

The Sussex Bird Report

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Editor: LG Holloway

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EDITORIAL

Hardly had the ink been dry on the 1996 *Report* than I was planning and indeed organising in detail the page lay-out and a multitude of other items for this issue of the Society's annual *Bird Report*. Where so many complex matters are involved, it is never too early to begin the task and although much experience had been gained in 1997, this, the 50th *Report*, has presented the usual selection of problems – and some of them not so usual!

One of the main events since the issue of the 1996 *Bird Report* last October, was the exciting news earlier this year that the *Report* had been judged by *British Birds* in their *Best Annual Bird Report* competition, gaining 3rd place, joint with that of Norfolk. Not content with that, the *British Trust for Ornithology* also reviewed the *Report*, writing in glowing terms. Amongst other comments, the reviewer said that 'the species' accounts are well written and attractively type-set in a style that other reports would do well to emulate.' So, all that detailed work, struggling with page lay-outs, designing tables and scanning in the black and white drawings paid off. Many thanks again to all those members who were involved in other major aspects, too – the Species' Accounts and the Papers, especially. Everyone has every right to be pleased with this outcome. As an aside comment, I would add only that had the 1995 *Report*, edited by my predecessor, Sarah Patton, been entered for judgement by *British Birds*, then I am sure that it, too, would have been well-placed.

This year's species' accounts are equally comprehensive, taking up again no fewer than 147 pages of text. My thanks to everyone involved: all 32 Writers can be identified by their initials at the end of the species' texts: JTA Bagley, J Beesley, Mrs VP Bentley, Dr C Brooks, CB Collins, DEG Copeland, DE Crawley, RJ Fairbank, BR Gilmore, JR Havers, JL Herring, JA Hobson, LG Holloway, 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 Prior (RPr), R Pulley (RPu), Dr AB Watson, B Williams and Dr BJ Yates.

It is anticipated that all copies of this *Report* will be posted out to Society Members during a two- or three-day period at some time during September/October, a little earlier than last year. An operation of that nature occupies quite a lengthy period and involves a number of staff at the printers from whence all members receive their copies direct, so it will be understood that some members may receive their copies earlier than others. A very small number of the *Report* are delivered by hand, direct to book-sellers and the like, and so may well appear on their shelves within a day or so of publication and perhaps before your copy has arrived. Rest assured that everything is done as speedily as possible so that Members receive their copies at around the same time!

Finally, my special thanks to the following, without whose assistance this *Report* would have been all the poorer: to John Hobson and Robin Pepper for guidance in many matters relating to records and the species' list, and to Dr John Newnham for sharing his computer expertise and generous advice in so many other ways. Finally, I would like to thank my wife, Ann, without whose assistance and direct participation this *Report* would have been rather longer in the preparation.

Lawrence G Holloway *September 1998*

Sussex Bird Report 1996 — Amendments & Corrections.

Any corrections and amendments to species' accounts and records with regard to the 1996 *Report* will be found under those species in the following Systematic List. Some 37,000 records were processed and summarised for that *Report*, so it is not surprising that the occasional error should have arisen. Data is processed at a number of levels, beginning with actual field observations and reports, then through all stages of administration and interpretation, to appearing in the *Report*, so the capacity for error is understandable.

Apologies are due to any contributors, in whatever, capacity, who were not acknowledged in the 1996 *Report*. Again, so many data are involved that the occasional oversight is only too possible.

Text Illustrations:

John Davis

Bob Greenhalf

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Lawrence Holloway

Photographic acknowledgements: The Editor would like to thank those photographers who submitted photographs of Sussex birds, taken in 1997. As in the past, the number of transparencies and prints received was remarkable.

Those selected are as follows:

Les Bird

Dave Sadler

Peter Wilson

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

50 YEARS OF THE SUSSEX BIRD REPORT

by Paul James

Although a report on *Birds in Sussex* formed part of the *South-Eastern Bird Report* for 1947, it was not until the following year that the first *Sussex Bird Report* appeared on its own. To mark the occasion of this 50th *Sussex Bird Report*, it seems appropriate to compare it with the first in 1948. Edited and published (at his own expense) by Grahame des Forges, it was a slim publication with a plain buff cover, 28 pages long. It contained records of 168 species and subspecies, contributed by just 63 observers. Many, including such well known names such as Denzil Harber and 'Jock' Walpole-Bond, have long gone. Others, however, are still active today, including Brian Metcalf, Jean Stacey and Charles James, the latter probably the only contributor of records to all 50 *Sussex Bird Reports*. Given the inclusion of photographs for the first time in recent years in 1994, it is interesting to note that the 1948 *Report* contains a frontispiece in the form of a black-and-white photograph of a Kentish Plover.

Much has already been written about the early years of the *Sussex Bird Report* (Marr 1987), but as an aside, the experiences of Roy Sandison, still an active SOS member today, make for interesting reading. Although he sent in a few records for the 1949 *Report*, his name does not appear in the list of contributors for that year. He recalls his records being dismissed, on the inevitable postcard from the Editor, as being too lightweight! The following year, Stan Bayliss Smith urged him to persevere, saying that he had spoken to Grahame des Forges who admitted having been somewhat harsh in his judgement. Roy was restored to the fold in 1950 and has resided there ever since.

What then of the birds in 1948? The *Report* for that year refers to a Stone Curlew's nest 'found in growing corn', 'probably due to a shortage of suitable sites, as 3 or 4 other pairs were nesting along a strip of ground no more than 3/4-mile long'. 'Three, possibly four, pairs of Curlew were on their breeding ground in north-west Sussex' and 'coition was at least attempted' between a pair of Kentish Plovers at Rye Harbour. Rareties included Cory's Shearwater, White-rumped, Pectoral and Broad-billed Sandpiper, Red-necked and Grey Phalarope, Shore Lark, Richard's and Tawny Pipit, and an inland Red-breasted Flycatcher in spring! Conversely, the *Report* contains no entry for Canada Goose, and Collared Doves had yet to reach our shores. Just two Bewick's Swans were recorded and 'very few' Brent Geese wintered 'at the beginning or end of the year'.

Given the continuing growth in our ornithological society, it seems certain that the number of records received each year will keep on increasing, placing even more burden on an already over-worked computer and its team of helpers. The *Report* too seems likely to grow in size, this latest issue being the biggest ever. Few of the contributors of 50 years ago would have predicted that the County would be subsequently colonised by a number of new species, including Fulmar, Kittiwake, Collared Dove, and Cetti's Warbler. Perhaps at some time in the future, the *Report* will list colonies of Little Egrets, just as it does today for Grey Heron? Will global warming result in other southern species, such as Hoopoe, Bee-eater and Serin, breeding regularly in Southern England? Will agricultural changes see Grey Partridge, Tree Sparrow and Corn Bunting go the way of the Stone Curlew and Cirl Bunting? Whatever the future holds, it seems assured that the *Sussex Bird Report* will continue to maintain its reputation as an attractive, informative and respected publication.

References

Marr, BAE 1987. The S.O.S. – A Perspective, in des Forges, G (ed) 1987. *Birds in Sussex 1962-87*: 1-8.

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INTRODUCTION

The highlights of the year included one potential first record for Britain – a **Lesser Sand Plover** – which, although accepted as such by the BBRC, is awaiting acceptance by the BOU to the British List; a first **Yellow-billed Diver** for the County; the continued presence from 1996 of our confirmed first, **American Wigeon** (a previous record having been of doubtful origin); a third **Ring-necked Duck**; and our fourth **Desert Wheatear** and **Hume's Warbler**. However, descriptions of the County's potentially first **Eleonora's Falcon** and fourth **Surf Scoter** have not been submitted for consideration and remain unsubstantiated.

Thanks to the efforts of those members and others, including some from outside the County, who submit their observations, a best-ever total of over 42,100 records – comparable with the 41,700 for 1996 – have been entered into the Society's data-base to date. Over 380 of these – somewhat fewer than last year – concerned scarce or unusual birds for which a description is required, of which 33 were of BBRC quality. While 41 have not been accepted, more than 300 have been accepted for publication in this journal and 17 in *British Birds*. The remainder are in various stages of consideration by the relevant records' committees.

The distribution of records is biased towards that coastal band which includes the well-watched coastal sites, and the Downs, the Arun Valley and Ashdown Forest. Although there is a good spread across the rest of the county, the relative barrenness of records from central East Sussex and north West Sussex continues. It is noticeable, moreover, that the more common breeding birds – mainly passerines – are significantly under-recorded by comparison with the more interesting or unusual species. Without comprehensive data, it is not possible to monitor the health of such populations adequately, without recourse to statistically-based monitoring surveys such as the BTO's Breeding Birds Survey. All readers are, therefore, encouraged, indeed urged, to submit all their observations of even the most common birds and, also, to participate in the BBS.

Some records of scarce birds mentioned in the quarterly *Newsletter*, for which descriptions are required (as listed on the inside back cover of last year's *Report*), have not been substantiated by written descriptions submitted to the Hon. Recorder. These are, therefore, regarded as unauthenticated claims and are denoted by an asterisk* in this Review. All observers (not just the finders) of such birds are asked, please, to send in a description, preferably on the Society's form, as soon as possible. Despite a similar request last year, a number of similarly unauthenticated records for 1996 remain so.

January began with a continuation of 1996's bitter cold, with temperatures below zero and snow lying until 11th. High pressure during the rest of the month brought fog and frost and it was the driest January for 200 years.

Wintering waterfowl which featured widely throughout the month included small numbers of **Smew**, **Goosander**, **Scaup**, **Long-tailed Ducks**, **Slavonian**, **Red-necked** and **Black-necked Grebes**. Records were mainly from coastal localities, but occasionally inland in the usual river valleys and reservoirs. The County's first confirmed **American Wigeon** remained in Pagham Hbr from 1996 until mid-Feb, and a high count of 91 **Gadwall** was made at Thorney on 7th. There was also a Mediterranean flavour, with a **Red-crested Pochard** at Chichester GPs and a **Ruddy Shelduck** in Pagham Hbr, both of which stayed into February. Five **Ruddy Ducks** off Hove on 3rd was unusual. A high

count of 300 **Red-breasted Mergansers** was made on 10th off Hove. Early in the month, small numbers of

Bewick's Swans were seen at various locations. **Whooper Swans** were at Shoreham Airport and Greatham, and five were claimed* at Ashington in the Adur Valley on 3rd. On

25th, three adults were at Tangmere. On 5th, two **Pale-bellied Brent Geese** were at Shoreham Airport when a flock of 40 **Greylag Geese** at Ford included two **Bean Geese*** of unspecified race. Other **Bean Geese** of unspecified race were three on the Upper Adur levels on 13th, while one of the race *rossicus* (the Tundra Goose) in the Lewes area on 31st, was joined on 3rd Feb by three others, all staying until 5th. Reports of **White-fronted Geese** included 40 at Rodmell on 12th, 35 at Rye, and four near Lewes on 25th. A single **Pink-footed Goose** was at Burpham on 7th.

Other interesting winter visitors during the month included 11 **Woodcocks** at Sheepcote Valley, Brighton, on 1st; **Bitterns** in the Rye/Icklesham area, at Chichester GPs and Rodmell, and a dead one at Brighton Marina. **Snow Buntings** were seen at several coastal sites and **Firecrests** variously. A small **Crake*** gave frustratingly brief views by the River Adur. A **Lesser Spotted Woodpecker** was out of place at New Salts Fm, while Shoreham Airport provided interest with both **Twite** and **Water Pipits**, which latter were also present at Thorney, at Apuldram from 7th into Feb, and near the North Wall, Pagham Hbr, from mid-month, also into February. Warnham hosted three **Jack Snipe** during the 2nd week.

Other wintering visitors at suitable places included a few **Whimbrel**, **Common Sandpipers** and **Avocets**, an unusual flock of 15 **Purple Sandpipers** passing Brighton Marina on 3rd, and five **Green Sandpipers** at Chichester GPs on 25th. **Little Egrets** remained, with 14 of these at Thorney during the 2nd week. There were six **Twite** at Thorney on 24th, and **Dartford Warblers** in the Brighton area on 25th. Wintering **Hen** and **Marsh Harriers** featured during the month, while a **Goshawk** was seen on 15th taking a Pheasant near Sidlesham.

Good counts of resident birds included 75 **Tree Sparrows** at Rye and five **Hawfinches** at West Dean. Other unusual counts included up to 380 **Scaup** off Rye on 19th, 713 **Curlews** there on 27th, and 60 **Razorbills** off Brighton Marina – figures dwarfed by counts of 5432 **auks** eastwards and 1216 **divers** past Seaford during the month.

In complete contrast to the start of the year, **February** was wet and windy, with rain on many days during the month.

At the beginning of the month, **Bean Geese** near Selsey included three of unassigned race at Earnley, and two assigned to the race *rossicus* (the Tundra Goose) in the Pagham area from 3rd to 13th. Meanwhile, at Scotney GP in the east, four **Bean Geese** of the race *rossicus* had increased to no less than 16, but unassigned as to race, by 14th. They were amongst a flock of no less than eight goose species which included 300 **White-fronts**, three white-phase **Snows** of unknown origin, at least 3 **Pink-feet** and an escaped **Bar-headed**. Up to 60 **Bewick's Swans** roosted at Northpoint GP around this time. Four **Short-eared Owls** were seen at Thorney and, on 9th, a female **Marsh Harrier** began a six weeks' stay at Icklesham, joined later by a male.

A very early drake **Garganey** appeared in Pagham Hbr from 7th to 9th when Brighton Marina hosted a **Rock Pipit*** of the Scandinavian race.

Interesting birds seen on the sea from 11th, included **Great Northern Divers** off Brighton Marina, Pilsy, East Head, and Selsey Bill. **Slavonian**, **Red-** and **Black-necked Grebes** were seen at several coastal and inland locations during the month, notably at

Arlington Res which had one of each, as well as a **Red-throated Diver*** and two **Red-breasted Mergansers**.

Wintering gulls during the month involved a claimed adult **Ring-billed Gull*** at Southwick Canal on 8th when a **Great Skua** was off Selsey Bill. Seven adult **Mediterranean Gulls** roosted at Pagham Hbr on 12th, two **Glaucous Gulls** were there on 18th, and an **Iceland Gull** was claimed on 22nd when a 2nd-winter **Glaucous** was at

Shoreham Fort. Inland at Arlington, a 2nd-winter **Iceland Gull** and a **Mediterranean Gull** were seen on 26th. By the end of the month, the flocks of **Avocets** in Pagham Hbr had increased to 15 and **Little Egrets** at Thorney to 42.

The month ended with a pair of **Garganey** past Seaford on 28th, and the first – presumed migratory – **Chiffchaff** at Pagham. No less than 86 **Smew** were seen at 17 sites during the first two months, possibly the fourth best winter for this attractive duck.

March was generally warm, sunny and dry.

Hopes for a settled spring and early migration were encouraged by the appearance of a **Sandwich Tern**, past Seaford, on 1st, and of **Wheatears**, with three at Rye and singles at Selsey, at Pagham the following day and at Brighton on 4th. Although a **Sand Martin** was seen at Rye on 5th, it was the only record there for the month. Although other sites reported a dearth of sightings, reasonable numbers were apparently seen further north. Raptor movements during the month included a male **Marsh Harrier** at Thorney on 5th, while **Common Buzzards** were reported widely. Spring passage' water-birds included a **Black-throated Diver** at Scotney, scarce **grebes** elsewhere, with a **Black-necked*** claimed at Burton MP, and a drake **Goosander** past Selsey on 9th when 22 **Scaup** lingered at Scotney.

More spring migrants appeared from the 2nd week. **Black Redstarts** were seen at Rye and Beachy Head where a small fall on 8th included **Wheatears** and 20 **Chiffchaffs**, smaller numbers of which were seen elsewhere. Other movements involved a **Great Grey Shrike**, which appeared on 11th for a few days in Ashdown Forest, and up to seven **Short-eared Owls** in the Glynde area and one at Selsey.

Movements noted by sea-watchers mid-month included an immature **Iceland Gull** at Seaford, a **Manx Shearwater** and 18 **Avocets** past Brighton Marina, a **Glaucous Gull** at Hastings for three days, and another **Iceland Gull** – the third of the winter – past Selsey Bill on 21st, when a **Little Gull** was at Sidlesham Ferry.

Winter visitors remaining included **Water Pipits** at Icklesham into April and others at Pagham on 25th. **Rock Pipits** of the Scandinavian race were observed at Cow Gap, Beachy Head, mid-month, and around Pagham Hbr later. A **Snow Bunting** stayed for a few days at Pilsey, while the two wintering **Bitterns** at Rye were seen flying off to the east on the evening of 22nd.

Good numbers of early common migrants were evident from mid-month. **Dartford Warblers** passed through Beachy Head and Church Norton, and the first **Whimbrel** appeared on 23rd, with singles at Pulborough and Seaford. An amazingly early **Hobby** which appeared at Pagham on 26th beat the hitherto earliest date by over two weeks. A similarly record-breaking **Nightingale** arrived at Pulborough Brooks on 28th when a **Marsh Harrier** flew in off the sea at Worthing. Other summer visitors around this time included **House** and **Sand Martins**, **Common Sandpiper** and **Little Ringed Plover** at Pulborough, a **Serin*** claimed at Fairlight on 29th, a **Garganey** and an **Osprey** at Pagham, **Ring Ouzel** and **Willow Warbler** at Beachy Head, and **Swallows** and **Yellow Wagtails** at several places. Other movements included a **Black-necked Grebe** inland at Weir Wood Res on 27th, a **Long-eared Owl** at Rye and a **Ring-billed Gull*** claimed there from

28th to 30th, and an **Arctic Skua** past Bexhill on 29th.

April continued dry and mild, but became cooler in the middle of the month when north-easterly winds predominated. Showery conditions finally arrived on 25th.

On 2nd, a **Surf Scoter*** was claimed as seen off Splash Point, Seaford, – a potential fourth for the county, if submitted and accepted, and the second for this site. Another unusual record was of a **Raven**, of unknown origin but presumed wild, which may have wandered from Dungeness. It stayed around Beachy Head from 2nd until 11th when it was seen flying past Seaford. Otherwise, the month began where March left off, with the arrival of the first few **Willow Warblers**, **Ring Ouzels** and **Swallows**. **Sand Martins**, however, were scarce. The first **Pied Flycatcher** appeared on 11th and a **Wryneck** showed well at Birling Gap on 13th, when a male **Savi's Warbler** was found at Icklesham. On 16th, the first **Reed Warblers** appeared, and a **Nightingale** was seen at Arlington Res where there was also a **Little Gull**. By the last week, **Turtle Dove** and **Grasshopper Warbler** had arrived.

Over-shooting visitors – expected at this time of year – included the first **Serin** which sang from 2nd to 8th at Sidlesham Ferry; two more over Thorney on 16th; and a male at Selsey from 28th for two days. Meanwhile, others were claimed* at Newhaven, flying over Beachy Head and Brighton Marina, and at Scotney GP. **Hoopoes** turned up at Church Norton on 16th and at Cow Gap, Beachy Head, on 23rd.

Passage waders included the first **Dotterel** with **Golden Plovers** at Scotney GP on 6th, a female **Kentish Plover** at Thorney next day, with a male there from 10th to 12th, and another **Dotterel*** claimed from Wolstonbury Hill, Brighton, on 16th. More **Dotterel** appeared from 21st, with at least three at Balsdean over the next week, and a further seven at Beeding Hill, Shoreham. Passage **Garganey** involved two past Selsey Bill on 7th and another two at Rye on 11th, where a **Little Egret** remained, and another at the Severals, Church Norton, later. A **Spoonbill** visited Arundel WWT for two days from 15th. A roost of **Whimbrel** at Rye Hbr contained 256 in the last week.

There were few records of raptors. Two **Ospreys** were at Weir Wood Res on 2nd, at Bexhill on 8th and elsewhere in the last week. A **Common Buzzard** was seen at West Fields, Selsey, the same day and another was with a **Hen Harrier** at Rye Hbr. A **Goshawk*** was claimed at Beachy Head on 12th and more **Hobbies** arrived during the last week.

Sea-watchers at Seaford during the first week counted 2300 **Common Scoters** flying east and 20 **Slavonian Grebes** on the sea. The first **Pomarine Skua** flew past Brighton Marina and Seaford on 24th, followed by another the next day.

With the onset of colder, north-easterly, winds mid-month, migrants became scarcer. However, **Little Ringed Plovers**, **Pied Flycatchers**, **Redstarts** and **Whinchats** were seen at several sites, and a **Ring Ouzel** was in Woodvale Cemetery, Brighton. Other firsts for the year from 14th were **Wood Warbler** at Pulborough and Hollingbury Camp, Brighton, a **Swift** at Church Norton, **Spotted Flycatcher** on 26th, a number of **Whinchats**, and a male **Blue-headed Wagtail** at Selsey.

However, the best bird of the year, so far, and a first for the County, was an adult **Yellow-billed Diver**, 'scoped by an almost unbelieving lucky observer as it flew past the West Pier at Newhaven on 27th.

May began hot and sunny with south-easterly winds, but in the second week it became cold and there was snow on one day. However, from mid-month, temperatures gradually increased and it became hot again by the end of the month.

On the first day of the month, a wandering **White Stork*** was apparently seen over

Woodingdean, Brighton, at 11.00, Worthing at 12.30 and then Lancing at 13.00, but, unfortunately, a description has not yet been submitted. The 2nd was '**Pom Day**' when at least 107 **Pomarine Skuas** passed along the coast in light SE winds. As if they weren't enough, sea-watchers also struck lucky with a **Red-rumped Swallow** at Beachy Head. The next day, a Saturday, brought expectant crowds to various sea-watching locations, but only 9 '**Poms**' were seen; however, at least 70 **Black Terns** were some compensation. During the next week, a few more **Pomarine Skuas** and small parties of **Manx Shearwaters** passed through, an adult **Great Northern Diver** flew west past Selsey Bill on 10th and an adult **Long-tailed Skua** delighted watchers at Seaford on 11th.

An influx of **Kentish Plovers** brought birds to Thorney from 2nd to 7th, to Church Norton from 8th to 10th and another was claimed* at Bognor Regis on 4th. An intriguing record was of a **Crested Tit** in a garden in Worthing on 10th, the first of two accepted for the year. Unconfirmed claims around this time involved the following over-shooting 'goodies': a **Red-rumped Swallow*** near Upper Beeding on 6th; **Golden Orioles*** at Selsey on 2nd and Pagham Hbr on 9th, where one was confirmed later on 25th; and a **Bee-eater*** claimed at Beachy Head on 14th. On the same date, 14th, an **Alpine Swift** was seen at roof-top height in Worthing, while two more flew over Beachy Head on 17th.

Continuing migration involved **Hobbies** at many sites, including up to 8 at Icklesham; a **Roseate Tern** at Thorney on 16th; a late **Short-eared Owl** at Rye Hbr on 17th; a dark phase **Honey Buzzard** low over Church Norton on 20th; yet another **Serin** nearby for a couple of days; a **Marsh Harrier** and a **Black Tern** at Rye Hbr on 22nd; a **Wood Sandpiper** at Icklesham and a **Temminck's Stint** at nearby Pett on 23rd. A male **Subalpine Warbler** at Beachy Head on 24th began nest building the next day, but had disappeared by 26th. A **Nightjar** was reported at Brighton Marina at this time and there was an influx of **Quails**.

Raptor lovers located **Honey Buzzards** and **Goshawks** in apparently suitable breeding habitats; a **Montagu's Harrier** was seen passing Houghton on 14th; and **Red Kites** were widely reported. The County's third **Ring-necked Duck** was found at Northpoint GP on 21st, remaining in the area until 22 June. The month ended with a **Wood Sandpiper** at Chichester GPs, a female **Red-backed Shrike** at Sheepcote Valley, Brighton, and the first of several **Marsh Warblers** at Icklesham.

In contrast to the previous two months, **June** was the wettest this century!

Raptors featured frequently during the month; two **Honey Buzzards*** were claimed at Weir Wood Res and three others were seen in potential breeding areas; a **Montagu's Harrier*** was claimed at Rye Hbr on 3rd and 6th; a **Marsh Harrier** at Rye Hbr on 5th; and several **Ospreys** were noted.

Reports of **Quails** included three at Balsdean; Beachy Head produced one on 3rd; and two more at Hodcombe on 9th were followed by another near Mt. Caburn on 10th.

Hodcombe again proved itself as potentially the best garden in Sussex on 11th, with claimed but elusive **Melodious*** and **Subalpine Warblers***. Other interesting records at this time concerned more **Marsh Warblers** at Icklesham, a **Wryneck** on Midhurst Common, and a second **Crested Tit** at Fairlight.

Meanwhile, sea-watching at Seaford produced 10 **Manx Shearwaters**, a possible **Great Northern Diver***, 2 **Black-throated Divers**, a **Roseate Tern** on 8th and a **Garganey**. Another late **Garganey** was at Chichester GPs.

