for instance Crabtree 2021). The fraction of monads with Nightingales has remained at about 8% throughout the period with no evidence of a trend over time (trend in binomial proportion, P=0.67) supporting the view of little change in the Nightingale population over the period.

Singing Nightingales are currently distributed through parts of the Weald with little evidence of any change in the last decade at least but are thinly distributed on the Downs and the coastal plain (Figure 3). However, the species was once far more widespread in the county. For instance, Walpole-Bond (1938) wrote '…putting aside most towns and really bare country, is found generally in more or less scattered pairs though in certain areas in what may almost be termed little "colonies" throughout most of the county'. Presumably there is no longer sufficient suitable habitat in many areas of the county where the birds have been lost.

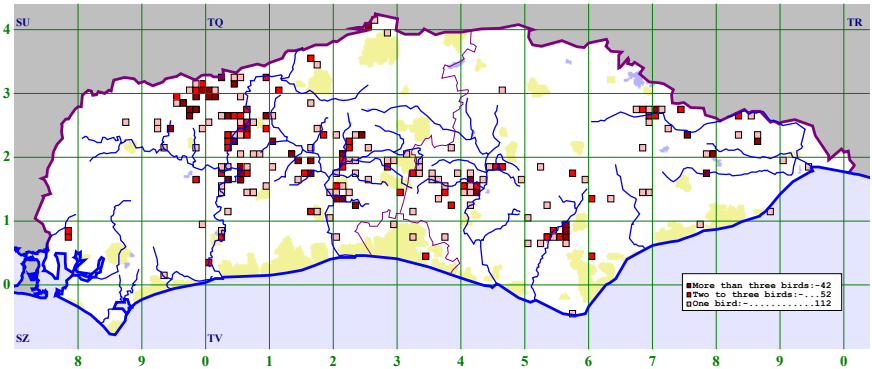


**Figure 3.** *The total distribution of singing Nightingales reported in 2022 combining the results of this survey and all other records submitted to the SOS Recorder.*

There has been a significant shift to fewer birds being found in broadleaved woodland and active coppice in 2022 compared with 2012/13 continuing the trend to nesting in scrub. Scrub is now clearly the key habitat but this comes in many forms from small scrub patches, large overgrown hedgerows, powerline wayleaves, clearfells and re-wilded areas such as the Knepp Estate and SWT Butcherlands. The Sussex population appears to be sufficiently resilient to colonise such areas as they become available but it also means there is turn-over of sites as habitat matures and becomes less suitable. The extra birds we found from the SOS database support the idea of site turn-over.

Deer occur in high numbers throughout Sussex and are probably increasing yet they do not appear to be having such a negative impact on the Nightingales as found in the experimental study in the East Anglian coppiced woodland (Holt *et al.* 2010). More studies are needed to investigate the impact of the high deer numbers on the habitat structures in Sussex. It could well be that the Wealden landscape with its high woodland cover, pastoral rather than arable farmland and frequent patches of scrub is less vulnerable to deer impacts than the largely arable land with scattered woodland of East Anglia.

The main driver of the increased numbers in the 2022 survey was the birds in tier 4 – monads within tetrads surveyed in 2012/13 with no birds recorded then. This could represent a genuine colonisation of new areas but could also be the result of better coverage in 2022 with the monads being a far more tractable area to survey than whole tetrads.

The BTO estimated the national Nightingale population as 5550 singing males using the results of the 2012/13 survey (Hewson *et al.* 2018). On this basis Sussex could hold upwards of 20% of

the national population. The BTO used data from multiple visits to estimate the detectability of the birds during tetrad surveys and came up with an overall figure of 55-65% and used this to arrive at their population estimate. It is probable that detectability is higher with surveys of monads compared with tetrads but there have never been any corrections for detectability in any of the Sussex population estimates so it could well be the Sussex is even more important for the species than the uncorrected numbers suggest.

The BTO study also investigated the impact of time of day on the detectability of Nightingales and found that it was relatively insensitive (Hewson *et al.* 2018) with the modelled detection probability only falling from 0.6 to 0.5 from dawn until mid-morning. This implies that for future surveys we can probably relax the constraint of only surveying up to 08:30 and perhaps go through to mid-morning.

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Nightingale, Pulborough Brooks, 20 April (Gary Faulkner)

## Unusual Records

All records of the unusual species listed below are subject to assessment by the SOS Records Committee and it may be assumed that those published in the annual Sussex Bird Report have been fully authenticated.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| All pheasants (except Common) | Roseate Tern | Red-rumped Swallow |
| Taiga Bean Goose | White-winged Black Tern | Wood Warbler |
| Pink-footed Goose | Pomarine Skua (not spring) | Pallas's Leaf Warbler |
| Tundra Bean Goose | Long-tailed Skua | Radde's Warbler |
| Whooper Swan | Little Auk | Dusky Warbler |
| American Wigeon | Black Guillemot | Greenish Warbler |
| Green-winged Teal | Puffin | Arctic Warbler |
| Ring-necked Duck | White-billed Diver | Blyth's Reed Warbler |
| Surf Scoter | All petrels (except Fulmar) | Marsh Warbler |
| Smew | All shearwaters (except Manx) | Melodious Warbler |
| Alpine Swift | White Stork [1] | Icterine Warbler |
| Corncrake | Glossy Ibis | Barred Warbler |
| Spotted Crake | Night-heron | Rose-coloured Starling |
| Crane | Purple Heron | Red-spotted Bluethroat [2] |
| Red-necked Grebe | Montagu's Harrier | Red-flanked Bluetail |
| Stone-curlew | Black Kite | Red-breasted Flycatcher |
| Black-winged Stilt | White-tailed Eagle [1] | Dipper |
| American Golden Plover | Rough-legged Buzzard | Citrine Wagtail |
| Dotterel | Hoopoe | Richard's Pipit |
| Temminck's Stint | Bee-eater | Olive-backed Pipit |
| White-rumped Sandpiper | Red-footed Falcon | Water Pipit [3] |
| Buff-breasted Sandpiper | Red-backed Shrike | Common Rosefinch |
| Pectoral Sandpiper | Woodchat Shrike | Twite |
| Red-necked Phalarope | Golden Oriole | Common Redpoll |
| Grey Phalarope | Chough | Parrot Crossbill |
| Lesser Yellowlegs | Hooded Crow | Serin |
| Sabine's Gull | Willow Tit | Lapland Bunting |
| Ring-billed Gull | Penduline Tit | Ortolan Bunting |
| Glaucous Gull | Shore Lark | Cirl Bunting |
| Iceland Gull | Short-toed Lark | Little Bunting |

[1] Only when there is evidence that the bird is of wild origin and not from a reintroduction project or otherwise escaped or released.

[2] White-spotted Bluethroat *Luscinia svecica cyanecula* is a BBRC subspecies.

[3] Except for coastal area from Eastbourne eastwards.

In addition, descriptions are required for some subspecies, including: 'Black Brant' (*B. b. nigricans*), 'Kumlien's Gull' (*L. g. kumlieni*), 'Continental' Coal Tit (nominate *P. a. ater*), 'Siberian' Chiffchaff (*P. c. tristis*), 'Northern' Willow Warbler (*P. t. acredula*) and Yellow Wagtail forms *M.f. thunbergi* and *M. f. flava*. However, descriptions are not required for the following subspecies: 'Pale-bellied' Brent Goose (*B. b. hrota*), nominate Herring Gull (*L. a. argentatus*), *intermedius* Lesser Black-backed Gull, 'Greenland' Wheatear (*O. o. leucorhoa*) and nominate White Wagtail (*M. a. alba*).

