

The Sussex Bird Report

No. 49 1996



Published by
The Sussex Ornithological Society

SUSSEX ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY
Vice Presidents G. des Forges and B.A.E. Marr

OFFICERS AND MEMBERS OF COUNCIL AT 30th JUNE 1997

<i>President:</i>	Dr JK Irons, 9, Babylon Way, Ratton, Eastbourne, East Sussex. BN20 9DL.
<i>Secretary:</i>	DJ Golds, 63 Sullington Gardens, Worthing, BN14 0HS
<i>Treasurer:</i>	MJ Mason, 21, Park Close, Burgess Hill, West Sussex. RH15 8HL.
<i>Recorder:</i>	RT Pepper, Scobells Farm, Boast Lane, Barcombe, Lewes BN8 5DY
<i>Assistant Recorder:</i>	JA Hobson, 23 Hillside Road, Storrington, RH20 3LZ
<i>Editor of Bird Report:</i>	LG Holloway, Wigeon Cottage, 30 Fernhurst Gdns, Aldwick, Bognor Regis, West Sussex. PO21 4AZ.
<i>Press and Publicity Officer:</i>	DC Heryett, Flat 1, 56 Shakespeare Road, Worthing, West Sussex. BN11 4AT.
<i>Surveys and Projects Officer</i>	L Manns, 5 Downsview Avenue, Storrington, RH20 4PS
<i>Conservation Information Officer:</i>	A Perry, Edghill Barn, Byworth, Petworth, West Sussex. GU28 0HR.
<i>Conservation Field Officer:</i>	PJ Luffingham, 75 Stroma Gardens, Hailsham BN27 3AZ
<i>Membership Secretary:</i>	JE Trowell, Lorrimer, Main Road, Icklesham, Winchelsea TN36 4BS
<i>Newsletter Editor:</i>	Mrs IM Simpson, Hardanger, Littleworth, Partridge Green, Horsham RH13 8JF
<i>Members of Council:</i>	C Corrigan, 188 Old Shoreham Road, Shoreham-by-Sea BN43 5TE C Lowmass, 33 Barn Close, Seaford BN25 3EW A Perry, Edghill Barn, Byworth, Petworth GU28 0HR Dr AB Watson, 83 Buckingham Road, Shoreham-by-Sea BN4 5UD Mrs AJ Wende, Sunbeams, Green Road, Wivelsfield Green, Haywards Heath RH17 7QD J. Tranter,.....
<i>Archivist:</i>	Vacant
Committees:	
<i>Scientific:</i>	DJ Burges, RDM Edgar, LG Holloway, L Manns, Dr JA Newnham, RT Pepper, A Perry, GCM Roberts, MV Sennitt, Dr AB Watson, Dr B Yates.
<i>Records:</i>	RJ Fairbank, JA Hobson, CR Janman, R Kelly, SH Linington, RT Pepper, DI Smith.
<i>Programme:</i>	BF Forbes, PJ Luffingham, Mrs AJ Wende.

**THE SUSSEX BIRD REPORT
NUMBER FORTY- NINE, 1996**

Recorder: RT Pepper

Editor: LG Holloway

CONTENTS

	<i>Page</i>
Editorial.....	xx
Review of 1996.....	xx
Classified Records.....	xx
Map of Sussex and mini gazetteer.....	xx
Summary of Breeding Bird Counts.....	xx
First and Last Migrant Dates.....	xx
Contributors and Acknowledgements.....	xx
Ringing in Sussex, 1996, Derek Crawley.....	xx
The Grasshopper Warbler in Sussex, Robert D.M.Edgar.....	xx
My Experience with Woodlarks in Sussex, Leslie Osborne.....	xx
The Tree Sparrow in Sussex, Tim W.Parmenter.....	xx
Survey of the Breeding Rook Population in Sussex, 1996, Matthew V.Sennitt.....	xx
Whimbrel at Rye Harbour, Dr Barry J.Yates.....	xx

Cover photograph: the xxxxxxxxx, xxxxxxxx, xxxxx, xxxxxx, xxxxxxxxxxx

Text Illustrations

<i>John Davis</i>	xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx
<i>Bob Greenhalf</i>	xxxxxxxxxx
<i>John Reaney</i>	xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx

Published September 1997

by

THE SUSSEX ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY

Name of Printer (*Sussex Litho*).....

EDITORIAL

Intro text: personal observations and the like:

Grateful thanks are due to the following writers of the species' accounts. Many are old hands at this annual chore, but some have been persuaded to be brave enough to use their talents for the first time ever! To them, I am particularly grateful, since without their participation, the gestation period of this Report would have proved to be rather longer than has been the case. To the old timers, too, many thanks for their continuing support. All can be identified at the end of the species' texts by their initials: JTA Bagley, J Beesley, Mrs VP Bentley, Dr C Brooks, Mrs G Carrington, CB Collins, JES Cooper, DEG Copeland, DE Crawley, RJ Fairbank, JR Havers, JL Herring, JE Hobson, A House, Dr JK Irons, P James, Dr ME Kalaher, R Knight, SH Linington, P Luffingham, L Manns, MJ Mason, Dr JA Newnham, JL Nobbs, K Noble, Mrs SJ Patton, RT Pepper, R Pulley, Dr AB Watson, B Williams and Dr BJ Yates.

I would like to offer special thanks to the following people, without whose assistance and guidance this Report would not have been completed: to Dr JA Newnham for his computer expertise and generous advice, to JE Hobson and RT Pepper for their assistance with the multitude of records and details, and to my wife, Ann, whose understanding knows no boundaries!

Lawrence G Holloway.

Sussex Bird Report 1995 — Amendments & Corrections: Inevitably, with such a large number of records and other data to hand annually, unannounced errors creep into any Report, and the *Sussex Bird Report* for 1995 is no exception. Luckily, eagle-eyed readers tend to spot such misdemeanours, although it must be emphasised that every effort is made to avoid them in the first place!

So, the Editor's apologies! The Amendments and Corrections to the 1995 Report are as follows.

Photographic acknowledgements: The Editor would like to thank those photographers who have offered pictures of Sussex birds, taken in 1996. They are as follows:

Les Bird
Dave Sadler
Peter Wilson

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX
XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX
XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

REVIEW OF 1996

by JA Hobson

INTRODUCTION

The number of records of birds unusual to either Britain or Sussex received by the Recorder exceeded 400, an increase of over 8% over 1995's total. Of these, 48 have not been accepted for various reasons but, to date, 328 have been accepted for publication in either 'British Birds' or this journal. The remainder are in various stages of consideration by either the British Birds Rarities Committee or the Society's own Records Committee.

Unfortunately, as happened last year, some records of unusual birds mentioned in the quarterly Newsletter have not been substantiated by written descriptions submitted to the Recorder. These have, therefore, been regarded as unauthenticated claims and are denoted by an asterisk* in this Review. All observers (not just finders) of such birds who have not yet submitted descriptions are asked, please, to send them to the Recorder as soon as possible. **It is not too late!** Other records which are still being considered by either SOSRC or BBRC are denoted by a hash#.

January was generally dull and damp in the first half, followed by fog in the middle of the month and then a predominance of cold easterlies with light snow showers and heavy frosts.

The month began with a **Lapland Bunting** still at Rye Hbr with eight **Long-tailed Ducks**, and, still at Brighton, two **Snow Buntings** and a **Black Guillemot**, which stayed until March, as well as a **Great Northern Diver**. On 2nd, an oiled **Black Guillemot*** was seen off Ferring while in the east a **Great Skua** flew past Seaford. By 6th, **Scaup** were being widely reported and an influx of **Goosanders** was obvious, with up to 22 at Rye Hbr and 13 at Arlington Res where 25 **Bewick's Swans** were roosting. On 8th, an **Arctic Skua** was seen at Church Norton where **Little Gulls** were also seen. Twelve **Waxwings** in the wood at Rye Hbr on 10th were harbingers of later events. On 11th, a **Lesser Flamingo*** appeared in Pagham Hbr, although its origin was rather more dubious than the **Great White Egret** seen over Hartfield the next day when, during strong SE winds, a **Great Grey Shrike*** stayed only briefly at Pulborough.

The following week was extremely foggy and sightings were few. A **Bittern** was found at Thorney and the usual **Glaucous Gull** was evident throughout in the Selsey Bill – Pagham Hbr area where three **Bean Geese*** also appeared. On 20th, four more **Bean Geese** turned up at Scotney Gravel Pit (GP), a **Lapland Bunting*** was seen again at Rye Hbr and a **Snow Bunting** was at the Crumbles. At Weir Wood Res the next day there was a **Bittern**, which showed occasionally in front of the hide, and a **Ruddy Shelduck**, probably a tame bird, which remained until the end of March, while on 23rd 12 **Barnacle Geese** were there. On 25th, a **Twite** turned up at Pagham Hbr and another the following day. Snow showers and freezing temperatures by 27th were accompanied by two more **Glaucous Gulls** and movements of **Thrushes**, **Lapwings** and **Snipe** while wintering **Common Sandpipers** remained at Thorney and Newhaven Tide Mills. On 29th, a **White Pelican*** of unknown origin was seen at Rye Hbr, while a **Great Northern Diver*** at Church Norton was rather more expected. At Thorney, 11 wintering **Chiffchaffs** included one of the race '*tristis*'. On 30th, the **Great White Egret** reappeared briefly on Pevensy Levels, only to disappear until mid-February. During the month, single wintering **Water Pipits** were seen at a number of suitable locations and several at Combe Haven.

February was generally unsettled and cold, with snow recorded on a number of dates.

The highlight of the month was probably the largest invasion of **Waxwings** ever seen in the county, with total numbers probably in excess of 600 from 28 sites, providing the first opportunity for many to see the species in quantity. There were up to 43 at Seaford during the 1st week, small flocks of 17 at Crawley, 15 at Rustington and 13 at Crowborough in the middle period and scatterings elsewhere around the county. By the end of the month numbers at Hastings and Bexhill had increased to 80 and 90 respectively – or were these the same peripatetic birds? – and 40 in **East Grinstead** increased to a possible 145 by the following week. Many stayed into March, when 28 more were seen at Wych Cross, and into April when there were still 56 in Hastings on 1st, and, on 7th, 80 in Burgess Hill, 60 in Bexhill, and 21 in East Grinstead. Finally, there were 15 in Crawley on 11th – the best year ever for the species in Sussex. Elsewhere, two **Great Grey Shrikes** were found at the start of the month in Ashdown Forest, one of which was fairly easy to see during the month, where watchers also located a flock of 40 **Bramblings**, a species which was generally scarce. A 2nd winter **Iceland Gull*** was claimed at Thorney on 2nd, and on 3rd a 2nd winter **Glaucous Gull** flew west past Bexhill. On Thorney Island, a dead **Little Auk** was picked up on 4th, and a **Woodlark** was seen on 6th. On 11th, one lucky observer at West Dean Woods had the unusual experience of seeing a **Rough-legged Buzzard** being mobbed by a wing-tagged **Red Kite**. They remained in the area for several days. In the east, in the Scotney/Camber/Rye Bay area, there was a **Black-throated Diver**; 21 **Smew**; 120 **Scaup**, which increased to 220 by 18th; and a **Black-necked Grebe** from the 11th to almost the end of March. On 12th, a **Great Grey Shrike** was seen in Buchan Park, Crawley. Another **Rough-legged Buzzard*** was claimed in Kingley Vale on 17th, at the same time as the West Dean bird was sitting in a tree, and there were at least eight **Common Buzzards** in that area.

At sea, easterly passages at Seaford included 20 **White-fronted Geese** on 18th, and a **Little Auk*** on 19th. Next day, an adult **Ring-billed Gull*** roosted in Pagham Hbr and a **Little Auk** was seen on the Lagoon. Snow on 20th was accompanied by unusual records of **Mandarin Ducks** and **Common Buzzard** at Brighton Marina. The next day the **Great White Egret** was relocated on Pevensy Levels, to be seen daily thereafter until 17 March, and a **Bittern** was seen at Rye Hbr around this time. On 23rd, a **Great Northern Diver** at Brighton Marina was the first of a number of sightings there, while a **Grey Partridge** there was an out of context one-off! In Lancing, a wintering **Ring Ouzel** on 23rd/24th was one of c.25 in the country. In Brighton, five **Firecrests** were wintering and the remaining pair of **Ring-necked Parakeets**, accompanied by a single bird, began nest building. Twelve **Barnacle Geese** were at Pett Level on 26th, and **Water Pipits*** were claimed at Combe Haven. Two **Long-tailed Ducks** were in Emsworth Channel on 28th.

March was rather dry and cold, but with occasional warmer sunny days and winds mostly from the east.

On 1st a **Mealy Redpoll** at Parham Park was the only county record from a national influx while the 2nd was the **Black Guillemot's** last day at Brighton Marina. A **Red Kite*** was seen at Laughton next day and a **Slavonian Grebe** showed down to a few feet on the mill stream at Arundel. On 3rd, a 1st winter **Iceland Gull** visited Norman's Bay. On 4th, a **Rough-legged Buzzard*** flew over Hodcombe, Beachy Head, and a **Red Kite*** over Hollingbury was one of several reported during the month. **Bitterns** were represented by one at Chichester Yacht Basin on 5th, and two

at Rye Hbr. An early **Manx Shearwater** flew past Seaford. On 8th, Weir Wood Res hosted **Red-necked** and **Slavonian Grebes** and a **Red-throated Diver**. On 9th, while 10 **Velvet Scoter** flew past Selsey Bill, a male **Ring-necked Duck**, which had been wintering at a private site in Surrey, was found on Warnham Mill Pond, remaining until 11th, and becoming the county's second record. A wandering **Spoonbill** visited Pett Level Pools on 10th. Heralds of spring also noted on 10th were **Sandwich Terns** at Seaford and Rye Hbr; **Sand Martins** in Cuckmere Haven; **Wheatears** and **White Wagtail** at Bexhill; and a very early **Yellow Wagtail** at Seaford, while a **Black-necked Grebe** was a good record at Barcombe Res. Other reports were of up to 45 **Woodlarks** singing in West Sussex – an augury for the year's Woodlark survey on county heathlands. **Dartford Warblers** appeared to have been hit by the cold weather and were decidedly scarce, although one bird was wintering at Hollingbury Camp. Other migrants included a pair of **Garganey** on Glynde Levels on 12th, two more at Sidlesham Ferry on 19th, and another on Ivy Lake, Chichester GP, around this time. Another **Yellow Wagtail** at Seaford on 15th was followed the next day by more **Wheatears**. On 16th, some variety on the usual fare at Church Norton was provided by a female **Goshawk**. Single wintering Scandinavian **Rock Pipits** of the race *littoralis* were seen around this time in the Upper Adur Levels and at Cuckmere Haven where two **Water Pipits** were also present. At Sidlesham, a **Cirl Bunting** was seen on 20th and 21st, but not thereafter, despite much searching. Up to 40 **Tree Sparrows** were in that area, while 20 were wintering inland at Weir Wood Res. Reminders that winter was not yet banished included a first year **Iceland Gull*** over Beachy Head on 17th, and another during the morning of 25th at Newhaven and Seaford, **Whimbrels** still at Pagham and Thorney and a **Goosander** past Birling Gap on 18th. A **Snow Bunting** was still present at Brighton, but was rather elusive.

The 1st day of Spring brought a summer-plumaged **Great Northern Diver*** past Beachy Head and a **Common** and 30 **Sandwich Terns** to Selsey Bill, followed, next day, by an **Arctic Skua** and a **Woodlark**. Light SE winds and drizzle on 23rd provided perfect conditions for a fall which included a **Little Bunting** – which remained into April – consorting with **Tree Sparrows** and **Reed Buntings** at Sidlesham, a superb male **White-spotted Bluethroat** for one day at Cuckmere Haven, over 100 **Wheatears** along the coast, three **Ring Ouzels** at Pagham and an **Osprey** at Arlington. The next day, other migrants included **Ring Ouzel** and **Common Redstart** in the Cuckmere; '**Commic**' **Tern** at Seaford; **Yellow Wagtail** at Rye Hbr; **Water Pipit** at Thorney; a colour-ringed **Avocet** on the beach at Birling Gap with others; good numbers of **Black Redstarts** and **Firecrests**; a **Garganey** at Willingdon and another by the North Wall at Pagham on 26th. A sub-adult **Iceland Gull** was seen at Seaford on 25th. The first **Willow Warbler** appeared at Thorney on 27th, a **Swallow** was at Rye Hbr on 28th, **Dartford Warblers** were at Beachy Head, the wintering bird remained at Hollingbury Camp and a **Blue-headed Wagtail*** was claimed at Rye Hbr on 29th. What was possibly the Pevensy **Great White Egret** appeared at Pagham on 27th, where it stayed until 31st. Raptors around this time included a **Goshawk*** claimed over Arundel; two **Red Kites**, one at Arlington# on 24th, and another near Lewes on 29th; a **Black Kite*** claimed over Preston Park in Brighton that evening and, on 31st, an **Osprey** at Weir Wood Res. On 30th, two **Great Northern Divers*** were claimed off Rottingdean, seven **Mediterranean Gulls** were at Southwick and further migrants included the first **Little Ringed Plovers** and **House Martins**. On the last day of the month, four summer-plumaged **Black-necked Grebes** were off Brighton Marina and 220 **Sandwich Terns** were roosting at Rye Hbr. Sea-watching at Seaford during the first three months produced some high totals of 965 **Divers**, 2704

Auks and 17,497 **Brent Geese**, all flying east. Other species recorded in above average numbers included **13 Red-necked Grebes**, **14 Black-necked Grebes**, **19 Slavonian Grebes** (away from Church Norton), **40 Smew**, **28 Avocets** and **20 Mediterranean Gulls**.

April began cold, but although warm spells were recorded in the middle and at the end of the month it was, overall, cooler and drier than average.

On 1st, the **Little Bunting** was still present at Sidlesham, remaining until 5th, while elsewhere a **Marsh Harrier** was at Thorney and two **Red-necked Grebes** were off Glyne Gap. On 2nd, a **Great Northern Diver** was off Pett Level; two **Little Ringed Plovers** were in Pagham Hbr; and a **Blue-headed Wagtail** was seen at Pulborough Brooks. The **Great White Egret** from March was seen again at the North Wall, Pagham, on 3rd and finally on Thorney on 7th. A **Purple Heron** was discovered on Pevensey Levels on 4th,. Although occasionally elusive, it gave mostly excellent views, feeding on rodents and insects in a dry road-side ditch until 12th. On 5th, **75 Scaup** were still at Scotney GP. Migrants included **10 Avocets** at Sidlesham Ferry and two at Southwick; five **Common Terns** at Arlington Res; a **Whimbrel** at Rye Hbr; a **Ring Ouzel** at Rye; a **Sedge Warbler** at Thorney and a "blue" **Fulmar** past Seaford the next day. On 7th, a **Red Kite*** flew over Friston, a **Stone Curlew*** was claimed briefly in Cuckmere Haven and an early **Pied Flycatcher** was at Whitehawk Hill, Brighton. On 8th, another **Red Kite** was seen over Horse Eye Level where **1500 Fieldfares** remained from the winter influx, and **50 unidentified Grey Geese** flew over Beachy Head. On 9th, **Redstarts** were seen at Bexhill and Thorney. **Black-necked Grebes** continued to feature, with one at Pett Level Pools from 5th to 6th; three at Saltdean from 6th until 13th; seven at Hastings on 7th; one at Seaford; another at Brighton Marina from 9th to 15th; three at Birling Gap on 14th and, finally, one inland at Barcombe Res on 24th. **Water Pipits** in summer plumage were evident at several locations during the month. On 10th, an **Osprey** caught a fish at Weir Wood Res before flying off north, early **Little Terns** were at Seaford and Bexhill and a **Hawfinch** was unusual at Rye Hbr. The 11th produced the last record of **Waxwings**, with **19** in Crawley, a **Nightingale** at Thorney and a male **Brambling** at Rye Hbr. The 13th produced five **Great Skuas** past Seaford, a very early **Black Tern** at Arlington Res and **Slavonian Grebes** elsewhere. A **Serin*** was claimed over Galley Hill, Bexhill, on 14th, an early **Pomarine Skua** was seen from Seaford, a **Red Kite**, without wing- tags, was at Thorney, and **Ring Ouzels** were seen at a number of localities. On 15th, a **Goshawk*** was claimed at Rye Hbr, an early **Swift** was at Church Norton and **55 Little Egrets** were roosting at Thorney.

Warm southerly winds on 16th brought many common migrants and single **Hoopoes** to the Crab & Lobster, Pagham, on 18th; Beachy Head on 20th; Lullington Heath on 21st and Fairlight Country Park (CP) on 27th. The winds also brought a **Serin*** to Sidlesham Ferry; an impressive **38 Redstarts** to Pagham; a **Turtle Dove** to Selsey Bill, as well as a **Great Northern Diver** which remained until 18th. On that day, a **Hoopoe** was found in the North Fields of nearby Pagham Hbr. The next day an **Osprey** was in Chichester Hbr, and claims were made of an adult **Iceland Gull*** at Icklesham and a **Blue-headed Wagtail*** at Rye Hbr, where the species is seen most springs. On 19th, the first spring **Spoonbills*** were claimed flying north over Pulborough Brooks where there were also five **Garganey**. A **Serin*** was claimed at Beachy Head around this time. The next day brought another **Osprey** to Weir Wood Res; another **Hoopoe** to Beachy Head; five **Pomarine Skuas** past Seaford; **12 Little Gulls** inland to Arlington Res, and a claimed **Roseate Tern*** off Selsey Bill. On 21st,

there was a good passage of **Skuas**; some **Black Terns** were noted; a **Red Kite*** was at Ambersham and a presumed escaped **White Stork*** flew over Scotney GP and Pett, having been seen widely nationally as far north as Aberlady Bay, East Lothian, during the previous three weeks. On 22nd, two more **Avocets** were at Icklesham and a male **Ortolan Bunting** passed through Pagham, as did **Ospreys**, with one through Pulborough Brooks next day and another at Chichester Hbr on 24th. A first year **Ring-billed Gull#** was claimed at Rye Hbr on 25th, and a **Serin** was at Selsey Bill. Over the next few days a wide variety of migrants included several **Pied** and **Spotted Flycatchers**, **Wood Warblers**, **Grasshopper Warblers** and **Whinchats**. **Hobbies** were widespread and a **Nightjar** was seen at Selsey Bill. On 29th, the three **Long-tailed Ducks** finally left Rye Hbr and a singing **Twite*** was also claimed there. An unusual record on the last day of the month was Weir Wood Reservoir's third ever **Fulmar**.

May was the coldest since 1902, with winds mostly from the north-east and generally lower than average rainfall.

Rye Hbr gave the month a good start with records of an immature **Black-crowned Night Heron#**, seen intermittently until 19th, two **Egyptian Geese** and a claimed **Honey Buzzard***. Meanwhile, Brighton Marina saw a **Glaucous Gull**, and two **Roseate Terns** were at Selsey Bill. On 2nd, a **Puffin** flew past Seaford and two **Sanderlings** were a good inland find at Arlington Res. The next day, the **Egyptian Geese** moved to Scotney GP and around this time **Marsh Harriers** were seen at Icklesham, Rye Hbr and Selsey. Again at Rye Hbr, another male **Ortolan Bunting** was found on 4th, giving excellent views during the day, while at nearby Scotney GP a **Spoonbill** flew over. On 5th, Rye Hbr scored again with an **Osprey** over the Long Pits. On the same day, at least two **Serins** were seen around Selsey and a **Roseate Tern*** was also claimed there. Two more **Roseate Terns** were seen at Seaford and another passed Selsey on 7th. **Dotterels** were seen at their usual site at Balsdean where there was one on 1st; three on 6th; 13 by 8th; 6 still there on 12th, but only 2 on 16th. These birds proved to be very popular, despite the long walk from Rottingdean. Raptors around this time were represented by a **Red Kite** at Pulborough Brooks; **Ospreys** at Thorney and Pilsey; a **Common Buzzard** over Seaford; a **Honey Buzzard** in West Dean Woods on 5th and 6th; another at Selsey on 8th; and a late **Merlin** at Balsdean the same day. Also on 6th, a **Roseate Tern*** was claimed at Bexhill. On 8th, a **Wood Sandpiper** was at Rye Hbr. On 9th, a **Temminck's Stint** arrived for a short stay at Sidlesham Ferry. On 9th, a **Black-crowned Night Heron** gave excellent views at Cuckmere Haven, often from the car park, until 25th. The same day, a **Serin** was at Selsey Bill and a sub-adult **Iceland Gull** was at Icklesham, moving later to Rye Hbr. Over the next few days more **Ospreys** were seen at several locations. On 12th, another **Serin*** was claimed for Selsey, and there was a small movement of **Pomarine Skuas** and **Black Terns** along the coast. On 14th, two **Red-rumped Swallows*** were claimed briefly in Whitbread Hollow; Rye Hbr claimed a **Marsh Warbler***, and next day a **Roseate Tern*** was claimed, and **Little Stints** were seen at Pilsey and Sidlesham.

Sea passage was still evident through the month. On 15th, a **Puffin** was seen off Selsey Bill and, next day, a **Mediterranean Shearwater*** was claimed past Seaford. Strong winds on 19th produced several **Manx Shearwaters**, **Skuas** and **Black Terns**, and next day a **Caspian Tern** passed Brighton. On 22nd, **Storm Petrels** and a **Roseate Tern** were seen off Selsey Bill with another claimed off Seaford* where there were three **Manx Shearwaters** and two **Great Skuas** on 24th. Passerine

migrants included a late **Ring Ouzel** at Beachy Head on 16th; a **Melodious Warbler** which stayed for three days from 19th in Horseshoe Plantation, Beachy, followed by another at Church Norton on 21st. A **Rock Thrush** was seen around this time at an undisclosed site in the county. Also on 19th, a **Kentish Plover** was photographed at Widewater, Lancing. On the evening of the 19th, an **Alpine Swift** was found flying around the derelict buildings at Beeding Cement Works. It went to roost and reappeared briefly for the few there at 6.30 the following morning. Later that morning, a **Purple Heron*** was claimed at Rye Hbr. On 21st, a male **Scaup** was at Arlington Res; a **Golden Oriole*** was claimed in Belle Tout Wood, but another was seen at Shoreham on 25th. A **Serin** was found near the old lighthouse, Beachy Head, on 24th, and another was claimed on 25th at Belle Tout Wood* where there was also a fall of **Spotted Flycatchers**. Around this time, Icklesham had **Black-crowned Night Heron***, **Grey Heron**, **Little Egret** and **Bittern** all recorded. On 25th, what was presumably the Cuckmere **Night Heron**# was relocated at Charleston Reedbed, and a late **Garganey** was at Sidlesham Ferry. On 28th, a **Mediterranean Shearwater** was found off West Wittering where it remained until at least 30th, and an **Osprey** was at Pulborough Brooks. On 29th, a summer-plumaged **Great Northern Diver** flew west past Selsey Bill and a **Spoonbill** was at Church Norton. The next day, a female **Red-footed Falcon*** was claimed with **Hobbies** at Icklesham and another claimed* from a car in Lancing. **Roseate Terns** were seen at West Wittering and claimed* at Rye Hbr while **Ospreys** and a **Honey Buzzard** were at Weir Wood Res.

June at last brought welcome warmer weather, with hot conditions at the beginning of the month.

On 1st, a **Spoonbill**, possibly the bird from Pagham, was at Icklesham until 4th, and seven **Manx Shearwaters** and a **Pomarine Skua** were seen from Seaford. On 2nd, a **Montagu's Harrier** was seen at West Wittering; a **Black Tern** and six **Hobbies** were at Rye Hbr; and a **Curlew Sandpiper** was at Pilsley. On 4th, another **Honey Buzzard*** was claimed at Rye Hbr while the following day a **Common Buzzard** flew over Thorney and a **Garganey** was at Rye Hbr. On 6th, a **Quail** was flushed from the cliff edge at Birling Gap; a male **Red-backed Shrike** showed for just a few hours at Church Norton; an **Osprey** and two **Little Egrets** were at Weir Wood Res; and two **Marsh Warblers** were trapped at Icklesham. On 8th, a female **Red-crested Pochard*** was seen at Icklesham, four **Crossbills** flew over Beachy Head and singing **Grasshopper Warblers** were reported from two locations. A **Quail** was reported from Rye Hbr between 10th and 13th.

As might be expected, the middle of the month was fairly quiet, but unseasonal sightings were of a **Long-tailed Duck** on the Long Pool, Sidlesham on 11th; a **Black-throated Diver** at Selsey Bill and 15 **Brent Geese** at Dell Quay. On 13th, the **Little Egret** roost at Thorney reached its mid-summer trough, with just eight coming in to roost. The next day, a claimed **Caspian Tern*** roosted at Rye Hbr but unfortunately it didn't linger, being seen next day at Stodmarsh. **Mediterranean Gulls** at Rye Hbr successfully fledged two young and a **Spoonbill** flew over there on 16th when a **Red-backed Shrike** was at Pulborough Brooks. A **Little Gull** was at Thorney till the end of the month, **Avocets** were seen at several places and, on 21st, a **Roseate Tern** was at Pilsley. Later, a **Black-crowned Night Heron** found in Alexandra Park, Hastings, remained into July, and a **Common Buzzard** flew over Hampden Park, Eastbourne, on 26th. At the end of the month, a **Montagu's Harrier*** was claimed near the border with Kent from the A259. Early returning migrants were **Green Sandpipers** at Icklesham on 16th, and a **Little Stint** at Rye Hbr. Easterly passage totals from Seaford

during April – June included 1456 **Divers**, 2726 **Gannets**, 20,794 **Brent Geese**, 14,408 **Common Scoter**, 276 **Arctic Skuas** and 53 **Great Skuas**, but only 59 **Pomarine Skuas**.

July was generally warm, with some rain and occasional coastal fog during the first half but the second half was generally hot and dry.

Seabirds featured from 1st when there were 17 **Manx Shearwaters** past Bexhill and 15 off Selsey Bill. Between 2nd and 9th, sea-watchers at Selsey Bill logged at least 31 **Storm Petrels**, with an unprecedented 16 on 3rd; 75 **Manx Shearwaters**, amongst which were a **Mediterranean Shearwater** on 3rd and another on 8th; two **Roseate Terns** on 6th; and an immature **Pomarine Skua** flying west on 11th. In the east, 17 **Manx Shearwaters** passed Bexhill on 1st, a **Storm Petrel*** was claimed there on 3rd, and a **Mediterranean Shearwater*** was claimed on 7th. **Roseate Terns** were also claimed* at Rye Hbr. Other records included a **Honey Buzzard*** claimed at Rye on 4th and a male **Red-backed Shrike*** claimed at Ashdown Forest on 6th. On 13th, a juvenile **Wheatear** at Glyne Gap was either an early migrant or locally bred, and the following day a summer-plumaged **Great Northern Diver** flew west past Selsey Bill while a **Wood Sandpiper** was at nearby Sidlesham. On 14th, a **Blue-headed Wagtail** was seen at Horse Eye Level. On 16th, a **Quail** was seen at Rye Hbr and another heard on 25th near North Stoke. A **Bee-eater*** was frustratingly only heard at Rye on 17th, when a **Great Skua** was off the Cuckmere.

South-easterly winds at this time were probably responsible for a small influx of **Kentish Plovers**. One seen on Worthing beach on 17th was possibly the same as one in Pagham Hbr on 20th and 23rd, and singles were seen on 24th at Thorney, remaining until the end of the month, and claimed* at Rye Hbr. On 28th, a major rarity occurred in the form of a female or 1st summer **Greater Sand Plover** at Pilsey, possibly also due to the SE winds. Although the bird was watched for four hours it could not be relocated the next day. This is only the second record for the county. **Little Egrets** began their normal late summer invasion at this time with records from several sites away from the normal ones, and numbered 78 at the Thorney roost by the month's end.

August was fairly unsettled. A westerly airstream dominated and brought rain interspersed with periods of hot, sunny weather.

The month began with an **Osprey** at Weir Wood Res on 2nd. Four **Ruddy Shelducks*** were seen briefly at Sidlesham in the afternoon of 3rd before they moved to Farlington. These may have been the four seen flying in off the sea at Dungeness the day before. On 6th, a further five **Ruddy Shelducks** flew NE over Weir Wood Res. Raptors in the first half of the month included a **Marsh Harrier** over Hove on 4th; one, possibly two, **Red Kites** in the Arundel-Patching area; a **Marsh Harrier** over Balsdean on 12th; a **Montagu's Harrier** near Aldingbourne on 13th; and another **Osprey** at Climping. Passage waders continued to feature with a **Wood Sandpiper** at Pulborough, 26 **Curlew Sandpipers** at Pilsey, and, on 11th, a **Pectoral Sandpiper*** claimed at Pagham Hbr. Three **Aquatic Warblers** were trapped at Icklesham at this time – well down on the 15 caught last year. On 13th, fall conditions produced many common migrants, including a **Red-backed Shrike** at Birling Gap on 13th. Two **Little Egrets** in the Cuckmere increased to seven for the rest of the autumn. On 14th, two **Mediterranean Shearwaters** flew past Bexhill and an incredibly early **Redwing** was trapped in Whitbread Hollow. Four **Garganey** were on Pevensy Levels on 15th, and the next day a claimed **Pectoral Sandpiper*** began a nine-day stay at Rye Hbr. Also on 16th, a **Wryneck** was seen in a garden in Horsham

and a claimed juvenile **Montagu's Harrier*** was at Rye. At this time, **Ospreys** were seen at Arlington and Weir Wood Reservoirs and **Marsh Harriers** were at Pett and Scotney GP, the latter seen eating a dead fish. On 18th, a juvenile **Red-backed Shrike** at Sompting was flushed by a motorbike, and an adult **Spoonbill** was seen at Pagham Hbr. The next day, a **Quail** was heard at Pett Level and, on 20th, another **Red-backed Shrike** was found there, moving later to Icklesham where it, presumably, was trapped on 21st when the autumn's first of four **Spotted Crakes** was also trapped. Elsewhere on 20th, **Wood Warblers** were at Hollingbury and **Spoonbills** at Rye Hbr.

Strong winds on 24th brought **Mediterranean Shearwaters** close in with one at Seaford and claims of one* at Bexhill and two* at Telscombe. The next day, Birling Gap had a **Red-necked Grebe** and claimed a juvenile **Long-tailed Skua*** while a **Pomarine Skua** was seen at Selsey Bill. **Manx Shearwaters** and **Great Skuas** were seen off Brighton Marina and another **Great Skua** off Goring. On 29th, the ageing **Glaucous Gull** returned once again to Selsey Lifeboat Station and on 30th an adult **Long-tailed Skua*** was claimed at Rye Hbr. **Wood Sandpipers** peaked at about this time with up to three at Rye Hbr and eight at Icklesham. **Ospreys** passed through in good numbers with at least 13 over the next three weeks, including four at Thorney. On 26th, a **Marsh Sandpiper** was watched for an hour on flood water at Horse Eye Level, but it could not be relocated later in the day. On 28th, a **Black-necked Grebe** was at Barcombe Res and stayed well into September. In the east, two **Greater Flamingos*** of unknown origin, one of which was colour ringed, were claimed at Rye Hbr. Raptors at this time included a **Montagu's Harrier** at Balsdean on 22nd; two **Marsh Harriers** at Kingston; and a claimed **Honey Buzzard*** flying out to sea at Beachy Head on 30th. On that day, a **Wryneck** was at Arlington Res and a totally albino **Swallow** was seen at Barcombe Res. Elsewhere, a **Marsh Warbler*** was claimed at Filsham and a **Barred Warbler** was caught in Whitbread Hollow on 31st, when **Little Egrets** reached another new record with 135 counted leaving the roost.

September was dominated by a high pressure system which brought northerly winds for the first half of the month, but as the system moved over Scandinavia the winds changed to the east for the second half.

On 1st, another **Long-tailed Skua** was seen at Rye Hbr and the two **Greater Flamingos*** were seen again there. Seven **Little Egrets** flew in off the sea at Selsey Bill and an impressive count of 50 **Spotted Flycatchers** was made at Beachy Head. The next day, a **Montagu's Harrier** was at the North Wall, Pagham; on 3rd a **Hoopoe*** was claimed in gardens at Slinfold; and an **Aquatic Warbler** was trapped at Thorney. Also on 3rd, an **Ortolan Bunting** was trapped at Icklesham. On 5th, another **Spoonbill** was at Pagham Hbr and a **Lesser White-fronted Goose** of dubious origin was at Weir Wood Res. The next day, a **Melodious Warbler** was reported at Church Norton. **Wrynecks** appeared in some numbers from the 3rd when there was one at Hastings CP; two were trapped at Icklesham on 6th, on which day another arrived and stayed at Beachy Head for three days; another was at Mill Hill, Shoreham, the following day; and more were seen over the next few days, with one at the North Wall, Pagham, and one at Littlehampton on 11th. **Marsh Harriers** were seen at a number of locations as were migrant **Common Buzzards**. Waders appeared in significant numbers, particularly **Little Stints** and **Curlew Sandpipers**, the latter increasing to 30 at Sidlesham Ferry by 14th, with others elsewhere. On 8th, a juvenile **Red-necked Phalarope** was at Scotney GP, although at times it was so close to the bank that it couldn't be seen from the road. Ringing activities at Icklesham caught a **Marsh Warbler** on 8th; a second **Spotted Crake** on 12th; a 3rd one on 28th; and a

Bluethroat on 21st. Later in the month a record inland count of 46 **Little Stints** was made at Weir Wood Res on 23rd and an amazing 106 at Pilsley on 28th. On 11th, a **Black-necked Grebe** was seen at Chichester GP and the first **Firecrests** and **Ring Ouzels** were evident. On 15th, an adult male **Bluethroat** was a good find at Chat Vale, Beachy Head; a **Melodious Warbler**# was reported at Church Norton; and an impressive count of 60,000 **Swallows** moving east was made at Icklesham on 17th, where a **Hoopoe*** was claimed in flight, and the wintering **Bittern** returned to Castle Water, Rye. One of two **White Pelicans** which had escaped from *Bird World* was seen in Chichester Hbr.

South-easterly winds on 18th brought 14 **Firecrests** and six continental **Coal Tits** to Beachy Head and a further two of the latter to Fairlight. Following continuing favourable winds there were 10 continental **Coal Tits** and several more **Firecrests** at Beachy Head. Both species were also seen at Camber and Hastings on 20th and 21st. **Wrynecks** continued to feature. One was caught by a cat in Halland on 18th but released, alive, but without its tail. Another was found the next day at Sheepcote where it remained into October, another was found on 24th in Hampden Park, Eastbourne, and yet another in Bexhill on 25th. The favourable winds on 21st also brought a flock of 45 **Ring Ouzels** and a fly-over **Richard's Pipit*** to Beachy Head, while a further 35 **Ring Ouzels** were in Hastings Country Park, and on 25th a female **Common Scoter** was at Weir Wood Res. A **Booted Warbler**, found at Sidlesham Ferry on 28th, remained to at least the end of the month. It showed very well at times and incredibly a second bird# was trapped at Icklesham on 30th. These were only the third and fourth records respectively for the county. At the end of the month, nine **Crossbills** flew over Beachy Head.

October was generally mild with Atlantic fronts dominating the weather while winds fluctuated between south-east and south-west. On 28th, the remnants of Hurricane Lili resulted in storm force WSW winds which, fortunately, were nowhere near as destructive as the Great Storm of 1987.

After the **Booted Warblers** of late September, a succession of other Asiatic warblers and extreme rarities followed, but not before the county hit the birding headlines again when a single observer saw Britain's fifth **Cliff Swallow**# on 1st, hawking insects around the Severals, Church Norton. The same day, a **Baird's Sandpiper** was found at Sidlesham Ferry: Unfortunately it, too, was present for but a short time. Probably the highlight of the year appeared the next day when a Nearctic **Black and White Warbler** was found at Hodcombe, Beachy Head. The bird showed down to a few feet in a private garden until the following day when it disappeared mid-afternoon ahead of a weather front. Some observers declared it was the best Sussex bird since the 1977 Wallcreeper! Also on 2nd, the first of at least eight **Yellow-browed Warblers** was claimed at Hodcombe*; another was seen briefly at Goring Gap on 5th; another was claimed at Beachy Head* on 6th; another was seen at Hastings on 7th; one was trapped at Icklesham on 11th; one was seen at Norton Priory on 12th, and another, probably a different bird, there on 16th. Two were seen at Hodcombe, Beachy Head, on 15th, and, finally, one was in Whitbread Hollow on 19th. Intermingled with these, and probably brought in by south-easterly winds on 14th, was the first of at least seven **Pallas's Warblers** for the season, which was found in Fairlight Country Park. Another, which stayed a while, was at Belle Tout, Beachy, the next day when one was also claimed* at Park Crescent, Brighton. One was found in the Horseshoe Plantation, Beachy, on 19th. Another was there from 23rd to 24th, when yet another stayer was found at Selsey where, adding further spice, a

Barred Warbler was also found on 24th. After a gap of a couple of weeks another **Pallas's Warbler** was claimed in Whitbread Hollow* on 9 Nov and one was found on 10th in Hastings Country Park. Finally, the last for the year turned up on Thorney Is on 15 Nov. Mixed in with these were eastern races of the Chiffchaff with one in Horseshoe Plantation, Beachy, on 30 Oct and one at Church Norton on 1 Nov. Why go to the Isles of Scilly in October when you can see such birds on your home patches?

Rather more prosaically perhaps, a **Wryneck** was still present in Sheepcote Valley, Brighton, at the beginning of the month and another was at Hastings CP on 3rd. A wing-tagged **Red Kite** flew over Beachy Head, a **Black-necked Grebe*** was claimed at Rye Hbr on 2nd and an early **Twite*** was claimed at The Crumbles on 4th. The county total for **Little Egrets** at this time was between 140 and 150. **Curlew Sandpipers** were still at a number of sites following the earlier influx. A **Grey Phalarope** was seen at Brooklands, Worthing, on 7th, where it had possibly been present for a week. That day, a migrant **Hawfinch** was at Church Norton where a **Serim** was seen the next two days. Nearby, a **Raven** was seen in the Sidlesham Ferry area on 9th, and subsequently. On 10th, a **Woodlark** and a **Dartford Warbler** were at Beachy Head and a **Whimbrel** was inland at Warnham.

On 11th, three **Jack Snipes** were seen at Rye Hbr, continental **Coal Tits** were found at Beachy Head, while **Firecrests** were there, at Church Norton and elsewhere. The following day, a **Spotted Crake** – the 4th for the year – was trapped at Icklesham. On 13th, Pagham Hbr boasted not only a **Black Tern**, but also the county's first **American Wigeon**, a 1st year male, which remained into 1997 becoming easier to see as the year progressed. A **Grey Plover** was a good inland record at Weir Wood Res and **Marsh Harriers** were seen at three sites around this time. The 14th found **Firecrests** and a continental **Coal Tit** at Fairlight Glen; a **Mediterranean Shearwater*** was claimed off Seaford; and two **Serims** were at Church Norton. On 19th, **Cetti's Warblers** were found at Belle Tout and trapped in Whitbread Hollow. On 21st, nine **White-fronted Geese** flew over Climping. An amazing record on 23rd concerned a **Red-billed Chough** reported flying over Belle Tout. On 24th, four **Twite** and a **Long-tailed Duck** were at Thorney. On 25th, a **Red-backed Shrike** was at Sidlesham Ferry and there was an unsubstantiated report of a **Dusky Warbler*** at Beachy Head. A **Grey Phalarope** lingered offshore at Selsey Bill. Storm force winds on 28th had subsided by the 30th and in their wake left **Grey Phalaropes** at Camber and Littlehampton. Four **Pomarine Skuas*** were claimed flying west at Brighton Marina and **Little Auks** were recorded at Littlehampton on the River Arun and at Selsey Bill. A **Long-tailed Duck** was at Brooklands and a **Woodlark** and a **Hawfinch** were in Hastings. On the last day of the month, three **Little Auks** and a **Pomarine Skua** flew past Selsey Bill.

November's weather was a mixture of cold and frost, interspersed with milder and wetter periods as Atlantic fronts crossed the country.

The **Grey Phalarope** was still at Littlehampton on 1st. Elsewhere, 116 **Little Egrets** were counted at Thorney and **Firecrests** were in Park Crescent, Brighton. Strong winds on 2nd produced an unsubstantiated **Sooty Shearwater*** flying west past Shoreham, with an **Arctic Skua** and a **Black-throated Diver** off Selsey, and two **Red-necked Grebes** were at Pagham Hbr. On 3rd, a **Sabine's Gull*** was claimed briefly at Brooklands, Worthing. On 5th, a wintering **Water Pipit** returned to Pagham Hbr where numbers increased to three by 10th – when one was also seen at Brighton Marina – with two remaining into December. Also on 5th, a **Snow Bunting** was

found at Streat Hill Farm, Plumpton, where they are unusual. By 7th, **Red-necked Grebes** had increased to four at Pagham and a **Grey Phalarope** began a week's stay at Brighton Marina. An impressive count of 22,300 **Wood Pigeons** was made at Hastings on 8th. The next day, two **Shore Larks**, three **Twite** and a **Snow Bunting** were noted at Pagham Hbr. Other **Snow Buntings** were seen at Climping.

On 13th, a latish **Serin** was seen at the Severals, Church Norton, and a female **Hooded Merganser** was found on the river at Rickney. This was one of a number seen in Britain at the time although this one's origin was certainly in doubt as it had one wing shorter than the other suggesting it had been clipped. Elsewhere, five immature **Whooper Swans** were at Weir Wood Res and wintering **Whimbrels** were at Thorney and Pagham. An influx of **Little Auks** included at least 20 at Pagham and one at Brighton on 14th (found dead on 16th), one claimed* at Selsey Bill on 15th, and another on the sea off Brighton Marina the next day. A count of **Divers** off Church Norton included two **Great Northern**s and seven **Black-throated**s, while at Thorney, next day, there was also an adult **Glaucous Gull**. Seventy-five **Fulmars** on the sea off Beachy Head was a good count on 16th, and a **Lapland Bunting*** was claimed flying over Castle Water, Rye. The next day, a **Shore Lark*** was also claimed at Rye, remaining until 21st. On 19th, a **Sooty Shearwater** and a **Grey Phalarope** were seen at Selsey Bill. Another **Grey Phalarope** at Brighton Marina was different from the previous week's bird. Also at Brighton, up to 25 **Little Gulls** were seen there during this period. Four unauthenticated **Lapland Buntings*** joined the **Shore Lark** at Rye on 21st and the wintering **Great Grey Shrike** returned to Ashdown Forest. On 23rd, an unsubmitted **American Wigeon*** was seen well at Arlington Res, a late **Wheatear** was at Rye and a **Goosander** was in Brighton Marina. A scattering of **Snow Buntings** at this time included, unusually, three at Beachy Head. Three juvenile **Ruddy Shelducks** at Pagham Hbr on 24th were of doubtful origin. On 28th, a **Richard's Pipit** was reported at West Wittering where it had apparently been present for 10 days. Some good counts included seven **Water Pipits** at Thorney and six **Shags** at Southwick. At the end of the month, **Avocets** had increased to six at Pagham and a **Black-throated Diver** was at Scotney GP.

December was generally dull, damp, misty and cold until the last week when arctic conditions arrived with some snow and exceptional cold which lasted well into 1997.

The **Black-throated Diver** at Scotney GP was joined by a **Great Northern** on 3rd which remained throughout December. Also on 1st, a **Great Skua** was off Rye, and, on 3rd, an **Arctic Skua** was off Brighton Marina. A **Goosander** began a three-week stay at the Pells, Lewes, on 4th. **Snow Buntings** appeared on 5th at Pett Level, possibly the same as those at Bexhill on 7th, and a **Goosander** was at Weir Wood Res on 6th. Wintering **Firecrests** included one at Camber and three at Church Norton. Six **Little Egrets** remained in the Cuckmere and the ageing **Mediterranean Gull** had returned to Mewsbrook Park, Littlehampton. Records from Selsey and Chichester around this time were of a variety of **Divers**, including one **Great Northern** at Pagham Hbr on 1st; one in Chichester Hbr on 5th; and one off Selsey on 7th. Meanwhile, Chichester Hbr held numbers of **Velvet Scoters** and **Long-tailed Ducks** and there were four **Firecrests** at East Head. The following week was fairly quiet as dull, misty, conditions prevailed. However, 42 **Pink-footed Geese** were seen flying over Hollingbury on 11th, and a single **Knot** at Weir Wood was more unusual than a count of 886 at Thorney. Also on 11th, a **Raven** was seen at Shoreham Sanctuary, an unusual location for this species.

Small flocks of **Tree Sparrows**, including 20 at Hurstpierpoint and 35 at Rodmell, were encouraging as this species is becoming increasingly scarce. At Pagham on 14th there were 12 **Avocets** and 23 **White-fronted Geese**, with a **Slavonian Grebe** at Brighton Marina on the same day. **Goosanders** included two in Eastbourne and two at Rye. A **Waxwing**, found in Hastings on 16th, unfortunately remained lonely, as no others were seen by the end of the year. The same day a **Great Skua** was seen off Seaford but **Little Egret** numbers had dropped to 71 at Thorney.

It was generally quiet again until 22nd when colder conditions sent 22 **White-fronted Geese** past Southwick; five **Goosanders** were at Rye; and a **Crane** was found on Glynde Levels. It was seen in the Cuckmere and on Lewes Levels during the following few weeks. Another **Great Northern Diver** was seen in Chichester Hbr; the next day a **Slavonian Grebe** appeared at Weir Wood Res; and a **Snow Bunting** was inland at Arlington Res. The first **Smew** arrived on 24th with seven at Rye Hbr increasing to a peak of 25 at Northpoint GP by the end of the year. A sea-watch from Bexhill on Christmas day produced 11 **Black-throated** and 423 **Red-throated Divers** all flying east. At Weir Wood Res the **Slavonian Grebe** was joined by a **Red-necked**, and seven **White-fronted Geese** were seen. On Boxing day, four **Whooper Swans** were seen at Northpoint GP and another two were at Pagham. Possibly the highlight of the year, if it is ever substantiated, was a claim of a **Red-winged Blackbird*** in Selsey. The bird was reportedly seen well by two visiting American birders who didn't realise the significance of their find until several days later! On 27th, **Smew** and **Goosander** were at a number of sites and the **White-fronted Goose** flock at Scotney, now numbering 135, included a **Bean Goose**, of unspecified race, and one (later three) **Pink-footed Goose**. A **Bittern** was seen at Castle Water although it was suspected to have been present all month. On 28th, 15 **Pink-footed Geese** flew over Northpoint GP. The last few days of the year saw **Goosanders**, **Smew** and a small numbers of **White-fronted Geese** at many sites. Displaced **Woodcocks** included up to nine at Sheepcote Valley. A **Bittern** was at Thorney, two **Twite*** were claimed on the River Adur at Shoreham, a **Snow Bunting** was at Rye and the **Crane** showed particularly well in the Cuckmere. During the month nearly 1000 **Auks** flew east at Seaford.

CLASSIFIED RECORDS FOR 1996

This list covers all species in Categories A and C of the British Ornithologists' Union' check list.

The following abbreviations are used in the Systematic List as standard practice: N, S, E, W *etc.*, as cardinal compass points; GP – gravel pit; GC – golf course; Hbr – Harbour; MP – Mill Pond; SF – sewage farm or works; LNR – Local Nature Reserve; NR – Nature Reserve; NNR – National Nature Reserve; Res – Reservoir; SSSI – Site of Special Scientific Interest; WWT – Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust; nc – no count; ha – hectares; km – kilometres.

Sea-watching records were received from several sites. The following table lists the hours watched in each month at 4 locations where logs were kept and details of times recorded:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
Selsey Bill	18	16	63	137	181	10	50	23	12	16	14	9
Worthing	3	2	41	41	37	4	11	12	18	17	7	11
Seaford	25	29	101	133	165	10	12	11	16	13	7	28
Bexhill	21	19	31	34	38	7	22	15	32	19	21	16

Many tables which are included in the accounts for wetland bird species refer to the monthly WeBS' counts — the Wetland Bird Survey. These counts are undertaken on a fixed date each month during the winter, and sometimes during the summer months, as well. 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.

0002. RED-THROATED DIVER

Gavia stellata

Fairly common winter visitor and passage migrant.

The monthly estimates given below are only very approximate, especially due to the difficulty of estimating the number of birds offshore. With offshore birds, the largest daily site counts were combined. Where there were counts of birds flying both E and W at a site, the larger count was used. Birds away from open water were estimated more accurately.

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
333	659	189	78	41	-	1	-	4	8	32	587

Reports from 3 sea-watching sites were as follows (see also under Diver species):

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
Selsey Bill	81	41	17	29	16	-	1	6	27
Seaford Splash Pt	35	13	95	37	12	-	-	-	39
Bexhill Glyne Gap	176	563	65	26	20	-	1	3	478
Total*	324	644	171	71	41	3	7	31	578

* all coastal sites and allowing for duplication

Widespread records from along the coast during the first winter period. The largest numbers reported included 61 off Pett Levels on 9 Jan, and at Bexhill, Glyne Gap, 58 W and 9 E on 7 Jan; 33 W and 106 E on 18 Feb; and 1 W and 376 E on 21 Feb, when large numbers were seen off Dungeness.

Away from the open sea during this period, there were a large number of records. These included the following sites (with approximate minima of individuals in brackets) : Thorney Island (1); Pilsey Sands (1); Pagham Hbr (4); Pulborough, South Brooks, (1); Steyning (1); Shermanbury (1); Shoreham Hbr (4); inside Brighton Marina (2); Weir Wood Res (1); Barcombe Res (2); Lewes, Southerham Farm, (1); Arlington Res (1); Newhaven Hbr (1); Newhaven Tide Mills (1); Cuckmere (1); Shinewater Marsh Lake, Eastbourne, (1); Sovereign Hbr Marina (2); Pevensey, Middle Bridge, (1); Wallers Haven, Pevensey Levels, (3); Wishing Tree Res (1); Icklesham (1); Rye Hbr (7); Rye, Northpoint Pit, (1), and Scotney Court GP (2).

The last of the spring were 2 at Beachy Head and 1 off Selsey Bill on 22 May.

The next record was of 1 offshore at Worthing Beach, on the unprecedented date of 9 July (*cf.* Great Northern Diver).

A long-dead individual was found at Scotney Court GP on 14 Sept and then 1 was offshore at Rye on 21 Sept.

Again, widespread offshore during the latter part of the year, with many records from scattered coastal localities through October and November. The largest number recorded was on 25 Dec when observations from Bexhill, Glyne Gap, during a watch of 2.25 hrs, revealed 422 E and 1 W. Away from the open sea there were reports of individuals at Chichester Hbr (2), Pagham Hbr (6), Shoreham Hbr (2), Sovereign Hbr Marina (2) and Scotney Court GP (1). [SHL]

0003. BLACK-THROATED DIVER

Gavia arctica

Scarce winter visitor and passage migrant.

About 215 were recorded during the year. The monthly estimates are as follows:

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	Oct	Nov	Dec
17	17	20	30	42	3	4	14	71

Totals of birds offshore are shown below (see also under Diver species). Where there were counts of birds flying both E and W at a site, the larger count was used.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	Oct	Nov	Dec
Selsey Bill	5	-	5	12	4	1	2	3	41
Church Norton	-	1	2	-	-	-	-	5	6
Climping	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
Worthing Beach	-	-	2	5	-	-	2	-	1
Lancing Widewater	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Southwick	-	-	-	-	9	-	-	4	1
Brighton Marina	-	1	1	-	9	-	-	2	4
Seaford Splash Point	3	7	10	13	40	2	-	1	5
Beachy Hd Birling Gap	-	-	-	1	1	-	-	-	-
Bexhill Glyne Gap	8	8	2	3	2	-	-	-	14
Total*	15	15	18	30	42	3	4	14	70

* Total (allowing for duplication between sites)

The June records relate to singles, all flying E, off Seaford on 1st and 5th, and at Selsey on 10th. The first of the autumn was 1 E off Worthing Beach on 4 Oct.

Reports from other sites, in Jan, comprised 1 at Shoreham Hbr on 2nd, and 1, which had been present since the previous Dec, at the Crumbles/ Sovereign Hbr Marina on 4th and 15th. In Feb, there was 1 at Scotney Court GP on 11th, and 1 at

Langney Point (perhaps the Crumbles' bird) on 17th. In Mar, singles were at Pagham Hbr on 10th and at Shoreham Hbr on 16th. There was 1 in Pagham Hbr on 6 Dec. [SHL]

0004. **GREAT NORTHERN DIVER**

Gavia immer

Very scarce winter visitor and spring passage migrant.

About 10 were recorded during the year. At Brighton Marina, there was a single on 1-2 Jan (RJF, RAI, RWCI) and the same, or another, on 23 Feb and 9 Mar (ADW, IJW). The next was off Pett Level on 2 Apr (IJW), followed by individuals in summer plumage off Selsey Bill between 16-18 Apr (TJE), on 29 May (TJE), and on the unprecedented date of 14 July (RP). The rest were in Nov and Dec. A single off Church Norton on 14 Nov (TJE, AH) and 21 Nov (AH) may have been the same as one at Pagham Hbr on 1 Dec (RAI, DIS). There were other singles at Scotney Court GP on 3 Dec (ADW, IJW), in Chichester Hbr on 5 Dec (TJE), off Selsey Bill on 7 Dec (OM) and finally at East Head on 22 Dec (BFF, RAI, DIS). [SHL]

DIVER SPECIES

Gavia sp.

Divers seen at a distance often cannot be safely identified as to species and are therefore recorded as Diver species.

The total numbers of birds seen during Jan - May and Oct - Dec at the 4 main sea-watching sites were determined by adding the monthly totals of numbers flying E, those going W and those (a very small percentage) on the sea. The figures therefore represent the number of sightings and almost certainly over-estimate the actual number of birds involved.

	Diver Sp.		R-T Diver		B-T Diver		Total*		No. per hr*	
	J-M	O-D	J-M	O-D	J-M	O-D	J-M	O-D	J-M	O-D
Selsey Bill	116	17	217	36	26	45	361	99	0.87	2.60
Worthing Beach	77	38	24	15	7	2	108	55	0.87	1.55
Seaford Splash Point	1387	339	200	39	73	5	1660	383	3.66	8.01
Bexhill Glyne Gap	-	11	863	500	25	14	888	525	6.22	14.15

* Includes 2 Great Northern Divers at Selsey Bill during Jan - May and 1 during Oct - Dec.

Nearly all the divers seen at Bexhill were identified to species, compared with figures of 71% at Selsey, 27% at Worthing and 15% at Seaford.

The percentage of birds of all species seen passing E at the four sites during each of these months is shown below :

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Oct*	Nov*	Dec
Selsey Bill	39%	30%	100%	97%	75%	20%	64%	87%
Worthing Beach	100%	28%	98%	91%	71%	75%	50%	44%
Seaford Splash Point	84%	74%	95%	96%	100%	100%	67%	96%
Bexhill Glyne Gap	34%	91%	94%	96%	92%	-	0%	95%

* Percentages for these two months are based on very small counts.

By far the largest passage of Diver species involved 99 E at Seaford on 21 Mar. [SHL]

0007. **LITTLE GREBE***Tachybaptus ruficollis***Scarce resident, passage migrant and winter visitor.**

The monthly Wetland Bird Survey' counts at the principal sites were as follows:

	199						199			
	6						7			
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
<i>County Totals</i>	150	122	136	178	161	195	173	86	72	71
Chichster Hbr	42	25	45	42	32	51	52	28	33	29
Pagham Hbr	11	6	9	8		18	15	10	3	
Chichester GP	10	17	4	25	26	22	16	6	4	8
Lwr Ouse Valley	3	-	-	nc	2	10	5	5	7	3
Cuckmere Hvn	22	15	21	8	12	14	22	8	11	5
Langney	9	2	3		2	8	9	13	5	3
Bewl Water	16	17	24	42	44	36	24	8	6	6
Pett Level	-	-	-	20	15	17	14	3	1	4
Rye Hbr	28	29	26	22	13	11	7		1	8

Breeding activity was reported from 18 sites. Those where young were recorded included Bewl Water where 17 pairs were reported in May and 3 broods produced at least 5 young. Thorney Deeps had 3 pairs which fledged 8 young, while Portfield GP, Chichester, had a breeding pair with at least 3 juveniles, and Holmbush Forest recorded an adult and 3 chicks in Aug.

From 4 pairs at Ternery Pool, Rye Harbour, there was 1 young bird seen early in the season and then 5 others later, while 1 pair bred on New Narrow Pit, Rye.

At Pett Level Pool only a single chick was recorded, while other sites from which breeding was reported included the Ferry Long Pool, Pagham Harbour, and Elms Farm, Icklesham.

Monthly maxima at selected wintering sites included:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
Thorney Island	59	52	31	48	48	49	50
Lower Cuckmere	-	23	-	-	3	-	17
Northpoint GP	16	60	5	-	2	4	-
Bewl Water	32	39	24	42	44	36	24

Late-year sightings away from the principal sites included birds seen at Wicks Farm, Yapton, Darwell Res, Upper Chichester Channel, Brighton Marina, New Salts Farm, Lancing, and Brooklands, Worthing. [JKI]

0009. **GREAT CRESTED GREBE***Podiceps cristatus***Fairly common resident, passage migrant and winter visitor.**

The monthly Wetland Bird Survey' counts at the principal sites were as follows:

	199						199			
	6						7			
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
<i>County Totals</i>	203	162	286	282	319	323	222	120	204	246
Chichster Hbr	23	5	33	1	3	20	17	11	5	28

Pagham Hbr	10	11	7	38	39	11	21	-	21	1
Chichester GP	37	23	10	32	36	47	28	10	23	35
Shillinglee Lk	13	4	13	11	nc	nc	nc	-	2	12
Ardingly Res	7	13	20	9	14	17	10	5	17	17
Weir Wd Res	43	26	68	25	84	94	64	-	29	45
Arlington Res	5	5	9	27	27	37	14	9	18	16
Bewl Water	38	24	36	70	61	38	42	73	36	31
Darwell Res	13	27	30	45	37	37	8	-	11	29
Pett Level	1	2	2	2	-	-	1	-	14	-
Rye Hbr	6	14	26	2	3	4	5	-	8	8

Counts at selected sites during the months Apr - Aug were as follows:

	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug
<i>County totals</i>	135	105	124	127	169
Chichester GP	16	9	9	12	4
Lurgashall MP	1	2	2	-	4
Shillinglee Lake	3	6	3	-	6
Weir Wood Res	78	52	69	58	57
Barcombe Reservoir	-	-	-	-	3
Arlington Reservoir	7	10	13	19	34
Darwell Reservoir	30	26	28	38	61

The first day of the year saw a single bird at Brighton Marina and 12 off-shore at Glyne Gap, Bexhill. During Jan there were 45 off Rye Bay on 7th, and 85 off Pett Level shore on 9th, while Splash Point, Seaford, had a month total of 18 passing E in 25 hrs of sea-watching.