A potential first for Britain appeared on 13th; a **Spur-winged Plover** watched at Pett Level for two days, had been seen previously in Holland and at Stodmarsh and subsequently at Dungeness. Although its identity was accepted by BBRC, it was considered to be an escape. Hard luck life-listers! Another rare bird was a **Squacco Heron** – the County's 5th – found near Boreham Street on 18th by members of the Eastbourne RSPB Group. The next few days were fairly quiet, typical of mid-June, although enlivened by a **Wood Sandpiper** at Sidlesham Ferry on 23rd, a grey-headed **Yellow Wagtail** at Church Norton on 25th, two **Black Terns** at Thorney on 30th and an invasion of **Crossbills**, with flocks of up to 50 at suitable locations. Easterly passage past Seaford during the spring had included no less than 2174 **divers**, 8469 **Common Scoters**, 445 **Eiders**, 54 **Manx Shearwaters** and 6792 **auks**.

July, after a cool and showery start, was generally settled, hot and sunny.

It was a generally quiet month, the most notable birds in the first week being sea-birds, with **Manx Shearwater** and **Arctic Skua** off Seaford, a **Storm Petrel** off Church Norton and Selsey Bill, a **Bonxie** at Pilsey, two **Roseate Terns** at Rye Hbr from 7th to 9th, one at Church Norton on 15th, and a nice count of five **Mediterranean Gulls** at Thorney on 17th. Passage waders during the month included nine **Little Ringed Plovers** at Chichester GPs, a **Wood Sandpiper** and **Avocets** at Sidlesham Ferry, a **Curlew Sandpiper** at Thorney on 22nd, two **Spotted Redshanks** at Icklesham and two **Little Stints** there on 25th.

The **Crossbills** which arrived in June had increased to 125 at West Dean Woods by 18th and small numbers were seen at several other locations. Individual **Quails** featured again, being reported from several widely scattered places. **Little Egrets** were also reported variously, with up to 19 at Pagham Hbr by the month's end. Other interesting records concerned a **Dartford Warbler** at Pilsey on 15th, when a **Marsh Harrier** at Thorney was the first of many sightings of this increasing raptor this half-year. A **White Stork*** of unknown origin was seen flying low over Gatwick on 18th and returning **Ospreys** were seen variously.

August continued settled, with temperatures in the low 30s at times. The summer weather finally broke on the Bank Holiday weekend, with wet and windy conditions.

This was the month for raptor enthusiasts – they seemed to turn up almost anywhere! **Ospreys** were seen at Weir Wood Res on several dates and also at Pilsey, Pagham, Arlington and over Glyndebourne towards the month's end. **Red Kites** were seen at several places. **Marsh Harriers** featured widely, being seen at the West Fields, Selsey, on 7th; at Icklesham; over the Sheepcote Valley and at Cissbury on 9th; and three elsewhere on the Downs on 12th. **Montagu's Harriers** also occurred widely; one appeared over Pagham Hbr on 8th; one was seen at Storrington on 9th; one was claimed* at Birling Gap; another was at Pagham again on 14th; and possibly another* at Harrow Hill, Patching, the next day. There was another at Steep Down, Lancing, from 18th to 20th and, on 19th, an adult female and two juveniles were at West Fields, Selsey, for two days. On 13th, a claimed dark phase **Eleonora's Falcon*** which spent ten minutes over West Dean Woods before flying off towards Chichester would, if submitted and accepted, be a first for the County. A **Hobby** on 25th at Beachy Head was rather more prosaic.

Quails continued to feature, being either heard or seen at several locations throughout the month.

The normal return passage of waders involved an early **Purple Sandpiper** at Brighton Marina from 1st; a **Curlew Sandpiper** on 2nd at Icklesham, followed by a **Marsh**

Sandpiper on 11th, which moved later to nearby Pett, and six **Wood Sandpipers**, which

species was also seen at several other sites at this time. Wednesday, 14th, was a red-letter day for wader buffs, and twitchers, when a potential first for Britain was located at Church Norton. Unfortunately for many, it was not only initially identified, and broadcast by some who should have known better, as a Greater Sand Plover – recalling memories of Britain’s first at Pagham in 1978 – but it disappeared Friday night, by which time it had been correctly identified with the aid of photographs as a **Lesser Sand Plover**. It has been accepted as such by the BBRC, but is still under consideration by BOURC as a first for Britain. A young **Spoonbill** visited Pagham Hbr on 19th, **Dotterel** passage was observed on 24th with two near the Long Man of Wilmington, a **Little Stint** was at Arlington Res on 26th, **Greenshanks** peaked at 165 at Thorney and seven **Curlew Sandpipers** were there on 31st.

The first returning **Pied Flycatcher** was noted at Church Norton on 2nd, and eight more **Pied** and 12 **Spotted Flycatchers** were there on 30th. Passage warblers of note included an **Icterine Warbler**, a very scarce species in Sussex, trapped at Whitbread Hollow. Surprisingly, it was re-trapped the next day and there was another at Icklesham on 16th. A **Barred Warbler**, at Shooter’s Bottom, Beachy Head, on 17th, remained until 23rd, to provide many Sussex’ birders with a long awaited opportunity to see this species in the County. A **Melodious Warbler*** was claimed at Church Norton on 25th; four **Grasshopper Warblers** were at Beachy Head on 31st; and, at Icklesham, a record 30 **Aquatic Warblers** and two more **Marsh Warblers** were ringed during the month.

Other notable passage migrants were **Spotted Crakes**; an adult was at Coldwaltham Brooks from 11th to 14th; another adult at Sidlesham from 12th gave some excellent views during its five-days’ stay; another at Icklesham on 27th; and a 4th for the month at Thorney on 30th. Claims were made for a **Golden Oriole*** at Pagham on 14th, and a **Tawny Pipit*** at Hope Gap, Seaford, on 26th. There were seven **Black Terns** at Thorney on 28th. **Wrynecks** appeared at Icklesham on 29th and at Thorney from 31st until 4th Sept. **Red-backed Shrikes** involved one at Icklesham on 20th and another at Beachy Head on 31st, when a male blue-headed **Yellow Wagtail** was found at Climping. Of interest, were three **Long-tailed Tits** with white heads, seen at Peacehaven on 24th.

Strong winds on 30th produced a **Sooty** and two **Mediterranean Shearwaters** at Brighton Marina, **Bonxies** at various sites and a claimed **Mediterranean Shearwater*** and 15 **Arctic Skuas** past Langley Point on 31st, when a returning **Black-necked Grebe** was seen near Newhaven. **Little Egrets** were seen variously during the month, while the roost at Thorney reached a new British record, with 137 counted.

September was on the whole very dry and warm. Winds in the first half of the month were generally from the west, but in the second half light easterlies predominated.

Raptors continued to feature during the month. On 1st, a **Honey Buzzard** showed particularly well at Lullington. Several **Ospreys** passed through during the first week and one lingered off Pilsey from 21st to 28th. There were claims for a **Montagu’s Harrier*** near Steyning on 2nd and for **Goshawks*** over Hodcombe, Beachy Head, on 9th, and at Pagham the next day where two **Marsh Harriers** had been seen previously. A **Short-eared Owl** was more normal fare on 14th at Beachy Head. **Common Buzzards** were seen at a number of sites around 12th, and small numbers of **Hobbies** and **Merlins** were seen towards the month’s end.

Wader passage involved numbers of **Dotterels**, with a flock at Steyning increasing from five on 1st to nine on 3rd, and another four claimed* at Newmarket Hill on 5th. A **Grey Phalarope** stayed at West Wittering from 2nd to 9th, and a **Pectoral Sandpiper** was on the

wader scrape at Cuckmere Haven from 6th to 12th. Three **Curlew Sandpipers** were on the River Adur at Shoreham on 10th and an **Avocet** at Thorney on 19th.

Scarce birds included a brief **Red-rumped Swallow** at Sidlesham on 2nd; a **Melodious Warbler** at Church Norton from 3rd, joined by another on 6th; a **Common Rosefinch** at Sidlesham and a **Corn Crake** trapped at Icklesham on 5th. On 6th, a **Red-backed Shrike** stayed two days at Cow Gap, Beachy Head, while a **Tawny Pipit** on Littlehampton GC flew off at 08.30. A juvenile **Rosy Starling*** was claimed on 12th at Hodcombe, Beachy Head, but unfortunately did not stay. A **Cetti's Warbler** was found in Chat Vale, Beachy Head, on 30th.

Sea-watchers enjoyed a **Sooty Shearwater** as it flew past Selsey Bill on 11th and the next day a juvenile **Sabine's Gull** was seen passing Brighton Marina. It was relocated in the evening in Cuckmere Haven and, fortunately for many, was still there the next morning.

Migration watchers at various locations noted **Swifts**, **Pied Flycatchers**, **Firecrests**, an influx of **Siskins**, which remained into the autumn, and a **Dartford Warbler** near Pilsey.

The end of the month was unusually quiet. The first **Brent Geese** returned to Church Norton on 25th and a **Cetti's Warbler** was in Chat Vale, Beachy Head, on 30th.

October, although wet and windy early on, was exceptionally mild later, with daytime temperatures reaching 21°C as late as 19th. Nights were cold towards the end of the month and it was generally rather dry.

Late migrants continued to feature. The month began with a **Red-backed Shrike** at Newhaven until 2nd when there was another at Pagham Hbr and the autumn's second juvenile **Barred Warbler** was at nearby Norton Priory. Three days later, another turned up at Icklesham and a fourth was at Church Norton on 25th. A **Lapland Bunting** arrived at Climping on 3rd and remained for 10 days. Icklesham's ninth **Marsh Warbler** of the year was trapped on 22nd. Asiatic vagrants included a claimed **Yellow-browed Warbler*** at Church Norton on 8th, but a confirmed one on 13th on Littlehampton GC. On 19th, the first of the year's three **Pallas's Warblers** appeared for a few hours at Birling Gap and another possible was claimed* at Littlehampton on 22nd. By far the best bird of the month, however, was a **Lesser Grey Shrike**, found at West Fields, Selsey, on 24th which, unfortunately, stayed for only one day – the last 'twitchable' one was at Birling Gap in 1982.

Other autumn migrants early on included the odd **Pied Flycatchers**, **Ring Ouzels** and **Turtle Dove** and, mid-month, four continental **Coal Tits** at Beachy Head, a late **Redstart** at Church Norton, the usual **Black Redstarts** and, at Icklesham, a **Penduline Tit**. Although a few **Firecrests** were seen at various places, they were more scarce than usual.

Other movements included **Wood Larks** at Thorney on 3rd, over West Wittering the next day, at Beachy Head a few days later and small numbers elsewhere. **Crossbills** continued to be seen, while **Dartford Warblers** turned up in the Church Norton area. Two **Shorelarks** appeared at East Wittering on 19th; the first **Short-eared Owls** appeared at Rye Hbr and Pulborough Brooks; the first report of returning **Water Pipits** was from Pett on 21st; and the autumn's first **Twite** – two at Church Norton on 23rd – were followed by three more in the Sheepcote Valley, Brighton, on 26th.

Unsubstantiated claims during the month included a **Marsh Warbler*** at the Cuckmere on 12th; a **Cirl Bunting*** at Pagham Hbr on 15th; a **Little Bunting*** at Birling Gap on 20th, which reportedly flew off frustratingly soon; a **Ring-billed Gull*** at Pagham

Hbr the

same day; and a **Red-throated Pipit*** and a **Lapland Bunting*** over Church Norton on 22nd.

Strong north-west winds and clear skies from 12th produced some large movements and the first significant influx of the usual winter visitors. **Redwings** arrived *en masse*, with 10,000 seen at Roedean and over 1000 at Beachy Head, with smaller numbers of **Fieldfares** and **Bramblings**. Two hundred and fifty **Brent Geese** arrived at Pagham with a couple of **Pink-footed Geese**. A **Red-necked Grebe** appeared for a week on Aldingbourne Rife.

Raptor sightings were few and involved only the odd **Common Buzzard** over Peacehaven, a somewhat late **Hobby** at Rye Hbr on 4th, a couple of latish **Ospreys** and the odd **Marsh** and **Hen Harriers**. Counts of waders early on included an impressive 133 **Greenshanks** at Thorney where there were also 121 **Little Egrets**.

Watchers at various coastal sites appeared to have enjoyed an interesting month. Rye Hbr reported **Sandwich Tern**, **Little Gull** and **Razorbill** early on, and a **Red-necked Grebe** and two **Barnacle Geese** were seen at Pagham Hbr on 7th. **Pomarine Skuas** passed Church Norton also on 7th, and Seaford on 10th. Strong winds on 8th brought claims of

Sooty Shearwater* from Brighton Marina and Hove, and five **Leach's Petrels***, four **Great Skuas** and the odd **Manx Shearwater** at Seaford. More strong winds on 14th brought a **Little Auk** to Newhaven and claims for both **Leach's Petrel*** and **Sooty Shearwater*** from Selsey Bill. On 18th, a possible **Sabine's Gull*** lingered around the fishing boats at Hastings and three **Velvet Scoters** were off-shore there. **Little Auks*** were claimed at Castle Water, Rye, on 26th and, unusually, inland at Chichester GPs on 28th, while the next day **Slavonian** and **Red-necked Grebes**, and **Velvet Scoter**, were seen at Brighton Marina. Inland, at Bewl Water, the autumn's second **Black-necked Grebe** appeared on 16th and a **Slavonian Grebe** was there on 27th when the **Mediterranean Gull** returned to Mewsbrook, Littlehampton.

Unusual sightings during the month included a **Raven*** claimed at Pagham Hbr on 23rd which was possibly the same bird seen at Rye Hbr the next day. On 26th, a **Mandarin** and eight **Ruddy Ducks** were on the Ternery Pool, Rye, and, unusually, **Ring-necked Parakeets** were at Brighton Marina.

November continued very mild, but with a welcome increase in rainfall.

Late migrants continued to feature widely, if sparingly. **Wheatears** were seen at a number of sites up to 12th, two **Common Terns** were at Pilsey on 2nd and the third latest **Spotted Flycatcher** for the County was at Birling Gap. Other late migrants included a **Common Swift** at Widewater, Lancing, on 6th; 10 **House Martins** at East Dean on 14th; a **Cetti's Warbler** visited Rye briefly on 15th when four potentially wintering **Dartford Warblers** were at Thorney. Rye Hbr saw its last **Swallows** on 16th. **Water Pipits** were at Icklesham from 16th and at Apuldram on 26th. On 29th, a migrant **Long-eared Owl** was at Sheepcote Valley.

Three **Shorelarks** arrived at Sovereign Marina, Eastbourne, on 2nd – part of a national influx. On 4th, two more flew in off the sea at Brighton Marina and there was one at Rye Hbr on 23rd. The only **Snow Buntings** reported were two at Sovereign Marina on 8th and another on 9th at Church Norton.

Further Asiatic vagrants featured well. A second **Yellow-browed Warbler** appeared at Pagham Information Centre on 3rd. A **Pallas's Warbler**, which was found with a flock

of **Long-tailed Tits** – both species being only the second records for the site – stayed from 15th to 23rd and initiated a rather purple patch for Sheepcote Valley. The next day, the

same observer found a **Hume's Warbler** – a species recently given full status by the BOU, having been treated previously as a race of the **Yellow-browed Warbler**. This bird remained until 22nd when it was reported to have been taken by a **Sparrowhawk**. Although it was probably the fourth record for the County, the last was as long ago as 1975. Another **Pallas's Warbler** was found at nearby Whitehawk Hill, Brighton, on 23rd. Meanwhile, another had been claimed* at Goring on 17th, and yet another was claimed at Hastings on 24th when the Sheepcote Valley completed a hat-trick with its own **Yellow-browed Warbler** which remained until 29th, but was generally elusive. Another **Yellow-browed Warbler*** – possibly the same – was claimed at nearby Park Crescent, Brighton, on 29th.

Sea-bird observations during the month included a **Puffin** on 2nd off Pett and, on 5th, a **Little Auk** and a **Black-throated Diver** off Selsey Bill.

In a good autumn for **Leach's Petrels**, singles flew past Selsey Bill on 8th and 9th when **Red-necked Grebe** and **Arctic Skua** were also seen there. Around this time, **Mediterranean Gulls** were seen at many locations and a few **Little Gulls** were blown in by the strong winds. On 16th, an adult and a 1st-winter **Iceland Gull** turned up in the Selsey/Pagham Hbr area. The latter was claimed later in the Southwick Canal' gull roost, before it flew out to sea. However, probably the same two turned up again at Pagham on 18th, the youngster staying until 20th. Around this time, a **Leach's Petrel** lingered off-shore at Southwick, two **Sandwich Terns** were at Brighton Marina, a **Great Northern Diver** was off Selsey Bill and an **Arctic Tern** was at Newhaven on 23rd. At least 15 **Mediterranean Gulls** were seen during the month

Records of wintering waterfowl involved a **Goosander** which was at Hampden Park, Eastbourne, on 9th, a good inland record at Weir Wood Res of an **Eider** on 24th, a single **Brent Goose** at Pulborough Brooks on 26th, **Red-necked Grebes** at Scotney GP on 26th and claimed* at Bewl Water on 28th.

The best bird of the month, however, was a **Desert Wheatear**, found on 30th at Cow Gap, Beachy Head. It stayed for six days and provided excellent photographic opportunities, particularly when eating meal worms provided by its admiring audience.

December weather fluctuated between wet and windy. The occasional cold snap brought heavy snow on 17th, but mild conditions returned the next day.

Laggardly migrants involved **Swallows**, with one at Peacehaven early on and the last of the year at Newhaven on 14th; a **Ring Ouzel** at Newhaven; two **Garganey** around this time at Pulborough Brooks, which would equal the latest recorded date for this species, and, on 16th, a **Sandwich Tern** in Pagham Hbr.

Wader counts at Pagham Hbr and Thorney mid-month included 10 **Avocets**, three **Spotted Redshanks** and a **Whimbrel**, and eight **Spotted Redshanks** and two **Whimbrel** respectively. Wintering waterfowl early in the month included a **Long-tailed Duck** at Church Norton and a **Slavonian Grebe** inland on Barcombe Res for most of the month. The first **Smew** arrived at Northpoint GP on 6th and Chichester GPs on 7th. These had increased to two apiece by the end of the year, with another at Castle Water, Rye. A **Velvet Scoter** was off-shore at Rye Hbr on 9th but, unusually, no **Common Scoters**. Seventeen **White-fronted Geese** were in the Pulborough area from 17th and three **Velvet Scoters** flew past Brighton Marina on 20th. A **Goosander** was at Pulborough Brooks on 23rd, three were at Arlington Res on Christmas Day, and two were on the River Adur on 28th. By the end of the month, there were 53 **Bewick's Swans** in the Arun Valley.

During the month, the gull roost at Southwick held up to seven **Mediterranean Gulls**; and a first-winter **Ring-billed Gull** was also there, on 22nd. On 24th, two out-of-season **Sooty Shearwaters** flew past Worthing and a late **Arctic Skua** lingered at Newhaven for three days to 30th, before moving to Brighton for a further short stay. **Divers** were represented by the usual **Great Northern**s off-shore in the Selsey area from 13th onwards, and also on odd days at Brighton and Newhaven. On Christmas Day, a **Black-throated Diver** was at Galley Hill, Bexhill.

Wintering passerine records included early **Firecrests** at Belle Tout Wood, Beachy Head, a **Water Pipit** on Littlehampton GC on 12th, a **Lapland Bunting** at East Head on 14th and, on 18th, up to four **Hawfinches** and 20 **Bramblings** in West Dean Woods. **Willow Tits** were also noted there and at Weir Wood Res. Sightings of **Crossbills** included flocks of 30 at Ambersham and 10 at West Dean Woods. The only unusual raptor reported was a **Rough-legged Buzzard**, near East Grinstead, on 18th. Finally, an immature **Rosy Starling** was found at Church Norton on 31st.

CLASSIFIED RECORDS FOR 1997

This list covers all species in Categories A and C of the British Ornithologists Union's check list. The **Outline Guide** which follows may help you to track down any particular bird: all groups and species are in the usual systematic order.

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 four locations where logs were kept and details of times recorded:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
						e						
Selsey Bill	13	19	32	115	145	19	8	23	25	44	36	22
Worthing	6	3	17	51	39	5	9	18	6	11	9	7
Brighton	24	18	42	64	54	4	1	8	17	10	11	38
Seaford	45	57	85	112	142	41	19	6	3	14	12	39
Bexhill & Hastings	33	28	88	75	52	5	5	41	58	42	26	14

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. In previous years, the sites displayed in these tables have been randomly selected, invariably choosing sites with the highest counts. The tables in this *Report*, however, show all sites where any of the

monthly counts held 5% or more of the county total for that month.

LOOKING for that particular bird? The Outline Guide below may help you:

	Pages		Pages
Divers and Grebes		Kingfisher	
Fulmar, Shearwaters & Petrels		Hoopoe	
Gannet		Wryneck	
Cormorant and Shag		The Woodpeckers	
Bitterns, Herons & Egrets		The Larks	
Storks, Ibises and Spoonbill		Martins and Swallows	
Swans		Pipits and Wagtails	
Geese		Waxwing	
Ruddy Shelduck & Shelduck		Wren	
Mandarin		Dunnock	
Surface feeding Ducks		The Thrushes	
Diving Ducks		Warblers and 'crests	
The Sawbills		Flycatchers	
Ruddy Duck		Bearded Tit	
Honey Buzzard and Kites		Long-tailed Tit	
The Harriers		The Parus Tits	
Goshawk & Sparrowhawk		Nuthatch	
The Buzzards		Treecreeper	
Osprey		Penduline Tit	
The Falcons		Golden Oriole	
Gamebirds		The Shrikes	
Rails, Crakes, Moorhen & Coot		Crows	
Crane		Starlings	
Waders		Finches	
Skuas, Gulls & Terns		Buntings	
The Auks		Black and White Warbler	
Doves and Pigeons		Northern Oriole	
Ring-necked Parakeet		Escapes and Feral Birds	
Cuckoo			
The Owls			
Nightjar and Swifts			

0002. **RED-THROATED DIVER***Gavia stellata***Fairly common winter visitor and passage migrant.**

For this species and the next, monthly estimates have been made by combining records of birds seen inland with the totals from coastal sites, having made allowance for duplication at the latter. The larger of the counts of birds flying E and W at each site was added to the largest number of birds reported as 'o.s.' (which can mean either 'on sea' or 'off-shore'). It is likely that a high proportion of the birds recorded as 'Diver *spp*' are, in fact, Red-throated, and these accounts should be considered together.

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
790	488	45	63	19	-	-	-	-	10	43	167

Reports from some sea-watching sites are also given, with the totals for *all* sites:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	-	Oct	Nov	Dec
Selsey Bill	4	9	5	19	7	-	3	14	42
Worthing Beach	14	1	3	11	3	-		1	
Brighton Marina	72	25	9	22	10	-	2	1	70
Splash Point, Seaford	52	63	16	18	5	-	2	1	36
Bexhill & Hastings	673	404	22	35	2	-	2	27	70
<i>Total (*)</i>	768	476	37	61	17	-	8	41	166

(*) adjusted to compensate for duplication.

It is apparent that the strong passage noted at the end of 1996 continued into early 1997, but was not repeated at the end of the year. Remarkable totals of 294E on 2 Jan, 140W on 19 Jan, 90E on 22 Jan and 328E on 4 Feb were recorded at Bexhill, where they must have been close enough to be identified. These numbers should be allied to those of Divers *spp* noted at sites further west in the same period. There were also numbers of birds seen away from the open sea early in the year, with birds at: Pilsea (3); Pagham Hbr and Church Norton (3); Upper Chichester Channel (2); River Adur, Shoreham, (2); Shoreham Hbr (2); Newhaven Tide Mills (2); Lower Ouse and Rodmell Brooks (4); Cuckmere (2); Sovereign Hbr (2); Rye LNR (several sightings probably involving about 6 birds); and single birds at Fishbourne Channel, Southwick Canal, Piddinghoe, Newhaven Hbr, Barcombe Res, Arlington Res, The Crumbles, Bawl Water, Powdermill, Icklesham and at Scotney Court GP. The last Spring record was 1E at Brighton Marina on 12 May.

The first autumn birds were 2 passing W at Bexhill on 10 Oct. The modest numbers moving in the Channel during October and November were promising, but the count for December was less than a quarter of those seen in the same month last year, with only Bexhill on 22 Dec exceeding two dozen on any one day. Birds seen away from the sea were merely late December singles in the Cuckmere and at Rye LNR. [BRG]

0003. **BLACK-THROATED DIVER**

Gavia arctica

Scarce winter visitor and passage migrant.