Descriptions may also 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 are also acceptable.

Reports of national rarities as defined by the British Birds Rarities Committee (BBRC) should be submitted to the Recorder either in the same format as above or on BBRC forms available from the Recorder or via the BBRC website https://www.bbrc.org.uk/submit-a-sighting.



*Red-necked Phalarope, Rye Harbour, 21 October (Barry Yates)*

## Contributors and acknowledgements

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| A Dennis[T] | G Dunning[U] | P Evans[U] | DS Flumm |
| D Dennis[X] | P Dunwiddie[U] | R Evans[U] | R Foakes[X] |
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| R Desy[U] | K Dziubinska[DEXT] | JJ Everitt[HWU] | AE Ford[T] |
| S Dettmar[T] | MR Eade[ET] | M Eydmann[X] | W Ford[T] |
| SC Devereau[T] | R Eadie | T Eydmann[X] | T Forster[U] |
| R Devo[T] | M Eagles[B] | H Fairbairn[U] | TP Forster[T] |
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| J Dickinson[D] | J Ede[U] | J Farooqi[U] | T Fowler[X] |
| H Dignum[X] | RDM Edgar | R Farran[BCXT] | TP Fox[BDHNT] |
| M Dillamore[BDN] | P Edgcombe[T] | S Farrand[U] | R Frampton[T] |
| K Dirs[X] | B Edge[T] | AR Farrar[T] | A Francis[D] |
| T Diserens[T] | T Edom[X] | G Faulkner | M Francis |
| G Dixon[X] | A Edwards[U] | C Feerick[U] | R Franks[U] |
| J Dixon[U] | J Edwards[XT] | JA Feest | C Fraser |
| A Dobson[U] | J Edwards[X] | C Feger[U] | J Fraser[X] |
| S Docker[X] | M Edwards[X] | G Fenn[T] | L Fredberg[U] |
| JW Dodd | P Eerdmans[U] | D Fenton-Scott[T] | P Free[T] |
| J Doherty[T] | T Eichner[X] | P Fenwick[H] | K Freegard[X] |
| TA Doherty[T] | C Eland[X] | L Fernando[U] | MG Freeman |
| K Donaghy[T] | H Eldon[T] | D Field[U] | P Freitas[U] |
| R Donelan | T Ellery[U] | S Field[T] | CD French[BCT] |
| S Donnelly[U] | D Elliott[X] | JE Fields[B] | S Frettsome |
| K Donovan[T] | S Elliott[T] | F Finch[U] | O Froom[X] |
| R Donovan[T] | K Ellse[T] | P Finch[U] | C Fry[MW] |
| J Dorward[U] | M Emberson[M] | C Firman[XTU] | DC Fry[T] |
| L Dorward[U] | [T] Emmens[T] | J Fisher[T] | RC Fullbrook[C] |
| E Dowding[H] | B England[T] | R Fisher[U] | TP Fuller[T] |
| GR Down[MX] | M England[X] | S Fisk[X] | WW Fuller[B] |
| FT Downing[T] | S Englund[U] | A Fitzgerald[U] | W Funk[U] |
| J Downing[T] | T Ensom[U] | AW Flannagan[T] | A Galloway[X] |
| W Drake-Wilkes[U] | D Errey[T] | K Fleming[T] | MA Galtry[T] |
| T Dray[T] | S Errington[T] | K Fleming[N] | J Gamlin[X] |
| S Driver[X] | R Escott[X] | D Fletcher[T] | C Gape |

| C Garcia[U] | J Glover[BDMT] | R Grimmett | K Hardy |
|---|---|---|---|
| M Garcia[U] | R Glover[U] | A Grimsey[T] | M Hare[T] |
| AH Gardiner[T] | B Goddard[U] | R Grimshaw[U] | W Hare[U] |
| N Gardner[U] | C Goddard[X] | S Grimwade[U] | F Hargreaves[W] |
| P Gardner[X] | N Goldsmith[T] | C Grindrod[T] | T Harkness[U] |
| A Garner[X] | D Goodge[CT] | V Grinstead[T] | K Harlow[T] |
| SJ Gates[T] | J Gooding[T] | Q Groom[X] | F Harmer[T] |
| F Gaymond[U] | LJ Gooding[WTU] | N Gross[X] | Z Harmer[X] |
| J Gearing[U] | JR Goodspeed[M] | K Grove[X] | C Harpur |
| L Gearing-Bell | K Goodwin[T] | J Grover[N] | A Harris |
| G Geer[T] | S Goodwin[T] | L Groves | NG Harris[T] |
| S Geliot[X] | C Gordon[T] | J Grundy[T] | R Harris[N] |
| C Geoghegan[X] | W Gordon[WT] | J Guiver[T] | RG Harris[T] |
| C George[B] | R Gordon-Colebrooke[U] | C Gull[U] | S Harris[U] |
| CM George[BCMNWT] | L Gore[X] | C Gunn[U] | S Harris[U] |
| R George[BC] | J Goring | M Gurney[U] | S Harris[U] |
| L Gerber[T] | P Goriup[T] | C Gutjahr[B] | C Harrison[U] |
| I Ghillie[T] | D Gornall[U] | AC Gutteridge[BCDT] | C Harrison[T] |
| A Giacomelli[MT] | A Goszczynska[X] | R Guy[T] | C Harrison[U] |
| S Giacomelli | R Gowan[U] | K Hackett[T] | S Harrison |
| A Gibb[U] | JS Gowers[WTU] | P Hadley[U] | T Harris-Ross[BCWT] |
| I Gibb[B] | S Gowers[U] | A Hadshi[U] | T Harrop[U] |
| AP Gibbs[X] | AS Grace[X] | J Hague[U] | R Hart[T] |
| H Gibbs[U] | I Graham[T] | R Hague[X] | C Hartwell[T] |
| R Gibbs[X] | KR Grant[T] | H Haines[T] | L Harvey |
| J Gibson[X] | L Gravely[T] | A Halbur[U] | P Harvey[U] |
| N Gibson[U] | A Gray[WT] | KE Hall[T] | P Hasell[T] |
| T Gibson[U] | B Gray[U] | R Hall[X] | R Hastings[XTU] |
| TE Gibson-Poole[T] | C Gray[U] | T Hall[T] | Z Hatch[X] |
| D Gilbert[U] | N Gray | TD Hallahan[T] | R Hatcher[XT] |
| SA Gilbert[B] | Z Gray[T] | K Halsall[X] | J Hather[U] |
| B Gilgoff[U] | K Greaves[X] | H Halstead[T] | G Havard[U] |
| H Gilja[U] | R Greaves[X] | M Hamer[X] | RM Haydon[T] |
| KB Gillam[TU] | MA Grech[T] | M Hames[X] | J Hayhurst[W] |
| T Gillard[T] | D Green[B] | A Hamilton[T] | M Hazleton[T] |
| W Gillatt[U] | M Green[CT] | CH Hamilton[T] | J Headley[T] |
| G Gillett[T] | P Green[BHNT] | J Hamilton | S Healey[U] |
| R Gillies[W] | S Green[X] | N Hammatt[U] | M Healy[U] |
| S Gillingham[T] | NM Greenaway[DW] | C Hance[X] | I Hedgson[X] |
| V Gilson[X] | D Greene[U] | J Hancox[U] | E Hein[U] |
| SP Ginnaw[T] | C Greenfield[T] | A Hand[U] | M Hellicar[T] |
| L Giron[U] | RR Greenhalf[W] | JC Hannam[T] | D Henderson[U] |
| T Gittings[U] | D Greenwood[X] | T Hanson[BCT] | N Henry |
| L Glanz[X] | A Gregory[U] | W Harcourt-Smith[U] | M Hepworth[T] |
| J Glen[T] | S Grieve[T] | AJ Hardie[T] | D Herbert[T] |
| AS Glossop[NU] | G Griffin[W] | A Harding[U] | D Hermitage[T] |
| J Glossop[U] | S Griffith[U] | B Harding[U] | J Hewitt |
| C Glover[M] | AJ Griffiths[X] | D Harding[X] | C Heywood[T] |
| CJ Glover[B] | S Griffiths[X] | C Hardware | J Heywood[T] |