Sea-watching in Feb and Mar respectively showed Splash Point, Seaford, 41 in 29 hrs (26 E and 3 W) and 127 in 101 hrs (59 E and 5 W), and Glyne Gap, Bexhill, with 55 in 19 hrs (28 E and 11 W) and 39 in 31 hrs (43 E and 2 W).

Early breeding records came from Warnham Mill Pond where 2 pairs were displaying on 26 Feb and a bird was sitting there on 25 Mar. Nesting was confirmed at Tilgate Park, Crawley, on 31 Mar, with 2 juvs noted on 30 May.

From Apr onwards, successful breeding records came from Bewl Water where 38 pairs nested, but only 1 young was recorded. At Darwell Res 'at least 13 pairs' were reported on 19 May, 13 broods on 21 Jun and 25 immatures on 18 Aug, while those birds at Weir Wood Res had their nests disturbed and only 6 young were counted.

Other sites reporting successes included New Narrow Pit, Rye Hbr, Mill Pond, Ifield, Slaugham Manor, Scotney GP, Knepp Lake, and New Lake, Chichester.

Monthly maxima at selected wintering sites included:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	.....	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
Weir Wood Res	43	50	110	.....	79	103	134	152
Arlington Res	-	7	12	.....	15	6	66	15
Bewl Water	38	85	36	.....	70	61	38	42
Darwell Res	13	29	30	.....	45	37	37	8

In Dec, the monthly maximum at Weir Wood Res of 152 compared well to last year's figure (93), but Darwell Res' records noted a 'low count for site and season'. Monthly totals from sea-watching also varied, with the highest number of 30 E and 3 W and 9 on the sea, and a maximum of 30 on 25 Dec, coming from Glyne Gap, Bexhill, in 16 hrs. [JKI]

0010. **RED-NECKED GREBE***Podiceps grisegena***Scarce winter visitor and passage migrant.**

Singles were reported from nine sites in Jan, including a bird seen regularly at Bewl Water between 4 Jan and 3 Feb. Singles continued to be seen at traditional sites through Feb, with two birds seen at Brighton Marina on 4 Feb and another two off-shore at Church Norton on 15 and 22 Feb.

Two displaying birds were off Glyne Gap, Bexhill, on 31 Mar, and in the same month Splash Point, Seaford, recorded a monthly total of 7, including 4 E.

Apr reports of birds in summer plumage came from Southwick Beach on 3rd, Bexhill on 5th, Castle Pit, Rye Hbr, on 14th-15th, and Winchelsea Beach on 15th, while Bewl Water had a similar bird on 3 May.

Sightings resumed in Sept at Pagham Intertidals on 7th and continued largely in that area, peaking with 5 off Church Norton on 4 Nov. Weir Wood Res had a single on 14 Nov and subsequent dates into Dec, and the last bird of the year was at Emsworth Channel on 29 Dec. [JKI]

0011. **SLAVONIAN GREBE***Podiceps auritus***Scarce winter visitor and passage migrant.**

The approximate monthly totals were as follows:

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	Oct	Nov	Dec
36	67	78	30	15	61	35

In Jan, the majority of records came from the Pagham area, with 15 reported on 21st at the Hbr, although the second best maximum was from Pilsey Island with 12 on 13th.

In Feb, 36 were off-shore at Church Norton on 27th. Far less movement was recorded compared to last year, the best monthly maximum being 3 E at Splash Point, Seaford. Away from the coast, singles were reported from Powdermill Res on 18th, and from both Arlington Res and Bewl Water on 23rd.

Mar 5 saw 42 birds off-shore at Church Norton, with 33 there on 11th and 40 off-shore at Pagham Hbr on 27th. Evidence of movement came from Selsey Bill with 14 moving E in 4.5 hrs on 9th. A summer plumage bird was displaying off Glyne Gap, Bexhill, on the last day of the month. Numbers predictably reduced in Apr, with a maximum count of 6 at Church Norton on 4th, while 7 flew E in 6.5 hrs at Selsey Bill on 16th.

The first autumn reports were of singles at Glyne Gap and the Tide Mills, Newhaven, on 19 Sept and 27 Sept respectively. Of the eleven site reports during Oct, 9 were from Church Norton, with a best day-count of 12 on 31st. Following severe gales, a single was reported from the Dam area of Bewl Water on 29 Oct.

The last two months of the year were again dominated by records from Church Norton, with a month maximum of 22 on 16 Nov, although this was nearly matched by 21 at Ferring, Kingston, 3 days earlier. A single was at Weir Wood Res on 23 Dec, while Glyne Gap had 7 E in 2.25 hrs on 25th. [JKI]

0012. **BLACK-NECKED GREBE***Podiceps nigricollis***Very scarce winter visitor and passage migrant.**

An adult was on Ivy Lake, Chichester, on 10 Jan (TJE) and another single was at Brighton Marina from 30 Jan until at least 4 Feb (ADW, TJW, RAI). Of 2 adults at Brighton Marina on 9 Mar, one was in summer plumage, and by 31 Mar 4 in summer plumage were displaying. A single summer-plumaged bird was also there from 9 until 15 Apr (ADW, SJP).

Reports for Barcombe Res ranged from singles on 10 Mar and 24 Apr in the spring, to possibly the same bird recorded on various dates from 28 Aug to 12 Sept (RTP, ADW, JSG).

Other early-year reports included 1 at Camber Sands on 11 Feb and subsequent dates (NJC), with Mar records of singles at Trout Lakes, Chichester, on 4th (RK), Large Camber Pit, Rye Bay, on 10th (BFF), Splash Point, Seaford, on 12th (WRT) and Pett Level Pools on 27th, this last staying until 9 Apr (JAG, CAH, ASG). Apr sightings included 3 at Saltdean on 6th (DRW), 7 off Hastings Beach on 7th (ASG) and 3 on the sea off Birling Gap, Beachy Head, on 14th (TJW).

Apart from Barcombe Res, the only other late-year sightings were of 1 at Ivy Lake, Chichester, on 11 Oct (TJE), and of 4 at Selsey Bill on 29 Oct (TJE). A single was at Castle Water, Rye Hbr, on 2 Oct (BJY). [JKI]

0020. **FULMAR***Fulmarus glacialis***Fairly common breeding species and passage migrant, resident on coastal cliffs from November to September.**

Movements at the main sea-watching points were as follows:

Direction	Jan-Feb		Mar-May		Jun-Jul		Aug-Oct		Nov-Dec	
	E	W	E	W	E	W	E	W	E	W
Selsey Bill	-	2	123	200	7	53	3	53	-	-
Worthing	-	-	62	45	3	4	6	12	2	-
Seaford	382	52	577	27	-	-	3	3	183	17
Bexhill	25	13	147	12	19	14	3	24	15	-

As usual, most birds in East Sussex moved eastwards, and most at Selsey Bill westwards. Larger movements than usual past Seaford in Jan included 63 east on 20th. Other notable numbers eastwards off Seaford were 120 on 8 Mar, 300 on 1 Apr, and 80 on 22 May. At Beachy Head, 75 were on the sea on 16 Nov.

Breeding reports were of 53 territories at Rock a Nore, Hastings, 6 young in nests at Newhaven, and 2 birds on a nest at Beachy Head.

Inland, 2 flew south at Weir Wood Res on 12 Mar, and single birds were at Lewes cliffs on 28 Mar, Weir Wood Res on 30 Apr, moving west at Mill Hill, Shoreham, on 23 June, and east at Icklesham on 17 Aug. [KN]

0043. **SOOTY SHEARWATER***Puffinus griseus***Very scarce autumn visitor.**

1995: One W and then later E off Selsey Bill on 4 Oct (AF, AHo) was the 2nd record of the year.

1996: One W off Selsey Bill on 11 Nov (TJE) was the only record. All 6 records during the 1990s have been at this site between mid-Sept and mid-Nov, with 4 having been seen by this observer. [RJF]

0046. **MANX SHEARWATER**

Puffinus puffinus

Scarce spring and autumn passage migrant.

Another good year, with a total of 94 recorded, the majority of which were in early July.

At Selsey Bill, singles flew W on 18 Apr (TJE) and 19 May (PJ, TJW *et al*), and E on 28 Apr (TJE). The only other spring record was of 2 E at Brighton Marina on 1 May (ADW, IJW).

There were no further sightings until 1 July when there were 15 E at Selsey Bill (TJE) and 17 E at Glyne Gap (RBW). Birds were recorded almost daily at the former locality up to 9 July, with 8 W on 2nd, 29 W on 3rd, 3 W on 4th, 8 W on 5th, 1 W on 7th, 1 W and 1 E on 8th, and 1 W on 9th. Elsewhere, there were 3 W at Hastings on 3rd (ASG) and 1 W at Brighton Marina on 4th (IJW). The only subsequent record was of 1 W, again at Brighton Marina, on 29 Aug (IJW). [PJ]

0046.01 **MEDITERRANEAN SHEARWATER**

Puffinus yelkouan

Very scarce spring to autumn visitor.

The best year since 1983, with a total of 6 recorded. One in the entrance to Chichester Hbr between East Head and Sandy Point on 28 May remained until 30th (RJF, JWK *et al*). At Selsey Bill, singles flew W on 3 and 8 July (both TJE) while 2 on the sea off Galley Hill, Bexhill, for about an hour on 14 Aug, eventually departed W (DEC). One that flew E past Newhaven, West Pier, on 24 Aug (EU) was seen shortly afterwards off Splash Point, Seaford, (TJW).

Of 41 recorded in the county since 1962, 4 have been in May, 10 in July and 17 in Aug. Twenty-two have occurred at Selsey Bill. [PJ]

0052. **STORM PETREL**

Hydrobates pelagicus

Rare vagrant, mainly in autumn after severe gales (before 1996).

One 300-500m off Selsey Bill on 22 May (TJE, CRJ) heralded an exceptional series of sightings in early Jul when at least 9 were present, usually very distantly, off Selsey Bill, enabling many observers to see the species in the county for the first time. Records were 4 on 2 Jul; at least 9 on 3rd; at least 4 on 4-6th; 9 on 7th; 7 on 8th and 2 on 9 Jul (TJE *et al*). How many birds were involved is impossible to determine, 10 being an absolute minimum. To put this occurrence into context, there were just 12 records during 1962-94, 5 of these being picked up dead or exhausted, while another was 10 km offshore! Other unusual records at this time were 17 past Hengistbury Head, Dorset, on 3 Jul and 4 off Dungeness, Kent, on 9th (*Birding World* 9:254). It remains to be seen if occurrences at this time of year become more regular. [RJF]

0055/-. **LEACH'S/SWINHOE'S PETREL**

Oceanodroma leucorhoa/monorhis

Rare vagrant/not recorded in county.

One W off Selsey Bill on 2 Jul (TJE) was clearly larger and paler than an adjacent Storm Petrel, but was regrettably too distant for a contrasting rump to be seen (if it had one). Since 1948, all records of Leach's Petrels in the county have fallen between 10 Sep-2 Jan and the only previous record outside this period was in early May 1895. At least one Swinhoe's Petrel, which is a national rarity, was trapped at Tynemouth, Tyne and Wear, annually in July during 1990-94, perhaps being more indicative of this bird's identity. [RJF]

0071. GANNET

Sula bassana

Fairly common passage migrant and non-breeding summer visitor; once scarce but now increasingly numerous in winter.

Direction	Jan-Feb		Mar-May		Jun-Jul		Aug-Oct		Nov-Dec	
	E	W	E	W	E	W	E	W	E	W
Selsey Bill	67	8	520	400	14	331	77	202	1	-
Worthing	-	-	96	68	9	46	93	298	21	2
Seaford	292	11	2305	344	600	87	400	180	51	19
Bexhill	40	23	201	11	43	69	52	114	24	20

Large numbers were reported this year, particularly off Seaford, where the biggest movements were 106 on 8 Mar, 144 on 13 Apr, 150 on 18 Apr, 146 on 1 May, all moving E. A total of 846 E, 205 W between 19 May and 1 June included 163 E and 31 W on 31st. During the summer, additional birds were noted offshore, neither moving E nor W. For instance, 178 at Seaford on 13 June, 100 at Seaford and 120 at Worthing on 24 Aug. An exceptional 440 were counted in 4 hours at Bexhill on 26 Oct. [KN]

0072. CORMORANT

Phalacrocorax carbo

Very scarce breeding species and common winter visitor.

The monthly Wetland Bird Survey' counts at the principal sites were as follows:

	96							97			
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	
<i>County totals</i>	417	394	401	781	590	499	614	463	629	345	
Chichester Hbr	33	23	17	49	55	30	24	11	13	29	
Pagham Hbr	102	83	204	134	126	28	72	161	246	57	
Chichester GP	39	45	2	116	125	185	206	2	86	60	
Climping	8	5	12	7	26	20	14	138	11	7	
Henfield Brooks	3	19	2	56	29	3	25	66	20	-	
Weir Wd Res	25	36	45	15	40	27	54	-	54	58	
Pevensy Levis	21	20	9	16	51	26	29	-	30	19	
Bewl Water	34	27	21	50	32	50	30	50	40	20	
Pett Level	18	4	2	41	2	46	43	2	44	11	
Rye Hbr	38	27	42	262	24	15	9	-	13	25	

The above Chichester GP figures for the autumn months included birds coming in to the nocturnal roost. A number of these birds would have been counted earlier in the day at local sites, so inflating the total. However, there is little doubt that the County

total continued to increase because the simultaneous counts of the two nocturnal roosts which serve the birds in the small stretch from Littlehampton westwards showed increases over previous years in every month.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
Chichester GP	182	265	222	174	196	246	346
South Stoke	105	57	82	69	90	114	71
Total	287	322	304	243	286	360	417

Counts at selected sites for the months Apr to Aug include:

	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug
County totals	12	15	4	24	33
Chichester GP	-	2	-	1	-
Shillinglee Lake	-	1	-	-	-
Pulborough Brooks	-	1	-	-	-
Henfield Brooks	1	1	-	14	-
Weir Wood Res	11	9	4	4	25
Barcombe Reservoir	-	-	-	-	1
Arlington Reservoir	-	1	-	3	4
Pevensey Levels	-	-	-	1	2
Darwell Reservoir	-	-	-	1	1

Whilst Chichester GP has become the more important nocturnal roost for most of the year, in late Dec 1996 and early Jan 1997 when the lakes were frozen it was deserted. Some of the birds were seen to fly west towards Hampshire at dusk, but the majority clearly went to South Stoke where the roost built up to 238 on 28 Dec and to 332 on 13 Jan 1997.

Other nocturnal roosts, particularly in the east of the county, were not well covered, but there were 100 birds on the roost at Northpoint Pit, Rye, on 17 May, and 104 on electricity cables at Wyckham Farm on the Upper Adur on 16 Nov, increasing to 148 on 17 Dec.

Some of the main daytime lounging roosts are not covered by the Wetland Bird Survey. One of these is Bognor Regis Pier, or the adjacent Bognor Rocks at very low tides. The numbers at this roost are tending to decrease as new local sea defences in the shape of rock islands provide attractive alternative secure offshore sites. The lounging roost at Tern Pool, Rye, continues to be unusual in that the numbers built up to a maximum in late summer, with a high of 418 in Sept.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
Bognor Regis Pier	87	71	59	61	31	20	31	nc	nc	nc	nc	72
Tern Pool, Rye	nc	nc	31	56	92	96	176	140	418	17	8	nc

The offshore lounging roost at Worthing had a high of 60 on 9 Sept, whilst that in the lone dead tree in the Arun meadows downstream from South Stoke had 21 on 1 Feb. Subsequently, this landmark tree has fallen.

There were hints of greater breeding activity. Two pairs nested at Tern Pool and eggs were laid, but they were unsuccessful. There were 15 occupied nests on the cliffs at Fairlight Country Park but no follow up reports to indicate breeding success or failure.

Many inland sites reported high numbers at various times of the year: 90 at Weir Wood Res on 7 Jan; 35 at Barcombe Res on 1 Mar; 60 at Knepp Lake on 12 Oct; 29 at Warnham Mill Pond on 4 Dec; and 40 at Barcombe Res on 26 Dec. [RK]

0080. **SHAG**

Phalacrocorax aristotelis

Scarce winter visitor and passage migrant.

Numbers for the year are rather difficult to estimate accurately, due to the presence of small numbers, which may have been the same birds, along the coast between Brighton Marina and Seaford Splash Point, during much of the year. There were 6 at Brighton Marina on 20 Feb, 7 off Saltdean on 10 Mar, 6 off Seaford on 5 Apr, 8 at Newhaven, West Pier, on 24 Aug, and 7 off Telscombe Cliffs on 1 Sept, with 6 there on 28 Dec. Smaller numbers occurred at other times along this stretch of the coast. Of reports from sites further to the E and W, the largest number recorded was 4 off Worthing Beach on 3 Sept. In total, there were records from 14 coastal sites. In addition, there were singles at Bewl Water on 14 and 21 Mar, and in Pagham Hbr on 7 and 22 Nov. [SHL]

0095. **BITTERN**

Botaurus stellaris

Very scarce winter visitor.

The status of this species in the county seems to be favourably changing. Singles were at Applesham, near Coombes, on 3 Jan; Pett Level on 17 Jan and 5 Feb; Thorney Deeps on 18 Jan; Weir Wood Res on 22 Jan and 6 Feb; Ashdown Forest on 1 Feb (sadly found dead); Rye Hbr on 8 dates between 26 Feb - 18 Mar; and at Apuldram on 6 Mar.

At Icklesham, Elms Farm, birds were recorded on 21 dates in the following months (number of dates are shown in brackets) : Feb (4), Mar (3), Apr (5), May (3), June (1), Aug (1), Sept (2) and Oct (2). Of special interest were 2 together, and calling heard, in Apr. Presumably a wanderer from this site was present at Pett Level on 18 June and later in the autumn.

One had returned to Rye Hbr by 1 Sept and there were further sightings there on 30 Sept, 27 Nov and 27 Dec. Finally, 1 was present at Thorney Deeps on 30 Dec, bringing the year total to perhaps as many as 11. [SHL]

0104. **NIGHT HERON**

Nycticorax nycticorax

Rare, mainly spring, vagrant.

1995: An immature at Rye Hbr during 1-8 May and again on 19 May (DJF, PMT *et al*) has been accepted by *British Birds*.

1996: An adult at Cuckmere Haven from 9-25 May (JCH, TJW *et al*) and a first-summer at Shornden Res in Alexandra Park, Hastings, from 26 Jun-3 Jul (APP, WP *et al*) have been accepted by *British Birds*. The first individual was most regularly seen on the Oxbows next to the A259, although on the last date it was found at Charleston Reedbed, while the second was usually to be found roosting in trees beside the reservoir. Ten have been seen in 1990s and 29 in total. All but 4 of the 20 recorded since 1970 have been in Apr or May. [RJF]

0111. **CATTLE EGRET**

Bubulcus ibis

Very rare vagrant.

1995: One at Middle Barn, Eartham, from 7 Dec remained to at least 12th (RTP *et al*), but was sadly found dead at Madehurst (6 kms to E) on 31 Dec (*per* ABW). The bird was in summer plumage and was considered to be of the Indian race *B. i. coromandus*. This record has been accepted by *British Birds* as an escape from captivity. It is the third documented escape in the county, following others in Dec 1964 and Aug 1974. There have been 3 records of wild birds involving 6 individuals in 1962, and more recently one at Pagham Hbr in 1986. [RJF]

0119. **LITTLE EGRET**

Egretta garzetta

Formerly rare, but now a scarce and increasing passage migrant and winter visitor.

The approximate minimum monthly totals were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
County Totals	89	55	58	63	31	20	90	178	161	155	139	92
Thorney Deeps	76	46	46	55	18	10	78	135	134	124	116	71
Pagham Hbr	9	6	7	3	4	4	7	18	18	17	18	14
Cuckmere	1	1	2	3	3	2	2	6	6	7	4	5
Rye Hbr	1	1	1	1	1	-	-	1	2	5	1	2

Numbers continue to increase, albeit not at the same momentum as in previous years, with a minimum of 255 birds recorded in the county, compared to 236 in 1995. During Jan – Mar, the majority of the records came from Chichester and Pagham Harbours. The only record well inland, during this period, was of a single bird at Pulborough Brooks on 4 Jan, and again from 18 until 27 Mar. Counts at the Thorney Deeps' roost were of 76 on 16 Jan. The cold weather returned during the last week of the month, reducing the roost to 46 on 30th. The roost' figure remained at this number until 15 Feb when it fell again, down to 37 birds. Heavy overnight snow on 19th - 20th, and severe windchill conditions, reduced the number of birds still further, down to 27 on 27th. The number of roosting birds remained at this figure until the following month when milder conditions returned. Numbers built up gradually to 46 on 28 Mar, increasing again to 55 on 15 April. Thereafter, numbers fell again, down to 19 on 26 Apr, 18 on 1 May and 12 on 20th.

Other notable records were of 9 at the Pagham Hbr' roost on 16 Jan, 7 at Lumley, near Emsworth, on 28 Jan, 3 in the lower Cuckmere Valley from 14 Apr until 13 May, 3 in the Adur Valley on 13 May, and 3 at Icklesham on 27 May where one was observed three days earlier, mobbing a Fox. At least 12 – 14 birds summered in the county.

Spring sea-watches produced 3 records: 1 W at Selsey Bill on 30 Mar, 2 W at Splash Point, Seaford, on 14 May, and 1 W at Beachy Head on 25 May.

Counts at the Thorney Deeps' roost built up rapidly in July, with 20 on 10th, 78 on 30th, increasing to 115 on 17 Aug, and a maximum of 135 coming out of the roost at dawn on 31st. Sixty-five of these flew across into Hampshire. There were 134 on 11 Sept, 124 on 22 Oct, and 116 on 1 Nov, thereafter falling rapidly to 71 on 16 Dec. Incidentally, no roost was formed at Old Park Wood during the autumn.

Counts at the Pagham Hbr' roost were 7 on 28 Jul, 18 on 30 Aug, 18 on 24 Sept, 17 on 6 Oct, and 18 on 21 Nov, falling to 14 on 10 Dec. Other noteworthy counts were of 14 at Pilsey Island on 30 Sept and 7 at Cuckmere Haven on 5 Oct.

Autumn sea-watches produced 2 records: from Worthing Beach of 1 E on 19 Sept, and 2 W on 26 Oct.

Records well inland were of single birds observed at Pulborough Brooks on 2 June and 9 Aug; 2 at Weir Wood Res on 6 Jun and 22 July; 2 at Arlington Res on 15 Aug, and an unprecedented record of 11 at Bewl Water on 17 Aug. [CBC]

0121. **GREAT WHITE EGRET**

Egretta alba

Very rare vagrant.

One flying E at Little Parrock, Forest Row, at 10.30 hrs on 12 Jan (RH) flew NE at Balls Green, Withyham, (6 km ENE) an hour later (NAD) and was probably that present at Bough Beach Res, Kent, on 6 Jan (*Birding World* 9:5). Presumably the same bird was found on Horse-eye Level, Pevensey, on 30 Jan (CH, RKH, VH), being relocated on nearby Down Level from 17 Feb-17 Mar (see photo in *Birding World* 9:44). It reappeared at Pagham Hbr from 27 Mar-3 Apr (TJE *et al*) and was presumably that reported briefly at Thorney Island on 7 Apr, before flying W over Langstone Hbr.

To date, all but the last of these sightings have been accepted by *British Birds* and, assuming all involved the same individual, relate to the third to be recorded in the county, the previous records being in 1985 and 1990. [RJF] **note to editor - if Langstone record is accepted in time replace underlined bit with "All these sightings ..."**

0122. **GREY HERON**

Ardea cineria

Fairly common resident.

The Wetland Bird Survey counts were as follows:

	96						97				
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	
<i>County totals</i>	112	72	66	175	140	117	103	59	75	72	
Chichester Hbr	11	5	10	30	25	15	10	5	6	5	
Pagham Hbr	17	6	5	6	7	7	2	-	-	6	
Chichester GP	5	4	1	10	6	9	6	2	3	3	
Forest Mere	nc	nc	nc	10	6	-	1	-	1	-	
Burton MP	2	5	3	1	5	-	1	-	-	-	
Bury Brooks	-	-	nc	nc	nc	nc	-	12	-	-	
Amberley Wild Brooks	3	-	nc	3	3	2	-	-	3	8	
Pulborough Brooks	3	-	9	3	nc	1	-	1	-	2	
Kneppmill Pond	-	-	5	4	1	3	4	3	11	7	
Warnham MP	6	1	1	nc	-	nc	-	1	2	nc	
Lower Adur Valley	1	-	-	9	8	12	7	7	4	nc	
Ardingly Res	2	2	1	2	2	3	3	1	2	7	
Barcombe Res	-	-	5	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Glynde Levels	1	6	-	5	5	3	9	nc	nc	nc	
Cuckmere Haven	4	5	4	13	12	9	9	4	8	6	

Pevensey Levels	8	6	5	10	11	6	9	2	6	15
Bewl Water	3	2	2	16	11	10	1	1	1	-
Pett Level	-	6	5	3	4	11	9	3	6	2
Rye Hbr	30	15	2	22	22	11	17	10	15	3

In the breeding season all known heronries, including two new ones, were counted, and the total of occupied nests came to 215 (204 in 1995). Counts for individual heronries were as follows:

Fishbourne 19 (JKC), Pagham 4 (ABW), Flansham 17 (RK), Parham 17 (PI), Henfield 24 (ABW), Firle 19 (ABW), Knepp 16 (DB), Eridge 9 (MJS-H), Glynleigh 8 (PIL), Wartling 6 and Wartling, Horsebridge Road, 10 (PIL), Winchelsea 2 (GHD), Leasam 28 (RBRG), Iford 2 (DCL), Gilham's Moor 1 (JLN), Warnham 4 (RC), Charleston 15 (SS), Hadlow Down 6 (PBC), Westbourne 1 (GCMR), Ardingly 3 (JCH), Burwash 8 (RGL). Two adults and later two young were seen at Bewl Water but no nest found. The Ardingly site is new, and not far from the Loder Valley heronry which became extinct when the tree blew down in 1987. The site near Burwash, also new, was found during the rookeries' census and has apparently been occupied for at least 12 years. The numbers at Fishbourne continue to fall, and there has been an increase at Charleston - other sites show minor variations from year to year.

During the rest of the year single Herons were seen in suitable habitat throughout the county, with loafing groups at the more favoured sites. The largest such aggregation was of 31 birds at Carters Pit, Rye Hbr LNR, on 1 Jan. Counts at WeBS' sites include feeding and loafing birds, and the table shows a selection of these.

At sea-watching sites, occasional singles and up to five were reported moving both east and west, but there were not enough records to deduce a consistent pattern. [ABW]

0124. PURPLE HERON

Ardea purpurea

Rare vagrant.

An adult in ditches at Pevensey Bridge Level from 4-12 Apr (RBW *et al*) was superbly photographed (*Birding World* 9:127, 128 & 472) and is believed by the finder to have been seen by over 200 people during its stay. It is the first county record since 1993 and only the 4th during 1990s, a dramatic decline from the 1980s when 21 were recorded. [RJF]

0136. GLOSSY IBIS

Plegadis falcinellus

Rare vagrant.

1995: One in a ditch near Castle Water, Rye Hbr, from 24-27 Oct (BJY *et al*) has been accepted by *British Birds*. It is the first county record since 1988 and probably only the 6th individual to be recorded in the county since 1909! [RJF]

0144. SPOONBILL

Platalea leucorodia

Very scarce visitor, most frequent in spring and autumn.

Seven were recorded in an above average year. One flew N over Pett Pools on 10 Mar (JA, JABG, AHu); a sub-adult flew E over Scotney Court GP on 4 May (NAD *et al*); a sub-adult was present in Pagham Hbr during 29-31 May (TJE *et al*) while an adult remained at Pannel Sewer, Icklesham, from 1-4 Jun (TJW *et al*); a probable adult flew NE over Rye Hbr on 16 Jun. (CFB). In autumn, two were recorded at Pagham Hbr; an adult on 18 Aug (DMcK) and a juvenile on 5-6 Sep (TJE *et al*). The Mar record might appear to be early, although it recalls records in that month from Thorney (1989) and Pevensey (1992). Thirty have now been recorded during the 1990s. [RJF]

0152. MUTE SWAN

Cygnus olor

Fairly common resident

The monthly counts at the principal sites were as follows:

	96					97				
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
<i>County totals</i>	601	484	383	459	506	552	605	588	430	318
Chichester Hbr	90	53	76	80	84	121	122	147	41	25
Chichester GP	33	29	2	63	66	59	30	13	20	17
Arundel WWT	13	17	19	nc	25	17	14	17	nc	24
Amberley Wild Brooks	9	5	nc	-	10	53	56	34	5	15
Pulborough Brooks	3	3	2	24	nc	5	11	11	18	77
Henfield Brooks	33	2	10	32	15	13	19	12	8	16
Lower Ouse Valley	136	100	21	nc	12	90	57	60	42	50
Lewes Brooks	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc		34	11	47	7
Eastbourne Parks	nc	nc	nc	42	67	25	67	12	17	nc
Pevensey Levels	59	32	40	39	51	47	52	19	55	34
Pett Level	9	8	15	33	48	40	71	126	50	7
Rye Hbr	72	61	84	46	45	28	26	59	86	9

In Jan, counts of 160 at Jury's Gap on 3rd, 136 in the Lower Ouse Valley during the WeBS' count, 123 on Lewes Brooks on 22nd, and 110 at Scotney Court GP and on Broomhill Level on 14th and 17th respectively were the largest in E.Sussex, whilst in the west, 90 in Chichester Hbr on the WeBS' count, 47 at Chichester GP on 3rd and 36 on Henfield Levels on 24th were the most significant totals reported. A count of 93 at The Midrips on 1 Feb was the biggest number in that month, with other substantial counts being 65 at Nook Meadows, Rye SSSI, on 26th and in excess of 50 at that site on five other days; 64 on Henfield Levels on 17th, and 53 in Chichester Hbr during the WeBS' count.

Counts from Apr until Aug inclusive provided the following figures:

	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug
<i>County totals</i>	134	105	66	43	54
Chichester GP	5	10	10	15	11
Lurgashall MP	1				1
Shillinglee Lake	2				2
Arundel WWT	17	15	13		18
Pulborough Brooks	82	58	11	11	18
Henfield Brooks	11	10	29	5	
Gravetye Lakes	2	2	2	2	2

Weir Wood Res	1				
Pevensey Levels	13	10	1	10	2

Two breeding records, at Southwater CP and Combe Haven, were received for Mar; and whilst it would appear that many of the wintering herds had dispersed, the one in Nook Meadows reached a max of 91 on 12th. No fewer than 76 were in Chichester Hbr on the Mar WeBS' count, but no other records reached double figures. The early breeding at Southwater CP was only partially successful: four eggs were laid, 3 cygnets were present on 9 May, but only one remained 5 days later. Many breeding records were submitted for 1996, with nests at Brooklands, Worthing; New Salts Farm, Lancing; Knepp Lake; Chichester GP, New Lake and Ivy Lake; Gravetye Lakes; Pevensey, Bridge Level; Mill Bay, Robertsbridge; Glynde Reach; Shinewater Marsh, Willingdon; Brickkiln Ponds, Stansted; RSPB Pulborough, Mid and North Brooks; Amberley Wild Brooks; Albourne; Holtye; Great and Little Deepes, Thorney; Iford Mill Pond; The Pells and Southerham Farm, Lewes; Tilgate Lake and Burton Mill Pond.

Significant numbers were reported from a number of sites during the months of Apr to July: 73 on Nook Meadows, Rye SSSI, and 82 on RSPB Pulborough, North Brooks, on 12 and 19 Apr respectively, were followed by 51 on RSPB Pulborough, South Brooks, on 20 May, and 35 at Beach Tern Pool, Rye LNR, a week later. By June, birds were gathering in Fishbourne Channel, Chichester Hbr, with a max of 129 on 26th, a pattern which continued, with 130 counted there on 24 Jul. Seventy, said to be an unusually large number, were present in Bosham Channel on 23 Aug. Chichester GP held 51 on 24 Sept whilst the WeBS' counts in the Rye LNR and SSSI areas aggregated 46 on 16 Sept and 47 on 13 Oct. Wintering numbers became more apparent as the year progressed, with 48 on Chichester GP, 70 on Lewes Brooks and 68 in Nook Meadows, Rye SSSI, on 16, 27 and 29 Nov respectively. By Dec, herds were spread across the county, with 39 adults and 8 juveniles on Amberley Wild Brooks on 4th, 50 at Scotney Court GP on 7th, 71 in the Rye area on the WeBS' count (15th), 130 at Rise Barn, Lewes Brooks, and 168 reported at Rye Town on 26th. The year ended with 86 on the Upper Adur Levels on 28 Dec and 94 on Northpoint Pit, Rye, on 30th. [MJM]

0153. BEWICK'S SWAN

Cygnus columbianus

Scarce winter visitor and passage migrant.

The monthly Wetland Bird Survey' counts at the principal sites were as follows:

	96						97					
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar		
<i>County totals</i>	117	146	133	t	-	46	87	94	104	77		
Shillinglee Lake	-	-	-	-	nc	nc	nc	11	-	-		
Arundel WWT	-	-	-	nc	-	-	-	6	nc	-		
Arun (Houghton-Offham)	-	-	nc	-	-	7	7	-	-	-		
Bury Brooks	-	10	nc	nc	nc	nc	-	-	-	26		
Amberley Wild Brooks	8	-	nc	-	-	28	30	-	-	-		
Pulborough Brooks	-	-	-	-	nc	-	21	59	62	-		
Lower Ouse Valley	15	15	-	nc	-	7	19	-	4	51		
Lewes Brooks	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	4	-	17	38	-		

Sightings in the first winter period were principally, in E. Sussex towards the Kent border, around Jury's Gap and Scotney Court GP, and in the Ouse Valley, whilst in W. Sussex they were in the Arun and Adur Valleys. Counts in the east of the county included 27 at Scotney Court GP on 10 Jan, 16 at Jury's Gap on 12 Jan and 14 on Lewes Brooks on 22 Jan. Arlington Res hosted 25 birds on 3 Jan, rising to 30 two days later, but there were no subsequent records from this site. These figures were all eclipsed by a herd of 221 counted at Scotney Court GP on 3 Mar, likely to have been some or all of those which had wintered on Walland Marsh over the Kent border (PT). In the west of the county, at RSPB Pulborough Brooks, there were 49 adults, (2 with blue neck collars), and 9 juveniles on 11 Feb. A total of 36 were counted on Amberley Wild Brooks on 2 Jan, whilst 21 on Henfield Levels on 13 Jan was the largest count in the Adur Valley. Eighty birds flew NE over West Chiltington on the evening of 7 Mar (FWD) and the last spring record was of c10 on Glynde Reach on 14 Mar.

The first birds of autumn were seen at RSPB Pulborough Brooks in the second week of Nov, with one bird on 8th rising to 3 by 16th. On 4 Dec, 27 adults, 2 of them with blue neck collars, and 3 juveniles were grazing on Amberley Wild Brooks. The largest count in the second winter period was of 55 on RSPB Pulborough Brooks on 24 Dec. No records of sightings in E Sussex were received until 2 birds flew past Rye Hbr LNR on 21 Dec. Subsequently there were maxima of 31, including 3 juveniles, on Lewes Brooks on 28 Dec, 8 on Pevensey, Bridge Levels, on 24 and 29 Dec and a single immature at Scotney Court GP on 27 Dec. [MJM]

0154. **WHOOPER SWAN**

Cygnus cygnus

Very scarce winter visitor and passage migrant.

Five immatures were watched for an hour at Weir Wood Res on 13 Nov (NAD *et al*) and 4 adults were seen to fly into Northpoint Pit, Rye, on 26 Dec (LL). [MJM]

0157. **BEAN GOOSE**

Anser abalis

Rare winter visitor and passage migrant.

The only records were of 4 at Scotney Court GP on 20 – 21 Jan (CFB, CWM *et al*) and a single bird at the same locality on 27 Dec (IJW). [JRH]

0158. **PINK-FOOTED GOOSE**

Anser brachyrhynchus

Scarcely winter visitor and passage migrant.

In the early part of the year, 2 birds of unknown origin were present at Bewl Water on 21 Jan, with 3 there on 18 Feb and 10 Mar. A good description was received of 42 moving E over Hollingbury GC on 11 Dec, during rather misty conditions (ADW, IJW). The subsequent deterioration in the weather gave rise to a small influx at the year's end, with one seen at Scotney Court GP on 27 Dec, this number increasing to 3 on 28th (IJW *et al*). On the latter date, there were also 15 N at Northpoint GP, Rye, (TJW). [JRH]

0159. **WHITE-FRONTED GOOSE***Anser albifrons***Scarce winter visitor and passage migrant.**

A better year than 1995, with influxes in both winter periods. The approximate monthly totals were as follows:

Jan	Feb	Mar	Oct	Nov	Dec
124	47	151	8	3	340

In Jan, there were 6 at Horse Eye Level on 6th, 3 at Bewl Water on 7th, 7 SE over Climping on 10th, and flocks of 12 and 7 at Pett Level and Rye Hbr respectively on 12th. An influx occurred later in the month, with 40 in the lower Cuckmere Valley on 19th, 35 on Horse Eye Level on 20th, 12 at Scotney Court GP on 21st and 2 at Pett from 20th into Feb. Other Feb records were of 7 at Pulborough Brooks on 3rd, 20 E at Splash Point, Seaford, on 18th, 2 at Rye Hbr on 21st, 14 at Scotney Court GP on 23rd, and singles at Pulborough Brooks on 19th and at Pett Level from 26-29th. One at Rye Hbr on 2 and 5 Mar may have been the Pett bird. A flock of 150 at Scotney Court GP on 16 Mar were probably migrants, given the absence of other flocks in the county at this time.

The first recorded in autumn were 8 W over Climping on 21 Oct and 1 at Barcombe Res on 7 Nov. The only other Nov record was of 2 NE over Pilsley Island on 28th. A number of large flocks from 7 Dec onwards included 45 over Rye Hbr on 7th, 44 NE over East Head, Chichester Hbr, on 11th, 23 in Pagham Hbr on 14th and 18th, 22 E at Southwick on 22nd, 130 at Scotney Court GP on 26th (with 60 there on 27th and 32 on 28th) and 43 on Lewes Brooks on 27th. [PJ]

0161. **GREYLAG GOOSE***Anser anser***Fairly common introduced resident and winter visitor, scarce passage migrant.**

The monthly Wetland Bird Survey⁷ counts from principal sites were as follows:

	96						97			
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
<i>County totals</i>	29	31	92	322	40	173	194	76	28	79
Chichester Hbr	8	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-
Arundel WWT	-	-	-	nc	-	-	-	40	nc	-
Amberley Wild Brooks	3	4	nc	-	-	118	-	-	-	40
Coldwaltham Brooks	-	17	nc	nc	-	-	-	-	-	-
Pulborough Brooks	12	2	45	-	nc	15	182	32	-	5
Henfield Brooks	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	6
Ardingly Res	-	-	4	61	3	-	-	-	22	2
Weir Wood Res	-	-	-	193	8	-	-	-	-	-
Lower Ouse Valley	3	-	-	nc	-	-	-	-	-	-
Glynde Levels	-	4	31	64	26	-	-	nc	nc	nc
Cuckmere Haven	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	4	4
Pett Level	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	4
Rye Hbr	-	2	-	-	-	20	-	-	-	17

Apart from the WeBS' counts, the other notable numbers reported during the first half of the year were as follows: 133 at Weir Wood Res on 2 Jan; 200 at Scotney Court GP on 3rd; 64 at Rye Hbr LNR on 7 Feb; and 17 at Elms Pond, Icklesham, on 30 Mar.

Breeding records were received from Balcombe Lake, with 2 adults and 6 young on 17 May; from Elms Pond, Icklesham, with 2 pairs and 4 young seen on 26th; and at Rye Hbr LNR where there were reports of 1 adult and 2 young on 6 Jun; 1 adult and 3 young on 24th; and 1 adult and 4 young on 18 Jul.

Numbers began to build up in July and August, commencing with 63 at Ardingly Res on 26 Jul. In August, a total of 601 birds was recorded at 9 sites, including 68 at Amberley Wild Brooks on 11th, 165 at Scotney Court GP on 17th and 280 at Pulborough Brooks noted during the WeBS' count on 19th. In September, notable counts included 86 at Warnham Mill Pond on 25th and 222 at Weir Wood Res the next day. During October, numbers peaked at 598 birds recorded at 5 sites, including 251 at Weir Wood Res on 6th and 250 at Scotney Court GP on 26th. Thereafter, numbers being reported declined, with the only other large flocks noted being 157 at Scotney Court GP on 7 December and 30 at Darwell Res on 30th. [AH]

GREY GOOSE Species.

Anser sp.

Among the more noteworthy records were 5 W at Splash Point, Seaford, on 20 Feb, 50 W during fog at Beachy Head on 8 Apr (probably White-fronted Geese), and 70 NE, high over Thorney Deeps on 22 Dec. [JRH]

0166. CANADA GOOSE

Branta canadensis

Fairly common introduced resident and partial migrant.

The Wetland Bird Survey counts were as follows:

	96						96	97		
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
<i>County totals</i>	245	178	889	171	129	196	228	221	743	614
	4	4		3	1	3	8	3		
Shillinglee Lake	35	52	55	66	nc	nc	nc	85	4	25
Petworth Park	115	44	39	160	79	4	41	32	45	89
Swanbourne Lk	nc	nc	nc	12	110	6	2	nc	nc	nc
Arundel WWT	130	106	47	nc	120	46	83	580	nc	53
Arun (Houghton-Offham)	-	-	nc	90	-	-	-	-	-	-
Amberley Wild Brooks	-	52	nc	-	-	149	123	167	26	7
Coldwaltham Brooks	127	81	nc	nc	-	-	-	-	-	-
Pulborough Brooks	335	37	114	10	nc	187	515	49	18	40
Ardingly Res	42	32	47	14	100	78	89	80	76	45
Weir Wood Res	82	14	16	186	32	-	-	-	11	25
Barcombe Res	23	36	-	-	-	1	137	20	66	-
Glynde Levels	-	68	90	159	104	4	-	nc	nc	nc
Arlington Res	-	12	4	588	50	-	-	230	12	7
Cuckmere Haven	496	53	87	2	31	384	323	127	123	35
Pevensey Levels	18	19	4	1	80	191	73	100	44	20
Bewl Water	719	494	113	252	230	500	472	400	47	56

Darwell Res	52	47	3	46	2	1	172	240	5	10
Pett Level	78	20	50	-	52	-	-	-	46	40
Rye Hbr	120	148	94	22	170	83	71	7	133	80

During the 1st winter period, other large counts from additional sites were of 140 at Elms Farm, Icklesham, on 12 Jan, 121 at Knepp Lake on 2 Jan, maxima of 178 at Barcombe Mills Res during Jan, increasing to 199 in Feb, 982 at Bewl Water on 10 Feb, and 80 at Nep Town, Henfield, on 13 Feb, with local flooding.

Breeding was confirmed at 25 individual sites by not less than 64 pairs of which 31 produced at least 140 young.

During the summer, there were 362 at Bewl Water on 21 Jun, while in Aug there were 1000 there on 25th and maxima of at least 250 at Elms Farm, Icklesham, and 450 at Arlington Res. Large counts in the autumn, not tabled above, involved a maximum of 188 at Warnham Mill Pond in Sept, 540 at Arlington Res on 11th, 198 at Knepp Lake on 21st, 650 at Arlington Res on 24th, 170 at RSPB, Pulborough Brooks, on 5 Oct, a maximum of 163 at Weir Wood Res for the period Oct - Dec, 393 at Barcombe Mills Res on 7 Nov, increasing to a maximum of 489 for Dec, 133 at Henfield Levels on 30 Nov, and 172 at Darwell Res on 16 Dec.

Movements, noted as unusual at Whitbread Hollow, Beachy Head, were of 28 flying west on 14 Sept and a total of 55 passing there in 10 hrs on 28th, including a party of 35. There were no records of birds of the race *minima* during the year. [JAH]

0167. BARNACLE GOOSE

Branta leucopsis

Very scarce winter visitor, usually in severe weather, and increasing feral resident.

Once again, there were numerous reports of birds of feral origin. The largest flock was at Barcombe Res where there were up to 32 in Jan, 36 in Apr and 42 in Dec. Up to 12 were recorded at Weir Wood Res in Jan, but, at other sites, no more than 5 were reported throughout the year.

A flock of 32 that flew E over Littlehampton West Beach on 21 Jan was of uncertain origin, as were 2 that flew E at Selsey Bill on 14 May and singles with Brent Geese at Pagham Hbr from 21 Feb to 25 Apr and on Pilsey Sands on 17 Sept.

The most likely candidates for truly wild birds were parties of 5 at Scotney Court GP on 23-24 Feb and 14 at Pett Level on 25 Feb, decreasing to 12 the next day. This small influx coincided with a major invasion of about 1800 Barnacle Geese into northern France from 21 Feb onwards (*Birding World* 9 (2): 49). [PJ]

0168. BRENT GOOSE

Branta bernicla

Very common winter visitor and passage migrant.

The Wetland Bird Survey' counts were as follows:

	96						97			
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
County totals	11692	11849	11149	132	2061	10955	6842	770	666	739
Chichester Hbr	8664	10760	8231	99	1995	8997	4773	455	628	586
								9	6	9
								9	2	9

Pagham Hbr	3016	1087	2866	27	65	1953	2015	287	356	147
								9		6

The highest counts other than WeBS' counts for the early part of the year were 3000 on the North Fields at Pagham Hbr on 9 Jan and 2500 on Honer Farm, Sidlesham, on 18 Mar. The only inland records were 1 on Weir Wood Res on 7 Jan, 2 at Pulborough Brooks from 3-5 Feb, with 1 remaining until 10th, and 5 flying ENE over Cattlestone Farm, West Chiltington, on 9 Mar.

Spring passage recorded from the main seawatching locations was as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Total	Hrs watched
Bexhill Glyne Gap	89	1350	6319	582	140	8480	143
Seaford Splash Point	104	928	16465	3100	197	20794	453
Selsey Bill	34	9	2409	1755	74	4281	389
Worthing Beach	-	-	9116	764	74	9954	263

The biggest movement of the spring was on 16 Mar when 3927 passed Worthing, 3307 flew by Seaford and 3254 were noted passing Bexhill.

Small numbers remained throughout the summer in Chichester and Pagham Hbrs, with maxima of 5 in Pagham Hbr on 18 Jun and 16 in Chichester Hbr on 27 Aug. The first returning birds were 86 in Emsworth Channel, Chichester Hbr, on 14 Sept. Thereafter, a light return passage was recorded at the main seawatching sites as follows:

	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total	Hrs watched
Bexhill Glyne Gap	238	37	52	11	338	88
Seaford Splash Pnt	20	-	2	94	116	63
Selsey Bill	6	137	21	9	173	51
Worthing Beach	147	116	78	32	373	53

The largest total apart from the WeBS' counts in the second part of the year was 1158 on a wheat field at Pagham on 18 Nov. The only inland records were of flocks of 300 flying S on 26 Dec and 500 flying NE on 31st, over Ivy Lake, Chichester.

For the second year running there were no records of Black Brant (*B.b.nigricans*) received. There were few reports of birds of the pale-bellied race (*B.b.hrota*) during the year, the only records being as follows: 1 in Pagham Hbr on 3 and 9 Jan, 3 in a flock of 1800 dark-bellied Brent Geese at East Head on 14 Feb, and 1 in Pagham Hbr on 26 Nov and 5 Dec. [AH]

0171. RUDDY SHELDUCK

Tadorna ferruginea

Rare vagrant, all recent (post 1940) records most likely to be escapes.

The individual present at Pagham Hbr from 13 Dec 1995 (SxBR 48:31), remained to the end of Feb (TJE, RK) while an adult male was present at Weir Wood Res during 21 Jan-7 Apr (BMM). In early Aug, 4 were seen at Pagham Hbr on 3rd (BJ) and 5 at Weir Wood Res. on 6th (NAD) where 2 were present on 21 Sep (JS). One was at Pagham Hbr on 14 Nov (TJE), with 3 there on 24 Nov (RJF *et al*) and 1 on 31 Dec (CEH). Most records are presumed to relate to escapes, for which they represent an average showing, although those in early Aug may well have been wanderers from feral populations on the continent (and recall 3 at Pagham Hbr in Aug 1992, and 3 at Arlington Res in Aug 1994). The 3 juveniles in Nov were more interesting, looking unsettled and distinctly wary. They appeared to arrive from W and frequently flew

around the centre of the Harbour to find remote areas. When feeding, one of the 3 was always alert (usually with its head up). Their age, behaviour and short stay encouraged the (possibly biased) view that they might be the most genuine vagrants to be recorded in the county since 1940. [RJF]

0173. **SHELDUCK**

Tadorna tadorna

Fairly common breeder and common winter visitor.

1995: Correction. At Chichester Hbr, 67 young were raised from at least 8 families.

1996: Common along the coast, especially at the eastern and western harbours, but also recorded inland at some of the larger reservoirs and lakes.

The monthly Wetland Bird Survey' counts were as follows:

	96			96			97			
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
County totals	151	248	214	52	66	410	569	149	162	120
	9	2	6					4	3	1
Chichester Hbr	113	198	164	24	58	294	365	111	114	928
	5	0	5					8	0	
Pagham Hbr	229	336	326	23	2	35	116	251	398	160
Arundel WWT	55	58	82	nc	-	31	28	54	nc	27
Glyne Gap	-	-	-	nc	-	-	37	-	nc	2
Pett Level	2	4	-	5	6	4	14	50	41	6
Rye Hbr	51	22	36	-	-	43	6	9	9	9

Sea-watching at the principle localities recorded the following:

	Jan		Feb		Mar		Apr		Dec	
Selsey Bill	2W	-	2W	-	2W	18E	21W	43E	20W	-
Worthing	-	-	2W	-	5W	18E	36W	22E	94W	-
Seaford	48W	5E	1W	4E	2W	154E	23W	123E	120W	43E
Bexhill	34W	7E	-	6E	-	69E	-	22E	22W	2E

There is great difficulty in assessing breeding numbers, but during May and June there were several pairs at Chichester Hbr which raised a total of 55 young, plus 174 non-breeders at Thorney Deep. Up to 12 pairs were counted at Pagham Hbr; 14 at Pulborough Brooks; 2 at Shopham Bridge, nr Byworth; 1 pair at Bewl Water; 2 at Warnham Mill Pond; 10 at Cuckmere Haven; 2 at Glynde Reach; 8 pairs at Icklesham; 8 pairs at Rye Harbour, with 4 broods totaling 25 young of which 17 fledged, plus up to 55 non-breeders.

During Jul, only a few adults remained, just those concerned with dependent young. The others had departed for their annual moult, and their return at the end of the year can be seen in the sea-watching table above.

Inland, there were up to 14 in the Arun Valley, 2 at Barcombe Mills on 13 Jan, 11 at Weir Wood Res on 24 Jan, and 1 on 10 Nov. [BJY].

0178. **MANDARIN**

Aix galericulata

Scarce but increasing introduced resident.

Much the highest count early in the year was 43 at Arundel WWT on 21 Jan. There were 8 at Maynards Green in Jan, but most reports were of only 1 or 2, including 1 on the sea at Brighton Marina.

At Standen Wood, by Weir Wood Res, 2 pairs laid 20 eggs in nest boxes, and 3 other nests produced 37 young. A female with 5 ducklings was at Darwell Res, and another with 3 immatures at Bewl Water. Two pairs summered at Graffham, and other pairs were at Arundel Mill Stream, and North Stoke. Graffham held 23 on 14 Oct. [KN]

0179. **WIGEON**

Anas penelope

Common winter visitor and passage migrant.

The monthly Wetland Bird Survey' counts were as follows:

	1996					1997				
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
<i>County totals</i>	9036	7421	9204	1950	3546	6094	9311	11176	8505	4165
Chichester Hbr	1308	1450	1680	536	1277	1332	1609	1511	873	726
Pagham Hbr	1060	400	273	882	1559	1810	2734	1525	303	194
Amberley Wild Brooks	-	198	nc	-	-	129	28	1159	134	156
Pulborough Brooks	4629	2459	4738	159	nc	1071	2917	3252	4109	2036
Cuckmere Haven	1190	1183	1080	97	273	858	862	2020	1090	518
Pevensy Levels	175	353	388	40	109	392	456	140	706	185
Bewl Water	348	300	286	83	185	200	206	342	264	189
Pett Level	45	90	127	100	25	-	132	117	135	-
Rye Hbr	30	29	28	43	115	20	92	610	460	92

These are very high totals, and for many sites exceed the previous maxima for every month except Jan. It is most unusual to have as many birds present in Mar as in the peak months of Dec and Jan. Wigeon clearly like the conditions provided at Pulborough Brooks. High counts not in the table included 3000 in the Lower Cuckmere on 7 Feb, and 2000 at Scotney Court GP on 16 Mar. Compared with the winter flocks, the numbers seen on coastal passage are very small. Peaks at Seaford were 46 W on 20 Feb, 41 E on 17 Mar; at Bexhill 18 W 23 E on 22 Sept; and at Worthing 46 W 9 E on 21 Dec.

A total of 7 birds were present in summer at Pulborough Brooks, Icklesham, Rye Hbr and Thorney Deeps, but there was no proof of breeding. [KN]

0180. **AMERICAN WIGEON**

Anas americana

Very rare vagrant.

A first-winter male at Pagham Hbr from 13 Oct to mid-Feb 1997 (TJE, AHo *et al*) has been accepted by *British Birds*. It was seen throughout the Harbour and was very irregular in its appearances at the start of its stay, although it became much easier to find as the winter progressed. The only previous record in the county, a pair at Pett Pools on 1 Jun 1991, were, due to the unusual date, widely regarded as having escaped from captivity and was accepted as such. [RJF]

0182. **GADWALL**

Anas strepera

Very scarce breeder and fairly common winter visitor which has increased significantly in recent years; passage migrant.

The monthly Wetland Bird Survey' counts were as follows:

	1996						1996			1997	
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	
<i>County totals</i>	436	428	113	121	225	539	448	410	272	130	
Chichester Hbr	8	20	10	-	4	12	12	18	10	8	
Pagham Hbr	25	-	4	1	-	-	9	2	-	-	
Chichester GP	116	109	-	46	103	284	145	182	45	2	
Lurgashall MP	3	4	10	-	nc	nc	nc	-	5	-	
Burton MP	2	4	5	21	21	1	4	2	-	5	
Arundel WWT	25	30	20	nc	11	24	57	57	nc	37	
Pulborough Brooks	15	23	-	-	nc	-	-	-	-	-	
Eastbourne Parks	nc	nc	nc	1	8	12	16	35	21	nc	
Bewl Water	153	150	41	15	44	120	109	26	20	20	
Darwell Reservoir	-	4	2	-	-	-	10	26	62	-	
Pannel Sewer	48	25	nc	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Pett Level	2	25	3	32	8	5	6	39	32	32	
Rye Hbr	27	8	14	6	32	91	94	25	81	14	

Numbers were even larger than in 1995. The Nov count, the highest ever, includes a very large gathering at Chichester GP. Other peaks included 192 at Icklesham on 4 Jan, 42 at Willingdon Level on 10 Jan, 183 at Bewl Water on 3 Feb, 67 at Thorney Deeps on 15 Feb, and 130 at Rye Hbr on 30 Nov.

Breeding was proved at Rye Hbr where 3 broods totalled 25 young on 28 June, and at Glynde Levels where a female was seen with 9 young on 15th. Other summer records included 2 pairs at Icklesham and 1 pair at Bewl Water. [KN]

0184. **TEAL**

Anas crecca

Scarce resident and common winter visitor and passage migrant.

The monthly Wetland Bird Survey counts were as follows:

	1996						1996			1997	
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	
<i>County totals</i>	3074	2499	2479	847	1930	3604	4611	3549	2341	1445	
Chichester Hbr	790	944	560	332	746	1198	1332	2037	976	455	
Pagham Hbr	556	154	116	56	599	1038	1617	678	525	165	
Burton MP	22	4	28	55	27	10	42	7	-	-	
Arundel WWT	73	63	55	nc	109	62	273	120	nc	14	
Amberley Wild Brooks	24	271	nc	-	12	11	54	17	-	85	
Pulborough Brooks	846	432	1153	146	nc	150	286	323	200	425	
Glynde Levels	26	128	272	19	82	186	210	nc	nc	nc	
Pevensey Levels	147	38	103	12	12	227	326	25	334	148	
Pannel Sewer	110	130	nc	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Pett Level	32	11	4	59	96	251	23	80	104	36	
Rye Hbr	74	12	8	79	48	131	70	-	10	15	

Numbers generally were slightly below last year's high levels. Maximum counts not in the table above included 200 at Bewl Water on 3 Feb, 250 at Thorney Deeps on 17 Sept, 260 at Icklesham on 18 Nov and 800 at Glynde Levels on 22 Dec.

In the breeding season several pairs were present at Pulborough Brooks, 2 or 3 pairs at Icklesham and 1 pair at Rye Hbr, but no young were seen.

Offshore, 34 moved E at Bexhill on 1 Jan, and a total of 111 E past Selsey Bill during the month. Teal were also noted off Seaford, Worthing and Selsey Bill, mostly in March and April. The maximum was 39 E at Seaford on 16 Mar. [KN]

0186. **MALLARD**

Anas platyrhynchos

Common resident and winter visitor.

The monthly Wetland Bird Survey' counts were as follows:

	1996					1996 1997				
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
County totals	3362	2182	1734	2661	2718	3790	3450	4287	1583	1700
Chichester Hbr	223	187	224	97	233	343	324	517	92	146
Pagham Hbr	317	73	124	120	206	402	291	282	197	122
Chichester GP	146	90	2	154	133	186	212	160	64	81
Arundel WWT	703	394	402	nc	283	1064	822	859	nc	415
Pulborough Brooks	239	102	168	362	nc	43	112	71	65	39
Ardingly Reservoir	125	108	80	53	87	53	109	206	174	95
Glynde Levels	258	198	24	367	403	412	250	nc	nc	nc
Arlington Reservoir	79	78	121	137	88	90	112	275	55	42
Bewl Water	410	400	218	470	348	192	206	424	183	205
Alexandra Park	nc	nc	nc	nc	178	184	182	260	120	83
Pett Level	12	4	10	102	177	66	11	73	74	18
Rye Hbr	205	68	44	217	95	169	104	345	94	65

At Bewl Water, the highest count of 832 was not in winter but on 18 Aug. Other peaks there were 532 on 7 Jan and 650 on 30 Dec, and at Arlington Res there were 450 on 29 Dec. Breeding records included 77 pairs with 21 broods of 107 young at Bewl Water, 20 pairs at Icklesham, and 46 young in 8 broods at Thorney Deepes. From a late brood of 7 small ducklings at Wakehurst Place on 5 Nov, 6 survived into 1997. [KN]

0189. **PINTAIL**

Anas acuta

Fairly common winter visitor and passage migrant, occasionally summers and has bred.

As usual, the vast majority were found in the western harbours and Arun Valley. The WeBS' counts for the principal sites shown below indicate this clearly. The county total of 1318 in Dec would seem to be the highest ever recorded.

The Wetland Bird Survey counts were as follows:

	96					96 97				
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
County totals	542	558	605	14	261	125	131	994	767	220
Chichester Hbr	169	224	266	6	22	85	62	204	282	138
Pagham Hbr	273	174	109	5	234	114	121	739	306	30
						3	0			

Pulborough Brooks	79	112	209		nc	23	38	40	166	33
Rye Hbr	1	1		3	5	-	-	-	-	-

RSPB Pulborough had a maximum of 421 on 13 Jan and Thorney Deeps had 160 on 23 Feb. However, there were also numerous reports of significant numbers well away from the principal sites. Arlington Res had 20 on 7 Jan and Pett Level Pools had 18 two days later, and there were 40 in local floods at Henfield on 13 Feb. Weir Wood Res had counts of around 20 in each of the first three months, and Elms Farm, Icklesham, had a maximum of 33 on 9 Mar. At this latter site there were a number of reports of birds displaying and mating throughout April, but none stayed on to breed and there were no breeding reports from elsewhere in the county. The only reports of birds throughout June and July came from Thorney Deeps where there was a pair on 4 June and a female on 2 July. The first reports of birds returning in autumn came from both Pulborough Brooks and Church Norton on 24 Aug.

The largest daily movements reported by sea-watchers were all eastwards: 34 at Seaford on 4 Feb, and 43 at Worthing and 44 at Seaford on 20 Mar. There was only a handful of movements listed in the autumn months and unusually most of these were eastward, as well. [RK]

0191. GARGANEY

Anas querquedula

Scarce passage migrant and rare summer visitor.