In what must be a record year for the genus, fewer than 160 birds of this species were recorded in 1997 compared with 215 in 1996 and over 300 in 1994. Estimated totals are:

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
31	15	8	44	25	2	-	-	1	2	11	16

At the main sea-watching sites, the numbers seen were:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
Selsey Bill	6	3	1	12	11		1	2	4	8
Worthing Beach				1	3					
Brighton Marina	8	8	2	15	6					5
Splash Point, Seaford	3	2	3	11	15	2				
Bexhill & Hastings	6	8	1	15	2		2		5	1
<i>Total (*)</i>	25	14	7	43	25	2	1	2	9	16

(*) adjusted to compensate for duplication.

Away from open sea were birds at The Crumbles on 6 Mar, and in Shoreham Hbr and in Fishbourne Channel in November. The last spring migrant was off Seaford on 4 June, while the first of the autumn was at Selsey on 10 Sept. [BRG]

0004. **GREAT NORTHERN DIVER**

Gavia immer

Very scarce winter visitor and spring passage migrant.

Some 25 accepted records probably refer to at least 10 different birds, the same number as last year. One bird (oiled) was at Pagham Hbr on 10 Feb (AH), while next day two others were at Selsey Bill (TJE). One, or both of these, (or another) were seen on several occasions between Selsey and Church Norton from 14 to 27 Feb (AH,BJC,TJE) and off East Head (TJE) and Pilsea (CBC), while on 17 Feb another was off Brighton Marina (IJW). The next flew east past Selsey Bill on 16 Apr (TJE) and another was seen there on 10 May (OM,TJE).

The next bird was first recorded at Selsey Bill on 20 Nov (TJE) and it may have been this bird which was seen on several dates in the area to mid-December. One was off Brighton Marina on 16 Dec (IJW), and this, or another, was seen off Newhaven on 28 Dec (CAH). The final records refer to one seen by several observers (RAI, BFF, DIS, TJE) near Selsey from 21 Dec to the end of the month, (which could even have been the November bird) and possibly a different bird at Elmer on 29 Dec (RJLK) [BRG].

0005. **WHITE-BILLED DIVER**

Gavia adamsii

Very rare vagrant.

One, flying west past West Pier, Newhaven, at a range of approximately 400m, at 07:15 BST on 27 Apr (EDU), was the first report of this species in the County. This record has been accepted by *British Birds* and its occurrence in the County is perhaps not unexpected, given recent records from Dungeness, Kent. One report of its occurrence was published in the *SOS Newsletter* (Winter 1997). [RJF]

DIVER Species*Gavia spp.*

The specific identification of distant divers is rather unreliable, and so those recorded as ‘*spp*’ normally form a significant proportion of the total number of divers seen. An estimate of the divers, whether of known species or not, passing the five main sea-watching sites for January to May and for October to December, is made by adding the monthly totals of birds flying East to those going West (thereby creating an over-estimate by some duplication) and including the small number of birds seen on the sea.

	Diver <i>spp.</i>		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	44	72	47	50	34	15	128	137	0.44	1.35
Worthing	41	10	39	1	4	0	84	11	0.72	0.68
Brighton	64	48	148	91	42	7	254	146	1.26	2.45
Seaford	2305	185	160	38	35	1	2500	224	6.25	3.75
Bexhill	176	31	1137	129	36	6	1349	166	4.89	2.04

* includes 3 Great Northern Divers at Selsey during Jan-May.

No attempt should be made to add the columns, since many birds will have been seen at more than one site. However, it is clear from these figures that the total number of divers seen in 1997 was far greater than in any previous year, and continues the trend mentioned in *Birds of Sussex* (p 96). It would be even more informative if data were not artificially split into calendar years, but totalled for each season. The ‘winter’ sum of the December, January and February totals at Splash Point, Seaford, for 1996/7 was 2163E and 280W in 129 hours, which is a remarkable 16.7 birds per hour E and 2.1 birds per hour W for the whole period. [BRG]

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:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
<i>County totals</i>	86	72	73	27	15	23	27	45	124	125	107	168
Chichester Hbr	28	33	29	10	8	11	10	14	22	28	35	72
Pagham Hbr	10	3	-	2	-	4	-	-	nc	3	2	10
Chichester GPs	6	4	8	1	-	-	-	-	13	11	10	9
Gravetye Lakes	-	-	1	2	nc	nc	nc	nc	5	8	-	-
Lower Ouse	5	7	3	-	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	-	1	2
Lewes Brooks	-	-	-	2	nc	nc	nc	nc	4	-	2	1
Glynde Levels	-	-	2	-	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Cuckmere Haven	8	11	5	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	-	-	6	19
Langney	13	5	3	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	1	3	8	13
Bewl Water	8	6	6	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	36	30	22	8
Darwell Res	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	1	-	nc	-
Pett Level	3	1	4	1	-	1	-	-	1	-	-	-
Rye Hbr	-	1	8	7	5	6	12	27	36	35	15	25

Remarkably, there was a 6 Jan report of 40 birds at Piddinghoe, near Newhaven.

In contrast to last year's figure of 18, breeding activity was confirmed from only 8 sites, with another 3 reporting probable breeding. Those where young were recorded included

Thorney Deepes where 5 pairs fledged 10 young and Bewl water where 11 birds, including 4 young, were recorded on 31 Aug. Rye Hbr had a breeding total estimated at either 4 or 5 pairs, with Ternery Pool having 1 adult with a single young bird on 20 June, a pair with 4 half-grown young on 21 Aug, and with a final breeding performance at the Pool of 2 young early in the season and 10 later on.

Inland breeding sites included South Heighton with 2 chicks on 27 May, Kneppmill Pond, and Pease Pottage, where an adult was feeding a juvenile on a farm pool on 10 Sept.

Monthly maxima at selected wintering sites included:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
Thorney Island	29	28	21	20	30	28	29
Lower Cuckmere	6	15	4	-	-	-	-
Northpoint GP	30	-	-	-	-	-	3
Bewl Water	35	7	6	36	30	22	8

December sightings away from the principal sites included Wicks Fm, Yapton; Upper Chichester Channel; the Small Pit at Northpoint; Pagham Lagoon; the Crumbles GP; and Exceat Bridge, Cuckmere. [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:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
<i>County totals</i>	120	202	248	151	145	132	161	127	300	375	313	344
Chichester Hbr	11	5	28	8	8	6	1	2	5	8	27	35
Pagham Hbr	-	21	1	-	5	2	8	10	nc	52	9	6
Chichester GPs	10	23	35	12	10	7	3	5	33	21	20	36
Kneppmill Pond	-	-	7	4	4	8	5	4	5	12	-	-
Ardingly Res	5	17	17	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	8	21	12	17
Weir Wood Res	-	29	45	47	57	61	60	29	31	50	96	38
Arlington Res	9	18	16	17	9	8	18	31	31	32	14	12
Bewl Water	73	36	31	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	111	105	80	66
Darwell Res	-	11	29	30	24	14	50	31	38	36	nc	11
Pett Level	-	14	-	6	-	2	2	-	1	-	14	81
Rye Hbr	-	8	8	13	12	9	2	6	12	8	11	7

Brighton Marina had 11 birds on New Year's Day, as opposed to the single bird present on the equivalent day last year, while the monthly total there was 176 which included 26E & 17W in 24.5hrs of sea-watching. Similarly, Splash Point, Seaford, had a January' total of 191, 28E & 5W and 158 on the sea in 45hrs, and Bexhill and Hastings had 27E and 63 on the sea for the month. Inland, Bewl water recorded 103 birds on 14 Jan.

At Splash Point, Seaford, 56.5hrs of sea-watching in February revealed 47E & 17W and 54 on the sea, while Bexhill and Hastings reported 4E & 6W and 36 off-shore. Weir

Wood Res reported a monthly maximum of 46 on 22 Feb, and similarly, Bewl Water had 36 on 9 Feb.

Sea-watching in March gave monthly totals of 22 for Splash Point, and 23 for Bexhill and Hastings in 85 and 87.5hrs respectively.

Counts at selected sites during the months of April – August, were as follows:

	Apr	May	June	July	Aug
<i>County Totals</i>	151	145	132	161	127
Chichester Hbr	8	8	6	1	2
Pagham Hbr	-	5	2	8	10
Rye Hbr	13	12	9	2	6
Chichester GPs	12	10	7	3	5
Lurgashall MP	1	3	5	2	nc
Knepp Lake	4	4	8	5	4
Weir Wood Res	47	57	61	60	29
Arlington Res	17	9	8	18	31
Darwell Res	30	24	14	50	31

Displaying was reported at Warnham LNR on 5 Feb and at Castle Water, Rye, on 27th. Aldsworth Pond had displaying birds on 6 Mar, as did Darwell Res, among the 29 birds recorded there on 9 Mar. The latter site had the first breeding confirmation and 7 immatures were reported there on 20 July. Rye Hbr had 11 breeding pairs, but only one pair raised young (3), while Bewl Water's 19 pairs which attempted to breed, failed to produce any young, another disappointment after last year's 38 pairs only produced one juvenile.

Among the dozen or so other sites which reported breeding activity, Balcombe Lake had an adult feeding 'two large but stripey juvs' on 16 Nov.

Monthly maxima at selected wintering sites included:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
Weir Wood Res	30	46	45	31	60	100	56
Arlington Res	10	23	18	22	36	38	4
Bewl Water	103	36	31	111	105	80	80
Darwell Res	-	11	29	38	36	-	11

The reversal of the dominance of Bewl Bridge over Weir Wood in this year's December' counts, compared with the total December' count from the previous three years (WW298 and BW63) is very marked. Sea-watching monthly totals for December show 19 birds in 14hrs for Bexhill and Hastings, 11 in 6.9hrs for Worthing Beach, 9 in 22.25hrs for Selsey Bill, 21 in 39hrs for Splash Point, Seaford, and 11 in 38.3hrs for Brighton Marina. [JKI]

0010. RED-NECKED GREBE

Podiceps grisegena

Scarce winter visitor and passage migrant.

In January, singles were reported from 8 localities, including two reservoirs and at Bryants Fm at Bewl. Apart from Selsey Bill, which had 2 sightings on 14 Feb in its monthly total of 4 birds in 18.5hrs of sea-watching, only singles were again reported for February. Following the report of a single bird at Arlington Res on 4 Feb, there were regular sightings of a single there from 20 Feb until at least 20 Mar. The last spring record was of a summer-plumage bird off Brighton Marina from 22 to 25 Apr.

Apart from a single bird flying west in southerly gales off Brighton Marina on 27 Aug, there were no further records until another single was seen in Pagham Hbr on 6 Oct. The rest of the October' records, which included a bird seen daily at Aldingbourne Rife from 13 to 22 Oct, were from coastal areas, as were those in November, except for singles at Bewl Water and at Rosemary Fm, at Bewl, on 16th. Sea-watching over a period of 35.75hrs at Selsey Bill in November yielded a month' total of 8, with 7W and a monthly maximum of 3 on 8th.

The four birds, all singles, recorded in December, were on the coast at Selsey Bill and Splash Point, Seaford, and inland at Scotney Court GP and Bewl Water. [JKI]

0011. SLAVONIAN GREBE

Podiceps auritus

Scarce winter visitor and passage migrant.

In January, there were reports from 22 sites, mainly in the Pagham Hbr area, and with the usual concentration off Church Norton where there were counts of 25, 28 and 35 on 10, 23, and 27 Jan respectively. Inland, there were singles at Cuckoo Corner, Coombes, on 2 Jan, and at Bewl water on 3rd, while Weir Wood had 2 birds on 10th and singles on 13th and 31st.

February had 46 birds off-shore at Church Norton on 3rd, while Arlington Res reported singles (2 on 24th) on 7 days between 20th and 28th. Other inland records came from the Eastbourne area, with singles at the Crumbles GP and Princess Park on 22nd and 28th respectively.

In March, birds were again most frequent in the Pagham Hbr area, with 19 on the sheltered and shallow waters of the Harbour close to Church Norton on 8th. A count in Chichester Hbr on the same date revealed 13 birds. Other March records included singles at Arlington Res on 1st and 2nd, a singleton at Willingdon Level on 17th, and another at Widewater, Lancing, on 22nd, while two birds were at Powdermill Res on 9th. The highlight of the April' records was of 20E in 6hrs of sea-watching at Splash Point, Seaford, on 9th. The last spring record was of a bird flying east off Brighton Marina on 22 May.

The first autumn' count was 8 off-shore at Church Norton on 12 Sept, with numbers then building at the traditional sites throughout October and November, peaking with 39 at Pagham Hbr on 14 Dec. Barcombe Res had a single on 5 Dec which remained until 26th. Seven birds were at Selsey Bill on 13 Dec. [JKI]

0012. BLACK-NECKED GREBE

Podiceps nigricollis

Very scarce winter visitor and passage migrant.

1996: The date of the bird recorded at Splash Point, Seaford, for 12th Mar should be corrected to read 12 Apr (WRT). Likewise, the late-year sighting of a bird on Ivy Lake, Chichester GPs, on 11 Oct should be amended to read 11 Sept (TJE).

1997: On 2 Jan, a bird at Glyne Gap, Bexhill, flew along the beach and then landed with 3 divers (IS), while another was feeding off Marine Gardens at Worthing Beach on the 4th (RAI). On 9th, a single was seen on the River Adur at Shoreham, swimming and diving with a group of 4 Little Grebes (MW), while, inland, there was a single bird on the river by the road bridge at Barcombe Mills on 16th (RTP).

The Pagham Hbr/Church Norton area had up to 3 birds between 22 Jan and 10 Feb. The two individuals seen on 23 Jan were near the Harbour mouth at low tide, swimming near, but distinct from, two large rafts of 35 Slavonian Grebes. A bird found on a small rife behind the North Wall, at Pagham Hbr, on 26 Jan, was badly oiled, but neither the observers nor the RSPCA were able to catch it (TJE,AJG,AH).

An adult in summer plumage was watched by four observers for 30 minutes at Weir Wood Res on 27 Mar (NAD) and another summer bird was seen flying close in-shore at Brighton Marina on 23 Apr (IJW).

In the second half of the year, a bird was found on a stretch of reed-fringed water between Newhaven and Piddinghoe on 30 Aug and was photographed the next day. It stayed in the area until at least 5 Sept (LRB).

The remaining records for the year consist of a single at Bewl Water seen four times between 16 and 24 Oct, and possibly the same bird again was nearby at Rosemary Fm on 16 Nov (PCB,MF), while another was on the sea off Church Norton, before flying west towards Selsey, on 11 Nov (TJE). [JKI]

0022. 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		June-July		Aug-Oct		Nov-Dec	
	E	W	E	W	E	W	E	W	E	W
Selsey Bill	3	5	37	382	16	33	1	23	-	-
Worthing	1	2	21	89	1	5	2	3	-	-
Brighton Marina	2	-	1086	25	5	-	8	7	32	19
Seaford	689	55	60	1	-	-	3	2	144	52
Bexhill	32	32	590	165	-	-	5	2	34	17

At the start of the year, the largest easterly movements at Seaford were of 149 on 31 Jan and 173 on 1 Feb. Of Bexhill's 288E in March, 95 passed on 9th. Brighton's 595E in April included 225 on 7th, and 395E in May included 99 on 15th. As usual, most Fulmars in West Sussex moved westwards, in May, for instance, 308 passed Selsey Bill, with 141 on 10th, and 82 at Worthing, with 68 also on 10th. Little passage was noted after late May until December, when 128 moved E and 41W at Seaford.

Breeding was noted in May: there were 25 nesting sites at Newhaven and 56 pairs at Hastings, between East Hill and Warren Glen. A single bird was by chalk cliffs inland at Lewes on 9 June, and there was a chick in a cliff-top nest by Brighton Marina on 5 Aug.

A blue morph flew east at Brighton Marina on 5 May, and another was at sea six miles south-west of the Marina on 24 July. [KN]

0043. SOOTY SHEARWATER

Puffinus griseus

Very scarce autumn visitor.

Four were recorded. One flying west off Brighton Marina on 30 Aug (IJW), one moving east off Selsey Bill on 11 Sept (AH) and 2E off Worthing Beach on 24 Dec (RAI). This represents the best showing since 1987 and includes the first records away from Selsey Bill since 1989. Coincidentally, the only previous December record was also on 24th (in 1989). 1993 was the last blank year, but only 10 have been recorded during the

1990s. [RJF]

0046. **MANX SHEARWATER***Puffinus puffinus***Scarce spring and autumn passage migrant.**

One flew in an easterly direction at Brighton Marina on 14 Mar (PJWh), equalling the previous earliest date for that month. Thereafter, a total of about 132 was recorded at the main sea-watching localities up to 25 July as follows:

	Apr		May		June		July	
	E	W	E	W	E	W	E	W
Selsey Bill	-	4	1	49	-	-	-	-
Goring	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	-
Worthing	-	-	3	-	-	-	-	-
Brighton Marina	-	-	9	2	-	-	-	-
Newhaven	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-
Splash Point, Seaford	2	-	29	2	22	1	2	2
Bexhill	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-

The largest movements were on 4 May (9E and 2W at Brighton Marina), 10 May (34W at Selsey Bill), 21 May (19E and 1W at Seaford) and 2 June (9E and 1W, also at Seaford).

The only subsequent records were of 1 in Rye Bay on 27 Aug, 1W at Selsey Bill on 3 Sept and, at Seaford, 1E on 9 Oct and 1W on 7 Dec, a very late date. [PJ]

0046.01 **MEDITERRANEAN SHEARWATER***Puffinus yelkouan***Very scarce spring to autumn visitor.**

Another good year, with a total of 5 recorded. In June, single birds flew W at Brighton Marina on 20th (KBG) and Selsey Bill on 25th (TJE). In August, there was one off Glyne Gap on 25th (IS) and 2 singles off Brighton Marina on 30th (IJW), both of which flew west.

A total of 72 has now been recorded in the county, 11 in June and 22 in Aug. [PJ]

0052. **STORM PETREL***Hydrobates pelagicus***Rare vagrant, mainly in autumn after severe gales or, recently, at mid-summer.**

One, about 750m off the beach at Church Norton on 3 July (TJE) was the only record. It recalled the exceptional series of sightings in early July 1996 (see *SxBR* 49:24) although, regrettably, that event was not repeated. [RJF]

0055. **LEACH'S PETREL***Oceanodroma leucorhoa***Rare vagrant.**

Three singles were recorded in November: one moving east off Selsey Bill on 8th (TJE, AF); one flying west there (and presumably different) on 9th (TJE) and one off Southwick Beach on 19th (RAI). These are the first records since 1992, the County total for the 1990s being just seven. The vast majority of records occur between mid September and early January. [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		June-July		Aug-Oct		Nov-Dec	
	E	W	E	W	E	W	E	W	E	W
Selsey Bill	4	-	259	672	244	247	90	824	4	53
Worthing	-	-	45	211	22	33	62	120	2	10
Brighton Marina	3	5	641	167	19	30	82	555	52	35
Seaford	83	11	1842	615	783	118	239	67	293	58
Bexhill	8	11	344	272	39	189	799	933	95	107

Another year of high numbers, especially between 27 Apr and 12 May, including 137E and 24W at Seaford on 29 Apr, and 193W and 17E at Bexhill on 8 May. On 10 May, there were 174W at Worthing, 91E and 146W at Seaford, and 275W at Selsey Bill, the highest day-total for the County in spring.

Other peaks were 70W and 106E at Selsey Bill on 25 June, 175E and 2W at Seaford on 1 July, 185W at Selsey Bill on 27 Aug, and 180W at Brighton Marina on 12 Sept. October was the busiest month of the autumn, particularly on 7th, with 250W at Selsey Bill, and 148W and 230E at Bexhill. An oiled bird was in Pagham Hbr on 14 Nov. [KN]

0072. CORMORANT

Phalacrocorax carbo

Very scarce breeding species and common winter visitor.

The monthly *Wetland Bird Survey* counts at some of the principal sites were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
<i>County totals</i>	463	632	345	114	139	143	155	351	485	690	442	404
Chichester Hbr	11	13	29	15	9	15	28	41	49	88	44	37
Pagham Hbr	161	246	57	50	70	51	68	96	nc	183	15	86
Chichester GPs	2	86	60	-	-	-	-	-	27	71	105	80
Climping	138	11	7	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	7	20	16	11
Steyning Levels	nc	5	-	nc	3	-	14	nc	6	7	16	1
Henfield Brooks	66	20	-	-	-	6	23	17	37	10	8	-
Weir Wood Res	-	54	58	-	9	4	16	10	37	43	41	27
Pevensey Levels	-	30	19	-	1	1	nc	7	4	17	20	11
Bewl Water	50	40	20	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	80	70	70	20
Pett Level	2	44	11	5	-	1	1	-	2	-	-	4
Rye Hbr	-	13	25	32	43	58	-	170	177	85	37	49

A better indication of total numbers is given by counts at nocturnal roosts. The coastal fringe in the west was fairly well covered by these and showed that numbers may have levelled off there after a number of years of increase. The simultaneous counts of the two nocturnal roosts which serve the birds in the small stretch from Littlehampton westwards were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
Chichester GPs	6	285	175	184	185	155	88
South Stoke	332	152	92	64	165	109	187
Total	338	437	267	248	350	264	275

In January, the Chichester GPs had partial ice cover, and, as usual in these conditions, the majority of the birds clearly diverted to South Stoke. The Chichester roost was more fragmented than usual in the autumn, spreading from the favoured electricity lines over Trout Lake West, to a tree bordering Trout Lake East. After leaf fall, some, but not all as is customary, switched to tree roosts on the islands in Ivy Lake. Amongst birds seen at this roost was one ringed at Vorso, Denmark, in 1990, another at Grune Point, South Solway, in 1993, and a third at Nottingham in 1997.

In the South Stoke' tree roost, some of the distinctive first-year birds were noticed to occupy the same perches over a period of months.

Also in the west, the nocturnal roost on electricity cables at Wyckham Fm on the Upper Adur had 101 on 28 Aug, increasing to 156 on 5 Oct, then falling to 81 on 27 Dec. The Ardingly Res' nocturnal roost numbered 45 on 27 Oct, whilst the Weir Wood Res' nocturnal roost normally held about three quarters of the daytime numbers. Thus, in October, the West Sussex' nocturnal roosts alone held about 600 birds.

Unfortunately, there was only one East Sussex report of a nocturnal roost. This came from Southerham Fm, Lewes, where 9 birds were on electricity lines on 14 Jan. Birds feeding at Bawl Water, which reached as many as 96 on 9 Oct, were all reported to head south at dusk. Since Cormorants use fairly direct flight lines to their nocturnal roost, some fairly simple detective work could reveal the roosts of the Bawl Water' birds and other birds in the eastern population. Reports in the past have come from Manxey Level, Seaford Head, and Rye Harbour.

The most frequented daytime loafing roosts in winter were, as usual, Bognor Regis Pier, with 205 on 24 Jan, and Pagham Harbour intertidals, with 187 on 18 Mar. The breakwater at the mouth of the R. Arun at Littlehampton had 49 on 3 Dec. A different seasonal pattern was observed in the east, where numbers built up to a maximum in summer, with 181 at Beach Tern Pool, Rye, on 6 Aug.

In the breeding season, there were 12 or more nests on the cliffs at Fairlight Country Park on 9 Apr, but no follow up reports to indicate success or failure. At Castle Water, Rye, there were at least 6 active nests, of which two possibly hatched young.

The number of Cormorants breeding inland in SE England has grown very rapidly in the 1990s, and recent research has shown that this has been fuelled by the expanding population of the continental subspecies, *sinensis*. So far, no inland breeding has been reported in the County, but incipient breeding activity has been noted at Weir Wood Res and this may be a precursor.

Besides the major reservoirs, many small inland sites reported surprisingly large numbers of birds through the year; Folly Pond, Liphook, was an example, with a site record of 16 on 28 Dec. [RK]

0080. SHAG

Phalacrocorax aristotelis

Scarce winter visitor and passage migrant.

Most records for this species were from the coastal area between Brighton and Seaford, with the majority from Brighton Marina. Between 2 and 6 birds were recorded there in the first half of the year and up to 3 were present in the second half, excluding two exceptional records, 15 flying west on 13 Aug and on 30th. The only other areas to report regular sightings were Bexhill and Hastings, with 5 spring and 9 autumn records, and in the Church Norton/Selsey Bill area, which produced only 4 birds in the spring, but a total

of 15 in the autumn, including 5 flying east past Selsey Bill on 13 Sept. Elsewhere, records were all of 1 or 2 birds as follows: at Southwick Beach, 2 were present on 17 Jan, with one staying until 28 Feb, and with another on 27 Nov. At Shoreham Hbr, 1 was present from 18 until 25 Feb, and at Worthing, 1 flew east on 24 Mar.

The only inland record was of one at Bewl Water, present on 13 Jan. [AH]

0095. **BITTERN**

Botaurus stellaris

Very scarce winter visitor.

As demonstrated last year, this species is no longer just a winter visitor; there were reports in nine of the months and relating to perhaps 13 different individuals. The Icklesham - Pett Level - Rye area offers the best opportunity to see this species.