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|---|---|---|---|
| M Hibbard | S Hopper[X] | L Ismail[X] | PD Jones[U] |
| C Hibbert | JHM Horne[BCW] | C Iverson[X] | PE Jones[BCMWT] |
| AED Hickham | J Horrocks-Taylor[U] | BGR Ives[T] | R Jones[T] |
| KLD Hickman[CNT] | C Horsey[X] | RA Ives | R Jones[U] |
| G Hicks | K Horton[U] | H Jaarsma[U] | SEI Jones[U] |
| M Hicks | A House | K Jackson[BCT] | T Jones[T] |
| R Hicks[T] | M Howard[X] | L Jackson[X] | W Jones[U] |
| D Higgins[U] | T Howard-Jones[XT] | P Jackson[X] | M Jordan[U] |
| M Higham[T] | J Howell[U] | RA Jackson[T] | T Jordan[N] |
| C Hilder[T] | C Howells[U] | SJ Jackson[T] | J Joseph[N] |
| A Hill | DH Howey[T] | T Jackson[X] | R Joy[U] |
| C Hill[T] | R Howorth[X] | E Jacob | W Justice[T] |
| S Hill | Y Huang[U] | S Jacobs[T] | ME Kalaher |
| R Hills[T] | S Hucks[T] | BD James[TU] | R Kale[U] |
| G Hinchon | P Huggins[CX] | GRF James[U] | T Kaleel[U] |
| A Hines[E] | C Hughes[X] | JR James[T] | J Kaliniecki[T] |
| S Hipperson[X] | G Hughes[CDEWT] | P James[U] | M Kallionaki[U] |
| V Hiscock[U] | G Hughes[U] | CR Janman[T] | D Kalyan[T] |
| M Hitchings[U] | J Hughes[X] | R Jasper[X] | M Kears[U] |
| K Ho[U] | J Hughes | C Jefferson[T] | P Keeler[U] |
| RS Hoad[BCDT] | N Hughes[U] | M Jeffree[XT] | LR Keen |
| D Hoare[T] | PH Hughes[HMWTU] | A Jeffrey[U] | P Keevill[X] |
| T Hoare[T] | S Hughes[T] | S Jennings[T] | J Kellett[M] |
| J Hobden[U] | CA Huisman[X] | C Jensen[U] | RS Kelly |
| D Hodgkiss[X] | S Humphrey | S Jesse[N] | S Kelly[X] |
| I Hodgson[T] | A Humphreys-Jones[T] | M Jezierski[U] | AD Kennelly[T] |
| AM Holden | D Humphries[T] | DJ Jode[MW] | T Kennelly[U] |
| G Holden[T] | L Hunt[U] | R Joganic[U] | JO Kenney[T] |
| M Holden[U] | E Hunter[U] | D Johnson[U] | H Kent[U] |
| AP Holding[T] | L Hunter | M Johnson | R Kenward[X] |
| P Holdridge[X] | P Hunter[U] | M Johnson | M Kerry[X] |
| J Holland[X] | C Hurworth[T] | R Johnson | D Kettles[U] |
| PK Holland[T] | EA Hutchby[BCT] | R Johnson[U] | J Keynes[X] |
| A Holloway[X] | J Hutchings[U] | RJ Johnson[HWT] | D Kidd[T] |
| C Holloway[X] | NP Hutchinson[BWT] | S Johnson | L Kidd[T] |
| AL Holmes[T] | AM Hutson[T] | T Johnson[U] | J Kilby[X] |
| PJ Holmes[T] | A Huttly[DT] | V Johnson[NT] | L Kilic[U] |
| CA Holt[N] | K Hyde[U] | A Johnston[T] | AJ Killick[WT] |
| CA Holter[CDT] | J Hyder[B] | T Johnston[U] | K Kimberley[X] |
| J Holter[WT] | DJ Hyland[T] | A Jones | B King[U] |
| T Holter[WT] | E Ide[T] | B Jones[T] | DR King |
| G Honey[T] | M Infield[X] | C Jones[TU] | E King[U] |
| I Honeyman[DM] | JB Ingham[T] | C Jones[T] | J King[T] |
| J Hook[T] | GS Ingle[T] | D Jones[T] | JE King[BC] |
| J Hooper[X] | A Ingman[T] | I Jones[U] | M King[T] |
| A Hoover[U] | P Ingram[H] | K Jones[B] | MN King[BCDMNT] |
| P Hopcroft | B Inman[X] | K Jones[XU] | N King[T] |
| CE Hope | P Insua[U] | M Jones[U] | P King[T] |
| O Hopgood[X] | R Iredale[T] | P Jones[XT] | R King[X] |