The first report of the year was of a drake at Ternery Pool, Rye Hbr, on 7 Mar, while other records for Rye that month included a pair at Carters Pit on 27th, and single males at Castle Water and Aldreds Field on 28th and 31st respectively. Six birds (including 3 drakes) flew E at Worthing Beach on 21st and five other sites reported singles.

During Mar and Apr, there were reports from some 18 sites, mainly of single males, although Pulborough Brooks RSPB had 3 males and 2 females on 17 Apr, while Glynde Levels had 1 male and 2 females on 28 May. There was probable breeding at Elms Farm, Icklesham, and confirmed breeding at 3 sites in the Pulborough area, but with no reports of fledged young. Ternery Pool, Rye Hbr, had a juvenile on 22 Aug.

Records continued through Aug and Sept, with 4 (including 2 drakes) at Horse Eye Level, Pevensey, on 15 Aug and 5 at Elms Farm on 3 Sept. The last record for the year was of an eclipse bird at Bewl Water on 12 Oct. [JKI]

0194. SHOVELER

Anas clypeata

Very scarce resident and fairly common winter visitor and passage migrant.

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

	1996						1996			1997		
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar		
<i>County totals</i>	481	288	298	158	186	233	338	227	223	229		
Chichester Hbr	6	3	8	-	-	2	8	17	-	5		
Pagham Hbr	22	9	30	23	4	11	16	2	8	31		
Chichester GP	53	57	-	2	7	11	57	100	2	5		
Burton MP	12	-	-	1	13	11	8	2	-	-		

Petworth Park	24	9	1	-	-	31	13	1	-	1
Arundel WWT	10	9	6	nc	-	13	6	5	nc	6
Pulborough Brooks	242	100	176	8	nc	14	88	34	122	140
Arlington Reservoir	35	3	4	27	82	43	36	20	25	-
Cuckmere Haven	1	-	17	-	-	4	12	11	6	4
Pevensley Levels	2	4	21	-	-	1	12	3	17	3
Bewl Water	-	-	-	10	-	-	-	-	-	-
Pannel Sewer	18	30	nc	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Pett Level	3	6	2	61	-	23	44	22	7	8
Rye Hbr	35	14	18	23	72	55	25	-	33	18

There were peak counts of 190 at Icklesham on 1 Jan, 105 at Chichester, Ivy Lake, on 7 Feb, and 60 at Pulborough, North Brooks, on 19 Apr.

Observations from the regular sea-watching sites were as follows:

	Mar	Apr	May	Total
Selsey Bill	22E	16E	2E	40E
Worthing Beach	185E	17E	2E	204E
Seaford Splash Point	443E	93E	-	536E

The maximum daily total was on 20 Mar, with 107 at Worthing and 136 at Seaford.

There were birds present throughout the summer at Icklesham, Rye Hbr and Pulborough Brooks, with breeding confirmed at Pulborough and Rye, but the only record of young was from Rye where a 6-day-old duckling was seen with an adult female.

There was little indication of migratory movement before 29 Aug, when 30 birds were recorded at Icklesham, with 20 at Arlington and 15 at Pagham on 9 and 11 Sept respectively. Maxima were 57 at Icklesham on 15 Sept, 86 at Rye Hbr on 24 Oct, 64 at Pagham on 12 Nov and 85 at Chichester GP on 30 Dec. [GMC]

0196. RED-CRESTED POCHARD

Netta rufina

Possibly rare winter visitor and passage migrant, although many records probably relate to escaped or feral birds.

All records came from Icklesham. The first was a single female on 18 Feb. Up to 3 birds (2 females, one male) were present during June, with 2 remaining in July and one in Sept. [SJP]

0198. POCHARD

Aythya ferina

Rare breeder and fairly common winter visitor and passage migrant.

The Wetland Bird Survey' counts at principal sites were as follows:

	96						96	97		
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
County totals	108	120	680	173	286	842	108	145	747	562
	8	9					8	1		
Chichester GP	192	206	25	101	153	256	223	377	289	84
Arundel WWT	407	331	249	nc		197	268	615	nc	302
Kneppmill Pond	62	30	19	-	-	-	-	7	31	11

Weir Wood Res	97	165	132	-	-	5	8	-	27	36
Barcombe Res	65	45	50	1	-	85	286	-	100	3
Glynde Levels	-	72	-	3	15	-	6	nc	nc	nc
Arlington Res	9	25	2	-	80	126	12	285	3	1
Bewl Water	16	42	38	-	10	32	21	70	6	25
Pett Level	-	-	2	42	3	97	152	6	105	41
Rye Hbr	136	133	88	16	15	34	54	-	100	26

Good numbers of birds were reported for the early part of 1996, significantly higher than for the same period in 1995. The largest monthly counts came from traditionally good sites, Chichester Gravel Pits playing host to around 200 birds in Jan and Feb; Warnham Mill Pond hosting a maximum of 38 birds in Jan, and Arundel WWT recording 407, also in Jan. Barcombe Res provided a refuge for a maximum of 98 birds. As usual, numbers in general dropped dramatically after the end of Feb.

Pairs were seen during the breeding season at Burton Mill Pond, Bewl Water and Rye LNR, although no young were reported this year.

Numbers began to build towards the end of the year, with 160 at Barcombe Res in Oct, rising to 230 in Dec. During that month, there were 237 birds at Chichester Gravel Pits, and 268 at Arundel WWT. [RP]

0200. RING-NECKED DUCK

Aythya collaris

Very rare vagrant.

An adult male at Warnham Mill Pond on 10-11 Mar (DWB, DB *et al*) was only the second county record, the previous one being a first-winter male at Portfield GP, Chichester, from 4-31 Dec 1982. [RJF]

0203. TUFTED DUCK

Aythya fuligula

Scarce breeding species and fairly common winter visitor.

The monthly Wetland Bird Survey' counts at principal sites were as follows:

	96						97			
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
County totals	731	798	562	285	395	711	773	144	722	723
								0		
Chichester Hbr	41	7	17	2	5	13	16	14	21	13
Chichester GP	284	338	17	99	197	279	312	556	342	342
Arundel WWT	124	142	164	nc	-	176	195	432	nc	61
Barcombe Res	40	27	22	11	6	31	48	7	43	9
Arlington Res	-	-	-	-	3	1	3	134	4	3
Eastbourne Parks	nc	nc	nc	5	14	24	26	1	47	nc
Bewl Water	8	42	31	102	92	49	52	106	35	60
Pett Level	-	-	12	11	4	14	21	45	57	36
Rye Hbr	138	153	181	19	29	66	68	6	108	111

Overall, numbers were slightly down on last year's totals, Chichester GP holding the largest numbers, with 261 birds present in January, falling to 156 in Mar. Arundel WWT was the only site to hold numbers in excess of 100 throughout most of the year. In the late autumn, numbers at the Chichester GP rose again to 305 in Dec.

Successful breeding was recorded from Bewl Water with 2 broods, Pagham Harbour also with at least 2 broods, Poling 1 and Rye LNR where one pair raised a second brood. At Icklesham, Elms Farm, there were between 2 and 5 pairs which raised a total of 21 young.

Numbers built up gradually towards the end of the year, with 105 birds being recorded from the Crumbles Gravel Pits in Dec. A count at Bewl Water revealed 108 on the penultimate day of the year. [RP]

0204. **SCAUP**

Aythya marila

Scarce winter visitor and passage migrant; rare in summer

Monthly totals were as follows:

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
219	276	359	77	7	1	-	-	18	-	72

A very good year for this normally scarce species which is so often driven westwards from the Continent during times of hard weather. Numbers at Scotney Court Gravel Pits were very high in the early part of the year, with well over 100 birds present. The highest total reported from this site was 220 on 26 Jan. A remarkable 322 were present on 7 Mar and there were still 190 birds there on the 16 March. At least 40 were still present into the second week of April. Elsewhere, in Jan and Feb, up to 5 birds were in the Chichester Channel area, and 6 were at the Crumbles Gravel Pits. During Mar, 2 birds were seen at Rye and 4 at Seaford, Splash Point. During the autumn, numbers only got into double figures at Church Norton, with 12 off-shore on 28 Oct. Scotney once again saw numbers building by the end of the year, with 62 birds there by the end of Dec. [RP]

0206. **EIDER**

Somateria mollissima

Scarce winter visitor and passage migrant; non-breeding birds summer annually.

The Wetland Bird Survey counts were as follows:

	96						97			
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan.	Feb	Mar
<i>County totals</i>	72	92	18	8	16	6	7	3	9	2
Chichester Hbr	32	23	15	8	1	1	1	2	-	-
Pagham Hbr	3	6	3	-	-	5	5	-	9	-
Lower Adur Valley	4	50	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	nc
Newhaven	-	13	-	-	-	-	1	1	-	-
Glyne Gap	-	-	-	nc	15	-	-	-	nc	-
Pett Level	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Rye Hbr	30	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2

Significant concentrations not shown in the table included 50 off Jury's Gap on 1 Jan and 100 there on 7 Feb; 38 off Church Norton on 22 Feb; 17 off Glyne Gap on 2 Mar; 30 at Newhaven on 21 Mar; 30 at Shoreham Hbr on 5 Dec, and 100 off Selsey Bill on 13 Dec.

Birds were also regularly recorded passing along the coast during the first part of the year, as shown in the following table:

	Jan		Feb		Mar		Apr		May	
	E	W	E	W	E	W	E	W	E	W
Selsey Bill	5	44	18	5	67	-	49	-	23	-
Worthing	-	-	-	-	125	-	25	-	-	-
Splash Point, Seaford	44	28	60	-	136	20	131	20	21	-
Glyne Gap	12	70	46	-	63	-	77	-	-	-

and also for the last three months of the year:

	Oct		Nov		Dec	
	E	W	E	W	E	W
Selsey Bill	6	-	3	-	19	10
Worthing	17	-	3	-	25	63
Splash Point, Seaford	-	-	5	-	49	19
Glyne Gap	-	18	-	4	22	39

The largest movements recorded were 55 E at Glyne Gap on 16 Mar; 75 E at Worthing and 63 E at Seaford on 21 Mar; and 39 W at Glyne Gap and 50 W at Worthing on 21 Dec.

Up to 8 summered in Chichester Hbr and 2 at Rye Hbr. At Brighton Marina there were 14 on 7 Jun.

There were no truly inland records but, unusually, there was 1 at Northpoint GP on 7 Jan. [PJ]

0212. LONG-TAILED DUCK

Clangula hyemalis

Scarce passage migrant and winter visitor.

There were 3 immatures or females daily at Ternery Pool, Rye Hbr, until 27 Apr. In addition, 5 flew over Rye Hbr on 1 Jan. Elsewhere, all records were as follows: 1 W at Bexhill on 3 Jan; 1 at Scotney Court on 3 Feb; 1 W at Bexhill on 20 Feb; 2 in the Emsworth Channel, Chichester Hbr, on 28 Feb; 1 E at Seaford on 9 Mar; 2 E at Worthing on 21 Mar; 2 E at Selsey Bill on 29 Mar; 2 E at Seaford on 5 May; 1 E at Bexhill on 31 May.

The first record for the autumn was of 1 at Emsworth Channel on 24 Oct, and 1 was at Brooklands, Worthing, from 24 Oct until 4 Nov. Two were in the Upper Chichester Channel on 24 Nov and 4 Dec, and 1 from 11 until 18 Dec. Two passed E at Bexhill on 15 Dec.

Perhaps the most unusual record for the year was of one which appeared on the Long Pool, Pagham Harbour, on 8 Jun, staying until 11th. [BJY]

0213. COMMON SCOTER

Melanitta nigra

Common spring passage migrant and fairly common winter visitor; scarcer in summer and autumn.

During Jan - Feb, there were 300 at Jury's Gap on 1 Jan, with totals of 16 E and 3 W at Selsey Bill (in 34 hours), 128 E and 1 W at Seaford, Splash Point (in 54 hours), and 362 E and 105 W at Bexhill, Glyne Gap (in 40.3 hours). Smaller numbers were offshore elsewhere. There were singles intermittently at Rye Hbr, with 1 at Scotney Court GP on 25 Jan and 1 in the Emsworth Channel on 28 Feb.

Eastward passage along the coast in the period Mar - May is summarised below (and excludes the few individuals seen flying W):

	Mar	Apr	May	Total	No. per hour watched
Selsey Bill	707	1544	1355	3606	9.5
Worthing Beach	681	270	402	1353	11.3
Seaford Splash Point	3741	7347	3072	14160	35.5
Bexhill Glyne Gap	109	654	437	1200	11.7

A total of 14378 combines the daily minimum figures from along the coast. By way of comparison, the hourly rates in 1993, 1994 and 1995 at Selsey Bill were 7.1, 13.4 and 8.9, and at Seaford, Splash Point, 24.3, 24.6 and 42.3, respectively.

Larger passages were at Seaford, Splash Point : 1250 (in 6 hours, ENE wind) on 21 Mar; 1078 (in 3.75 hours, SSE wind) on 10 Apr; 1019 (in 4.75 hours, E-SE wind) on 15 Apr and 2407 (in 7 hours, S wind) on 16 Apr.

Also during the period Mar - May, were 300 in Rye Bay on 16 Mar, with 150 there on 13 Apr and 200 on 30 May. Singles were at Rye Hbr on 2-8 Mar and Pilsey Island on 22-30 Mar. Six were at Weir Wood Res on 23 Mar and at Arlington Res on 7 Apr. One was found dead (and oiled) at Pevensey, Middle Bridge, on 9 Apr, 1 was at Knepp Lake on 11 Apr, a pair were at Bewl Water on 16 Apr, and at Pilsey Island, singles were seen on 20 Apr and 1 May, with 2 there on 29 May.

In June and July, watchers at Selsey Bill logged 182 E and 143 W (in 60 hours) and those at Seaford, Splash Point, reported 474 E and 46 W (in 40.75 hours). Three were at Pilsey Island on 2 July, with 1 there 12-17 July, and 23 were in Rye Bay on 29th.

The general scarcity of the species in the latter part of the year is reflected by the low totals seen on sea-watches during Aug - Dec : 23 E and 42 W at Selsey Bill (in 52.8 hours); 23 E and 11 W at Worthing Beach (in 69.45 hours); 185 E and 53 W at Seaford, Splash Point (in 73.5 hours), and 130 E and 98 W at Bexhill, Glyne Gap, (in 88.25 hours). Elsewhere, during these months, 1 was at Weir Wood Res on 25 Sept, with another at Pilsey Island on 30th. One was at Bewl Water on 13 Oct, 14 were at Pilsey Island on 24th, 1 was inside Brighton Marina on 9 Nov and 1 at Pilsey Island on 29 Dec. [SHL]

0215. VELVET SCOTER

Melanitta fusca

Scarce passage migrant and winter visitor along the coast; rare inland.

A total of about 112 were recorded during the year which is remarkably consistent with the estimated totals of 119 for 1994 and 117 for 1995. The approximate monthly totals are as follows :

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	...	Nov	Dec
9	23	35	30	5		3	8

There were more than usual offshore during the first three months of the year. During Jan, 4 were off Pett Level on 1st, with singles there on 9th and 21st; 2 flew E past Bexhill, Glyne Gap, on 2nd, with 3 E at Brighton Marina the next day and 2 E at Seaford, Splash Point, on 6th. The next included 5 W at Selsey Bill on 4 and 13 Feb, while there were 3 W at Seaford, Splash Point, on 18 Feb. At Bexhill, Glyne Gap, in Feb, 1 flew W on 11th, there were 3 E on 18th, 1 E on 21st and 2 W on 25th. Six

were off Pett Level on 26th, with 5 there two days later. One in Rye Bay on 5 Mar may well have belonged to this flock.

Easterly passage along the coast during Mar - May is summarised as follows:

	Mar	Apr	May	Total	No. per hour watched (E)
Selsey Bill	10	5	4	19	0.05
Worthing Beach	3	7	-	10	0.08
Brighton Marina	15	5	-	20	-
Seaford Splash Point	4	15	-	19	0.05
Beachy Head	4	3	-	7	-
Bexhill Glyne Gap	4*	6	1	11*	0.11

* plus 1 W

The larger passages were 10 E past Selsey Bill on 9 Mar, 8 E at Brighton Marina on 31 Mar and 9 E at Seaford, Splash Point, on 16 Apr. The rate at Seaford, Splash Point, is about a third that for 1995, which in turn was below average for this species.

Additional sightings during this period, included 1 off Church Norton on 7 Apr, 3 in Rye Bay on 13 Apr and 3 off Fairlight on 19 Apr.

The following were recorded in the final part of the year: 1 E past Selsey Bill on 18 Nov; 1 at Pagham Hbr on 24 Nov; 1 off Southwick Beach on 30 Nov; 2 in the Lower Chichester Channel on 5 and 11 Dec; 4 E at Bexhill, Glyne Gap, on 15 Dec; 1 W at Seaford, Splash Point, on 16 Dec, and 1 W at Lancing, Widewater, on 21 Dec. [SHL]

0218. GOLDENEYE

Bucephala clangula

Fairly common winter visitor; very rare in summer.

The Wetland Bird Survey' counts were as follows:

	96						97				
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	
County totals	57	94	95	2	4	35	64	167	83	82	
Chichester Hbr	37	64	65	-	-	27	44	119	40	59	
Pagham Hbr	11	19	18	-	-	2	15	22	19	15	
Chichester GP	-	-	-	2	4	-	-	-	4	-	
Gravetye Lakes	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	
Weir Wood Res	1	1	2	nc	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Barcombe Res	-	1	1	nc	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Eastbourne Parks	nc	nc	nc	-	-	-	-	-	5	nc	
Langney	-	2	3	-	-	1	4	11	3	3	
Bowl Water	4	3	1	-	-	2	-	2	3	1	
Rye Hbr	4	4	5	-	-	-	-	1	2	1	

Monthly maxima at selected sites were as follows (other than for offshore records):

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
Chichester Hbr	55	75	65	1	-	2	30	53
Pagham Hbr	18	19	18	-	-	-	4	19
Chichester GP	1	2	2	-	2	4	-	1
Pulborough North Brooks	-	6	-	-	-	-	-	-
Weir Wood Res	3	3	2	3	-	-	2	2
Barcombe Res	1	2	2	-	-	-	-	3

Arlington Res	1	1	-	-	.....	-	-	-	-
Sovereign Hbr/Crumbles	2	-	-	-	.....	-	-	1	11
Bewl Water	5	3	1	1	.....	-	-	2	1
Pett Level Pools	-	-	2	2	.....	-	-	-	1
Rye Hbr	2	6	4	1	.....	-	-	1	4
Rye, Northpoint	4	9	1	-	.....	-	-	-	3

Was it just coincidence that both records (on 14 April and 14 November) from Knepp Lake were of a male and 3 females or immatures or were they the same birds visiting? The last record for the first winter period was of a female at Rye Hbr on 28 Apr, and the next seen were two drakes at Pilsey Island on 8 Oct.

Offshore, there were 4 E past Bexhill, Glyne Gap, on 1 Jan, 2 off Church Norton on 8 Jan, another off Bexhill on 25 Jan, 1 at Seaford, Splash Point, on 29 Jan, 1 Feb and 20 Feb, and 6 in Rye Bay on 2 Feb, with 1 seen from Pett Level next day. There were still 4 in Rye Bay on 8 Mar. Spring sea passage involved 1 E at Bexhill on 12 Mar, 2 E at Worthing Beach on 16 Mar, 4 E at Seaford on 16 Mar, with 2 W there on 30 Mar, and 4 E there on 10 Apr. At the end of the year, 1 was offshore at Church Norton on 14 Nov, 1 flew W past Brighton Marina on 20 Nov, and singles flew E at Seaford on 27 Nov and 11 Dec. [SHL]

0220. SMEW

Mergus albellus

Very scarce winter visitor except in severe weather when larger numbers may occur.

An excellent year with influxes in both winter periods. During the winter of 1995/96, birds were recorded at 15 sites as follows:

	1995	1996	Feb	Mar
	Dec	Jan		
Arlington Res	-	1	1	1
Barcombe Res	1	1	2	-
Bewl Water	-	-	3	1
Camber GP	-	-	5	-
Chichester GP	5	-	1	-
Glynde Reach	-	-	-	1
Kneppmill Pond	-	-	1	-
Northpoint GP	-	3	14	-
Pagham Hbr	-	3	4	-
Pett Level	-	-	5	-
Pulborough Brooks	-	-	1	-
Rye Hbr	-	1	17	12
Scotney Court GP	5	2	2	-
Southwater CP	-	-	1	-
Weir Wood Res	-	2	1	-
<i>Monthly total</i>	<i>11</i>	<i>13</i>	<i>39</i>	<i>15</i>

The total for Feb is an estimate, given that it appears that birds wandered widely in the Rye area. On 7 Feb, for example, there were 9 (3 adult males) at Northpoint GP and 15 (3 males) on the Long Pit at Rye Hbr, whereas the following day, there were 14 (6 males) at Northpoint and 5 (1 male) at Camber GP. On 26 Feb there were 17 (3 males) at Rye Hbr, but by 15 Mar (the last date on which birds were recorded in

the county) only 5 remained. Analysis of the available data suggests a minimum county total of 45 for the winter of 1995/96.

The first recorded in the second winter period were a redhead in the lower Cuckmere Valley on 22 Dec and 3 redheads at Rye Hbr on 24 Dec. Numbers in the E of the county built up rapidly thereafter, with 8 (1 male) at Northpoint GP on 26th, 15 (2 males) there on 27th and 25 (5 males) on 30th. On 31st, there were 20 (4 males) at Northpoint and 7 (2 males) at Rye Hbr. Elsewhere, there were 2 (1 male) at Arlington Res on 26th and 3 redheads there on 29th. On the latter date there were also 2 in the Cuckmere Valley and a redhead at Barcombe Res. The remaining records for the month, in which a total of about 37 birds was reported, were of 2 redheads at Bewl Water on 30th and a redhead at Pagham Lagoon on 31st. [PJ]

0221. **RED-BREASTED MERGANSER**

Mergus serrator

Fairly common winter visitor and passage migrant to the coast; a few summer some years.

The Wetland Bird Survey counts were as follows:

	96						97			
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
County totals	122	105	188	-	6	150	111	75	168	164
Chichester Hbr	71	68	120	-	4	88	80	55	22	94
Pagham Hbr	50	34	68	-	2	61	21	11	145	46
Bury Brooks	-	-	nc	nc	nc	nc	-	2	-	-
Goring Gap	-	28	-	-	-	nc	10	-	-	20
Langney	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	6	-	-

Reports followed the usual pattern, with the largest numbers of wintering birds in the western part of the county. In Jan and Feb, parties were seen moving both east and west off Selsey Bill, months during which no significant passage was reported from Worthing Beach or Seaford. The time of day and state of tide are not available, and these movements may be local and merely reflect flights to and from suitable feeding grounds. On 4 Jan, 40 flew W and 61 E off Selsey Bill in 3 hrs. Similarly, on 1 Feb there were 48 W and 177 E during 3.5 hrs of watching. On 4 Feb, a combined count of flocks on Pagham Lagoon, in the Harbour at the North Wall, off the beach at Church Norton and off-shore at Selsey Bill totalled 180. The WeBS' counts show totals within Chichester Harbour and at other sites (see table). There were 28 off Goring Gap on 2 Feb and 60 off Worthing Beach on 4th. Further east, there were 9 at Seaford on 4 Feb, 10 at Pett Level on 13 Jan and many reports of single birds and a few groups of up to 4.

Easterly passage along the coast was observed in Mar, with a Worthing Beach total for that month of 354 E, 1 W and 232 off-shore. The Seaford Mar total was 238 E and 14 W. This movement continued into Apr, but by May was largely a trickle of singles. Exceptions to this were 7 E at Selsey Bill on 1 May, 13 E at Seaford, Splash Point, again on 1 May, and 14 E, again counted from Selsey Bill, on 3rd. Taking into account single birds, the monthly totals for Selsey Bill and Splash Point were 33 and 32 respectively.

This year, none were reported during Jun or Jul, although a single bird which was recorded at Pilsey Island, Chichester, on 10 Aug may have summered in the area. At Worthing, the first record of the autumn was a single passing W on 24 Aug, and

thereafter there were reports of singles, twos and threes from many coastal sites through until late Oct when numbers began to build again in Pagham Harbour, and off-shore at Church Norton. Counts from Worthing Beach and Selsey Bill on 31 Oct demonstrated a westerly movement of 16 and 14 birds respectively.

By early November, there were counts of 38 on the tidal waters of the Pagham Harbour and off-shore at Church Norton, and a total of 41 there mid-month. A count in Thorney Channel on 21 Nov produced 58 birds.

Inland, there was one on Bewl Water on 14 Jan. In the autumn, one was recorded on Arlington Reservoir on 29 Oct and another single, an immature female, at RSPB Pulborough Brooks on 30th. Two were on Bewl Water on 10 Nov. [ABW]

0223. **GOOSANDER**

Mergus merganser

Scarce winter visitor and passage migrant.

There were 141 records from 32 locations, making it impractical to cover such a spread by narrative form alone. The estimated totals by month were as follows:

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	...	Oct	Nov	Dec
102	59	9	1		4	7	41

There were few large flocks and most records consisted of from 1 to 3 birds. The estimated total of 223 is many more than those seen in the last few years (less than 50, recently), and the greatest since 180 were recorded in Jan 1985.

The first record in Jan was of 4 males and 18 redheads at Rye on 2nd. The next day, at Hastings Beach, there were 21, of which 11 flew W. Arlington Res had 4 on 5th, increasing to 13 the following day and falling to 1 by 29th. Other inland sites included Bewl Water with 8 on 7th and Weir Wood Res with 9 on 26th. There were 22 at Rye on 22nd and 6 on the River Adur, near Shoreham, on 28th. Records were widespread throughout Feb, with 17 at Rye on 3rd, 6 at Darwell Res on 17th, 8 at Pagham Hbr on 18th, and 5 at Barcombe Res on 22nd. As usual, few birds remained in Mar, the last being 2 at Barcombe Res on 16th and 1 at Pagham Hbr on 19th. A late stayer at Barcombe Res was seen up to 14 Apr, before departing.

The first 3 returning males appeared at Pagham Hbr on 29 Oct, and a single was seen at Pett Level the following day. A fourth male joined the others at Pagham Hbr on 8 Nov, and then there was a gap until 23rd when a single duck flew W at Brighton Marina. Two redheads were seen at the end of the month, with 1 at Arlington Res on 28th and another at Chichester GP on 30th. Only 4 birds were seen early in Dec, the remainder coming in small numbers in the second half. Again, they were widely spread as in the Jan/Feb period. Notably, 5 were seen in flight at Rye on 22nd and 9 were at Barcombe Res on 29th. The last birds to be seen were on 31st, with 1 on the river at The Pells, Lewes, another at Pagham Hbr and 5 at Chichester GP. [DEGC]

0225. *Cat. C* **RUDDY DUCK**

Oxyura jamaicensis

Very scarce resident and scarce winter visitor.

Outside the breeding season, birds were recorded at 9 localities as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
Arlington Res	1	4	-	-	2	-	3
Arundel WWT	13	9	6	-	-	-	-

Barcombe Res	3	3	1	2	-	2	1
Bewl Water	-	1	-	-	-	-	-
Chichester GP	17	9	1	5	5	6	6
Pett Level	-	-	1	-	-	-	-
Rye Hbr	2	5	3	-	1	1	4
Scotney Court GP	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Weir Wood Res	2	-	-	-	-	-	-

Numbers were well above average in the early part of the year, especially at Chichester GP where there were 17 on 3 Jan; 15 on 4th; and 9 on 27th. A count on 1 Feb revealed 8 birds, and again 9 on 22nd.

In the breeding season, there were up to 3 pairs at Ternery Pool, Rye Hbr, and 1 pair at Pett Level Pools but no young were seen. Birds were also present at Chichester GP and Swanbourne Lake, although the number of pairs at each site is not clear from the few records submitted. The only other breeding season report was of a female at Arlington Res on 14 Apr only. [PJ]

0231. HONEY BUZZARD

Pernis apivorus

Very scarce spring and autumn passage migrant; has bred.

The first of the year at West Dean Woods on 5 May (RAI, BFF *et al*) is the earliest record for the county. The previous record was on 9 May at Beachy Head in 1971. The second was sighted from the observer's garden on 8 May (BJC) at Selsey. As is often the case with large raptors on passage, a mobbing pair of crows and a gull alerted attention to the presence of this bird.

The third migrant at Weir Wood Res on 30 May (NAD) was a more typical date for this species. Very close views were obtained by this fortunate observer. Another coastal sighting, this time at Broadwater, Worthing, on 2 June (RAI) and once again a garden view and with the aid of a pair of helpful Crows.

Finally, 1 or 2 birds were recorded on a number of occasions at a single site in the east of the county between 5 June and 17 July. A wing-shivering display flight was seen on 7 July. No information submitted as regards breeding.

There were no autumn records. [MEK]

0239. RED KITE

Milvus milvus

Rare visitor recorded in all months except July. Formerly bred.

An excellent year, with a probable total of 11 individuals. With such a freely-mobile species it is always possible that the same bird will appear in several locations.

The first for the year, a wing-tagged sub-adult, was reported at West Dean Woods on 11 Feb (ADW). On the day it was first sighted, the observer was lucky enough to witness this bird mobbing a Rough-legged Buzzard. Subsequently, there were many records of it soaring with Common Buzzard. It ranged widely in this general area and was last seen on 17 Mar.

An un-aged bird was seen at Horse Eye Level, Pevensey, on 2 Mar (APC). Then a brief view was obtained of a bird at Mill Pond, Burton Park, on 9 Mar (PJ). There were 2 birds seen on 23 Mar, the first at Cuckmere Haven (AFB) and the second at Binsted Valley (TKR). Both were considered to be possible 'genuine wild birds'

bearing in mind the date and the prevailing SE winds. Another, seen at dawn flying over Newick Park on 29 Mar, was mobbed by Crows (NAD).

On 8 Apr at Horse Eye Level, Pevensey, another possible 'wild' bird flew steadily west despite the attentions of local Crows (RGH, DH). On 14 Apr, Thorney Island had its first ever record of this species (CBC). This was an adult bird and no wing tags were seen. Yet another first, this time at Pulborough Brooks on 6 May (GJS).

In the autumn one was seen at Arundel on 10 Aug (SEFV) and also close-by at Hammerpot, Patching, on 10 Aug (WRT). Presumably the same bird, they were both identified by their respective observers whilst driving, neither having an opportunity to stop their cars! A sub-adult without wing tags was seen from Harrow Hill, Patching, on 13 Aug (PHM). It would seem likely that this was the same bird as seen on 10 Aug.

The final sighting of the year was at Belle Tout, Beachy Head, on 2 Oct (WRT) and this bird had yellow wing tags. [MEK]

0260. MARSH HARRIER

Circus aeruginosus

Scarce spring and autumn passage migrant and rare winter visitor.

Of the total of 102 records received, just 31 relate to the spring and the rest to the autumn. There were only 2 reports of male birds, the rest were either female or immatures. It seems likely that at least 38 individuals were involved. The probable monthly minima were as follows:

Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sept	Oct
1	4	5	7	2	0	7	10	3

The usual traditional sites were visited and the records can be summarised as follows:

Chichester and Pagham Hbrs: Spring migration began with a single male on 10 Mar, followed by another male on 31 Mar. Singles were seen on a further 5 dates between 1 Apr and 3 June. Autumn reports were more numerous, beginning with a female on 27 Aug. There were 2 birds present on 14 Sept, otherwise all the records were of single birds which were seen on a further 13 dates until 24 Oct.

Arun Valley: A total of 4 females in the spring from 5 Apr until 31 May. There was an early autumn bird on 11 Aug. The same individual was also recorded over the Storrington Downs where it briefly joined a family party of 4 Buzzards. The last sighting was on 18 Aug.

Rye area: Seen on 31 dates in every month from Feb until Oct, except for the month of July. A female, with yellow on the head, was first seen on 14 Feb followed by a male on 15 Mar. Singles were recorded on 10 dates between 25 Apr and 5 June, with 2 birds present on 31 May. First sighted in the autumn on 12 Aug, there was a total of 20 records of singles with the last sighting on 22 Oct.

Elsewhere in the county, there were spring birds at Cuckmere Haven on 23 Mar, in the hinterland one was seen soaring over Hurst Green on 30 Apr and finally a single was recorded at Balsdean, nr Rottingdean, on 9 May.

The first returning bird for anywhere in the county appeared over Hove on 4 Aug. Balsdean, nr Rottingdean, had a single on 12 Aug. Beachy Head a juvenile on 14th, Cissbury Ring a single on 18th, whilst 2 birds visited Swanborough Hill, Kingston, on 28th. Beachy Head was favoured twice more, with a female flying SW on 7 Sept and another single on 21 Sept which flew out to sea. On the coast, a juvenile flew east

over Lancing Clump on 11 Sept, whilst Pevensey had singles on 8 and 19 Sept. Further east, there was an immature hunting over Charleston Reedbed on 22 Sept. [MEK]

0261. **HEN HARRIER**

Circus cyaneus

Scarce, but regular, winter visitor and passage migrant.

A rather disappointing year for although there were approximately 200 records it seems likely that relatively few individuals were involved, with just 16 for the first part of the year and 14 for the second. There were just 7 adult males. Probable monthly minima were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	.....	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
Adult males	3	-	-	1	.....	-	-	-	2	1
Ringtails	10	7	4	3	.....	1	2	1	6	4

The records can be grouped and summarised as follows:

Chichester and Pagham Hbrs: Remarkably, there were no records at all until 3 Sept, with further ringtail singles on 28 Sept, 13 and 29 Nov and finally 3 Dec. An adult male ranged widely and was seen on 4 dates between 15 and 28 Dec.

Arun Valley: 1-2 ringtails roosted at Pulborough Brooks from 16 Jan until 10 Mar. A ringtail male was sighted on 2 Apr and stayed until 26 Apr. Most unusually, there were no reports for autumn and early winter.

NW Sussex downs and commons: A ringtail roosted at Lavington Common in the early part of the year and was seen on 6 dates between 28 Jan and 30 Mar. Ambersham Common had singles on 1 Feb and 30 Mar. There were single records from Duncton Common on 11 Mar, West Dean Woods on 14 Feb and, finally, Kingley Vale on 10 Nov.

Downland between Adur and Ouse: At Balsdean, nr Rottingdean, ringtails were seen on 11 dates between 13 Jan and 21 Apr. There were 2 birds present on 17 Jan and 1 Feb. At Lower Standean on 27 Jan, a pair were seen hunting together. The earliest autumn bird for the county was seen at Plumpton Plain on 17 Aug. Finally, a single was present at Ashcombe Bottom, Lewes, on 12 Dec.

Ashdown Forest: A male and a female were seen on 9 Jan, followed by a ringtail on 12 Feb and another male on 28 Apr, which was the last spring bird for the county. Later in the year, singles were seen on 6 and 15 Nov.

Pevensey area: A single ringtail was observed on 21 Jan and 27 Feb. In the autumn, another ringtail on 26 Oct, was followed by a male on 23 Nov. Finally, a ringtail on 5 Dec stayed until 18 Dec.

Rye area: There was a male at Scotney Court GP on 1 Jan as well as 2 ringtails at Elms Farm, Icklesham, on 2 and 3 Jan. Otherwise, single ringtails were seen on numerous dates until 19 Apr. In the autumn, there was a ringtail from 13 Nov until the end of the year, with a male sighted at East Guldeford Level on 18 Nov.

Otherwise, coastal singles were seen at Climping on 26 Jan, Beachy Head on 8 Nov and at Seaford on 12 Nov. There was a ringtail at No Man's Land, Findon, on 4 Dec. In the east of the county there was just one other sighting not already mentioned, a ringtail at Glynde Reach on 24 Nov.

The only prey seen taken was a Grey Partridge. [MEK]

0263. **MONTAGU'S HARRIER**

Circus pygargus

Very scarce spring and autumn visitor; formerly bred in small numbers.

1995: A first-summer female was observed for fairly long spells in the Mount Caburn area, on 25, 27 and 28 June and 4 July (IJW).

1996: Just 3 records for the year. The first was a ringtail at West Wittering, Chichester, on 2 June (CRJ), which is a good date for this species. Once again, the observer was helped by the reaction of other birds; on this occasion the panic caused in the local Starling and Whitethroat populations. The second was at Aldingbourne on 13 Aug (TJE), which is also a very good date as *Circus cyaneus* is rarely sighted so early in the autumn. Viewing time was very brief, which is all too often the case with passage migrants. Finally, a second bird in the autumn for the same observer, this time at Pagham Hbr on 3 Sept (TJE). A more prolonged view was obtained and on this occasion it kept company with a Marsh Harrier. [MEK]

0267. **GOSHAWK**

Accipiter gentilis

Rare visitor, mainly in winter; has bred and now appears to be resident in the county.

Just one authenticated record of a female at Greenlease Farm, Church Norton (RK). On 30 Apr, at a locality in the west of the county, a displaying pair was watched for 30 minutes (*pers obs*). A pair of Sparrowhawks was also displaying over the same stretch of woodland at the same time. This provided an interesting size comparison. [MEK]

0269. **SPARROWHAWK**

Accipiter nisus

Fairly common resident; passage migrant.

As usual, a large number of records submitted but minimal information as regards breeding success. Bewl Water had 5 pairs and young were known to have fledged. A pair at Hollingbury Camp raised 2 young, as did a pair at Sheepcote Valley, Brighton. Clearly this does not in any way reflect breeding activity within the county.

Prey species reported were Blackbird, Collared Dove and Wood Pigeon. Icklesham, Elms Farm, ringed a record annual total of 15. According to the data received, there were no obvious migrants. [MEK]

0287. **BUZZARD**

Buteo buteo

Rare resident, scarce passage migrant and possible winter visitor.

There seems little doubt that this species is continuing to do well. There were approximately 150 records from a total of 33 of the county 10 km squares. The number of multiple sightings has increased considerably, with maximum counts of 6 at West Dean Woods on 14 Feb, 10 at Parham, Storrington, on 26 Feb and 10 at Glynde Levels on 13 Sept. It seems likely that there was successful breeding at 6 localities, equally divided between the east and the west of the county. This may under-estimate the true situation, as in common with most raptors, breeding pairs can be very secretive.

With the significant increase in reports and the obvious suitability of the local countryside, it is increasingly difficult to comment on the status of isolated sightings in the hinterland. Some will be true migrants, but many will represent dispersal of juveniles and wandering immatures. Most of the coastal records are probably migrants.

Certain coastal localities had a number of sightings. The Chichester area had singles on 29 Feb, 28 Mar, 8 and 14 Apr, 5 June, 8,9 and 13 Sept. The Brighton area had a single off the sea on 20 Feb, with 2 birds present on 8 and 9 Sept and singles on 12 and 13 Sept. Beachy Head had 2 birds present on 22 Aug and a single on 1 Sept. There was also a single at near-by Hampden Park, Eastbourne, on 26 June. The Rye area had a good number of records, with singles on 5,10, and 12 May, 14 and 31 Aug, and with 1 or 2 birds present on 4 dates in Sept, and finally 2 seen on 30 Nov, which then stayed for a few days. Splash Point, Seaford, had a single in off the sea on 6 May.

Of the 10 birds seen at Parham, Storrington, 6 were migrants moving together, flying west. Of interest, 3 of these birds had white rumps, the white extending on to the upper part of the tail (*pers obs*). Clearly room for confusion with *B. lagopus*. [MEK]

0290. **ROUGH-LEGGED BUZZARD**

Buteo lagopus

Rare winter visitor and passage migrant.

The last sighting was in 1987 and so this species has become a very rare visitor indeed. This individual was located at West Dean Woods on 11 Feb (ADW). First sighted perched in a tree, it afforded good close views for the observer. Later the same day, it was mobbed by a Red Kite and both were seen jousting together out in the open. It was seen regularly over the next few days and was last reported on 28 Feb. Although not aged with certainty, it was considered to be an immature but not in its first winter. [MEK]

0301. **OSPREY**

Pandion haliaetus

Scarce passage migrant.

1995: An additional record concerns a bird at Arlington Res, seen on 12 Aug and observed to take a fish, before flying off high to the NW. It, or another bird, was seen again on 18 Aug, sitting in a dead fir tree. [RTP]

1996: Yet another good year for this species, with 75 records submitted. A total of 28 individuals would seem likely, of which 20 were sighted in the spring and 18 in the autumn. The first of the year was seen flying north over Cocking Down on 2 Apr and the last at Cuckmere Lower Valley on 25 Sept. The minimum monthly totals were as follows:

Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sept
8	11	1	3	6	9

As usual, just a few localities were favoured:

Chichester and Pagham Hbrs: First of the spring off-shore at Pagham on 13 Apr, followed by further sightings on 18,19 and 24 Apr. The final spring record was at Pilsey Sands on 9 May. Autumn passage began on 24 Aug. A colour-ringed individual was seen on 14 Sept and two days later there were 4 birds at Pilsey Sands.

Arun Valley: Three spring reports on 23 Apr, 4 and 28 May. A returning bird was seen on 14 Aug.

Weir Wood Res: As usual, an excellent location to watch this species. Seen on 6 occasions in the spring and mid-summer, from 10 Apr until 18 June, with 2 birds present on 30 May. An early return on 2 Aug, with a further 4 sightings during this month, and with the final record on 21 Sept.

Cuckmere Valley: A total of 6 records, all relating to Sept — 7th, 10th, 12th, 15th, 24th, and 25th. On one occasion, the fish caught was identified as a Grey Mullet.

Arlington Res: Two spring records on 11 and 18 May, and just 2 autumn sightings on 8 and 22 Sept.

No other locality had more than two records. In the spring, there were reports from Cocking Down on 2 Apr (as already mentioned), Knepp Lake on 12 Apr, Ashdown Forest on 17 Apr, Brick Kiln Ponds, Stansted, on 19 Apr. Singles were also reported on 11 May at Bewl Water, on 18 May at Ardingly Res and Mill Pond, Burton Park, and on 21 May at Hailsham. In the middle of the summer, there was an unusual record at Gatwick Airport on 24 June, and in the following month 2 birds flying SE over Ellisons Pond, Ashdown, on 18 July, with a single at Darwell Res on 21 July.

In the autumn, there were singles at Bewl Water on 14 Aug, Ashburnham Park, Battle, on 18 Aug, the River Ouse, Hamsey, on 26 Aug, at Barcombe Res on 28 Aug, at Knepp Lake on 12 Sept and finally one at Barcombe Res on 21 Sept. [MEK]

0304. **KESTREL**

Falco tinnunculus

Fairly common resident and passage migrant.

There were a number of records of breeding pairs. Bewl Water had 4 pairs and young fledged. Hollingbury Camp, Brighton, had 3 pairs nesting. Thorney Island also had 3 pairs. Elms Farm, Icklesham, had 2-3 pairs. A nestbox at Chalder Farm, Sidlesham, was used and 4 young were ringed. Most pairs seemed to fledge 2 or 3 young, but at Balsdean, nr Rottingdean, a pair reared 5 young, and at Standen Wood, Weirwood Res, a pair fledged 6 young.

The only unusual prey items recorded by observers were earthworms and crabs, the latter taken by a bird at Pilsey Island, hunting amongst the seaweed.

The regular sea-watches revealed a good number of birds considered to be migrants. There were records from Selsey Bill, with a single on 9 Feb, 3 on 25 Mar, and with further singles on 9 Sept and 29 Oct. Splash Point, Seaford, had a single on 22 Mar, 2 on 5 Apr, with 3 on 16 Apr, singles on 5 and 6 May and with finally a single on 28 Sept. Worthing Beach had singles on 1 and 14 May, and on 7 June. Glyne Gap, Bexhill, had singles on the following dates: 8 Apr, 6 and 25 May, 21 July, 18 Aug, 1 Sept, 10 Oct and finally 21 Dec. [MEK]

0307. **RED-FOOTED FALCON**

Falco vespertinus

Rare vagrant.

1995: A female at Rye Harbour on 8 May (DJF) has been accepted by *British Birds*. It is the 29th county record, the third for 1995 and the 8th during 1990s. The only record this century outside the period 4 May-3 Jul was one reported in Sept 1968. [RJF]

0309. **MERLIN***Falco columbarius***Scarce but regular winter visitor and passage migrant.**

More than 200 records received, but as usual the majority came from traditional coastal localities with a scattering of reports elsewhere. Probable monthly minima were as follows:

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
5	8	5	4	0	2	0	4	9	7	6	8

Chichester and Pagham Hbrs: One or more females were recorded on numerous dates from 1 Jan until 28 Mar. In addition, a male was seen on several dates between 12 Jan and 6 Feb. A single was reported on 6 June. The first autumn bird appeared on 16 Aug, but not again until 27 Aug and then a very large number of records until 31 Dec. A male appeared on 28 Sept, and on 5 dates until the end of the year there were 2 birds recorded.

Arun Valley: There were 7 records from 2 Jan until 1 Mar and both a male and a female were reported. A male was seen on 13 and 20 Oct and a female on 26 Nov and 29 Dec.

Beachy Head: There were no records for the first part of the year, but an early autumn bird appeared on 14 Aug, with reports spaced fairly evenly on a further 16 dates until 23 Oct. On 14, 15 and 22 Sept there was both a male and a female present.

Rye area: In the early part of the year, there were many reports of a single bird from 2 Jan until 11 Apr. A male was seen on several dates from 13 until 22 Mar. On one occasion it was chasing a Meadow Pipit. The first autumn sighting was on 30 Aug, and thereafter there were regular sightings until the end of the year.

There were numerous coastal sightings of this free-ranging species. From west to east there were records from Lancing on 16 Sept, Shoreham on 3 Nov, Newhaven on 23 and 26 Sept, 8 and 10 Oct, with 2 present on 20 Dec, Seaford on 10 and 23 Mar, 1 Sept, 13 Oct and 26 Nov, Cuckmere on 6 Dec, Pevensey Levels on 23 Feb and 4 Apr, Bexhill on 22 Sept.

Elsewhere, there were at least 21 sightings on the South Downs, mostly to the north and east of Brighton. A good number of singles at Balsdean, nr Rottingdean, in the early part of the year, and in the autumn two were present on 15 Oct. A male was seen at Hassocks on 23 June, an unusual date.

In the deep hinterland, there were just 2 reports, the first was of a male at West Dean Woods on 17 Feb, and the second a single at Old Airstrip, Ashdown, on 30 Mar. [MEK]

0310. **HOBBY***Falco subbuteo***Scarce breeding summer visitor and regular passage migrant.**

With over 300 records submitted, it would appear that this delightful little falcon is continuing to do well within the county. The total spring passage involved a minimum of 60 birds at approximately 40 localities. At least 19 arrived in April, with the first single recorded at Elms Farm, Icklesham, on 16 Apr, followed by singles at Warnham, Parham and Friston Forest on 20 Apr. Early pairs were present at Elms

Farm, Icklesham, on 20 Apr, with other pairs present at Pulborough Brooks on 22 Apr, and at Handcross and Highbeeches Forest on 27 Apr.

Multiple sightings appear to be much commoner in recent years. Pulborough Brooks had a maximum of 5 on 4 May, and Rye Hbr 6 birds on the same date. Elms Farm, Icklesham, had an incredible 12 birds present on 1 May, with 7 birds present on 25, 28 and 30 May.

Just 2 birds were recorded as flying in off the sea, the first at Splash Point, Seaford, on 6 May, and the second at Pagham Hbr on 15 May.

As usual, breeding was confirmed for just a few pairs, with Ashdown Forest recording several successes. These few records do not in any way reflect the true situation within the county.

In the autumn, there were reports from 30-40 different localities, but no large gatherings were recorded, in contrast to the spring. One bird was seen flying out to sea at Hodcombe, Beachy Head, on 20 Aug. There were several birds still present in October. The last inland sighting was on 9 Oct at Pulborough Brooks and the final record fell to Beachy Head on 20 Oct.

Of interest, there was only one record of prey taken and that was a Swift. However, one observer watched a Dunlin being chased, and in its efforts to avoid capture it totally submerged itself in water. [MEK]

0320. PEREGRINE

Falco peregrinus

Scarce breeding resident.

Well over 300 hundred records received. The very large number of records submitted clearly reflects the *renaissance* of this species as a breeding resident to this county. There is some difficulty in estimating the precise number of pairs, but from the data available a minimum of seven would seem likely, but possibly as many as 10 pairs in total.

With very few exceptions, the sightings were from the coast and it would seem that any chalk headland or tall inaccessible building may tempt a pair into residency. Several inland sites have received attention from prospective pairs. It would seem prudent to keep all sites confidential for security reasons. The latter consideration does slightly restrict this report.

Data on breeding success is unfortunately limited, either because observers genuinely do not know or because of an unease in releasing such sensitive information. One pair had 3 nestlings and 2 fledged. There was an adult male accompanied by a juvenile male at Beachy head on 14 Aug, and at the same site on 12 Oct an adult pair with a juvenile female. One inland pair was known to have failed. Otherwise there was no data on the other pairs.

Pilsey Island must rate as one of the best locations in the county to watch birds actively hunting. There were a good number of reports of 2 birds acting as a team whilst attacking the wader roost. Otherwise, prey seen taken were Shelduck, Black-tailed Godwit and Lapwing.

At Beachy Head on 30 Oct a female adult was chased by a Saker Falcon!
[MEK]

0358. RED-LEGGED PARTRIDGE

Alectoris rufa

Introduced resident.

The only notable covey recorded in the first winter period was of 30 at Lower Standean on 3 Mar. Although no records of confirmed breeding were received, pairs were reported during the breeding season from Kirdford, Emsworth, Pagham Hbr (2 pairs), Bewl Water, Balsdean and Cissbury Ring. The largest covey in the second winter period was 34 at Pagham, West Side, on 25 Oct. Twenty at Hurstpierpoint on Christmas Day and 7 at both New Erringham Farm, Shoreham (25 Oct), and Handcross (4 Dec), were the only other notable records during this time. Smaller groups or singles were noted at 8 other sites during the year. Due to the difficulty of separating them in the field, some of these records may relate to introduced Chukars, *A. chukar*, or hybrids between the two species. [RTP]

0367. **GREY PARTRIDGE**

Perdix perdix

Fairly common but decreasing resident.

During the first winter period, records were received from 17 different sites. The largest coveys were all noted at Rye Hbr LNR, with 5 records of over 17 birds, the best of these being 34 on 9 Jan. The only other double-figure records were 18 at Goring Gap on 1 Jan and 12 at Church Farm, Climping, on 8 Feb. A bird found on the sea-wall of Brighton Marina on 23 Feb was more likely to have been a frightened and disorientated bird than a migrant, as the western population is considered to be mainly sedentary.

Few details of breeding success have been received. At Pulborough Brooks RSPB Reserve 18 young were fledged from 3 broods, and on Thorney Island 12 and 7 young were reared from 2 broods. Thirty pairs bred at Rye Hbr LNR with 'moderate' success, and breeding was confirmed at Goring Gap. Records between Apr and July, which are indicative of breeding, were received from 23 other sites around the county.

In the second winter period, the highest counts came, as usual, from Rye Hbr LNR where there was an incredible 75 on 7 Dec. The next highest winter count, away from Rye, was of 24 at West Marden on 21 Nov. A covey of 20 was recorded from Goring Gap on 24 Dec, and 2 coveys, of 14 and 6, from Lancing on 6 Nov. The most unusual record must go to another disorientated bird that was rescued by a member and released unharmed from a High Street shop in Lewes. [RTP]

0370. **QUAIL**

Coturnix coturnix

Scarce summer visitor, recorded in variable numbers from year to year. Formerly occasional in winter.

The first record, on the unusually late date of 7 June, came from Rye Hbr LNR where a pair was heard calling on a number of dates during June and July. Calling birds were heard on the Downs in July at Balsdean, Amberley, Patching and Storrington. The only other records came from Pett and, more unusually, Ashdown Forest where a female was seen walking on a grassy ride near the Forest Centre on 30 Aug. They were last recorded with Grey Partridge on 14 and 16 Sept at Rye Hbr. If the suggestion that males call only occasionally once mated is correct, there is little evidence that breeding occurred in the county. [RTP]

0394. **PHEASANT***Phasianus colchicus***Very common resident.**

Breeding records were received from 6 different sites in the county. At Hollingbury Camp one pair raised 8 young. No other breeding successes were noted, but there is little fear that this species will disappear from the county. At Clapham Wood, 1400 are reared and released annually for sporting purposes. The total number released in the county is not known but must be very considerable. White birds were reported from Laughton, Bewl Water and Handcross. The chances must be that these were all released birds. [RTP]

0396. *Cat.C.* **GOLDEN PHEASANT***Chrysolophus pictus***Scarce introduced resident.**

This species continues to be recorded at Kingley Vale, where 4 males seen on 18 Feb was the maximum count, and at West Dean and Westdean Woods. The only other record was of a single bird at Ebernoe Common on 15 Sept. [RTP]

0407. **WATER RAIL***Rallus aquaticus***Scarce resident, winter visitor and passage migrant.**

The minimum monthly totals of non-breeding birds were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	.....	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
No. of Sites	23	13	13	9	.....	5	5	10	8	14
No. of birds	56	38	36	15	.....	6	7	23	12	37

At Icklesham, 29 were trapped for ringing, and at least 50 pairs were present in the breeding season. Thorney Island held 18 in Jan and 15 in Feb, and during Mar, Thorney Island held 9 and Combe Haven 15. In May and June, single birds were reported at Southease, Pulborough Brooks and Thorney Deeps. [KN]

0408. **SPOTTED CRAKE***Porzana porzana***Very scarce spring and autumn passage migrant and rare winter visitor.**

1995: The individual at Weir Wood Res on 8 Aug (SxBR 48:54) remained to 15th (CWM *et al*).

1996: Four juveniles were trapped at Pannel Sewer, Icklesham, in autumn: on 21 Aug; 12 Sep; 28 Sep; and 12 Oct (RBRG). During the 1990s, a total of 22 have been trapped at Icklesham (all between 21 Jul-12 Oct) with just 4 recorded elsewhere (including 3 in Apr 1993). [RJF]

0421. **CORNCRAKE***Crex crex***Rare passage migrant, formerly bred.**

1994: One was reportedly flushed from Sheepcote Valley on 17 Sept (ADW). The only other record of the year being at Walberton on 10 Oct.

1996: None were recorded, the 4th blank year during the 1990s. This species' decline has been dramatic, although has, perhaps, levelled out. There were 42 records during 1960s, 21 in 1970s, 8 in 1980s and 6 to date in 1990s.

0424. **MOORHEN**

Gallinula chloropus

Very common resident and winter visitor.

The monthly Wetland Bird Survey' counts were as follows:

	96						97			
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
<i>County totals</i>	649	491	347	442	459	547	710	605	366	467
Chichester Hbr	28	44	42	14	14	75	35	45	58	41
Pagham Hbr	47	23	41	21	16	14	22	12	4	16
Chichester GP	141	177	10	82	105	159	166	167	136	131
Petworth Park	40	23	20	-	14	19	23	11	15	23
Swanbourne Lake	nc	nc	nc	24	30	36	37	nc	nc	nc
Arundel WWT	87	nc	nc	nc	-	-	151	145	nc	115
Pulborough Brooks	44	18	35	29	nc	6	10	49	11	6
Henfield Brooks	15	22	35	7	-	-	-	3	11	7
Weir Wood Res	10	2	4	23	15	8	5	5	3	2
Pevensey Levels	33	6	17	27	19	27	21	4	2	5
Bewl Water	66	50	50	80	64	50	71	35	33	20
Alexandra Park	nc	nc	nc	nc	23	34	27	18	28	19
Pannel Sewer	20	30	nc	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Rye Hbr	49	46	39	30	42	37	32	25	7	13

There was a separate record of 103 at Bewl Water on 3 Feb. Records of breeding were received from 27 sites, the largest being Bewl Water with 60 pairs, 12 broods and 17 young. Icklesham had 30 pairs, and at Thorney Deepes there were 12 pairs, 5 broods and 23 young. [DEGC]

0429. **COOT**

Fulica atra

Common resident, with numbers much increased by visitors outside the breeding season.

The Wetland Bird Survey' counts were as follows:

	96						97			
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
<i>County totals</i>	253	245	124	179	222	218	255	321	205	149
	4	7	9	5	9	2	3	6	7	0
Chichester Hbr	74	59	73	37	53	68	94	174	174	58
Chichester GP	875	817	14	545	683	841	101	120	665	552
							8	4		
Arundel WWT	61	83	64	nc	88	105	76	300	nc	64
Pulborough Brooks	15	12	94	3	nc	-	-	2	12	51

Eastbourne Parks	nc	nc	nc	92	137	122	89	46	112	nc
Bewl Water	663	595	339	728	718	405	494	446	477	281
Pett Level	40	33	34	20	42	13	21	84	82	78
Rye Hbr	451	562	419	190	373	495	583	710	359	258

Whilst the above figures are the regular monthly WeBS' counts, there were additional counts by individual observers showing higher numbers. There were 1945 at Chichester GP on 3 Jan, 481 on 4 Mar, 1190 on 24 Sept and 1351 on 16 Nov. A count at Bewl Water on 7 Jan revealed 928 birds, and 924 on 3 Feb. There was also a count of 250 at Broadwater Lake, Willingdon Level, on 10 Jan.

Breeding was reported from only 12 sites, including Bewl Water with 76 pairs, 9 broods and 17 young, and at Thorney Deeps where 16 pairs raised 14 young from 6 broods. There were 30 pairs at Icklesham, but breeding success was not reported.

At the end of the year, increased numbers were reported from Brooklands, Worthing, with 126 on 25 Oct, 130 on 23 Nov, and 114 on 4 Dec.

An albino was again present at Chichester GP, but was reported only once, on 28 Oct. [DEGC]

0433. CRANE

Grus grus

Rare visitor.

1993: The two individuals E over Pagham Hbr (at approx. 11:00 hrs), Patching (at approx. 13.30 hrs) and Newhaven (at approx. 14:00 hrs) on 24 Oct (*SxBR* 46:38) were also seen distantly over Newmarket Hill at 13:40 hrs (IJW).

1994: The adult on the Adur Levels just north of Bramber on 6-8 Nov (*SxBR* 47:39) remained to morning of 10th when it flew off S.

1996: A juvenile or first-winter bird moved around the Levels between the Ouse and the Cuckmere in the latter part of Dec. It was seen on Glynde Levels on 22nd and 24th (MJH, ARK), on Iford Brooks on 26th (HG, AP), in the lower Cuckmere Valley on 29th (NMG, JMT *et al*), departing at dawn on 30th to return to Glynde Levels, where it was also seen on 31 Dec (IJW). Seven have been recorded during 1990s. [RJF]

0450. OYSTERCATCHER

Haematopus ostralegus

Scarce breeder, fairly common passage migrant and winter visitor.

Recorded along the whole coast throughout the year. The monthly Wetland Bird Survey' counts at the principal sites were as follows:

	96					97				
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
<i>County totals</i>	189	167	152	159	186	192	155	203	188	112
Chichester Hbr	9	5	1	8	6	6	8	4	4	6
	6	6		9	3	7	0	6	7	
Pagham Hbr	349	268	413	198	275	145	188	303	265	326
Climping	2	2	13	98	62	-	10	-	4	-
Rye Hbr	210	264	327	68	180	190	160	290	391	237

The largest roost was at Pilesey Sands, Chichester Hbr, where the monthly maximum counts were:

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
1114	846	625	242	92	260	800	1200	1100	1122	1000	950

As in 1994 and 1995, there was a leucistic bird at this roost, seen on 5 dates in Jan and Feb. Another leucistic bird was recorded at Pagham on 4 Aug.

Breeding by 29 pairs was reported as follows: at Chichester Hbr, 2 pairs at Pilsey Island, 1 pair at Thorney Airfield, 1 pair at Cobnor Cottage, and 2 pairs at North Stakes Island. One pair nested at Pagham Hbr. A pair nested in a set-aside field at Coombes, Cuckoo Corner (River Adur); and another pair in the Cuckmere Valley. One pair at Icklesham raised a brood of 4, while 19 pairs at Rye Hbr raised just 4 young.

Inland records were as follows: 1 at Arlington Res on 20 Jan; 1 at Weir Wood Res on 17 Feb; and 2 at Bewl Water on 17 Jul. [BJY]

0456. **AVOCET**

Recurvirostra avosetta

Scarce winter visitor and passage migrant. Has bred.

Approximate minimum monthly totals were as follows:

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
15	12	32	41	17	7	6	-	1	8	20	12

The highest winter count was 13 in Pagham Hbr on 27 Jan, and up to 11 were regularly in the Pagham and Sidlesham area until mid-Apr. Single birds were at Shoreham, Pilsey Sands and Lower Cuckmere.

The first past Glyne Gap, Bexhill, flew E on 4 Feb, followed in spring by 4 singles, and a flock of 15 on 12 Apr. A total of 9 passed Seaford in Mar, and up to 3 were at coastal sites. Inland, at Pulborough Brooks, there were 2 on 13 Mar, and 3 at Waltham Brooks on 7 Apr.

A pair raised one young at the site in Chichester Hbr where breeding was last attempted in 1987. One or two birds were at Icklesham, Rye Hbr and Pagham Hbr during the summer. The total for Nov includes 9 at Pulborough Brooks on 10th. Up to 12 were at Pagham Hbr in Dec. [KN]

0469. **LITTLE RINGED PLOVER**

Charadrius dubius

Rare breeding summer visitor and scarce passage migrant.

The first arrival was on 23 Mar. The breeding season was the most productive so far, with 9 pairs raising 21 young. Two or 3 additional pairs may have bred, and 2 pairs made scrapes but did not lay.

Most of the autumn records came from breeding sites and from Sidlesham, Rye Hbr and Pett Level. Highest counts were in July, with 9 at Weir Wood Res and Sidlesham, and 7 at Pett Level. Only the last site held any birds after mid-Sept, up to 3 remaining until 3 Oct. [KN]

0470. **RINGED PLOVER**

Charadrius hiaticula

Fairly common breeder, passage migrant and winter visitor.