During cold weather in January, 1 was found dead early in the month at Brighton Marina, there were singles at Rodmell and at Ivy Lake, Chichester GPs, on 2nd (the latter standing out in the open on ice), 1 was at Weir Wood Res between 1st and 13th and 1 was at Marsh Fm, Yapton, on 21st. There were also reports on 11 dates between 2 Jan and 4 Feb at Icklesham, including 2 on 12 Jan. At Rye, there were reports on 15 dates between 3 Jan and 22 Mar, including 2 on the latter date (an encouraging record) and on 21 Jan. The Rye reports came from Castle Water LNR, the Beach Tern Pool LNR, the Narrow Pit SSSI and Northpoint Pit. There was 1 at Pett Level on 25 Mar, then none until 1 at Icklesham on the interesting date of 25 May. There was 1 at this site on 1 Aug and then one on at least 13 dates during the period Sept-Oct. The latter individual was probably the same one which was present at Pett Level on 1-2 Nov and at Icklesham on 15 Nov. It was possibly the same one which was at Pett Level on 23 Dec and Icklesham on 30 Dec. In December, one was seen on five dates from sites at Rye. [SHL]

0108. **SQUACCO HERON**

Ardeola ralloides

Very rare vagrant.

One was present by the lake at Cowden Fm, Bodle Street, from 18–20 June (JA, WRP). This record has been accepted by *British Birds* and is the 6th County record. Like this one, both other recent records have been in mid June (in 1982 & 1995), although, also like this one, they were not widely known about, keeping the species firmly fixed on most observers' 'wanted' lists. [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	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
<i>County totals</i>	27	51	63	54	15	22	117	172	168	154	112	91
Thorney Deeps	18	42	56	46	8	13	93	137	135	121	95	76
Pagham Hbr	3	3	4	6	2	9	19	21	24	27	13	12
Cuckmere	1	3	1	-	1	-	1	6	5	5	3	2
Rye Hbr	1	-	1	1	1	-	1	3	2	-	1	1

Spring and autumn peak numbers were similar to last year, with a minimum of 235 birds recorded in the County, compared to 255 in 1996. The January numbers were well

down on previous years, however, due to the extremely cold east to north-east winds, and the mercury barely scraping above zero Celsius during the first half of the month.

During the January to March period, the majority of the records came from Chichester and Pagham Hbrs. There were 2 records well inland during this period, of single birds at Haywards Heath on 16 Jan, and at Darwell Res on 15 Mar. Counts at the Thorney Deeps' roost were 14 on 13th and 18 on 23 Jan. Numbers there then gradually built up as milder conditions returned during the following month. There were 25 on 5 Feb and 42 on 22nd, increasing to 56 on 20 Mar, thereafter gradually falling to 46 on 2 April, 38 on 9th, and 22 on 16th. Eight were counted on 1 May and finally 2 on 8th. Other notable records were of 3 at Cuckmere Haven on 6 Feb, and 6 at Pagham Hbr on 9 Apr. The only spring inland record was of 2 at Weir Wood Res on 16 May. The last spring sightings for Pagham and Chichester Harbours were of single birds on 22 and 23 May respectively, the latter flying north-east into Chichester Hbr from East Head. One remained at Icklesham until 4 June.

Presumed returning birds were observed at both Pilsey Island and Pagham Hbr on 5 and 7 June, respectively. Counts at the Thorney Deeps' roost revealed a rapid build-up in July, with 42 on 16th, 93 on 29th, increasing to 118 on 12 Aug, and a maximum of 137 during the period 24-27 Aug. There were 135 on 4 Sept, 121 on 1 Oct, thereafter falling rapidly to 95 on 6 Nov and 76 on 12 Dec. Counts at Pagham Hbr were 19 on 28 July, 21 on 19 Aug, 24 on 21 Sept, with a maximum of 27 on 19 Oct, then falling gradually to 13 on 6 Nov and 12 on 3 Dec. Other noteworthy counts were of 6 at Cuckmere Haven on 7 Aug, and 3 at Rye Hbr on 16 and 17 Aug. A high-tide count at Thorney Deeps produced 74 on 21 Aug. Four were at Icklesham on 26 Aug, and 20 at Pilsey Island on 5 Sept. The only autumn inland record was of a single bird at Pulborough Brooks from 4 to 6 July.

Routine sea-watches in spring and autumn produced but two records. In the spring, one flew west off Worthing Beach on 3 May, and in the autumn one passed east off Birling Gap, Beachy Head, on 19 Oct. [CBC]

0122. **GREY HERON**
Fairly common resident.

Ardea cinerea

The *Wetland Bird Survey* counts were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
<i>County totals</i>	60	77	72	69	46	82	104	139	137	173	160	140
Chichester Hbr	5	6	5	9	12	15	18	17	19	23	13	17
Pagham Hbr	-	-	6	4	2	11	13	11	nc	12	6	7
Chichester GPs	2	3	3	2	3	-	1	2	5	5	9	5
Forest Mere	-	1	-	3	5	15	8	16	2	4	1	1
Arun Offham	-	1	1	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	-	12	12	9
Bury Brooks	12	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	2	2	-
Amberley Brooks	-	3	8	5	8	2	5	4	3	-	5	7
Pulborough Brooks	1	-	2	8	2	6	12	3	2	5	8	2
Kneppmill Pond	3	11	7	24	-	-	1	2	-	-	-	-
Lower Adur	7	4	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	5	-	5	7
Ardingly Res	1	2	7	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	-	5	3	2
Weir Wood Res	1	3	2	1	2	5	6	25	7	5	4	3
Glynde Levels	1	2	-	2	5	5	3	1	2	3	3	2
Arlington Res	1	-	-	1	1	7	8	7	7	5	1	2
Cuckmere Hvn	4	8	6	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	14	16	17	20
Pevensey Levels	2	6	15	1	nc	nc	5	21	2	19	15	9
Bewl Water	1	1	-	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	17	10	6	4
Pett Level	3	6	2	-	-	1	3	8	2	5	2	2
Rye Hbr	10	15	3	2	3	6	10	11	18	36	24	24

In the breeding season, all known heronries were counted, the total of occupied nests coming to 225 (215 in 1996). Counts for individual heronries were as follows:

Fishbourne 12; Pagham 8; Flansham 19; Parham 13; Henfield 24; Firle 20; Knepp 12; Eridge 11; Glynde 7; Wartling 0 and Horsebridge Road, Wartling 17; Winchelsea 2; Leasam 31; Iford 1; Gilham's Moor 0; Warnham 3; Charleston 11; Hadlow Down 9; Westbourne 1; Ardingly 8; Burwash 15; and Chingley Wood, Bewl Water, 1.

The nest in Chingley Wood is the first reported in the Bewl Water area since 1979. The small heronry at Gilham's Moor may be extinct, and the pairs nesting to the west of Wartling seem all to have moved into the Horsebridge Road colony. Where observers have given a total of definitely occupied and another of probably occupied nests, the higher figure has been used, but as this is done every year, the overall slight increase in the population is likely to be real, and would be not unexpected after a mild winter.

During the rest of the year, Herons were seen in suitable habitat throughout the County, ranging from large lakes to small streams, and at fishponds in town gardens. There were occasional coastal records at sea-watching sites. The largest number at a single site was 29 at Weir Wood reservoir in Aug, and there were many reports of single birds. [ABW]

0144. **SPOONBILL**

Platalea leucorodia

Very scarce visitor, most frequent in spring and autumn.

Only two were recorded, an adult at Arundel WWT on 15-16 Apr (CAH *et al*) and a juvenile flying slowly east over Pagham Hbr on 19 Aug (TJE). A below-average showing.

With 34 recorded during the 1990s, only 1994 had fewer records, while the last blank year was 1985. Records in recent years are fairly well scattered between March and early November. [RJF]

0152. MUTE SWAN

Cygnus olor

Fairly common resident.

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

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
<i>County totals</i>	582	434	324	293	219	271	387	328	464	509	542	470
Chichester Hbr	147	41	25	45	66	84	108	119	57	50	98	118
Chichester GPs	13	20	17	11	5	5	7	11	50	46	56	36
Climping	-	-	-	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	33	20	6	14
Arundel WWT	17	nc	24	19	11	13	nc	18	16	17	11	14
Arun - Offham	8	4	5	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	20	29	23	13
Amberley Brooks	34	5	15	12	22	5	5	5	22	10	60	29
Pulborough Brooks	11	18	77	69	44	26	25	12	21	29	22	35
Steyning Levels	nc	9	6	nc	8	19	66	nc	10	19	3	12
Henfield Brooks	12	8	16	8	3	10	28	10	19	15	32	16
Lower Ouse	60	42	50	13	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	7	4	6
Lewes Brooks	11	47	7	4	nc	nc	nc	nc	6	34	9	35
Glynde Levels	2	15	6	15	13	29	21	17	23	22	14	-
Eastbourne Lakes	12	17	Nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	47	32	48	15
Pevensy Levels	19	55	34	22	11	2	nc	6	39	88	68	36
Pett Level	126	50	7	5	10	10	8	12	3	8	3	6
Rye Hbr	59	86	9	53	21	54	105	102	55	55	24	9

Herd sizes in January were down on those for 1996, with records topping 100 coming only from Bines Bridge, Ashurst (120 on 4th/5th), RSPB Pulborough Brooks (107 on 6th), whilst in the east of the County 105 were at Princes Park, Eastbourne, on 11th and 100 at Rye Fields East on 12th. Counts of 80 and 81 at Iford on 3 Feb and Harbour Fm, Rye SSSI, on 20 Feb, respectively, were the largest of that month. Up to 63 were reported at Ford, feeding on non-cereal crops in the first half of February. Numbers there had grown to 80 by 12 Mar when the crop was identified as oil seed rape. Seventy-seven on Manxey Level, Pevensy, on 27 Mar, was the highest count of the month in East Sussex. A pair on a nest at Filsham Reedbed on 18 Mar was the earliest breeding record for the year. Nesting activity in that month was also reported from Southwater CP and Warnham LNR.

In addition to the sites mentioned above, breeding records in 1997 were received from Brooklands, Worthing; Castle Fm, Rye LNR; Horse Eye Level, Pevensy; the Royal Military Canal, Pett; Bines Bridge, Ashurst; Ivy Lake, (6 pairs) and New Lake, Chichester GPs; Furnace Pond, Cowden; Boreham Bridge; Thorney Deeps; Henfield Level; Rye Harbour SSSI (7 pairs); Eastern Rother Levels; Piddinghoe Pond; Pett Level Pools; Amberley Wild Brooks; North, Mid and South Brooks, RSPB Pulborough; Kneppmill Pond; Peter Pond, Emsworth; Bremere Rife, and Ferry Pool, Pagham Hbr; Valebridge Pond, Burgess Hill; and East Guldeford Level. A number of sites where breeding was recorded in 1996 are not in the 1997 list, but, conversely, a number of sites mentioned above did not feature in 1996.

Summer gatherings in excess of 100 were recorded in Fishbourne Channel, Chichester

Hbr, on 18 June and 10 July (max 107), whilst in East Sussex, the counts at Rye Hbr SSSI during the summer *Wetland Bird Surveys* were 105 in July and 102 in August.

During the second winter period, 80, including 27 juveniles, most of which were thought to have come from locally reared families, were on Chichester GPs on 15 Oct, and 105 were present on Lewes Brooks on 22 Nov. The only significant herds reported in December were 85 at Dell Quay on 22nd, 41 at Ford on 26th and the same number on Chichester GPs on 27th.

Two deaths as a result of hitting overhead power lines were reported in 1997 – from Lewes Brooks on 28 May and Exceat Bridge, Cuckmere, on 26 Nov. [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:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
<i>County totals</i>	94	104	77	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	31
Shillinglee Lake	11	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Arundel WWT	6	nc	-	-	-	-	nc	-	-	-	-	-
Bury Brooks	-	-	26	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Amberley Brooks	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	26
Pulborough Brooks	59	62	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Lower Ouse	-	4	51	-	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	-	-	-
Lewes Brooks	17	38	-	-	nc	nc	nc	nc	-	-	-	5

In the first winter period, rather more sightings were reported from West Sussex than from the east of the County. Up to 71 birds, including one with a neck collar, were recorded at RSPB Pulborough Brooks in the first week of January, but, as ever, records came from a number of sites in the Arun Valley as far down as Ford, and assessing the total number of birds involved is difficult. Many sightings were recorded in the Adur Valley and observers there noted good numbers of juvenile birds, e.g., 13 out of 28 at Bines Bridge, Ashurst, on 5 Jan, and 8 out of 25 at Henfield on 23 Jan. In East Sussex, up to 48 birds were recorded at Iford on 3 Feb, whilst 60 were at Northpoint Pit, Rye, two days later. Four was the highest number of juveniles seen among 47 birds on the Lewes Brooks on 9 Feb. The *WeBS*’ count in the Lower Ouse Valley in March was of 51 birds. Final sightings for the period were, in the west of the County, 26 on Bury Brooks during the March *WeBS*’ count, and in the east 2 at Pevensey Bay on 30 Mar.

A single bird at Weir Wood Res on 9 July was considered to be an escape.

The first birds of autumn were 6 at Winchelsea on 22 Oct and this was the only record from East Sussex received up to the year end. Although birds were seen in the Adur and Arun valleys in November, it was not until 6 Dec that a count reached double figures when 14 were on Pulborough Mid Brooks. Twenty-two birds were on the River Adur at Shoreham on 20 Dec, whilst a herd of 32 on Pulborough North Brooks on 24 Dec was the highest count in the second winter period. Records of a maximum of only 7 juveniles were received. [MJM]

0154. **WHOOPEER SWAN***Cygnus cygnus***Very scarce winter visitor and passage migrant.**

Two sightings on 1 Jan possibly relate to different birds. Three adults and one immature were seen at around 1pm near Greatham (CWM), whilst, as dusk approached, 5 adults were on the River Adur near Shoreham Airport (TWE, DB, RNS). On 25 Jan, 3 adults flew over the A27 at Tangmere (DIS). [MJM]

0157. **BEAN GOOSE***Anser fabalis***Rare winter visitor and passage migrant.**

Cold weather at the beginning of the year produced a good number of sightings as follows: 3 on the Upper Adur Levels on 13 Jan (SL); 1 at Lewes Brooks on 31 Jan (IJW); 3 at Earnley on 1 Feb (AH); and 4 at Scotney Court GP on the same date. Four were at Iford, near Lewes, from 3 – 5 Feb (RDE, DCL), and 12 at Scotney Court GP on 7 Feb increased to 16 by 14th (BFF, SG). There were 2 at Pagham Hbr on 13th.

It should be noted that the two races of the Bean Goose, *Anser f. fabalis* and *Anser f. rossicus*, have now been separated into newly-defined species: the Taiga Goose (*fabalis*) and the Tundra Goose (*rossicus*). Doubtless, many future records will remain indeterminate between the two. [JRH]

0158. **PINK-FOOTED GOOSE***Anser brachyrhynchus***Scarce winter visitor and passage migrant.**

There were only three acceptable records during the year. On 7 Jan, one was seen with 2 feral Greylag Geese in a field by the River Arun at Burpham, the bird remaining until around 16th (MD). Three were noted with Brent Geese at Scotney Court GP on 13 Jan (RTP), and, finally, two alighted briefly on the mud-flats of Pagham Hbr on 3 Oct, before departing eastwards, in the direction of Pagham village (LGH). [JRH]

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

Another good year. The approximate monthly totals (allowing for likely duplication in the east of the County) were as follows:

Jan	Feb	Mar	Oct	Nov	Dec
226	206	62	9	11	43

In the early part of the year, the largest numbers recorded were at Scotney Court GP where there were 12 on 4 Jan, 138 on 28th, 60 on 2 Feb, 200 on 9th, 45 on 13th and 62 on 14 Mar. A number of parties of up to 39 birds at Rye Hbr in January and early February originated perhaps from this mobile flock, as did 130 at Icklesham on 26 Jan.

Elsewhere, there were 40 at Iford on 11 Jan and 34W over Pevensey Bridge Level, but the only records for the west of the County were of 6 in the Pagham Hbr area on 24 Jan, an immature there from 28 Jan to 13 Feb (when it was accompanied by an adult), and a single bird with Bean Geese at Marsh Fm, Earnley, from 1-5 Feb.

An injured adult was noted in Chichester Hbr from 18-30 July.

The first recorded in the autumn were an adult at Pagham Hbr on 16 and 28 Oct (possibly the Chichester Hbr bird?) and 7SW over Sheepcote Valley, Brighton, on 29 Oct. A party of 9 flew east at Sidlesham Ferry on 6 Nov. A small influx in December included 18 at Scotney Court GP on 6th, 15 at Pulborough Brooks on 23rd and 20 at Amberley Wild Brooks on 29th. [PJ]

0161. GREYLAG GOOSE

Anser anser

Fairly common introduced resident and winter visitor, scarce passage migrant.

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

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
<i>County totals</i>	82	35	86	107	42	27	89	22	361	254	286	158
Arundel WWT	40	nc	-	-	-	-	nc	-	-	-	-	-
Amberley Brooks	-	-	40	19	6	-	-	-	25	-	128	115
Pulborough Brooks	32	-	5	23	9	1	46	3	128	137	2	38
Warnham MP	-	-	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	14	-	-
Henfield Brooks	-	-	6	-	2	-	4	-	-	-	-	-
Ardingly Res	-	22	2	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	59	57	-	-
Weir Wood Res	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	93	28	-	-
Glynde Levels	6	7	7	26	6	24	22	12	26	-	155	-
Arlington Res	-	1	-	-	2	-	-	4	-	-	-	1
Cuckmere Hvn	-	4	4	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	-	-	-	1
Pett Level	-	-	4	22	4	-	1	-	-	-	-	-
Rye Hbr	-	-	17	15	10	1	14	-	29	17	-	-

Apart from *WeBS*' totals, the most notable counts were 259 at Scotney Court GP on 19 Jan, 86 on Amberley Wild Brooks on 23rd, 51 at Weir Wood Res on 27th, and, in February, 56 at Pulborough Brooks on 2nd. Otherwise, there was a scattering of records from East Sussex, with the only other records from the west being one at Ivy Lake, Chichester GPs, on 9 Jan, and at Pagham Hbr on 16th, and two, more or less resident, at Thorney Deeps, from the start of the year up to 8 May, and present again in December.

Breeding records were received for May from Piddinghoe Pond, where a pair and 7 young were seen on 14th, from Wiston Pond, near Steyning, where 2 pairs and 6 young were noted on 17th, from Rye Hbr, where there was a pair and 5 young, seen from 20th to 22nd, and in June from Glynde Levels where 5 adults and 10 young were noted on 15th. Also, one breeding pair was noted at Pulborough Brooks during an RSPB count on 1 June. There was also a notable tally of 40 birds seen at Ardingly Res on 29 May, but no note of any breeding.

As is usual with this species, numbers began to build up in the early autumn, with the first notable counts being 104 at Warnham MP on 23 Aug (with the same number still present on 18 Oct), 203 at Weir Wood Res on 7 Sept (rising to 209 by 9 Oct), 84 at Pulborough Brooks on 9 Sept (rising to 137 on 20 Oct) and 200 at Scotney Court GP on 28 Sept, peaking to the biggest count of the year of 296 on 26 Oct. Later in the year, peak counts were lower, the maximum at Weir Wood being 42 on 9 Nov. At Amberley, there were 110 on 29 Dec, and at Scotney Court only 32 on 6 Dec.

One other notable late autumn count was of 155 at Glynde Reach Clay Pit on 14 Nov.

[AH]

GREY GOOSE species*Anser* spp.

Unidentified grey geese were recorded during sea-watches as follows: 3 east in 1hr at Selsey Bill on 9 Feb; and 4 flying eastwards in 5hrs at Splash Point, Seaford, on 11 Mar. Three flew west past Selsey Bill on 4 Dec.

A flock of 60 birds in a flooded field at Amberley Wild Brooks on 21 Nov were probably White-fronted Geese. [JRH]

0163. SNOW GOOSE*Anser caerulescens***All records probably relate to escapes.**

Two birds at Pagham Hbr on 14 Mar, an apparent pair, appeared very wild although the probability that these were escapes cannot be ruled out. One was a blue-phase bird. [SJP]

See also Escapes and Feral birds.

0166. CANADA GOOSE*Branta canadensis***Fairly common introduced resident and partial migrant.**

The *Wetland Bird Survey*' counts, which again show that the largest numbers are present in autumn and early winter, were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
<i>County totals</i>	2223	810	680	385	303	432	488	1559	2270	2199	3049	2712
Forest Mere	1	20	14	6	16	29	34	-	-	-	-	-
Petworth Park	32	45	89	-	-	-	-	-	145	10	12	104
Arundel WWT	580	nc	53	68	86	48	nc	34	122	41	30	75
Arun Offham	-	-	-	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	155	33	-	34
Amberley Brooks	167	26	7	7	7	22	14	-	20	10	1410	174
Pulborough Brooks	49	18	40	62	29	13	14	110	39	344	44	348
Henfield Brooks	-	15	22	3	2	-	1	1	-	-	20	150
Ardingly Res	80	76	45	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	103	44	51	84
Weir Wood Res	-	11	25	9	2	104	62	408	239	75	115	-
Barcombe Res	20	66	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	29	28
Glynde Levels	4	60	66	34	35	2	64	-	143	99	18	6
Arlington Res	230	12	7	4	-	1	-	825	12	-	10	11
Cuckmere Hvn	127	123	35	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	235	480	335	455
Pevensy Levels	100	44	20	32	5	nc	nc	-	-	-	-	-
Bowl Water	400	47	56	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	479	500	548	548
Darwell Res	240	5	10	15	15	79	83	127	3	81	nc	22
Pett Level	-	46	40	41	20	60	69	-	30	99	143	120
Rye Hbr	7	133	80	83	59	49	96	1	326	141	55	195

Significant counts for the first winter period, not shown in the table, included 1000 at Bowl Water on 5 Jan and 316 at Barcombe Res on 16 Jan.

At Rye Hbr, a total of 34 pairs nested within the SSSI.

A number of large post-breeding flocks included 150 at Pett Level Pools on 10 June, 400 at Bewl Water on 22nd (increasing to 573 by 1 July and 1100 by 11 Sept), 133 at Weir Wood Res on 6 July (increasing to 408 by 24 Aug) and 650 at Arlington Res on 10 Aug (increasing to 850 by 24th).

Significant counts for the latter part of the year, not shown in the table, included 520 at Rye Hbr on 19 Sept, 1000 at Pulborough Brooks on 27 Nov and 360 at Barcombe Res on 30th.

A few birds were recorded at the main sea-watching localities in spring as follows:

	E	W	E	W	E	W
Selsey Bill	-	-	2	-	-	-
Worthing	-	-	2	2	-	-
Brighton	10	-	4	2	-	-
Splash Point, Seaford	-	-	2	13	-	1
Bexhill	2	-	4	2	-	-

A single bird, of likely captive origin, showing some characteristics of one of the smaller races of this species, but possibly a hybrid Canada x Barnacle Goose, was recorded at Princes Park, Eastbourne, on 13 Jan and in the lower Cuckmere Valley on 2 Mar and 7 Sept. [PJ]

0167. BARNACLE GOOSE

Branta leucopsis

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

There were no records of truly wild birds despite the harsh weather at the beginning of the year.

As in 1996, the largest feral flock was at Barcombe Res where there were 41 on 1 Jan and up to 43 in December. The next largest concentrations were of 18 at Arundel in February and up to 11 at Marsh Fm, Yapton, in November-December, but, elsewhere, no more than 6 were reported. A single bird was with Brent Geese at Sidlesham Ferry on 16 Feb and 3 with an escaped Red-breasted Goose (see Escapes and Feral Birds' section) at Church Norton on 23 Apr. Of uncertain origin were 4E at Brighton Marina on 20 Apr, 20 moving south and 1W at Selsey Bill on 21 and 30 Apr respectively, and 4W at Glyne Gap on 3 May. The dates, however, suggest that these, too, were feral. [PJ]

0168. BRENT GOOSE

Branta bernicla

Very common winter visitor and passage migrant.

The *Wetland Bird Survey*' counts were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
County totals	7709	6666	7399	92	18	27	15	2	5	3704	7759	8649
Chichester Hbr	4559	6282	5869	36	15	26	15	2	5	3474	7685	7821
Pagham Hbr	2879	356	1476	26	3	1	-	-	nc	203	69	672
Rye Hbr	-	25	13	30	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

Apart from the *WeBS*' totals, the highest counts in the first winter period were 3000 in

Pagham Hbr on 29 Jan and 1520 there on 5 Feb. Elsewhere, there were variable numbers reported, most notably up to 800 birds seen flying regularly over Chichester GPs, to feed inland during the cold snap in the first half of January. There were also up to 110 seen around the River Adur, north of Shoreham, during this period. At Scotney Court GP, up to 151 were recorded in the second half of January. The only other inland records all came from Pulborough Brooks, with 1 on 20 Jan, 2 on 23rd, and 1 on 31 Mar.