| RJ King[T] | R Lawrence[U] | D Littlejohns[X] | L Mann[T] |
|---|---|---|---|
| A Kingdom[N] | S Lawrence[T] | A Litvinoff[T] | C Manning[T] |
| DC Kingham[W] | A Lawson[X] | C Liu[U] | A Manning-Jones |
| G Kinnard[U] | C Lawson[T] | D Livingstone | R Manso de Zuniga[X] |
| S Kinsella[U] | D Lawson[X] | S Llewelyn[X] | MV Mansson[X] |
| A Kirby[U] | S Lawson | D Lo[U] | M Mantin[U] |
| AJ Kirby[T] | P Laycock | A Lobb[T] | L Manvell[BT] |
| W Kirby | N Layt[TU] | A Lockett[T] | B Mapp[T] |
| C Kirk[T] | NC Lear[X] | C Lodge[T] | G Marchant[U] |
| M Kirk[BXT] | R Leavett[T] | B Loehnen[U] | JH Marchant[T] |
| J Kirkman[T] | A Lee[X] | C Lofts[T] | A Marek[U] |
| R Kitchen[T] | BD Lee[T] | M Logan[T] | A Markham[U] |
| AR Kitson | CM Lee[U] | N Long[TU] | S Marley[X] |
| DC Knight[T] | M Lee[U] | LFC Love[B] | N Marples |
| L Knight[BCT] | SR Lee[T] | M Love[B] | E Marr[U] |
| RM Knight[T] | A Lees[U] | C Lovell[U] | N Marrable[X] |
| S Knight[NU] | CL Leeves[T] | D Lowe[T] | T Marrs |
| R Knott | W Legge[U] | R Lowe[U] | A Mars[U] |
| T Knowles[U] | MP LeGrys | WJ Lowe[T] | PMJ Marsh[X] |
| T Knox[U] | B Lentz[U] | JA Lowes[TU] | S Marsh[T] |
| H Koch[X] | C Leonard[U] | AR Loweth[T] | S Marsh[T] |
| B Kodama[U] | H Leonard[U] | L Loweth[X] | R Marshall[T] |
| M Kohler[T] | L Leonard[U] | J Lowther[U] | W Martens-Habbena[U] |
| W Konze[U] | K Lerwill[X] | J Luck[X] | AJ Martin |
| M Korkor[U] | J Lethbridge[U] | PJ Luffingham[H] | JNR Martin[C] |
| S Kozacek[U] | E Leven[U] | S Lumsden[T] | P Martin |
| J Kufrin[U] | DC Leversedge[BCT] | M Luscombe[X] | P Martin[T] |
| R Kurtz[U] | B Lewis[T] | E Lutterer[X] | P Martin[U] |
| H Laidlaw[U] | G Lewis[X] | A Lydall[X] | S Martin |
| DA Lake[T] | L Lewis[U] | P Lynch[X] | G Masa[U] |
| C Lamb[U] | M Lewis[U] | G Lyons[X] | R Masero[X] |
| L Lambert[CT] | P Lewis[XTU] | K Lyons[U] | JM Maskell[T] |
| MP Lanaway | P Lewis[U] | J Maccallum-Stewart[W] | A Mason[X] |
| S Lanaway[M] | P Lewis[U] | C Mackay[TU] | D Mason |
| C Lance[U] | S Lewis de Amable[U] | A Mackenzie[U] | L Mason[X] |
| IM Lang[WT] | OJ Leyshon | C MacKenzie[U] | M Mason[U] |
| GB Langley[U] | P Lifton[B] | I Maclean[U] | D Massie[U] |
| L Langley[TU] | T Lifton[BC] | G MacLellan[U] | PD Matson[ET] |
| T Langley[T] | MW Light[BCMT] | S Macpherson[X] | G Matthes[X] |
| N Langridge[X] | D Lindo[U] | H Madden[U] | A Matthews[T] |
| J Lansdell[BC] | J Lindop[B] | A Maddocks | K Matthews |
| A Large[T] | C Lindsay[XT] | R Maher[X] | S Matthews[XU] |
| C Large[U] | C Lindsay[U] | P Mair[X] | T Matthews[U] |
| M Larkin[X] | C Lindsay | F Maitland-Smith[X] | A Maustrin[X] |
| C Laver[X] | N Lindsay[U] | T Malby[U] | R Mawhinney[U] |
| C Law[T] | J Lindsey[X] | SE Malcolm[WU] | G May[T] |
| C Lawernece[N] | M Lingard | M Mallalieu[NT] | C Mayers[X] |
| L Lawler[U] | SH Linington[MNW] | L Mandry[X] | L Mayhew[NX] |
| B Lawrence[T] | C Lintz[U] | J Manley[U] | R Maynard[T] |

| H Mayo[X] | P Miller[T] | G Murray[U] | M Oates |
|---|---|---|---|
| B McAllister[X] | M Milne[U] | J Murray | J Obey[U] |
| S Mcavoy[T] | LJ Milward[MT] | E Muse[U] | D O'Donnell[T] |
| A McCall[T] | J Missing[U] | R Muselle | M Oldfield[X] |
| J Mccomiskey[MW] | R Mist[U] | K Musgrave[U] | DJ Oldham[X] |
| R McDermid[U] | A Mitchell[T] | S Musievski[U] | C Oliver[U] |
| K Mcdermott[X] | D Mitchell[U] | E Mustafa[T] | F Olivo[XT] |
| I McDonald[U] | M Mitchell[T] | D Mutters[T] | S Olliver[U] |
| D McGuire[U] | NB Mitchell[T] | J Mycock[E] | L O'Neil[X] |
| K McGuire[T] | O Mitchell[HWT] | D Mylott[U] | L O'Neill[U] |
| K McIntosh[T] | P Mnich[X] | J Nadgrodkiewicz[T] | M Onley[U] |
| R Mcintyre[T] | J Mochan[X] | D Napier[XU] | M Oppenheim[U] |
| C McIsaac[X] | CJC Moffat[BCDMNWT] | L Nash[U] | P Oprandi[BCT] |
| C Mckellar[U] | PJ Molloy[T] | T Naylor[X] | C Orange[U] |
| G McKenzie[T] | J Molnar[T] | C Nelson[U] | MA Orchard-Webb |
| Y McKeown[T] | JR Monkhouse[U] | D Nelson[U] | M Orford[U] |
| I McKerchar | R Mooney[U] | K Nethercoat[T] | J Orlowski[U] |
| F McKinnon[T] | A Moore[T] | [T] Neville-Spencer[X] | P Ormerod[B] |
| G Mckinnon[U] | C Moore[X] | K New[T] | R Orton[X] |
| T Mclane[U] | CH Moore[WT] | B Newark[U] | P Osborn[T] |
| M Mcmanus[EWT] | D Moore[U] | DA Newman[T] | B Osborne[D] |
| DF McNair[BCDWT] | J Moore[WT] | DK Newnham | BP Osborne[BCT] |
| J Mcnamee[BCXT] | R Moran[U] | JA Newnham[BCHMNWTU] | G Osborne[BCT] |
| N McNeil-Watson[U] | O Morgan[X] | J Newton[U] | JJ Otway[N] |
| A McQueen[U] | T Morgan[T] | M Newton[XT] | T Outham[X] |
| SJ Mcwilliam[X] | C Morgan-Grenville[T] | S Newton[X] | C Overington[U] |
| D Mead | A Morris[N] | SJ Newton[BCDXT] | J Owen[X] |
| G Mead[T] | A Morris[W] | N Nice | JC Owen[BCMT] |
| K Meade[X] | R Morris[W] | C Nicholson[WT] | L Owen[B] |
| N Meade[X] | P Morrison-Price[DX] | A Nightingale[U] | MP Owen[CT] |
| I Mears[U] | C Mortimer[BCDT] | D Nikolov[U] | RC Owen[BCT] |
| JI Medford[T] | G Morton[U] | J Nilsson[U] | H Oxley[U] |
| J Meed[T] | SD Morton[T] | S Nisbett[T] | S Oxley[U] |
| M Meeres | C Moss[DT] | K Noble[TU] | R Packham |
| C Melhuish[T] | LJ Moss[U] | SD Noble[T] | D Page[U] |
| M Mellor[U] | R Moss[X] | C Nock | R Page[BCT] |
| A Melnick[U] | R Mounce[X] | M Norman[X] | J Painter[U] |
| D Melville[T] | L Muchmore[T] | G Norris[NX] | G Palmer[U] |
| R Merrigan[U] | PL Mulcahy[T] | T Norris[U] | JC Palmer[T] |
| SJ Message | MF Mullen[BCMW] | G Nott[X] | M Palmer[T] |
| GA Michelmore[BCMWT] | CA Mulley[T] | J Nott[BCT] | D Panchaud[U] |
| J Middleton[X] | MJ Mullis | P Nott[X] | CC Pang[U] |
| K Middleton[U] | H Munt[T] | A Nottage[XT] | S Pang[U] |
| C Mier | L Munter[U] | S Novelli[X] | Z Pannifer[TU] |
| J Miles[X] | C Murphy[U] | R Nowak[T] | PJ Papps[T] |
| N Milius[U] | K Murphy[BCT] | A Nunns[TU] | R Parangi[T] |
| A Millar[T] | M Murphy[U] | R Nussbaumer[U] | A Parfitt[NXT] |
| AM Miller[T] | M Murphy[B] | M O Conor[U] | J Parham[U] |
| H Miller[X] | E Murray[BN] | T O Donnell[D] | DP Parish[CT] |