Recorded along most of the coast for much of the year. The monthly Wetland Bird Survey' counts at the principal sites were as follows:

	96							97		
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
<i>County totals</i>	802	541	660	521	857	337	426	618	390	305
Chichester Hbr	269	136	143	29	572	165	204	118	110	79
Pagham Hbr	173	81	216	56	93	26	9	314	-	177
Climping	82	101	111	65	53	9	86	31	20	12
Goring Gap	73	71	45	56	59	nc	20	6	60	3
Lower Adur Valley	168	103	38	164	-	91	16	115	109	nc
Cuckmere Haven	-	2	3	31	35	14	21	2	16	-
Pett Level	1	2	7	14	9	26	52	13	16	4
Rye Hbr	3	16	76	80	-	-	-	9	40	16

The greatest concentration was at Pilsey Sands, Chichester Hbr, where the monthly maxima were:

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
161	84	126	112	147	24	136	1000	271	494	300	192

Other concentrations (not in tables above and greater than 100 birds) were 110 at Goring Gap on 7 Jan, and 125 on the River Adur at Shoreham on 22 Sept.

A number of nesting pairs were reported: at Chichester Hbr — 1 at Ellanore; 2 at North Stakes Island; and 5-6 at Pilsey Island. Several pairs were nesting at Pagham; 5 at Southwick Beach; 1 at Climping; 3 at Widewater, Lancing; 3 at Brighton Marina; 2 at Newhaven Tide Mills; 1 at Cuckmere Haven; 1 at the Crumbles; 1 at Glyne Gap, Bexhill; and 40 at Rye Hbr.

Inland, there were records of a single bird at Pulborough Brooks on 24 Feb; 3 at Bewl Water on 3 May, and 7 on between 15 and 20 Sept; 4 at Weir Wood on 15 Aug, and 1 from 1 until 13 Sept; and 1 at Arlington Res on 18 Aug. [BJY]

0477. KENTISH PLOVER

Charadrius alexandrinus

Very scarce spring and autumn passage migrant, formerly bred.

1996: An adult female was watched at Widewater for 15 mins on 19 May (KN). One, probably an adult female, present briefly on Worthing Beach on 17 Jul (JAN) was presumably that seen in Pagham Hbr on 20 and 23 Jul (TJE, AH) while one, thought to have been a juvenile, at Pilsey Sands during 24-30 Jul (CBC *et al*), may have been the same bird (the dates would tie in nicely). There have been 35 records since 1988 of which 21 have been at Pilsey (including 4 in 1990, 1991 and 1993). 1992 was the last blank year. [RJF]

0479. GREATER SAND PLOVER

Charadrius leschenaultii

Very rare vagrant.

A female or first-summer was seen on Pilsey Island on 28 July (CBC, MAC *et al*). It was found in the high tide roost on Pilsey Island at 09.35 hrs where it remained until 12.10 hrs, feeding on the exposed mudflats until at least 13.35 hrs. It could not be found on subsequent days. It has been accepted by *British Birds* and is the second

record for the county, the first, at Pagham Hbr in Dec 1978, was also the first for Britain (*British Birds* 73:568-573). [RJF]

0482. **DOTTEREL**

Eurodromias morinellus

Very scarce spring and autumn passage migrant, one winter record.

All records were from the Downs between Balsdean and Iford. Records are 1 on Iford Hill on 1 May; 1 on Swanborough Hill on 6th; 3 on Picker's Hill on 6-7th, rising to 13 on 8th, but only 6 on 9th, 5 on 10-11th, 6 on 12th and 2 on 14-16 May (GAS, EDU *et al*). It may be that only 13 individuals were involved in these records although it would seem likely that the first was different, giving a cautious total of 14. Some autumn records from this area remain unsubstantiated. The species seems to make regular migration stops on the Downs, although spring records are more dependent on there being suitable fields available. Those with south facing slopes and little or no emergent crops are most favoured. The count of 13 almost matches the county record of 14, in the same general area on 29 Apr 1992. [RJF]

0485. **GOLDEN PLOVER**

Pluvialis apricaria

Common winter visitor and passage migrant, rare in summer.

The Wetland Bird Survey's counts were as follows:

	96					97				
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
County totals	259	155	266	1	292	533	244	85	459	300
Chichester Hbr	9	8	3				3			
Pagham Hbr	152	127	155	-	275	149	914	15	418	298
	6	1	8							
Pagham Hbr	101	196	275	-	-	19	107	-	38	2
	4									
Pulborough Brooks	-	-	515	-	nc	-	-	2	3	-
Pevensey Levels	22	86	111	-	16	184	200	-	-	-
Pett Level	8	1	59	1	-	181	110	63	-	-
							9			

Jan records included 400 with Lapwings on freshly-ploughed land at Nyetimber, Bognor Regis, on 4th; 800 at Thorney Island on 7th; 200 at the North Wall, Pagham Hbr, on 15th; 300 at Pulborough Brooks on 20th and 250 at Honer Farm, Pagham Hbr, on 26th. The largest numbers recorded in Feb were 280 at the North Wall, Pagham Hbr, on 15th; 320 on the intertidal area, Pagham Hbr, on 20th; 500 at West Wittering on 28th and 200 at Pulborough Brooks on 29th.

March yielded counts of 200 at Northpoint Pit, Rye, on 3rd; 1000 at Thorney Island on 5th; 1000 at East Head on 7th; 500 at Glynde Reach on 14th and 120 in a field with Lapwings at Thorney Deeps on the same date. In addition, there were 200 at Pulborough Brooks and 300 at Honer Farm, Pagham Hbr, on 18 March; 350 at Earnley on 23rd and 250 in Pagham Hbr on 27th.

After an Apr record of 432 at Jury's Gap on 7th, numbers declined rapidly, with the last being seen at Beachy Head on 11 May.

In the autumn, the first returns noted were of single birds at Sidlesham Ferry, Pagham Hbr, on 16 Jul and at Thorney Deeps on 18th. Numbers remained low until Oct, with a maximum of 64 at Scotney Court GP on 13 Aug. The intertidal area of Pagham Hbr had 200 on 1 Oct, rising to 330 by 22nd. There were 220 at Thorney Airfield on 28th. Nov included 320 at Honer Farm, Pagham Hbr, on 1st; 680 at East Head on 14th and 600 at Thorney Airfield on 30th. Dec yielded 450 on the intertidal area of Pagham Hbr on 3rd; 400 at Thorney Airfield on 4th; 1000 at Jury's Gap on 5th; 810 at East Head on 11th and 1000 at East Guldeford Level on 14th.

Diurnal movements reported included 10 heading N on 7 Jan in the Climping/Littlehampton Gap area and 50 E at Selsey Bill on 27 Mar. [JLN]

0486. **GREY PLOVER**

Pluvialis squatarola

Common winter visitor and passage migrant.

The Wetland Bird Survey's counts were as follows:

	96						97			
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
County totals	315	274	343	136	287	241	326	241	237	284
	5	9	3	9	8	6	0	3	2	0
Chichester Hbr	191	193	206	112	198	151	194	937	150	211
	0	8	0	7	6	5	5		8	7
Pagham Hbr	844	410	917	187	742	814	111	119	656	622
							3	8		
Climping	138	108	174	10	27	48	59	125	54	60
Goring Gap	178	211	200	37	118	nc	66	121	120	

Eastward spring passage' totals from sea-watching sites were as follows:

	Mar	Apr	May	Total	No. per hr (Apr-May)
Selsey Bill	9	8	171	188	0.56
Worthing Beach	25	6	51	82	0.65
Splash Point Seaford	2	22	153	177	0.58
Glyne Gap Bexhill	7	5	46	58	0.71

Numbers recorded were low, with the rate per hour down some 40% on last year. Maximum movements recorded were 40 E at Bexhill on 4 May, 71 E at Selsey Bill on 9th, and 51 E at Seaford on 19th. There was a small westerly movement in the autumn, with a maximum of 13 W at Worthing Beach on 30 Sept.

Maximum counts in Jan were 155 at Goring Gap on 10th; 1205 at Pilsey Sands on 20th and 200 on the intertidal area of Pagham Hbr on 29th. The largest count in Feb was 219 at Goring Gap on 21st, whilst March yielded 702 at Pilsey Sands on 6th and 169 at Goring Gap on 7th. April found 150 at South Stakes Island on 2nd and 80 at Pilsey Sands on 7th, falling to 29 on 5 May. Numbers then decreased further, with only a very few individuals, some in summer plumage, in Jun, until there were 21 at Pilsey Sands on 31 July.

In Aug, there were 220, mostly in summer plumage, at South Stakes Island on 14th and 360 at Pilsey Sands on 17th, increasing to 1600 by 29th. In Sept, there were 150 at Church Norton, Pagham Hbr, on 7th, whilst numbers at Pilsey Sands decreased to 500 on 28th. October yielded 570 at Pilsey Sands on 12th, and 506 on 16 Nov, then increasing to 600 on 12 Dec.

Inland records included 1 at Weir Wood Res on 3 Jan, 1 at Bewl Water on 10 Feb, 2 at Pulborough Brooks on 11 May, 1 at Arlington Res on 20 Aug, and 1 at Weir Wood Res on 13 Oct. There was also a record of 5 feeding in a de-turfed field at Pevensey Bridge Levels on 9 Jan. [JLN]

0493. **LAPWING**

Vanellus vanellus

Fairly common but decreasing breeder and very common winter visitor.

The Wetland Bird Survey' counts were as follows:

	96							97		
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
<i>County totals</i>	10508	1439	1503	1535	4624	7709	1477	353	1155	460
		9	2				7		0	
Chichester Hbr	2519	3559	1627	241	838	774	1611	109	1095	94
Pagham Hbr	850	1280	562	172	185	403	681	16	153	58
Bury Brooks	1129	263	nc	nc	nc	nc	-	1	-	-
Amberley Wild Brks	195	820	nc	95	200	673	137	5	24	21
Coldwaltham Brks	2	23	nc	nc	6	19	30	18	15	1
Pulborough Brooks	571	1623	9087	-	nc	192	2136	14	5966	53
Lower Adur Valley	1460	970	30	126	340	68	790	35	875	nc
Weir Wood Res	2	35	46	89	69	27	150		74	1
Newhaven	450	1200	5	-	160	196	1000	50	200	-
Glynde Levels		200	177	110	40	175	46	nc	nc	nc
Cuckmere Haven	300	600	420	-	371	250	620	16	650	-
Eastbourne Parks	nc	nc	nc	-	60	-	400	12	800	nc
Pevensey Levels	208	1446	1706	54	297	2309	1488	2	180	69
Bewl Water	300	200	11	130	150	215	550	10	370	2
Pett Level	665	299	640	317	1263	1581	3090	44	774	111
Rye Hbr	1350	1030	361	125	260	350	575	11	332	13

WeBS' counts in Jan and Feb were considerably down on 1995, but large flocks were in evidence elsewhere. Counts of 1000 and over were recorded in Jan at Newhaven Tide Mills, Northpoint Pit, Shoreham Airport (on 4th and 6th), Thorney Deeps, Ringmer, Henfield Levels, Scotney Court Gravel Pit and Amberley Wildbrooks. In Feb, these numbers were seen again at Shoreham Airport on 11th and 14th, and at Thorney Deeps on 17th. Towards the end of the month, numbers increased at Pulborough Brooks RSPB Reserve, coinciding with the thaw. On 29 Feb, 4000 were counted, growing to a total of 5000 on 1 Mar when there were also 1500 at Thorney Deeps.

Breeding records were received from 19 sites involving 188 pairs. The main areas were: Elms Farm, Icklesham (55); Glynde Reach (45); Pulborough Brooks (34); Thorney Island (23) and Rye Hbr (16). Although this is a considerable increase on 1995 figures, it is more likely to be due to improved reporting than a real increase in numbers. Of more importance is the number of young fledged. Breeding success appears to have been very poor, with only 29 reported fledged. To this can be added an unknown number from 21 pairs at Pulborough Brooks RSPB Reserve and at least 8 broods from Elms Farm, Icklesham. It is dangerous to draw too many conclusions from such incomplete information and more reports of numbers reared from other sites would be welcome.

Post breeding movements started early, with the first record of returning birds at Bewl Water on 3 Jun and a small flock of 100 at Nook Meadows, Rye, on 11th. Thereafter, small flocks appeared at a number of sites: 136 at Thorney Deeps on 17 June increasing to 320 on 19 July, 50 at Cissbury Ring on 30 June and 250 at Pulborough Brooks RSPB Reserve, with 150 on Horse Eye Level, Pevensey, by the end of July. By the end of Aug, the first large gathering, of 1800, was seen at Rye Hbr LNR. The main flocks up to the end of the year were 1000 on Pett level on 1 Sept and the same number at Rye Hbr on 4th, 1500 on North Brooks, Pulborough, and 1100 on Pagham Intertidals, both on 5 Oct. The highest Nov count was 583 on East Guldeford Level on 18th, and, in Dec, there were 2000 at Shoreham on the 1st, 1200 at Rye Hbr and 3000 at Jury's Gap on 5th, 1950 at Newhaven Tide Mills on 7th, 1500 at Shoreham Airport on 21st and 5500 at Pulborough Brooks RSPB Reserve on 23rd.

A leucistic bird was seen at Newhaven Tide Mills on two occasions in the autumn. This is now the 7th year that it or a similar bird has been reported from this site. It could be around for some time yet as the oldest recorded Lapwing from ringing recoveries is 19 years and 11 months. [RTP]

0496. **KNOT**

Calidris canutus

Common winter visitor and fairly common passage migrant.

The monthly Wetland Bird Survey' counts were as follows:

	96						97				
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	
County totals	284	326	100	19	10	533	117	121	166	548	
	8		5				4	4	5		
Chichester Hbr	260	100	854	-	10	517	918	984	137	478	
	8								5		
Pagham Hbr	240	226	151	16	-	16	256	228	290	70	
Goring Gap	-	-	-	2	-	nc	-	-	-	-	
Rye Hbr	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	

During the first winter period, the Jan WeBS' count produced 2848 in the county (see table above). Counts at Pilsey Sands were 2600 on 20 Jan, 754 on 21 Feb, and 834 on 9 March. At Pagham Hbr there were 292 on 17 Jan, 319 on 29 Feb, and 310 on 5 Mar. A count of 85 at Rye Hbr on 19 Feb was unusual for this site and was probably due to the cold weather which brought over-night snow on 19 – 20 Feb. Other records in this period were 2 at Rye Hbr on 9 Jan, and single birds observed in the lower Cuckmere Valley on 7 Jan and 4 Feb, and at Lancing, Widewater, and Newhaven Tide Mills, on 13 and 25 March respectively.

In spring, notable counts were 55 at Pagham Hbr on 6 Apr, 29 at Pilsey Sands on 10 Apr, and 21 in the Fishbourne Channel on 3 May. The last recorded were 2 at Rye Hbr on 10 Jun.

Easterly spring passage counts, at the main sea-watching localities, are as follows:

	Mar	Apr	May	Total
Selsey Bill	-	42	94	136
Worthing Beach	-	-	2	2
Splash Point Seaford	7	25	153	185
Glyne Gap Bexhill	34	21	-	55

Passage peaked with 115 E at Splash Point, Seaford, and 58 at Selsey Bill on 1 and 2 May, respectively.

Autumn passage commenced with a single at Rye Hbr on 24 June, followed by 9 at Pilsey sands on 17 Jul, rising to 24 on 25 Aug. Other notable counts in the autumn were 80 W at West Pier, Newhaven, on 10 Aug, 12 at Pagham Hbr on 10 Sept, and 4 in the Lower Cuckmere Valley on 22nd.

During the second winter period, counts at Pilsey Sands included 512 on 16 Nov, and 886 on 12 Dec. Pagham Hbr recorded 90 on 19 Nov, rising to 275 on 26 Dec. The only other record was of a single bird inland at Weir Wood Res on 11 – 13 Dec. [CBC]

0497. SANDERLING

Calidris alba

Fairly common winter visitor and passage migrant.

The monthly Wetland Bird Survey' counts were as follows:

	96						97			
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
County totals	43	324	340	184	162	62	77	184	396	259
Chichester Hbr	30	309	258	180	142	49	34	66	217	174
Pagham Hbr	1	-	-	1	-	-	6	-	-	-
Climping	4	1	6	2	3	1	31	115	12	85
Goring Gap	7	14	74	1	17	nc	-	1	77	-
Lower Adur Valley	-	-	-	-	-	-	6	-	-	nc
Rye Hbr	1	-	-	-	-	12	-	-	90	-

Eastbound totals for the spring passage from the main sea-watching sites were as follows:

	Mar	Apr	May	Total	No. per hr (Apr-May)
Selsey Bill	1	61	277	339	0.84
Worthing Beach	20	63	84	167	1.87
Splash Point Seaford	-	21	181	207	0.69
Glyne Gap Bexhill	-	-	60	60	1.58

Peak movements at Worthing were 46 E on 21 Apr and 44 E on 2 May. Seaford recorded 46 E on 12 May and Glyne Gap 32 E on 13th. In addition, there was a small westerly movement in May, with totals of 10 W at Worthing, 7 W at Selsey and 10 W at Seaford. Later in the year, there was a small autumn movement of 10 W at Selsey in July and 8 W at Worthing in both Aug and Sept.

Maximum Jan counts were 116 at Camber Shore SSSI on 7th, increasing to 200 by the end of the month; 72 at Goring Gap on 10 Jan; 70 at Pilsey Sands on 15 Jan and 100 at Littlehampton on 23rd. February found 309 at Pilsey Sands on 17th and 124 at Goring Gap on 21st, whilst in March there were 208 at Pilsey Sands on 9th; 112 at Littlehampton on 17th and 93 at Goring Gap on 21st. April totals increased with the spring migration, with 239 at Pilsey Sands on 10th, and 316 at the same site on 19th.

May began with 137 at Pilsey Sands, decreasing to 68 by 20th and down to only nine by 4 June. There were 80 at Goring Gap on 29 May, decreasing to 10 by 11 Jun. There were 25 birds at East Head on 31 May.

In the late summer, numbers at Pilsey Sands increased from 1 on 10 Jul to 212 by the end of the month, and to 287 by 29 Aug. September began with 260 at Pilsey

Sands on 2nd, but numbers fell to only 180 on 14th due to the presence of two Ospreys. October yielded 244 on 18th, decreasing to 47 on 16 Nov, and a total of 78 on 15 Dec. Elsewhere, there were 49 at Camber Shore SSSI on 23 Oct, 60 at Goring Gap on 26th, 40 at Rye Harbour Shore SSSI on 6 Nov, 93 at Camber Shore SSSI on 14 Dec and 168 at Rye Harbour Shore SSSI on 28th.

Inland records consisted 2 at Arlington Res on 2 May and 1 at the same site on 17th. [JLN]

0501. **LITTLE STINT**

Calidris minuta

Passage migrant, scarce in autumn and very scarce in spring; a few winter in most years.

The approximate minimum monthly totals were as follows:

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
-	-	-	3	8	2	8	17	306	153	8	1

The first 3 were at Pulborough Brooks on 13 Apr, followed by 2 there on 19 May, and 1 or 2 at coastal sites.

There were more migrants in Sept than in the whole of any previous autumn. Numbers built up from mid-month to a peak in the last week. Maximum counts included 106 at Pilsey Sands on 28th, 46 at Weir Wood Res on 23rd, 39 at Thorney Deeps on 27th, 19 at Sidlesham and 18 at Pett Level. In Oct, there were 81 at Pilsey Sands on 2nd, 44 on 15th, and 17 at Thorney Deeps on 29th. Other Oct counts were 10 at Sidlesham on 2nd, 13 at Rye Saltings on 13th and 12 at Pett Level on 15th. The last one was at Thorney Deeps on 30 Dec. [KN]

0502. **TEMMINCK'S STINT**

Calidris temminckii

Very scarce spring and autumn passage migrant.

One was seen at Sidlesham Ferry on 9 and 11 May (TJE). This was the 100th Sussex record and the 30th for this site. [SJP]

0505. **WHITE-RUMPED SANDPIPER**

Calidris fuscicollis

Very rare vagrant.

1995: An adult at Sidlesham Ferry from 5-8 Aug (CAH, JCH *et al*) has been accepted by *British Birds*. It was the 11th county record, but only the 7th since 1970. All these more recent records have been at either Pett Pools (2) or Sidlesham Ferry (5) and 4 of the latter have been in Aug. It was photographed (*Birding World* 8:287). [RJF]

0506. **BAIRD'S SANDPIPER**

Calidris bairdii

Very rare vagrant.

One found at Sidlesham Ferry on 1 Oct (TJE, LGRE *et al*) was present all too briefly before flying off. It has been accepted by *British Birds* and is the 7th county record although, perhaps surprisingly, the first to be recorded at this location. It is the

first since 1989 and the first to be recorded in Oct, all other records falling between 23 Jul-27 Sept. [RJF]

0509. **CURLEW SANDPIPER**

Calidris ferruginea

Passage migrant, scarce in autumn and very scarce in spring; rare in winter.

There were more than usual on spring passage. The first was at Pagham Beach on 13 Apr, followed by 1 at Sidlesham, Ferry Pool, on 2 May, 1 at Rye Hbr on 6th and 12th, 1 at Pilsey Island on 7th, up to 3 at Pulborough Brooks on 19th and 20th, 1 at Pagham Hbr on 30th, with 3 there on 8 Jun, and then 1 at Pilsey Island on 2nd and 3rd.

The first returning birds were 2 at Pett Level on 15 July. Very approximate totals of individuals on autumn passage are summarised below:

	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Total
Thorney Deepes	-	-	14+	12	14+
Pilsey	1	30	5	2	36
Chichester GP	-	2	1	-	3
Fishbourne Sewage Wks	-	-	5	-	5
Sidlesham/ Pagham Hbr	27	16	34+	7+	77+
Arundel	-	-	1	-	1
Worthing Beach	-	-	1	-	1
Shoreham	-	-	6	-	6
Weir Wood Res	-	-	3	3	6
Cuckmere	-	-	9	3	12
Icklesham, Elms Farm	-	1	9	-	10
Pett Level Pools	3	4	15	1	23
Rye Hbr	3	6	28	-	37
Union Canal, E. Guldeford	-	-	8	-	8
Scotney Court GP	-	-	1	-	1

The totals allow for overlap between months. It is likely that the figures for Sidlesham, Ferry Pool, and Pagham Hbr are greatly underestimated as birds were present almost daily in Sept. For instance, 34 seen at Sidlesham on 15 Sept could have been quite separate from 33 present in Pagham Hbr on 26 Sept.

From the above, the monthly totals are therefore :

Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sept	Oct
1	7	4	34	59	140	28

An annual total in excess of 249 closely rivals the exceptional influx in 1969. [SHL]

0510. **PURPLE SANDPIPER**

Calidris maritima

Scarce winter visitor and passage migrant; very rare in summer.

Peak monthly counts were:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
Chichester Hbr	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-
Selsey Bill	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-
Shoreham	4	4	-	3	-	-	-	2	3	2
Southwick Beach	-	-	-	4	1	-	-	-	-	-

Brighton Marina	5	-	2	1	-	-	-	3	8	10
Newhaven	9	7	-	-	-	1	-	-	3	9
Bexhill	7	-	4	8	1	-	-	-	2	1

The last bird of the first winter period was one at the entrance channel to Chichester Hbr on 12 May. The August record at Newhaven, West Pier, was on 10th, and the next bird seen was one at Brighton Marina on 24 Oct. [SHL]

0512. **DUNLIN**

Calidris alpina

Abundant winter visitor and common passage migrant. Small numbers summer.

The Wetland Bird Survey's counts were as follows:

	96							96	97	
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
County totals	27,586	13,285	15,933	1156	4353	16,647	23,964	24,760	22,665	8698
Chichester Hbr	22,590	9029	12,017	259	2993	13,855	19,567	17,848	18,967	6679
Pagham Hbr	3056	2340	2463	663	1257	2168	3633	4868	2119	1703
Goring Gap	216	628	858	12	15	nc	57	295	465	170
Lower Adur	1095	924	218	48	22	325	290	985	438	nc
Pett Level	127	79	35	115	51	247	318	409	203	21

The recorded county totals show March at 15,933 to be well above the previous maximum of 14,863, while the months with counts below the monthly average were Feb at -30%, Sept -30%, and Oct -60%. Rye Harbour counts were unusual, being low for Sept at 2, and for Nov and Dec both zero, whereas counts for Jan and Mar were higher than normal. Chichester and Pagham Harbours had the majority of birds but a significant 7% were in other areas.

The following tables shows the monthly totals at the sea-watching sites during the spring and reveals a larger passage than in 1995. As usual, movements were predominantly in an easterly direction in the spring, but a small west-bound movement was noted in the autumn; most notably at Worthing where the month's total was 76.

	Mar	Apr	May	Total	No. Per hr (Mar- May)
Selsey Bill	36	388	614	1038	2.72
Worthing Beach	458	58	70	586	4.92
Splash Point Seaford	163	200	140	503	1.26
Glyne Gap Bexhill	111	328	118	557	5.40

Apart from the Wetland records above, many other counts were recorded during the year at 39 different sites. These counts vary in the number of records, from one record at one site in the whole of the year, to seventeen records in one month at another site. These records were not co-ordinated so that it is impossible to be sure of totals in any one area.

A selection of these records appears below and shows the maximum counts in each month for those sites. Note that some counts within Chichester Harbour, and all those in Pagham Harbour, also those near to Rye Harbour, have been collated as they are close to each other. Pilsey Sands, as usual, show the largest numbers of birds. A slight increase in birds recorded in May was seen at Glyne Gap, Bexhill, and in June at Pilsey Sands, but these were small and may not be significant.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
Thorney Island							133	140		4200		

Pilsey Sands	1800	2560	8000	500	800	33	1000	1800	200	5000	1050	1800
	0										0	
Stakes Island				450								
Pagham Hbr		250	100	2	5	5	41	100	150	150		200
Climping			55									
Littlehampton			27									
Pulbrough Brks	4		2	1	10			4		1	1	
Goring Gap	1037	577	680									
Shoreham	350	600	100									
Newhaven	300	271	27									25
Cuckmere Hvn		47					15	15	27	17		
WeirWood Res	10							2	6	2	1	
Pevensey Bay	200											
Icklesham	9	9	116	7	4	4		1	17			
Pett Level	126	78	33				130	135	18	6	239	280
East Guldeford	50	1							35			2
Rye area	600	250	200	40	6		83	133	68	51	35	36
Camber SSSI	300											

[BW]

0514. **BROAD-BILLED SANDPIPER**

Limicola falcinellus

Very rare vagrant.

1895: The record of one shot at Rye Hbr on 12 Oct and published in *Birds of Sussex* should have been excluded as a 'Hastings Rarity' (*British Birds* 55:283-384). Also, it was on 2 Oct! Just 6 have been recorded in the county. The only records in recent years were both in May, in 1988 (Pevensey) and 1993 (Sidlesham Ferry). [RJF]

0517. **RUFF**

Philomachus pugnax

Scarce winter visitor and passage migrant.

The Wetland Bird Survey counts were as follows:

	96						97					
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar		
County totals	46	49	9		11	7	5	6	12	16		
Chichester Hbr	5	6	4	-	6	6	5	4	9	-		
Pagham Hbr	3	-	2	-	5	-	-	1	-	-		
Bury Brooks	23	8	nc	nc	nc	nc	-	-	-	-		
Pulborough Brooks		35	1		nc			1	3	16		
Pett Level	1	-	2	-	-	1	-	-	-	-		

The largest numbers in the early part of the year were at RSPB Pulborough Brooks, with 40 on 13 Jan. During Feb, 14 were near the car-park at East Head, Chichester Hbr. Numbers continued to be rather low, with odd birds being recorded from a number of sites. There was a white-headed male at Pett Levels on 9 Apr.

Males in full breeding plumage were recorded from RSPB Pulborough Brooks and Rye LNR during May. No breeding successes were reported from the county, although female birds, too, were noted at RSPB Pulborough Brooks.

The late summer saw an increase in records, but none into double figures. Sidlesham Ferry and Rye LNR proved to be the best late-summer sites, with 7 and 3 birds respectively in Jul. Numbers did not reach double figures until 12 were noted at RSPB Pulborough Brooks on 1 Dec. [RP]

0518. **JACK SNIPE**

Lymnocyptes minimus

Scarce winter visitor and passage migrant.

The minimum monthly totals were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
No. of sites	8	7	8	7	1	3	7	8	6
No. of birds	33	40	36	18	1	5	12	21	26

During the first winter period, a minimum of 70 birds were recorded from 18 localities. Counts at Thorney Deeps included 14 on 12 Jan, with a maximum of 16 on 14 Feb, 14 on 1 Mar, thereafter falling to 10 on 1 Apr, and 4 on 21st. One remained until 26 Apr. Other notable records were 3 at both Pilsey Island on 21st Apr, and at Pulborough on 22nd. There were 8 at River Lavant Marsh on 31 Jan. In Feb, 5 were at Pilsey Island from 14th until 21st, 10 at Icklesham on 18th, and 5 at Crowborough Bog on 24th. In Mar, 2 were at Steyning on 13th, 8 at Crowborough Bog on 17th, 6 in the upper Cuckmere Valley, and a single bird at Gatwick, River Mole, on 31st. In Apr, 2 were at Perryfield, near Tillington, on 2nd, with single birds at 6 other sites. The last spring record was of a single bird at Willingdon, Shinewater Marsh, on 9 May.

During the second winter period, a minimum of 43 birds were recorded from 13 localities. The first returning birds were singles at Icklesham on 20 Sept, and at Thorney Deeps and Pilsey Island on 23rd. Three birds were trapped at Icklesham during the autumn. Counts at Thorney Deeps included 4 on 21 Oct, increasing to 8 on 13 Nov, with a maximum of 20 on 2 Dec. Other notable records were 3 at Rye Hbr on 11 Oct. In Nov, 4 were at Nutbourne Marsh on 14th, 3 at Ferring Rife on 21st, 2 at Pilsey Island on 28th, and single birds at Pulborough Brooks on 1st and in the lower Cuckmere Valley on 20th. In Dec, 2 were at Glynde Levels on 22nd, and singles at Gatwick Cargo Terminal and at Weir Wood Res on 28th.

At least 113 birds were recorded during the two winter periods from 22 localities. [CBC]

0519. **SNIPE**

Gallinago gallinago

Fairly common breeder and common winter visitor.

The Wetland Bird Survey' counts were as follows:

	96						97				
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	
<i>County totals</i>	708	332	323	48	222	310	348	73	170	248	
Chichester Hbr	137	124	118	6	2	71	106	12	34	49	
Pagham Hbr	34	-	23	-	6	13	29	1	-	4	
Arundel WWT	1	40	1	nc	16	3	2	1	nc		
Amberley Wild Brooks	2	3	nc	13	44	73	10	5	10	7	
Coldwaltham Brooks	12	8	nc	nc	3	10	19	12	3	28	

Pulborough Brks	172	80	85	-	nc	30	27	14	29	100
Lower Adur Valley	197	4	-	-	59	-	15	-	55	nc
Weir Wood Res	1	-	1	7	30	15	-	-	24	12
Lower Ouse Valley	2	-	-	nc	-	5	5	4	-	-
Glynde Levels	-	9	14	2	-	12	20	nc	nc	nc
Pevensey Levels	49	45	38	10	6	54	84	4	1	18
Pett Level	63	-	-	2	4	6	11	15	4	16
Rye Hbr	5	1	7	4	39	5	-	1	3	-

Other than the tabulated counts, records of large numbers during Jan included 71 at Weir Wood Res on 5th, 88 at Shoreham on 9th, 188 at Thorney Deeps on 12th and 80 at Lancing, New Salts Farm, on 14th. In Feb, there were counts of 40 at Midhurst, Cowdray Park, on 7th, Ifieldwood, Bowlands Copse, on 17th, and at Crowborough Bog on 24th. It is interesting to note that 2 flew in from the sea at Brighton Marina on 20 Feb during cold weather.

Breeding season records were as follows: 1 holding territory at Ashdown, Millbrook, 23 Mar - 12 June; 20 drumming and at least 10 juveniles at RSPB Pulborough Brooks; 3 in display flight at Amberley Wildbrooks on 5 June; adults with young at Rye SSSI, Saunder's Pit, and drumming birds reported at Icklesham.

One was present at Sidlesham, Ferry Pool, on 11 June, 1 was at Pett Level on 15 July and 2 were at Weir Wood Res on 26th. Numbers increased in Aug and Sept, but there were no reports exceeding 25 until a count of 36 at Rye Hbr on 30 Sept. During the rest of the year, the larger counts of note were 150 at RSPB Pulborough Brooks, 61 at Weir Wood Res on 24 Oct, 69 at Rye Hbr on 30th, 64 at Thorney Deeps on 13 Nov, with 85 there on 2 Dec, and, finally, 70 at the Upper Adur Levels and 65 at Oreham Common on 28th. [SHL]

0529. WOODCOCK

Scolopax rusticola

Fairly common resident and winter visitor.

During January there were over twenty reports of 1 or 2 birds, mainly from the central area of the county. At Pipers Farm, East Hoathly, on the 2 Jan, 31 were found during a shoot. There were fewer records in February when 15 birds were reported, and March produced nineteen reports, involving 23 individuals. In April, there were fewer reports, with only 7 birds being seen. May produced the first roding birds: 2 on 5th at Wiggonholt Common, increasing to 3 on 9th. Most of the May records originate from various sites in Ashdown Forest. Nearly forty reports of displaying birds inevitably involve some duplications. There were at least twenty reports of probable breeding, with 14 of those being from Ashdown Forest, the remaining records coming from the western part of West Sussex. A single confirmed breeding report is of a pair at RSPB, Pulborough Brooks. A single record in September was followed in October and so through to the year's end by thirty observations involving no more than 40 birds. [DEC]

0532. BLACK-TAILED GODWIT

Limosa limosa

Common winter visitor and passage migrant. Small numbers summer.

The Wetland Bird Survey's counts were as follows:

	96						97			
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
County totals	253	228	348	237	190	501	491	279	382	221
Chichester Hbr	224	226	247	235	187	497	458	259	343	123
Pagham Hbr	29	1	100	2	2	4	33	16	39	98

In the first month of the year, there were day maxima of 181 at North Wall Fields, Honer, Pagham, 120 in Pagham Harbour and 100 at Thorney Deeps. In Mar, 5 flew E at Splash Point, Seaford, on 20th and the first report of summer-plumaged birds was at Ternery Pool, Rye Hbr, on 30th.

Thorney Deeps had day maxima of 280 on 19 Apr, 116 on 20 May, 110 on 30 July and 215 by 2 Aug. During this period, 164 were reported from Hermitage, Emsworth, on 29 Jul.

At Elms Farm, Icklesham, on 25 May a resident flock of 6 chased a newly-arrived flock of 10. Throughout the summer, 3 pairs displayed, with an additional non-breeding flock of 24 sometimes present.

Following a County year maximum at Thorney Deeps of 500 on 29 Oct, Manor Farm, Apuldram, recorded 52 on 8 Nov, and there were 95 in Fishbourne Channel on 4 Dec.

Inland, apart from Elms Farm, Icklesham, which recorded birds from Mar through every month of the year until Oct, Pulborough Brooks RSPB recorded singles on 25, 29, 30 Mar and 6 Dec, Weir Wood had singles on 29 Jul, 7 and 15 Aug, and Arlington 11 birds on 13 Sept. [JKI]

0534. BAR-TAILED GODWIT

Limosa lapponica

Common winter visitor and passage migrant. A few summer.

The Wetland Bird Survey's counts were as follows:

	96						97			
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
County totals	125	18	106	319	335	276	367	107	120	217
	9		6					6	8	
Chichester Hbr	125	5	100	306	310	269	316	880	110	216
	0		9						0	
Pagham Hbr	9	7	55	4	9	7	48	196	106	
Rye Hbr	-	6	2	2	-	-	-	-	-	-

Monthly spring sea-watching totals, for birds moving E and seen from principal stations, were as follows:

	Apr	May	Total	No. Per hr
Selsey Bill	152	244	396	1.2
Worthing Beach	247	280	527	6.7
Splash Point, Seaford	3529	1267	4796	16.1
Glyne Gap, Bexhill	795	566	1361	19.0

Early-year numbers at Pilsey Sands included 1100 on 20 Jan, 850 on 21 Feb and 558 on 9 Mar. Glyne Gap, Bexhill, had the first substantial movement with 18 flying E on 10 Mar.

Spring movement was again concentrated in late Apr and early May. At Splash Point, Seaford, 95% of the Apr total flew E in the period 27th - 29th, at a rate of 194 per hr. Similarly, 64% of the May total passed E on 1 May.

Pilsey Sands' numbers began to build from late Jul, with 800 by 31 Aug and 700 on 12 Dec. In December, summer-plumaged birds were reported from Rye Saltings, Pilsey Sands and Fishbourne Channel. [JKI]

0538. **WHIMBREL**

Numenius phaeopus

Common passage migrant; a very scarce summering and wintering species.

The Wetland Bird Survey' counts were as follows:

	96						97			
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec.	Jan	Feb	Mar
County totals	2	1	3	2	2	1	1	1	3	2
Chichester Hbr	1	1	1	2	2	-	-	-	2	1
Pagham Hbr	1	-	1	-	-	1	1	1	1	1
Bewl Water	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

The above table shows single birds were reported between Jan and Mar from Pagham and Chichester Harbours. One heard calling at Bewl Water on 10 Mar was probably the first spring migrant and 1 E at Selsey Bill on 18 Mar heralded the eastward coastal movement. By the middle of Apr, passage was well under way, with peak movements of 108 E in 1.hr at Glyne Gap, Bexhill on 16 Apr, 202 E (8hrs) and 314 E (11hrs) at Selsey Bill and Splash Point, Seaford respectively on 21Apr and 161 E in 12hrs at Selsey Bill on 28 Apr. The coastal movement continued until mid -May with the largest movements being 160 E at Selsey Bill in 10hrs on 8 May, 177 E at Selsey Bill and 140 E at Seaford both in 4 hrs on 10 May and 147 E at Seaford in 13hrs on the following day. The table below summarises the movements at 4 regularly watched sites

	Mar	Apr	May	Total	No. Per hr (Apr- May)
Selsey Bill	1	504	529	1034	3.3
Worthing Beach	-	126	118	244	3.1
Splash Point Seaford	-	556	521	1077	3.6
Glyne Gap Bexhill	-	324	38	362	5.0

The number of birds roosting at Rye LNR reached a peak of 601 on 4 May but between 21 Apr and 10 May there were three figure counts. Othe significant spring counts were 139 near Houghton on 28 Apr, 83 at Pevensey Bridge Level on 30 Apr, 45 at Graffham on 7 May , 55 in Pagham Hbr on 9 May and 122 at Pilsey Island on 10 May.

The summer month of Jun saw a scattering of records across the county. A maximum of 43 on 10 Jul at Rye GC was the first significant number of the late summer and perhaps indicated return passage. The largest counts, however occurred in late July and early Aug with 80 at Rye Hbr on 31 July, 41 in Pagham Hbr on 1 Aug and 51 at Pilsey Island on 2 Aug. A count of 56 at Rye Hbr on 3rd Aug was the last large count. By Oct, numbers were once again very thin, with a majority of records coming from the Pagham Hbr area in early Nov and through Dec when perhaps 1 or 2 birds were present up to the turn of the year. [RP]

0541. CURLEW

*Numenius arquata***Formerly a very scarce breeder; common passage migrant and winter visitor.**

The Wetland Bird Survey' counts were as follows:

	96						97			
	Jan.	Feb	Mar	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
County totals	205	213	174	172	216	164	149	738	158	144
	9	4	7	2	1	1	2		0	4
Chichester Hbr	115	129	798	155	138	113	978	389	451	719
	6	6		2	3	5				
Pagham Hbr	519	534	526	128	664	414	334	206	399	568
Newhaven	28	14	14	-	13	-	27	44	15	2
Pett Level	102	111	258	30	93	77	143	63	623	1
Rye Hbr	166	177	151	1	6	5	5	33	46	152

Spring totals at the main sea-watching sites were as follows:

	Feb		Mar		Apr		May	
Selsey Bill	-	-	46E	-	10E	2W	8E	-
Worthing	-	3W	26E	1W	15E	2W	5E	2W
Seaford	2E	5W	125E	2W	66E	1W	8E	-

Other movements reported during the year included 100 W off-shore at dusk at Bognor Regis on 2 Jan, 50 E at Littlehampton on 21 Jan, 21 E at Glyne Gap, Bexhill, on 31 Mar, 116 NE at Thorney Island in 7 April, and 500 NE in the Lower Chichester Channel on 17th of that month. There was a small westerly movement in Jul, the maximum being 19 W at Worthing on 13th.

Jan reports included 150 at the North wall, Pagham Hbr, on 10th; 600 at Saunder's Pit, Rye SSSI, on 13th; 899 at the Harbour Shore SSSI, Rye, on 15 Jan, 105 on flooded meadowland at Halsey's Farm, Sidlesham, on 22nd, and 200 on the intertidal area of Pagham Hbr on 29th.

Inland, 7 were feeding on arable land at Aldingbourne during a very cold spell on 28 Jan and 50 at North Barnham on 10 Feb. February totals at the coast included 125 at Honer farm, Pagham Hbr, on 13th; 146 on pasture at Halsey's Farm, Sidlesham, on 26th and 157 roosting at Camber Shore SSSI on 29th. March found 461 at dusk on Harbour Shore SSSI, Rye, on 1st and 89 at Sidlesham Ferry on 6th. Apart from 100 off-shore at Church Norton Spit on 21 April, counts decreased until the return of migrating birds.

The main counts in Chichester Hbr reflecting the early autumn migration season were:

	South Stakes Is		Pilsey Island		Thorney Deepes
4 May	50	1 Jul	221	19 Jul	194
1 Jun	100	1 Aug	800	3 Aug	286
2 Jul	530	15 Aug	300	30 Aug	232
31 Jul	200	29 Aug	716	17 Sept	230

Other counts included 240 on the intertidal area of Pagham Hbr on 11 Jul; 385 at the North wall, Pagham Hbr, on 29 Aug; 271 roosting at Rye Hbr Shore SSSI in 24 Sept; 620 at Pett Level on 20 Oct and 140 at Thorney Airfield on 28 Oct.

Inland records featured 1 at Arlington Res on 3 Mar and 2 there on 28 Dec, whilst Weir Wood Res had 2 on 28 Jun, 1 on 24 Oct and 2 on 29 Oct. There was also a single bird at Cissbury Ring on 29 Sept.

No records of breeding were received. [JLN]

0545. **SPOTTED REDSHANK**

Tringa erythropus

Scarce passage migrant and winter visitor.

The approximate monthly totals were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
County totals	6	4	9	7	14	2	5	13	24	11	4	3
Chichester Hbr	4	3	5	3	11	1	1	3	2	2	3	3
Pagham Hbr	-	-	2	2	3	-	3	3	3	4	1	-
Pett Level	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	2	1	-	-
Rye Hbr	1	-	1	1	-	-	-	3	5	2	-	-

During the first winter period, all the records came from Chichester Hbr, except for single birds at Rye Hbr on 1 Jan and on 2 Mar, and at Newhaven Tide Mills from 27 Jan until 25 Mar. Two were recorded at Pagham Hbr throughout Mar. In spring, 3 were at Thorney Deeps from 17 April until 1 May, and a flock of 8 put in a brief appearance there on 9 May, before quickly moving on. This is the largest flock recorded at this site during the spring since 1990 when 10 were observed on 2 May. Two were at Pagham Hbr on 30 Apr, and 3 at Sidlesham Ferry from 1 – 8 May, with one remaining until 12 May, making it the last spring record. Incidentally, no birds were observed inland during the spring.

Autumn passage began with single birds recorded at Icklesham and at Thorney Deeps on 29 Jun, followed by 3 at Sidlesham Ferry on 5 Jul. In Aug, 3 were at Thorney Deeps on 15th, 3 at Rye Hbr on 18th, and 3 at Pagham Hbr on 31st. In Sept, there were 24 birds in the county. Records of note were 2 at both Thorney Deeps on 4th – 11th and at Pett Level on 7th. On 18th, 4 at Icklesham were apparently feeding on Marsh Frog tadpoles. There were 3 at Sidlesham Ferry on 22nd. October provided records of 4 at Sidlesham Ferry on 1st, with 3 remaining until 20th. There were 2 at both Rye Hbr on 2nd and at Icklesham on 10th, and two were observed at Thorney Deeps throughout the month.

Autumn inland records were of single birds at Pulborough Brooks from 31 Jul until 5 Aug, at Weir Wood Res from 24 until 30 Aug, and two at the latter site from 1 until 4 Sept. Five at Bewl Water on 15 Sept were exceptional.

In Nov and Dec all the records were from the western Harbours, with a single at Pagham Hbr on 11 – 15 Nov, and 3 at Thorney Deeps from 13 Nov until 9 Dec, with two remaining into 1997. [CBC]

0546. **REDSHANK**

Tringa totanus

Fairly common resident, passage migrant and winter visitor.

The monthly Wetland Bird Survey' counts at the principal sites were as follows:

	96						96			97		
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec.	Jan	Feb	Mar	Sept	Oct
County totals	153	177	153	148	216	143	190	145	139	203	145	139
	3	7	1	1	0	2	0	7	2	7	7	7
Chichester Hbr	848	124	100	109	135	100	111	805	789	144	805	789

		5	9	7	1	7	5			2
Pagham Hbr	396	249	333	93	437	199	383	402	237	380
Lower Adur Valley	127	111	20	81	108	74	144	139	169	nc
Pett Level	20	14	4	180	216	57	148	48	107	102
Rye Hbr	84	103	108	5	3	10	4	3	18	41

Additional concentrations of more than 100 birds were reported at Thorney Deeps, with 148 on 18 Jun, 160 on 27th, 300 on 2 Jul, 485 on 14th, 651 on 19th, 900 on 14 Aug, and 850 on 30th. By the River Adur, Shoreham, there were 160 on 24 Jan. Other counts from selected sites are shown in the table below:

	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug
<i>County totals</i>	219	97	34	801	1212
Chichester Hbr	154	60		801	1212
Arundel WWT	13	13	13	-	-
Pulborough Brks	42	20	21	-	-
Pevensey Levels	10	4	-	-	-

Breeding records were received from the following sites: at Chichester Hbr, 18 pairs at Thorney Deeps, 2 pairs at Thorney Island, 3 pairs at Cobnor Cottage, 2 pairs at Snowhill, West Wittering, 4 pairs at Pilsey Island, 1 pair at Apuldram Manor Farm, and 1 pair at Ellanore. Several pairs were at Pagham Harbour, and there were between 15 and 20 broods at Pulborough Brooks. Several pairs were recorded at Coldwaltham Brooks. Glynde Levels had 8 pairs, and a nest was found at Loughton Level. One pair was at Boreham Street, and there were 10 pairs at Icklesham and 13 pairs at Rye Hbr.

In addition to the sites above, there were reports inland of 1 at Bewl Water on 5 Jan during cold weather, 1 at Gatwick Waterworks 11 Feb and 28 Dec, 1 at Millbrook, Ashdown, on 13 Mar, and an exceptional 27 at Weir Wood on 22 Apr. [BJY]

0547. **MARSH SANDPIPER**

Tringa stagnatilis

Very rare vagrant.

One at Horse Eye Level, Pevensey, on 26 Aug (MJE) has been accepted by *British Birds*. It is the 10th to be recorded in the county, half having occurred since 1989. The species has now been recorded in all months between Apr-Sep, with 4 in Jul, although this is the first in Aug. [RJF]

0548. **GREENSHANK**

Tringa nebularia

Fairly common passage migrant; a few winter.

The approximate minimum monthly counts were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
<i>County totals</i>	12	8	8	51	55	8	157	272	223	117	20	13
Chichester Hbr	10	7	6	22	25	-	113	186	170	95	14	9
Pagham Hbr	-	-	-	8	10	2	26	30	8	12	3	-
Rye Hbr	-	-	-	2	4	2	2	6	2	2	-	-
Icklesham	-	-	-	4	4	2	3	10	5	-	-	-

During the first winter period, all the records were from Chichester Hbr, except for single birds in the lower Cuckmere Valley on 16 Jan, and at Newhaven Tide Mills where one was seen intermittently from 27 Jan until 25 Mar.

Spring passage was again particularly heavy at Thorney Deeps and numbers built up rapidly in Apr, with 18 on 21st, increasing to 22 on 26th, and peaking at 25 from 1 until 5 May. The number decreased to 20 on 15th, with 3 remaining until 20th. Other notable records were of 4 at Icklesham on 19 April and of 8 at Pagham Hbr on 23rd, respectively. In May, 10 were at Sidlesham Ferry on 8th, and 4 at both Rye Hbr and Cuckmere Haven on 13th and 18th, respectively. Inland records were of 2 at Pulborough Brooks on 21 – 25 Apr, increasing to 3 on 17 May. There were 9 at Weir Wood Res on 22 Apr. The last spring record was of a single bird at Rye Hbr on 5 Jun.

Spring sea-watches produced 3 records: 1 W at Worthing Beach and 1 E at Selsey Bill on 20 and 30 Apr, respectively, and 1 E at Glyne Gap, Bexhill, on 3 May. Counts at selected sites from Apr through to Aug are as follows:

Autumn passage began with 3 at Pett Level Pools on 21 Jun. Five colour-ringed birds were observed at Thorney Deeps during the autumn: they had all been ringed at Farlington Marshes between 1994 and 1996, emphasising local movements between these two sites. Passage numbers built up rapidly in July and counts at Thorney Deeps included 68 on 18th, 113 on 30th, increasing to 133 on 2 Aug and a record count for Sussex of 186 on 18th. The previous highest total was 174 on 5 Sept 1994, at the same locality. Numbers at this site fell to 170 on 1 Sept, 144 on 17th and 114 on 27th. In Oct, there were 95 on 1st, thereafter falling rapidly to 56 on 16th and 27 on 29th. Other records worth noting were of 30 at Pagham Hbr and 10 at Icklesham on 1 and 15 Aug, respectively. Two flocks were observed flying south high over Pilsey Sands, with 13 on 17 Oct and 11 on 21st. No doubt they were heading for warmer climes.

Autumn sea-watching produced 3 E at Lancing, Widewater, on 20 Sept, and 3 W at Beachy Head on 21st. Inland records of note were 7 at Darwell Res on 18 Aug, 10 at Pevensey, Horse Eye Level, on 26 Aug, 7 at Weir Wood Res on 1 Sept, and 5 at Bewl Water on 15th.

In Nov and Dec, records away from the western Harbours were of single birds at Newhaven Tide Mills on 3 – 10 Nov, and on 1 Dec; at Cuckmere Haven on 8 Nov; at Weir Wood Res on 16 Nov; and 2 at Shoreham, River Adur, on 15 Dec. Finally, 1 passed E at Glyne Gap, Bexhill, on 21 Dec. [CBC]

0553. **GREEN SANDPIPER**

Tringa ochropus

Scarce spring and fairly common autumn passage migrant. Small numbers winter.

The Wetland Bird Survey' counts were as follows:

	96						96			97		
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar		
<i>County totals</i>	8	6	5	8	22	6	5	3	10	4		
Chichester Hbr	-	-	1	-	1	-	-	-	-	-		
Pagham Hbr	1	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-		
Chichester GP	nc	nc	-	-	-	-	-	-	nc	3		
Burton MP	-	-	-	4	4	2	-	-	-	-		

Arundel WWT	-	-	-	nc	2	-	-	-	nc	-
Bury Brooks	-	-	nc	nc	nc	nc	-	-	1	-
Adur (Steyning-Henfield)	nc	nc	nc	-	-	-	-	-	-	2
Henfield Brooks	2	1	-	-	4	1	-	1	-	-
Barcombe Res	-	-	-	-	2	-	1	1	-	-
Pevensey Levels	4	-	2	-	3	3	4	-	8	1
Darwell Res	-	-	-	3	5	-	-	-	-	-
Pannel Sewer	-	2	nc	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Pett Level	1	3	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Rye Hbr	-	-	-	1	1	-	-	-	-	-

Other counts were made at selected sites from Apr to Aug:

	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug
<i>County totals</i>	2	-	1	10	17
Chichester Hbr	-	-	-	1	1
Chichester GP	1	-	-	-	6
Arundel WWT	-	-	-	-	2
Pulborough Brooks	-	-	1	5	5
Weir Wood Res	-	-	-	2	2
Barcombe Res	1	-	-	-	-
Arlington Res	-	-	-	1	1
Pevensey Levels	-	-	-	1	-

Figures extracted from daily records show rather improved totals:

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
23	20	19	25	2	14	59	60	39	16	14	16

Jan - Apr numbers were slightly up on those of 1995, but the approximate minimum numbers for the remainder of the year were lower. Records were received throughout the year, from 1 Jan to 31 Dec.

The River Stour at Storrington provided the first sighting on New Year's Day, and during the month birds were seen from Lumley, near Emsworth, in the west, to Pett Level in the east. Six at Shopwyke, Chichester, on 3 Jan was the biggest gathering of the month. Three birds were in the Emsworth area and 2 were recorded at Elms Farm, Icklesham and on the Upper Adur Levels on the same date. The bird seen well inland at Shopham Bridge, near Byworth, on 18 Jan was present at least until 9 Mar. Shopwyke again provided the highest count in Feb, with 4 on 25th. Three were reported wintering at Steyning on 14 Feb, and elsewhere in that month 2 were seen on Henfield Levels (15th), Pett Level (18th) and Down Level, Pevensey (23rd). Many Mar records were of single birds, but up to 3 remained at Shopwyke throughout the month and 2 were at Elms Farm, Icklesham, on 10 Mar. Six birds at Shopwyke on 2 Apr and a flock of 6 seen flying NE over Middle Bridge, Pevensey, on 6 Apr were the biggest counts for the month, but birds along the coastal strip were also seen at Emsworth, Pagham Hbr, Combe Haven and various sites in the Rye Hbr area. Inland records came from Steyning, Etchingam, RSPB Pulborough Brooks, Knepp Lake and Barcombe Res.

In May, single sightings at RSPB Pulborough Brooks on four dates and similarly at Elms Farm, Icklesham, were the only records suggesting that all the other birds seen in April had moved to their northern breeding grounds. There was a gap of 30 days between the last record for May and the first June sightings at Pulborough Brooks. Similarly, the gap was of 29 days at Elms Farm. However, the first returning birds were probably those seen at Glynde Levels on 15 June and at Castle Pit, Rye

LNR, the following day. Other June records were at coastal sites, except for a bird at Weir Wood Res on 26 June. The regular sites such as Rye Hbr, RSPB Pulborough Brooks and the Chichester GPs all had birds back in July, but records also came from Bewl Water (10th), Charleston Reedbed (rising to 3 on 28th), Chingford Pond, Duncton (5 on 20th), Manxey Level, Pevensey, (3 on 20th) and Weir Wood Res (max of 3 on 26th).

August numbers and distribution were much as July, with a max of 15 at Shopwyke, Chichester on 9th. Weir Wood Res had 5 on 10 and 23 Aug, and at RSPB Pulborough Brooks 5 were present on 21st. Numbers started to decline in Sept, with the biggest total being 8 at Elms Farm, Icklesham, on 5th. Seven were at Shopwyke on 6th and 5 had been at Weir Wood Res on 3rd. From Oct to Dec, records were only of ones or twos, except for 5 at Darwell Res on 13 Oct and 3 on the Upper Adur Levels on 28 Dec. The final record on 31 Dec was of a bird at Lumley, near Emsworth. [MJM]

0554. **WOOD SANDPIPER**

Tringa glareola

Scarce spring and autumn passage migrant; recorded once in winter.

The minimum monthly totals were as follows:

Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sept	Oct
1	4	0	3	22	2	1

The pattern of records was much as in previous years, with perhaps smaller numbers present in Aug. The first sighting was at RSPB Pulborough Brooks on 10 Apr and a singleton was reported regularly from there until Aug when 3 birds were present on 24th and 2, the final record at this site, on 25th. The only other records not from sites close to the coast came from Weir Wood Res of one bird on 8 Jul and 19 Aug.

Sightings were scarce in the west of the county, apart from Pulborough Brooks, with single birds only at Pagham Hbr, North Wall, on 30 May, Ferry Pool, Sidlesham, on 2 Aug, Yapton Marsh Farm on 13 Aug, Drayton Pit, Chichester GP, between 14 and 24 Aug, whilst it was possibly the same bird at Shopwyke, Chichester on 21 and 26 Aug.

In the east, the earliest record came from Beach Tern Pool, Rye LNR, on 8 May, but with no more sightings in the Rye area before 16 Aug from which date up to 3 birds were reported until 28 Aug. The max count at Elms Farm, Icklesham, was of 7 birds on 25 Aug, where the species was recorded on 18 days in that month. Four birds were recorded at Horse Eye Level, Pevensey Levels, on 26 and 27 Aug. The final records of the year were on 10 days in Sept at Elms Farm, with a max of 2 on 5th, and a single bird at Cuckmere Haven on 8 Oct. [MJM]

0556 **COMMON SANDPIPER**

Actitis hypoleucos

Fairly common passage migrant. A few regularly winter. Has bred at least once.

The approximate monthly totals were as follows:

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
5	-	-	36	76	6	68	197	56	4	-	2

There were 5 or 6 wintering birds in the early part of the year. As usual, one was at Thorney Deeps and was first seen on 7 Jan, then throughout Feb and Mar until 4 Apr. It was probably the same bird which was seen near Emsworth on 1 Mar, and possibly the same bird recorded at Apuldram on 11 Mar. Another was at Bewl Water on 14 Jan and 3 Feb, and 2 were recorded at Church Farm, Climping, on 26 Jan. One at Lewes Brooks on 27 Jan was probably the same bird which was seen at Barcombe Res the next day and throughout Feb until 10 Mar.

One at Sidlesham on 25 Mar may well have been the Thorney bird or could possibly have been an early spring migrant. If not, the first was at Sidlesham on 13 Apr, joined by another the next day. Singles followed, at Warnham Mill Pond on 16th, Worthing Beach on 17th, and in the lower Adur Valley on 18th. Four flew S from Warningcamp on 19th. Locations were widespread throughout Apr and May, but birds seen were mainly in ones and twos. The largest numbers were 7 at Barcombe Res on 28 Apr, rising to 12 on 6 May. There were 6 at Knepp Lake on the same day, and 8 at Cuckmere Haven on 15th.

Birds began to return south, with the first on 18 Jun at Pagham Hbr, 2 at Sidlesham on 27th, and singles the following day near Emsworth and at Pulborough Brooks. On 29th, there were 2 at Thorney Deeps, increasing to 3 on 1 Jul. The number at Sidlesham reached 6 on 2 Jul. There were no large concentrations anywhere and numbers reached double figures in only a few places. Pagham had 12 on 1 Aug, Bewl Water 10 on 18th, Thorney Deeps 15 on 30th and Barcombe Res also 15 on 1 Sept. By Dec, numbers were down to 3, possibly 4 birds. Two were at Ford on 28th and the single bird near Emsworth on 2nd was probably the same bird seen at Thorney Deeps on 8th and 9th, and finally on 29th. [DEGC]

THESE FIGS as below MUST BE CHECKED as they do not agree with David's figs above!

The Wetland Bird Survey counts were as follows:

	96					97				
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
<i>County totals</i>	1	1	18	20	4	6	-	1	1	-
Chichester Hbr	1	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	1	-
Lower Ouse Valley	-	-	-	nc	3	-	-	-	-	-
Barcombe Res	-	1	1	9	1	-	-	-	-	-
Langney	-	-	17	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Bewl Water	-	-	-	6	-	-	-	-	-	-
Darwell Res	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-
Powdermill Res	-	-	-	-	-	6	-	1	-	-
	Apr		May		Jun		Jul		Aug	
<i>County totals</i>	1		11				17		27	
Chichester Hbr	-		4		-		4		11	
Chichester GP	-		2		-		2		2	
Arundel WWT	-		1		-		-		-	
Pulborough Brooks	-		-		-		-		1	
Weir Wood Res	-		-		-		5		4	
Arlington Res	-		3		-		3		4	
Darwell Res	1		1		-		3		5	

0561. TURNSTONE

*Arenaria interpres***Fairly common winter visitor and passage migrant. Scarce in summer.**

The Wetland Bird Survey counts were as follows:

	96						97			
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
County totals	724	716	813	212	860	485	466	627	302	503
Chichester Hbr	128	126	143	56	150	150	83	152	133	192
Pagham Hbr	375	391	231	103	452	81	169	281	102	181
Climping	6	8	87	9	21	1	2	46	10	32
Goring Gap	-	4	5	15	2	nc	-	-	6	14
Lower Adur Valley	3	13	-	-	9	12	14	38	3	nc
Langney	16	9	30	23	12	-	13	7	-	-
Glyne Gap	164	75	259	nc	182	231	54	102	nc	72
Pett Level	27	80	53	5	31	10	131	-	48	3

Despite the record count in Mar 1995, the County total for the first three months of 1996 was marginally ahead. Glyne Gap, Bexhill, continued to be a leading site, with 129 on the beach on 7 Jan, 146 on 4 Feb and 200 on 3 Mar. From other sites, 157 at Pilsey Island on 17 Apr was notable.

Easterly coastal movements in the spring, from four sites, are shown in the following table:

	Mar	Apr	May	Total	No. per hr
Selsey Bill	37	199	161	397	1.0
Worthing Beach	23	8	21	52	0.4
Splash Point, Seaford	-	19	21	40	0.1
Glyne Gap, Bexhill	92	10	4	106	1.0

Summer numbers were typically low, although Pilsey Island had 164 on 2 Aug, the western side of Pagham Hbr 100 on 12 Aug, and Pett Level 63 on 15 Aug.