Eastward spring passage was noted from the main sea-watching sites as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Total
Selsey Bill	22	176	536	89	273	1096
Worthing Beach	0	86	246	125	106	563
Brighton Marina	26	150	2479	134	123	2912
Splash Point, Seaford	73	1135	6960	333	325	8826
Bexhill and Hastings	65	291	7069	609	131	8165

The most significant day for birds moving east was 11 Mar, when 1291 passed Brighton, 3562 passed Seaford and 3007 passed Bexhill. Those figures equate to around 40% of the total spring passage at these three sites.

During the summer months, the highest numbers were recorded in Chichester Hbr during the Summer Wetland Bird Survey, with 26 recorded in June and 15 in July. Elsewhere, one was in Pagham Hbr on 3 June and 1 July, 11 were off-shore with a Barnacle Goose at Bexhill on 5 June and 1 was on the sea off Goring Gap on 5 July.

The first returning birds comprised a flock of 45, including some juveniles, at Pett Level Pools on 15 Sept, followed by 73 flying south-east over Pilsea Sands, Chichester Hbr, on 19th. Thereafter, numbers started to increase, with 200 in Emsworth Channel on 29 Sept, and a large influx on 12 Oct when 94 flew west past Bexhill, 64 passed Worthing and at least 200 arrived at Church Norton. A total of 904 birds was reported flying west in October, of which 449 were recorded from Selsey Bill. The largest recorded autumn flock related to 1200 in Pagham Hbr on 10 Dec.

There were a number of records of the Pale Bellied race, *B.b.hrota*, in the first winter period, but the sequence of dates suggests that they could all refer to one bird. The first reports were from around Coombes, near Shoreham, where one was present on 2–6 Jan. Then, one was reported five times between 12 Jan and 5 Feb from the northern end of Pagham Hbr. There was an additional record of a single bird from West Wittering on 3 Feb. Finally, one was seen flying east from Brighton Marina on 23 Feb. In the autumn, one was at Rye Hbr on 26 Oct, and one was seen at West Fields, Selsey, on 27 Nov. [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 31 Dec 1996 (*SxBR* 49:38), remained to 26 Feb (TJE, AH *et al*), usually being reported from the North Wall. An adult and five juveniles at Bewl Water on 21 Sept (CWM *et al*) were seen at Arlington Res on 22nd (CAH). It would seem likely that this group, which had been seen earlier in North Kent, was of continental origin, although whether wild or, perhaps more likely, from a feral population is open to debate. One can also only speculate on their eventual destination. [RJF]

0173. **SHELDUCK**

Tadorna tadorna

Fairly common breeder and common winter visitor.

Common along the coast, especially at the eastern and western Harbours, but also recorded inland at some of the larger reservoirs and lakes. The annual peak count of 1623 in February was considerably lower than the 2482 of February 1996 and the mean February count for the years 1974/94 of 3125. The monthly *WeBS*² counts at the principal sites were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
<i>County totals</i>	1496	1623	1205	642	516	258	70	28	42	178	439	773
Chichester Hbr	1118	1140	928	399	307	113	8	7	37	69	252	557
Pagham Hbr	251	398	160	124	124	58	36	9	nc	101	143	144
Arundel WWT	54	nc	27	65	37	39	nc	11	5	4	31	46
Pett Level	50	41	6	-	4	2	10	-	-	-	8	7
Rye Hbr	9	9	9	27	23	42	16	-	-	3	3	11

Sea-watching at the principle localities recorded the following movements:

	Jan		Feb		Mar		Apr		May		Dec	
Selsey Bill	59W	3E	2W	-	9W	13E	12W	20E	2W	33E	41W	-
Worthing	61W	7E	2W	2E	4W	8E	12W	33E	5W	4E	7W	-
Brighton	92W	28E	13W	7E	16W	44E	5W	33E	10W	55E	8W	30E
Seaford	124W	66E	18W	16E	11W	89E	19W	66E	34W	87E	18W	23E
Bexhill & Hastings	117W	86E	4W	7E	17W	102E	15W	62E	7W	35E	7W	1E

In May, there were 516 adults in the County, of which 307 were in Chichester Hbr. The breeding success was generally poor with the reports as follows: at Chichester Hbr, young only reported from Thorney (2 pairs fledged 5 young) and Bosham, a pair at Fishbourne Channel, a pair at Cobnor Point, 2 pairs at Cobnor Cottage. At Pagham Hbr, there were at least 20 adults and 10 young at the Ferry Pool. In the Arun Valley, a pair with 6 young were at Greatham Bridge, a pair with 8 young at Coldwaltham Brooks, a pair at Amberley Wild Brooks and a pair near Yapton. At Cuckmere Haven, a pair was seen with 8 young, and at Bewl Water a pair had 7 young. At Icklesham, up to 10 adults were seen, but no young reported. Around Rye there were 12 pairs at Rye Hbr (but only 2 broods seen and only 3 young fledged), a pair with a brood at Iden; a pair in Union Channel and 3 pairs with 22 young on the River Rother.

During July, only 70 adults remained in the county following the departure of most for their annual moult and the annual minimum was just 28 in August. The return at the end of the year can be seen in the tables above.

Inland, away from the breeding sites, there were up to 9 at Weir Wood Res from 19 Aug until 26 Nov, 3 at Warnham LNR on 16 Oct and 2 at Darwell Res on 15 Dec. [BJY]

0178. **MANDARIN**

Aix galericulata

Scarce but increasing introduced resident.

January' records for the Mandarin Duck were few and far between, with only single birds seen at Horsted Keynes and at Bewl Water on 7th and 13th, respectively, and two at Swanbourne Lake, Arundel, on 12th. On 28th, a pair were seen at Furnace Pond, Ebernoe, a typical locality for the species. On 17 Feb, five drakes were seen at Swanbourne Lake which maintained a nucleus of 11 birds on 27th. There was a single bird at Chingford Pond on 22nd. More birds were seen throughout March, with sightings of singles or pairs coming from Ebernoe, again, and from Forest Mere, Kneppmill Pond, North Stoke and Offham in the Arun Valley, and Greatham Common. There were 7 recorded at Pulborough brooks on 24th.

With breeding activity well under way, records became numerous throughout April. Localities which hosted this species included Swanbourne Lake, Eridge Park, Pulborough Brooks, Wakehurst Place, Ashdown Forest, Glynde Levels, Folly Pond, near Liphook, and South Stoke in the Arun Valley. A single drake was seen on a pond at West Itchenor on 29th. The main concentration was at Swanbourne Lake on 6th when 21 were counted there. Otherwise, numbers varied between 2 and 8 birds. On 13th, a nest was recorded in the Ashdown Forest where two drakes and a duck were noted, too. May featured further evidence of breeding, with a duck and 5 young at Swanbourne Lake on 10th and Weir Wood Res which had two broods of 5 and 10. In addition, birds were seen at Forest Mere, Shinewater Lake, Eastbourne, Parham and Ardingly.

In June, the RSPB surveyed Amberley and Pulborough Brooks where 3 pairs were noted. Close by, on 9th, two ducks were flushed from a ditch near Parham. One of the ducks had young which vanished into cover so that the exact number could not be ascertained. At Bewbush, Crawley, on 14th, a female was seen to have 3 Mallard ducklings in tow. On 15th, at the Mill Stream, Arundel, a duck was accompanied by two small juveniles. Breeding was also confirmed at Weir Wood Res where up to 14 birds were seen on 22nd. A duck was seen with 3 juveniles at Ifield MP on 29th.

Evidence of breeding was still to be seen in July when an adult was seen with a brood of 8 ducklings at Pulborough Brooks on 13th. Other records of the species came from Lurgashall MP and Forest Mere.

August was a lean month for records, with sightings coming only from Weir Wood Res and from Folly Pond, Liphook. Madonna Pond, Binsted, featured 13 and 10 birds on 18 and 25 Sept, respectively, and 51 were counted at Arundel on 21st.

October featured a surprising record of a duck on the Small Pond, Sidlesham, on 2nd. Otherwise, records of one or 2 birds came from Madonna Pond, Binsted; Bewl Water and Arundel. Another coastal record was of a drake at Rye Hbr on 26th, and there was a drake at Earnley, on the Selsey Peninsula, on 2 Nov. Three were at Shinewater Marsh, Willingdon, on 16th. Again, Arundel featured a main nucleus, with 47 counted on 16th.

The last month of the year produced a scattering of records from many of the usual sites, including Arundel, Weir Wood Res, Ifield MP, and Willingdon. Other sites included Maynards Green, Shillinglee Lake and Hampden Park, Eastbourne. [KN/LGH]

0179. WIGEON

*Anas penelope***Common winter visitor and passage migrant.**

The monthly *Wetland Bird Survey*' counts were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
<i>County totals</i>	11,177	8695	4202	175	17	5	3	4	400	3820	5917	7536
Chichester Hbr	1511	873	726	56	2	2	2	2	135	1171	936	1555
Pagham Hbr	1525	303	194	50	-	-	-	-	nc	1463	1736	2133
Amberley Brooks	1159	134	156	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1265	492
Pulborough Brooks	3252	4109	2036	52	-	3	-	1	155	613	1117	1414
Glynde Levels	1	190	37	-	1	-	1	1	2	74	12	6
Cuckmere Hvn	2020	1090	518	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	54	125	365	645
Eastbourne Lakes	4	12	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	26	32	63	45
Pevensey Levels	140	706	185	13	13	nc	nc	-	70	100	71	670
Pett Level	117	135	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	2	-	28
Rye Hbr	610	460	92	3	-	-	-	-	-	86	95	200

This year, like the previous one, saw large numbers in the County, particularly at Pulborough Brooks and Cuckmere Haven in January and February. Cold weather in January pushed larger than usual flocks into sites such as the Adur Valley, and Kneppmill Pond, where the peak was 600 on 15 Jan. The maximum at Scotney Court GP was 2844 on 19th, and 2000 were still there on 9 Feb. By the end of March, most birds had left.

In June, there were 2 pairs at Pulborough Brooks, and a total of 6 birds elsewhere, but there was no proof of breeding.

On several days in the first winter period there were movements off-shore, including 100W and 50E at Brighton Marina on 1 Jan, and 36E and 30W at Seaford on 24th. Sea-watching points observed movements again, from September onwards. Numbers were relatively small, with a maximum of 114W at Bexhill and Hastings on 25th, 11W at Selsey Bill on 4 Nov, and 47E at Splash Point, Seaford, on 19 Dec.

From October onwards, numbers began to build again, with flocks observed in the customary localities. Around 700 were at Thorney Deepes on 2 Oct, 280 at White's Creek, Pagham Hbr, on 6th, 613 at the North Brooks, Pulborough, on 20th, 1050 at Amberley Wild Brooks on 21 Nov, and a conservative count on the mud-flats of Pagham Hbr on 3 Dec revealed at least 2100. Back in the Cuckmere area, 1500 were at Exceat Bridge at the end of the year, on 28th. [KN/LGH]

0180. AMERICAN WIGEON

*Anas americana***Very rare vagrant.**

The first-winter male at Pagham Hbr from 13 Oct 1996 (*SxBR* 49:40), remained to 15 Feb (TJE *et al*). Towards the end of its stay, when its plumage had become somewhat more distinctive, it was often to be seen favouring the area around Tern Island. It has been accepted by *British Birds* and is the first wild occurrence in the County. [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:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
<i>County totals</i>	410	272	130	51	32	11	5	32	123	198	422	448
Chichester Hbr	18	10	8	2	-	-	-	1	4	1	25	25
Chichester GPs	182	45	2	-	-	-	-	-	51	88	188	164
Burton Ponds	2	-	5	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	11	10	3	-
Arundel WWT	57	nc	37	18	14	10	nc	23	22	23	35	42
Weir Wood Res	-	6	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	3
Glynde Levels	-	-	-	2	3	-	-	-	-	-	1	-
Eastbourne Lakes	35	21	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	3	5	22	54
Bewl Water	26	20	20	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	21	33	72	50
Darwell Res	26	62	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	nc	5
Pett Level	39	32	32	20	9	1	5	4	-	-	6	10
Rye Hbr	25	81	14	9	4	-	-	1	9	26	55	59

The year began with a major count of 160 at the Chichester GPs, the largest count during the first winter period. Other maximum counts included 77 at Bewl Water on 5 Jan, 91 at Thorney Deeps on 7th, 60 at Rye Hbr on 29th, 54 at Icklesham on 4 Feb, and 66 at Bewl Water on 19th. During April, numbers began to fall, the largest flock being 23 at Icklesham on 19th.

Pairs were seen at a number of localities through late April, May and June, but the only evidence of breeding was a pair with a young juvenile at Glynde Levels on 12 May, and single broods of ducklings seen at Rye Hbr, Icklesham, and Swanbourne Lake, Arundel.

Numbers remained low throughout July, August and October, but a number of localities featured what were presumably post-breeding flocks. Thirteen were at Icklesham on 30 Aug, 21 at Bewl water on 21 Sept, 10 at Chichester GPs on 29th, 24 at Rye Hbr on 10 Oct, 12 at Chingford Pond, Duncton, on 18th, and 72 at Chichester GPs on 7 Nov.

Winter' numbers began to build up during late November and through December, with 81 at the Chichester GPs on 24 Nov, 35 at Thorney Deeps on 6 Dec, no fewer than 200 at Chichester GPs on 11th and substantial gatherings elsewhere, including Bewl Water, Knepmill Pond, and Rye Hbr.

Movements off-shore were noted on several dates in the first half of the year. There were 2 at Bexhill in snow on 2 Jan, 6W at Seaford on 3rd, and 5E and 5W on 4th. Between 4 Mar and 19 May, 27 passed E and 1W. [KN/LGH]

Scarce resident and common winter visitor and passage migrant.

The monthly *Wetland Bird Survey* ' counts were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
<i>County totals</i>	3572	2486	1565	521	10	16	21	376	999	1954	3714	3843
Chichester Hbr	2037	976	455	22	-	-	7	80	413	665	857	1649
Pagham Hbr	678	525	165	38	-	3	-	48	nc	550	646	969
Forest Mere	14	11	10	5	-	2	2	45	45	80	96	43
Arundel WWT	120	nc	14	33	2	5	nc	36	64	38	-	21
Amberley Brooks	17	-	85	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	256	96
Waltham Brooks	30	59	47	6	-	-	2	3	6	-	54	80
Pulborough Brks	323	200	425	339	-	-	-	17	194	332	1058	245
Steyning Levels	nc	-	-	nc	1	-	-	nc	-	-	-	-
Glynde Levels	23	145	120	11	1	-	-	-	34	50	192	33
Pevensey Levels	25	334	148	6	6	nc	nc	12	4	17	77	225
Bewl Water	31	6	8	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	58	5	10	10
Powdermill Res	14	13	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	207
Pett Level	80	104	36	42	-	4	4	110	67	57	290	30
Rye Hbr	-	10	15	6	-	2	6	19	40	60	82	137

Numbers during January and February were relatively small across the County, excepting in Chichester and Pagham Hbrs as the *WeBS*' counts show. Otherwise, main numbers were at Icklesham, where there were 440 on New Year's Day; 60 at Rye Hbr on 10 Jan, 50 at Steyning Levels on 12th, 84 at Kneppmill Pond on 13th, 105 at Weir Wood Res, also on 13th, 57 at Rye Hbr on 31st, and 100 at Pett Level on 15 Feb. There were 88 on Henfield Levels on 2 Mar, and 40 at Coldwaltham Brooks on 7th.

April featured potential breeders, with pairs being seen then and during May and June at Rye Hbr and Icklesham, although only the RSPB confirmed breeding at North Brooks, Pulborough. Otherwise, no ducklings were seen at any of the localities where breeding might be anticipated.

Small numbers passed the coast in January, February and March, and at least 214E in April, including 132 off Brighton Marina on 21st.

Post mid-summer' numbers began to build up at a number of sites, including 11 at Sidesham Ferry on 8 July, 27 at Thorney Deepes on 11 Aug, 80 there on 19th, 106 at Icklesham on 24th, and 80 at Pulborough Brooks on 1 Sept.

September featured substantial increases in numbers, with 200 at Pett Level Pools on 10th, 250 at Thorney Deepes on 18th, 194 at North Brooks, Pulborough, on 22nd and 250 behind the North Wall, Pagham Hbr, on 23rd.

Counts during the month of October showed a steady build-up in numbers, with 154 at Milland on 4th, 130 at Snowhill, West Wittering, on 10th, 180 at Pulborough Brooks on 14th, 200 near Snowhill, on 18th, 332 at Mid Brooks, Pulborough, on 20th, and 120 in White's Creek, Pagham Hbr, on 21st. During November, numbers continued to increase. Major counts were at Snowhill, West Wittering, where the previous month's numbers had increased to 250 on 1st, and at Pett Level where there were 150 on 16th. There were 140 at Icklesham on 16th, a yet even larger count of 400 at Snowhill, West Wittering, on 22nd, and 400 at Icklesham on 23rd.

The last month of the year produced some good figures, too, with 310 at Icklesham on 7th, 100 at Cuckmere Haven on 13th, 128 at Rye Hbr on 14th, and 150 in Pagham Hbr on 30th. [KN/LGH]

0186. MALLARD

Anas platyrhynchos

Common resident and winter visitor.

The monthly *Wetland Bird Survey*' counts were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
<i>County totals</i>	4472	1873	1888	1095	882	785	728	1949	3962	3424	4737	3627
Chichester Hbr	517	92	146	44	41	114	60	80	215	196	295	231
Pagham Hbr	282	197	122	39	59	91	94	225	nc	159	214	278
Chichester GPs	160	64	81	20	15	21	12	51	170	191	249	128
Swanbourne Lake	100	65	-	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	200
Arundel WWT	859	nc	415	490	367	67	nc	453	842	358	947	906
Amberley Brooks	152	18	80	52	54	49	10	10	40	8	103	80
Pulborough Brooks	71	65	39	48	41	97	31	144	277	486	596	97
Knepmill Pond	123	28	3	-	4	12	91	4	20	18	17	28
Ardingly Res	206	174	95	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	65	117	139	68
Barcombe Res	18	30	4	2	29	12	39	12	34	21	29	47
Glynde Levels	185	290	188	127	89	112	60	219	275	359	260	210
Arlington Res	275	55	42	45	20	38	29	65	104	98	89	98
Bewl Water	424	183	205	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	926	606	378	420
Alexandra Park	260	120	83	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	117	nc	151	149
Pett Level	73	74	18	47	20	17	62	461	180	58	192	14
Rye Hbr	345	94	65	47	44	58	109	72	155	141	235	76

The *WeBS*' figures in all months of the year show this to be one of the most abundant of ducks throughout the County. As can be seen above, peak numbers at *WeBS*' sites were during January, September, October, November and December.

Apart from the sites listed above, major numbers were recorded from a wide range of localities during the first three months of the year, including Barcombe Res (140 on 1 Jan), Icklesham (200, also on 1 Jan), Rye Hbr (150 on 2 Jan), Arlington Res (180 on 5 Jan), Knepmill Pond (123 on 13 Jan), Bewl Water (424, also on 13 Jan), and Pagham Hbr (200 on 29 Jan). Generally, numbers declined in February, all sites showing smaller counts.

Often an early breeder, display was seen at Icklesham on 1 Mar, and, later that month, 23 broods were seen, totalling 164 ducklings, at Bewl Water. Ducklings were seen at Pulborough Brooks on 15 Apr, and breeding was confirmed at Barcombe Res where there were 11 adults and 20 juveniles on 18th. Breeding was also confirmed at Rye Hbr and Warnham LNR.

Numbers counted in May and June were small, but family parties were noted at Furnace Pond, Ebernoe; Weir Wood Res, Rye Hbr and Burgess Hill. A survey by the RSPB confirmed 63 breeding pairs in Pulborough South, Mid and North Brooks. In June, Icklesham had ‘many successful broods’, and observers at Thorney Deepes recorded 42 young in 6 broods on 15th. Breeding was confirmed at Marsh Fm, Yapton, a CBC plot.

July and early to mid-August’ numbers were small, although counts show a marked increase from the third week of August onwards. Two hundred and twenty were noted during a *WeBS*’ count at Pett Level on 24th and there were 241 at Icklesham, also on 24th. No fewer than 600 were at Bewl Water on 31st and 180 were at Rye Hbr on the same date.

Good numbers were maintained in September and October, with 300 at Rye Hbr on 21 Sept, 926 at Bewl Water on the same date, and 277 at Pulborough Mid Brooks on 22nd. A count at Rye Hbr on 30th revealed an increase in numbers to 500. Balcombe Lake produced a count of 340 on 7 Oct, and Bewl Water had 606 and Pulborough Brooks 486, on 19th and 20th, respectively. A count at Pagham Lagoon on 21st produced a figure of 115 birds present.

During the month of November, all the usual sites produced relatively small figures, the only large counts being at Glynde Reach Clay Pit where there were 200 on 6th, Pett Level where 172 were present on 16th, Rye Hbr which hosted 209, also on 16th, and Bewl Water which had 378, again on 16th. The only major count of note during December was at Bewl Water where there were 420 on 14th and on Pagham Lagoon where there were 151 on 15th. The last count of the year was at Barcombe Res where 85 birds were present on 31st. [KN/LGH]

0189. **PINTAIL**

Anas acuta

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

The *WeBS*’ counts as shown below, show the dominance of the western Harbours, particularly of Pagham, and of the Arun Valley. The County total of 1389 in December exceeds last year’s record total for any month of 1318. For comparison, the highest monthly total ten years ago, in 1987, was 471 in January.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
<i>County totals</i>	994	767	220	4	-	1	-	-	31	451	585	1389
Chichester Hbr	204	282	138	-	-	-	-	-	24	8	41	106
Pagham Hbr	739	306	30	2	-	-	-	-	nc	409	371	1087
Amberley Brooks	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	101	57
Pulborough Brooks	40	166	33	-	-	-	-	-	1	34	39	135
Pevensley Levels	-	-	-	2	nc	nc	nc	-	-	-	32	-
Rye Hbr	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	5	-	-	-

Away from the principal sites, 130 were seen on Henfield Levels on 22 Feb, whilst Icklesham had between 7 and 14 from late January to early March, including 8 displaying on 1 Mar. Barcombe, Arlington, Bewl Water, Weir Wood Reservoirs and Knepp Mill Pond all reported small numbers between 1 and 6 birds during January and February.

By April, most of the birds had left. Nearly all the sea-watch records showed an easterly movement during this time, albeit for small numbers, with a daily maximum of 15

at Brighton Marina on 9 Mar. A few remained, with single birds at Sidlesham Ferry on 1 May and 27 May, 2 at Cuckmere Haven on 2 May, and a male at Rye LNR throughout most of June. There were no breeding reports, but an immature bird was at Rye LNR on 26 July.

Females at Rye on 9 Aug and at Pagham on 20 Aug were the first returnees. Sea-watch figures in autumn showed the usual westerly movement, with a maximum of 18 off Beachy Head on 23 Sept. Rye Hbr had 42 on 26 Oct, but from then onwards only very small numbers were reported from East Sussex, and it was striking that December's record *WeBS*' count only included one from an East Sussex' site. [RK]

0191. **GARGANEY**

Anas querquedula

Scarce passage migrant and rare summer visitor.

1994: The Sussex Ornithological Society's Rarities Committee has accepted the record for a Garganey at Beeding Brooks on 22 Jan (KN).

1997: A drake was recorded on the western shore of Pagham Hbr on 7 Feb, followed by additional records of single drakes in the Pagham area on 9 and 11 Feb: these may have been the same individual. A pair flew eastwards at Splash Point, Seaford, on 28th.

The report of a single bird, moving east off Bexhill and Hastings on 29th, was followed on 2 Apr by the second report of a pair, found at Pevensey Bridge Level. Other pairs recorded for April included records at Icklesham on 3rd, 7th and 8th, and on Pevensey Hooe Level on 7th. A pair was displaying at Pulborough Brooks on 10th and there was another pair at Castle Water, Rye Hbr, on 17th, 18th and 21st April.

From 25 May, a single male was seen regularly until the end of the month at Icklesham, where breeding probably occurred and where two females or immatures were seen on 15 July. Five were recorded there on 28 Aug. There were no reports of breeding pairs at Pulborough Brooks and Amberley Wild Brooks. Other sites with multiple reports included the Pett Level area where, following earlier reports of singles on 12 Apr and 12 May, there were regular sightings, usually of one and two birds, but with 4 on 2 Aug, 5 on 11th and 3 on 10 Sept. There was a single at Weir Wood Res on 4 Sept.