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|---|---|---|---|
| N Park[BCT] | CB Peverett[MWTU] | M Price[X] | A Redman[T] |
| A Parker | C Phelps[T] | M Price[T] | I Redman |
| G Parkes[U] | MS Phelps[BDMWU] | R Price[WX] | S Reece[X] |
| L Parkhouse[U] | MJ Phillips[W] | R Price[X] | B Reed[U] |
| JH Parkinson[T] | R Phillips[T] | MG Prince[U] | T Reed[W] |
| S Parks[T] | R Phillips[T] | T Prince[U] | J Reeve[X] |
| S Parnell[U] | S Phoenix[X] | G Proctor[U] | E Reeves[U] |
| T Parry[X] | A Piccolo[T] | C Provost[U] | H Reeves[U] |
| D Parry-Davies[TU] | P Pickering[U] | S Pruett[U] | H Reeves[T] |
| J Parsons[W] | A Pike[T] | S Pryor[X] | JP Reeves[XU] |
| J Parsons[N] | W Pilfold | L Pulawski[U] | R Reeves |
| NM Parsons[T] | M Pinhorn[T] | RN Pulley[T] | C Regan[T] |
| R Partch[U] | B Pinkosz[X] | S Pullinger[NT] | R Regan[X] |
| F Partridge[X] | L Pitcher | RHA Putnam[T] | A Reid[T] |
| RA Pask | M Pitt[U] | B Puttock[WT] | F Reid[U] |
| H Passmore | I Pitts | K Puttock[U] | GS Reid[T] |
| S Patmore[U] | J Pitts[X] | J Puzzo[T] | L Reilly[U] |
| F Pattinson[D] | J Pitty[T] | S Pyrah[NX] | T Ren[U] |
| ER Paxton[U] | T Plant[T] | R Quinlan[N] | L Reumont[U] |
| A Payne[X] | J Platt[U] | N Quinn[X] | O Rice[U] |
| A Payne[X] | R Platt[T] | AR Quinton[DMW] | T Rich[X] |
| D Payne[T] | A Playle[T] | R Rackliffe[U] | JP Richards[X] |
| M Payne[X] | D Plummer | A Raczynska[U] | J Richardson[U] |
| C Pearce[N] | AH Podmore[T] | K Radman[X] | JE Richardson[T] |
| F Pearce[M] | J Pointing[T] | M Raeburn[X] | K Richardson[T] |
| J Pearce[X] | D Pointon[U] | C Raffan[U] | L Richardson[H] |
| D Pearson[U] | H Poland[BC] | B Rainbow[X] | SC Richardson[X] |
| J Pearson[U] | S Pont[TU] | A Ramesh[U] | G Richens[W] |
| A Pedliham[T] | D Pontalti[U] | H Ramm[U] | MJ Ridley[U] |
| J Peet[X] | CR Poole[T] | J Ramsey[BC] | D Rimes |
| EA Pell[T] | D Pope[X] | M Ramsey[BC] | C Rinaldi[TU] |
| G Pellas[U] | NJN Pope | S Rance[U] | R Rios[U] |
| J Pellet[X] | A Poplin[U] | R Randall[U] | W Ritchie[X] |
| J Penfold | D Porter | R Ranft[U] | SB Rix[U] |
| P Pentek[T] | I Porter[U] | G Rankin[T] | I Rizza[X] |
| RF Penticost[BC] | NR Porter[T] | M Rann[TU] | A Roach |
| H Pepe[U] | RF Porter | J Ransley[U] | C Roach[T] |
| L Percival[M] | S Porter | NM Ratcliffe[T] | D Roba[T] |
| A Perry[CE] | T Porter[U] | J Rawles[T] | GCM Roberts[T] |
| A Perry[T] | J Potter[U] | J Rawlinson[X] | L Roberts[T] |
| G Perry[W] | R Pratt[X] | J Rayner[T] | M Roberts[T] |
| H Perry[WXU] | P Precey[U] | J Rea[U] | R Roberts[X] |
| JW Perry[T] | C Preece[N] | J Read[X] | D Robinson[T] |
| M Perry[U] | HDV Prendergast[CT] | E Reast[X] | JA Robinson[T] |
| R Perry[X] | G Prescott[T] | C Reay[CNXT] | D Robinson-Ruffle[U] |
| D Peters[X] | K Prescott[C] | P Reay[X] | J Robinson-Ruffle[U] |
| A Petersons[T] | G Price[T] | J Redford | D Robison[T] |
| R Pettett | G Price[U] | M Redford | C Roche[BCNWT] |
| S Pettit[T] | J Price[X] | A Redman[X] | M Roche[U] |