	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug
County totals	362	57	nc	nc	164
Chichester Hbr	362	57	-	-	164

Evidence of strong westerly movements came in Sept from Selsey Bill with a month total of 65 in 11.7 hrs. Glyne Gap had 74 birds on the beach on 3 Nov, contributing to a total of 134 for that month, whilst Pilsey Island had 61 on 16 Nov.

In Dec, Selsey Bill witnessed a W month total of 20 in 8.75 hrs, and Glyne Gap had a month total of 212, comprising 2 E, 2 W and 208 on the beach (maximum 92 on 21 Dec) in 16.25 hrs of observations.

In contrast to last year, there were no inland records. [JKI]

0564. RED-NECKED PHALAROPE

*Phalaropus lobatus***Rare spring and autumn passage migrant.**

1995: A juvenile on the first Several, Church Norton, on 23-24 Sep (CWM *et al*) was the 2nd record at this time, the other being at Littlehampton from 21-23rd (*SxBR* 48:76).

1996: A juvenile at Scotney GP on 8 Sept (ADW, IJW *et al*) is the 7th record during the 1990s and only the 11th since 1980. One of these was in Jun (1989) with all the others being seen in Sept, although 2 arrived in late Aug and one remained into early Oct. [RJF]

0565. **GREY PHALAROPE**

Phalaropus fulicarius

Very scarce autumn and rare winter visitor, usually occurring after gales.

Seven birds were recorded, the highest annual total since 1988. A juvenile bird moulting into first-winter plumage was at Brooklands, Worthing from 7-9 Oct (BFF, DIS) and had possibly been present for up to a week beforehand. The next was feeding on the sea off Selsey Bill on 27 Oct (CRJ). On 30 Oct birds were seen at Camber Pits (M S-H) and West Beach, Littlehampton (SJP, PTP), the latter birds remaining until 1 Nov. Two different birds were seen at Brighton Marina, one from 7-14 Nov (ADW *et al*) and another on 19 and 20 Nov (IJW *et al*). These 5 records were identified as first-winter birds. The final sighting was of 1 flying E past Selsey Bill on 19 Nov (TJE). [SJP]

0566. **POMARINE SKUA**

Stercorarius pomarinus

Passage migrant, regular in varying numbers in spring but very scarce in autumn; a very scarce visitor in winter.

A total of 13 were reported in Apr, with the first three at Seaford, Splash Point, on 14th, 18th and 19th. There were, perhaps, 90 in May. An estimation is complicated by the fact that 3 flew W at Selsey Bill on 6th when 5 flew E past Seaford, and that there were 17 W, 8 E at Selsey on 7th when 12 went E at Seaford. Apart from those on the latter date, the only other numbers of note were 9 E off Bexhill, Glyne Gap, on 4 May and 13 off Beachy Head, Birling Gap, on 5th. The last of the spring was 1 E off Seaford on 1 June, bringing the spring total to 104, a number that is well below average for recent years.

The only other records involved singles flying W off Selsey Bill. There was a sub-adult on 11 July (TJE), and one which was probably an immature, on 31 Oct (BJC, TJE). [SHL]

0567. **ARCTIC SKUA**

Stercorarius parasiticus

Fairly common to scarce spring and autumn passage migrant; very scarce in summer and rare in winter.

A total of about 452 for the year assumes that birds seen on consecutive days were different. The total is based on daily minimum figures from along the coast and takes the larger count (*either* E or W) when birds were recorded flying in both directions on a date:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
Birds	2	-	1	134	199	12	15	38	37	10	3	1

Dates 2 - 1 18 27 6 7 13 15 7 3 1

There were two Jan records, 1 E at Bexhill, Glyne Gap, on 6th, and 1 off Church Norton on 8th. The only Mar sighting was 1 E at Selsey Bill on 21st. During Apr - May, there were widespread records along the coast and 1 was at Pilsley Island on 4 May. Totals seen flying E at four sites were as follows:

	Apr	May	No. per hour
Selsey Bill	70	92	0.51
Worthing Beach	13	25	0.48
Seaford Splash Point	118	151	0.90
Bexhill Glyne Gap	23	15	0.53

The total seen during Apr and May from all sites was estimated to be 333, one more than the high total for the spring of 1993. Hourly rates of birds flying E should be compared with 0.30 for Selsey Bill and 0.81 for Seaford, Splash Point, during 1995. Apart from those flying E, there were 3 at Selsey Bill and 2 at Seaford, Splash Point, which flew W during May.

The largest numbers were 24 E at Selsey Bill and 37 E at Seaford, Splash Point, on 21 Apr and, at the latter site, 38 E on 1 May and 24 E, 1 W on 19 May. As usual, the weather influenced visible passage during this period, with wind direction being a strong influence as data from Seaford indicate:

Predominant wind direction	No. days	% of days birds seen	No. hours watched	No. seen	No. per hour watched
S - WSW	14	93	64.5	86	1.3
W - NNW	7	43	26.8	3	0.1
N - ENE	28	50	131.5	62	0.5
E - SSE	8	100	60.8	112	1.8

More than usual were seen during June and July, with a total of 2 at East Head, about 8 at Selsey Bill, 1 at Brighton Marina, 10 at Seaford, Splash Point, and 4 at Bexhill, Glyne Gap. There were fairly frequent sightings from along the coast during Aug and Sept, the most being 8 E at Seaford, Splash Point, on 24 Aug. Scarce during Oct and Nov, the most exceptional record being 1 at RSPB Pulborough Brooks on 30 Nov. Only 1 was seen in Dec, off Brighton Marina on 3rd. [SHL]

0568. **LONG-TAILED SKUA**

Stercorarius longicaudus

Rare vagrant.

On 1 Sept, an adult flew W off Rye Hbr, before returning to E (JMH). It is only the 12th record since one in 1963, the others being equally divided between 1981-87 and 1991-93. Records during this period have been during 8-16 May (5) and 1 Sept-20 Oct (7). [RJF]

0569. **GREAT SKUA**

Stercorarius skua

Scarce spring and autumn passage migrant; very scarce but increasing in winter.

An annual total of 76 (estimated on the same basis as for the Arctic Skua) was recorded. The monthly totals were:

Jan Feb Mar Apr May Jun Jul Aug Sept Oct Nov Dec

2 - - 39 16 3 2 2 2 7 - 3

During early Jan, there were singles W at Seaford, Splash Point, on 2nd, and at Bexhill, Glyne Gap, on 3rd. There were none then until April when 1 flew E past Seaford, Splash Point.

The passage E along the coast in spring is summarised below and represents a minimum of about 55 individuals:

	Apr	May
Selsey Bill	9	1 (and 1 W)
Seaford Splash Point	36	14
Bexhill Glyne Gap	2	-

At Seaford, there were three daily counts of 5 (13 Apr, 18 Apr and 19 May) and one of 6 (15 Apr).

More than usual were seen during the summer, with singles E past Seaford on 1, 2 and 6 June, 1 W past Worthing Beach on 3 July, and 1 W past Seaford on 17 July.

Autumn records were: 1 off Rye Hbr on 19 Aug; 1 E at Seaford on 24 Aug (*cf.* Arctic Skua); 1 E at Selsey Bill on 8 Sept; 1 at Pagham Hbr on 17 Sept; 1 E at Seaford on 12 Oct; 1 offshore Church Norton on 13 Oct; 1 W at Bexhill on 20 Oct; 4 E at Selsey Bill on 31 Oct; 1 off Rye Hbr on 1 Dec, and, finally, singles E past Seaford on 16 and 18 Dec. [SHL]

0575. MEDITERRANEAN GULL

Larus melanocephalus

Scarce but regular visitor throughout the year. A few pairs have attempted to breed in recent years.

Another excellent year for this species, as the total of 479 records reported shows: no fewer than 835 sightings on 228 different days. The number of different birds involved is difficult to estimate, but the sightings probably represent a small increase from 1995, with between 120 and 140 individuals seen. As usual, the records involved considerable duplication and the following table, showing the approximate numbers of each age-class seen in each month, with those birds of unknown age included in the totals, again reveals a peak in the spring.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
Adults	7	8	29	17	5	2	10	6	10	7	13	10
2nd yrs	5	6	12	20	4	2	5	1	2	2	2	1
1st yrs	5	1	2	9	9	6	2	1	1	2	2	3
TOTAL	18	19	61	70	38	11	23	10	13	11	17	17
Inland	2	3	1	1	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	1

Wintering individuals were regularly recorded at Chichester Hbr, Selsey Bill, Pagham Hbr, Littlehampton and in the vicinity of Shoreham Hbr where Dutch-ringed '24H' remained until early Mar. Peak counts during the winter were 4 at Pagham Hbr on 6 Jan and 3 at Selsey Bill on 1 Feb.

The above table shows a marked increase in Mar, presumably involving passage birds. Peak counts were 13 at Glyne Gap, Bexhill, on 12 Mar, and 7 at Southwick on 30 Mar. Observations at Southwick during the spring suggest between 11 and 13 different birds were involved: these probably include those seen in Shoreham Hbr and on the River Adur where 4 were seen on 1 Apr. Whilst the species was regularly seen from several well-watched coastal locations in the spring, the sites in East Sussex

recorded most, with 11 E at Glyne Gap, Bexhill, on 4 Apr, and another 11 recorded there on 13 May. The month totals at Splash Point, Seaford, were 10 E and 1 W during Apr, and 5 E and 3 W during May.

At Rye Hbr, the number of birds increased through Mar, and by mid-Apr at least 6 adults and 15 immatures were present. Amongst this group were 2 second-year birds, bearing Dutch rings (White 37K & 57K), and 2 additional birds, a second- and first-year, carrying Hungarian rings (Red H190 & H416) respectively. Two pairs nested at Ternery Pool: one had deserted by 17 May, but the other raised 2 young, thus providing the first successful breeding in the county. At Icklesham, a pair was present in Apr, but there was no nesting activity, and at Chichester Hbr there were just isolated sightings of immatures during the spring.

In contrast to the spring, most of the autumn records were from West Sussex and mostly involved one or two birds. During July, 3 passed W at Bexhill on 7th, 7 were at Thorney Deeps on 14th and 3 were at Southwick on 15th. A ringed adult at Southwick on 6 Aug may have been '24H' which was positively identified in this area on 15 Sept. At Pagham Hbr, 3 adults were amongst the gull roost on 31 Oct, at least 8 individuals were seen roosting there in early Nov and there were 3 there on 3 Dec. Elsewhere, only singles were seen in Dec, apart from 3 at Glyne Gap, Bexhill, on 28 Dec.

As usual, most were seen on or near the coast and only 9 were recorded inland. All were singles and the monthly distribution, also shown in the table above, reveals most were recorded in the winter months. [JAN]

0578. **LITTLE GULL**

Larus minutus

Scarce visitor and passage migrant, most numerous on passage in spring.

Approximately 435 were seen during the year; a figure very near the average for the past twenty years. The following table of approximate monthly totals shows that most, as usual, were recorded at coastal sites during the spring. A record number were seen in Jan, and a small autumn passage was confined mainly to Nov.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Total	41	12	8	220	69	3	1	8	7	7	58	1
Inland	4	-	1	17	5	-	-	1	3	-	3	1

At least 41 individuals were seen during Jan at 17 different sites, with 6 flying E at Selsey Bill on both 9 and 13 Jan, 4 offshore at Hastings on 8 Jan and 4 recorded in Pagham Hbr on both 11 and 25 Jan. Although most were seen at the coast, there were singles inland at Weir Wood Res on 7 Jan, at Pulborough Brooks on 10th, at Steyning on 12th and at Arlington Res on 13th. Eight immatures at Brighton Marina on 25 Feb was the only other significant winter record.

Coastal movements in spring were mediocre and the totals seen from each site between Mar and May were 62 at Selsey Bill, 13 at Worthing, 23 at Brighton, 219 at Seaford, 9 at Beachy Head and 20 at Glyne Gap, Bexhill. Details of the four best days of passage are shown in the following table (number of hrs watched are shown in brackets):

	10 Apr	16 Apr	21 Apr	1 May
Selsey Bill	2 (3.0)	30 (6.5)	5 (7.8)	5 (14)
Worthing	1 (0.9)	5 (2.0)	2 (2.3)	2 (7.8)

Brighton	10	(?)	-	-	5	(?)	3	(?)
Seaford	24	(3.8)	54	(7.0)	62	(11.3)	24	(12.8)
Beachy Hd	-	-	-	-	7	(?)	-	-

During the spring, small numbers were recorded at Chichester GP, Pulborough Brooks, Weir Wood Res and Bewl Water, but at Arlington Res there was a gathering of 12 on 20 Apr, 8 of which were adults. Singles at Rye Hbr on 23 Jun, at Glyne Gap on 28th and at Thorney Island between 18 June and 14 July were the only summer records.

Very few were recorded in the early autumn, but in Nov there were 14 W at Newhaven on 1st, 6 offshore at Hastings on 10th, and 25 sheltering in Brighton Marina on 19th. The last were singles at Widewater, Lancing, on 30 Nov and at Ivy Lake, Chichester, on 3 Dec. [JAN]

0582. **BLACK-HEADED GULL**

Larus ridibundus

Common breeding species and abundant winter visitor and passage migrant.

On 1 Jan, the roost at Pagham Hbr held 10,000: this was the only large five-figure count early in the year. Counts of 4-figures were 1000 near Horsham on 9 Jan, up to 1500 at Warnham MP in Feb, 2500 roosting at Camber on 29 Feb and 4000 roosting between Camber and Rye on 1 Mar. There were still 880 at Warnham MP on 14 Mar and 400 at Bewl Water on 21 Mar.

Eastward coastal movements were small, with month-totals at Selsey Bill of 137 in Mar, 269 in Apr and 24 in May, and at Worthing 263 in Mar, 447 in Apr and 301 in May. The largest movement was only 122 E at Worthing on 11 May.

Once again, the declining colony in Chichester Hbr failed to breed. On South Stakes Island the 33 nests, containing 89 eggs on 3 June, were completely washed away during high tides and the single pair on North Stakes Island also failed. There were better fortunes in East Sussex where 335 pairs at Ternery Pool, Rye Hbr, raised 150 young, and 45 pairs at a new colony at Icklesham reared 14 young.

There were 500 feeding on a weedy tide-line at Worthing on 17 July, and at Southwick the roost' counts showed a gradual increase through the autumn, with 1000 on 29 July, 1200 on 24 Aug and 1500 on 4 Sept. The largest counts later in the year were 11,500 roosting at Pagham Hbr on 31 Oct and 13,000 roosting at Bewl Water on 30 Dec.

A single albino individual was recorded at Southwater Country Park on 7 Oct. [JAN]

0590. **COMMON GULL**

Larus canus

Common winter visitor and passage migrant; small numbers summer; bred until 1963.

During the winter, the largest counts were at coastal roosts with 2000 at Pilsey Sands on 15 Jan, 7000 at Camber on 29 Feb and 17,000 between Camber and Rye on 1 Mar. Smaller numbers were recorded inland as shown by the maximum counts of 520 at Pulborough Brooks on 13 Jan and 300 at Bewl Water on 18 Feb. After the large roost-count at Rye in early Mar, other spring groups were unexceptional and included 300 at Pilsey Sands on 11 Mar, 200 at Bewl Water on 14 Mar, 250 roosting at Icklesham on 26 Mar, 955 on the River Adur at Shoreham on 2 Apr and 340,

mainly immatures, at Pagham Hbr on 8 May. Few were seen passing the coast in the spring, with the Mar - May totals being 162 E at Selsey Bill, 106 E at Worthing and 117 E at Glyne Gap, Bexhill.

Three birds, seen nest building at Icklesham on 26 Mar, did not stay, and at Rye Hbr 2 adult pairs were noted in late June. During July, numbers at Pilsey Sands increased from 34 on 8th to 256 on 25th, but thereafter autumn counts throughout the county remained low, the highest being 325 near Cissbury on 20 Oct and 370 roosting in Pagham Hbr on 31 Oct. Larger roosts were noted later, with 3000 at Southwick and 2000 at Pilsey Sands on 16 Nov and 1500 at Bewl Water on 30 Dec. [JAN]

0591. **LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL**

Larus fuscus

Fairly common passage migrant and winter visitor; small numbers (mainly immatures) summer and a few pairs breed.

Although 24 roosted at Stakes Island, Chichester Hbr, on 15 Jan, most of the records from coastal sites early in the year involved small numbers. The highest counts were from inland, with 97 at Warnham Brickworks on 9 Jan and 93 at Warnham MP on 10 Feb.

Spring coastal movements started in Feb as watchers at Glyne Gap, Bexhill, logged 98 E during this month, with a maximum of 21 E on 21 Feb. The same site recorded a total of 46 E in Mar (42 E on 12th), 94 in Apr (maximum 46 E on 7th) and 7 E in May. Fewer were recorded from other sea-watching sites, with 22 E at Worthing on 21 Mar being the only notable record. Elsewhere in the spring, there were 24 at Rye and 30 at Camber on 1 Mar, 56 flew NE over Bewl Water on 21 Mar, 28 at Sheepcote Valley, Brighton, on 6 Apr and 84 at Icklesham on 12 May.

Breeding was confirmed on roof tops in Brighton and central Worthing: adults were regularly seen, near Worthing, at Maybridge and West Durrington throughout the spring. An adult pair were at Rye Hbr on 11 June.

Autumn counts were largest at Rye Hbr, with 140 on 31 July, 200 on 13 Aug and 250 on 3 Sept. Apart from these, the only significant counts were 60 at Pagham Hbr on 8 Sept, 36 at Bignor Hill on 29 Oct and 28 at Pilsey Sands on 14 Dec. [JAN]

0592. **HERRING GULL**

Larus argentatus

Common breeding resident, passage migrant and winter visitor.

Once again, there were no co-ordinated winter counts so the records do not truly reflect the numbers occurring in the winter. The largest counts were 102 at Warnham Brickworks on 9 Jan, 100 at Darwell Res on 21 Jan, 140 at Barcombe Res on 18 Feb and 320 roosting in the Rye Hbr/Camber area on 1 Mar.

At Rye Hbr, a total of 13 pairs nested at Ternery Pool, Long Pit and Castle Water, whilst several nested on buildings in Rye Hbr village. Roof top nesting was only reported from St Leonards, Worthing and Haywards Heath, and a pair nested on a small roundabout in Eastbourne.

There were 325 loafing offshore at Worthing on 7 June and several counts at Pagham Hbr between 19 July and 8 Oct ranged between 205 and 302. There were no large counts at the end of the year.

A leucistic individual was seen on several occasions in Chichester Hbr.

An adult, showing the characteristics of the race *L.a. argentatus*, was seen on the River Adur at Shoreham on 19 Dec (PMB).

The yellow-legged gulls, mainly of the race *L.a. michahellis* and now considered by many to be a separate species, *L. cachinnans*, were recorded in smaller numbers than usual. The following table shows the monthly minimum totals and reveals the peak to be slightly later in the autumn than is usual.

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
5	1	1	-	-	19	7	12	18	49	31	1

The largest counts were 20 on the River Adur at Shoreham on 28 Sept, 45 at Chichester GP on 3 Oct and 31 in Pagham Hbr on 7 Nov. A single at Weir Wood Res on 6 Jan was the only record far inland. [JAN]

0598. **ICELAND GULL**

Larus glaucooides

Rare winter visitor and passage migrant.

There were 4 records, probably involving just 3 individuals. On 3 Mar, one in 1st winter plumage was seen on the beach at Norman's Bay before flying westward towards Langney Point (SWG). One, probably in advanced 1st year plumage, was seen on 25 Mar at both Newhaven Hbr (WRT) and on Seaford beach (BRG). A second-summer individual was seen at Icklesham on 10 May (M S-H) and presumably the same bird roosted at Rye Hbr on 12 May (PMT). [JAN]

0599. **GLAUCOUS GULL**

Larus hyperboreus

Very scarce but regular winter visitor and passage migrant.

During the year, 8, and possibly 9, individuals were recorded and the following table gives the monthly distribution.

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
3	2	1	1	1	-	-	1	2	2	1	1

The regular adult which has frequented Selsey Bill and Pagham Hbr since 1984, was again seen from Jan until 27 Feb, and returned from 31 Aug until Dec. On 17 Jan there were 2 adults and a 1st-year in Pagham Hbr (TJE), and an adult was seen at Brockhurst Wood land-fill site, near Kingsfold, on 1 Feb (ABW). During the spring, one in 2nd-year plumage was seen in Emsworth Channel, before flying over Thorney Deeps on 15 Mar (CBC). A 1st-year was seen during the evening at Icklesham on 13 Apr (SJR, JW), and an adult flew E at Brighton Marina on 1 May (ADW). Apart from the Selsey bird, a single adult was at Shoreham on 28 Sept (SRA), and on 6 Oct an adult was seen in Pagham Hbr and at Thorney Island (RJS), and thus may have involved different birds. [JAN]

0600. **GREAT BLACK-BACKED GULL**

Larus marinus

Common winter visitor and passage migrant; small numbers summer.

The largest counts early in the year were 600 at Pagham Hbr on 1 Jan, 350 at Stakes Island on 9 Jan and 200 at Rye Hbr on 20 Jan. Thereafter, counts were all less than 100 until early July. Regular counts at Pilsley Sands were 22 on 29 Apr, 39 on 30

May, 90 on 13 June and 134 on 7 July. There were 217 in Pagham Hbr on 2 July and a particularly large count of 1100 on 8 Sept. Other significant Sept counts were 128 at Shoreham-by-Sea on 18th, 300 at Camber on 22nd and 300 at Birling Gap on 28th. Only small numbers were recorded in Oct and Nov, but in Dec there were 200 at Stakes Island and 300 on Pilsey Sands on 7th, 360 in Pagham Hbr on 17th and 444 roosting at Glyne Gap on 28th. With the exception of 56 at Chichester GP on 3 Oct and 176 at Arlington Reservoir on 6 Dec, the numbers seen inland were small. [JAN]

0602. **KITTIWAKE**

Rissa tridactyla

Common but localised breeding species; common winter visitor and passage migrant.

Most of the records of this species refer to movements at the coast. The following table of monthly totals for the sites where logs are kept show most were seen moving off East Sussex during the winter months.

Month	Selsey Bill		Worthing		Seaford		Bexhill	
	East	West	East	West	East	West	East	West
Jan	106	10	5	-	219	35	52	1
Feb	2	1	-	-	351	423	35	32
Mar	2	-	5	-	707	64	67	-
Apr	103	4	12	-	nc	nc	36	1
May	44	3	-	12	150	-	35	-
Jun	2	-	-	-	nc	nc	9	4
Jul	4	86	-	-	nc	nc	-	26
Aug	1	21	-	5	nc	nc	2	14
Sept	-	-	4	-	2	1	16	23
Oct	-	-	-	-	9	1	-	-
Nov	104	2	-	-	-	-	3	73
Dec	1	-	32	-	50	2	125	-

The largest movements in the early part of the year were all seen at Seaford, with 65 E on 12 Jan (1 hr), 206 E on 5 Feb (0.8 hr), 370 W on 20 Feb (1 hr) and 500 E on 21 Mar (6 hr). Other sites recorded the best movements later in the year and include 300 E at Brighton Marina in just 5 minutes' watching on 4 Sept, 104 E at Selsey Bill on 18 Nov (5.3 hrs) and 83 E at Glyne Gap, Bexhill, on 25 Dec (2.3 hrs).

There was a further decline in the numbers at the Newhaven colony. A count on 18 July disclosed 214 occupied nests, whilst at Seaford a count of 659 occupied nests on 16 July shows that this colony continues to grow. One at Arlington Res on 22 Sept was the only inland record. [JAN]

0606. **CASPIAN TERN**

Sterna caspia

Rare vagrant.

One W off Brighton on 20 May (DTP) has been accepted by *British Birds*. The 13th county record, it was somewhat galling to local observers that it was seen by a visitor to the county, albeit a very prominent one, strolling along the 'prom' after breakfast! At least he had his binoculars with him! All records fall between late Mar and mid-Sept, with nearly half in Jul. This is the first for May. [RJF]

0611. SANDWICH TERN

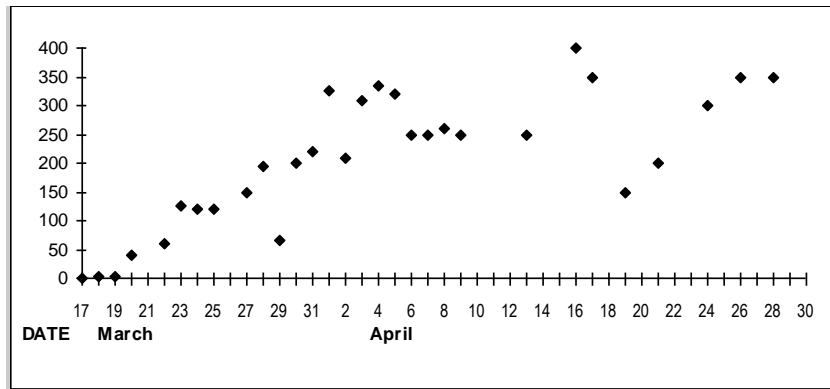
Sterna sandvicensis

Scarce breeding summer visitor and common passage migrant; rarely recorded in winter.

The first birds of the year were noted on 3 Mar, with 2 at Seaford and 1 at Rye Hbr, but the first double-figure count was of 14 at Bexhill on 16th.

Easterly spring passage totals at the main sea watching localities (number of hours watched in brackets) were as follows:

	Mar		Apr		May		Total	Birds/hour
Selsey Bill	183	(63)	1739	(137)	1190	(181)	3112	8.2
Worthing	180	(41)	645	(41)	343	(37)	1168	9.8
Seaford	118	(101)	1467	(133)	1219	(165)	2804	7.0
Bexhill	84	(31)	379	(34)	216	(38)	679	6.6



Numbers of Sandwich Terns at Ternery Pool, Rye Hbr (17 Mar - 30 Apr 1996)

The pre-breeding increase in numbers at Rye Hbr, see graph above, was followed by a poor breeding season. At Ternery Pool, up to 200 pairs were prospecting for most of April, but only 12 nested from 4th May, raising no young. Losses were due to Herring Gulls, but reluctance to nest and inability to defend nests may have been linked to poor food availability (see other nesting tern summaries). The first juvenile was noted at Rye Hbr on 9 Jul (possibly from the nearby colony at Dungeness where the first fledged young were noted on 28 Jun). The post-breeding flock built up rapidly, with 150 roosting at Ternery Pool by late July. Numbers then dropped, before increasing again in mid-August to reach the autumn peak of 180 in early September.

Other large numbers were noted at Pagham: 40 on 16 Jul; 50 on 17th; 90 on 23rd; 150 on 10 Aug; 120 on 13th; 90 on 14th; 135 on 21st; 120 on 21st. The last large count was of 138 at Selsey Bill on 28 Sept, then 24 on 2 Oct and 14 on 3rd. There were single-figure counts along the coast until the last one at Worthing on 28 Oct.

The only inland records were of 1 at Pulborough Brooks on 19 April, 1 at Weir Wood on 13 Sept, and 7 at Bewl Water 28th. [BJY]

0614. ROSEATE TERN

Sterna dougallii

Very scarce passage migrant and non-breeding summer visitor.

Another good year, with records totalling 14 individuals although some duplication is likely. With the exception of 2 singles flying E at Splash Point, Seaford, on 5 May (SD, WRT *et al*), all were recorded in the W of the county. At Selsey Bill there were 1 E and 1 offshore on 1 May (BJC, TJE *et al*); 1 E on 7 May (TJE); 1 offshore on 22 May (TJE, CRJ); 2 E on 6 July (IJW), and 1 E on 16 July (TJE). Four were seen resting with other terns on a sand bar off East Head on 30 May (TJE), and 1 was off Pilsley Island on 21 June (CBC). [PJ]

0615. COMMON TERN

Sterna hirundo

Scarce breeding summer visitor and common passage migrant.

The first arrival was at Rye Harbour and Northpoint GP on 6th, 2 offshore at Bexhill on 8th, and 4 at Weir Wood Res on 10th. Double-figure counts were noted from 12th, with 11 at Chichester GP, 38 at Glyne Gap, Bexhill, on 14th, and 60 at Rye Hbr on 16th, 100 on 17th and 350 on 26th.

Breeding records received were: 25-30 pairs nested on rafts at New Lake, Chichester GP (46 chicks were ringed); 3 pairs at Icklesham (2 pairs nested and 1 chick was reared); about 80 pairs nested at Rye Hbr (raising less than 20 young — the first chick was noted on 19 June, whereas in the previous three years it was noted on 2nd, 8th and 3rd). On 17th July, many late chicks were killed by a Fox that reached the islands because of very low water levels. The start of nesting was later than usual and may have been linked to poor food availability — food brought to chicks included many unusual items - small brown fish, small flatfish and shrimps.

Single birds in first year, *portlandica*, plumage were noted at Rye Hbr LNR from 24 June until 17 July.

In July, there were 36 at Pagham Hbr on 2nd, 40 on 17th, 54 at Pilsley Island on 7th, and 60 on 16th.

During the autumn passage, the maximum counts were: 150 on 24 Aug at Rye Hbr, and on the same date 255 W at Glyne Gap, Bexhill.

The last records of the year were 1 at Pagham Hbr on 22 Oct, 1 at Thorney Deepes on 30 Oct, and then 4 at Barcombe Res on 17 Nov. [BJY]

(See also Common / Arctic Tern.)

0616. ARCTIC TERN

Sterna paradisaea

Uncertain, but probably a fairly common spring and autumn passage migrant.

There were 39 records this year, many more than the 12 of 1995. The first was of 2 on 14 Apr at Selsey Bill with 18 Common Terns, then 3 at Seaford on 16th, 1 at Bexhill on 18th, 2 at Seaford on 20th and 1 at Pagham on 24th. During May, there were high counts of 20 and 18 from Brighton Marina on 1st and 19th, and 10 at Southwick Canal on 1st. There was a scatter of records along the coast, but also 5 at Arlington Res on 5th and 3 at Weir Wood Res, also on 5th. The last spring record was of 2 at Seaford on 22nd.

In July, there was 1 at Pagham 5th-18th, and 1 at Bexhill on 27th. In August, there were 6 at Pagham on 10th, 11 at Worthing on 24th and 1 at Bexhill on 24 and 27th.

During September, there were a very few individuals noted along the coast, but also 1 at Weir Wood Res on 21st and 29th. The last record of the year was of 1 at Bewl Water on 5 Nov, after south-westerly gales. [BJY]

COMMON / ARCTIC TERN

Sea watching produced many records of uncertain identity with birds passing offshore at distance. In spring, the passage began on 21 Mar with 1 at Worthing Beach and 1 at Selsey Bill, then 1 at Seaford on 24th and 26th.

The eastward passage is summarised below (number of hours watched in brackets).

	Apr		May		Total	Birds/Hour
Selsey Bill	2311	(137)	4008	(181)	6319	19.9
Worthing	356	(41)	837	(37)	1193	15.3
Seaford	2436	(133)	6013	(165)	8449	28.4
Bexhill	-	-	358	(38)	358	9.4

Spring daily counts of 100+ occurred from 14 Apr until 22 May, with the maximum of 998 E in 10 hours at Splash Point, Seaford, on 13 May.

Autumn, offshore, movement was typically light and less directional than in Spring. Starting in late Jul, numbers increased through Aug and then declined in Sept.

The monthly directional counts are summarised below:

	Jul		Aug		Sept	
	W	E	W	E	W	E
Selsey Bill	94		92	72	3	5
Worthing	65	7	13	26	4	18
Seaford	-	-	21	10	15	1

The last record was of 1 at Splash Point on 13 Oct. [BJY]

0624. LITTLE TERN

Sterna albifrons

Scarce breeding summer visitor and fairly common passage migrant.

First recorded on the early date of 2 Apr, with 2 at Galley Hill, Bexhill. Then, on 10th, 1 at Selsey Bill, 5 at Seaford, 1 at Rye Harbour and 3 at Bexhill. There was 1 at Pulborough Brooks on 12th — the first record for the RSPB reserve. The only other inland record was of 1 at Warnham Mill Pond on 9 June.

Easterly spring-passage totals at the main sea watching localities (number of hours watched in brackets) were as follows:

	Apr		May		Total	Birds/Hour
Selsey Bill	233	(137)	696	(181)	929	2.92
Worthing	32	(41)	62	(37)	94	1.2
Seaford	68	(133)	121	(165)	189	0.6
Bexhill	21	(34)	110	(38)	131	1.8

The largest movement noted was on 1 May, with 100E in 14 hours at Selsey Bill, but the sea-watching sites only recorded 25+ daily from 16 April until 21 May.

In the breeding season, there were birds present at North Stakes Island. At Rye Hbr LNR, about 30 pairs nested, but no young were seen. There were many nesting

failures and, perhaps, desertions, despite there being few ground predators. No hatched chicks were seen. The nesting was late and most nests had gone by 21st June. The last displaying birds were noted on the very early date of 4th July. The post-breeding flock of adults at Rye Harbour in July was of 30 on 3rd, 52 on 7th, 24 on 10th and 2 on 15th.

There was a bird with unusual plumage, presumed to be an immature, at Rye Hbr on 5 Jul. It had an all-black bill, grey rump, grey-black cap, dark legs and extensive white forehead.

At Pett Level there was an adult feeding a juvenile on 18 Aug. Autumn passage was typically light and there was the usual large number at Pilsley Sands, with 72 on the very early date of 4 Aug, then 140 on 3rd, 128 on 4th, and 73 on 18th. There were just 5 records in Sept, the last being at Pilsley Sands on 28th. [BJY]

0627. **BLACK TERN**

Chlidonias hybridus

Fairly common passage migrant.

The first returning spring birds were seen in April at Arlington Res, with 1 on 13th, and another at Selsey Bill on 16th. There were 5 at Seaford on 16th, and then there was a good series of 82 records until 1 at Rye Hbr on 2 Jun.

The eastward passage during Apr and May is summarised below, (number of hours watched in brackets):

	Apr		May		Total	Birds/Hour
Selsey Bill	26	(137)	54	(181)	80	0.3
Worthing	-	-	5	(37)	5	0.14
Seaford	24	(133)	110	(165)	134	0.45
Bexhill	-	-	21	(38)	21	0.55

The first returning autumn bird was noted at Selsey Bill on 9 Jul, then another at Pagham on 18th and 1 at Chichester Hbr on 23rd. The next was not until a single bird was seen at Bexhill on 11 Aug, followed by 44 records of between 1-5, until the last 2 at Bexhill on 30 Sept. [BJY]

0636. **RAZORBILL**

Alca torda

Scarce winter visitor and passage migrant; formerly bred.

The approximate monthly totals, which include sea passage, were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
1996	30	90	89	32	8	6	1	-	-	16	2	15
1980-95	95	56	44	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

The total for the year of 289 is a remarkably large figure when compared with most years and is accounted for by the unusually large numbers which were recorded in Feb and Mar, almost double the figure for the same months in the 16 years 1980-95. Totals include 4 found dead, one oiled and dead, and 1 oiled. [DEGC]

0634. **GUILLEMOT***Uria aalge***Fairly common winter visitor and passage migrant; formerly bred.**

The approximate monthly totals, which include those birds on sea passage, were as follows:

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
77	255	62	57	42	9	29	5	5	7	9	115

These figures in total show twice the number recorded in each of the last two years and include 28 casualties, 16 occurring in Feb. Of these, 6 were dead, 3 were oiled and dead and 19 were oiled but alive, 2 being caught and taken to the RSPCA. [DEGC]

0638. **BLACK GUILLEMOT***Cephus grylle***Rare vagrant.**

The individual at Brighton Marina from 23 Dec 1995 (*SxBR* 48:92, but found by IL, not observers stated) remained intermittently to 2 Mar (MO), while one flew E off Rye Hbr on 5 May (MSH). These two are the first records since 1985. The former is the first to be recorded in Feb and Mar, while the latter is the first for May, leaving Jun as the only month with no records. One was reported off Dungeness, Kent, a day or two after the Rye occurrence. [RJF]

AUK SPECIES

Totals at the main sea-watching localities were as follows:

Direction of Movement	Jan-Feb		Mar-May		Aug-Oct		Nov-Dec	
	E	W	E	W	E	W	E	W
Selsey Bill	-	3	9	59	-	2	-	10
Worthing	17	2	3	4	-	2	2	3
Seaford	1727	247	1634	129	49	-	1059	58

The movement E off Seaford was even larger than last year, particularly in Feb (1111), Mar (977) and again in Dec (998). The highest daily count was on 5 Feb, with 294 E and 4 W in just 0.75 hrs. [DEGC]

0647. **LITTLE AUK***Alle alle***Very scarce but increasingly regular autumn passage migrant and winter visitor.**

The 3rd best year on record, with a total of 34 birds recorded. A corpse found at Pilsy Island on 4 Feb (CBC, MAC) was considered to be about a month old. One at Pagham Lagoon on 20 Feb (TJE) was just 4 days short of being the latest winter record for the county.

In the latter part of the year, the species was recorded between 30 Oct and 15 Dec as follows:

30 Oct: Singles on the R. Arun at Littlehampton (PTP, SJP) and flying W off

- Church Norton and Selsey Bill (both TJE).
- 31 Oct: 3 W at Selsey Bill (TJE).
- 14 Nov: 21 W at Selsey Bill between 10.50 and 13.50 hrs (TJE), and 1 W off Church Norton at 14.30 hrs (AH).
- 16 Nov: 2 (1 of which was found dead) at Brighton Marina (TJW). The dead bird had reportedly been seen alive the previous day.
- 21 Nov: 1 W off Church Norton (AH).
- 15 Dec: 1 W at Selsey Bill (BJC).

Selsey Bill in late autumn is clearly the place to see this diminutive species in Sussex!
[PJ]

0654. **PUFFIN**

Fratercula arctica

Very scarce visitor, most frequently recorded in spring.

Singles flew E at Splash Point, Seaford, on 2 May (SD, WRT) and at Selsey Bill on 15 May (TJE). Of 62 recorded in the county since 1962, 32 have been in May and 10 were at Selsey Bill. [PJ]

0665. **FERAL ROCK DOVE**

Columba livia

Common Resident.

As usual, there was only a handful of reports, none of which covered breeding, so once again it is difficult to assess population trends. A regular farmland flock at Yapton which numbered 70 on 10 Jan declined due to shooting down to only 30 on 11 Nov. A flock of 100 was seen feeding on stubble at Lancing Clump on 16 Oct. The remainder of reports were nearly all from urban locations during the autumn period, with 66 at East Grinstead on 9 Sept, 530 in Sheepcote Valley, Brighton, on 25 Sept, 150 on rooftops at Crawley on 26 Nov, and 100 at The Pells, Lewes, the following day. [RK]

0668. **STOCK DOVE**

Columba oenas

Common resident and possible winter visitor.

There were flocks of 55 at Broomhill Level on 17 Jan, 40 at Weir Wood Res on 18 Feb, and 80 at Paghams Hbr on 13 Mar, but the largest of the year was 120 at Kilnwood, near Faygate, on 9 Mar.

The results of regular breeding surveys on page ?? suggest a favourable season, as do the increased number of breeding reports from around the county. One pair nested on cliffs at Ovingdean, and there were three breeding pairs in Hotham Park, Bognor Regis, and four in Hollingbury Camp. At Standen Wood, Weir Wood Res, six nestboxes had a total of 20 eggs, from which 14 young hatched and 11 fledged. At RSPB Pulborough Brooks two pairs fledged 7 young.

In the latter part of the year, the largest flocks were 28 on stubble at Lancing Clump on 25 Oct, 105 at West Wittering on 30 Nov, and 70 at Shoreham on 15 Dec. [RK]

0670. **WOODPIGEON**

Columba palumbus

Abundant resident and winter visitor.

There were few counts in the early months of 1996. At Chelwood Gate, Ashdown Forest, the Jan/Feb count was an approximation at 4500, and the Jan/Feb maxima for Warnham Mill Pond were 180 and 200 respectively. The only other record of note in January was of 700 at The Warren, Balcombe.

Breeding records came from only 9 sites, covering approximately 170 pairs. These reports came from areas where regular annual counts are made.

Autumn movements were noted throughout October, culminating in a westerly flow of 13,300 at Pagham on 30th. Smaller numbers were reported at other sites in the west on the same date. Further east, there were 1000 at Beachy Head and 387 in two hours at Glyne Gap, Bexhill, also on 30 Oct. Movements continued into November, with counts of 2230 west at Pagham Harbour on 1 Nov, 1810 west on 5th and 2300 west on 7th. Signs of westerly movement continued through to the middle of the month. At Pagham Information Centre 4500 flew from a roost on 5 Dec. [DEC]

0684. **COLLARED DOVE**

Streptopelia decaocto

Very common resident.

A pair were noted copulating on 15 Jan at Hailsham, and a bird was seen carrying nesting material at Sharpthorne on 6 February. The highest count during the first months of 1996 was of 82 at Chalder Farm, Sidlesham. The results of breeding surveys can be found on page..... In August, there were 400 at Marsh Farm, Sidlesham. This was the highest count of the year, with no counts in Nov/Dec exceeding 70 birds. [DEC]

0687. **TURTLE DOVE**

Streptopelia turtur

Common, but probably declining, summer visitor and passage migrant.

The first record of the year was of a single bird seen at Selsey Bill on 16 Apr. At Shermanbury, 2 were seen on 27 Apr, where breeding was subsequently confirmed. Birds were present at Icklesham through the summer, with a May maximum of 10 on 11th. An approximate total of 20 breeding pairs was reported from this locality, probably the best total at Icklesham since observations started in 1986. A Bewl Water breeding survey showed 12 pairs present. Breeding was confirmed at Lullington Heath where there were 5 pairs. At Marsh Farm, Sidlesham, 18 birds were present on 5 June, and by July this figure had risen to 21, with at least 4 pairs with 2 young each. Five pairs were at Thorney Deeps during the breeding season. Various locations in Ashdown Forest reported probable breeding of about 20 pairs. Drayton, Chichester GP, recorded 2 pairs with young, and more than ten other records of probable breeding were submitted. The number of submissions was higher than most recent years, reflecting increased observer activity.

The largest September group was of 10 birds, seen at the Beach Fields, Rye Harbour SSSI, on 26th. This number showed the continuing downward trend to smaller and smaller flocks recorded in the autumn since the late 1980s. The last record was of a single bird at Nook Meadows, Rye Harbour SSSI, on 16 Oct. [DEC]

0712. *Cat. C* **RING-NECKED PARAKEET***Psittacula krameri***Very scarce introduced breeding resident.**

Although now well established in parts of south-east England, the species remains very scarce in Sussex. The only breeding record was of a pair at the University of Sussex, Falmer. Reports of up to 3 at this site in Jan, Feb and Dec may well have been the same birds as 3 at Hollingbury Camp on 24 Jan, where 5 were present on 17 Sept. The only other records were of 6 at Gatwick Airport on 5 Mar, 2 at Three Bridges on 12 Aug and Selsey Bill on 29 Oct, and singles at Chichester on 2 Mar, Sidlesham on 6 June, Aldingbourne Rife on 10 June and Beachy Head on 18 Aug.

See also Alexandrine Parakeet on page..... [PJ]

0724. **CUCKOO***Cuculus canorus***Fairly common summer visitor.**

The first reached Bewl Water on 9 Apr, and on 14th there were 3 at Pulborough Brooks and singles at four other sites. About 60 more were noted, most singly, up to 9 May. Maximum counts in May and June included 10 territories at Bewl Water, 8 pairs at Thorney Island, 8 males at Rye Hbr and Icklesham, 5 at Pulborough Brooks. Between early July and the last record, at Hodcombe, Beachy Head, on 21 Sept, about 40 were noted, many identified as juveniles. [KN]

0735. **BARN OWL***Tyto alba***Scarce breeding resident.**

Approximate monthly totals were:

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
28	17	12	12	8	18	25	10	4	12	20	12

Most reports were of birds hunting. The total number of sightings touched 178 and birds were seen in every month of the year, with January, July and November showing peak numbers.

Breeding was proven at 11 sites, spread throughout the county. Altogether more than 20 young were found. Another 4 sites had adults carrying food and it can be safely assumed that more young were present.

This species has had a hard time due to modern farming techniques, the demolition or conversion of old barns into modern dwellings and fast motor traffic. Attempts to balance population losses with releases into the wild of birds reared under controlled conditions and the provision of nest boxes has helped in some areas. However, a 15% drop in suitable sites recorded in Sussex shows that there is some way to go. In some areas birds were noted hunting over set-aside fields, and at Shoreham Airport, a more natural habitat with presumably higher rodent activity. [JTAB]

0757. **LITTLE OWL***Athene noctua***Fairly common resident.**

Approximate monthly counts were as follows:

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
6	9	21	17	17	27	9	11	13	26	88	8

There were approximately 200 reports from 65 locations, compared with around 270 and 61 respectively in 1995. Key areas were mainly coastal, with Bewl Water and Pulborough Brooks (RSPB) a close second.

Breeding records suggest 19 pairs, but only 5 young birds were confirmed. However, it would be reasonable to consider that this figure is an underestimate. Reports were from nearly all areas of the county, but, as in 1995, most came from the western half. One small, well-watched, area in the west of the county confirmed the presence of 8 pairs in the breeding season. One road death, at Barcombe, was reported. [JTAB]

0761. **TAWNY OWL***Strix aluco***Fairly common resident.**

Monthly totals were as follows:

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
12	11	13	15	59	42	15	10	17	28	10	17

A widely distributed species in Sussex, although most of the records came from the west and central areas, with fewer from the extreme east. Approximately 250 birds were recorded, of which at least 20% were calling birds.

Breeding was confirmed from 15 sites and 29 young were seen. A survey taken during the breeding season produced records of 5 pairs in a small area in the north-east of the county. Six birds were reported as road casualties. Compared with 1995, records came from 74 sites, an increase of 17. [JTAB]

0767. **LONG-EARED OWL***Asio otis***Rare resident and very scarce passage migrant and winter visitor.**

Monthly totals were as follows:

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Oct	Nov
6	2	1	1	4	5	4	1

First recorded in Jan with 3 birds in the extreme east of the county, plus 3 more in the Brighton area. February records came again from the east, and another record originated from the same area in Mar. The Apr bird appeared at Selsey Bill. May produced 4 in mid-Sussex where young were seen. The 5 records for June in mid and east Sussex included newly-fledged birds and 2 young.

There were no further records until Oct when 2 were seen in that well-watched patch in the east. Another was found at Beachy Head, and 1 flew out of a Little Egret

roost in the west, on the Sussex/Hampshire border. The year finished with 1 seen in car headlights on a roadside post at Steyning on 22 Nov.

Overall there was an increase of 4 birds compared with 1995. [JTAB]

0768. **SHORT-EARED OWL**

Asio flammeus

Scarce winter visitor and passage migrant. Has bred.

Approximate monthly counts were as follows:

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
7	16	13	1	2	0	1	1	8	9	13	4

Almost all records were from coastal locations, exceptions being 1 in Mar at Pulborough Brooks (RSPB) and 1 in Aug at Hellingly. Hotspot for the first winter period was Thorney Island with 4 and 5 in both Feb and Mar (CBC). Willingdon, Shinewater Marsh, had 3 present all winter. Pagham was next with 2 reported on various dates in Jan/Feb/Mar. Apart from 2 at Thorney Island in Nov/Dec, all other records were for single birds. Most of the records for Apr to Oct would be migrants. The main wintering population is present in the early months of the year.

Seventy-five birds were reported for 1996 compared with 74 for 1995. No breeding reported this year. [JTAB]

0778. **NIGHTJAR**

Caprimulgus europaeus

Fairly common summer visitor rarely seen on migration.

The first coastal immigrant was on 28 Apr at Selsey Bill, followed by 2 at Icklesham on 25 May. Inland, the first heard was on 5 May at Parham.

Breeding season counts revealed 73 churring birds or pairs in 43 localities on Ashdown Forest, including 6 nests. There were 11 records from 7 other localities in East Sussex, and 56 from 20 sites in West Sussex, giving a probable total of 140 pairs in the whole county. This figure represents a considerable increase over the count for 1995, and compares well with the 148 recorded in the survey of 1991.

An early south-bound migrant was flushed at Sidlesham on 30 Jul and another was found at Icklesham on 7 Sept, the last record of the year. [JB]

0795. **SWIFT**

Apus apus

Common summer visitor and passage migrant.

First recorded from RSPB Pulborough Brooks on 14 Apr. Small numbers were seen during the rest of the month, rising to a maximum of 400 on the 30th at Hollingbury Camp. May saw some significant passage, with 2000 birds recorded at Rye LNR on the 16th, and 1000 on the same day at Selsey Bill. Jun produced some more high counts, with 2000 at Barcombe Res on 23rd and 2000 at Pagham Hbr on 29th.

Very little information on breeding birds was received. Pairs and groups of birds were recorded from a number of localities, but with no indication of breeding success.

Numbers dropped dramatically by the end of Aug, with the odd bird being noted until the middle of Oct. The last record was of a single bird at Pilsey Sands on the 14th. [RP]

0798. **ALPINE SWIFT**

Apus melba

Rare vagrant.

One, seen flying around the old cement works by the A283 at Upper Beeding on the evening of 19 May, rather surprisingly flew out of a high, empty window of the western-most building and away high to SE at 06.20 hrs the following morning (NB *et al*). It has been accepted by *British Birds* and is the 30th to be recorded in the county. All have been between late Mar and mid-Oct, with 10 in May and 6 in Aug. This is the first to be recorded on more than one day, although individuals W over Beachy Head and E past Portobello on consecutive days in early May 1981 were possibly the same. [RJF]

0831. **KINGFISHER**

Alcedo atthis

Fairly common resident and probable winter visitor.

Observations during the winter months were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	.....	Nov	Dec
Number of birds	36	15	.....	31	23
Number of inland sites	10	2	.....	5	5
Number of coastal sites	13	9	.....	12	13

Numbers were generally less than last year — more in keeping with those of 1994. Sightings as usual were mainly of single birds, but there were 3 on Chichester GP on 21 Jan, and also at Apuldram on 24th. In Nov, 3 were seen together at Piddinghoe, near Newhaven, on 16th.

No full breeding reports were received from any location. One pair was reported from both Warnham Mill Pond and Pett, Royal Military Canal, and 2 pairs each at Bewl Water and Elms Farm, Icklesham. A newly-fledged youngster was seen at Shopwyke, Chichester. [DEGC]

0846. **HOOPOE**

Upupa epops

Very scarce spring and autumn passage migrant; has bred.

Six birds were recorded, the best showing since 1993. The first was seen at Pagham Hbr on 18 Apr (BJ, CMJ). One at Beachy Head on 20 Apr (ADW) may have been the same as that seen at Lullington Heath the following day (ME). The last spring record was of 1 at Fairlight on 27 and 28 Apr (PMT).

In the autumn, one was seen daily at Slinfold between 3 and 8 Sept (MAH) and another was at Icklesham on 15 Sept (RBRG). [SJP]

0848. **WRYNECK**

Jynx torquilla

Very scarce passage migrant; has bred.

A further increase in sightings over recent years, with a minimum of 16 birds reported. Again, only one bird was seen in spring, at Aldwick on 23 Apr.

Records in autumn commenced with 1 at Arlington Res on 30 Aug, followed by another at Hastings on 3 Sept. Two juveniles were trapped and ringed at Icklesham on 6 Sept, with singles sighted on 7 Sept at Mill Hill, Shoreham, and at Chat Vale, Hodcombe, and Birling Gap in the Beachy Head area. It is possible that these last three reports may relate to the same bird which remained in the vicinity until the next day. Also on 8 Sept, 1 was seen on the ground in a garden at Wisley Estate, Steyning. One bird appeared at the North Wall, Pagham, on 10 Sept, with 1 on 11th at Climping Gap and another at Graffham which remained until 16th. A single was noted in the Pevensey Bay area on 13 Sept, followed by 1 at Sheepcote Valley, Brighton, on 19 Sept which stayed until 1 Oct. An individual found at Halland, also on 19 Sept, had been caught by a cat, but was released alive, though minus tail. On 22 Sept, 1 was seen near the dam at Bewl Water and another was present at Galley Hill, Bexhill, from 25-28 Sept. [JESC]

0856. **GREEN WOODPECKER**

Picus viridis

Fairly common resident.

A total of 140 records were received from 76 sites across the county, with reports from 47 of the sites being in the breeding season, a creditable increase in reporting over that in recent years. CBCs and other surveys recorded pairs at Thorney Island (2); Marsh Farm, Yapton; Barns Copse, Binstead; Pulborough Brooks (3); Hollingbury Camp (2); Pippingford Park, Ashdown (5); Lullington Heath (2); Grantleys Farm, Maynards Green; and Bewl Water (20). Breeding was also confirmed at Stansted Forest; Goring Gap; Standen Wood, Weirwood; and Kidbrooke Wood, Ashdown Forest. Territorial males were reported from 14 other locations and juveniles were seen at Littleworth, Partridge Green and Beach Field, Rye Hbr. [LM]

0876. **GREAT SPOTTED WOODPECKER**

Dendrocopus major

Common resident.

The earliest territorial activity reported was at Press Ridge Warren, Ashdown on 15 Feb. CBCs and other surveys recorded pairs at Hotham Park, Bognor Regis; Barns Copse, Binstead; Pippingford Park, Ashdown (9); Chiddinglye Farm, W Hoathly (2); Grantleys Farm, Maynards Green (3); and Bewl Water (6). Breeding was confirmed at 15 other sites, with pairs present at a further 11 locations and territorial males at 7. Juveniles were observed at Stansted Forest; Littleworth, Partridge Green; Shoreham Sanctuary; Sharpethorne; Blackwell, East Grinstead; Cooden Beach GC; Fairlight; and Beach Field, Rye Hbr. [LM]

0887. **LESSER SPOTTED WOODPECKER**

Dendrocopus minor

Fairly common resident.

Records were received from 43 sites across the county (20 of them in the breeding season). Pairs or territorial males were reported from: Cowdray Park, Midhurst (1 seen carrying food); Burton Mill Pond LNR; Ebernoe Common; Sandgate Park, Storrington; Cattlestone Farm, West Chiltington; Weir Wood Res; Newick; Ashdown Forest Centre; Millbrook, Ashdown Forest; Pipers Farm, E Hoathly; Bewl Water; and Elms Farm, Icklesham.

A total of 68 records was received for this year; all records, especially of territorial behaviour or confirmed breeding, are required for this species. [LM]

0974. **WOODLARK**

Lullula arborea

Very scarce resident and passage migrant.

In Jan, 38 were recorded from three localities in West Sussex in sheltered inland areas. Of these, 25 were seen on Woolbeding Common on 4th and 25th. In Feb, numbers in these areas were reduced to 19, plus one on Thorney Island. Two were heard singing. By Mar, birds were appearing in scattered localities, a few on the coast and some at potential breeding sites. Some birds were in song and there was a number of pairs in evidence. In Apr, 9 nests and several pairs with fledglings were found, and by the end of the month 38 pairs had been located in West Sussex. In May, a further seven territories were found there. In East Sussex, one was singing on Ashdown Forest in Jun and Jul. On 23 Jun, 2 parties, of eight and four birds, were reported from Stedham Common, and on 23 Sept, 12 were seen together at Liphook Chapel Common.

From early Oct until the end of Dec, 50 were recorded inland, including 13 from the Trotton Common/Gatehouse Farm area in the period 23 Oct until 2 Nov. Twelve were noted near the coast. [JB]

0976. **SKYLARK**

Alauda arvensis

Common resident, passage migrant and winter visitor.

There were 26 records of flocks in Jan and Feb, the largest being 100 at Broomhill Level on 17 Jan, 100 at Pagham Hbr on 25th, 100 at Rye Hbr LNR on 26th, 120 at Ifield on 27th, 279 at Thorney Island on 7 Feb and 100 at Southbourne on 8th. Early singing birds were at Elms Farm, Icklesham, from 10 Jan, at Bewl Water on 14 Jan and another on Ashdown Forest on 2 Feb, the main song period beginning at the end of that month. Movements were recorded by seawatchers during Mar from Selsey Bill, Seaford and Bexhill, totalling 19 birds moving N and 46 E. A flock of 120 was seen at Earnley on 23 Mar, although others were already establishing territories earlier in the month.

Records of 229 singing males were obtained from 23 sites. This represents an increase from 1995, but the bad news is that the estimate from Ashdown Forest, which was the main site in 1995, is down from 86 singing males to 43 and that Iping Common had no breeding birds, probably for the first time. The reasons for this decline are not obvious, but the increasing pressure from leisure activities, particularly dog walking on Ashdown Forest, probably plays a part. Pulborough Brooks RSPB Reserve is now the main site with 48 pairs, followed by Rye Hbr with 25. It may be

significant that both are reserves with limited access. Downland sites are also important, with a total of 50 singing males reported.

In the second winter period, the first reported flock, of 122, was found at Sompting Abbots on 3 Oct. There were 200 at Beachy Head on 7 Oct and about 150 on linseed at Ifield on 6 Dec. Movements were noted from the coast during the same period. At Pagham Hbr, 50 passed W on 7/8 Oct, 88 E on 10/11 Oct and 44 S on 12 Oct. Fifteen came in off the sea at Thorney Island on 14 Oct, heading NE. At Bexhill, 24 were seen passing W during Nov and a further 22 in the same direction on 31 Dec. [RTP]

0978. **SHORE LARK**

Eremophila alpestris

Rare winter visitor.

Two were seen along the western side of Pagham Hbr from 9-13 Nov (TJE *et al*), although could be elusive at times. Despite having been recorded in consecutive years, this species appears to be becoming no more frequent. This is only the 3rd record since 1990 and only the 8th since 1980. [RJF]

0981. **SAND MARTIN**

Riparia riparia

Fairly common summer visitor and very common passage migrant.

The first sighting was of a singleton in the Lower Cuckmere Valley on 10 Mar, 8 days ahead of the next two at RSPB Pulborough Brooks. From then on, birds were recorded in increasing numbers at many sites, principally near the coast, during the rest of the month. Double figures were first achieved at Pett Level with 10 on 24 Mar, but next day 100 were counted at RSPB Pulborough Brooks, rising to 150 on 28th and 200 on 30th. Castle Water, Rye LNR, also attracted significant numbers, with 150, 250 and 300 respectively on 28, 29 and 31 Mar.

Passage continued through Apr, with most of the larger counts being in the west of the county, especially at Ivy Lake, Chichester GP, where 600 were present on 29th and 700 on 30th. Three hundred were at Thorney Deeps on 16 Apr, and 200 at both RSPB Pulborough Brooks and Ferry Fields, Pagham, on 15 Apr. A gathering of 200 hundred was the max at Elms Farm, Icklesham, and at Castle Water, Rye LNR, on 16 and 23 Apr respectively.

A passage movement of 350 was noted at Bewl Water on 3 May. Counts in excess of 400 were made at Ivy Lake, Chichester GP, on 4 days in May and June, but if they were breeding birds, where were their nesting sites? Breeding was reported only from Sandgate Park, Storrington, and Stedham Common, with no more than 50 occupied nests at either location.

Return passage became noticeable in early July, with 27 W at Sidlesham Ferry on 7th and 35 E over Beach Tern Pool, Rye LNR, on 10th. Five hundred were seen at Church Norton Shingle Spit on 18 July and 2000 were counted by the same observer over Pagham Hbr, North Wall, the same day. At nearby Selsey Bill, however, only 78 were seen in July, all on 14th. Some large gatherings in Aug included 1500 at Long Pit, Rye SSSI, on 18th and similarly at Ivy Lake, Chichester GP, on 29th. Eight hundred, part of a movement W of hirundines, were recorded at Exceat Bridge on 31st. Five hundred birds were counted at Arlington Res on 15 and 31 Aug, and at

Church Norton on 28 Aug. But all of these numbers paled beside the 6000 roosting at Elms Farm, Icklesham, on 30 Aug.

Movements continued through Sept, with Elms Farm again having the highest daily total, 5000. However, inland waters, too, attracted many birds - 3500 at Weir Wood Res on 9 Sept, 1500 at Bewl Water on 13 Sept and 1000 at Barcombe Res, where the 1996 autumn passage was described as very strong, on 9, 14 and 19 Sept. Observers at coastal locations, too, noted some large movements: 1000, among many hirundines, passed Belle Tout on 11 Sept and 1000 were also over Castle Water, Rye LNR, on 22 Sept. Few sightings were reported for Oct, with the only noteworthy counts being 84 at Cobnor Farm on 2nd and 30 in Cuckmere Haven on 5th.

A total of 13,017 were trapped at Elms Farm, Icklesham, in 1996, the second best year ever (SJR). [MJM]

0982. **CRAG MARTIN**

Ptyonoprogne rupestris

Very rare vagrant.

1995: One was seen over the cliff edge, east of Shooter's Bottom, Beachy Head, on 8 Oct (DAP, CAW), but regrettably moved off S after only 10 mins. It has been accepted by *British Birds* and is the 2nd county and 4th British record. The first in the county was also at Beachy Head, on 9 Jul 1988. It stayed marginally longer (30 mins) but was still only seen by one observer (*SxBR* 42:74-5). [RJF]

0992. **SWALLOW**

Hirundo rustica

Common summer visitor and abundant passage migrant.

1995: The following breeding record was omitted from the last report: in a large barn on a farm at Keymer, 16 broods produced 67 pulli and, in addition, there were 3 more nests which could not be reached. In 1994, the same barn held 17 nests and the 14 accessible broods yielded 52 pulli. [RTP]

1996: Three records, from Shoreham Hbr, Warnham MP and Bewl Water, on 23 Mar, were the earliest of the year, but no significant numbers were noted until towards the middle of Apr when 50 were seen at RSPB Pulborough Brooks on 12th, 99 at Selsey Bill on 14th and 300 at Ferry Fields, Pagham on 15th. Thereafter, reports of sizeable passage came from a number of sites: 400 were seen at Ivy Lake, Chichester GP, and 200 at Weir Wood Res on 22 Apr, whilst next day 500 were over Castle Water, Rye LNR, and 200 each at Westhampnett and Ivy Lake. Two large movements were noted over reservoirs in May, with 500 at Arlington on 3rd and 1300 at Bewl Water on 16th, a day of cold easterly winds.