Appropriately enough, the last bird of the year was seen at Icklesham on 23 Sept. [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:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
<i>County totals</i>	233	260	258	105	18	4	5	49	113	225	404	324
Chichester Hbr	17	-	5	1	-	-	-	-	-	3	-	-
Pagham Hbr	2	8	31	-	-	-	-	-	nc	4	6	21
Chichester GPs	100	2	5	-	-	-	-	-	9	8	3	7
Arundel WWT	5	nc	6	-	7	1	nc	3	13	9	5	3
Pulborough Brooks	34	122	140	67	1	-	1	1	5	80	165	147
Glynde Levels	6	37	29	7	-	-	-	-	-	8	3	4
Arlington Res	20	25	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	4	20	38
Eastbourne Lakes	4	4	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	-	14	11	18
Pevensey Levels	3	17	3	2	6	nc	nc	-	-	-	46	-

Pett Level	22	7	8	14	3	3	4	8	19	5	9	-
Rye Hbr	-	33	18	12	1	-	-	35	58	82	126	59

The species was well represented in the County during January, with 80 at Ivy Lake, Chichester GPs, on New Year's Day, and 56 at Icklesham on the same date. Of 20 which were at Northpoint, Rye, on 2nd, no fewer than 14 were drakes. Although Arlington Res was half frozen over on 11th, 10 birds were present. Arlington Res featured Shovelers again, in February, when 25 were recorded on 2nd. Ten birds were counted at Exceat, in the Cuckmere Valley, on 3rd. The Ferry Pool, Sidlesham, featured 12 on 6th, and Rye Hbr had 16 on 9th. The highest count in February was of 52 at Arlington Res on 9th. Two gatherings of 20 in each were on the Henfield Levels and at Glynde Reach Clay Pit on 22nd.

The numbers recorded by *WeBS*' counters at the usual sites in March, revealed that numbers remained much as they were during January and February, with a first winter period' high of 258 in the County. Elsewhere, 15 were at Rye Hbr on 1st, 13 moved east at Bexhill and Hastings on 8th, and 19 passed eastwards at Splash Point, Seaford, on 11th. There were 10 at Icklesham on 13th, and 32 at the Ferry Pool, Sidlesham, on 21st. The monthly total at Splash Point was 40, 38 of them moving eastwards. Likewise, there was a substantial monthly total of birds moving east off Bexhill and Hastings: of the 30 counted, all were passing east.

April provided more evidence of birds moving east. Movement was noted at Worthing Beach on 7th; at Splash Point, Seaford, also on that day; and at Bexhill and Hastings, likewise on 7th. This movement continued the next day, with 26 off Splash Point, and 32 observed from Bexhill and Hastings. Potential breeding records during the month concerned pairs at Pevensey Bridge Level, Rye Hbr and Bewl Water.

With the departure of wintering birds, numbers during May were restricted to a pair recorded at Rye Hbr, at the beginning of the month, and scattered single records, frequently of drakes, from Icklesham and Rye Hbr. A belated movement east was noted on 28th, when six passed Splash Point, Seaford, where the monthly total was 11, all of them east-bound.

A survey of breeding birds, carried out by the RSPB at Amberley Wild Brooks and Pulborough Brooks, at the beginning of June, found one confirmed breeding pair of Shovelers. At Icklesham, up to six birds were in evidence early in the month, including a female with a brood of 11 young. July provided low figures, with a maximum of 8 at Icklesham. Up to four were recorded at Rye Hbr. After the first week of August, numbers began to build, with 60 at Rye Hbr on 9th, 35 on 24th and 40 on 31st.

Throughout September, there was a scattering of records from the customary localities: Pulborough Brooks, Icklesham, Rye Hbr, Bewl Water, Pett Level and Kneppmill Pond. The best numbers came from the Severals, Church Norton, where 12 were recorded on 10th, from Icklesham which hosted 10 on 11th and from the mud-flats of Pagham Hbr where a maximum of 21 were counted on 17th. There were 43 at Rye Hbr on 21st.

During October, major concentrations were recorded at Rye Hbr where there were 60 on 5th and 75 on 19th; and at Pulborough Brooks where up to 16 were seen around mid-month and 80 on 20th. Kneppmill Pond had 14 on 31st.

During November, numbers built up to an all-year high of 404, counted at the usual *WeBS*' sites. Rye Hbr provided encouraging figures, with 35 there on 1st; and 140 on 29th. Amberley Wild Brooks had a count of 30 on 16th, and there were 40 at Drayton, Chichester GPs, on 23rd. The month finished with a count of 102 at Arlington Res.

The best counts during December were of 144 at Pulborough Brooks, recorded during *WeBS*’ surveys; 18 at Icklesham on 1st; 38 at Arlington Res on 9th; 56 at Rye Hbr on 14th; 122 at Rye Hbr on 20th and 25 at the Ferry Pool, Sidlesham, on 30th. The total County’ number of 324 was only a little down on that for November. [LGH]

0196. **RED-CRESTED POCHARD**

Netta rufina

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

During a severe cold spell, a drake was seen on Chichester GPs 18 and 25 (New Lake and Ivy Lake) from 1 Jan until 11 Feb. Ducks were recorded at Pulborough Brooks on 2 Jan and at Swanbourne Lake, Arundel, on 10 May. The latter bird was obviously an escapee.

At Icklesham, a female hatched a brood of three chicks in May and was seen until 16 June.

A very dark bird of captive origin was at Sidlesham from 4 to 27 July. Other single birds were at Rye Hbr on 30 Sept and Kneppmill Pond from 29 Sept until 21 Dec. [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:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
<i>County totals</i>	1470	821	580	30	24	27	5	21	47	221	666	935
Chichester GPs	377	289	84	1	1	1	4	6	2	122	241	287
Forest Mere	-	19	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	14	10	23
Swanbourne Lake	-	60	-	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	14
Arundel WWT	615	nc	302	27	21	20	nc	14	13	39	197	171
Kneppmill Pond	7	31	11	-	-	-	-	-	23	27	38	12
Weir Wood Res	-	27	36	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	93
Barcombe Res	-	100	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	3	12
Glynde Levels	24	43	18	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	6	-
Arlington Res	285	3	1	-	-	-	-	-	1	2	-	-
Bewl Water	70	6	25	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	-	1	8	58
Pett Level	6	105	41	-	-	-	1	1	-	-	3	16
Rye Hbr	-	100	26	1	1	6	-	-	6	-	134	186

Numbers of birds reported in the County during January were high compared with previous years, but then declined quickly. Largest monthly counts came from the traditional sites with Arundel WWT holding 615 in January. The largest numbers for that month came from Jury’s Gap, near Camber, with 400 and Chichester GPs with 377. Numbers for February and March were more typical of recent years, with Chichester GPs and Arundel WWT recording 84 and 302 respectively during March.

During the breeding season, single birds, predominantly males, were noted from various sites around the County. No breeding was noted this year.

Numbers increased during September and built up to typical figures during November and December. Once again, it was Chichester GPs that had good numbers in December with 287. Scotney Court GP also held over 200 birds, with a total of 210 during the same month. [RPu]

0200. **RING-NECKED DUCK**

Aythya collaris

Very rare vagrant.

An adult male, of unknown origin, was seen at Northpoint GP, Rye (PMT), on 21 May and at Ternery Pool, Rye Hbr, on 14 and 22 June (PMT *et al*). The extended stay at this time of year must raise some doubts as to the bird's origin. The previous records, with seemingly better credentials, were in December (1982) and March (1996). [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:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
<i>County totals</i>	1456	723	737	221	106	123	91	113	446	559	886	1008
Chichester Hbr	14	21	13	2	4	7	6	6	-	2	6	5
Chichester GPs	556	342	342	12	4	3	20	11	100	270	471	537
Forest Mere	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	10	33	-	3	-
Petworth Park	2	14	18	-	-	-	-	-	17	29	13	26
Swanbourne Lake	1	40		nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	-
Arundel WWT	432	nc	61	57	47	45	nc	37	74	67	110	108
Barcombe Res	7	43	9	4	3	4	-	-	4	2	22	5
Glynde Levels	16	8	14	9	9	25	17	6	2	4	16	2
Arlington Res	134	4	3	-	-	-	-	-	3	2	1	8
Eastbourne Lakes	1	47	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	21	27	47	41
Bewl Water	106	35	60	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	120	56	44	46
Darwell Res	4	7	15	24	-	-	9	9	6	-	nc	-
Powdermill Res	-	-	-	11	-	4	5	9	12	4	4	46
Pett Level	45	57	36	6	2	8	12	1	-	-	3	4
Rye Hbr	6	108	111	87	33	26	21	24	38	73	85	114

Good numbers of birds were reported within the county during January, well up on previous years. Chichester GPs had the highest January count with 556, which was closely followed by Arundel WWT with 432 and Jury's Gap, near Camber, with 400. February saw a rapid decline in numbers, but these stabilised in March. Chichester GPs recorded 342 birds in both months. Other notable counts included Rye Hbr with 108 in February and 11 in March.

Single breeding pairs were recorded at Amberley, Pagham Hbr, Rye LNR, Glynde Levels, Thorney Deeps, Darwell Res and at Folly Pond, near Liphook. During June, Icklesham recorded 16 birds with at least 3 broods.

Numbers built up at the end of August, with 80 at Bewl Water. As the autumn went on, so numbers increased at the traditional locations. At the end of the year, Chichester GPs held 537 birds. [RPu]

0204. **SCAUP**

Aythya marila

Scarce winter visitor and passage migrant; rare in summer.

Not recorded in quite the totals seen in 1996, but some significant numbers of birds were noted during the year. Highest January totals included 245 at Jury's Gap, near Camber, on the 1st, and 215 on the sea at Rye Bay on the 10th. Scotney Court GP had 30 on 23rd, with single birds being reported off-shore along the length of the coast at traditional sea-watching sites throughout the month.

February numbers declined rapidly, with a peak count for the month of 54 at Scotney Court GP on 16th. Numbers at this location continued to be good, with 22 birds reported on 6 Mar. The last spring record was of one at Scotney Court GP on 9 Mar.

During the summer, there was a single male bird at Rye LNR in July. Autumn numbers were low, with 7 at Rye Harbour LNR on 26 Oct. To end the year, there were 5 at Scotney Court GP on 21 Dec. [RPu]

0206. **EIDER**

Somateria mollissima

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

The *Wetland Bird Survey*' counts were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
<i>County totals</i>	3	9	2	1	-	3	3	3	3	3	6	17
Chichester Hbr	2	-	-	-	-	3	3	3	3	3	4	17
Pagham Hbr	-	9	-	-	-	-	-	-	nc	-	2	-
Newhaven	1	-	-	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	-	nc	-	-
Pett Level	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Rye Hbr	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

Significant flocks not shown in the table included 30 at Jury's Gap on 9 Feb, 22 off Church Norton on 3 Dec, 17 off Southwick on 5 Dec and 25 off Langney Point on 21 Dec.

Movements at the main sea-watching localities are shown in the following tables:

	Jan		Feb		Mar		Apr		May		Oct		Nov		Dec	
	E	W	E	W	E	W	E	W	E	W	E	W	E	W	E	W
Selsey Bill	4	5	4	-	21	1	16	1	9	-	-	-	2	15	17	-
Worthing	-	-	-	-	5	1	13	-	7	-	-	6	1	9	-	-
Brighton Marina	3	4	31	-	36	-	31	-	-	-	-	-	4	2	3	
Splash Point, Seaford	38	2	215	11	156	-	15	-	21	-	-	-	7	42	9	
Bexhill	7	9	30	-	188	3	40	-	32	-	4	-	10	-	32	

The largest movements were on 23 Feb (59E at Seaford), 12 Mar (36E at Seaford and 88E at Bexhill) and 11 May (27E, also at Bexhill).

There were 3 females in Chichester Hbr from 28 May throughout the summer, with 7 there on 27 June.

Unusually, there was a male at Weir Wood Res on 24 Nov (BMM, DCM, JM). There have been 4 previous inland records for the county totalling 16 birds, of which singles were in February and October and 14 in December. [PJ]

0212. **LONG-TAILED DUCK**

Clangula hyemalis

Scarce passage migrant and winter visitor.

It was a very poor year for records of this sea duck. In January, there was a female at Cuckmere Haven on an unfrozen stretch of the river, a female at Newhaven Tide Mills on 7th and 10th and 2 flew east at Bexhill on 27th. On 8 Apr, 2 flying east were noted at Worthing, Brighton and Seaford, but the timings suggest they were not the same birds. On 3 May, 1 flew east past Selsey Bill. The only other record was of 1 in a flock of Eider at Church Norton on 3 Dec. [BJY]

0213. **COMMON SCOTER**

Melanitta nigra

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

During January and February small numbers were seen off-shore, 35W past Brighton Marina on 9 Jan representing the largest daily total.

There were singles at Scotney Court GP on 1 Jan and at Pett Level Pools on 28 Feb.

Passage up the Channel in the March-May period is summarised below:

	Mar	Apr	May	Total	No. per hr
Selsey Bill	71	431	786	1288	4.4
Worthing	37	665	245	947	8.7
Brighton Marina	221	2389	940	3550	22.3
Splash Point, Seaford	1442	4725	1961	8128	24.0
Glyne Gap, Bexhill	144	2335	323	2802	13.1

The above figures represent a below average spring. The ‘bumper’ day of 9 April witnessed the only large movements, with 2297 past Splash Point, Seaford, (in 6hrs, with an easterly wind), and representing nearly 50% of the whole April’ tally past that watch-point! The hourly rate at Seaford was back to the levels experienced in 1993 and 1994, after 42.3 and 35.5 per hour in 1995 and 1996 respectively.

Inland, during this period, there was one reported at Barcombe Res on 21 Mar.

In June and July, only the watchers at Splash Point, Seaford, logged a monthly total of over double figures, with 359E and 33W in June. There was one at Pilsley Island, Chichester Harbour, on 5 July.

In the August-December period, sea-watchers recorded the usual comparatively low numbers: 77E and 81W at Selsey Bill (in 126.75 hours), 63E and 12W at Brighton Marina (in 85.2 hours), 89E and 12W at Splash Point, Seaford, (in 73.25 hours) and 134E and 328W at Bexhill (in 180.5 hours).

Elsewhere, there was one in Newhaven Harbour on 17 Oct; 8 off Southwick Beach on 30th; a flock of 160 in Rye Bay on 21 Nov; one in the Lower Chichester Channel on 27th, and 20 at the Crumbles GP on 29 Dec. [RPr]

0215. **VELVET SCOTER***Melanitta fusca***Scarce passage migrant and winter visitor along the coast; rare inland.**

About 101 were recorded during the year, down on the average annual total of 116 of the previous three years.

The approximate monthly totals are as follows:

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	Oct	Nov	Dec
10	6	4	26	5	10	16	7	17

A rare inland record occurred during the early cold spell, when a female was seen on Chichester GPs on New Year's day.

Elsewhere, in January and February, off-shore wintering birds were few, with 2 off Bexhill on 2 Jan, and on 22nd, plus 4 at Shoreham on 22 Feb.

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

	Mar	Apr	May	June
Selsey Bill	-	4	-	10
Brighton Marina	-	1	-	-
Splash Point, Seaford	-	21	3	-
Glyne Gap, Bexhill	3	-	2	-

The largest movements were at Splash Point, Seaford, with 7E on 9 Apr and 8E on 24th. A flock of 10 past Selsey Bill on 15 June served as a reminder that this species can reward mid-summer sea-watching.

An additional sighting in this period was 1 off-shore at Pett Level on 31 Mar.

A higher than average number was recorded in the second winter period, starting with 3 past Glyne Gap, Bexhill, and Church Norton on 16 Oct.

Selsey Bill saw 8E on 23 Oct, and there were 4W past Glyne Gap, Bexhill, on 9 Nov. Apart from 3 in Chichester Hbr on 3 Dec, 2E at Splash Point, Seaford, on 6 Dec and 3E at Brighton Marina on 20th, all the other end-of-year records were of singletons, involving approximately 14 individuals. [RPr]

0218. **GOLDENEYE***Bucephala clangula***Fairly common winter visitor; very rare in summer.**

The *Wetland Bird Survey*' counts were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
<i>County totals</i>	167	78	82	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	21	91
Chichester Hbr	119	40	59	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	15	79
Pagham Hbr	22	19	15	-	-	-	-	-	nc	-	-	2
Chichester GPs	-	4	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-
Eastbourne Lakes	-	5	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	-	-	-	-
Langney	11	3	3	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	-	-	-	-
Rye Hbr	1	2	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	5	6

Monthly maxima at other selected sites were as follows (other than for off-shore records):

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
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Chichester Hbr	67	53	41	-	-	-	21	38
Chichester GPs	5	5	2	-	-	-	1	2
Pagham Hbr	51	22	10	-	-	3	3	8
Rye Hbr	5	2	2	1	-	2	4	4
Sovereign Hbr/Crumbles	14	6	8	-	-	-	-	-
Pett Level Pools	2	-	-	-	-	1	2	2

The last spring record was of a female which lingered at Rye Harbour until 13 Apr, and the next seen was a pair at Pulborough Brooks on 19 Oct.

Off-shore, there was 1W past Brighton Marina on 2 Jan, with 3W the next day and 1W on 4th. Splash Point, Seaford, saw 2W on 3 Jan, and 3 flew east past Brighton Marina on 13th. Further west, 3 passed east off Selsey Bill on 19 Jan and 2 were off Church Norton on 28th.

Spring movement involved 3 flying east past Splash Point, Seaford, on 9 Mar when 1 also passed Glyne Gap, Bexhill. Two more flew east at Splash Point, Seaford, on 12 Mar, with 1 past Glyne Gap on 26th and 6E there on 7 Apr.

In the second winter period, singles were recorded moving east past Splash Point on 29 Oct, 23 Nov and 15 Dec, with 1W there on 23rd. Selsey Bill saw 1E on 21 Dec, with 2W there on Christmas Eve.

Away from the coast, birds were recorded at Barcombe Res in January (1) and in February (3 on 24th), and at Arlington Res on 3rd. Four were at Weir Wood Res in January, staying on through February. A single bird was on Wiston Pond, Steyning, towards the end of January. A duck and a drake visited Pulborough Brooks on 19 Oct. Arlington Res had 2 on 28 Oct, and Barcombe Res played host again to a single bird on 30 Nov and to 7 on 21 Dec. There was a female at Tilgate Lake, Crawley, on 1 Nov. [RPr]

0220. SMEW

Mergellus albellus

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

Another very good year, with a marked influx in the first winter period when birds were recorded at a large number of sites some of which are shown below:

	1996	1997	Feb	Mar
	Dec	Jan		
Aldsworth Pond	-	13	6	1
Pagham Hbr	1	4	5	1
Chichester GPs	-	15	14	-
Arun Valley	-	5	-	-
Pulborough Brooks	-	7	3	-
Upper Adur Valley	-	8	-	-
Lower Adur Valley	-	5	3	-
Weir Wood Res	-	3	2	-
Ouse Valley	1	-	1	-
Barcombe Res	1	-	1	-
Cuckmere Valley	2	4	-	-
Arlington Res	5	2	1	-
Princes Park, Eastbourne	-	3	-	-
Bewl Water	2	3	3	-

Bexhill	-	4	1	-
Pannel Valley	-	9	2	-
Pett Level	-	5	1	-
Rye Hbr	7	12	11	1
Northpoint GP	25	17	5	-
Scotney Court GP	-	7	-	-
<i>Monthly total</i>	36	118	64	3

The totals given for both January and February are estimates as it appears that birds wandered widely in an area extending from Pett Level to Scotney Court GP, and also along the main river systems. The largest flocks were of 17 (4 males) at Northpoint GP in January on 1st, 16 (2 males) at Piddinghoe on 6th, 15 (7 males) at Chichester GPs on 29th, and 13 (6 males) at Aldsworth Pond on 15th.

Unusually, there were a number of records from the open sea comprising 3 (1 male) off Bexhill and a redhead in the Brighton Marina on 3 Jan, a redhead off Jury's Gap on 4th and single redheads moving west past Bexhill on 5 Jan and 9 Feb. The last reported were redheads at Aldsworth Pond and Chichester GPs on 6 Mar. A redhead at Icklesham on 13 Jan tried unsuccessfully to eat a Marsh Frog.

Analysis of the numerous records received for this species indicates a County total of about 130 for the winter of 1996/97, a figure exceeded only by the 150 in the record winter of 1984/85.

The first recorded in the latter part of the year was a redhead at Northpoint GP on 6 Dec. A further 10 or 11 birds occurred up to the end of the year, comprising up to 4 (1 male) at Rye Hbr, up to 3 (1 male) at Chichester GPs, 2 redheads at Weir Wood Res from 21st to 23rd, and a further 2 redheads at Willingdon Level, also on 23rd. [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:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
<i>County totals</i>	75	168	164	34	-	2	-	-	-	26	132	179
Chichester Hbr	55	22	94	11	-	2	-	-	-	18	111	151
Pagham Hbr	11	145	46	22	-	-	-	-	nc	8	21	28
Goring Gap	-	-	20	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	-	-	-	-
Langney	6	-	-	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	-	-	-	-

The largest counts, apart from the *WeBS*' surveys, came from the Pagham Hbr/Church Norton area, with peaks of 75 on 22 Jan, 142 on 19 Feb and 62 on 31 Mar, in the first winter period. In the second winter period, there were 47 birds present on 27 Nov and 51 on 17 Dec.

No records from Chichester Hbr exceeded the *WeBS*' counts. Elsewhere, the highest counts were 11 at Sovereign Marina, Eastbourne, on 11 Jan, 19 at Lancing on 21st, 80 at Southwick Beach on 21 Feb, 10 at Cuckmere Haven on 1 Mar, and 35 off Worthing Beach on 13th. The most remarkable record was of 310 off-shore at Hove on 10 Jan: this is the largest single flock ever recorded in Sussex.

At sea-watching sites, there were regular winter' reports of birds flying east and west,

and easterly passage was evident in March and April, as shown below:

	Jan		Feb		Mar		Apr		May		Oct		Nov		Dec	
	E	W	E	W	E	W	E	W	E	W	E	W	E	W	E	W
Selsey Bill	62	5	183	4	215	15	207	19	14	1	29	87	99	195	90	144
Worthing Beach	8	4	1	1	56	10	69	9	3	0	0	2	1	29	9	29
Brighton Marina	5	8	5	6	20	8	80	3	18	0	-	-	0	2	23	16
Seaford	125	2	102	4	91	6	211	9	28	0	-	-	1	1	1	10
Bexhill	14	0	10	1	13	10	135	5	3	0	3	14	3	24	1	5

The largest single movements were of 67 flying east past Selsey Bill in 2hrs on 30 Mar, 53 moving west there in 3hrs on 18 Nov, and 64 west and 17 east in 2hrs on Boxing Day.

There were four reports of birds during the summer: two in Chichester Hbr at Pilesey Island on 2 June, one on the Crumbles GP from 5–7 June, 1 east past Worthing Beach on 25th, and 1 flying east past Seaford on 7 July.

The first returning birds were off Bexhill and Hastings, where 4 flew west on 1 Sept and 10 east on 19th. From 11 Oct, when 13 flew west past Selsey Bill, numbers began to build up at the regular wintering sites.

There were more inland records than usual, particularly during the cold weather at the start of the year. The first record was of 2 on Pulborough Brooks on 3 Jan; followed by 3 on Arlington Res on 7th (with one there also on 28 Feb and two on 2 Mar); four at Henfield Levels and 2 at Bewl Water on 11 Jan, with one at the latter site also on 13th; and, finally, a single bird on Ivy Lake, Chichester GPs, on 1 Mar. There was also a released bird at Icklesham from 22 until 31 Mar, at least. [AH]

0223. GOOSANDER

Mergus merganser

Scarce winter visitor and passage migrant.

With bitterly cold weather in January, many inland waters and some rivers were frozen, so many birds will have moved frequently between sites. For that reason, and also because of 179 records from 47 locations for that month alone, assessing total numbers accurately is difficult. The following are therefore the estimated totals by month:

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
237	51	7	6	1	1	-	-	1	-	1	22

The huge influx in January must create a new record previously held in January 1985 when 180 were seen. Despite the large total, flocks were relatively small, the largest being found on the River Adur between Shoreham and Steyning with 38 on 5th at Cuckoo Corner, 24 on 6th at Upper Beeding and 35 on 11th at the Cement Works. On the inland waters, Barcombe had 17 on 12th, Arlington 14 on 10th and 23 on 21st, Bewl 19 on 13th and Darwell 6 on 12th, rising to 22 on 9th Feb. Throughout February, birds were spread between 15 sites mainly in small numbers. By March, single birds remained at 5 sites, the last seen being at Ivy Lake, Chichester GPs, on 12th, Piddinghoe on 22nd and Arlington Res on 30th. The final 3 birds were seen flying east on 7 Apr from Worthing Beach.

Goosanders have been recorded only twice before during the summer months, in 1972 and 1987, so it was a good sighting for the observer concerned, to see a single bird on 29 June at Warnham LNR.