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|---|---|---|---|
| A Rodgers[WU] | D Salgud[T] | EM Shilland[T] | L Sole[U] |
| M Rodriguez Gallego[U] | R Salt[U] | K Shirky[U] | M Sole[U] |
| A Rodway[H] | E Sames[TU] | M Shotter[W] | S Sonsino[T] |
| S Rodway[H] | B Sanders | D Shute[X] | C Souter[W] |
| A Roe[X] | A Sapatsch[U] | P Silas[U] | G South[U] |
| A Roffey | A Sapatsch[U] | MJ Silk[U] | J Spetzler[U] |
| DP Rogers[HMWT] | M Saul[U] | Y Simmonds[T] | P Spiers |
| MD Rolfe[T] | A Saunders[U] | OJ Simms[U] | GC Spinks[U] |
| CGK Roome[T] | M Saunders[BT] | T Simon[X] | J Spinks[U] |
| S Rooney[T] | M Savory[X] | B Simpson[T] | G Springett[M] |
| P Rose[U] | J Saydam[U] | D Simpson[T] | J Squire[X] |
| A Rosenfeld[T] | W Saywell[X] | P Simpson[U] | T Squire[CDXU] |
| J Ross[BCWT] | T Scalici[U] | R Simpson | M Squires[U] |
| S Ross[T] | BW Scammell[T] | RN Simpson[BT] | A Srdic[W] |
| PW Rouse[T] | A Scarlett[T] | S Simpson[U] | T Stachnicki[T] |
| H Rowe | P Schechter[U] | SP Simpson[BCWT] | A Stallabrass[U] |
| I Rowe[U] | S Schmidt[U] | T Simpson[X] | S Standing[XU] |
| M Rowell[T] | K Schrecongost[U] | J Simpson-Lee[T] | A Stanger[T] |
| C Rowland[U] | [T] Schumann | D Singer[U] | W Stanger[T] |
| D Rowland | L Scotcher[T] | J Singlewood-Dodds[T] | TJ Stapleton[T] |
| A Rowlands[T] | J Scott[U] | PA Sketch[T] | A Starbuck[U] |
| D Rowlands[H] | M Scott[T] | AJ Skinner[B] | S Starr[U] |
| S Rowledge[X] | R Scott[U] | C Skinner[T] | L Stead[T] |
| M Royal[U] | M Scott-ham[HT] | A Slack | AJ Steele[TU] |
| C Rudzinski[U] | AM Seabrook[T] | A Slade[TU] | T Steele[X] |
| W Rudzinski[U] | R Seargent[TU] | B Smallman[U] | D Steely[X] |
| D Rumble[U] | I Searle[U] | H Smart[X] | A Steger[U] |
| S Rummery[U] | CM Seaton[BCTU] | P Smart[X] | R Steggerda[U] |
| B Rumsby[U] | L Sedgwick[X] | A Smethurst[T] | S Steiner-Goldberg[TU] |
| SJR Rumsey | C Sell[T] | C Smith[U] | F Stenning[X] |
| CW Rusbridge[T] | S Sellens[X] | D Smith[T] | A Stephens[X] |
| L Rusbridge[T] | RA Senior[X] | DI Smith | J Stephens[U] |
| A Russell[T] | RJ Senior[W] | G Smith[T] | PC Stevens |
| J Russell[X] | MV Sennitt[X] | J Smith[T] | PD Stevens[T] |
| J Russell | S Serup[U] | K Smith[T] | PR Stevens[T] |
| MG Russell | T Shannon[U] | KW Smith[BMNWTU] | M Stevenson[U] |
| MJ Russell[CT] | J Sharpe | L Smith[BMWT] | A Stewart[T] |
| SA Russell[DT] | W Sharps[TU] | M Smith[X] | B Stewart[X] |
| ND Rutherford[BCW] | G Shaw | N Smith[X] | G Stewart[U] |
| B Ryan[U] | MD Shaw[BCHWT] | PA Smith[HT] | N Stewart[T] |
| S Ryan[B] | E Sheehan[U] | R Smith | M Stoker |
| A Ryde[U] | B Sheldon[U] | R Smith[T] | B Stokes[X] |
| L Ryde[U] | M Sheldon[D] | RE Smith | R Stokes |
| C Ryland[T] | M Shelley[T] | S Smith[U] | HP Stone[U] |
| K Rylands[T] | C Shepherd[U] | AC Smithen[BCMNWT] | T Stone[T] |
| D Sadler[X] | P Shergold[U] | A Snelling[T] | L Stonestreet[T] |
| L Sadler[T] | I Sherriffs[U] | TG Snow[BC] | N Stonestreet[DT] |
| T Sadler[T] | M Sherriffs[U] | M Snowball[U] | M Stovell[U] |
| S Sainsbury[U] | H Shih[U] | R Solange[X] | J Stow[T] |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| A Strange[T] | A Thomas[XT] | R Towheed[U] | D Verdier[U] |
| PJ Strangeman[T] | E Thomas[B] | S Towheed[U] | D Verrall[X] |
| S Streeter[XT] | G Thomas[U] | P Townend[XT] | C Vince[W] |
| M Strevens[T] | K Thomas[T] | G Townsend[T] | C Vine[W] |
| K Strydom[U] | M Thomas[X] | W Townsend[T] | K Vine[T] |
| R Stuart[U] | N Thomas[U] | I Tree | V Vrint[T] |
| E Stubbs[U] | R Thomas[U] | Trektellen[T] | B Wade[U] |
| A Suarez Bonnet[U] | RD Thomas[BC] | S Trenerry[T] | J Wadsworth[U] |
| LO Sully[X] | S Thomas[B] | G Trew[BCNWT] | H Wakeford[EWT] |
| D Sulway[T] | T Thomas[BDWTU] | S Trice[X] | K Waldock[X] |
| L Summers[U] | A Thompson[T] | P Trodd | N Walford[X] |
| S Summers[T] | E Thompson[U] | CE Trollope[HT] | H Walker[U] |
| P Summerton[X] | J Thompson[X] | C Trotman[X] | J Walker[U] |
| J Sutcher[U] | J Thompson[B] | N Truby[T] | S Walker |
| B Sutherland[U] | JFW Thompson[U] | R Trueman[T] | S Walker[T] |
| CJ Sutton[XU] | S Thompson[X] | CY Tse[X] | N Wall[T] |
| K Sutton[U] | SRB Thompson[U] | J Tse-Leon[U] | PH Wallace[U] |
| S Sutton[X] | R Thorlby[T] | D Tubb[N] | E Waller |
| G Swan[U] | T Thorneycroft[T] | M Tucker[U] | M Waller[T] |
| K Swann[X] | D Thorns[T] | S Turato[H] | C Wallis[X] |
| J Swann White[T] | P Thornton[W] | M Turner[U] | SS Walls[U] |
| P Swaysland[T] | A Thrasher[X] | RM Turner | A Walmsley[X] |
| A Sweet[X] | D Threadgold[T] | TL Turner[T] | I Walmsley[X] |
| T Sweetland[U] | A Thyer[T] | G Turvey[BNT] | V Walmsley[X] |
| A Swetman[CU] | S Tickle[U] | P Tweedale | D Walsh[TU] |
| K Sykes[T] | J Tilby[T] | C Twitchen[XT] | J Walsh[U] |
| K Sykes | A Timms[BE] | WM Twitchett[T] | SF Walsh |
| T Sztypuljak[U] | G Tims[U] | HL Twizell[B] | J Walston[U] |
| WIE Tagg[X] | AD Tindale[T] | M Twydell[NXT] | B Walter[X] |
| F Tait[X] | C Tinkler[X] | C Tyldesley[T] | D Walters[U] |
| N Taite[T] | PA Tinning[X] | D Tyler[T] | J Walther[X] |
| A Tarrant[T] | PC Tinning[X] | P Tyler[T] | P Walton[U] |
| KN Tarrant[U] | J Tinsley[U] | J Ullman[W] | R Walton[X] |
| A Taylor[W] | P Tinsley-Marshall[X] | DJ Underdown[X] | S Walton[X] |
| A Taylor[U] | R Tite[X] | J Underwood | L Wan[U] |
| B Taylor[T] | J Tmberlake[X] | G Upton[T] | A Ward[X] |
| F Taylor[X] | J Todd[MT] | N Upton[U] | B Ward[X] |
| K Taylor[U] | R Todd[T] | T Urben[U] | F Ward |
| L Taylor[W] | P Toe | A Urquhart[U] | G Ward[BT] |
| M Taylor[U] | R Tofts[T] | M Usher[X] | GC Ward[C] |
| RJ Taylor[T] | D Tombling[X] | L Vachon[U] | P Ward[U] |
| S Taylor[X] | M Tomlins[T] | J Valenzuela[U] | S Ward[T] |
| S Taylor[T] | A Tomlinson[T] | SD Valientes[U] | T Ward |
| I Teague[T] | D Tomlinson[C] | W Van Niekerk[X] | T Ward[U] |
| S Teale[X] | J Tomlinson[WU] | M Van Tol[U] | P Wardell[X] |
| G Tebbs[X] | R Tomlinson[X] | P Vandeputte[U] | M Warden[U] |
| J Ten Sythoff | SA Tomlinson[U] | P Varnham[X] | PC Warden[T] |
| D Thatcher[X] | S Tompsett[U] | M Varvill[X] | J Wareing[U] |
| R Thom[U] | TJ Toohig[T] | E Venter[U] | C Waring[T] |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| N Warne[B] | I West[U] | S Wilkinson[U] | M Woodgate[X] |
| D Warner[B] | R West[T] | S Wilkinson[U] | K Woodhouse[M] |
| K Warner[U] | S West[U] | J Wilks | J Woodman[U] |
| D Warren[U] | S Westcott[U] | JD Willett[T] | V Wood-Mewett[BCXT] |
| S Warrington[X] | JD Weston[T] | JR Willett[T] | R Woods[U] |
| N Warwick[BCT] | K Weston[T] | AJ Williams | J Woodward |
| A Wasik[X] | S Westwood[U] | B Williams[X] | J Wooldridge[BDMT] |
| A Wasley[U] | O Whaley[X] | DC Williams[T] | K Woolner[D] |
| A Waterfield[X] | AV Wheatcroft[T] | I Williams[X] | C Worsley[T] |
| D Waterhouse | K Whiston[T] | K Williams[U] | C Wren[T] |
| C Waters[T] | P Whitby[W] | L Williams | L Wren[CXT] |
| T Waters[HW] | AD Whitcomb | NM Williams[U] | R Wren[T] |
| D Watkins[B] | IJ Whitcomb[T] | PA Williams[T] | CMV Wright[BCDNWT] |
| J Watkins[U] | PJ Whitcomb[T] | R Williams[U] | D Wright[U] |
| V Watkins[U] | A White[T] | R Williams[T] | G Wright[U] |
| G Watola[U] | C White[T] | E Williamson[T] | G Wright[U] |
| H Watson[U] | D White[T] | N Willis[X] | M Wright[T] |
| J Watson[U] | G White[T] | P Wills[T] | P Wright[X] |
| J Watson[U] | R White[X] | J Willsher[T] | T Writer[U] |
| R Watson[N] | R White[X] | A Wilson[X] | D Wyatt[X] |
| RF Watson[T] | T White[X] | AR Wilson[T] | J Wyatt[T] |
| B Watson Hernandez[U] | G Whitehead[U] | C Wilson[X] | M Yallop[X] |
| PJ Watts[T] | P Whitehead[U] | M Wilson[U] | R Yarham[N] |
| E Weaver[U] | J Whitehouse[U] | M Wiltshire[T] | BJ Yates[W] |
| R Weaver[U] | N Whitehouse[U] | M Wimsett[U] | E Yeats[X] |
| J Webb[U] | J Whitlock | C Winchester[DXT] | D Yelland[U] |
| R Webb[T] | J Whitman[X] | R Wingfield[X] | V Yeung[U] |
| S Webb[TU] | N Whitmarsh[T] | MP Winkworth[T] | J Young[WT] |
| PJ Webster[T] | A Widdop[X] | A Winstanley[U] | K Young |
| P Weddell[T] | C Wiechmann[X] | A Wisun[X] | P Young[X] |
| P Weeks[X] | M Wiggins[TU] | H Witts[TU] | P Young[U] |
| S Weingarten[U] | R Wiggins[T] | S Wolmarans[U] | S Young[X] |
| W Welch[X] | S WIlcock[U] | C Wood[BCT] | S Younger[WU] |
| L Wells[T] | R Wiley[U] | JM Wood[X] | A Zadoya[U] |
| AJ Wende[T] | A Wilkes | R Wood[U] | Z Zhou[U] |
| A Wendy[X] | A Wilkinson[U] | S Wood[X] | N Zimmerman |
| P Wenham[X] | J Wilkinson[WT] | S Woodard[T] | T Zoppi[T] |
| A West[BCNT] | M Wilkinson[X] | M Woodford[X] | |
| DR West[T] | R Wilkinson[U] | R Woodford[U] | |