Few breeding records were received: one territory was established at Maynards Green by 24 Apr. Thirteen pairs were present at Bewl Water, 1 pair raised 3 young at RSPB Pulborough Brooks, and fledged young were seen at West Hoathly, Rusper and Holmbush Forest. At three sites in mid-Sussex 97 young were fledged.

Autumn passage began in earnest in the third week of Aug, with 500 seen roosting on wires at Birling Gap on 16th and 1300 passing Hollingbury Camp on 19th. Four hundred were at Church Norton on 28 Aug, and next day a further 1400 were seen at Hollingbury Camp. Sea-watchers were rewarded with 294 E and 2 W in two hours at

Worthing Beach on 29th. A pure albino bird was at Barcombe Res from 19 Aug to 1 Sept and this may have been the same bird seen at Berwick Station on 27 Aug.

The coast and high ground were the best vantage points for seeing the many passage movements reported in Sept. Among these, in the first half of the month, were 1900 at Hollingbury Camp (2nd); 1200 E at Worthing Beach in 1.3 hrs, 1923 past the Climping-Littlehampton Gap and 15,000 at Hodcombe, Beachy Head (7th); 4000 off Pagham Hbr and 10,000 at Elms Farm, Icklesham (11th); 3810 at Sompting Downs & Abbots (12th); and 50,000 (10,000 an hour moving E) over Pett Pools on 15th. Passage continued in the second half of Sept, with 30,000 E in an all-day movement passing Chat Vale, Beachy Head (16th); 1400 at Hollingbury Camp (18th); 4958 over Worthing Beach (24th); 4000 S at Church Norton (26th); and a final count of 1300 at Hollingbury Camp on 29th. A leucistic bird, part of a large movement of hirundines, was watched for some minutes at Church Norton on 16 Sept.

Numbers diminished in Oct, but nevertheless there were some significant counts. Four hundred and fifty W at Church Norton and 500 at Maynards Green on 1 Oct; 428 at Sompting Downs & Abbots on 2 Oct; and 435 W at Church Norton on 7 Oct; while at Glyne Gap, Bexhil, 65 W and 407 E were noted in 2.75 hrs on 10 Oct. A few stragglers were seen in Nov, notably 6 at Birling Gap on 10th, with the final record coming from Church Norton on 22nd. [MJM]

1001. HOUSE MARTIN

Delichon urbica

Common summer visitor and abundant passage migrant.

Small numbers were recorded from 24 Mar to 15 Apr when 50 were at Ferry Fields, Pagham, but it was late Apr and into May before significant numbers were seen. Two hundred at Weir Wood Res on 22 Apr were followed by 150 next day at the Severals, Church Norton, and 300 at Ivy Lake, Chichester GP, on 29 Apr. This last site attracted many birds in May, 300 on 16th, 930 on 18th and 500 on 28th being reported. Bewl Water also had very good numbers, with 200, 500 and 1000 on 3, 16, and 19 May respectively: on the last of those days easterly winds were blowing.

Some breeding records were received. At West Itchenor, 2 birds were seen checking house fronts on 17 Apr, whilst at Glyne Gap, Bexhill, 8 birds were collecting mud off the beach on 27th. Twenty-five pairs were present during a breeding survey at Bewl Water. Three pairs bred at Chiddingly Farm, West Hoathly, 26 nests were counted at Maynards Green and 9 pairs bred at Vinehall, near Mountfield. A total of 31 nests were at Knepp Castle, 15 at Brantridge Park, Balcombe. Seven nests on Sheffield Park Station were occupied all season, despite the constant passage of Bluebell Railway steam trains within a close distance. At least 6 nests were on houses on the Folders Lane estate in Burgess Hill, where some 70 birds were seen clinging to the sides of houses in Kingsway on 15 Aug.

Autumn passage started rather spasmodically, with 400 birds passing Hollingbury Camp on 29 July, but it was 17 Aug before another large gathering was reported when 1000 were roosting on wires at Birling Gap. Over Hollingbury Camp on 21 Aug a count revealed 738 birds, and 700 were at Bewl Water next day. The last day of Aug was a day of many sightings, including 900 W at the Climping - Littlehampton Gap; 2000 at the Severals, Church Norton; 1000 at Whitbread Hollow, Beachy Head; and 3500 W, in an all-day movement at nearby Chat Vale. Of interest is the fact that among the next group of larger sightings were some of birds moving E: 3000 E at Beach Field, Rye SSSI, and 9000, direction unspecified, at Hodcombe, Beachy Head,

on 8 Sept; 1500 E at Church Norton on 9 Sept; 861 E at the Climping - Littlehampton Gap on 11 Sept, when also 6000 were off Pagham Hbr and 10,000 were seen from Seaford Head. An observer at Belle Tout on this day saw but 1000 moving E as part of a hirundine movement. A total of 2700 were over Hollingbury Camp on 12 Sept and 1800 were there on 15th. The total count at Worthing Beach on 24 Sept was 9576, on which day 3818 passed Lancing Clump. Further inland, 2500 moved W at Bewl Water on 28 Sept.

Apart from 5000 at Church Norton on 2 Oct, numbers in that month were measured only in hundreds: 341 at Sompting, also on 2 Oct, 300 S at Bewl Water on 3 Oct, 500 at RSPB Pulborough Brooks on 7 Oct and 560 W at Church Norton on 8 Oct. Thereafter numbers rapidly declined, with the final sighting for the year at Pagham Beach on 12 Nov. [MJM]

1002. **RICHARD'S PIPIT**

Anthus novaeseelandiae

Rare vagrant.

One in dunes at East Head, West Wittering, on 28 Nov (TJE) had been reported in the same area on 19th. Although this species has been recorded in each of the last 4 years, this is only the 5th record in the 1990s, following 7 during the 1980s. It is the latest record since one in the Ouse valley on 12 Dec 1946, although one was seen at Hove Lagoon from 25-29 Jan 1956 (*SxBR* 9:25). [RJF]

1005. **TAWNY PIPIT**

Anthus campestris

Very scarce visitor.

1994: An adult in a 'set aside' field at Birling Gap on 29 May (RHC, AQ *et al*) was considered to be different to that present on 23rd (*SxBR* 47:74) and takes the year's total to 4.

1995: One on the cliff edge to E of Beachy Head Hotel on 10 Sep (EGK, GEK) tied in nicely with the year's two other records: at Rye Hbr on 10 Sep and near Littlehampton on 11 Sep.

1996: No records have been received, making this the first blank year since 1962! A total of 22 were recorded during 1990-95, 3 in May, 2 in late Aug, 16 in Sep and 1 in Oct. [RJF]

1009. **TREE PIPIT**

Anthus trivialis

Fairly common but local summer visitor and passage migrant.

The first two arrivals were noted on Ashdown Forest on 5 Apr, and the last arrival of the spring was a bird seen at Seaford on 30th of the month. This year, records of pairs and singing males were similar to those of 1995: 81 from Ashdown Forest, 24 from Pippingford Park and 71 from the rest of the county.

Return migration began in late Jul with birds seen at Cissbury Ring, and the last record was from a shingle roost at Church Norton on 16 Oct. In total, 569 migrants were recorded, exceeding those of 1995 and were spread fairly evenly over the period,

apart from 118 reported from the Beachy Head - Birling Gap area on 21 Sept, and 29 from Hodcombe on 22nd. [JB]

1011. MEADOW PIPIT

Anthus pratensis

Locally common resident, very common passage migrant, winter visitor.

There were eight reports of groups of more than 10 in Jan and in Feb. By late Feb, birds were already moving through, with 29 over Glyne Gap on 20th of the month. Passage started in earnest on 10 Mar, with 57 (55 of them flying east) at Glyne Gap, followed by 120, also east there, on 12 Mar, when 32 flew north over Selsey Bill. On 19 Mar, 590 passed Selsey moving north, and on 23 Mar, 500 came in off the sea at Ore and 100 were at Hollingbury Camp. The next day saw 114 north at Climping and 900 north at Selsey. Passage ended much earlier than in 1995, around 8 – 9 Apr (when 24 moved mainly east at Glyne Gap, and 80 were at Selsey Bill). Spring passage coincided in turn with continued wintering: 90 roosting on Duncton Common on 17 Mar may have included some passage birds. Some inland counts – e.g., the 36 at Pulborough Brooks on 4 Apr and the 36 by the Mole, at Gatwick, on 13 Apr – were presumably resting migrants.

Breeding preparation was noted on Ashdown Forest from 15 Mar, where around 10 pairs were recorded in the breeding season. There were 20 territories on Camber Dunes and 8 at the Pontin's Site at Selsey Bill. Further records came from Icklesham, Hollingbury Camp, Bewl Water, Willingdon and Coldwaltham Brooks: presumably this species is widely but largely thinly distributed, both on the Downs and in the valleys and around water.

Scattered congregations were seen from late July: 80 at Pilsey Island on 21st and 60 there on the 29th; and 20 at Cissbury Camp on 18 Aug. But regular double-figure counts only began in mid-Sept. These came from the shore (e.g., Worthing Beach), the Downs (e.g., Lancing Clump), and inland, from Bewl Water, where there were 50 on 17 Sept. Mass passage began abruptly on 21 Sept, when the 11 flying west at Glyne Gap were dwarfed by at least 550 moving east in three and a quarter hours. On the 22nd, 200 were noted as 'coming off sea moving east' at Church Norton, 300 were in Whitbread Hollow, Beachy Head, and about 600 flew east in 5 hours at Glyne Gap. The next day saw only double-figure counts in the west of the county, but 300 were recorded flying east at Beachy Head in 3 hours. On that day, too, steady eastward passage was reported from Rye.

There was some respite in the last week of Sept, when the maximum was only 250 (at Beachy Head on the 28th), but a count of 111 at Cissbury Ring on 30 Sept was notable. Icklesham's maximum – 1000 on 30 Sept – stands out. There were counts in excess of 100 on each of the first seven days of Oct, led by 1300 west at Church Norton on 1st, when 500 were on Beeding Hill. The numbers on the Downs from the Adur to Cissbury were considerable: 512 were at Sompting and 212 at Lancing on 2 Oct. Movement thereafter was erratic: 130 west at Church Norton on 6 Oct, then 115 east on 10 Oct.

Presumably wintering birds were present by early Oct in the interior of the county: at Heyshott Common, Duncton Common (110 on 21 Oct), Bewl Water and Weir Wood Res. There were eight double-figure counts in Dec, and the year ended with 76 flying west at Glyne Gap on New Year's Eve.

The origin – and destination – of the multitude of autumn passage birds remains unclear: likewise for those which winter at, e.g., Hurstpierpoint where there

were 20 on Christmas Day. Spring passage, essentially cross-Channel and northward, seems straightforward. Autumn movements are largely coastal: there is sufficient evidence of eastward movement to qualify the comment in *Birds of Sussex*, p.399, that autumn movement is predominantly westerly. Inland sites in Hampshire report substantial southerly movements of the kind that are not apparent – or have not been noted – in Sussex. But, as in Sussex, coastal movements are ‘to the west or east, into the prevailing wind, with passage south out to sea rarely recorded’ (*Birds of Hampshire*, p.343). In Kent, ‘the southerly movement over inland localities is quite widespread ... Visible migration is generally north at Sandwich Bay and north-west at Dungeness’ (*Birds of Kent*, p.284-285) The maxima involved in Kent seem lower than in Sussex. At Capel, only just north of the Sussex border, in Surrey, autumn movement is both to the south (200+, 22 – 23 Sept 1993, coinciding with large numbers in Sussex) and to the north/north east (75, 18 Sept 1994) (*Surrey Bird Reports, 1993, 1994*). [CB]

1014. ROCK PIPIT

Anthus petrosus

Very scarce resident, fairly common passage migrant and winter visitor. Rare away from the coast.

Recorded from traditional sites in good numbers at both ends of the year, but largely neglected in the breeding season.

A total of 47 birds were seen at 13 localities in Jan, with 7 at Newhaven on 2nd and 16 around Thorney Island on 21st. By the second half of March, pairs had apparently settled in to territories at heavily disturbed sites in Brighton Marina and at Rottingdean: a juvenile was seen at Brighton Marina in July.

Two were at Pagham Hbr on 2 Aug, the only record submitted for that month. A number of singles were seen moving along the coast in the autumn, for example, east at Glyne Gap on 21 Sept, and west at Camber Sands on 26 Sept. Twelve were on Newhaven, West Pier, on 1 Nov, but only a single remained on 17th. Thorney Island held 9 on 15 Nov and 8 were recorded at Shoreham Hbr on 27th. The Thorney Island number had reduced to 4 on 26 Dec while the Shoreham Hbr count remained at 8 on 27th.

Given that this species appears to be as much at home around Chichester and Pagham Hbrs as it is at Saltdean or Newhaven, a co-ordinated winter count would be of interest.

There were three records of single birds showing the characteristics of the Scandinavian race *A. p. littoralis*: on the R. Adur at Steyning (13 Mar, ARK), at Cuckmere Haven (17 Mar, NJT) and at Elms Farm, Icklesham, on 22 Mar and 7 Apr (SJR, RGH). [CB]

1014b. SCANDINAVIAN ROCK PIPIT

Anthus petrosus littoralis

1994: Ten individuals on the beach at Shoreham Fort on 27 Feb (RJT) showed the characteristics of the Fenno-Scandinavian race *A. p. littoralis*, colloquially known as Scandinavian Rock Pipit. They were accompanied by 2 nominate Rock Pipits but were not seen on earlier, or subsequent, visits, suggesting a movement of some kind.

This record corrects those previously published from this site at this time (*SxBR* 47:76 & 48:106).

1995: A one-legged individual at Widewater on 11 Mar (RJF) showed the characteristics of the race *A. p. Littoralis*, as did a different, two-legged, bird at Shoreham Fort, also on 11th (RJF). The former bird had not been seen on regular visits to this site during the winter, although had it two legs, then it could readily have been overlooked. The latter bird was with 8 'Rock Pipits' feeding on the tideline. This is a much larger group than is normal at this site in winter and the possibility that some of these were also *littoralis*, but undetectable in less advanced plumage, could not be excluded.

1996: An individual on the Upper Adur Levels on 13 Mar (ARK) showed the characteristics of the Scandinavian race *A. p. littoralis*, as did one at Cuckmere Haven on 17 Mar (NJT). The only other records during the 1990s have been at Newhaven on 24 Mar 1991 and 12 Sep 1992. That virtually all records have been during late Feb-mid Mar may suggest a small but probably overlooked early spring passage (as suggested by 1994 and 1995 records) although winter records, when individuals have no trace of summer plumage, are even more likely to go unnoticed, possibly masking the true status of this race. Walpole-Bond considered this race to occur annually between the latter half of Feb and late Apr, a status these records would seem to confirm. Records from Widewater at this time during 1990-92, some published as Water Pipit, are currently under investigation. [RJF]

1015. **WATER PIPIT**

Anthus spinoletta

Scarce winter visitor and passage migrant.

1992: One at Widewater on 28 Mar (*SxBR* 45:62) has been withdrawn by the observer who now believes it more likely to have been a 'Scandinavian Rock Pipit', *A. p. littoralis*. This, and other sightings of 'Water Pipits', at Widewater during Jan-Apr 1990 and in Mar 1992, should be reviewed with a view to considering the possibility that they also were '*littoralis*'. Any comments on these birds by those that saw them would be most welcomed. [RJF].

1995: Combe Haven, the county's premier site for this species, held birds from the start of the year, to the late date of 3 May. Six were present on 2 Jan; 16 – 17 were estimated from 19 to 24 Mar, with 8 remaining on 25 Mar. There were 7 on 26 Dec (RBW). Conditions at this site, and the mobility of the birds, often consorting with Meadow Pipits, make it difficult to arrive at definitive counts. 1996 records for this site are not yet to hand.

1996: Recorded at eleven locations (a welcome increase) from 1 Jan to 24 Apr, and at five locations from 5 Nov to 30 Dec. The absence of Feb reports is striking.

Month	Jan	Mar	Apr	Nov	Dec
Reports	6	2	5	12	5
No of Birds	5	3	6	prob 13	5

Most records were of single birds, though 7 were at Thorney SF on 28 Nov, of which only two remained on 1 Dec (CBC). One at the North Wall, Pagham Hbr, on 5 Nov was joined by two others in mid-month, with two remaining in early Dec (BFF). Three of the four Apr records (NB, CH, PHEL) were of birds in summer plumage.

With occasional exceptions, the Water Pipit remains an obdurately coastal bird in Sussex – the Upper Adur Levels was the furthest inland record this year. *The Birds of Hampshire* (1993), points to a decline of inland wintering birds in that county after the mid-1980s. But good numbers winter at Stoke Water Meadows, near Guildford, in Surrey, so perhaps any corresponding habitat in the north-west of Sussex would be worth checking. [CB]

1017. **YELLOW WAGTAIL**

Motacilla flava

Fairly common but localised summer visitor and common passage migrant.

Recorded from 10 Mar at Seaford, the county's earliest date, previously 12 Mar 1990, until 31 Oct (three sites), with one very late bird at Ferring on 23 Nov. This is the county's latest date, previously 21 Nov 1926, though there have been four winter records.

There were several double-figure counts in the spring – 13 at Glyne Gap on 14 Apr, 15 at Chat Vale, Beachy Head, on 20th, and as many as 52 on Pett Level on 26th. This last count appears to be the highest in spring since 171 at Barcombe Res on 23 – 24 Apr 1989. Spring passage ended in mid-May, with 9 at Selsey on 11th, and finally 2 at Hollingbury GC on 23rd.

Breeding season records suggest some recovery for this perhaps beleaguered species. However, maybe closer observer attention or perhaps cyclical changes are responsible for this impression – *cf. Birds of Sussex*, p.402 – 3). There were 10 pairs on Glynde Level and 28 displaying males at Rye Harbour. Only 3 pairs, however, bred at Pulborough.

The first autumn movement saw one west over Glyne Gap on 21 July. Rye set the standard for the autumn: there were 500, out of the blue, on 29 Aug, and 400 the next day, when 102 were at the North Wall of Pagham Hbr. The 31st saw 238 at Chat Vale, Beachy Head. There were triple-figure counts, nine in all, on each day from 28 Aug to 2 Sept and again on 7, 8, 17 and 21 Sept. October saw 20 records and 83 bird days (*cf. ca* 200 in 1995, 23 in 1994, 88 in 1993) from 13 sites. This year, there were few autumn records from north of the Downs, other than at Barcombe – where a stoat eyed a party of 37 on 31 Aug, and where the maximum was 50 on 2 Sept, and at Arlington Res (40 also on 2 Sept). One would think from the rarity of these inland records other than at the reservoirs, that the species' migration strategy must be meticulously carried out. The number of birds on autumn passage recorded from north of the Downs in 1995 seems to have been exceptional.

Blue-headed Wagtail: there were six records of seven birds showing the characteristics of the nominate race, *M. f. flava*. The first, on 26 Apr, was associating with Yellow Wagtails at Selsey Bill (AH). Four followed in mid-May, three of them at Arlington Res, where there was one on the 15th and two on the 18th (WRT, SL), with the final bird at Scotney on 17 May (AJH, BJH). Late summer/returning birds were found at Horse Eye Level on 14 July, (AD and IJW) and at Rye Hbr on 4 Aug (AD and IJW). [CB]

1019. **GREY WAGTAIL**

Motacilla cinerea

Fairly common resident, passage migrant and winter visitor.

There were records from 20 sites in Jan and 17 in Feb (*cf.* 18 and 13 respectively in 1995). Most records were of singles, but 6 roosted in the Fishbourne reed-bed (*cf.* Pied Wagtail) and 4 were in the River Lavant marsh on 24 Jan with 4 on Thorney Island on 31st. Only Glyne Gap recorded any movement in the first four months, and the maximum was only 3 on 10 Mar.

Breeding reports came from typical sites in the interior of the county, from Midhurst and Burton Mill Pond in the west to Ashburnham Place and Darwell Res (three pairs) in the east.

Post-breeding dispersal was recorded from July, and the first coastal bird flew west at Glyne Gap on 21st. Subsequent coastal birds were at Shoreham Sanctuary on 17 Aug ('earlier than usual here') and Pett on 19 Aug. Birds trickled along the coast and over the Downs throughout the last three months of the year. Double-figure counts came from Barcombe (15) and the North Wall of Pagham Hbr (20) on 1 Sept; from Hodcombe, Beachy Head, (18 on 21 Sept) and from Sompting Downs (12 on 2 Oct). Nine roosted in willows at Ifield MP on 10 Nov. December birds were reported from the coast and the interior, but only from 10 sites (*cf.* 13 in 1995). A female at East Grinstead fed on birdseed in the snow on 27 Dec. [CB]

1020. PIED WAGTAIL

Motacilla alba

Common resident, passage migrant and winter visitor.

Many double-figure counts were received for the first three months of the year. The highest roost counts were of 204 at a reed bed in Fishbourne on 12 Jan and 520 there on 7 Feb. A gathering of 200 were at East Hoathly on 1 Feb, 260 in central Eastbourne on 7th and over 300 in Stanmer Park in early Mar. Movement was noted from coastal stations after mid-March, and continued into mid-April. A range of breeding reports were received: 19 pairs were present around Bewl Water. Each year comes news of a particular and interesting breeding site: in 1996, the wall of a sheep dip on Pett Level proved congenial quarters for one pair. Post-breeding dispersal brought 94 to Denne Park, Horsham, on the very early date of 24 July and 44 to the Bewl Water Dam on 23 Aug. Small numbers moved along the coast from 31 Aug, but there was only one three-figure count this year – of 100 at Ferring on 6 Oct. Three large roosts were reported at the end of the year: at St. Leonard's on Sea (200 on 30 Nov), Apuldram (140 on 17 Dec) and at Sussex University where there were 200 on 20 Dec. Presumably this reflected a marginal shift in the loyalty of the early year Stanmer Park roost.

White Wagtail (*M. a. alba*): At least 40 birds (1995: 32, 1994: 28, 1993: 35) were seen in a good spring passage, from 11 Feb (an early date, at Coldwaltham) to 13 May (Exceat Bridge in the Cuckmere). Among them were 6 together at Rye Harbour, Castle Water, on 1 Apr and 5 on Laughton Level on 16th. One summering bird was reported from Pulborough Brooks on 19 June. Autumn passage was, characteristically, very thin – one which stayed at Weir Wood Res from 24 Sept to 1 Oct, and 2 at Sompting on 2 Oct were the sum total, except for an unprecedented (or at least, not previously reported) total of 20 which moved through Icklesham. [CB]

1048. WAXWING

Bombycilla garrulus

A very scarce winter visitor.

In some years, Sussex sees no Waxwings at all and in others, the numbers are in single figures. We had recorded none in the county since the 6 recorded in the winter of 1991/92. When irruptions occur, the totals are usually modest, as with the two most recent of 200 in the winter of 1965/66 and 50 for 1970/71. It is therefore a real highlight to report the happenings for this year.

A major irruption occurred in late autumn in Scandinavia, with birds moving eastwards across the North Sea. There were about 80 records in Dec 1995, mostly in East Anglia, then, in Jan 1996, around 6000 arrived, increasing to possibly 10,000 over the next two months, mainly along north-eastern coastal counties. (*British Birds* 89: 156/260/584)

In Sussex, it all started in Jan, with 12 at Rye on 10th, followed by 5 at Bexhill on 26th and 2 at both Lewes and Hastings on 31st. By mid-Feb, records had come from a further 14 sites, mostly in small numbers, but notably at Seaford with 20 on 6th, rising to 43 on 8th, but, strangely, none thereafter. There were 25 at Ashdown Forest on 13th. In the second half of the month, the numbers really began to build up, with records coming from a further 13 sites, including 30 at Bexhill on 16th, 50 at Hastings and 20 at Crowborough, both on 26th. There were 17 at Crawley on 27th and, finally, a massive 150 at East Grinstead on 29th. Birds were reported feeding on *Cotoneaster*, Crab Apples, and even Guelder Roses, and two were seen to catch gnats. Nearly all records came from east of a line from Crawley to Brighton, with two exceptions being 12 at Rustington on 16 Feb and 1 at Fernhurst on 22nd. The only bird to be seen at Brighton was found dead on the road on 5 Feb.

Flocks stayed into Mar at many places and fresh records came from a further 21 sites, making a total of at least 52 locations. Many were to be seen in parks and other open spaces, but others invaded private gardens, housing estates and even Tescos at St Leonards!

On 2nd, there were 27 at Forest Row and 27 at Ashdown Forest on 3rd. The huge flock of 150 was still at East Grinstead on 7th, reducing dramatically to 12 by 14th. Burgess Hill recorded 25 on 28th and 32 on 30th. On 31st, there were 31 at Bexhill.

By Apr, birds had disappeared from all but four areas. At Burgess Hill, numbers actually increased to 45 on 4th, to 80 on 7th, and then reduced to 11 by 11th. Similarly, at Bexhill, numbers also increased to 53 on 7th, before declining to 19 on 14th.

To see really large flocks, the area south of East Grinstead was the place to be, although this was restricted to just two weeks. However, the area around Hastings deserves special mention for consistent numbers, beginning with 2 early birds at the end of Jan and continuing with flocks of from 30 to 50 and more, until almost the last record, of 9 birds, on 15 Apr. The last Apr record was, in fact, of a single bird at Birches Industrial Estate, East Grinstead, on 19th.

A single bird was recorded on 21 Nov at Chelwood Vachery, Ashdown, and although one was said to have been found at Hastings on 16 Dec, no record was received and no others seen up to the end of the year.

The total numbers involved in the irruption in the early part of the year are considered to be at least 1200. [DEGC]

1066. **WREN**

Troglodytes troglodytes

Abundant resident.

It is regrettable that, for such a common species, records were received from only 18 sites. Such a paucity of records inhibits any chances of monitoring the well-being of such a species when other common farmland and urban species are known to be suffering significant reductions in numbers.

Breeding was confirmed at 7 sites, was probable at 2 others and suspected in at least 2 others. Breeding surveys found 72 pairs at Hollingbury Camp, 26 pairs at Marsh Farm Yapton, 24 pairs at Maynards Green, 14 pairs at Barns Copse, Binstead, 12 pairs at Lullington Heath, 8 pairs at Scobells Farm, Barcombe, and was also confirmed at Hotham Park, Bognor Regis. Breeding was probable at Bewl Water with 107 pairs and at Chiddinglye Farm, W Hoathly, with 27 pairs. Breeding densities estimated at 4 of these sites varied from 0.39 to 0.88 territories per ha., average 0.48. Productivity was not recorded at any. Breeding was suspected at Darwell Res where there were 15 singing males on 21 Apr and at Pevensy, Bridge Levels, from 10 singing males on 15 Apr. Maximum counts at other sites were of 11 which went to roost at dusk in a nesting box at Blackwell, East Grinstead, on 27 Jan when there was snow on the ground. There were 10 at Whitbread Hollow, Beachy Head, on 22 Aug and again on 17 Oct, while the total count for the year at Elms Farm, Icklesham, was 345.

At Cissbury Ring, 43 birds, a reduction of 20 on the previous year's total, were ringed during the season. Usually 1 - 3 birds were ringed most sessions, but with a maximum of 11 on 18 Aug. [JAH]

1084. **DUNNOCK**

Prunella modularis

Abundant resident.

Records were received from only 14 sites, despite this being an abundant resident species. Such a paucity of information seriously inhibits the ability to monitor the true status of this species.

Breeding was confirmed at 10 sites and was probable at 2 others. Breeding surveys found 58 pairs at Hollingbury Camp, 34 pairs at Lullington Heath, 22 pairs at Marsh Farm, Yapton, 12 pairs at RSPB Pulborough Brooks, 6 pairs at Grantley's Farm, Maynards Green, 4 pairs at Scobells Farm, Barcombe, 3 pairs at Barns Copse, Binstead, 8 singing birds at Darwell Res on 10 Mar and a juvenile at Littleworth, Partridge Green. Breeding was probable at Bewl Water with 84 pairs and at Chiddinglye Farm, W Hoathly, with 28 pairs. Breeding densities estimated at four of the above sites varied from 0.19 to 0.45 pairs/ha., average 0.37. Productivity was not recorded at any. A total for the year of 266, fewer than in 1995, was counted at Elms Farm, Icklesham.

There were no records from ringing activities at Cissbury Ring. [JAH]

1099. **ROBIN**

Erithacus rubecula

Abundant resident, passage migrant and winter visitor.

Records were received from only 18 sites, despite this being an abundant resident species. Such a paucity of information seriously inhibits the ability to monitor the true status of this species.

Breeding was confirmed at 9 sites and was probable at two others. Breeding surveys found 126 pairs at Hollingbury Camp, 49 pairs at Lullington Heath, 43 pairs at Maynards Green, 22 pairs at Barns Copse, Binstead and also at Marsh Farm, Yapton, 8 pairs at Scobells Farm, Barcombe, 1 pair at Littleworth, Partridge Green, and at Darwell Res there were 31 singing males on 10 Mar. Breeding was probable at Bewl Water with 136 pairs and at Chiddinglye Farm, W Hoathly, with 43 pairs. Breeding densities estimated at four of the above sites varied from 0.3 to 1.4 pairs/ha., average 0.61. Productivity was not recorded at any. Maximum counts at other sites were of a total for the year of 402 at Elms Farm, Icklesham (the third best year since 1986), and 50 at Whitbread Hollow, Beachy Head, on both 24 Sept and 6 Oct.

At Cissbury Ring, 34 birds, a reduction of 18 on the previous year's total, were ringed during the season. Usually, 1 - 3 were ringed most sessions, but with a maximum of 10 on 24 May. [JAH]

1104. NIGHTINGALE

Luscinia megarhynchos

Fairly common summer visitor and infrequently seen passage migrant.

The first birds were recorded at Selsey Bill and Thorney Deeps on 11 Apr: this date, a few days later than the past two years, is slightly earlier than the average for the period 1962-93 (James (Ed), 1996). There were records from 3 further sites on 15 Apr and thereafter the species was heard daily, with 62 being recorded from 35 sites by the end of the month. Maximum numbers in Apr were 5 at Pulborough Brooks and Plumpton on 20 Apr, 4 at Hurst Green on 21 Apr and 6 at Cattlestone Farm, West Chiltington, on 28 Apr. By the end of June, a further 28 had been noted from an additional 9 sites. At Pulborough Brooks, there were 8 singing males in mid-May. In all, this species was recorded from 26 tetrads in West Sussex and 17 in East Sussex.

Observers at Icklesham recorded an 'average year' with 17 being trapped and with 1 - 2 birds recorded on 12 days in Aug. At Beachy Head, however, the records prompted a comment of 'a poor year for this species' as 1 - 2 were recorded on seven dates between 28 July and 19 Aug. Elsewhere, the species was scarce: none were trapped at Cissbury, one was at Church Norton on 18 Aug and 2 at Sheepcote Valley, Brighton, on 30 Aug. The last recorded was a single bird at Cow Gap, Beachy Head, on 7 Sept. [JAN]

1106. BLUETHROAT

Luscinia svecica

Very scarce spring and autumn visitor.

One was recorded in spring (the first since 1991) and two in autumn. All were adult males: at Cuckmere Haven on 23 Mar (NJT, WRT *et al*); Shooters Bottom, Beachy Head, on 15 Sep (AFB, SJB *et al*) and trapped at Icklesham on 21 Sep (RBRG). The Mar individual, the first in that month and the earliest county record by just over a week, is also the first record of the 'white-spotted' race, *L. s. cyanecuta*, since Sept 1968. That at Icklesham is the 9th to be trapped there since 1988. Records in the 1990s are averaging just under two a year. [RJF]

1121. BLACK REDSTART

Phoenicurus ochruros

Rare resident, fairly common passage migrant and scarce winter visitor.

Approximate monthly totals:

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
12	3	75	40	-	-	-	1	3	25	25	22

These monthly totals almost certainly include some overlap where there are obvious wintering birds: Brighton Marina, and the Glyne Gap/Galley Hill area of Bexhill. Splash Point, Seaford, and Selsey seemed to be the main wintering locations in 1996. The sightings in the early part of the year carry over the good totals from the end of 1995.

A pair was noted at Cuckmere Haven on 23 Mar and on the next day 6 were recorded, including 3 males and 2 females. Also on 24 Mar, a pair was seen at Rye Harbour Village. Passage at Selsey Bill produced a monthly March total of 20 sightings, with a maximum of 7 on 26th. In April, the monthly total of 5 counted were singles only. There was no evidence of breeding and as can be seen from the monthly totals the summer months produced no records until the single immature male at Nook Meadows, Rye Harbour SSSI, on 13 Aug.

Mainly coastal sites produced the Oct-Dec sightings (see table above). There were 5 individuals at Southwick Canal on 14 Dec. Regular reports from Brighton Marina, Shoreham Harbour, and Glyne Gap, Bexhill, suggested that birds would be remaining at these sites during the 1996-97 winter. [DEC]

1122. **REDSTART**

Phoenicurus phoenicurus

Scarce summer visitor and fairly common passage migrant.

The first of the year's records is of 4 birds at Hollingbury Camp on 2 Apr, followed by a continuous stream of arrivals at the coast until 12 May, peaking during the middle of Apr, with 22 at Selsey Bill on 12th, and again with 25 on 16th.

During the breeding season, there were 14 territories or singing males on Ashdown Forest and 25 in Pippingford Park. There were no other records from East Sussex and only 9 from the west.

Autumn departure was first noted on 12 Aug, with 1 at Pagham Hbr, soon followed by small numbers almost every day along the coastal strip and tailing off to 1 on Plumpton Plain on 7 Oct. Peak figures in the autumn exodus were 11 at Lancing Clump on 27 Aug, 25 at Chat Vale, Beachy Head, on 31st and 20 there on 1 Sept. [JB]

1137. **WHINCHAT**

Saxicola rubetra

Rare summer visitor and fairly common passage migrant.

Recorded from 15 Apr (Pulborough Brooks and Ashdown Forest) to 20 May, and from 18 July (Pagham) to 29 Oct (Newmarket Hill). There were two mid-summer records: Hollingbury Camp (5 June) and Ambersham Common (7 June), but no evidence of breeding.

Spring passage was most evident at Selsey, with double-figure counts on 27 Apr (10), 11th (21 at the Bill, with up to a further 15 in the area) and 14 May (10). There were no other counts above 8, but the reported total of 174 birds was much higher

than in recent years (1993: 120, 1994: 66, 1995: 87). The great majority of records were from the coast or Downs. There were two records from Ashdown Forest, and both were early – 15 and 25 Apr.

There were 9 double-figure counts in Aug (maximum 30, Combe Haven, on 30th), and 15 in Sept (maximum 27, Thorney Island on 2nd, and Sheepcote Valley, on 3rd). The number recorded was lower than in recent years: 347 bird/days in August and 660 in Sept with, in addition, birds at Icklesham on 15 days in Aug (maximum 12 on 24th.) and on 21 days in Sept (maximum 20 on 7th) There were 48 bird/days in Oct. [CB]

1138. **STONECHAT**

Saxicola torquata

Scarce resident and partial migrant.

There were 44 reports of between 60 and 65 birds from 33 localities in January (*cf.* only 17 sites in 1995). Numbers, sites and reports were fewer in February. These early-year records were spread across the county. Twelve at Thorney Island (6 males and 6 females) on 4 Jan and 6 at Pannel Sewer, Pett, on 21st were the maxima. Birds were reported all along the coast, from Chichester Hbr and Pagham through Widewater to Glyne Gap and Rye: that was to be expected. There were singles, or twos, or pairs, on the Downs (e.g., Hollingbury Camp, Steep Down at Lancing), in the valley gaps (e.g., at Tarring Neville) and well inland (e.g., Henfield Levels, Partridge Green, Pulborough Brooks, Weir Wood Res, Ifield and Bewl Water, with a few on Ashdown Forest).

There was little visible spring passage, though one at Goring Gap on 3 May was considered 'unusual'. Most spring records came from Ashdown Forest, where there were small gatherings prior to breeding (e.g., 7 at Coleman's Hatch on 23 Mar), as well as pairs on territory. The western commons – Stedham, Chapel, Ambersham, Duncton and Iping, held a number of pairs and there were four pairs at both Heyshott and Woolbeding. The Iping birds were seen to be harassed by a Dartford Warbler on 9 May. A few took up territories along the coast – Thorney Island, Climping, Newhaven Tide Mills, Combe Haven, and at Camber. Two pairs were on the Downs at Chiseldown, East Dean, on 16 Apr, and a pair were seen with three young at West Dean on 6 June. There may have been two pairs at Handcross.

Post-breeding dispersal saw birds reaching the coast from mid-July. Four juveniles were at the North Wall, Pagham Hbr, on 18th and 2 birds were at Combe Haven on 20 July. The major concentrations – of *ca.*20 birds – were at Mill Hill, Shoreham, on 7 Sept and at Beachy Head on 16th – 17th. Some remained on the Downs until late in the year: a family party of 5 was in West Dean Woods on 10 Oct and 2 were on Stedham Common on 6 Dec. But by then, most birds were in characteristic small groups along the coast – numbers and sites were probably lower than in 1995, but the pattern was similar. [CB]

1146. **WHEATEAR**

Oenanthe oenanthe

Very scarce breeding summer visitor and common passage migrant.

The first returning birds were noted in March at Climping, with 2 there on 4th. The next was not until 10th, a single bird at Bexhill, and then 2 at Brighton Marina on

11th. There were many coastal records of between 1 and 6 birds until 22nd, but on 23rd many large counts were made: 110 at Worthing; 52 between Climping and Littlehampton Gap; 25 at Selsey Bill; 40 at Rye Hbr; 47 at Sompting Brooks; and 20 at Goring. The largest spring count was of 195 at Selsey Bill on 27th. During April, there was another influx, with high counts on 9th: 11 at Saltdean; 22 at Pagham; 20 at South Lancing; 75 at Goring Gap; and 20 at Bexhill.

However, in May there were mainly scattered singles remaining, and only a very few pairs. A pair was recorded at Newhaven Tide Mills (later seen with young); and there were 8 pairs at Rye Hbr which had good breeding success.

The autumn passage started with 1 at Pilsey Island on 27 Jul, followed by numerous records from other sites. The largest counts were: 81 at Pagham on 13 Aug; 50 at Rye Hbr on 17th; 70 at Birling Gap, also on 17th; 110 at Pagham on 27th; and 55 at Chat Vale, Beachy Head, on 31st. The last double-figure counts were made at several sites on 11 Sept, and the last 2 were noted on 21 Oct at Pett Level. In November there was 1 at Church Norton on 4th and one at Cissbury Ring on 10th. [BJY]

1162. **ROCK THRUSH**

Monticola saxatilis

Very rare vagrant.

An adult female was seen in a large clearing at an undisclosed inland locality on 19-20 May. This record has been accepted by *British Birds*, but with no details of the location or of the two observers forthcoming (for apparently very sound, but undisclosed, reasons), it is, at best, of only limited value.

This species was on the county list on the strength of an immature male and an immature female, shot at Pett on consecutive days in early Sept 1911. These records were deleted as 'Hastings Rarities' (*British Birds* 55:283-384) but, in its current form, this occurrence is a very unsatisfactory replacement (as an addition to the county avifauna) and it is hoped that circumstances will allow fuller, more meaningful, details to be published at a later date. [RJF]

1186. **RING OUZEL**

Turdus torquatus

Passage migrant, scarce in spring, often fairly common but local in autumn.

The records of 24 birds in spring and 125 in autumn were less than the averages for the last 10 years of 31 and 176 respectively. The long-term averages (1962-1993) were 20 and 138. The approximate monthly totals were as follows:

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
-	1	8	15	-	-	-	-	91	29	5	-

There was an early record of a male at Lancing on 24 Feb. The Mar records were of singles at the Cuckmere on 22nd and 24th; Pagham Hbr on 23rd; Selsey on 29th and 30th; Littlehampton on 30th; and at West Itchenor and Beachy Head on 31st. In Apr, there were reports of 4 at Hollingbury Camp on 16th, with singles at Rye Hbr on 6th; Selsey on 10th and 24th; Eastbourne on 13th-14th; Hove on 14th; Birling Gap on 14th and 20th; Fairlight and Hastings on 15th; Beachy Head on 20th; and Robertsbridge on 20th-21st.

The autumn passage began with singles in Sept at Birling Gap on 1st and 8th; at Lancing Clump on 7th; and at Beachy Head on 8th. There were good numbers from mid-month, with 2 at Hollingbury Camp on 19th and 4 on 23rd; 3 at North Seat, Hastings, on 21st (2 on 24th); 2 flew in off the sea at East Hill, Hastings, on 22nd; 8 at Beachy Head on 19th increasing to 45 by 21st; 19 at Birling Gap on 21st increasing to 25 on 22nd and down to 15 on 23rd; 1 at Elms Farm, Icklesham, on 23rd; 2 at Sheepcote Valley, Brighton, on 25th; and 3 at Plumpton on 28th. On 1st Oct there were 2 at Cissbury Ring, 1 at Birling Gap, 2 at Beachy Head and 7 in the Hastings area. These were followed by singles at Beachy Head on 3rd; Pagham Hbr on 12th; Belle Tout, Beachy Head, on 17th; and Sheepcote Valley, Brighton, on 20th. At Beachy Head, there were 3 on 20th, 1 on 22nd and 2 on 23rd; and there was a single at Pagham Hbr on 24th. The only records at the end of the year were in Nov: 3 at Beachy Head on 10th and singles at Elms Farm, Icklesham, on 12th and Beachy Head on 16th. [LM]

1187. **BLACKBIRD**

Turdus merula

Abundant resident and winter visitor: perhaps a passage migrant.

Fifty birds were seen feeding on windfalls at Beaumanns, Bewl Water, on 28 Jan. A leucistic bird was seen often near the Little Egret roost at Thorney Deeps in Mar and Apr, presumably the same one as reported in the previous two years.

The regular breeding surveys listed on page ?? all show a decline of some 5-10% in the number of breeding pairs. Bewl Water had 157 breeding pairs and Hollingbury Camp 123 pairs. Hotham Park, Bognor Regis, supported nearly 3 pairs per ha, some six times the density shown by farmland and woodland surveys nearby.

At Durrington, Worthing, a party of 25 was recorded on 26 Oct, and on the same day 50 were at Church Norton. There were 53 at Darwell Res on 17 Nov, whilst 43 were counted on a 67 ha plot on Marsh Farm, Yapton, on 21 Nov. In the cold weather on 28 Dec, 34 were seen feeding on apples at Lancing Clump. [RK]

1198. **FIELDFARE**

Turdus pilaris

Common to abundant passage migrant and winter visitor.

During the first winter period, large numbers were reported. In Jan, these included: 1500 at both Pevensy, Horse Eye Level, on 6th, and Pagham Hbr, North Wall (Honer), on 9th; 2000 at Henfield Levels and 1000 at Steyning on 13th; 1000 at Jury's Gap on 14th; 2000 at Amberley Wildbrooks and 1100 at Beeding Brooks on 17th, and 2500 at Pevensy, Bridge Levels, on 21st. During Feb, there were 1000 at Yapton, Marsh Farm, on 4th; 1000 still at Pagham Hbr, North Wall, on 15th; a cold weather movement of 800 W over Seaford, Splash Point, on 20th, and 2500 at Shopham Bridge, near Byworth, on 29th. There were 1000 at both Warbleton and Maynards Green on 4 Mar and at Newick on 31 Mar. The last large report involved 1500 at Pevensy, Horse Eye Level, on 8 Apr. Up to 10 were present at Selsey Bill between 17 and 30 Apr, with 5 on the latter date.

There was an unusual report of 7 at Pagham Hbr, North Wall (Honer), on 13 Aug, interestingly the day before a Redwing was present at Beachy Head. There were none then until 4 were recorded at RSPB Pulborough Brooks on 20 Oct. The rest of the

autumn and the second winter period were quiet, with the first flocks of any size being one of 130 birds at Ashdown, Millbrook, on 8 Nov, and one of 200 at Standen Wood, Weir Wood Res, next day. There were only 6 other records of more than 100 birds, the largest being 300 at RSPB Pulborough Brooks on 13 Dec. [SHL]

1200. **SONG THRUSH**

Turdus philomelos

Abundant resident and partial migrant; abundant passage migrant and very common winter visitor.

Maximum counts during the early part of the year were 20 feeding on windfalls at Bewl Water on 28 Jan, 24 at Sidlesham and 22 at North Wall, Pagham Hbr, on 30 Jan, and 25 at Earnley on 4 Feb. Five were singing at Darwell Res on 10 Mar, and there was a fall of 20 migrants at Bewl Water on 8 Apr.

Breeding season records included 158 territories in 650 ha at Graffham, the results of an RSPB survey. There were 13 pairs at Hollingbury Camp, 48 at Bewl Water, 15 at Pulborough Brooks and 11 in 61.8 ha of dairy farmland at Chiddinglye Farm, West Hoathly. At Cissbury Ring, 30 birds were ringed between May and Nov.

Later in the year, totals of 20 at Pulborough Brooks on 10 Oct, and 25 at North Fields, Pagham, on 19 Dec, were recorded. There was a movement of 63 W at Glyne Gap, Bexhill, on 31 Dec. [JLN]

1201. **REDWING**

Turdus iliacus

Abundant passage migrant and very common winter visitor.

During Jan - Mar, large numbers included 1000 at Chichester GP, Ivy Lake, on 3 Jan; up to 3810 at Pagham Hbr on 9th and 10th; 1500 at Henfield Levels on 13th; 1500 at Pevensey, Bridge Levels, on 21st; 1000 at Horsham, Denne Park, on 13 Feb, and 1000 N over Sidlesham Ferry on 29 Mar. In Apr, 500 calls an hour were heard on the night of 7th at Combe Haven, with 100 in that area and at Rye Hbr allotments next day. On 9th, 350 in Friston Forest included singing birds, and there were 400 at Selsey Bill. The last departing migrants were 30 at Charleston Reedbed on 15 Apr and a total of 10 next day at Pevensey, Hooe Level, Selsey Bill and Hollingbury Camp.

One was trapped at Beachy Head, Whitbread Hollow, on 14 Aug, the earliest autumn record for Sussex. On 20 Sept, one was at Lancing Clump, a much favoured spot for early autumn sightings, and 2 were at Brighton, Sheepcote Valley. The first sizeable arrival involved 160 birds at Hollingbury Camp on 2 Oct. For the rest of the year, numbers were quite low, with few records involving more than 50 birds. The exceptions were 100 at RSPB Pulborough Brooks on 9 Nov, with up to 250 there in Dec; 80 at Darwell Res on 17 Nov and, at Bexhill, Glyne Gap, 205 W and 440 W on 15 and 31 Dec, respectively. [SHL]

1202. **MISTLE THRUSH**

Turdus viscivorus

Very common resident and partial migrant.

During the first three months of the year, reports were received of 4 at Glenleigh Park, Bexhill, on 29 Feb, and 4 at Bexhill Down on the same date, a flock of 17 at Thorney Island on 11 Mar and a maximum of 5 at Warnham MP on 12th.

Breeding season records included 6 pairs at Hollingbury Camp, 13 pairs at Bewl water and 10 pairs at Gatehouse Farm, Trotton. Later in the year, maximum counts noted were 11 at Cissbury Ring on 30 Jun, 25 at Elms Farm, Icklesham, on 3 Aug, 13 on stubble at Barcombe on 25 Aug, 15 at Pulborough Brooks on 28 Aug, 55 at Alexander Park, Hastings, on 4 Sept, 13 at Sidlesham on 25 Sept, and 20 at Worth Forest on 28 Nov. [JLN]

1220. **CETTI'S WARBLER**

Cettia cetti

Very scarce resident, passage migrant and winter visitor.

From Jan to Mar, there were records from 6 sites, mostly in the Chichester/Arundel area, but including 1 from Burton Mill Pond on 29 Feb.

Breeding was again confirmed at Thorney Deeps, where one male held two territories and one nest fledged 5 young. Singing males were also heard at 5 other sites, including Arundel WWT on 13 Apr; North Stoke on 4 May and at Hermitage, Emsworth, on 9 May.

At Elms Farm, Icklesham, 6 birds were ringed during the year, including the only male trapped at the site to date.

In the last 3 months of the year, single birds were reported at Thorney Deeps on 7 Oct, 21 Nov, 9 and 26 Dec; the Severals, Church Norton, on 21, 22 Oct and 15 Nov; Beachy Head on 20 and 21 Oct, and at Filsham Reedbed, where one was heard calling on 11 Nov. [VPB]

1236. **GRASSHOPPER WARBLER**

Locustella naevia

Very scarce and declining summer visitor and fairly common passage migrant.

The first record for the year was from Icklesham on 14 Apr, followed two days later by a single bird at Selsey.

During the breeding season, reeling males were heard at several sites, including Thorney Deeps on 14 and 15 May, Friston Forest on 2 and 6 Jun, Beach Field, Rye, from 9 to 18 Jun; while two were heard at West Dean Woods on 6, 9 and 23 Jun. Later in the month, on 29 Jun, a male was singing continuously at Barnham, and was heard again on 5 Jul.

On return migration, one juvenile was ringed at Thorney on 16 Aug, 3 at Cissbury in Aug and Sept, and Rye Bay Ringing Group recorded their second best year for this species. In addition, there was a scattering of records right through from early Aug until late Sept, also from coastal localities such as Beachy Head, Camber Dunes and Church Norton. Two were seen further inland at Holmbush Tip, Faygate, on 10 Sept, and the final record for the year was of 6 ringed at Beachy on 1 Oct. [VPB]

1242. **AQUATIC WARBLER**

Acrocephalus paludicola

Very scarce autumn visitor.

Single juveniles were trapped at Icklesham on 6, 8, 9 and 13 Aug (RBRG) and at Thorney, Little Deep, on 3 Sep (CBC, GCMR, MTMR). Four at Icklesham is a poor showing by their recent high standards (*cf.* 10 in 1994 and 15 in 1995) while the species has been trapped in 3 consecutive years at Thorney. The county total moves to 117, all between 30 Jul-19 Oct. [RJF]

1243. **SEDGE WARBLER**

Acrocephalus schoenobaenus

Fairly common summer visitor and abundant passage migrant.

The first record of the year came from Thorney Deeps on 6 Apr, followed by singles on 10th from Rye Hbr and Lewes. Territorial behaviour commenced promptly with singing males being recorded at Rye on 11, 12 and 14 Apr. Breeding in Sussex is based at 3 main sites and 10 other scattered localities. At Elms Farm, Icklesham, about 120 pairs nested, at Rye Hbr LNR 86 pairs were recorded around the reserve and at Thorney Deeps there were 48 pairs. At Pulborough Brooks RSPB Reserve 13 pairs bred, but only very small numbers were noted elsewhere.

Autumn passage was hardly recorded, except at Elms Farm, Icklesham, where birds were trapped on every day during Aug and on 29 days in Sept. The maxima in these months were 672 on 13 Aug and 201 on 1 Sept. At nearby Combe Haven, 30 were seen on 18 Aug and 20 on 31 Aug. At Pagham Hbr, 10 were recorded on 2 July and 14 on 22 Aug. The last bird was seen at Thorney Deeps on 2 Oct. [RTP]

1250. **MARSH WARBLER**

Acrocephalus palustris

A rare summer visitor and passage migrant.

Three were ringed at Icklesham; 2 on 6 June and one on 8 Sept. This species was not recorded in Sussex in 1995. [SJP]

1251. **REED WARBLER**

Acrocephalus scirpaceus

Common summer visitor and very common passage migrant.

The first record was on 15 Apr from Thorney Deeps. With only a scattering of records for this species during Apr and May, it is difficult to judge the date for general arrival, although the first week in May saw 10 singing males at Willingdon, Shinewater Marsh, and 27 singing birds noted on 13th at South Stoke, Arun Valley.

Breeding season counts include 73 pairs at Thorney Deeps, 23 at Yapton, Marsh Farm, and approximately 300 pairs at Icklesham, Elms Farm.

Return passage seems to have commenced towards the end of Aug, with 83 birds being ringed at Beachy Head, Whitbread Hollow, and 50 birds being reported from Burpham on 27th. Late autumn numbers were very low, with the last records of single birds coming from Church Norton and Beachy Head, Belle Tout, on 17 Oct.

Icklesham, Elms Farm, had its third best year ever for ringing, achieving a total of 5784 birds. [RP]

1256. **BOOTED WARBLER**

Hippolais caligata

Very rare vagrant.

One, found at Sidlesham Ferry on 28 Sept, remained in the weeds and bushes beside the Long Pool until 1 Oct (CWM *et al*). One was trapped at Icklesham on 30 Sept (RBRG). These are the 3rd and 4th records for the county. The first, as recent as 1993, was also trapped at Icklesham, on 19 Sept. The Sidlesham Ferry bird was photographed (*Birding World* 9:383) although the constant close attention the bird received from at least one recognised photographer can not be condoned. Both have been accepted by *British Birds*. [RJF] **note to editor - Icklesham Booted still with BBRC. If no news when go to press then following is more appropriate:**

1256. **BOOTED WARBLER**

Hippolais caligata

Very rare vagrant.

One, found at Sidlesham Ferry on 28 Sep, remained in the weeds and bushes beside the Long Pool until 1 Oct (CWM *et al*). It was photographed (*Birding World* 9:383), although the constant close attention the bird received from at least one recognised photographer can not be condoned. Another was trapped at Icklesham on 30 Sept but, to date, only the first has been accepted by *British Birds*. There are two previous records: trapped at Icklesham in Sept 1993 and at Beachy Head in Jun 1994. [RJF]

1260. **MELODIOUS WARBLER**

Hippolais polyglotta

Very scarce visitor.

Three were recorded, including a record two in spring. One was found in Belle Tout Wood, Beachy Head, on 19 May (AQ *et al*), while others were watched at Church Norton on 21 May (TJE, AF) and 6 Sept (TJE). There have been 47 records in total, of which 11 were during the 1990s when annual totals have varied from none (1991 and 1995) to 5 (1994). [RJF]

1262. **DARTFORD WARBLER**

Sylvia undata

Scarce resident.

In Jan, 4 birds were recorded in two coastal areas and another 4 from three inland localities. In Feb, the average picture was much the same, with 4 birds from two areas on the coast and 10 reported from seven inland areas. The month of March produced 3 birds which were reported from three coastal habitats while a count of the species inland revealed a total of 13 individuals.

Inland, singing was noted from 17 Feb onwards. During the breeding season 59 pairs or singing birds were recorded on Ashdown Forest, and 12 from six sites in West Sussex. In East Sussex, apart from Ashdown, a singing male stayed at one site only, although no evidence of breeding was seen. There were no records from the South Downs.

During the Oct-Dec period, only 8 birds were noted inland, compared to 19 in 1995. On the coastal strip, mainly at Pagham, far fewer were recorded compared to the previous year. [JB]

1273. **BARRED WARBLER**

Sylvia nisoria

Very scarce autumn visitor.

One was trapped at Whitbread Hollow on 31 Aug (RDME, SPH, EDU) and one was present at the northern end of the Pontins' site at Selsey Bill from 24-26 Oct. (CRJ *et al*). The former is the 5th to be recorded in Whitbread Hollow since 1986 and the latter is very close, in date and location, to the 1995 record. Records during the 1990s average one a year. [RJF]

1274. **LESSER WHITETHROAT**

Sylvia curruca

Common summer visitor and passage migrant.

The first sightings were on 20 Apr at Pulborough Brooks, Rye Bay Wood and Houndean Bottom, Lewes, 9 days later than in 1995. By the beginning of May, there were records from across the county.

During the breeding season, 6 pairs were present at both Bewl Water and Thorney Deeps, and 3 pairs at Hollingbury Camp and Scobells Farm, Barcombe. Results of breeding surveys can be found on page.....

During Aug, there were 30 at Whitbread Hollow on 14th, 16 at Pagham on 20th, 20 at Seaford Head on 26th and a maximum of 40 at Whitbread Hollow on 28th and 31st. Numbers then decreased: there were 25 at Chat Vale, Beachy Head on 1 Sept; 15 at Lancing Clump on 10th, and 8 at the same site on 24th. The last report of the year was of a single bird at Birling Gap on 12 Oct. [VPB]

1275. **WHITETHROAT**

Sylvia communis

Very common summer visitor and passage migrant.

The first two individuals were seen at Pagham Hbr, on the western side, on 7 Apr. Over the next week, there were records from Combe Haven, Shoreham-by-Sea, Pulborough Brooks and Rye Hbr, and 25 were noted at Selsey on 16 Apr.

Breeding season counts revealed 53 territories at Thorney, 8 more than in 1995; 20 at Hollingbury Camp; 27 at Bewl Water, and 56 at Lullington Heath. High breeding density was reported around the Information Centre at Pagham Hbr LNR where 51 birds were recorded on 26 Jun. Results of breeding surveys, which show an increase from the previous year at several sites, are on page.....

The Rye Bay Ringing Group reported their best ever year-total, of 1132, and there were high daily passage totals of 105 at Pagham Hbr on 27 Aug, and 250 at Whitbread Hollow on 28th. There was a handful of records from Oct, notably 10 at Church Norton on 1st. The last individual was seen at Birling Gap on 7 Oct. [VPB]

1276. **GARDEN WARBLER**

Sylvia borin

Very common summer visitor and passage migrant.

As in 1995, the first record was on 14 Apr, when a single bird was seen at Cooden Beach GC, though elsewhere in the county the first arrivals were not noted until 7 – 14 days later.

During the breeding season, there were 38 pairs present at Bewl Water, 7 pairs at Lullington Heath, 3 pairs at Scobells Farm, Barcombe, and 2 pairs at Grantley's Farm, Maynards Green. The last two sites showed an increase from only single territories held in 1995. Results of the breeding surveys are to be found on page.....

Good numbers were ringed in early autumn, with the Rye Bay Ringing Group reporting their second best year-total of 719. However, at Beachy Head numbers were lower than in previous years, though 40 and 60 were trapped on 26 and 28 Aug, respectively. Other records were of 9 at Church Norton on 1 Sept and 16 at the same site on 3rd. There were 7 birds reported during Oct, but an individual trapped on 16 Nov at Cissbury becomes the latest county record by 9 days: the bird was of good weight and condition. [VPB]

1277. BLACKCAP

Sylvia atricapilla

Very common summer visitor and passage migrant; small numbers winter.

Records from Jan – Mar showed an increase in wintering individuals, with at least 66 birds at 45 different sites (*cf* 45 at 37 sites in 1995). On 3 Feb, 8 were seen at Southbourne, of which 7 were males. Pairs were recorded on 21 Feb at Sandgate Park, Storrington and Hastings, and the first singing male was at Fishbourne on 28 Feb. The first obvious migrants appeared at Thorney Deepes on 24 Mar in the west of the county and at Cooden Beach on 9 Apr, in the east.

During the breeding season, there were 43 pairs at Bewl Water and 14 pairs at Hollingbury Camp. Results of breeding surveys, which were similar to those of the previous two years, are on page.... However, reports from both the Rye Bay and Steyning Ringing Groups indicated poor breeding success in 1996, with numbers trapped on autumn passage significantly lower than the previous year. For example, at Cissbury only 241 were ringed (*cf* 314 in 1995). The maximum count from Whitbread Hollow was 450 on 15 Sept.

In the last two months of the year, there were reports of 29 wintering birds from 23 different sites (*cf* 60 from 32 locations in 1995). [VPB]

1298. PALLAS'S LEAF WARBLER

Phylloscopus proregulus

Very scarce visitor, mostly in late autumn.

1994: The individual at Sheepcote on 22 Oct (*SxBR* 47:86) was also reported on 23rd. While the possibility of two birds being present on 22nd can not be ruled out, most observers were firmly of the opinion that all sightings related to one, at times very mobile, individual.

1996: Seven were recorded in an excellent autumn (only matched by 1994). Records were: one at Fairlight CP on 14 Oct (ADW); one briefly at Hodcombe, Beachy Head, on 15 Oct (MEC, RHC) which was presumably that found later in Belle Tout Wood (RJF); another, duller, individual in Belle Tout Wood, Beachy Head, from 18-21 Oct

(PN *et al*); a third individual, with 'dirty' underparts, in Belle Tout Wood on 23-24th (RTP *et al*); one in gardens at East Beach, Selsey, on 24 Oct (JH, CRJ); one at Barley Lane, Hastings, on 10 Nov (ASG); and one in the churchyard on Thorney Island on 15 Nov (CBC). 1989 was the last year this species was not recorded in the county and 24 of the 45 recorded have been during the 1990s. [RJF] **note to editor - John Hobson may have a view whether the statement on the possibility of there being 2 individuals in 1994 needs to go round records c'ttee again before being made, if so might be best to leave the date extension to next time too.**

1300. **YELLOW-BROWED WARBLER**

Phylloscopus inornatus

Very scarce visitor, mostly in autumn.

Seven were recorded in an above average autumn (only surpassed by 8 in 1985). All were in Oct and records were as follows: one seen briefly at Goring Gap on 5th (DIS); one at West Hill, Hastings, on 7th (ASG); one trapped at Icklesham on 11th (RBRG); one seen at Norton Priory, Church Norton, on 12th (TJE); 2 at Hodcombe, Beachy Head, on 15th (MEC, RHC *et al*); another at Church Norton on 16-17th (TJE); and one briefly in Whitbread Hollow, Beachy Head, on 19th (JAGGED). The 2 at Hodcombe were rarely seen together, but luckily one was a bright individual and the other a dull one. They had originally been found with a Pallas's Leaf Warbler (see above). The county total moves to 80, of which 29 have been during the 1990s. [RJF]

1308. **WOOD WARBLER**

Phylloscopus sibilatrix

Very scarce summer visitor and passage migrant.

The first arrivals were two singing on Ashdown Forest on 15 Apr. During the rest of the month, there were 9 records from sites near the coast and 7 from Ashdown.