An unusually early returning bird was a female at Ivy Lake, Chichester GPs, on 12 Sept. (This may be another record if the previous date of 16 Sept 1992 at Steyning was the earliest.) There was a gap after that until the next bird arrived at Barcombe Res on 6 Nov, and a further gap until 12 Dec when 3 males and 7 females flew south-west in the late afternoon across West Fields, Selsey. Two birds were at Henfield Levels on 14th, followed by groups of 2 and 3 at four sites and ending with 2 on the River Adur at Shoreham on 28th and 2 at Weir Wood Res on 31st. [DEGC]

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

Oxyura jamaicensis

Very scarce resident and scarce winter visitor.

Counts at the main localities outside the breeding season were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
Aldsworth Pond	5	-	-	-	-	-	-
Chichester GPs	8	5	4	-	2	3	4
Arundel WWT	-	2	-	21	6	9	13
Barcombe Res	-	1	-	-	-	-	-
Arlington Res	6	3	-	-	-	-	-
Willingdon Level	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
Bewl Water	4	-	-	-	-	-	-
Rye Hbr	1	1	2	6	8	8	4

As inland waters froze over in the early part of the year, birds moved to the open sea, with 5 at Hove on 3 Jan (1 still present on 5th), 2 at Cuckmere Haven on 4 and 11 Jan, 2 at Jury's Gap on 4 Jan and 1 at the mouth of the River Rother, Rye Hbr, on 6th. One found dead at Princes Park, Eastbourne, on 11 Jan may have been a victim of the harsh weather.

During the breeding season, there were 4 pairs at Rye Hbr and single pairs at both Icklesham and Pett Level Pools. The latter pairs were seen with 5 and 4 young respectively. Birds were also present at Arundel WWT (16 on 4 May and 10 on 22 June) and at Chichester GPs (2 males displaying on 6 Apr). Singles at Kneppmill Pond on 18 Aug and Glynde Levels on 30 Aug were indicative of post breeding dispersal. [PJ]

0231. **HONEY BUZZARD**

Pernis apivorus

Very scarce spring and autumn passage migrant; has bred.

1996: An autumn bird was seen on 24 Sept at Church Norton (CAM, PHM).

1997: Breeding raptors, within this County, have begun to do very well in recent years and it is pleasing to be able to report successful breeding of this very rare species after an absence of 21 years. It is clearly important to protect the identity of this site, and other possible suitable sites, which does slightly restrict this report.

The pair in question raised 1 young. On 26 May, there were 2 males approximately 800 metres apart engaged in a typical wing-shivering display. There was no obvious evidence of a second pair, but it does raise intriguing possibilities for the future!

At a second location, there was a sighting on 14 June which might hint at the possibility of breeding, or at the very least a 'prospecting' bird and the same caution must apply.

In addition to the above, there was just one spring bird, a dark-phase migrant at Pagham Hbr on 20 May (TJE).

Finally, there were 2 autumn migrants, the first of which was an adult bird seen at Lullington Heath on 1 Sept (JC). The second autumn bird was recorded at Arundel WWT on 13 Sept (APC). [MEK]

239. **RED KITE**

Milvus milvus

Rare visitor which has been recorded in every month. Formerly bred.

1996: There was a brief view of a bird drifting east to west at Walberton on 23 Mar (TKR).

1997: The first bird of the year was seen above a polling booth at Seaford on 1 May (PJW)! This was followed by one at Cissbury on 17 May (CH). This bird had a yellow tag on the left wing. There were 2 over the River Adur at Shoreham on 26 May (CMS). Another 2 authenticated birds (or possibly the same as those seen at Shoreham), were recorded inland a few days later on 30 May. Since this latter site is eminently suitable for breeding Kites, it would perhaps be prudent to reveal neither the location nor the observer.

Later in the summer, there was a single at Newtimber Hill, Poynings, on 28 July (JCS) and on the same day another single at Beachy Head (SA). The latter bird had red tags on both wings. *Corvidae* mobbed a single at Harrow Hill, Patching, on 12 Aug (BFF). Finally, a lucky observer had a garden bird at Rustington on 22 Sept (MT).

The release programme has been a great success and it would seem very likely that this species will re-colonise its former haunts within the next few years. [MEK]

0260. **MARSH HARRIER**

Circus aeruginosus

Uncommon spring and autumn passage migrant and rare winter visitor.

The upsurge in national fortunes of this species continues to be reflected in the County reports. A total of 144 records were submitted for 90 dates and allowing for duplication these sightings represented a probable minimum of 52 different individuals. All of these three figures are County records. There were just 6 adult or immature males, with the remainder females or immatures. The probable monthly minima were as follows:

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
3	2	4	4	7	2	5	12	14	2	1	0

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

Rye area: There were 80 records for the year, with sightings in every month except January, October and December. It is likely that a total of 23 individuals were involved. The first of the year was a single at Scotney Court GP on 1 Feb, followed by another single at Icklesham on 6 Feb. This bird was seen several times throughout the month. A male was present on 18 Feb. In March, regular sightings of birds continued, with a male seen on just a single date of 26 Mar. Somewhat surprisingly, there was just a single record for the following month on 4 Apr. In May, there were isolated reports on 9th and 15th, and then several from 22nd onwards. There were 2 birds present on 22 and 28 May. In June, there were singles at Icklesham on 3rd, at Castle Water LNR on 5th and at Harbour Fm SSSI on 14th. These were the only County records for this month.

In the second half of the year, there was a single bird recorded on 9 July. In the following month, there were 4 records, from 8th onwards, and these included 2 at Castle Fm LNR, and a single at Pett Level on 20th. There were numerous sightings in September, probably involving 5 different birds and including a juvenile on 20th and a male on 23rd. Finally, there were 2 sightings on 12 and 15 Nov.

Chichester and Pagham Hbrs: A good year, with a probable total of 16 different individuals. The majority of sightings were in the autumn. The first of the year was a female at Pagham on 17 Jan which stayed in the area for a few days. An adult male was reported from Thorney Deeps on 5 Mar and then, at the same site, there was a female, heading east, on 7 Apr. A single bird was seen at Pagham on 19 Apr which was the latest spring sighting for the year.

In the second part of the year, there was a single at Pagham on 17 July, with another sighting at Thorney Deeps two days later. There were probably 4 different singles seen in the area during the following month from 9 Aug onwards. In September, observers reported sightings on eight dates and a total of 6 individuals was likely, including 2 at Pagham on 7th and 2 at Selsey on 27th, which included an adult male. The final record was at Pagham on 18 Oct.

Pulborough Brooks: Seen on three dates, there was a single bird recorded on 6 Jan, another on 31 May and finally one flying south on 21 July.

Outside of these areas, there were 12 singles reported, equally divided between the east and the west of the County. In the east, there was an immature male at Hooe Level, Pevensey, on 9 Mar and a female at Glynde Level on 24 May. In late summer, there was an adult female at Coombe Haven on 29 July, and shortly after an immature female at Bewl Water on 3 Aug. A female at Beachy Head on 17 Aug was the only record at this locality. There was a single at Frog Firle, Alfriston, on 23 Sept and finally an immature male at Middle Bridge, Pevensey, on 24 Sept.

In the west, a female at Shoreham Airport, seen on New Year's Day, stayed on for a few days. At the same locality, there was another record for 2 Apr. In late summer, a single visited Sheepcote Valley, Brighton, on 9 Aug, with a further sighting at Balsdean, nr Rottingdean, on 15 Aug. A free-ranging immature was seen on many occasions from 10 Aug until 26 Aug, in both the Harrow Hill, Patching, and Cissbury areas. On 4 Sept, an immature flew over Hove, and finally a single was seen flying north at Cissbury Ring on 5 Oct. [MEK]

0261. HEN HARRIER

Circus cyaneus

Scarce, but regular, winter visitor and passage migrant.

There were 230 records received, involving a probable 25 individuals in the first part of the year and 22 different birds in the second part. There was an annual total of 7 males. The probable monthly minima were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
Adult males	2	2	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	1	2
Ringtails	12	8	10	3	4	0	1	3	1	5	4	7

As usual, most of the sightings were at just a few traditional localities and these can be usefully summarised as follows:

Rye area: Observers sent in 88 records for this area. In the early part of the year, there were probably 4 birds present, including a male. On 2 Jan, there were ringtails at Icklesham and Harbour Fm SSSI, with a female and male at Scotney Court GP. There continued to be numerous sightings of these over-wintering birds, with a latest spring date of 9 Apr. There was an isolated record on 7 May at Pett Level, otherwise none before a ringtail on 23 Oct at Icklesham, which was then seen regularly in the general area, thereafter. A male was seen on several dates from 14 Nov onwards. Finally, there were 2 ringtails at Icklesham on 20 and 22 Dec.

Pulborough Brooks: A female was reported on 18 Jan and an adult male on 23rd. There followed many records of single ringtails, with 2 birds on 23 Feb. A male was seen on 23, 27 and 28 Mar. There were no more sightings for the year.

Chichester and Pagham Hbrs: A female was seen at East Head on 1 Jan, and during the same month there were many sightings of a single ringtail in the Pagham area until 24th. There were no more before the autumn when 2 were recorded at Selsey on 19 Aug and singles at Pagham the following 2 days. A ringtail was seen on 19 Sept at Pagham and a ringtail was seen several times at Selsey between 25 and 31 Oct, with also a male present on 30th and 31st. Further single ringtails were reported at Pagham on 10 and 27 Nov.

Ashdown Forest: A ringtail was seen on several dates between 3 Jan and 31 Mar. In the autumn, a ringtail was present on 5 Oct and was seen on many occasions in the following months. There was a known roost site.

Downland between Brighton and Eastbourne: There were at least 20 records from this large area of downland, with a minimum of 3 individuals in the first part of the year. There were 2 ringtails over-wintering in the general area of Lower Standean, and these birds were also seen at Glynde Levels. A male was present at Balsdean, near Rottingdean, on 6 Mar, and presumably the same bird was recorded at Glynde Levels from 9 to 22 Mar. The last spring bird was seen on 25 Apr. In the autumn, a male and a female were present at Swanborough Hill on 27 Oct and both stayed until 30th. Otherwise there were singles at Rodmell Brooks on 13 Dec and at Ditchling Beacon on 14th.

NW Sussex downs and commons: There was a single at Kingley Vale on 4 and 28 Jan. West Dean Woods had single ringtails on 1, 2 and 22 Feb and also on 27 Mar. A second-winter male was reported at Ambersham Common on 21 and 30 Jan, also on 27 Feb, with a ringtail on 19 Mar at the same locality. At Duncton Common, there were 2 ringtails on the single date of 15 Mar. At the end of the year, 1-2 ringtails were present at West Dean Woods between 21 and 30 Dec.

Pevensey Levels: A ringtail was present on 7 and 27 Jan, 3 Feb and 2 Mar. There were no records for the second part of the year.

Beachy Head: A single came in off the sea on 5 May. A ringtail was present on 10 Aug and, finally, another bird came in off the sea on 28 Oct.

Elsewhere, in the west of the County there were isolated records at Cissbury on 2 Mar and at Broadwater, Worthing, on 21 May. In the east, there was a ringtail at Glyne Gap, Bexhill, on 5 May. [MEK]

0263. MONTAGU'S HARRIER

Circus pygargus

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

A good year, with 8 records in total. The only early summer sighting was of a female at

Houghton Bridge on 14 May (BFF). Good views were obtained as it headed NW in the direction of Bury.

There was a cluster of sightings in late summer, with the remaining 7 reports all seen within just 13 days. On the coast there was a sub-adult male at Pagham Intertidals on 8 Aug (LGH). An adult female was observed hunting over West Fields, Selsey, on 19 Aug (TJE), and also on 20 Aug at the same location (BFF). A sub-adult male was again seen at Pagham Hbr on 14 Aug (TJE). This was presumably the same bird as reported on 8 Aug.

Raising the possibility of a breeding pair, there were 3 sightings of this species in suitable downland habitat. The first was an un-aged female at Storrington on 9 Aug (MEK). This was a garden bird and the observer was alerted to its presence by the dramatic effect it had on the local *corvidae*. The second was an adult male located at Harrow Hill, Patching, on 15 Aug (PJ). The third sighting, and probably the same bird recorded on 15 Aug, was an adult male at Steep Down, Lancing, on 18 Aug (BFF), which was seen again at the same locality on 20 Aug (SRA). [MEK]

0267. GOSHAWK

Accipiter gentilis

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

1993: A female was seen flying NE from Belle Tout, Beachy Head, on 16 Oct (RJF).

1997: There were 5 authenticated accounts. The first sighting of the year was a female at Marsh Fm, Sidlesham, on 15 Jan (AH). This bird had just taken a Pheasant. After a minute or so it flew off towards a local wood and disappeared from view.

The next 3 reports were all in the month of May and, as such, could be resident or breeding birds. On 3 May, at a locality in the west of the County, an adult pair displayed very enthusiastically for approximately 10 minutes. The exuberance of their display was no doubt spurred on by the presence of another adult female. At one point, the 2 females circled around some 30-60 yards apart, but made no attempt to make contact (MEK).

On 18 May at North Stoke, an immature female was watched for 1-2 minutes (MEK). It was moving quickly with continuous wing-beats and no gliding, covering the ground in leisurely but deceptively quick fashion.

A female at West Dean Woods on 28 June (AH) was disturbed by the observer's dog, which duly presented a freshly killed Hare presumably having stolen it from the accipiter!

Finally, a male, seen in silhouette and therefore of uncertain maturity, flew over the observer's house in Storrington on 20 Sept (MEK). [MEK]

0269. SPARROWHAWK

Accipiter nisus

Common resident and passage migrant.

Several hundred records were received from numerous localities throughout the county. Casual observation would suggest that most areas in the west of the County are fully saturated with breeding pairs (*pers obs*). The picture is less clear in the east of the County in that there are substantially fewer reports, but this may reflect reduced observer activity. Only a comprehensive survey would answer these questions.

Very few observers were able to confirm breeding. Fledging success was generally

very low, but with just a handful of reports, there is insufficient data to offer meaningful comment. One pair at Streat reared at least 3 young, but otherwise records suggest that 1-2 was more usual.

Prey items reported were Dunlin, Rock Pipit, House Sparrow, Fieldfare, Blue Tits, Goldfinches, and Song Thrush young taken directly from the nest. One enterprising bird attacked a Budgerigar through a window!

A pair at Storrington on 9 July was seen hunting as a team, which is rather unusual behaviour for this species.

With regards to possible passage birds, there were 3 individuals present at Beachy Head on 28 Sept that were considered likely migrants. No other records received were suggestive of migrant birds. [MEK]

0287. **BUZZARD**

Buteo buteo

Uncommon resident, scarce passage migrant and possible winter visitor.

There has been a very dramatic increase in the number of territorial pairs located in the County. In the west, there were at least 17 pairs and in the east a probable minimum of 8 pairs. These figures are based on spring observation of pairs, or multiples of pairs, seen in areas of suitable habitat. The majority of these 'critical' spring records, were mid-to-late March, with a spread of 22 Feb to 3 Apr.

In the west of the County, it is evident that more-or-less the whole of the South Downs from Steyning in the east to Harting Downs in the west has been populated. The downs between Storrington and Angmering, together with the downs of West Dean Woods and East Dean Woods, are the major strongholds, each area having several pairs. In the east, the Ashdown area remains the nucleus of the breeding population, but several other pairs have been located.

There was very little data as regards breeding success. Two pairs in the east bred successfully. Five pairs within 8 km of Storrington were all successful, each pair raising 2 young (*pers obs*). One of the keys to future expansion lies with the apparent ease with which these pairs are able to fledge 2 young annually. The Storrington pair mentioned last year have now produced 9 young in 4 years (*pers obs*).

The comments made last year regarding migrants clearly still apply. However, since there are no known breeding pairs on the coastal plain, birds seen there can reasonably be regarded as migrants.

There were several records in the Rye area, with singles on 31 Mar, 9 Apr heading west, 16 May, 10 June, 3 Aug and 31 Oct. There was a single flying east over Brighton Marina on 13 Jan and another heading north over Moulsecoomb Wild Park, Brighton, on 15 Apr. The Chichester area had a number of sightings, with one flying north-east over Earnley on 9 Apr, another at Upper Chichester Channel on 31 July, a single at Fishbourne Channel on 16 Sept flying north, one heading east at West Itchenor on 29 Sept and finally 2 at Bosham on 6 Nov, seen hunting and eating earthworms. At Hastings, there were singles on 18 Apr flying east and 7 Sept heading west.

Finally, a short story about a local gamekeeper (known to this observer). As a breed of men they are often much maligned and no doubt, in the past, with some justification. The gamekeeper disturbed a Buzzard raiding his Pheasant poults and in its anxiety to escape the hapless bird became snared in the netting of the pen. The keeper duly released the bird. Pondering over his dilemma, he found a simple but highly effective solution. He

shot a Rabbit every day (with a rifle and therefore no worries over lead-shot pellets) and left it in the open for the Buzzard to find. The poults were left alone! [MEK]

0290. **ROUGH-LEGGED BUZZARD**

Buteo lagopus

Very rare winter visitor and passage migrant.

This species continues to be very rare within the confines of this County, but there was one seen hunting at Gatwick Manor, Hammerwood, nr East Grinstead, on 18 Dec (NAD). It soon drifted off to the north and was not seen again at this site. The observer thought it was probably an adult bird. [MEK]

0301. **OSPREY**

Pandion haliaetus

Uncommon passage migrant.

Another very good year for this species, with a probable minimum of 48 different birds involved. There were just 13 individuals in the first half of the year with the remaining 35 seen in late summer and early autumn. The earliest migrant was seen at Pagham on 30 Mar and the latest date was 13 Oct, with a report of a single at Bognor Regis and a further 2 birds at Weir Wood Res.

The minimum monthly totals were as follows:

Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct
1	7	4	1	7	14	11	6

The records can be grouped and summarised as follows:

Weir Wood Res: All the birds seen at this site were logged very accurately. In the spring, 2 birds were seen on 2 Apr, with another on 13 May. An immature was reported on 12 July, with a different bird arriving on 23rd: this one stayed for a few days. The following month, there was a long stayer which was recorded on 9 dates between 3 Aug and 21st. A bird with missing primaries was seen on 24 Aug and a different one arrived on 26th and was seen several times before departing on 4 Sept. Interestingly, the bird with missing primaries put in another appearance on 6 Sept (where had it gone to in the interim?). A ninth bird for the year was seen on 7 Sept and stayed until 10th. An immature arrived on 12 Sept and left on 16th. Two birds were present between 20 and 24 Sept. An eleventh bird, dark in colour, was recorded on 23 Sept. A further individual was seen from 25 Sept until 2 Oct when it was joined by another. A Scottish bird with a white ring on the right leg was reported on 28 Sept. Finally, there was a single on 8 Oct and a further 2 on 13th, making a grand total of 17 birds for the year.

Chichester and Pagham Hbrs: Just 2 birds in the spring, the first on 30 Mar and the second on 22 May. In late summer, an adult was seen catching Grey Mullet on 29 and 30 July. Further singles were present on 19, 23 and 31 Aug. There was a single at Thorney Deepes on 2 and 3 Sept, with 2 at Pagham Intertidals on 7 Sept. Further singles were seen in this general area on 21, 23 and 28 Sept.

Pulborough Brooks: One record in the spring on 10 Apr, with 2 birds flying over on 15 Aug and another single on 24th.

Arlington Res: An adult bird with an orange ring on its right leg was present on 27, 28 and 29 Apr. It was seen to catch several fish, including a trout. A bird was reported on 23

and 24 Aug, and seen to catch a fish on the latter date.

Bewl Water: Just 2 records, the first on 21 Apr and the second on 21 Aug. The latter was actively fishing.

Rye area: An adult on 24 Apr and a single on 24 June which arrived from the north-east and then flew out to sea.

Elsewhere, on the coast from west to east there were singles at Bognor Regis on 13 Oct, at Worthing on 4 May and 26 July, at Newhaven on 2 May (this bird was seen to come in off the sea), at Cuckmere on 2 May, at Bexhill on 9 Apr and, finally, at Rye on 24 Apr and 24 June.

Inland, there were 5 dates for the Ashdown Forest area, with singles seen on 26 July, 21 and 23 Sept, and 2 birds seen on 30 July and 17 Aug. At this locality, there is bound to be an overlap with the neighbouring Weir Wood Res. and some duplication is inevitable. There were singles at Barcombe Res on 26 and 31 Aug, with presumably the same bird seen at Glynde Levels, also on 26 Aug. [MEK]

0304. **KESTREL**

Falco tinnunculus

Common resident and passage migrant.

Numerous, with a probable breeding population in excess of 800 pairs. Nothing short of a comprehensive survey is likely to do justice to this very familiar falcon. As usual, there were many reports of breeding pairs, but very few records of fledging success. Two pairs at Streat raised 3 and 4 young, respectively. At Rottingdean, a pair used a nest-box and 4 fledged. A pair at Littlehampton Marina failed due to Crow predation.

There was a minimum of 3 pairs present at Bewl Water and also 3 pairs at Thorney Island.

On favourable days in late summer and early autumn, fairly large numbers may be visible at the same time. There were 8 present at Steep Down, Lancing, on 23 Aug and 16 at Balsdean, near Rottingdean, on 27 Sept.

Passage birds were reported from the various sea-stations, with records on 12 dates in the first part of the year and 8 dates in the second. Splash Point, Seaford, had records for 5 Jan, 5 and 10 May and 21 Oct. Bexhill and Hastings had records for 26 Jan, 6 and 12 Apr, 5 and 14 May, and 17 Aug. At Selsey Bill, there were records for 20 and 28 Mar, 31 Aug, 11 and 21 Sept, 23 Oct and 22 Dec. Worthing Beach had a single record for 9 Apr, Brighton Marina, two, on 24 May and 18 Oct. [MEK]

0309. **MERLIN**

Falco columbarius

Uncommon but regular winter visitor and passage migrant.

Another good year with over 200 records submitted and whilst the majority came from the usual areas there was a noticeable increase in reports from other, mainly downland, localities. The probable monthly minima were as follows:

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
12	12	19	7	1	1	0	3	11	13	10	10

The records can be grouped and summarised as follows:

Chichester and Pagham Hbrs: Seen in every month of the year except July, there were 98 records in total. Pagham intertidals and Pilsey Sands were the most favoured locations to watch this diminutive falcon. As usual, the wader roosts were regularly attacked. It is likely that there were 4 different birds present in January, with 2 females, an adult male and an immature male. Regular sightings ensued, with 2 individuals lingering into April. There was a single at Selsey Bill on 1 and 2 May and, finally, another single at Church Norton on 5 June.

In the second half of the year, there were records for 12 and 28 Aug, with more regular sightings from 5 Sept onwards. There were probably 3 different birds in the area in October and November and 2 in December.

Rye area: Seen on 14 dates from 4 Jan until 15 Apr and probably involving 2-3 birds. The earliest report for the autumn was 4 Sept and there were regular sightings thereafter until the end of the year. It would seem likely that 3 different birds were involved. The only multiple sighting involved 2 birds at Icklesham on 24 Oct.

Pulborough Brooks: A male was present on 4 Feb and was seen irregularly until 15 Apr. There was a female on 8 Mar. In the autumn, a male was recorded on 12 and 21 Oct.

Beachy Head: Just 2 sightings in the early part of the year, on 9 and 30 Mar. There were 9 records of singles between 6 Sept and 23 Oct.

Downland: There were approximately 20 records from many localities within the large swathe of downland from Storrington in the west to East Dean in the east. There were multiple sightings at Glynde Levels where there were 2 birds present on 8 Jan and 3 birds on 3 Nov, and also at Round Hill, Steyning, on 19 Sept when 2 birds were reported.

Elsewhere, there were some 25 reports from scattered localities along the coastal plain. The lower Adur had several records in both spring and autumn.

Inland, from west to east, there were singles at Ambersham Common on 27 Feb, at Petworth on 22 Feb and 1 Mar, at Holmbush Tip, Faygate, on 12 Apr, at Keymer on 11 Mar, at Weir Wood Res on 12 and 26 Dec, at Fletching on 27 Feb, on Ashdown Forest on 31 Mar, and, finally, at Barcombe on 25 Jan and 31 Mar. [MEK]

0310. **HOBBY**

Falco subbuteo

Uncommon breeding summer visitor and regular passage migrant.

With more than 350 records submitted, there are good indications that this species continues to do well. The earliest sighting was on 13 Apr at Icklesham. Interestingly, there was then a gap of a whole week before the next record, which was at Beachy Head on 19 Apr, when 2 birds were seen. The latest record for the year was at Selsey on 30 Oct.

Approximately 50-60 spring migrants were reported and these mostly relate to records from the Rye area and Selsey Bill. Small congregations of birds have become increasingly common in recent years and the Rye area features strongly. There were 8 birds present on 17 May at Icklesham and also 8 different birds seen on 15 June at Castle Water, Rye.

In any area of suitable habitat, even a single sighting from late April until early September may readily indicate the presence of a local breeding pair. This is an unobtrusive species which can easily be over-looked. From the records received, it is likely that 46 territories were identified in the west of the County and 18 in the east. There was, however, very little confirmation of breeding, with just 4 observers submitting records. Three pairs raised two young and one pair reared three fledglings.