| **Key to superscripts in the above table** | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **B** | Breeding Birds Survey (BBS) | **N** | Nightingale Survey |
| **C** | Sussex Winter Bird Survey (SWBS) | **T** | Contributors via *BirdTrack* |
| **D** | South Downs Farmland Bird Initiative (SDFBI) | **U** | Contributors via Cornell University's e-Bird |
| **H** | Heronry Census | **W** | Wetland Bird Survey (WeBS) |
| **E** | Wealden Heaths Breeding Bird Survey (WHBBS) | **X** | Contributors via Sussex Biodiversity Records Centre, iRecord or iNaturalist |
| **M** | Breeding Waders of Wet Meadows Survey | | |

The society is aware many observers watch in groups or families where just one member has recorded the observations; in these circumstances other members of the group may not be included in the extensive listing above.

## Assistance to Recorder

The Recorder and Database Manager thank contributors for submitting their records through one of the on-line recording systems or providing the society with digitised records. Particular thanks to AS Glossop who converted the records from eBird to import into the database.

## 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, was organised in Sussex by Dr Helen Crabtree, 6 Blackstone Street, Henfield, West Sussex, BN5 9TH (hcrabtree@gmail.com). Thanks are due to the 139 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, was organised in Sussex for 2021 by Christine George (sussex.wbs@gmail.com). Thanks are due to the 112 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 was organised by Dr Helen Crabtree (contact details above) and involved a BBS like survey of randomly selected 1-km squares containing at least 50% farmland habitat. The BBS squares in the national park were included in this survey and the 46 surveyors involved are shown with **D** in the above table.

***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 near Petworth, West Sussex, GU28 0HR (aledgehill@outlook.com). Thanks are due to the 11 observers involved who are indicated by **E** in the list of contributors.

***Heronry Census:*** This long-standing national census has been organised in Sussex since 2018 by Dr Helen Crabtree (contact details as above). Counts of breeding Grey Herons, Little and Cattle Egrets and Cormorants are given in the systematic list. Thanks are due to the 33 contributors who are indicated by **H** in the above table.

***Breeding waders of wet meadows survey:*** This national survey of breeding waders in lowland wet grassland was organised by the BTO in partnership with the RSPB and commissioned by Natural England. The fieldwork was conducted in 2021 and 2022 and was coordinated in Sussex by Dr Helen Crabtree (contact details as above). Thanks to the 62 surveyors who are indicated by **M** in the above table.

***Nightingale Survey*** This county survey of randomly selected 1-km squares was organised by Matt Twydell with help from Ken Smith. The fieldwork was undertaken by 68 observers who are shown by **N** in the 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 Rd, 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 128 counters who are indicated by **W** in the list of contributors.

***Co-ordination of Seawatching Records:*** The annual co-ordination 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).

## Summaries of observations

We are grateful for organising survey work or summaries of detailed observations at Chichester Harbour from PH Hughes; Thorney and Pilsey Islands from CB Collins; Medmerry and Pagham Hbr from A Taylor; Selsey Bill from J Atkinson; Arundel WWT from S Lanaway; the Arun Valley from the team at RSPB Pulborough; Worthing from Dr JA Newnham; Horsham District Council reserves from JJ Everitt, the Knepp Estate from P Green, Weir Wood Reservoir from RJ Johnson; Ashdown Forest from P Johnson and M Jeffree; Fairlight from A Parker, Bewl Water from MG Freeman and MJ Phillips; and Rye Bay from Dr BJ Yates and PE Jones. We also thank Mrs C Blencowe and R Foreman at the Sussex Biodiversity Records Centre for providing ornithological records from the centre and with records via iRecord and iNaturalist this involved 474 observers (marked **X** in the above table). Once again records from the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology (eBird) have been included and involved observations from 746 recorders each labelled **U** in the contributor's table. Additionally, there were records from iNaturalist observers whose records could only be identified by a code and therefore cannot be individually acknowledged. The online recording of the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) surveys provided a plethora of records; the 816 Sussex contributors to BirdTrack are marked with a **T** in the above table. The records from Birdguides and Trektellen for 2022 were again channelled through BirdTrack. Thanks are due to the BTO for the county BirdTrack records and the county records for the Breeding Bird Survey, the Wetland Bird Survey and the detailed records from 254 Garden BirdWatch participants. Thanks also to the RSPB, Wildfowl and Wetland Trust (Arundel), Sussex Wildlife Trust and Knepp Estate for the records from their reserves in Sussex.

## Ringing

Thanks are due to VP Bentley for maintaining detailed records of ringing in the county and to all ringers who contributed data.



*Common Buzzard, Pulborough, 17 March (Bob Brewer)*

# The Sussex Ornithological Society

## 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 members to keep and submit records of the birds they see, and to take part in survey work to monitor bird populations. Our database now has well over seven million records, which are regularly used in support of wildlife conservation.