In the breeding season, at least 27 birds were noted, singing or displaying in suitable localities, between 4 May and the end of June: this was an increase over the numbers for 1995. Records of birds in the Ashdown Forest area numbered 22, at least 14 of which remained long enough to breed. However, only one bird was seen carrying food. In West Sussex, 8 records from four sites were received.

Return passage was first reported from Pagham on 14 Aug, followed by 8 more sightings near the coast, the last being on 27th. [JB]

1311. **CHIFFCHAFF**

Phylloscopus collybita

Very common summer visitor and passage migrant; small numbers winter.

Wintering birds were almost all recorded from the coastal strip, from the extreme eastern end of the county to the far west. In Jan there were 58 birds recorded, falling to 38 in Feb. Highest counts were 15 at Pulborough Brooks on 23 Mar, 10 at Thorney Deepes on 28th, and 13 at Combe Haven on 30th. In April, 10 were recorded from Combe Haven on 8th, 20 at Selsey Bill and 40 at Combe Haven on 9th. There were 25 there on 10th, and 15 were present at Icklesham on 17th.

Breeding season counts were 10 pairs at Hollingbury Camp and 57 pairs at Bewl Water on 1 May. Five pairs nested at Icklesham.

The first autumn movements of note were 10 at Barcombe Res and another 10 at Seaford Head on 1 Sept. A total of 31 were at Lancing Clump on 6th, and 30 were present at Barcombe Res on 8th. The greatest numbers were 300 at Beachy Head, Whitbread Hollow, on 15 Sept, 250 there on 1 Oct, 200 on 2nd, 100 on 6th, and 150 on 11th, far more than in 1995.

In Nov there were 51 sightings, and in Dec 42 were recorded, almost all in coastal areas. During the year, 1614 were trapped at Icklesham.

In the early part of the year, a single bird, showing the characteristics of a northern race, was found at Thorney Sewage Works on 29 and 31 Jan, and again on 2 Feb. Birds of the nominate race were also present on these dates. (CBC).

Initially, a single bird, showing the characteristics of the race *tristis*, was seen at Church Norton on 1 Nov. What was presumably the same bird was seen each day until 7 Nov when a second bird appeared. After 7th, there were no further records. (TJE). Another Chiffchaff, with plumage characteristics and call notes of either *tristis* or *abietinus*, was also seen at Church Norton on 1 Nov (ADW). [JB/LGH]

1312. WILLOW WARBLER

Phylloscopus trochilus

Abundant summer visitor and passage migrant.

The first immigrant of the year was at Pagham on 23 Mar, and others, mainly singletons, were noted almost every day until 2 Apr. Beginning on 9th, there was a major invasion: 150 were recorded at Church Norton, 140 at Selsey Bill, 30 at Combe Haven, 130 at Norton Priory, as well as smaller numbers elsewhere along the coast. On 10th, 200 were recorded from Pagham Hbr, and on 15th and 16th an additional 172 from Selsey Bill. Strangely, very few were reported eastwards, along the coast, apart from 100 at Icklesham on 16 Apr. The first inland record was from Ashdown Forest on 11 Apr, while fairly large numbers continued to arrive on the coast until 17th.

During the breeding season, 10 pairs were noted at Hollingbury Camp, 75 pairs at Bewl Water, 25 singing males in Pippingford Park, 21 territories on Lullington Heath and six pairs on Thorney Island.

Return passage was first observed at Pagham on 7 July. A count of 93 was recorded there on 8th, and 129 on 13th. At Beachy Head, Whitbread Hollow, 600 were recorded on 14th, 300 on 17th and 250 on 26th. A total of 1663 were recorded from 13 Aug until 8 Sept.

During the year, 2254 birds were trapped at Icklesham, these figures being the highest for several years. Numbers dwindled through Sept and the last record was at Pulborough on 20 Oct. [JB]

1314. GOLDCREST

Regulus regulus

Very common breeding resident, common passage migrant and winter visitor.

Records were received from 35 sites across the county (21 of them in the breeding season). The 16 records in the first quarter were almost all in single figures, the largest counts being 14 at Thorney Island on 14 Jan, 8 at Church Norton on 17 Jan

and 14 Mar, 6 at Whiteley Hill, Worth Forest, on 1 Feb, 5 at Cuckmere Haven on 24 Mar and 4 at Weir Wood Res on 29 Mar. The largest Apr counts were 12 each at Church Norton on 3rd, Lancing Clump on 6th and Beachy Head on 10th; 9 at Goring Gap on 9th; and 10 at Rye Bay Wood on 11th.

CBCs and other surveys recorded pairs at Thorney Island (2); Hotham Park, Bognor Regis; Barns Copse, Binstead (2); Chiddinglye Farm, W Hoathly (2); Grantleys Farm, Maynards Green (3); and Bewl Water (15). Pairs or singing males were also recorded at Broadwater, Worthing; Cissbury Ring; Giffords Wood, W Hoathly; Jarvis Brook, Crowborough; and Icklesham.

In the autumn, 27 were ringed at Cissbury Ring between 7 Sept and 16 Nov, with peak catches of 7 on 20 Oct and 9 Nov. The ringing total at Icklesham was poor, with only 82 individuals trapped. The first autumn birds at Hollingbury Camp totalled 18 on 20 Sept, with an autumn maximum of 25 on 1 Oct. Beachy Head had an extremely poor passage, with a single on 1 Oct, and 3 on 13th and 16th. In the churchyard at Thorney Island, there were 10 on 2 Oct, with an Oct-Dec maximum at Weir Wood Res of 5 on the same day.

The Nov records included 6 at Church Norton on 1st and 7 on 5th, 2 at Castle Water, Rye Hbr, on 1st, 4 at Thorney Island on 15th, 3 at Steyning on 24th and 3 at West Wittering on 28th. The only Dec records were of 12 and 5 respectively on 1st and 7th at Pulborough Brooks, 3 at Thorney Island sewage works on 5th, and 4 at Darwell Res on 16th. [LM]

1315. FIRECREST

Regulus ignicapillus

Rare breeder and scarce passage migrant and winter visitor.

The numbers present in the late winter and spring (81) were above the average for the previous 10 years (44); the autumn and winter numbers were at record levels. The approximate monthly totals were as follows:

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
6	11	33	26	4	4	-	-	96	166	96	38

Singles were seen in Jan at Birchgrove on 1st; Goring Gap on 7th; Church Norton on 14th and 16th; Aldwick on 23rd; and in Brighton Cemetery on 29th. At Pagham Hbr in Feb, singles were recorded on 5 dates, with 2 on 22nd and 5 on 25th. Also in Feb, there were singles at Bignor on 23rd; Brighton on 25th; Barcombe Cross on 27th; and Graffham on 29th.

In Mar, there were 7 at Pagham Hbr on 16th, with 3 on 18th and 2 on each of 24th, 27th and 30th; up to 3 at Littlehampton GC on 16th, 23rd, 25th and 30th; and 2 each at Goring Gap (18th), Hollingbury Camp (23rd) and Birling Gap (31st). Singles were reported at Pagham Hbr (on 8 days) and at 12 other, mostly coastal, locations. The Apr records included 2 at Pagham Hbr on 6 dates and singles on 5 other dates; 5 at Pevensy Levels on 4th; 1-2 at Rye Bay Wood on 6 dates; and singles at 10 other sites on 13 dates. Singing males were noted at Hollingbury Camp, Brighton Cemetery, Pevensy Levels and Rye Hbr.

The only May records were of singles at Beachy Head on 3rd, Pagham Hbr on 4th and Hollingbury Camp on 8th. The 4 records in June were of singing males at Holmbush (3 locations) and in Worth Forest.

Autumn passage started in Sept, with singles at Pagham Hbr and Beachy Head on 3rd and 8th respectively. The approximate totals of individuals in the autumn/winter were:

	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
Pagham Hbr	32	68	47	21
Beachy Head areas	45	60	4	-
Other locations	19	38	45	17

These indicated a record-breaking influx into Sussex, greatly exceeding the highest totals for this period during the previous 25 years: 1982 (110), 1984 (112), 1985 (115), 1990 (121), and 1995 (153). It is significant that Dungeness Bird Observatory also recorded very high totals during the autumn in 1996. The highest counts for the autumn/winter period in the main coastal locations were:

	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
Pagham Hbr	18th 22	13th 14	5th 8	4th 5
	21st 32	15th 10	14th 9	10th 7
	- -	22nd 13	21st 8	18th 5
	- -	23rd 14	27th 9	- -
	- -	24th 14	- -	- -
Beachy Head area	18th 22	12th 12	- -	- -
	21st 32	15th 10	- -	- -
	- -	19th 9	- -	- -

The "other locations" records were, in Sept, 1-4 at 10 sites between 20th and 30th; in Oct, 1-7 at 19 sites on 17 dates; in Nov, 1-6 at 15 sites on 14 dates; and in Dec, 1-4 at 11 sites between 14th and 30th.

At Icklesham, 11 individuals were ringed in what was described as the "the best year ever". [LM]

1335. **SPOTTED FLYCATCHER**

Muscicapa striata

Fairly common summer visitor and passage migrant.

The first records were of 2 at Selsey Bill and 2 at Wepham Woods, Angmering Park, on 27 Apr. The maximum spring count at Hollingbury Camp was 4. Passage seemed light through May, but there were 15 birds at Church Norton, the Severals, on 19 May, and 5 at Beachy Head, Horsehoe Plantation, on the same day. It is normal for spring counts to be low, not often reaching double figures, a feature especially noticeable over the past 20 years.

The first confirmed breeding was at Hove Park where there was a nest with young in mid-May, despite the poor weather conditions that prevailed during the month. There are 14 other records of confirmed breeding and at least 12 more probables where there was nest building activity or song. Results of breeding surveys can be found on page.....

Autumn migration got underway in late July. There were 15 at Graffham Common on 26 Aug, 12 at RSPB Pulborough Brooks and 21 at Lancing Clump on the same day. On the following day, the number at Lancing Clump had risen to 31. On 31 Aug there was further evidence that migration was at its peak, with 20 birds seen at two Beachy Head sites. A maximum of 3 were trapped and ringed at Icklesham on the

same date. The first day of September saw a count of 50 at Chat Vale, Beachy Head, and Lancing Clump' watchers recorded another 18 on 2 Sept. Counts of up to 20 were reported from the well watched sites in the west of the county, with Beachy Head providing almost all of the records in the east, the exception being a count of 8 at Summerfields, Hastings, on 2 Sept. The early days of October saw a marked reduction in records, the last being at Scobells Farm, Barcombe, on 9th. There was an obvious increase in the number of records submitted in 1996 for this species, but even allowing for this growth in observations, it was undoubtedly a better year for the Spotted Flycatcher. [DEC]

1349. **PIED FLYCATCHER**

Ficedula hypoleuca

Scarce passage migrant, more numerous in autumn than spring. Has bred.

Approximate monthly totals were:

Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sept	Oct
20	8	3	-	45	25	2

First seen at Brighton Racecourse on 8 Apr. There were 2 at Church Norton, Pagham Harbour, on 16 Apr, with 2 more at Birdham, Chichester, on the same day. On 28 Apr, there were 3 at Selsey Bill. Most records are of birds at coastal sites.

There was no evidence of breeding, although there was a male and a female seen at RSPB, Pulborough Brooks, on 6 May and again on 15 Jun.

As there were no July records, return passage was first recorded at Pagham Harbour on 13 Aug with a single observation. In August, the highest number noted was 3 at Tas Combe, Willingdon, on the 19th, at Hollingbury Camp on the 22nd, at Pagham Harbour on the same day and at Selsey Bill on 31st. There were fewer August records than the 80 recorded in 1995. The last was at Beacon Lane, Hastings, on 14 Oct. [DEC]

1364. **BEARDED TIT**

Panurus biarmicus

Very scarce breeder, scarce passage migrant and winter visitor.

The approximate minimum monthly totals outside the breeding season were:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
No of Sites	6	2	5	6	3	6	3	1
No of Birds	33	11	18	19	26	47	19	12

Ten sites were involved in the 1st winter period and 8 in the 2nd, with 16 different sites in all. These data are not, unfortunately, fully representative as one site recorded the actual numbers present in only three 1st winter months, merely noting their presence in others.

Breeding was confirmed at three sites, as in 1995, and recorded as only probable at a fourth where 3 pairs were seen on 5 May. At site 'A', the first 2 juveniles were seen on 13 May. These had increased to 7 (4 males, 3 females) by 25th and 8 (4 of each sex) by 4 Jun. A second nest produced 4 young by 7 Jun, while on 17 Jun 3 family groups were in evidence. Three groups were again seen on 15 Jul, one of which was freshly out of the nest, and presumably a second brood, while on 17th an adult pair was seen, still carrying food. During the season, 3 pairs fledged 35 young as a result, presumably, of second brooding. The highest count at this site was of 37 on 1

Oct, of which 15 were flying high. On 2nd, from a flock of 35 flying high, 9 were seen to fly off westwards. The next day, 14 were flying high, as though dispersing to other areas, but nevertheless came back. At site 'B', two pairs nested and 2 juveniles were seen on 13 Aug, but there was no other indication of productivity. At site 'C', 20 pairs nested, 82 juveniles were ringed during the season, and, in total, 184 birds were trapped, some of which had, presumably, arrived from elsewhere. Presumed emigration flying was noted in Oct. [JAH]

1437. **LONG-TAILED TIT**

Aegithalos caudatus

Very common resident.

Mainly small groups were reported in the winter months, but there were exceptions with parties of 40 at Swanbourne Lake, Arundel, on 3 Jan, 30 at RSPB Pulborough Brooks on 13 Jan, and 25 at Weir Wood Res on 19 Jan. The incidence of birds feeding regularly on peanuts continued to increase and included a ringed pair which fed daily during Feb at Blackwell, East Grinstead.

The results of regular breeding surveys on page ?? suggest a further small fall in the number of breeding pairs. Amongst other breeding reports was that of a pair which nested opposite Sainsburys in Chichester and of another at Cobnor which used polystyrene in nest construction.

Twenty-two birds were seen in Bay Wood, Rye, on 11 July and a single flock of 27 was at Church Norton on 16 July. No less than 28 were in one small tree at Scobells Farm, Barcombe, on 10 Aug. In the last four months of the year there were many reports of parties numbering between 10 and 25, but the outstanding sighting was of a single flock of 60 on Ambersham Common on 16 Dec. [RK]

1440. **MARSH TIT**

Parus palustris

Common resident.

1995: The following breeding records were omitted from the last report: at Ardingly Res, 2 broods fledged 14 young. One box contained a sitting bird on 16 Apr which, by 8 May, had been usurped by a Blue Tit. When 6 Blue Tit pulli were ringed on 21 May, the nest was found to contain the dead Marsh Tit. [RTP]

1996: An increase in records this year, with reports from 25 widely scattered sites during the breeding season, though predominantly from various locations in Ashdown Forest, and from a further 15 areas, at either end of the year. Maxima for the year were 7 at Ashdown Forest Centre on 12 Feb, and at West Marden, Forestside, and Walderton, both on 17 May.

Four pairs used nestboxes at Ardingly Res, but only 2 were successful, raising 11 young. A breeding survey around the 24km perimeter of Bewl Water found a total of 10 pairs, with 3 pairs located around Darwell Res. A singleton at Whitbread Hollow on 22 Aug was considered unusual for that site.

All counts of pairs in the breeding season from defined areas are welcomed. [JESC]

1442. **WILLOW TIT**

Parus montanus

Common resident.

Another increase in reports encompassed 22 localities throughout the year, mostly as single birds or pairs, with a maximum of 5 recorded at Linchball Wood, West Dean, on 14 Feb. At Weir Wood Res, 3 birds was the highest count in both late winter and summer.

As in the previous two years, 5 pairs were recorded breeding around the 24km perimeter of Bewl Water, but no specific counts were received from elsewhere in the spring.

All counts of pairs in the breeding season from defined areas are welcomed. [JESC]

1461. **COAL TIT**

Parus ater

Very common resident.

As last year, few winter gatherings of note occurred, with a maximum of 6 birds at Pulborough Brooks on 1 Dec.

Twelve pairs were counted in a breeding survey around the 24km perimeter of Bewl Water, and at Possingworth Park one pair raised 6 young in a nestbox.

A remarkable autumn influx of birds showing characters of the continental race (*P.a.ater*) commenced with 3 at Fairlight on 18 Sept. Thereafter, many more such birds were noted, with the maximum being 7 together at Belle Tout on 21 Sept, until the final sighting of 2 at Norton Priory, remaining from 15-22 Oct. Allowing for possible duplication, a total of between 45-62 birds were sighted, with most occurring in the well-watched areas around Beachy Head. Two were trapped and ringed at Plumpton and Whitbread Hollow, both on 12 Oct. [JESC]

1462. **BLUE TIT**

Parus caeruleus

Abundant resident.

1995: The following breeding records were omitted from the last report: at Ardingly Res, 16 broods in nest boxes fledged 108 young, and at the near-by Rivers Wood, 7 broods fledged 32 young. One of the boxes at Ardingly Res contained a sitting Marsh Tit on 16 Apr, but by 8 May it was occupied by a Blue Tit. When 6 pulli were ringed on 21 May, the nest was found to contain the dead adult Marsh Tit. At Hove Park and Three Corner Copse, 2 broods in boxes fledged 9 young. [RTP]

1996: No reports of any sizeable gatherings were received, with winter maxima of 28 at Darwell Res on 10 Mar and 34 on 17 Nov. Winter censuses at Marsh Farm, Yapton, revealed 22 birds on 67 ha on 7 Feb, but this had reduced to a maximum count of 11 between Oct-Dec. A similar count on 7 ha of urban land at Hotham Park, Bognor Regis, on 17 Jan, recorded 16 birds, but a maximum of only 7 birds in Oct-Dec.

A cool wet spell in late May affected many nestbox schemes adversely, with widespread losses of eggs or young and resultant low fledging rates per box. At Standen Wood, East Grinstead, 60 pairs nested in boxes from which 292 pulli fledged, and at nearby Weir Wood Res 12 pairs fledged 49 young. Similar schemes at Ardingly Res and Rivers Wood, Haywards Heath, produced 57 young from 24 pairs

and 26 young from 5 pairs, respectively. An urban site at Hove fared no better, with 14 young from 5 pairs. In boxes at Gravetye Lakes and Sharpthorne, a total of 10 pairs raised just 20 pulli. Other breeding season counts included 61 pairs at Hollingbury Camp, 96 pairs in 24km around Bewl Water, and 5 pairs on Lullington Heath. [JESC]

1464. **GREAT TIT**

Parus major

Abundant resident.

1995: The following breeding records were omitted from the 1995 report: at Ardingly Res, 3 broods in nest boxes fledged 25 young, and at near-by Rivers Wood, a further 3 broods fledged 24. At Hove Park, a single brood fledged 5 young. [RTP]

1996: As with the previous species, no large gatherings were reported. Winter counts revealed 6 birds on 7 ha at Hotham Park, Bognor Regis, on 6 Jan, and 7 birds on 67 ha at Marsh Farm, Yapton, on 16 Feb.

In the Weald, poor outcomes were reported from nestbox schemes (*cf* Blue Tit), with only 20 young fledged from 11 pairs at Gravetye and Sharpthorne, 40 from 15 pairs at Standen Wood, East Grinstead, 10 from 6 pairs at Weir Wood Res, and 27 from 6 pairs at Ardingly Res. Other breeding season counts included 37 pairs at Hollingbury Camp, 10 pairs at Lullington Heath, and 46 pairs around the 24km perimeter of Bewl Water. [JESC]

1479. **NUTHATCH**

Sitta europaea

Very common resident.

Widely reported, mainly from inland locations, the maximum noted outside the breeding season were 7 at Darwell Res on 15 Sept, with 6 still present on 16 Dec.

As with other nestbox users, the cool spell in May affected this species and follows two poor breeding seasons in the Weald. At Standen Wood, East Grinstead, 6 pairs fledged 12 young, 2 pairs at Rivers Wood, Haywards Heath, raised 5 young, with 15 from another 5 pairs at Pippingford Park, but 2 boxes at Ardingly Res both failed. Other breeding season counts included 21 pairs around the 24km perimeter of Bewl Water.

All counts of pairs in the breeding season from defined areas are welcomed. [JESC]

1486. **TREECREEPER**

Certhia familiaris

Very common resident.

Many widely scattered records of singletons or pairs were submitted throughout the year, including coastal sightings. Two birds seen at Goring Gap on 1 Jan were considered unusual for the site, as was a record in Belle Tout Wood on 4 Apr.

Around the 24km perimeter of Bewl Water, 14 pairs were located in a breeding survey. At Icklesham, a site record total of 34 birds were trapped and ringed during the year. [JESC]

1508. **GOLDEN ORIOLE**

Oriolus oriolus

Very scarce passage migrant and summer visitor, may have bred.

A female flew N over Mill Hill on 25 May (RJF). This is the 23rd to be recorded during the 1990s, all but two being in May or Jun. 1982 was the last blank year, although this is the 5th year since then with just one record. [RJF]

1515. **RED-BACKED SHRIKE**

Lanius collurio

Very scarce passage migrant; formerly a breeding summer visitor.

A total of 6 birds were seen. Two were recorded in June; adult males at Pagham Hbr on 6th (TJE) and at Pulborough Brooks on 16th (EL de Q, DC). An adult male was at Birling Gap, Beachy Head on 13 Aug (JCH, CAH). Juveniles were at Sompting on 18 Aug (AFB, SJB) and at Pett on 20 Aug (PJ, BDJ). The latter bird was probably the same as one trapped at Icklesham the next day (RBRG). Finally, a juvenile was seen at Sidlesham on 25 Oct (BJ, CMJ). [SJP]

1520. **GREAT GREY SHRIKE**

Lanius excubitor

Very scarce winter visitor and passage migrant.

A better year than last, with 6 and possibly 7 birds recorded. One seen in the early part of Jan in Ashdown Forest was probably the one still there from the previous month. An adult and an immature seen together on 1 Feb at Gills Lap, in the Forest, were probably the same seen separately there and at Greenwood Clump throughout Feb and until 2 Mar. One seen on 2 Feb and 13 Feb at the Old Airstrip and 1 at Four Counties on 15 Mar, both localities within the Forest, were likely to be different birds. Separate birds were noted at Pulborough Brooks on 12 Jan, and during Mar at Buchan Park on 3rd and 11th, and in Cowdray Forest, near Worth, on 23rd. [DEGC]

1539. **JAY**

Garrulus glandarius

Very common resident; passage migrant and winter visitor.

The records in Jan were of 2 at West Chidham on 15th, 3 at Darwell Res on 21st, and 4 at Pulborough Brooks on 29th. In Feb there were 1 at Hotham Park, Bognor Regis, on 5th, 4 at Darwell on 10th, and 3 at Bewl Water on 31st.

CBCs and other surveys recorded pairs at Hotham Park, Bognor Regis; Barns Copse, Binstead; Hollingbury Camp (2); Chiddinglye Farm, W Hoathly; Lullington Heath (2); Grantleys Farm, Maynards Green (3); and Bewl Water (6).

In Sept there was an unusual record for the location of 4 at Atherington, Climping, on 7th. The Oct records included 10 at Church Norton on 1st; 16 at Hollingbury Camp on 2nd; 10 at Pulborough Brooks on 3rd; 20 at Beachy Head on 10th; and 10 at Darwell Res on 13th. There was some evidence of migratory movements in Oct, with records from Church Norton of 12 north and 76 south; Sidlesham of 4 south-west and 5 north-east; Aldwick of 4 south and 6 south-west; and

Beachy Head of 7 in off the sea. The 4 records in Nov and Dec were of 1-3 birds only. [LM]

1549. **MAGPIE**

Pica pica

Very common resident.

Roost counts in the first quarter included 93 on 10 Jan, 76 on 15 Feb and 37 on 19 Mar at North Wall, Pagham Hbr, and 23 at Lancing Clump on 14 Feb.

CBCs and other surveys recorded pairs at Hotham Park, Bognor Regis; Marsh Farm, Yapton (4); Barns Copse, Binsted (2); Chiddinglye Farm, W Hoathly (3); Lullington Heath (3); Grantleys Farm, Maynards Green (3); Bewl Water (21). Breeding was also confirmed at Billingshurst; Standen Wood, Weirwood; and Scobells Farm, Barcombe.

The largest maximum counts in the autumn/winter were of 27 at Beachy Head on 1 Oct (where numbers were described as 'generally low'); and 145 at Hollingbury Camp on 1 Dec. A partial albino was seen in the lower Adur Valley on 1 Oct and 4 Dec (probably the same bird as reported at Lancing in 1995). [LM]

1559. **CHOUGH**

Corsica pyrrhocorax

Formerly a breeding resident, now a very rare vagrant.

One was seen briefly as it flew over Belle Tout Wood, Beachy Head, on 23 Oct (PJWi). The species is kept in captivity, but a recent (1995) record of 2 birds around Cap Blanc-Nez, Pas-de-Calais, Northern France, and a stable population of 30-40 individuals on Ouessant, Brittany, (P.J.Dubois *pers. comm.*) might indicate a more likely origin. There are four records from Belgium, the most recent being in 1928 (P. Schepens *pers. comm.*). The species bred on the chalk cliffs to 1830 and there have been some records of escapes subsequently (des Forges and Harber). [RJF]

1560. **JACKDAW**

Corvus monedula

Very common resident.

The highest counts recorded were: 32 at Warnham MP on 13 Feb; 50 at Kilnwood, Faygate, on 11 Mar; 85 at Handcross on 17 Mar; 67 at Bewl Water on 30 Aug; 130 at Weir Wood Res on 18 Nov; 300 at Maynards Green on 24 Nov; and 400 at Icklesham on 1 Dec.

CBCs and other surveys recorded pairs at Marsh Farm, Yapton; Chiddinglye Farm, W Hoathly (5); and Bewl Water (3). [LM]

1563. **ROOK**

Corvus frugilegus

Very common resident.

Records in Jan were of 200 at Steep Down, Lancing, on 10th; 200 at Castle Farm, Rye Hbr, on 19th; and 278 at Marsh Farm, Yapton, on 28th.

The results of the Society's 1996 census of rookeries are given on pages xxx-xxx.

Highest counts in the autumn/winter were 50 at North Wall, Pagham Hbr, on 17 Sept; 400 at Birling Gap on 4 Oct; 240 at Marsh Farm, Yapton, on 22 Oct; and 600 at Icklesham on 1 Dec. At Weir Wood Res, 12 on 7 Nov was an unusual record for the site. [LM]

1567. **CARRION CROW**

Corvus corone

Very common resident.

The largest concentrations reported were of 30 at Darwell Res on 21 Jan; 20 at Thorney Deepes on 17 Mar; 400 at Glyne Gap, Bexhill, on 13 Jul; 155 at Weir Wood Res on 16 Nov (described as 'eating maize and mussels'); and 50 at Handcross on 4 Dec.

Breeding season surveys recorded pairs at Marsh Farm, Yapton (3); Barns Copse, Binsted (2); Hotham Park, Bognor Regis (4); Hollingbury Camp (13); Chiddinglye Farm, W Hoathly (7); Scobells Farm, Barcombe; Lullington Heath (3); Grantleys Farm, Maynards Green (5); and Bewl Water (30). An individual with light brown wing feathers was seen at Old Lodge NR, Ashdown, on 9 May. [LM]

1572. **RAVEN**

Corvus corax

Formerly a breeding resident, now a very scarce visitor.

One flew E along the beach at the Severals, Church Norton, on 24 Oct (TJE) and was probably seen later in Pagham Hbr (AHO). One W over Mill Hill on 11 Dec (JAN). These two brief sightings are the 3rd and 4th during the 1990s, a welcome increase following just 4 records during previous three decades. The origin of these birds is uncertain: while wanderers from the Isle of Wight are possible, so too are escapes from captivity. [RJF]

1582. **STARLING**

Sternus vulgaris

Abundant resident, passage migrant and winter visitor.

The number of breeding pairs reported from the regular surveys on pastoral and mixed farms increased marginally to one pair to every 7.4 ha. The number of pairs at Hollingbury Camp, however, fell slightly to 37. Bewl Water had 61 breeding pairs and RSPB Pulborough Brooks had 6.

In contrast to the fairly stable population suggested by the breeding figures, the size of nocturnal roosts was very sharply down at all the popular sites. The largest reported flock of the year was a mere 6000 at West Pier, Brighton, on 30 Nov, compared with 50,000 in 1995. The largest flocks at Thorney Airfield, 4000 on 12 Oct, and at Ivy Lake reedbeds, Chichester GP, 1500 on 22 June, were also a small fraction of the previous year at comparable dates.

A gathering of 2500 birds roosted at Pett Level Pools on 10 Aug. The only sizeable flock reported from inland sites was 1000 at Gatwick Airport on 18 Aug. [RK]

1591. **HOUSE SPARROW**

Passer domesticus

Abundant resident.

Regular counts in 67 ha at Marsh Farm, Yapton, gave a maximum of 18 in the first quarter of the year, compared with 36 during Oct–Dec.

Results of breeding surveys (see page.....) show numbers similar to 1995 at sites where the species is present. Other breeding records were of 37 pairs at Bewl Water and 16 pairs at Hollingbury Camp, where a flock of 240 was present for 2 weeks at the end of Aug. There were 200 at Chalder Farm, Sidlesham, on 1 Aug; 200 feeding on stubble at Rye Caravan Site on 5 Sept, and 50 at Eastbourne Hospital on 27th. [VPB]

1598. **TREE SPARROW**

Passer montanus

Scarce and declining resident, passage migrant and winter visitor.

Early winter totals showed an increase over those for 1995, notably in the east of the county. At Icklesham, flocks of 20, 65, 30 and 40 were reported on 28 Jan and 12, 20 and 21 Feb, 65 being the largest flock recorded since Feb 1991. There were 12 at Combe Haven on 1 Jan, 15 at Castle Farm, Rye Hbr, on 19 Jan, and 30 at the same site on 1 Mar. Further west, a maximum of 22 was present during Feb–Mar at Weir Wood Res, while the largest flock in the Pagham area was of 35 at Sidlesham on 28 Mar, rising to 40 by 24 Apr.

Breeding was confirmed at 4 sites, with occupied nestboxes at both Elms Farm, Icklesham, and Rye Hbr LNR which held at least 18 breeding pairs. There were 2 pairs at Strettham, near Henfield, 1 pair at Bewl Water, and birds were reported as present during the breeding season at 5 other sites. Sadly though, for the first time in recent years, there was no confirmed breeding at Sidlesham.

During late autumn/winter, 20 were seen at Barcombe on 2 Nov, 20 at Danny, near Hurstpierpoint, on 8 and 12 Dec, 20 at Rodmell on 21 Dec, and 60 at Castle Farm, Rye Hbr, on 19 Dec.

1600. **LINNET**

Carduelis cannabina

Very common resident and partial migrant.

The Jan total of 277 included 100 recorded at Faygate, Holmbush Landfill, on 28th. Only 54 were recorded in Feb, but the March total rose to 872, with 350 at West Itchenor on 6th and 300 at Rye LNR Beach Reserve on 28th. Included in the April total of 3159 were 150 at Pevensy, Rockhouse Bank, on 11th; 150 at Beachy Head on 14th; 286 at Bexhill, Glyne Gap, on 21st, and 178 at Worthing Beach on 30th.

The month of May saw migratory movements at Bexhill, Glyne Gap, the monthly total numbering 125. There were 55 recorded at the Pagham Information Centre on 12th June. July was equally quiet, with 45 recorded at Pilsey Island on 6th. August numbers increased, with 300 at the Crumbles GP on 9th; 150 at Church Norton Shingle Spit on 29th and 400 at Rye LNR Beach Reserve on 30th. Numbers in Sept increased to 3930, with 200 at Littlehampton Golf Course on 1st; 200 near Sidlesham,

Ferry Pool, on 19th; 500 at Rye SSSI, Harbour Farm, on 24th and 800 there on 30th. A total of 500 were at Rye SSSI, Nook Meadows, on same date.

Oct started with 100 at Beeding Hill on 1st; 500 at Pagham, Ferry Fields, on 2nd; 550 at Littlehampton Golf Course on 8th; 180 at Earnley on 10th and 500 at Beachy Head, Birling Gap, on 13th. The year ended with 240 at Faygate, Holmbush Farm, on 3rd Nov, 90 at Kilnwood, near Faygate on 14th Dec, and 90 at Ifield, River Mole, on 25th. [JLH]

1636. CHAFFINCH

Fringilla coelebs

Abundant resident, passage migrant and winter visitor.

Early in the year, several flocks of 100 or more were noted. There were 200 at Wakehurst Place on 25 Jan, 175 at Knepp on 18 Feb and 110 on the Hyde Estate, Handcross, on 23 Mar. Towards the end of Mar, a massive migration was reported from Elms Farm, Icklesham, with up to 800 on 30th. A leucistic female was seen on 11 Apr at Chat Vale, Beachy Head.

During the breeding season, there were 23 pairs at Grantley's Farm, Maynards Green, 38 pairs at Marsh Farm, Yapton, both similar densities to those of 1993-5, and 117 pairs were reported from Bewl Water. Results of breeding surveys can be found on page.....

A flock of 100 at Pulborough Brooks on 3 Oct was the largest seen in the autumn and not until Dec were higher numbers recorded, with 150 at Handcross on 4th, 180 feeding on linseed at Holmbush Tip, Faygate, on 6th and 300 at Ashcombe Bottom on 12th.

1638. BRAMBLING

Fringilla montifringilla

Fairly common winter visitor and passage migrant.

A total of 31 were seen at various sites during Jan, with a maximum of 5 at Ashdown Forest. Fairly typically, some were seen in association with Chaffinches (*Fringilla coelebs*). During Feb, 40 were recorded at Ashdown, Wrens Warren, on 4th, with 50 in the Ashdown Forest area in general on 5th, and 25 on 11th. Ashdown, Coleman's Hatch, had 28 on 4th March and 12 on 14th. Ashdown, Melbrook, hosted 25 on 18th; Ashdown, Chelwood Beacon, 70 on 24th, and 40 were recorded on 28th at Ashdown, The Goat. The Ashdown area continued to feature the species in some numbers during April, with 27 at the Forest Centre on 2nd and 41 on 11th, whilst Ashdown, Chelwood Vachery, had 50 singing on 12th. Cowdray Forest, near Worth, had 8 on 8th, and there were 8 also at Press Ridge Warren, Ashdown, on 13th April. The last record of the spring was of a single bird at Selsey Bill on 18 April.

Autumn saw 4 at Hollingbury Camp on 23rd Sept, with another 4 being reported there on 3rd Oct. Apart from this latter record, Oct featured 131 records, notable sightings being 6 at Beachy Head on 10th; 4 at Pagham Hbr, Church Norton, on 17th, and 12 on 30th. Eleven were at Shoreham, River Adur, on 17th; and there were 8 at Ashdown Old Airstrip on 30th, and 25 at Beachy Head on same date.

Nov had a total of 27, including 3 at Pagham Hbr, Church Norton, on 14th, and 3 at Weir Wood Reservoir on 16th. The 4 recorded at Faygate, Holmbush Landfill, on 6th Dec, and 4 at Weir Wood Reservoir on 26th were among the 13 recorded at the year end. [JLH]

1640. **SERIN**

Serinus serinus

Very scarce passage migrant. Has bred.

Fewer records than in 1995 with probably only 8 birds in total, but not confined to spring sightings this year. An adult male was seen at the old Pontins site, Selsey, on 25 Apr (BJC, TJE). At least 2, and maybe 3, were seen on 5 May with a probable female at Selsey Bill at 09.25hrs, one flying over Church Norton at 11.15hrs and one near Church Norton at 12.25hrs (all TJE). The last bird was noticeably brighter than the first. Another female or immature male was at Selsey Bill on 10 May (OM). The last spring record was of an adult male at Beachy Head on 24 May (CFB).

One was seen in the Church Norton area on 8 and 10 Oct, with 2 (one male, one female or juvenile) on 14 Oct (TJE). Another bird, probably a male, was seen in this area on 13 Nov (TJE). [SJP]

1649. **GREENFINCH**

Carduelis chloris

Very common resident, passage migrant and winter visitor.

Records came from a variety of habitats, including arable stubble fields during the winter, and from urban environments and country areas at other times. Notable numbers were recorded at Bexhill, Glyne Gap, with 47 on 28 Feb, and 43 on 31 March. The first day of May saw 48 counted at Hollingbury Camp and 70 at Bewl Water, 24 and 35 breeding pairs respectively.

Autumn started with 40 at Bexhill, Glyne Gap, on 31st July; 80 in an oil seed rape field at Fishbourne, near Chichester, on 1st Aug; 177 at Lancing Clump on 2nd Sept, and 150 on 11th at Newhaven Tide Mills. RSPB Pulborough Brooks boasted 100 on 3rd Oct; Church Norton 114 on 10th and Crumbles GP had 100 on the same date. Paghams Beach reported 750 on 25th Oct and 500 on 5th Nov, the birds feeding on Sea Kale seeds. This flock was reduced in number to 130 by 3 December, perhaps due to the attentions of wintering Merlins! Rye LNR Beach Reserve recorded 550 on 9th Nov and 120 on 16th Dec. [JLH]

1653. **GOLDFINCH**

Carduelis carduelis

Common summer visitor and passage migrant and fairly common winter visitor.

The Jan total was 51 from 5 sites. A figure of 97 was recorded for Feb, including 60 from Faygate, Holmbush Farm, on 10th. March totalled 314, with 165 at Kilnwood, near Faygate, on 9th; 40 at Weir Wood Reservoir on 10th, and 50 on 21st at Sidlesham. These numbers and the 130 birds at Byworth, near Petworth, on 15th April, no doubt reflected the arrivals of intending breeders. The 50 at Icklesham, Elms Farm, on 16th, helped to swell the month's total to 506. Bewl Water recorded 66 (33 pairs) on 1st May, with 30 on 6th and an additional 36 on 31st at Bexhill, Glyne Gap.

Aug started with 150 at Icklesham, Elms Farm, on 1st; 60 at Thorney Deepes Channel on 4th, increasing to 80 on 20th; 95 at Sidlesham, Halseys Farm, on 18th, plus a count of 100 there on 29th. Weir Wood Reservoir recorded 60 on 25th, and at

Pagham Hbr, North Wall, there were 80 on 30th. September's total of 2426 included 300 at Icklesham, Elms Farm, on 1st; 110 on 4th at Sidlesham, Halseys Farm; 100 at Thorney Deeps Channel on 6th; 70 at Shoreham, Mill Hill, on 7th; 350 at Rye LNR, Castle Water, on 20th; 250 at Combe Haven on 28th, with 200 at Rye LNR, Castle Water; 250 at Rye LNR, Castle Pit, and 174 at Bexhill, Glyne Gap, all on 30th.

Significant numbers in the total of 5539 for Oct were 200 at RSPB Pulborough Brooks on 7th, 574 at Hastings on 8th; 541 at Watling Beach on 10th; 300 at Church Norton Shingle Spit on 10th; 715 at Pagham Hbr, Church Norton, on 11th; 1011 at Worthing Beach on 31st, with 239 at Bexhill, Glyne Gap, on the same date. The year ended with 150 at Weir Wood Reservoir on 29th Dec. [JLH]

1654. **SISKIN**

Carduelis spinus

Common winter visitor and passage migrant. Probably now a very scarce breeder.

The Jan total of 64 included 30 at Tilgate Lake on 20th. Feb records numbered 30 at Duncton, Burton Park, on 1st; 60 at Worth Abbey and 10 at Ambersham Common, both on 29th. The 108 in March had maxima of 30 at Ambersham and 21 at Bexhill, Glyne Gap, on 31st.

Summer counts between April and Aug were low at 48, but singing males and pairs were located at a number of localities, including Ambersham Common, Worth Forest, Bawl Water, Stedham Common, Cowdray Park, and Midhurst. A pair with fledged young was seen in Cowdray Park, Midhurst, on 8 Jun and a juvenile was on a feeder at Billingshurst on 6 Aug.

The first of the autumn at Bawl Water was a single bird on 13 Sept. Thereafter, autumn numbers in the county rose to a Sept total of 3227, the highest numbers being 250 at Beachy Head; 200 at Birling Gap; 200 at Belle Tout, all on 21st, with 148 at Hastings on 22nd; 145 at Beachy Head on 23rd; and 100 at Hurst Green 30th. Oct numbers dropped to a total of 1698, with 100 at Midhurst on 6th; 100 at Bawl Water, Ketley Farm, on 8th; 313 at Bexhill, Glyne Gap, on 10th; 300 at Burton Mill Pond on 17th and 391 at Bexhill, Glyne Gap, on 31st. The total for Nov included 45 at Bexhill, Glyne Gap, on 5th and 90 on 30th. The year ended with 213 in Dec, with 50 at Tilgate Park, near Crawley, on 8th, and 30 at Bawl Water, Ketley Farm Pond, on 30th. [JLH]

1662. **TWITE**

Carduelis flavirostris

Scarce winter visitor and passage migrant.

Another poor year, with only three records (a further late record has yet to be accepted), all from coastal sites. Early in the year, a single bird was seen on the western side of Pagham Hbr on 25 Jan (TJE), with 2 there the next day (AR). Autumn records were of 4 on Pilsey Island on 24 Oct (CBC), and of 3 at the Ferry Field, Sidlesham, on 7 Nov (TJE) which presumably moved to the nearby North Wall, Pagham Hbr, where there were also 3 from 8th to 12th. [JAH]

1663. **REDPOLL**

Carduelis flammea

Fairly common breeder, passage migrant and winter visitor.

The year started with a bang, with 340 being trapped at Icklesham, Elms Farm, on 1st Jan. Small numbers were seen elsewhere, too, including parties at Fernhurst and Crowborough. Feb featured 56 at Wakehurst Place on 2nd; 30 at Ashdown, Townsend CP, also on 2nd; 30 at Weir Wood Reservoir on 6th, and 40 at Ashdown Forest Centre on 23rd. March saw 20 reported at Burton Mill Pond on 9th. Eighty were seen at Worth Forest, Oldhouse Warren, on 14th April, and 22 at Bewl Water on 1st May. June records numbered 21 from sites in the Ashdown Forest region.

Small numbers were recorded until 22nd Oct when there were 150 at Ashdown, Ellison's Pond, and 100 at Ashdown, Millbrook, on 8th Nov. The year ended with 40 at Ambersham Common on 16th Dec.

Redpolls of the continental race *C.f.flammea*, the Mealy Redpoll, moved into some parts of Britain early in the year. Together with the above 56 Redpolls, a single Mealy Redpoll was at Wakehurst Place on 2 Feb, and there were no fewer than 15 recorded at Ashdown Forest on 17 March. [JLH]

1666. **COMMON CROSSBILL**

Loxia curvirostra

Scarce visitor occurring in large numbers in irruption years. Breeds occasionally.

Very few records, with 5 at Rye, Northpoint Pit, on 17th Feb; 1 at Ashdown, Millbrook, on 12th June; 4 on 2nd Aug and 2 on 14th Aug at Hollingbury Camp; 9 at Beachy Head, Belle Tout, on 22nd Sept, and, finally, 1 at Beachy Head, Whitbread Hollow, on 3rd Oct. [JLH]

1710. **BULLFINCH**

Pyrrhula pyrrhula

Very common resident.

Generally only single-figure records were received for this species. Exceptions, were 20 at Wepham Woods on 3 Feb, 12 at Darwell Res on 17 Feb, and, later in the year, 15 at Bow Hill, near Stoughton, on 31 Dec.

A total of 23 were ringed at Cissbury between Apr and Nov, an increase on a 1995 low of 15.

There were 25 pairs present at Bewl Water during the breeding season. Other regular counts were similar to 1995. The results of breeding surveys can be found on page.....

1717. **HAWFINCH**

Pyrrhula pyrrhula

Scarce breeding resident and very scarce passage migrant.

Total for the year was 23. Almost all records were of single birds, with only two records involving two birds and a single record of three. Singles were reported in Feb from Ebernoe, Furnace Meadow, and from Cocking Down and West Dean. Two were at Graffham on 1st March, 2 at Rye Bay Wood on 10th April, and 2 at West Dean on 2nd June. The next reported sightings were on 7th Oct of 2 at Pagham Hbr, and there were 4 sightings of singles during Nov at Graffham and Pagham Hbr, North Wall.

The year ended with 4 singles at Crowhurst, Fore Wood, at Graffham, and at RSPB Pulborough Brooks, with 3 at Bewl Water, Ketley Farm Pond, on 30th Dec.

All records of this elusive species are welcomed. [JLH]

1720. **BLACK and WHITE WARBLER**

Mniolita varia

Very rare vagrant.

A first-year female at Hodcombe, Beachy Head, on 2-3 Oct (RHC, SM *et al*) is the first county record of this American species. It has been accepted by *British Birds* and is the 10th or 11th British record. A photograph of it was published in *Birdwatch* in Dec 1996. The release of news of this bird presented some difficulties as Hodcombe is a large, isolated, private, and somewhat ornamental, garden to which there is no public access. It is surrounded by fields and although there is a public footpath running past to the north, it is separated from the garden by an 8ft high stone wall, making it almost impossible for even the tallest people to see in! While the owners were very happy for friends to visit their garden to see the bird, they were obviously reluctant to have the news broadcast on *Birdline*, without very careful consideration. This was eventually done on the second evening, but unfortunately the bird departed overnight. The bird usually kept very low in the centre of privet hedges or in the 'dell' in the centre of the garden, sometimes at very close range, although it could disappear for long periods. On one occasion it worked its way up a conifer trunk and on to the roof of a nest box (see *Rare Birds* 2:199-200). It was regarded by those fortunate enough to see it as one of the best birds in Sussex of all time and was undoubtedly the highlight of the year. Hodcombe's hospitality is acknowledged once again. [RJF] **note to editor - I hope Pete Wilson from Seaford has been approached for a photo of this for inclusion in the bird report (his is not a brilliant shot but well worth publishing). Also if Bob Edgar/Sarah McKenzie could write a note on it that would be good too.**

1847. **LAPLAND BUNTING**

Calcarius lapponicus

Very scarce winter visitor and passage migrant.

A poor year with only 2 birds recorded which flew over Church Norton on 30 Oct (TJE). [SJP]

1850. **SNOW BUNTING**

Plectrophenax nivalis

Scarce passage migrant and winter visitor.

1996 produced an improvement on 1995, with records from not less than 21 sites, but there were only 3 records from the Rye Bay area which, until 1971/72, was their major stronghold. Is no one watching this sandy area these days, or has there been a permanent shift away from it?

In the 1st winter period, records involved only 3 birds. At Brighton Marina both the male and an immature female from 1995 were present until at least 7 Jan, with the female remaining until 16 Mar. At Pett Level, a female was on the beach on 1 Jan.

In the 2nd winter period, the first sighting was of 1 on the cliff edge at Belle Tout, Beachy Head, on 30 Oct. Records involved not less than 42 individuals, 20 in the west, 20 in the east and 2 inland. The largest parties were of 7 at Pett Level on 5 Dec and at East Head, Chichester, on 16 Nov, a couple, possibly a pair, present there from 29 to 30 Nov, and of 4, also there from 4 to 22 Dec. Groups of 3 were seen near the Beachy Head Hotel on 24 Nov and at Galley Hill, Bexley, on 10 Dec. There were 2 feeding at Elms Farm, Icklesham, on 21 Nov and another couple was at the West Beach, Littlehampton, on 10 Nov, but only 1 the next day. Otherwise, sightings were of single birds at various coastal or near coastal sites between the Pagham Hbr area in the west and Winchelsea Beach in the east. Inland, sightings involved single birds at Streat Hill Farm on 5 Nov, possibly the same at nearby Plumpton Plain on 6th, and a male at Arlington Res from 23 to 26 Dec. [JAH]

1857. **YELLOWHAMMER**

Emberiza citrinella

Very common resident.

The highest numbers recorded during the first four months included a flock of 50 at Offham Hill on 7 Jan, 40 at Church Norton, Pagham Harbour, on 9th, 33 at Highdown, near Worthing, on 27th, and at Hollingbury Camp on 6 Feb. Of special interest was a wintering flock of 25 birds in a member's garden at Aldwick, Bognor Regis, on 20 Jan and which were still present on 7 May, when 29 were counted.

A good number of breeding records were sent in, a sample being 12 pairs at Hollingbury Camp on 1 May, with 21 pairs at Bewl Water and 5 pairs at Lullington Heath on 30 May. The only record of breeding success which was sent in was of 2 adults and 3 young at Sidlesham, Ferry Pool, on 30 Aug.

The first sizeable winter numbers were 21 at Hollingbury Camp on 12 Nov, 30 at Pease Pottage on 15 Dec, 40 at Cattlestone Farm, West Chiltington, on 28th, and also at St Leonards Forest on 29th. Weedy pasture at Tattlestone Farm, Handcross, attracted 10 on 4 Dec, and set-aside land at Yapton, Wicks Farm, 16 on 22nd. The garden at Aldwick hosted up to 20 throughout Dec until the turn of the year. [PL]

1858. **CIRL BUNTING**

Emberiza cirrus

Formerly a breeding resident, now a rare vagrant.

A male in fields at Sidlesham Village on 20-21 Mar (TJE, RF) was the first county record since 1988 and only the 4th since 1982 when breeding was last recorded. The two most recent sightings have also been on the Selsey Peninsula; at Church Norton in Oct 1987 and at Selsey Bill in May 1988. [RJF]

1866. **ORTOLAN BUNTING**

Emberiza hortulana

Very scarce, mainly autumn, visitor.

1994: A first-winter was reported from Hollingbury on 14 Sept (IJW). The only other record of the year was on the same date, at Pagham Hbr.

1996: Single males were seen at Church Norton on 22 Apr (LGH) and at Rye Hbr on 4 May (PMT *et al*), while a juvenile was trapped at Icklesham on 3 Sept (RBRG).

The first individual was seen by one lucky observer near the Severals, while the second performed for many admirers between Long Pit and the Ridge at Rye. Thirteen have now been recorded during the 1990s and 66 in total. These spring records are the first since in 1989 and only the 9th and 10th in total. [RJF]

1874. **LITTLE BUNTING**

Emberiza pusilla

Very rare vagrant.

One, probably a first year male, in fields at Sidlesham Village from 23 Mar-5 Apr (TJW *et al*) was the seventh county record, although the 3rd in three years. It was found while the observer was unsuccessfully looking for the Cirl Bunting that had been present a couple of days earlier (see above). Given the current status of the two species in the county, it is unlikely that this was regarded as an adequate substitute. Five of the previous records have been in autumn (3 in early Nov) and the other remained from Jan-Mar. [RJF]

1877. **REED BUNTING**

Emberiza schoeniclus

Common resident, passage migrant and winter visitor.

Over 140 records, covering more than 60 sites throughout the county, were received for this reasonably well-documented species.

During the 1st winter period, parties of over 50 were noted at 6 sites. There were 200 at Castle Water, Rye LNR, on 28 Mar; 200 at Sidlesham on 5 Mar, decreased to 60 by 23rd; 86 which roosted at Mill Pond Marsh, Sidlesham, on 16 Jan increased to 119 on 8 Feb, but fell to only 56 on 27th; 40 at Elms Farm, Icklesham, on 10 Jan, increased to 75 on 20 Feb; and there were 65 at the River Mole, Ifield, on 7 Jan. During the 2nd winter period, numbers were much lower. The largest parties were 20 at the River Mole, Ifield, on 25 Dec, and 15 at Combe Haven on 28 Sept. There was little evidence of coastal passage except for 3 seen flying over Hollingbury Camp on 30 Oct and, at Church Norton, Pagham Hbr, also during Oct, when 12 flew west on 7th, 12 east on 11th, 8 south on 14th and 10 west on 30th.

Breeding was confirmed at 8 sites, probable at 12 others and suspected at a further possible 16. Breeding was confirmed in the Rye Hbr SSSI area with 40 pairs; there were 19 pairs at the North Brooks and a further 2 at the Mid Brooks, Pulborough; 6 pairs at Marsh Farm, Yapton; 4 at Warnham Mill Pond; 3 at Pippingford Park, Ashdown; and 1 at Ashdown Forest. Probable breeding was reported for 11 territories in the Ashdown Forest area; 5 pairs at the South Brooks, Pulborough; 25 pairs at Bewl Water; 3 territories at Darwell Res, and singletons at 6 other sites. Breeding was suspected with 11 pairs at Thorney Island. There were 10 singing males at Shinewater Marsh, Willingdon; 2 males at Weir Wood Res; a further 6 in the Ashdown Forest area; 3 males at Coldwaltham Brooks; 2 at North Wall Fields, Honer, Pagham Hbr; and singletons at 5 other sites.

The only ringing return was from Elms Farm, Icklesham, where 555 were trapped during the year, an average number. [JAH]

1881. **BLACK-HEADED BUNTING**

Emberiza melanocephala

Very rare vagrant.

1994: An adult female in a 'set aside' field at Birling Gap from 17-20 June (RJF, AP *et al*) has been accepted by *British Birds*. It provided a particularly difficult identification challenge (see e.g. *Birding World* 7:319). It is the third county record following the first British record at Brighton Racecourse in Nov 1868 and a male at Rye in Sep 1971. [RJF]

1882. **CORN BUNTING**

Miliaria calandra

Fairly common but decreasing resident.

There were more records in the first than the second half of the year – 17 in Jan, and then 13, 10, 10, 8, 10, 4, 2, 6, 8, 6 and 7. Reasonable concentrations were reported at both ends of the year, led by 140 roosting in Pagham, Mill Pond Marsh, on 16 Jan and 164 on 8 Feb, reducing to 61 by 27th, with 80 there on 13 Nov and 60 on 19 Dec. Two at Fishbourne on 16 Jan increased to 93 by 7 Feb. Interestingly, four of the records for Dec came from sites that had not been mentioned in Jan. Coastal marshes were popular, but there were 40 on Offham Hill on 7 Jan, 40 with finches and larks on Chantry Hill on 17 Jan and 35 at Lancing Clump on 9 Sept. Forty were at the Cement Works north of Shoreham, by the River Adur, on 25 Oct. The only record from north of the Downs was of 13 at Pulborough Brooks on 24 Feb.

In late spring, five were singing in Poverty Bottom on 5 May, there were four on Thorney Island, six at Rye Hbr LNR and 3 territories on the CBC site at Yapton, Marsh Farm. There were, unfortunately, few breeding season records from the crest of the Downs, though six were on Steep Down, Lancing, on 21 May and five near Storrington on 26 July. While six singing birds were counted between Birling Gap and the Head on 26 May, records of flocks near Beachy Head came only in the autumn: 60 on 18 Aug, near Birling Gap, and 45 there on 10 Nov.

Clearly, much remains to be known about this elusive species. It seems likely that a wintering flock ranges from Sheepcote Valley to Balsdean, and another from Lewes Brooks and Cricketing Bottom, south-east to Poverty Bottom. There is some evidence of movement: an exhausted bird which was found at Widewater, Lancing, on 13 Mar and one at Goring Gap on 14 July were considered 'very unusual'. Dispersal of wintering groups clearly takes place in late March: there were 40 at Jury's Gap on 16 Mar, but only 5 on 7 Apr. A similar tale comes from Sheepcote Valley. But not much can be added from this year's records: perhaps Sussex observers were exhausted by their labours during the recent survey of the species! [CB]

1918. **NORTHERN ORIOLE**

Icterus galbula

Very rare vagrant.

1962: The adult male at Whitbread Hollow, Beachy Head, on 5-6 Oct has been reviewed by *British Birds* and its identification is believed to be correct, although the possibility of it having escaped from captivity was re-emphasised. It remains the only county record. [RJF]

ESCAPES and FERAL BIRDS

WHITE PELICAN

Pelecanus onocrotalus

A single bird was seen in Thorney Channel, Chichester Hbr, on 15 Sept and was presumed to be one of those which had escaped from Birdworld, near Farnham, in Surrey. [LGH]

CHILEAN FLAMINGO

Phoenicopterus chilensis

Two adult flamingos, probably Chilean, were at Rye Hbr LNR on 28 Aug and again on 1 Sept. Two more flamingos, positively identified as Chilean and perhaps the same birds, were seen in the Lower Channel, Chichester Hbr, on 20 Sept. [LGH]

LESSER FLAMINGO

Phoeniconaias minor

A single bird was seen in Whites Creek, Pagham Harbour, on 12 Jan. Another was found at Carters Pit, Rye Hbr LNR, on 29th. It was seen next day at Camber and also over the county border at Folkestone. [LGH]

BLACK SWAN

Cygnus atratus

One at Bewl Water on 10 Feb and a second one there on 13 Oct. [LGH]

BAR-HEADED GOOSE

Anser indicus

A party of 4 was at Pett Level on 19 Mar and there were 3 there, presumably the same birds, the following day. Warnham Mill Pond hosted 2 on 16 Apr and one was at Thorney Deeps, Chichester Hbr, on 22 Apr. Two were at Selsey Bill on 26 Apr. Singles occurred at Hermitage, Emsworth, on 29 May; again at Thorney Deeps on 30 Jul; at Scotney Court GP on 17 Aug; and at Southwater on 14 and 17 Sept. The Southwater bird was identified as a juvenile. This goose is a popular member of wildfowl collections. It is strongly migratory in its home range and perhaps this accounts for its tendency to wander away from collections. [LGH]

SNOW GOOSE

Anser caerulescens

One bird was reported from Icklesham on various dates during Apr and May. [SJP]

EMPEROR GOOSE

Anas canagicus

Singles were seen at Thorney Deeps on many dates from the end of Jul until early in Nov. One was with Canada Geese (*Branta canadensis*) on Thorney Island on 29 Nov. Widely kept in collections in the UK. Said to be declining in its home range (NE Siberia, NW Alaska and the Aleutian Islands). [LGH]

CHILOE WIGEON

Anas sibilatrix

A single bird was recorded on two dates, 1 Sept and 1 Oct, at Southwater, Horsham. [LGH]

PERUVIAN RUDDY DUCK*Oxyura (jamaicensis) ferruginea*

A male was seen at Ternery Pool, Rye Hbr LNR, from 16 Jun onwards. By some authorities recognised as a race of the Ruddy Duck (*Oxyura jamaicensis*), by others as a full species. Of all the races, this is the rarest in collections. [LGH]

CAPE TEAL*Anas capensis*

One was present at Weir Wood Res throughout much of Aug. [LGH]

BAHAMA PINTAIL*Anas bahamensis*

Two were at Pett Level on 6 Oct and 8 Nov, and a single male was seen there on 29 Oct. Another was at Rye Hbr LNR on 16 Oct. [LGH]

RED-CRESTED POCHARD*Netta rufina*

All records came from Icklesham. The first was a single female on 18 Feb. Up to 3 birds (2 females, one male) were present during June, with 2 remaining in July and one in Sept. [SJP]

RED-CRESTED POCHARD/Hybrid*Netta rufina*

An apparent duck Red-crested Pochard which was located on the Long Pool, Pagham Hbr, on 30 Jun was considered, after considerable discussion, to be a hybrid. One of the parents was undoubtedly a Red-crested Pochard, but no definite conclusion could be drawn concerning the other half! Some of the plumage characteristics appeared to be not quite right for a pure-bred *rufina*. The bird remained throughout Jul and at least until 3 Aug. [LGH]

POCHARD/TUFTED DUCK Hybrid*Aythya ferina/fuligula*

A drake, considered to be a Pochard/Tufted Duck hybrid, was seen at Earnley on 8 Apr. [LGH]

MARbled DUCK*Marmaronetta angustirostris*

1995: One, at Pagham Hbr on 17 Oct (TJE), has been accepted by *British Birds* as an escape from captivity. This species is not on the British List.

note to editor - it would be nice to know this birds age/sex. If you see Tim Edwards at Pagham ... I think JH's comment in his recent note relating to IJFaichnie on 12 Aug 1995 relates to Gtr Flamingo (published in escapes' section last year).

HOODED MERGANSER*Mergus cucullatus*

An adult female at Rickney, Pevensey Level, from 13 Nov into 1997 (DCL *et al*) has been accepted by *British Birds* as an escape from captivity. This species is not thought to have occurred in the wild in Britain this century, although, interestingly, 3 were at large at this time (*Birding World* 9: 414). This, however, was the least convincing of them, having one wing noticeably shorter than the other!

PATAGONIAN CONURE*Cyanoliseus patagonus*

A free-flying, escaped group of Patagonian Conures at Ifield were worthy of text and pictures in the local press. The birds had escaped from a collection at Oaklands Park Farm, Surrey. Observations included more than 5 on the roof and TV aerial of Ifield Hall on 19 Oct, 8 flying NW over Ifield Brook on 23 Nov, and 7 moving NW over Lambs Green on 26 Dec. Movements were associated with roosting and presumably also with feeding. They had also been noted at Langley Green in Oct. (JRH) [LGH]

SAKER FALCON*Falco cherrug*

One, seen chasing an adult female Peregrine (*Falco peregrinus*) at Birling Gap, Beachy Head, on 30 Oct. [LGH]

LANNER FALCON*Falco biarmicus*

A single at West Itchenor on 7 May. It was seen to take a feral pigeon. [LGH]

BARBARY DOVE*Streptopelia roseogrisea(risoria)*

A single bird, seen at Maynards Green on three dates: 6 and 7 Apr, and again on 8 Jun. A long-domesticated form of the African Collared Dove, *S. roseogrisea*, and often listed under the specific name of *risoria*. [LGH]

COCKATIEL*Nymphicus hollandicus*

Three records of this popular aviary bird: 5 Jul at Bexhill; 17 Aug at Climping Gap, Littlehampton; and on 11 Sept at Shoreham. [LGH]

BUDGERIGAR*Melopsittacus undulatus*

With such an enormous population of caged Budgerigars in the UK, it is not surprising that some escape on occasions! Single birds seen at liberty include one at Nutbourne, Chichester, on 5 Mar; a single at Balsdean, near Rottingdean, on 8 Jul; and two singles at Wick, Littlehampton, on 7 and 16 Aug, one of the blue variety, the other yellow. Another was at Sompting on 18 Aug. [LGH]

ALEXANDRINE PARAKEET*Psittacula eupatria*

A lone bird was seen frequently and on many dates between 28 Aug and 22 Dec on the western side of Pagham Hbr, between Sidlesham Ferry and Church Norton. By some observers it was reported as a Ring-necked Parakeet (*Psittacula krameri*). [LGH]

WEAVER Sp*Ploceus sp*

A weaver, considered to be a Black-headed Weaver, *Ploceus melanocephalus*, was seen at Pett Level on 31 Aug. [LGH]

RED-BILLED QUELEA

Quelea quelea

A single bird was seen on several occasions at Sunnyside, East Grinstead, in Dec.
[LGH]

SUMMARY of BREEDING BIRD COUNTS:

WREN: Summary of confirmed or probable Breeding Bird Counts with densities - John Hobson.