## What are the benefits of membership?

- our quarterly newsletter to keep you up to date
- a free copy of our award-winning annual Bird Report
- regular outings led by expert birders
- your membership supports conservation work to help Sussex birds

**Visit our website**

**www.sos.org.uk**

**for the latest bird sightings in Sussex and information about the society and how to join us**




***Registered Charity 256936***



*Redshanks, by Robert Greenhalf*

# Index

**Species in the Systematic List**


Auk, Little 95
Auk species 97
Avocet 55

Bee-eater 121
Bittern, Eurasian 105
Blackbird 159
Blackcap 145
Bluethroat, White-spotted 162
Booby, Brown 102
Brambling 176
Bullfinch 178
Bunting, Corn 184
Bunting, Lapland 184
Bunting, Little 186
Bunting, Ortolan 185
Bunting, Reed 186
Bunting, Snow 184
Buzzard, Common 117

Chaffinch 175
Chiffchaff 142
Coot 47
Cormorant 102
Corncrake 46
Crake, Spotted 46
Crossbill, Common 181
Crow, Carrion 130
Crow, Hooded 131
Cuckoo, Common 43
Curlew 62

Diver, Black-throated 98
Diver, Great Northern 99
Diver, Red-throated 97
Diver species 99
Dotterel 60
Dove, Collared 45
Dove, Stock 44
Dove, Turtle 44
Duck, Long-tailed 37
Duck, Mandarin 27
Duck, Ring-necked 34
Duck, Ruddy 39
Duck, Tufted 35
Dunlin 68
Dunnock 169

Eagle, White-tailed 116
Egret, Cattle 106
Egret, Great White 109
Egret, Little 110
Eider, Common 35

Fieldfare 159
Firecrest 152
Flycatcher, Pied 162
Flycatcher, Spotted 161
Fulmar 100

Gadwall 30
Gannet 101
Garganey 28
Godwit, Bar-tailed 62
Godwit, Black-tailed 63
Goldcrest 153
Goldeneye 37
Goldfinch 182
Goosander 38
Goose, Barnacle 22
Goose, Brent 20
Goose, Canada 21
Goose, Egyptian 26
Goose, Greylag 22
Goose, Pink-footed 23
Goose, Tundra Bean 24
Goose, White-fronted 24
Goshawk 113
Grebe, Black-necked 51
Grebe, Great Crested 49

Grebe, Little 48
Grebe, Red-necked 48
Grebe, Slavonian 49
Greenfinch 179
Greenshank 78
Guillemot, Common 95
Gull, Black-headed 80
Gull, Bonaparte's 80
Gull, Caspian 87
Gull, Common 84
Gull, Glaucous 85
Gull, Great Black-backed 84
Gull, Herring 86
Gull, Iceland 85
Gull, Lesser Black-backed 88
Gull, Little 81
Gull, Mediterranean 83
Gull, Sabine's 80
Gull, Yellow-legged 88

Harrier, Hen 114
Harrier, Marsh 113
Hawfinch 177
Heron, Grey 107
Heron, Purple 108
Heron, Squacco 105
Hobby 126
Honey-buzzard 111
Hoopoe 120

Ibis, Glossy 103

Jackdaw 129
Jay 128

Kestrel 125
Kingfisher 121
Kite, Black 116
Kite, Red 115
Kittiwake 79
Knot 66

Lapwing 56
Lark, Shore 135
Linnet 180

Magpie 129
Mallard 31
Martin, House 137
Martin, Sand 135
Merganser, Red-breasted 39
Merlin 125
Moorhen 47

Night-heron 105
Nightingale, Common 162
Nightjar 41
Nuthatch 153

Oriole, Golden 128
Osprey 111
Ouzel, Ring 160
Owl, Barn 118
Owl, Little 118
Owl, Long-eared 118
Owl, Short-eared 119
Owl, Tawny 119
Oystercatcher 52

Parakeet, Ring-necked 127
Partridge, Grey 39
Partridge, Red-legged 40
Peregrine 126
Petrel, Leach's 100
Phalarope, Grey 75
Phalarope, Red-necked 74
Pheasant, Common 40
Pigeon, Feral 43
Pintail 32
Pipit, Meadow 172
Pipit, Rock 174
Pipit, Tree 173
Pipit, Water 173
Plover, Golden 56
Plover, Grey 57
Plover, Kentish 60

Plover, Little Ringed 59
Plover, Ringed 59
Pochard, Common 34
Pochard, Red-crested 33
Puffin 96

Quail 40

Rail, Water 45
Raven 131
Razorbill 96
Redpoll, Common 181
Redpoll, Lesser 181
Redshank, Common 76
Redshank, Spotted 78
Redstart, Black 163
Redstart, Common 164
Redwing 158
Robin 161
Robin, American 161
Rook 130
Ruff 66

Sanderling 67
Sandpiper, Buff-breasted 71
Sandpiper, Common 75
Sandpiper, Curlew 67
Sandpiper, Green 76
Sandpiper, Purple 70
Sandpiper, White-rumped 71
Sandpiper, Wood 77
Scaup, Greater 35
Scoter, Common 36
Scoter, Velvet 36
Serin 182
Shag 103
Shearwater, Balearic 101
Shearwater, Manx 100
Shearwater, Sooty 100
Shelduck, Common 27
Shoveler 29
Shrike, Great Grey 127
Shrike, Red-backed 127
Siskin 183
Skua, Arctic 95
Skua, Great 94
Skua, Pomarine 94
Skylark 134
Smew 38
Snipe, Common 74
Snipe, Jack 72
Sparrowhawk 112
Sparrow, House 168
Sparrow, Tree 167
Spoonbill 104
Starling, Common 155
Starling, Rose-coloured 154
Stilt, Black-winged 55
Stint, Little 70
Stint, Temminck's 67
Stonechat, Eurasian 166
Stone-curlew 51
Stork, White 101
Swallow, Barn 136
Swallow, Red-rumped 138
Swan, Bewick's 26
Swan, Mute 25
Swan, Whooper 26
Swift, Common 41
Swift, Pallid 42

Teal, Eurasian 33
Teal, Green-winged 33
Tern, Arctic 92
Tern, Black 93
Tern, Caspian 89
Tern, Common 91
Tern, Common/Arctic 92
Tern, Little 90
Tern, Roseate 91
Tern, Sandwich 89
Tern, White-winged Black 93
Thrush, Mistle 157
Thrush, Song 156
Tit, Bearded 134
Tit, Blue 132

Tit, Coal 131
Tit, Great 133
Tit, Long-tailed 139
Tit, Marsh 132
Tit, Penduline 133
Treecreeper, Eurasian 154
Turnstone 64

Wagtail, Grey 170
Wagtail, Pied 171
Wagtail, Yellow 169
Warbler, Barred 146
Warbler, Booted 144
Warbler, Cetti's 138
Warbler, Dartford 150
Warbler, Garden 146
Warbler, Grasshopper 144
Warbler, Hume's 139
Warbler, Pallas's Leaf 139
Warbler, Radde's 140
Warbler, Reed 143
Warbler, Sardinian 149
Warbler, Sedge 143
Warbler, Willow 141
Warbler, Wood 139
Warbler, Yellow-browed 139
Wheatear, Desert 167
Wheatear, Northern 167
Whimbrel, Eurasian 60
Whinchat 165
Whitethroat, Common 149
Whitethroat, Lesser 148
Wigeon, Eurasian 30
Woodcock 72
Woodlark 134
Woodpecker, Great Spotted 123
Woodpecker, Green 124
Woodpecker, Lesser Spotted 123
Woodpigeon 44
Wren 153
Wryneck 122

Yellowhammer 185




*Glossy Ibis, Pagham Hbr, 1 February (Trevor Guy)*