		Pairs	Area ha.	Prs/ha.	
BS	Barcombe, Scobells Farm	8	10.4	0.77	
BBS	Binstead, Barns Copse	14	16.0	0.88	
YM	Yapton, Marsh Farm	26	67.0	0.39	
MG	Maynards Green	24			
HC	Hollingbury Camp	72			
LH	Lullington Heath	12			
WHCF	W. Hoathly, Chiddinglye Farm	27	61.8	0.44	Probable only
BW	Bewl Water	107			Probable only

REED BUNTING:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
Icklesham	15	n/a	8	4		n/a	n/a	
Thorney Dps	10	10	5	6	20	37	16	12
Thorney Is								
Pett Level					5			
Pett Lvl Pools				1	1	1		
Pett Pannel				4				
Sewer								
Pagham W & Lagoon		1	2	2				
Pagham	1		3					
Severals								
Sidlesham			2	2				
Ferry Pond								
Combe	3							
Haven								
St Leonards	1							
Bexhill	3							
Pebsham						2		
Fishbourne						4		
Filsham						1		
Rye SSSI						2		
Rye LNR							3	
No SITES	6	2	5	6	3	6	3	1

Arrival and Departure Dates of Summer Visitors 1995/96

Departure and Arrival Dates of Winter Visitors, 1995/96

CONTRIBUTORS and ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS, 1996

We are grateful to the following observers for records for the 1996 Sussex Bird Report:

.....
.....etc

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.

Heronry Census: This long-standing census is organised in Sussex by Dr AB Watson, 83 Buckingham Road, Shoreham-by-sea, West Sussex. Counts of known heronries are given in the systematic list, contributors in 1996 were: D Buckingham, R Carver, PB Clarke, JK Cross, CH Dean, JC Holt, P Isted, R Knight, DC Lang, Dr RG Loxton, PJ Luffingham, JL Nobbs, GCM Roberts, the Rye Bay Ringing Group, MJ Scott-Ham, S Sutton and Dr AB Watson.

Wetland Bird Survey (WeBS): This BTO/WWT/RSPB/JNCC survey was carried out between April 1996 and March 1997. Counts were carried out, those for the coast being organised by CD Lowmass, 33 Barn Close, Seaford, East Sussex, while those specifically for Chichester Harbour were organised by Ms A de Potier, Harbour Office, Chichester Harbour Conservancy, Itchenor, Chichester, West Sussex. Inland counts were organised by Mrs S Allwood, 69 Farhalls Crescent, Horsham, West Sussex. Thanks are due to the three survey organisers and to the following counters: S Abrams, R Antonini, PC Bance, K Benyon-Tinker, Mrs L Bingley, G Binns, GF Boniface, Dr C Brooks, M Buckley, DJ Burges, KF Burn, T Callaway, Dr J Chapman, GA Cockburn, D Codd, CB Collins, A Cotton, A Dawnay, Ms A de Potier, A Eales, P Edwards, M Emery, Mrs AE Everett, B Fellows, A Foster, DJ Funnell, J Glover, DJ Golds, Miss H Gordon, A Grace, WHF Green, N Greenaway, RR Greenhalf, G Griffin, RG Harris, JL Herring, D Heryett, R Hill, A House, S Knapp, R Knight, L Lacey-Johnson, DC Lang, HJA Lee, CD Lowmass, P Mathews, R Morris, Mrs BM Mortlock, Mrs SJ Patton, CJ Raymond, B Savage, A and Mrs IM Simpson, Miss A Skinner, Ms C Skinner, DI Smith, Miss CA Taylor, P Troake, JE Trowell, PC Turner, ED Urquhart, Mrs P Williams, RLC Williamson, J Willsher, PJ Wilson, H and Mrs H Wingfield-Hayes, CW and Mrs KI Woodburn, K and Mrs J Wright, Dr BJ Yates, and S Younger.

ALL FOLLOWING TO BE CHECKED & REVISED FOR 1966:

Common Birds Census: A number of members carry out annual breeding bird censuses for the BTO on a range of sites throughout the county.

Breeding Bird Survey: This BTO annual national breeding survey, based on selected one km squares, is organised in Sussex by Dr AB Watson.

Barn Owl Survey: Coverage of selected tetrads in Sussex was organised by Dr AB Watson for the BTO/Hawk and Owl Trust's extended survey in 1995.

Pevensey Levels Wintering Bird Survey: Several members continued to give assistance in this three-year survey (completed in March 1995) organised by the RSPB (SE Region).

Amberley Wild Brooks annual monitoring: This annual monitoring for the Society and RSPB is covered by Dr ME Kalaher, Cherry House, Kithurst Lane, Storrington, West Sussex.

Co-ordination of Spring Sea-watching records: The annual co-ordination of these records for the Society is carried out by Dr JA Newnham, 61 Grand Avenue, Worthing, West Sussex.

Cormorant roost counts: Simultaneous counts were carried out monthly from September 1995 to March 1996 at Chichester Gravel Pits and South Stoke, West Sussex, by A Cox and R Knight for the Cormorant Research Group.

We are grateful for summaries of detailed observations at Ashdown Forest from R Harman and D King, Beachy Head from RDM Edgar, Bewl Water from PC Bance, Chichester Harbour from Ms A de Potier, Icklesham from DE Crawley, Pett Level from JAB Gale, Pulborough Brooks from T Callaway and A Cotton, Rye Harbour from Dr BJ Yates, Selsey Bill from BJ Carter, Splash Point from GR Gilmore, Thorney and Pilsley Islands from CB and Mrs MA Collins, Worthing from Dr JA Newnham and Weir Wood Reservoir from Mrs BM Mortlock.

Thanks are due to DE Crawley for continuing to maintain detailed records of ringing in the county and to all ringers who contributed.

The Recorder is especially grateful to Dr JA Newnham and the following team of helpers for coding and inputting a large proportion of records onto the computer; PM Brayshaw, BR Clay, JES Cooper, DE Crawley, Ms A de Potier, IJ Faichnie, JL Herring, JE Hobson, LG Holloway, R Holtham, D King, R Knight, L Manns, MJ Mason, Mrs BM Mortlock, Dr JA Newnham, RT Pepper, C Raymond, Mrs IM Simpson, I Standivan, Dr AB Watson, Mrs A.Wende, J Whitman and Dr BJ Yates.

A total of 61,287 birds of 130 species were ringed in 1996. New species were **Red-crested Pochard** (1), **Hen Harrier** (1), **Little Stint** (6), **Guillemot** (1) and **Little Auk** (1). The Guillemots were oiled birds that had been treated and subsequently released. The Hen Harrier was caught in a mist-net! There is a previous record of a Little Stint being ringed at Shoreham in 1959 (Newnham, *pers. comm.*), and of one which was ringed at the Midrips in 1960 and was recovered in France a month later. These most recent records are the first since 1979. (James, 1996). The Sussex total of **Spotted Crakes** has risen to 21, with four more being found at Icklesham. The first was trapped in 1990. A **Barred Warbler** was trapped at Beachy Head, while single **Booted** and **Yellow-browed Warblers** were caught during autumn passage at Icklesham. At the same site, a single **Red-backed Shrike** was trapped. The first ringing record by the Rye Bay Ringing Group of an **Ortolan Bunting** was recorded at Icklesham. It was the first of the species to be ringed in Sussex since 1989.

A pair of **Bewick's Swans**, originally ringed at Khabuicka, Russia, on 22 Aug 1994, were reported at Pulborough Brooks on 4 Feb 1996 and at Amberley Wild Brooks on 4 Dec 1996. The pair were recorded at Khabuicka during the 1995 breeding season, but apparently did not nest.

Tufted Duck are becoming established breeders at Icklesham and 22 birds were ringed in 1996. Of this number, 16 were ducklings. A single **Pochard** was also ringed, bringing the post-1979 total in Sussex to 8.

A total of 54 raptors were ringed in the county, including the Hen Harrier mentioned above. The other species involved were **Sparrowhawk** (24), **Kestrel** (24) and **Hobby** (5). The figure for the Hobby is exceptional, bringing the total ringed in Sussex to 10 since 1986 which was possibly the year of the first Sussex ringing record. The total for Sparrowhawk is the highest since 1984 (25). The 24 Kestrels included 14 nestlings. A Kestrel ringed in the nest at Moorfield, Derbyshire, on 22 Jun 1996 was found dead at Wales Farm, Plumpton, on 17 Sept.

A **Coot** ringed at Icklesham on 4 Mar 1996 was subsequently found dead on 18 Apr at Rumst, Antwerpen, Belgium. The bird was a road casualty. A total of 44 Coots were ringed in the county during the year, all at Icklesham. Since 1979, 326 Coots have been ringed in our area and there have been reported findings of 6, including the above: all were found dead. Three were shot in France, one was killed by a dog and one was found near Sleaford, Lincolnshire, having presumably died of natural causes. The bird which travelled the greatest distance, 632 km along a bearing of 192 degrees, was shot in the Gironde department of France, having covered the distance in 14 days in November and December 1990. All except the most recent were recovered in the winter months.

A 1st year **Little Ringed Plover**, ringed while on passage at Icklesham on 29 Aug 1995, was controlled at Cottam Power Station, Nottinghamshire, on 21 July 1996. Since 1979, 44 Little Ringed Plovers have been ringed in Sussex. To the best of my knowledge this is the first Sussex-ringed individual to have been controlled anywhere.

A first-year **Kingfisher** ringed at Shoreham-by-Sea on 8 Oct 1995, was controlled on 5 May 1996 at Brandon, Suffolk. The bird was probably breeding at the control site. A female, it carried a brood patch. British Kingfishers tend to be sedentary, most recoveries of ringed birds being less than 9 km from the ringing site. There is a dispersal of young birds in autumn, and movements away from prolonged periods of very cold weather are essential if the individual is to survive.

A **Sand Martin**, ringed at Icklesham on 10 Aug 1990, was controlled nesting at Tancred Grange Quarry, North Yorkshire, on 31 Jul 1992 and controlled again at Brough Hall, Catterick, North Yorkshire, on 21 Jul 1996 where it was apparently nesting, having survived 2172 days (nearly 6 years), since the ringing date.

A juvenile **Swallow**, trapped at Icklesham on 16 Aug 1995, was found drowned in a water reservoir on 10 Dec 1995, after travelling 9134 km to Loogkock Farm, Kenhardt District, Cape Province, R.S.A.

An interesting record involves a **Meadow Pipit**. This first-year bird was ringed at Dungeness Bird Observatory on the morning of 30 Sept 1996. At 1300 hours on the same day it was trapped in a mist-net at Icklesham.

A juvenile **Robin** ringed at Ternhouse, Lothian Region, Scotland, on 10 Jun 1995, was controlled at Beachy Head on 23 Aug 1995. Not quite so intrepid was the juvenile Robin, ringed at Steyning on 10 Jun 1996, that was controlled at Icklesham on 7 Aug 1996 (69 km, E). Ringing recoveries have tended to suggest that few British Robins move more than 5 km from their birthplace. These are obviously two of that select few. (Mead 1984).

A total of 539 **Fieldfares** were ringed during 1996. This is an unusually high number: the previous highest annual figure was 321 in 1991. Most of the birds were trapped in the early part of the year at Icklesham. There have been three recoveries. All the birds were found dead, two in Norway and one in Sweden. The bird which travelled furthest reached Sor-Trondelag, Norway, being found dead on 22 May, 104 days after ringing.

Once again, a large number of **Grasshopper Warblers** (560) were ringed. I have no records of any recoveries from previous years to add. Up to and including 1994, 13,853 Grasshopper Warblers had been ringed in Britain and only 28 had been recovered. Of that grand total, 2162 had been ringed in Sussex since 1979. (Clarke *et al.*, 1996).

Aquatic Warblers continue to be trapped on an annual basis. The two main sites, Icklesham (4) and Thorney Island (1), ringed 5 birds. The birds are usually trapped after the middle of August and into September.

A **Reed Warbler** which was ringed at Icklesham on 2 Oct 1993 and was controlled at Novvig, Denmark, on 4 Aug 1994, is confirmed as being the first British-ringed Reed Warbler found in Denmark. (Clarke *et al.*, 1996, Crawley, 1995).

A juvenile **Garden Warbler** ringed at Zulte, Oost-Vlaanderen, Belgium, on 12 Sept 1995, found its way to Beachy Head where it was re-trapped on 22 Sept. An adult Garden Warbler, ringed at Beachy Head on 12 Aug 1989, was re-trapped there on 28 Aug 1996. This bird had been re-trapped previously at Beachy Head in July 1991 and August 1994. The bird had survived for 7 years and 8 days from the time of ringing. *Figure 1* shows the extent of Garden Warbler ringing in the county over the

last 11 years. Throughout the 90s, the effort at Icklesham, where the greatest number are ringed, has been fairly constant and the figures are an indication of autumn passage for the relevant years.

Of the other three species of common *Sylvia* warblers, both **Lesser Whitethroat** (1995=264, 1996=345) and **Common Whitethroat** (1995=1208, 1996=1488) were trapped in increased numbers. **Blackcap** figures were over 1000 down in comparison, (1995=3738, 1996=2676).

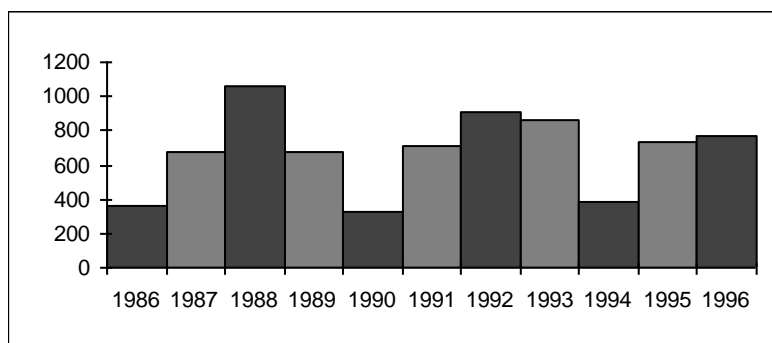


Figure 1. Garden Warblers ringed in Sussex 1986-96.

A first-year male **Blackcap**, ringed at Beachy Head on 4 Sept 1993, was controlled near Doncaster, South Yorkshire, on the early date of 8 Apr 1995. A wintering bird or an early arrival? My guess is the latter.

An adult male **Goldcrest**, trapped at Cissbury on 4 Nov 1995, was controlled by ringers at Bardsey Bird Observatory, Gwynedd, on 7 Apr 1996. During spring and autumn migration, considerable numbers of Goldcrests pass through Bardsey Island. Observatory' records over a period of 30 years up to 1984 show it to be the third most-ringed species after Willow Warbler and Manx Shearwater. (Jones, Peter Hope, 1988).

A total of 31 **Firecrests** were ringed. This is the highest number since 1990 (33). Of that total, Beachy Head Ringing Station and Rye Bay Ringing Group captured 11 each. No recoveries were reported.

Two juvenile **Bearded Tits**, ringed on 1 Aug 1995 at Thorney Island, were re-trapped at Icklesham on 20 Apr 1996. Both were subsequently re-trapped at least twice during May and June 1996, again at Icklesham. A nestling colour-ringed on 25 May and subsequently re-trapped four times at the ringing site up to 22 Sept, was identified in the field at Walton Reservoir, Walton-on-Thames, on 17 Dec. An adult male bird, ringed on the 15 Jan 1994 at Weston Turville Reservoir, Buckinghamshire, was controlled at Icklesham on 3 July 1996. The bird remained at Icklesham at least until the end of the month. Another adult bird, a female, ringed on 26 Mar 1996 at Wilstone Reservoir, Hertfordshire, was similarly controlled at Icklesham on 6 July 1996 and like the previous bird was re-trapped up to the end of the month. *Figure 2*

shows the record of Bearded Tit ringing since 1986: the 1996 total of 162 included 82 nestlings.

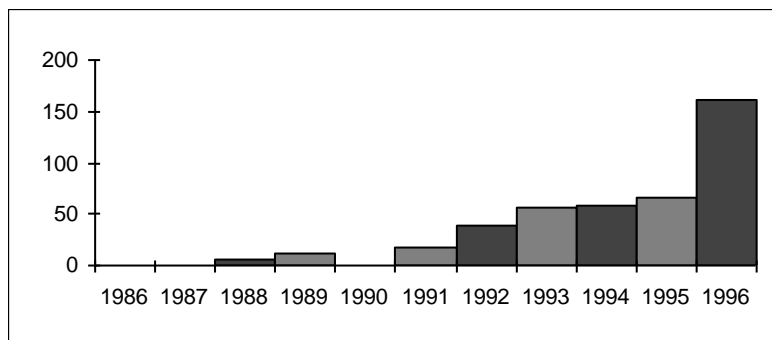


Figure 2. Bearded Tits ringed in Sussex 1986-96

A **Long-tailed Tit**, ringed at Icklesham on 9 Oct 1994, was found freshly dead, possibly the victim of a cat, at Blackheath, Greater London. Co-incidentally, the ringing date is the same as the Long-tailed Tit from Icklesham which was re-trapped several times at Beachy Head during October 1995. (Crawley, 1996).

Since 1981, substantial numbers of **Siskins** have been ringed in Sussex. An overwhelming majority of the birds trapped have been enticed into gardens with a supply of peanuts. Most of these birds were trapped in East Grinstead. However my two correspondents in East Grinstead report that very few Siskins came into their gardens during 1996. In fact, only 48 were ringed throughout the whole of the county. The average for the years 1990-1995 was 450. Siskins had a poor breeding season in Northern Scotland in 1995. (*pers. comm*).

The fall in the population of **Linnets** has been giving cause for concern in recent years, though the 1995 breeding bird survey of the BTO showed a 'significant increase'. This good news is reflected in the high number of Linnets (508) trapped and ringed in the county in 1996. At least 70 of this total were nestlings. (*Figure 3* shows numbers of Linnets ringed in the county between 1986-96.) However, the bad news is that the results of the comparison between the number of juvenile birds trapped at Constant Effort Sites throughout Britain, in 1995 and 1996, shows a fall in the percentage of juveniles caught in 1996, as compared to adults. In fact, the results over a range of common British breeding species indicates the poorest breeding season since the inception of the Constant Effort ringing scheme in 1983. Some species, including Dunnock, Chiffchaff, Long-tailed Tit, Blue Tit and Great Tit, recorded statistically significant percentage falls in the number of juvenile birds trapped in 1996, compared to 1995. At the 120 Constant Effort Sites in Britain, birds are ringed on 12 days between May and August each year. The ringers use a series of mist-nets, erected in the same positions and for the same period of time on each of the 12 visits. The percentage of juveniles caught each year is an indication of the success or otherwise of the breeding season. The primary reason for such a poor showing in

1996 was the bad weather which resulted in an exceptionally late and cold spring. (BTO News, 1996, 1997).

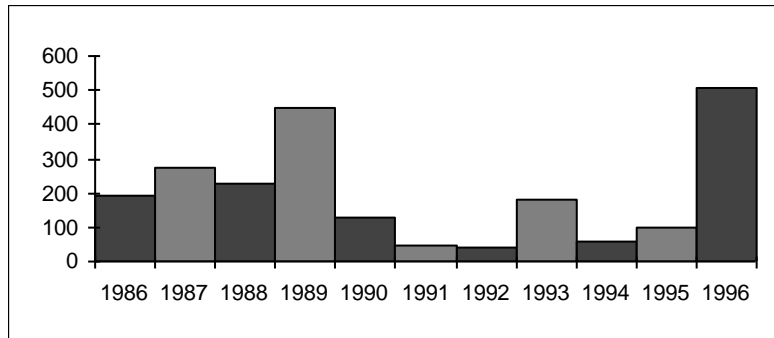


Figure 3. Linnets ringed in Sussex 1986-96

Over 200 **Yellowhammers** were ringed during 1996, including at least 22 nestlings. This is the highest figure for a number of years. As with the Linnets, the majority of the birds were trapped at Icklesham where habitat management has encouraged the species.

An unringed Gremlin caused a printing error in last year's Report. In referring to the long-lived Oystercatcher that fills 5th position in the longevity records of British ringed birds, its age should have read '31 years, 6 months and 12 days'. (Crawley, 1996).

I extend my gratitude to the individual ringers and groups who have provided the records that make this report possible.

REFERENCES

- Balmer, Dawn and Peach, Will 1997 *Population Changes on Constant Effort Sites* 1995-96 BTO News 208:8-9.
- Clarke, J.A. et al 1996, *Report of Bird Ringing in Britain and Ireland for 1994*. Ringing & Migration Volume 17 Part 1:36-79.
- Crawley, D. 1995, *Sussex Bird Report* 47:114.
- Crawley, D. 1996, *Sussex Bird Report* 48:152.
- Crawley, D. 1996, *Sussex Bird Report* 48:149.
- Gregory, R. and Bashford, R. 1996 *Breeding Bird Survey: 1994-1995* BTO News 206:5-8
- James, Paul 1996, (editor) *The Birds of Sussex* p 251.
- Jones, Peter Hope 1988, *The Natural History Of Bardsey*.
- Mead, C. J. 1984, *Robins*, Whittet Books, London.
- Derek Crawley, 67a Grange Court Drive, Bexhill-on-Sea, East Sussex, TN39 4AY. (01424-210874).

THE GRASSHOPPER WARBLER IN SUSSEX: THE RESULTS OF A BREEDING SURVEY DURING 1995 (WITH ADDITIONAL RECORDS FOR 1996).

By RDM Edgar

The last breeding survey of the Grasshopper Warbler (*Locustella naevia*) in the county was carried out in the period 1977 - 80, and was fully reported in Parmenter (1982). That survey was instituted "due to a general belief that the Grasshopper Warbler was declining steadily in Sussex". It did, indeed, confirm that belief and showed that a population which had peaked at 150 pairs in 1970, had declined to a total of 54 pairs over the four years 1977 - 80, with a low point of 17 - 18 pairs in 1978. James (1996) gives a county population of between 31 - 44 pairs in the Atlas period of 1988 - 92, suggesting yet a further decline. Indeed, subsequent reports to the Society, published in The Sussex Bird Report, give breeding populations of two pairs in 1993 and none at all in 1994. Due to this apparently alarming situation, and to show that this was not just due to a lack of submitted records, the Society decided to conduct a county-wide survey in 1995. (The 1995 Report refers to records from 16 sites between April and July, but this includes some migrants).

METHOD

Appeals for all records of possible males holding territory were made in the Society's Newsletter. In addition, some observers who watched areas thought to be particularly suitable were contacted directly. Anyone reporting Grasshopper Warblers was sent the same recording card as that used in the 1977 - 80 survey, requesting details of the observation (see later).

RESULTS

Positive records of singing birds (considered to indicate potential breeding pairs) in the period mid-May to the end of July 1995 were received from six 10km squares which had produced a maximum of nine singing birds altogether. Strictly speaking, seven squares were involved, but one bird was believed to have moved a short distance from one square into a neighbouring one. Additional records were received by the Society of non-singing Grasshopper Warblers during July from Icklesham, but these were all considered to be migrants. The squares where singing birds were found are shown in Fig. 1 and tabulated in Appendix 1. Note that although the earlier survey paper gave actual tetrads, the current rarity of the Grasshopper Warbler is considered by the author to warrant some degree of confidentiality over breeding locations in order to prevent unnecessary disturbance.

Due to the regular appeal for records, it was thought that there was a particular awareness of the need to report all Grasshopper Warblers. Therefore, although the survey was not continued into 1996, it is likely that the records submitted for that year were reasonably complete. In that year, a total of seven singing males was recorded, also in six 10km squares. These records are also shown in Fig. 1 (and Appendix 1).

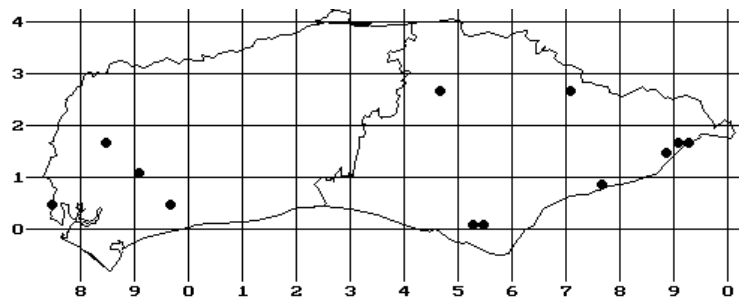


Figure 1 Distribution of breeding Grasshopper Warblers, 1995-96.

Observers in 1995 were asked to record the habitats in which birds were found, in the same way as in the earlier survey. Eight of the nine birds recorded could be ascribed to the six specific habitats, see Table 1. In addition, one was found in an uncultivated (presumably set-aside) field.

Table 1. Habitats used by breeding Grasshopper Warblers in Sussex in 1995.

Habitat:	Number of birds:
Downland scrub	0
Osier beds and rough marshland	4
Woodland edge	2
Overgrown ditches and hedges	0
Gorse commons and heathlands	0
Young plantations	2

DISCUSSION

The total of nine pairs for 1995 might be over optimistic, since in TQ50 the dates are not entirely mutually exclusive and it is just possible that only two birds were involved. However, it is equally certain that with such a secretive species, which not everyone is able to hear when it is singing, a few pairs were missed. With only seven pairs recorded in 1996 (even if this was not part of a formal survey) the inevitable conclusion must be that the county breeding population is now minute and is teetering on the brink of extinction.

The number recorded was so small that it is not profitable to compare the habitat use with the last survey. Clearly, there is a great deal of all the potentially suitable habitats available in the county that is not occupied by Grasshopper Warblers. In the previous survey, it was considered that birds may have forsaken plantations because they had become too old and had thus changed significantly in character and perhaps no longer offered suitable breeding habitat. Due to the severe storms of the late 1980s, however, there are now more young plantations in the county than there have been for a very long time, but as yet there is no indication that this has been of benefit to the Grasshopper Warbler.

SUMMARY

Appeals for records of singing Grasshopper Warblers in Sussex in 1995 produced a maximum of only nine possible breeding pairs. The records received by the Society for 1996, although not part of a formal survey, indicated only seven pairs. There has been a very severe reduction in the breeding population, although there is plenty of suitable habitat available.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am extremely grateful to those observers who submitted records and filled in habitat cards. I sympathise with those who, like me, failed to encounter any breeding Grasshopper Warblers. John Newnham kindly provided records from the Society's database and miraculously compiled the map.

REFERENCES

- James, P. (Ed) 1996. The Birds of Sussex. Sussex Ornithological Society.
Parmenter, T.W. 1982. The Grasshopper Warbler in Sussex: the results of a breeding survey during 1977 - 1980. Sussex Bird Report 34: 79 - 82.
Patton, S. (Ed) 1996. Sussex Bird Reports Nos 47 and 48.

Appendix 1. Number of breeding Grasshopper Warblers found in Sussex during 1995 - 1996, by 10km squares:.

10km Square	1995	1996
SU70	-	1
SU81/91	1	2
SU90	-	1
TQ42	-	1
TQ50	3	1
TQ70	1	-
TQ72	1	-
TQ81	2	-
TQ91	1	1
<i>Total:</i>	9	7

Robert D.M.Edgar, 6 Turnpike Close, Ringmer, Lewes, East Sussex, BN8 5PD.

MY EXPERIENCE with WOODLARKS in SUSSEX.

by Leslie Osborne

I have had fifteen years of enjoyment observing this delightful species with its considerable tolerance of the presence of observers and its evocative song. I write of my experiences in the hope that they will enable others to locate and enjoy this challenging little bird.

Field characteristics

Its field characters are well described in the literature and the Woodlark is not difficult to distinguish from the Skylark, whether on the ground or in flight. One feature usually described as diagnostic is the conspicuous black and white marks just below the angle of the folded wing. My field experience suggests that these markings are most often not exposed when the bird is perched or on the ground. They have, significantly, been observed being displayed prominently in an interaction between two birds on the ground (per comm R.Crane). Likewise, the crest is not often raised and then only when the lark is apprehensive or closely approached by an observer. The eyestripe of the Woodlark is much more prominent than that of the Skylark.

Breeding habitat

In Britain, lowland heath is often described as the most common habitat, but heathland is very variable in its structure. Unmanaged heathland with a near-continuous cover of heather, gorse, birch or bracken is, in my experience, unlikely to hold breeding Woodlarks, unless there has been some action by management to provide suitable breeding and feeding territories for the species. It is apparent that their most important requirement is substantial patches of bare ground or tightly-grazed turf — hence their particular liking for areas of recently-cleared land. A few scattered trees also seem to be desirable as they are frequently used as song-posts.

I have searched heaths in West Sussex since 1982, yet did not locate my first breeding pair on heathland until 1993 and then in a location where grassy scrubland had been cleared and kept mown by management, thus creating an attractive habitat for this lark. Breeding has since taken place here every year.

One very necessary characteristic of a suitable breeding site is that the soil should be dry and sandy to enable the larks to excavate and shape a depression in the soil in which the nest is built. Both male and female make such excavations. Such soils are highly suitable for conifer forestry, for the growing of hardy nursery stock of trees and shrubs and for mineral extraction. These localities all attract breeding Woodlarks and I have enjoyed locating them in such areas in West Sussex. These soils are also much used for Sweet Chestnut coppicing, but in my experience this crop has no attractions for the Woodlark, whether breeding or wintering.

Conifer forestry certainly can provide attractive breeding sites, especially recently cleared or replanted areas. It is my experience that even older plantings may retain their attraction for Woodlarks, especially if the planted area has wide, grassy rides.

Movement and wintering habitat

The B.W.P. (Vol V) 1988 states that the Woodlark is mainly migratory in winter in N.W. Europe, but is mainly resident in the maritime climate of Western Europe. However, the evidence from the main breeding areas in Britain appears to be

contradictory. Thus the Woodlark of the East Anglian Breckland, presently breeding mainly in conifer forests, are reported as migrating totally from the Breckland area for the winter period. On the other hand, the population of Woodlarks breeding on the Hants/Surrey border is known to remain in winter within the general breeding area, often using farmland, including cereal stubble, for the purpose.

In the winter of 1995-96, my researches, designed to clarify the position in Sussex, have confirmed that many and possibly all the breeding Woodlarks in West Sussex spend the winter within just a mile or two of the main breeding locations. None of these Woodlarks have been found to be in residence in their breeding localities at this time of the year.

With the permission of local landowners and farmers, I visited regularly in January and February a number of possible wintering areas, mainly cereal stubble due to be 'set-aside' and therefore to remain uncultivated through winter and spring. On three sites I located a total of some 40 Woodlarks, although my frequent visits revealed that the numbers present on any one occasion varied considerably. Thus, at the richest site, a very large expanse of cereal stubble, where the maximum population was 25 Woodlarks on two days (January 4th and 25th), there were none on January 30th (a warm, sunny day) and February 7th (two inches of lying snow) while on February 15th (a cold day) there were 17 present.

There were three areas where I located wintering Woodlarks that year. Two were cereal stubbles left in their post-harvest uncultivated condition as 'set-aside'. Both were rather weedy with annual weeds which were seeding, thus providing winter food for the birds.

The richest site referred to earlier was very large, over 500 metres in length, which the 25 Woodlarks shared with 50 Skylarks. The latter were always to be found in the most open and exposed part of the almost hedgeless field, while the Woodlarks were nearly always at one end of the field which enjoyed protection from a belt of mature deciduous trees running north/south on the east side of the field.

The second cereal stubble field also had a small population of wintering Woodlarks and Skylarks. Again the two species were located in different parts of the field, with the Skylarks located in the open and exposed area whilst the Woodlarks were usually near a belt of mature trees running east/west on the south side of the area.

The third site also included weedy, uncultivated areas situated in a tree nursery, which would also provide some protection against wind. There were no Skylarks at this site, which contained none of the 'wide open spaces' that wintering Skylarks appear to prefer.

My observations appear to suggest that wintering Woodlarks need shelter from the wind, beyond that provided by cereal stubbles and the like. I turned for guidance to the great Sussex ornithologist, Walpole-Bond, who, in his 'History of the Birds of Sussex' (Volume 1), says that trees are almost indispensable for Woodlarks in their breeding season, where 'they will be found either with wood clumps, belts, lines or straggling self-sown specimens'. So, it is hardly surprising that in its winter quarters

the Woodlark may also favour the presence of trees, while the Skylark has no such need.

Social behaviour

The Woodlark, with its lovely song, is easy to enjoy, but it is often difficult for the observer to understand what is going on. The bird is very tame, and so ironically locating a breeding pair is difficult and often involves detailed searching of a likely territory. Walpole-Bond suggested that it was necessary to walk within 25 metres to locate them.

The male of the breeding pair sings relatively little, except in the early stages, and by about the stage of egg-laying his singing is waning. It usually ceases altogether by the time of hatching. The task of the observer is made more difficult by the presence of an unpaired male which sings for much longer periods and at greater heights than the paired male. Thus it is very important to understand the difference in song characteristics of the paired and unpaired male.

The B.W.P. (p. 197) states that most of the defence of territory by the male Woodlark declines during the copulation period and early incubation. It is my experience that challenges by the unpaired male are not consistently made throughout the whole breeding season, which may include up to three separate nesting attempts by the breeding pair. After all, the challenging male would be wasting his time attempting to get an opportunity to mate a paired female which was not accepting mating with her regular partner.

The main season of singing lasts from February/March until about early July, but there is a second period of song in late September to early November. Witherby's 'Handbook' reports briefly that 'display is observed in Autumn as well as in Spring'. The B.W.P (Vol V) 1988 repeats this statement, but does not add to it, suggesting that there was then (some 50 years later) no additional evidence available.

In autumn 1996 I had the opportunity in Sussex to investigate the behaviour of Woodlarks at this time of the year. In the first two weeks of October we experienced a pleasant spell of weather, warm and sunny and free of strong winds. I made morning visits to seven Woodlark breeding habitats, using what might be called 'song-based search' which involved walking through the areas intent merely in locating Woodlark song. I did not search the ground thoroughly, as would be necessary for the location of breeding pairs, for I merely wanted to study the social behaviour of the birds during this period of autumn song.

In three of the seven localities there was no Woodlark song, but at the remaining four sites there was active aerial song by Woodlarks and at each location there was social interaction in progress. The outstanding feature was the intense aerial singing dispute between two male birds at each site in the presence of a third (presumably female) bird. At the end of the aerial confrontation, which in most cases consisted of gentle circling of the two singing males, (no physical contact was involved), the challenging male which had failed in the contest then departed the battlefield while the successful male flew gently to earth and joined his female partner which had remained there. In three of the four cases the female had played no part in the action and her presence was revealed only by the return to earth of the male.

In the fourth example, the female was involved during the singing flight of the two males which took place at a height of about 20 metres. She circled gently at about 50 metres until the defeated male had departed the scene. She then descended to earth in the company of the victorious male, both landing less than 20 metres from me.

Breeding

I have never searched for nests of the species although ten years ago, when walking through a young pine plantation, I accidentally disturbed a sitting Woodlark from a nest containing four eggs. She provided me with a textbook demonstration of the characteristic distraction-lure display as described in the B.W.P. (Vol V). Thus, I have no evidence about actual nest-sites in my study area.

All my observations of Woodlarks in Sussex have been made by walking the countryside without recourse to the use of any form of viewing hide. Such a method would in any case be quite unsuitable for use by an arthritic octogenarian!

Acknowledgements

Over the last four years I have been privileged to share some of the pleasures of studying Woodlarks in their breeding environment in Sussex with my friend Robin Crane. He has kindly offered his comments and advice on my writings on this subject and I wish to record my sincere thanks for his generous help.

Leslie Osborne, Carron Lane, Midhurst, West Sussex.

THE TREE SPARROW IN SUSSEX

by *Tim W. Parmenter*

The decline of the Tree Sparrow (*Passer montanus*) is well documented in literature, which illustrates a steady reduction in numbers through the years. In the *Atlas Survey* (1988–92), breeding was only confirmed in 69 tetrads and there has been a continuing reduction in the population since then. The situation as at 1996 is admirably summarised in the *Birds of Sussex* (1996).

A major factor may be modern farming methods which have encouraged greater weed control, thus reducing the availability of seeds. Also, the practice of autumn ploughing and subsequent sowing of winter-growing cereals, has all but reduced winter stubbles and their associated food sources to zero. However, it is unlikely that these are the only cause of the Tree Sparrow's decrease in population: Walpole-Bond commented on the situation as long ago as 1935 when, according to his information, breeding sites in the county were a scant two.

In 1995, it was decided to carry out a further survey to ascertain the present status. In that year, only 5 pairs were reported breeding from a mere 2 sites. A study of the records post-*Avifauna* i.e. 1993 — 96, provides the following records of confirmed or possible breeding:

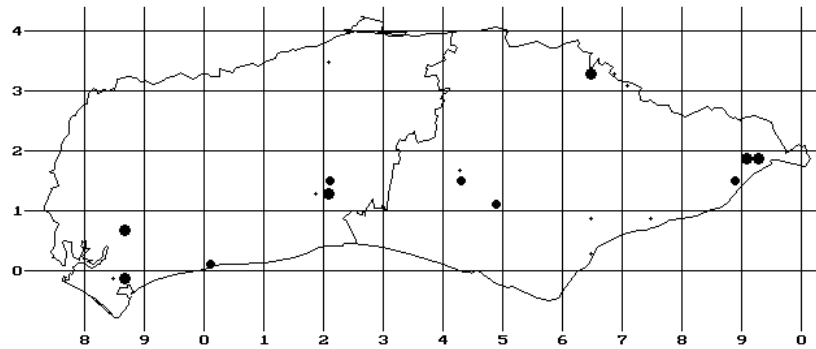
- 1993 — Three pairs at Sidlesham.
One pair at Bewl Water.
Breeding confirmed at Rye Harbour, but no count made.
Possible pair at Elms Farm, Icklesham.
Possible pair at Climping.
- 1994 — Two or three pairs, plus 3 possible pairs at Henfield.
One pair at Pagham Harbour.
Three possible pairs at Bewl Water.
- 1995 — Three (?) pairs at Henfield.
Two pairs at Sidlesham.
- 1996 — A nucleus of 18 pairs at Rye Harbour.
Two pairs at Henfield.
One pair at Barcombe Mills.
One possible pair at Laughton Level.
Nestbox with 5 young at Elms Farm, Icklesham.

All the pairs at Rye Harbour were associated with nestboxes, showing the importance of providing suitable man-made holes in potential breeding habitat.

Winter flocks in these years were also relatively poor, although, as can be seen below, Elms Farm, Icklesham, featured a major concentration in Jan 1996. The largest numbers are listed below:

- 1993/94 — 50+ at Elms Farm, Icklesham
40, Rye Bay Wood
25, Birling Gap, Beachy Head
- 1994/95 — 50, Sidlesham, Ferry Field
24, Upper Adur Levels
- 1995/96 — 30, Pagham Harbour
30, Castle Water, Rye Harbour
22, Weir Wood Reservoir
Between 20 and 65, Elms Farm, Icklesham.

The map below shows the records where breeding has been confirmed (large dots); probable breeding (medium dots) or the species just seen (small dots):



Members of the Sussex Ornithological Society are requested to continue to send in records for this species and are reminded of the importance of indicating on their record sheets and notes whether or not breeding was suspected. Equally, accurate estimates of any autumn and wintering flocks are of great importance.

Tim W. Parmenter, 22, The Kiln, Burgess Hill, West Sussex, RH15 0LU.

SURVEY OF THE BREEDING ROOK POPULATION IN SUSSEX, 1996.

by Matthew V Sennitt.

INTRODUCTION

The Rook (*Corvus frugilegus*) is a bird of farmland, feeding on the ground in both pasture and tillage (Brenchley, 1984). The Rook population was thought to be increasing until the late 1950s, but a national survey in 1976 found a decline (Sage and Vernon, 1978); the decrease in Sussex being estimated at 42% in Rook nest numbers by Merritt (1978). A further survey in 1980, based on randomly selected 10km squares, showed a partial recovery overall, but indicated further decline in some parts of South-East England (Sage and Whittington, 1985). In Sussex, however, the numbers of Rook nests had increased during this period (Sennitt, 1981). Since 1980, the populations of several avian species dependent on farmland have suffered marked declines (Marchant *et al.*, 1990). This, together with catastrophic changes in some areas of woodland caused by the storms of 1987 and 1990, has prompted a further survey of the Rook nesting population: nationally by the BTO using sample tetrads, and a full census in Sussex.

METHOD

The method of counting Rook nests and rookeries was similar to that used in 1975 and 1980 and was based on the method being used for the BTO sample census of rookeries in 1996. A rookery was defined as any group of nests situated 100 metres or more from the nearest group of nests. Rookeries were searched for from January, and Rook nests counted from late March to early May. Observers were asked to count all nests in a rookery, whether occupied or not, locating each rookery with a 6-figure OS grid reference. At the same time, the species of trees in which nests were found were recorded and the number of nests in each tree species counted. Coverage utilised the Sussex Ornithological Society's 10km square stewardship and was based on recorded coverage from each tetrad within a 10km square.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The survey of the whole county was carried out in 1996 in a single season, in contrast to the extended survey of 1975 when rookeries were located over three years, before the final count. However, returns indicated that most tetrads in the county were surveyed and the results are therefore reliable. The survey located 685 rookeries, with 16,512 nests being recorded. The results show that both the total of Rooks' nests and the number of rookeries have decreased since 1975, by 9.2% and 6.9% respectively. Furthermore, the decrease may have been larger, since Sennitt (1981) estimated some 20,300 Rook nests in Sussex in 1980. This decline runs contrary to the national trend (Marchant, 1997), but may reflect the situation in Kent where a 35% decrease in rook nest numbers was observed (Martin, 1997). However, marked fluctuations may occur in a Rook population showing a significant increasing trend (Chater, 1996), and more frequent surveys would be required to determine the population trend of Rooks in Sussex.

The distribution of nests depending on rookery size (Table 1) showed an increase in the number of nests in small rookeries, since 1975, with a reduction in the number of nests in larger rookeries. Furthermore, only 13 rookeries with more than 100 nests

were counted in 1996 (Table 2), in comparison with 21 in 1975. In other respects, though, the results of the 1996 survey are similar to those of 1975, with the average size of rookeries in the county (24.1 nests per rookery) changing little since 1975 (when it was 24.7), and the distribution of rookeries by size in 1996 (Table 3) being similar to that reported by Merritt (1978). Furthermore, the survey revealed that higher populations of Rooks remain on the alkaline soils of the Downs and neutral soils of the Coastal Plain than on the acid soils of the High Weald (Figure 1). This is also apparent from the distribution of nesting Rooks between 1988 -1992 (Sennitt, 1996).

Table 1. Distribution of Rook nests, depending on rookery size, 1996.

Size of rookery	1-25 nests	26-50 nests	51-100 nests	101-200 nests	201+ nests
No. of nests in rookeries of stated size	5,808	4,854	3,966	1,533	351
% of total nests	35.2	29.4	24.0	9.3	2.1

Table 2. Rookeries with 100 or more nests in Sussex, 1996.

Site	grid. ref.	Nests	Site	grid ref	Nests
Hambrook	SU79707 0	154	Westdean	TV52698 6	103
Highleigh Farm	SZ843987	120	Birling	TV55696 8	130
Binstead	SU99004 8	147	Hankham, NW.	TQ61306 2	130
Watersfield	TQ01816 2	104	Hankham, NE.	TQ62305 8	136
Sompting	TQ16406 2	150	Westfield	TQ79515 0	128
Falmer	TQ34808 8	102	Winchelsea	TQ90517 5	351
Iford	TQ40707 1	129			

Table 3. Distribution of rookeries by size in Sussex, 1996.

No. of nests in rookery	1-25	26-50	51-100	101-200	201+
No. of rookeries	473	138	61	12	1
% of rookeries	69.1	20.1	8.9	1.8	0.1

The change in fortunes of the Rook population reflects changes in farmland use. The collapse of the Rook population between 1945 and 1975 in Sussex coincided with the dramatic fall in the total area of grassland in the county, between 1939 and 1957 (McKenzie, 1996). More recently there has been a partial recovery of grassland area, but other changes in farming practice may have hindered recovery of Rook numbers. In particular, the switch from spring to autumn cultivation (O'Connor and Shrubbs, 1986), and the indirect effects of pesticides may have been detrimental to the Rook population, by decreasing the supply of invertebrates. The negative effects of these practices may have been ameliorated by set aside, especially permanent grass (Henderson, 1997).

In contrast to the small changes in the number and broad distribution of Rook nests in Sussex since 1975, the location of rookeries has changed considerably (Figure 2). The number of nests in rookeries has been shown to fluctuate considerably (Chater, 1996), with many rookeries being abandoned. Nevertheless, it is notable that the Rook nesting density has fallen in some areas, mainly on the Coastal Plain south of Chichester, the Weald south of Horsham and a broad band from the Downs above Brighton and Newhaven to the High Weald from Forest Row to Heathfield. This has been balanced by an increase in nesting density in the Low Weald north of Storrington, and at Rye and Winchelsea.

The species of trees in which nests were located were recorded for 12,112 nests and the frequency of use is shown in Table 4. The most commonly used were the Oak (36.1%), Pine (19.0%), Ash (15.2%) and Beech (7.9%). Trees used were usually mature, but some nests were found in immature Ash, in Holly and in Hawthorn. It is notable that only 2.1% of Rook nests remained in Elm in 1996, compared with an estimated 10% in 1975 (Merritt, 1978), and 14.6% of Rook nests in the 10km squares surveyed in 1980 (Sennitt, 1981).

Table 4. Distribution of Rook nests by tree species.

Tree species	% of nests found in this species.
Oak <i>Quercus robur</i>	36.1
Pine <i>Pinus sylvestris</i>	19.0
Ash <i>Fraxinus excelsior</i>	15.2
Beech <i>Fagus sylvatica</i>	7.9
Sycamore <i>Acer psuedoplatanus</i>	4.3
Holm Oak <i>Quercus ilex</i>	2.4
Horse Chestnut <i>Aesculus hippocastanum</i>	2.2
Elm <i>Ulmus procera</i>	2.1
Poplar <i>Populus spp.</i>	0.93
Alder <i>Alnus glutinosa</i>	0.91
London Plane <i>Platanus x hispanica</i>	0.74
Hornbeam <i>Carpinus betula</i>	0.73
Lime <i>Tilia spp.</i>	0.73
Monterey Cypress <i>Cupressus macrocarpa</i>	0.63
Fir <i>Abies spp.</i>	0.50
Sweet Chestnut <i>Castania sativa</i>	0.44
Willow <i>Salix spp.</i>	0.27
Yew <i>Taxus baccata</i>	0.25
Birch <i>Betula spp.</i>	0.15
Cedar <i>Cedrus libani</i>	0.11
Larch <i>Larix decidua</i>	0.04
Walnut <i>Juglans regia</i>	0.04
Field Maple <i>Acer campestre</i>	0.03
Hawthorn <i>Crataegus monogyna</i>	0.02
Holly <i>Ilex aquifolium</i>	0.02
Monkey Puzzle <i>Araucaria araucana</i>	0.01

Figure 1. The breeding distribution and nest density per tetrad of the Rook, 1996.

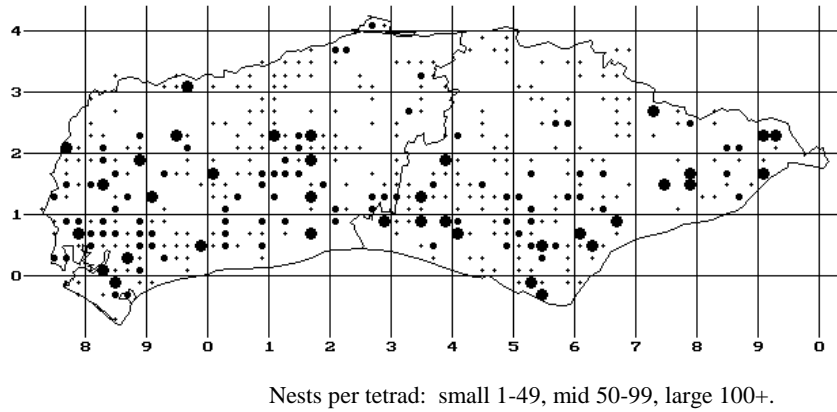
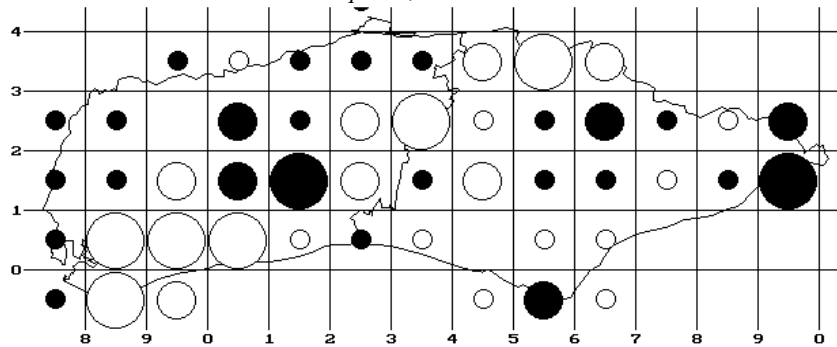


Figure 2. Change in Rook nest numbers from 1975 to 1996 for recorded 10km squares, in Sussex.



Increased (closed circles) and decreased (open circles) indicate numbers of Rook nests, 1975-1996: small 1-99, mid 100-199, large 200+.

The Dutch Elm disease epidemic of the 1970s, leading to loss of Elms (*Ulmus procera*), must be considered as one cause of rookery loss and subsequent relocation. Mature Elms were favoured by nesting Rooks and in some counties constituted the main host tree (Sage and Vernon, 1978). Indeed, loss of Elms was a major reason for the national sample census of rookeries in 1980 (Sage and Whittington, 1985). Loss of Elms in Sussex has certainly caused local rookery extinction and has resulted in Elms holding fewer nests in 1996 than in the previous surveys. Using records retained from the 1980 sample census of rookeries, it may be seen (Table 5) that in the sample 10 km squares the loss of only 4.3% of nests counted in 1975 were lost due to rookery extinction caused by loss of Elms and 13.0% by 1996. However, this is only a part of

the total extinction of rookeries during this time period, since rookeries holding 10.9% of the Rook nests found in 1975 were lost by 1980 and 49.0% by 1996.

Table 5. Loss of Rook nests (1975-1996) in the Sussex sample census 10km squares, 1980.

1975 - (4220 nests counted in census squares).	1980	1996
Number of nests lost due to rookery extinction.	458	2069
% of nests lost.	10.9%	49.0%
Number of nests lost due to Elm tree loss.	182	549
% of nests lost.	4.3%	13.0%

Additional causes for the extinction of rookeries, noted by observers during the 1996 survey, include harassment of rookeries, urbanisation, road building and local clearance of trees. The largest cause of tree loss during 1975-1996 resulted from the storms of October 1987 and January 1990, and the potential for rookery extinction by these events is clear. The woodlands of East Sussex were surveyed for damage following the autumn storm of 1987 (Noble, 1988), and it is notable that the area found to contain the most severely damaged woodlands coincides with the main area of rookery loss in East Sussex. Furthermore, the eastern extremity of the county, which showed largest increases in nesting Rook numbers in 1996, was found to be little damaged by the 1987 storm. This suggests that destruction of woodland resulting from the 1987 storm was a major factor in the relocation of rookeries in Sussex.

SUMMARY

16,512 Rook nests located in 685 rookeries were found in Sussex, showing a 9.2% decrease in Rook nest numbers and a 6.9% decrease in rookeries since 1975. A greater part of the population was shown to be nesting in smaller rookeries, than in 1975, at the expense of larger rookeries, with only 13 rookeries numbering above 100 nests being found in the county. However, the average rookery size of 24.1 nests remained similar to the figure found in 1975 (24.7), as did the distribution of rookeries by size, and the distribution of rookeries within the county. The relocation of many rookeries had been shown to occur, since 1975. Destruction of woodland supporting rookeries was suggested as the explanation, with the 1987 storm being the main cause and loss of Elms playing a minor role.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank all the many observers who took part in this study and the 10km square stewards in particular, who will probably never have a more onerous task. Thanks are due also to Leonard Manns for his help and encouragement with the

survey, to John Newnham for help with organisation of the results and preparation of the maps in the manuscript and to Lawrence Holloway for helping with its preparation.

REFERENCES

- Brenchley, A. 1984. The use of birds as indicators of change in agriculture. In: *Agriculture and the environment*. ITE symp. 13: 1323-1328. (ed. Jenkins). ITE/NERC. Cambridge.
- Chater, A.O. 1996. Colonies of the Rook *Corvus frugilegus* in North Ceredigion 1975-1994. *Welsh Birds*. 1: 3-21.
- Henderson, I. 1997. *Pers. Comm.* British Trust for Ornithology.
- Marchant, J.H. 1997. *Pers. Comm.* British Trust for Ornithology.
- Marchant, J.H., Hudson, R., Carter, S.P. and Whittington, P.A. 1990. *Population Trends in British Breeding Birds*. British Trust for Ornithology, Tring. 212-213.
- Martin, J. 1997. *Kent Ornithological Society Newsletter*. 428: 14-16.
- McKenzie, S. 1996. An Introduction to the Habitats of Sussex: Farmland. In *Birds of Sussex*. 64-69. (ed. P James). Sussex Ornithological Society.
- Merritt, W. 1978. The Rook in Sussex: The breeding population and its distribution in 1975. *Sussex Bird Report*. 30: 56-65.
- Noble, J. 1988. *Assessment of Storm Damage in East Sussex*. Esus Woodland Management Ltd. Countryside Commission & East Sussex CC.
- O'Connor, R.J. and Shrubbs, M. 1986. *Farming and Birds*. Cambridge University Press. Cambridge.
- Sage, B.L. and Vernon, J.D.R. 1978. The 1975 National Survey of Rookeries. *Bird Study*. 25: 64-86.
- Sage, B.L. and Whittington, P.A. 1985. The 1980 Sample Survey of Rookeries. *Bird Study*. 32: 7-81.
- Sennitt, M.V. 1981. Sample Survey of the breeding Rook population in Sussex, 1980. *Sussex Bird Report*. 33: 80-84.
- Sennitt, M.V. 1996. In *Birds of Sussex*. 509-510. 30: 56-65. (ed. P.James). Sussex Ornithological Society.

Matthew Sennitt, 75 Chipstead Lane, Lower Kingswood, Tadworth, Surrey, KT20 6RD.

WHIMBREL AT RYE HARBOUR

by Dr BJ Yates

INTRODUCTION

In Sussex, the Whimbrel is a common passage migrant and a very scarce summering and wintering species. The largest numbers occur at Rye Harbour (50°56'N 0°45'E) in spring where there is a regular nocturnal roost. Smaller numbers occur there in autumn, but very few summer and none have been recorded wintering. This paper summarises the available information from Rye Harbour from 1970 until 1996.

METHODS

Rye Harbour Nature Reserve was established in 1970 and Whimbrel were counted regularly during general observations. However, since 1980, when the spring roost was first detected, greater effort was put into counting. Initially, this was done at dusk, but it became apparent that some individuals were still arriving after dark. Since 1994, counts have been made of birds leaving around dawn. These recent counts have tended to be larger and may reflect the improved counting technique. In autumn, a roost is not predictable and counts at this time come from general observations.

RESULTS

TIMING

The date of the first spring arrival varied from 3rd to 24th April (mean of 11th April in 26 years). The peak spring' roost-count date varied from 22nd April to 12th May (mean of 30th April in 22 years). Whimbrel were usually scarce in the five-week period from mid-May to late June, but in most years one to three birds were noted occasionally. Some years, sick or injured individuals remained all summer. The last records of the year varied from 26th August to 19th October (mean of 23rd September in 23 years). There have been no records of Whimbrel at Rye Harbour between 19th October and 3rd April.

NUMBERS

Figure 1 shows the maximum spring counts from 1970 to 1996. Figure 2 shows the maximum autumn counts for the same period. Figure 3 shows the development of the spring roost during 1994, 95 and 96.

Figures 1, 2 and 3 here?.....

DISCUSSION

At Rye Harbour there are no records of over-wintering, whereas this is regular in West Sussex. The mean arrival date of 27th March in West Sussex (James, 1996) is two weeks earlier than that noted at Rye Harbour. These two differences may reflect more suitable wintering habitat in Pagham and Chichester Harbours, or the birds in West Sussex may be from a different population to the Rye Harbour birds.

The favoured spring roost site at Rye Harbour is centred around the eastern end of Ternery Pool (TQ939179). This roost has increased as the “wildlife sanctuary areas” and electric fencing were developed (to protect ground nesting birds from foxes). These measures provide extensive areas of undisturbed shoreline around brackish pools, which is the preferred roosting area. The dual benefit of this protection is seen in the general increase in numbers of the Whimbrel roost and other breeding birds. This is demonstrated in a significant correlation between the number of Whimbrel in the spring roost and the number of pairs of nesting Little Tern in 26 years, see Fig 4 (Spearman's Coefficient of Rank Correlation, $r_s = 0.68$, $t = 4.54$ with 24 degrees of freedom, $P < 0.001$). The Whimbrel spring roost has clearly benefited from the protection measures aimed at the Nature Reserve's ground nesting birds.

Fig 4 here?.....

Most roosting Whimbrel arrive during a one-hour period around sunset and depart during the thirty minutes before sunrise. Arrival and departure are usually accompanied by some calling. During the day, birds spread out over a wide area of levels, mostly within the Dungeness to Pett Level Special Protection Area, feeding mainly on pasture grazed by sheep. In some years, up to 130 may stay during the day to feed within the Rye Harbour Nature Reserve.

Elsewhere in Sussex, the peak counts are usually between 40 and 80 birds with just seven counts of 100 or more (James, 1996). In Britain, other major spring roosts have been recorded at the Severn Estuary (1978 birds in 1973, Ferns *et al* 1979, but smaller numbers have occurred in recent years, M Robins *pers comm*, see Fig 5). In Europe, major roosts occur at the Somme Estuary in France (about 800 in 1995 Triplet *pers comm*), in Belgium (2000 Voet, 1965), and in Hungary (20,000 Beretz, 1950).

Fig 5 here?.....

There are three races of Whimbrel, each with a distinct breeding area. *Numenius phaeopus phaeopus*, the race that occurs in Britain, breeds in Iceland (200,000 pairs), the Faroes (2800 pairs), Scotland (500 pairs), northern Scandinavia (45,000 pairs) and Russia (30,000 pairs). It winters along the coasts of Africa and the Arabian Sea. In Britain, the Whimbrel is of special concern because of the decline in breeding numbers during the late 19th and early 20th centuries: only recently has the population increased to over 300 pairs — mostly in Shetland (470 pairs), with a few elsewhere in northern Scotland. The threats to this population include the reclamation of moorland and maritime heaths for agriculture and forestry, possibly egg collecting and other forms of human disturbance (Batten *et al* 1990).

There have been few ringing recoveries concerning Britain. Two spring migrants from Kent and one from Wales in autumn have been recovered in northern Scandinavia and north-western Russia. Wing-lengths of 57 birds captured in spring at Dungeness (15km east of Rye Harbour) correspond more closely with Scandinavian

birds than with the longer winged Icelandic forms (Ferns *et al* 1979). Three Icelandic pulli have been recovered in north-western Britain and Ireland. Breeding birds from Shetland have been identified on passage in Norfolk and Ireland. It is therefore probable that part of the British breeding population passes through Rye Harbour.

The value of staging posts with extensive areas of suitable feeding areas and undisturbed roosting sites may be vital for the necessary accumulation of fat for long flights. The protection and monitoring of roost sites, such as the one at Rye Harbour, may be an important factor in the conservation of this long distance migrant.

Additional work is required to look at the distribution and habitat preference of birds in spring away from the roosting site, and also to consider more fully the national and international pattern of spring roosts.

SUMMARY

The mean date of the first arrival of Whimbrel at Rye Harbour is 11th April and the roost rapidly increases, reaching its peak, on average, on 30th. There is a rapid decline to single figures by 14th May. The maximum annual number recorded was 601 and the increase in roost' size over 27 years has been associated with increased protection from disturbance of the shoreline of brackish pools.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The counts reported in this paper would not have been possible without the efforts of D Funnell, R Knight and P Philpot.

REFERENCES

- Batten, L.A., Bibby, C.J., Clement, P., Elliot, G.D. and Porter, R.F. 1990. *Red Data Birds in Britain*. Poyser. London.
- Beretzka, P. 1950. The avifauna of the Feherto near the town Szeged. *Aquila*, 51-4, 51-80.
- James, P. 1996. *Birds of Sussex*. Sussex Ornithological Society.
- Ferns, P.N., Green, G.H. and Round, P.D. 1979. Significance of the Somerset and Gwent Levels in Britain as feeding areas for migrant Whimbrels *Numenius phaeopus*. *Biol. Conserv.* 7-22.
- Voet, H. 1965. Merkwaardige slapvluchten van regenwulpen (*Numenius phaeopus*) op trek. *Gierwalk*, 55, 16-25.

Dr Barry Yates, 2 Watch Cottages, Nook Beach, Winchelsea, East Sussex, TN36 4LU.