Autumn sightings are not always easy to interpret. Coastal records will generally relate to migrants, but any birds sighted inland may suggest a pair, hitherto unobserved. Family parties may stay together rather later than is sometimes suggested; as with an adult and 2 juveniles in Ashdown Forest on 18 Sept. In total, there was probably a minimum of 46 migrants. [MEK]

0320. **PEREGRINE**

Falco peregrinus

Scarce breeding resident.

A huge total of 385 records was submitted. It seems likely, from the data available, that there were 8 territorial pairs on the coast and 4 pairs inland. Information on breeding, where available, confirms that 2 pairs raised 4 young, 3 pairs raised 3 and one pair raised 2. This almost certainly under-estimates the true situation.

Certain areas generated large numbers of records:

Chichester and Pagham Hbrs: Seen in every month of the year, with a total of 117 records. In the early part of the year, there were numerous reports of an adult male and an immature female. On 5 Feb, these 2 birds were observed together, squabbling over a recent kill. On another occasion, at Pilsey Sands on 20 Apr, an adult male and a Merlin both chased a Skylark. The smaller falcon succeeded in the kill, only to be immediately harassed by the Peregrine. In May and June, the adult male and immature female were seen roosting together at Pilsey Sands. On 1 and 4 Sept, a single juvenile was roosting on Pilsey Island. Also on 4 Sept at Pagham Hbr, there were 3 seen together, an adult with a juvenile male and a juvenile female. In mid-October, an immature male regularly attacked the wader roost at Pilsey Sands.

Pulborough Brooks: There were several sightings of a female from 13 Jan onwards. A male was reported on 17 and 22 Apr, with the 2 birds together on 29 Apr and 18 May. During the summer months, there were occasional sightings in the Arun Valley. An immature bird was reported at Pulborough on 1 and 5 Sept. Singles were seen on 13 and 16 Nov and 2 Dec. A female was present on 7 and 9 Dec.

Rye area: Seen in all months except May and June, there was a total of 32 records. An adult male was present on 19 Jan. Singles were reported for February, March, April and July. An immature female was seen on 1 Aug, with several other unspecified singles during that month. There were 2 singles at Pett Levels on 20 Sept, a female at Icklesham on 13 Oct, and just an occasional single thereafter.

Chalk Headlands and Coastal Towns: A rather odd heading, in the interests of secrecy. Perhaps, when the breeding population in the County has increased to 20-30 pairs, this requirement for secrecy will no longer be necessary! As already mentioned, there were probably 8 territorial pairs, but not all were thought to have been successful in breeding, or to have attempted breeding.

Elsewhere, in the hinterland there were approximately 10 records of single birds, some of which were no doubt prospecting new sites. There are a good number of quarries that might prove suitable, provided they remain quiet and free from disturbance. [MEK]

0358. **RED-LEGGED PARTRIDGE**

Alectoris rufa

Introduced resident.

During the first winter period, coveys were noted in January at Locks Manor, Hurstpierpoint (20); Rushy Green, Ringmer (12); Lower Standean, Brighton (22); and in February at Birdham (8). No records indicative of breeding were received, but pairs were seen during the breeding season at the following locations: Pulborough Brooks; Piltown; West Fields, Selsey; Waterhall, Brighton (2 pairs); Wolstonbury Hill and Walthurst Fm, Loxwood.

Subsequent to the breeding season, birds were noted from 15 sites. The more notable of these were 12 at Stump Bottom, near Steyning, on 12 Aug, 25 at the Ferry Field, Sidlesham, on 14 Sept, 15 at Angmering Park Estate on 17 Sept, the same number at The Severals, Church Norton, on 24 Oct, and 13 at Broomhill Level on 16 Nov. In total, records were received from 31 sites, representing a minimum of 208 birds. Due to the difficulty of separating them in the field, some of these records may refer to the introduced Chukar Partridge, *A. chukar*, or hybrids between the two species. [RTP]

0367. **GREY PARTRIDGE**

Perdix perdix

Fairly common but decreasing resident.

Recorded from 28 locations during the first winter period. As in 1996, the largest covey, numbering 47 birds, was found at Rye Hbr LNR on 2 Jan, and the second most prolific site was again at Goring Gap, with 24 on 19 Jan. Other notable counts were 20 at Stansted Forest, coveys of 15 at Kingston Gorse and Glynde Levels, and of 10, both at Shoreham Airport and Pulborough Brooks RSPB Reserve. The total count for this first period was a minimum of 231 birds.

Breeding season records were received from 19 locations. At Rye Hbr LNR, 33 pairs were counted, but at the other sites only one or two pairs were noted. No indication of breeding success was given, except that at Sheepcote Valley, Brighton, 3 pairs were noted throughout the year, but no young were seen.

The second winter period produced records from 22 sites. Four coveys at Goring Gap on 14 Dec, totalling 43 birds, was the highest count of the period. Surprisingly, Rye Hbr LNR only managed counts of 5 and 6, with a further 9 on the adjoining golf course, compared to a peak count of 75 in 1996. Other notable counts were 21 at Sompting, 27 at Climping and 32 on the Lewes Brooks. Apart from maxima of 19 and 14 at Ringmer and Pulborough Brooks RSPB Reserve respectively, all the other sites were on the South Downs or the coastal plain. The minimum number of birds recorded in the second winter period was 308. [RTP]

0370. **QUAIL**

Coturnix coturnix

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

A minimum of 47 birds were reported, the first observation coming from Icklesham,

on 22 May and the last, also from Icklesham, on 6 Oct. As is usual with this species, most records refer to single calling birds, but with maxima of 3 at Balsdean and Findon. Birds were reported from 31 different sites, 27 of them being on or near to the Downs between Littlehampton and Eastbourne. The outlying sites were Icklesham (3 records), Rye Hbr Fm, Willingdon Level and the Brede Valley in the East, and Sidlesham (2 records) in the West. There were 5 records for May, 11 for June and 13 for July, but there was no evidence of successful breeding – males are said to stop calling when they have found a mate. Confirmation that this enigmatic species breeds within the county would be welcome. [RTP]

0394. **PHEASANT**

Phasianus colchicus

Very common resident.

Breeding records came from Kingley Vale where there were 17 pairs, West Dean Woods, 20 pairs, Binsted Barns Copse with 2 territories in 16ha of deciduous woodland, and at Marsh Fm, Yapton, where there were 3 territories in 67ha of mixed farmland. Nine pure white birds were reported from different parts of the County, as far apart as Pagham, Balcombe and Bewl Water. Large numbers of hand-reared birds continue to be released for sporting purposes and are the likely origin of the albinos noted above. [RTP]

0396. *Cat. C* **GOLDEN PHEASANT**

Chrysolophus pictus

Scarce introduced resident.

A declining population remains at Kingley Vale with a minimum of 3 males recorded, including the flavistic bird first noted in 1991. Two males were also recorded at West Dean Woods and a single at West Dean. No females were reported. It is impossible to estimate how many birds are now present from the information received, but it is unlikely to be as many as the 14 occupied territories noted at Kingley Vale in 1993. There was no evidence of breeding. [RTP]

0397. *Cat. C* **LADY AMHERST'S PHEASANT**

Chrysolophus amherstiae

Rare introduced, but not established, resident or escape from captivity.

Two males were seen at Kingley Vale on 1 Apr, and a released male was at Lordship Wood, Cripps Corner, on 7 Dec. [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	28	9	4	7	4	3	9	9	16
No. of birds	48	18	13	48	6	5	19	23	38

During the first winter period, from January through to the end of March, mostly

single Water Rails were seen at a large number of localities, from Pagham Hbr and Chichester GPs in the west, to Rye Hbr in the east. Concentrations in January included 7 at Combe Haven on New Year's Day, 6 at Icklesham on 4th, 8 at Thorney Deeps on 9th, increasing to 10 on 7 Mar. As usual, most records came from coastal sites during times of hard weather, but inland localities were productive, too, with birds recorded at Strivens Reed Bed, Steyning; Woods Mill, Henfield; Weir Wood Res; and Pulborough Brooks in January.

Numbers began to decline in April, with records originating from far fewer localities. Contrary to the general situation, however, a count at Pett Panel Sewer on 12th revealed 40 birds present. There was only one record for May, a single bird behind the North Wall, Pagham Hbr, on 22nd. As in 1996, Icklesham featured a main concentration in June when 'many were present all month'. Otherwise, only one bird was recorded for that month, a calling bird at Glynde Levels on 6th.

Records during July, August and September were thinly scattered and featured many localities. Again, Icklesham had the species 'present all month' throughout this period. Four were found at Thorney Deeps on 22nd Sept, this number increasing to a count of 6 on 27 Oct.

Throughout November and December, counts detected a slight increase in the general run of numbers, with 3 at North Wall, Pagham Hbr, on 11 Nov, 3 at Glyne Gap Marsh, Bexhill, on 16th and 6 at Thorney Deeps on 17th. Four were at Apuldram Manor Fm on 1st Dec where two were seen chasing Snipe (*Gallinago gallinago*), and a count in Chichester Hbr on 13th revealed 9 birds. The year finished with a count of 11 at Combe Haven on 29th. [KN/LGH]

0408. SPOTTED CRAKE

Porzana porzana

Very scarce spring and autumn passage migrant and rare winter visitor.

Four were recorded in an above-average autumn. Records were of adults at Waltham Brooks on 11 and 14 Aug (CEH), Pagham Hbr from 12-16 Aug (MO) and trapped at Icklesham on 27 Aug (RBRG). One was heard at Thorney Great Deep on 30 Aug (CBC). The individual at Pagham Hbr took up residence at the western corner of the Long Pool and was the most widely-seen individual in the County, since one at the same location in 1988. Thirty-two have been recorded in 1990s, of which 23 have been trapped at Icklesham. Most recent records have been during the period mid-August to early October [RJF]

0421. CORNCRAKE

Crex crex

Rare passage migrant, formerly bred.

An adult male was trapped at Icklesham on 5 Sept (RBRG). This is the 7th to be recorded in the 1990s and the 15th since 1980. All of these records fall between 24 Aug and 28 Oct. [RJF]

0424. **MOORHEN***Gallinula chloropus***Very common resident and winter visitor.**The monthly *Wetland Bird Survey* counts were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
<i>County totals</i>	656	406	475	282	123	137	243	360	654	437	729	708
Chichester Hbr	45	58	41	19	21	29	23	16	23	31	36	48
Pagham Hbr	12	4	16	12	6	19	12	13	nc	15	13	35
Chichester GPs	167	136	131	4	6	4	4	5	130	132	176	118
Forest Mere	5	1	4	-	4	11	9	13	25	23	10	15
Swanbourne Lake	42	38	-	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	60
Arundel WWT	145	nc	115	89	47	-	nc	141	115	-	123	136
Waltham Brooks	1	1	2	4	2	3	19	9	13	3	3	-
Pulborough Brooks	49	11	6	29	6	11	24	12	10	6	11	10
Kneppmill Pond	-	-	1	-	-	4	18	20	5	-	-	-
Henfield Brooks	3	11	7	2	5	8	22	15	11	6	25	18
Weir Wood Res	5	3	2	-	-	9	3	15	19	15	8	6
Glynde Levels	9	3	8	7	4	7	20	12	21	12	7	5
Pevensey Levels	4	2	5	6	3	14	1	10	25	33	48	13
Bewl Water	35	33	20	nc	Nc	nc	nc	nc	54	40	40	25
Powdermill Res	-	2	3	6	4	4	4	19	19	-	6	22
Alexandra Park	18	28	19	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	5	Nc	41	42
Pett Level	8	15	9	43	-	1	41	6	13	4	67	54
Rye Hbr	25	7	13	20	9	9	15	30	44	23	31	12

Records of breeding were received from 24 sites, but no large numbers were quoted. Bewl Water reported a poor year for breeding, after 60 pairs last year. At the village pond in Middleton-on-Sea, the only pair were not put off by two very large Terrapins (*Emys orbicularis*) sunning themselves regularly on a plank, only five feet from their nest. The Moorhens raised two broods of 5 and 6 youngsters. [DEGC]

0429. COOT

Fulica atra

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

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

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
<i>County totals</i>	3222	1995	1508	405	208	357	447	528	2276	2324	2251	2199
Chichester Hbr	174	174	58	38	31	46	53	35	25	30	65	58
Pagham Hbr	48	27	22	15	21	13	24	22	nc	19	23	44
Chichester GPs	1204	665	552	21	15	40	47	55	970	773	874	793
Arundel WWT	300	nc	64	62	52	74	nc	72	61	72	63	108
Pulborough Brooks	2	12	51	53	6	-	-	-	-	1	2	3
Kneppmill Pond	-	-	1	-	4	14	19	30	14	43	40	4
Glynde Levels	4	4	18	16	11	38	34	43	71	75	34	6
Eastbourne Lakes	46	112	nc	Nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	187	223	119	124
Bewl Water	446	477	281	Nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	624	730	534	448
Darwell Res	20	28	15	23	13	13	17	6	3	2	nc	11
Powdermill Res	-	-	7	12	5	35	22	37	24	8	20	35
Pett Level	84	82	78	73	-	32	110	16	8	8	47	63
Rye Hbr	710	359	258	69	29	45	116	204	228	284	359	297

Other counts of note were:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
Brooklands, Worthing	130	84	33	80	120	101	80
Scotney GP	105*	-	-	-	-	-	-
Jury's Gap	162**						

** On the sea, in cold weather on 3 Jan. *19 Jan

Breeding was reported from 15 sites and few details were given. However, Bewl Water had 64 pairs, but only 5 broods with 11 young. Thorney Deeps had 15 pairs, 7 broods and 19 young. Pulborough Brooks reported 22 pairs. [DEGC]

0450. OYSTERCATCHER

Haematopus ostralegus

Scarce breeder, fairly common passage migrant and winter visitor.

Recorded along the whole coast throughout the year. The monthly *WeBS*' counts at the principal sites were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
<i>County totals</i>	2034	1884	1126	773	661	528	881	1791	1661	1963	1469	1868
Chichester Hbr	1396	1167	520	340	417	379	696	1411	1334	1229	1106	1377
Pagham Hbr	303	265	326	202	88	37	163	253	nc	350	200	203

Rye Hbr	290	391	237	226	151	110	15	121	222	340	120	280
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The largest roost was at Pilsey Sands, Chichester Hbr, where the monthly maximum counts were:

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
1325	1105	463	254	313	260	640	1300	1300	1200	907	861

Breeding by 40 pairs was reported. There were pairs at Pilsey Island in Chichester Hbr, 2 pairs at Thorney Deepes, and 1 pair at Cobnor Cottage. Two pairs at Ellanore, one pair at South Stakes Island and 3 pairs at North Stakes Island raised no young. There were pairs in residence during the breeding season along the shingle beaches of Pagham Hbr.

In the east, pairs included 1 in Cuckmere Valley; 2 at Icklesham (which raised 1 young); 1 at Pett Level, 1 near Camber; and at least 1 at Lydd Ranges. Two pairs raised 1 young at Union Channel, near Rye. Twenty-three pairs at Rye Hbr raised just 5 young.

There were just 2 inland records: 1 at Bawl Water on 7 Apr and 1 at Weir Wood Res on 21 Dec. [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	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
5	14	40	21	15	7	6	1	10	19	10	14

In January, up to 4 were regular at Pagham Hbr/Sidlesham Ferry, rising to 6 by 20 Feb and a peak of 13 on 22nd. Occasional records from sites in Chichester Hbr may refer to just one bird.

There were 11 at Pagham Hbr on 5 Mar, but only 2 after mid-month. Ones and twos passed east along the coast, with a large flock of 18 off Brighton Marina on 17th. In April, the largest flock was 4 off Worthing Beach on 8th, and in May, 6 from the same point on 16th. Probably the same birds were on the scrape at Cuckmere Haven that evening. Up to 3 were recorded from Bexhill and Hastings, Rye Hbr, Thorney Deepes, and Seaford, including 2 resting on the sea for 20 minutes on 1 May.

A pair returned to the site of last year's successful breeding: one chick hatched but survived only four days. Singles were at Icklesham from 10 to 13 June, and Rye Hbr on 11 June and 29 July. At Sidlesham Ferry there was one on 15 June, and 2 from 23rd to 28th, and on 8 July. A single flew west past Bexhill on 3 Aug.

The next was at Pagham Hbr on 14 Sept, then up to 9 from 21st through October and November, rising to 11 in December. During the same period, up to 3 were at Pilsey Sands, and 1 or 2 passed Bexhill, Brighton Marina and Beachy Head in October. [KN]

0459. STONE-CURLEW

Burhinus oedicnemus

Scarce/rare passage migrant. Has bred.

1995: A single bird, seen at Pett Pools on 1 Aug (IW). This record has been accepted by the SOS Records Committee.

0469. **LITTLE RINGED PLOVER***Charadrius dubius***Rare breeding summer visitor and scarce passage migrant.**

The first bird was at Pulborough Brooks on 17 Mar and others reached several sites by the end of the month. Single birds were recorded at Pulborough Brooks, Sidlesham Ferry, Chichester GPs, Rye Hbr, Bexhill and Icklesham. As well as pairs settling into traditional breeding sites during April and May, a large number of birds were recorded at a wide variety of other localities, from Pagham Hbr and the Chichester GPs in the west of the County, to Icklesham and Rye Hbr in the east. Inland sites featured records at Pulborough Brooks, Barcombe Res, Lurgashall MP and Weir Wood Res.

About 12 pairs attempted to breed, but only 2 pairs were seen to succeed, both raising two broods, totalling 12 young.

The highest counts in July were 10 at two breeding sites, and 5 at Sidlesham Ferry. Smaller numbers were present in August, and the last were 1 at Pagham Hbr on 2 Sept, 3 at Pett Level on 15th, and 2, on unusually late date, at Cuckmere Haven on 4 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 *WeBS*' counts at the principal sites were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
<i>County totals</i>	618	390	305	162	228	127	66	2047	403	559	870	650
Chichester Hbr	118	110	79	25	89	12	20	1007	60	324	483	376
Pagham Hbr	314	-	177	87	20	15	41	1035	nc	14	-	64
Climping	31	20	12	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	31	35	45	57
Goring Gap	6	60	3	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	-	-	78	26
Lower Adur	115	109	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	174	157	189	100
Newhaven	1	13	5	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	-	nc	52	14
Cuckmere Hvn	2	16	-	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	24	2	6	-
Rye Hbr	9	40	16	50	119	100	5	3	105	5	-	-

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

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
76	102	57	103	134	144	76	1100	1200	420	478	353

Other concentrations (not in tables above and greater than 100) were 150 at Elmer, near Middleton-on-Sea, on 17 Aug, 134 at Shoreham on the River Adur, on 10 Sept and 112 there on 27th, 105 at Rye Hbr on 21 Sept, 117 at Worthing Beach on 30 Sept, 200 at Shoreham Hbr on 27 Dec and 112 at Church Norton on 31 Dec.

There were reports of 73 breeding pairs, but this total is probably an underestimate of the County total. Around Chichester Hbr, there was 1 pair at Ellanore; 1 at East Head, and 5 at Pilsey Island. Pairs were present on suitable habitat at Pagham Hbr. Five pairs were noted at Widewater, Lancing; 2 at Brighton Marina; 1 at Balsdean, near Rottingdean; 3 at Newhaven Tide Mills; 1 at Cuckmere Haven; 1 at the Crumbles; and at least 1 at Lydd Ranges. There were 52 pairs at Rye Hbr where a colour-dyed breeding male was present

between 23 Feb and 26 July, having been ringed at Canvey Island, Essex, on 24 Oct 1996.

There was only one inland record, 1 at Pulborough Brooks on 9 June. [BJY]

0477. **KENTISH PLOVER**

Charadrius alexandrinus

Very scarce spring and autumn passage migrant, formerly bred.

1996: The penultimate sentence should be corrected to read: There have been 36 records since 1988 of which 22 have been at Pilsey (including 5 in 1990, 1991 and 4 in 1993). (BC) [RJF]

1997: Four adults were recorded in spring. A female at Pilsey Sands on 7 Apr (CBC) just missed a male present there from 10-12th (CBC *et al*), while another female from 2-7 May (CBC) may have been the individual seen on the beach at Church Norton on 8th (TJE). A typical showing in all respects. There have been 36 recorded during the 1990s, in March (on 26th), April (9), May (12), June (4), July (3), September (5) and October (2). No fewer than 22 of these have been at Pilsey! [RJF]

0478. **LESSER SAND PLOVER**

Charadrius mongolus

A Lesser Sand Plover was discovered on the mud-flats of Pagham Hbr on 14 Aug (JWPB, TJE, JH, RH). Seen by a great many observers on that day and again on 15th and 16th, it has been accepted by *British Birds*, but currently remains under consideration by the BOURC for admission on to the British List. It was photographed by IH Leach. Further and more detailed particulars will be published after the results of the BOURC' considerations are known. If admitted to the British List, it will be the first record for the UK. [LGH]

0482. **DOTTEREL**

Charadrius morinellus

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

In the best year for the species in the County within living memory, a total of 31 were seen in spring and autumn. Three at Harvey's Cross Barn, near Balsdean, on 21 Apr were joined by a 4th from 27-29th (RTP, GAS *et al*). Meanwhile, 7 were found at Beeding Hill on 22 Apr, with just 2 there on 23rd, but 9 on 24th and 5 on 26th-27th (RNS *et al*), and presumably a different group of 6 on 6 May, with again just 2 on 7th (RNS *et al*).

In autumn, 5 at Steyning Round Hill on 1 Sept had risen to 9 on 2nd-3rd with 3 on 4th (ADW, IJW *et al*). Finally, 3 were found at Newmarket Hill on 5 Sept (JC, JPS *et al*). Of the 90 recorded during 1990-96, all but 24 were in the general Balsdean area, making those in the west of the County in 1997 particularly welcome. [RJF]

0485. **GOLDEN PLOVER**

Pluvialis apricaria

Common winter visitor and passage migrant, rare in summer.

The *Wetland Bird Survey*' counts were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
County totals	85	459	300	251	-	-	-	95	55	511	1130	3164
Chichester Hbr	15	418	298	38	-	-	-	29	-	306	878	2064

Pagham Hbr	-	38	2	200	-	-	-	-	nc	155	144	551
Glynde Levels	-	-	-	13	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Pevensey Levels	-	-	-	-	nc	nc	nc	-	-	20	80	25
Pett Level	63	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	40	150
Rye Hbr	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	66	53	1	65	290

In the early part of the year, counts were considerably down on those for 1996. Maximum totals for January were 125 at West Wittering on 2 Jan, 72 at Thorney Island on 21st, 320 at the car-park, East Head, West Wittering, on 22nd, and 90 on the inter-tidal area, Pagham Hbr on 30th. Marsh Fm, Yapton, recorded a Jan/Feb maximum of 80 in 67ha of mixed farmland on 28th. February records included 347 at Thorney Island on 9th, 400 at Scotney Court GP on 14th, and 315 in the car-park at East Head, West Wittering, on 19th. March yielded counts of 320 in White's Creek, Pagham Hbr, on 5th, 565 at Scotney Court GP on 6th, 250 at Thorney Island on 22nd and 575 in the Pagham Hbr area on 25th.

Numbers decreased in April, with totals of 80 birds (of the northern race) at Pagham Hbr on 2nd, and 50 at Scotney Court GP on 6th. After a count of 300 at Thorney Island on 16 May, there were no more sightings until single birds began to return in July, the first being at Rye Bay on 7th and the second at Pulborough Brooks on 13th. Maximum counts in August were 35 at Rye LNR on 15th, increasing to 220 by 31st. September's counts included 60 at Scotney Court GP on 7th, and 100 at Thorney Deepes on 17th, whilst October produced 500 flying over Chichester Hbr (probably from Thorney Island) on 3rd, 600 at Church Norton, Pagham Hbr, on 10th, 420 at White's Creek, Pagham Hbr, on 21st and 350 at the North Wall, Pagham Hbr, on 27th.

In November, there were 300 at West Wittering on 8th, 800 on Thorney Island on 17th, and 970 at Thorney Airfield on the same date. Later in the month, 650 were at North Wall, Pagham Hbr, on 23rd, 940 there on the inter-tidal flats on 26th and 890 at Castle Fm, Rye, on 30th. December featured impressive numbers, including 570 at Northpoint Pit, Rye, on 6th, 1100 on the inter-tidal flats at Pagham Hbr on 10th, with 950 at White's Creek, on the same date. On 13 Dec, there were 1033 at Thorney Island, whilst 14th yielded 700 at Castle Water, Rye, and 500 at Pett Level Pools. Counts in the latter half of the month included 300 at Church Norton on 21st, 850 at Castle Fm, Rye, on 22nd, 900 in the Brede Valley on 28th and 600 at the North Wall, Pagham Hbr, on the same date. Finally, there were 900 in White's Creek, Pagham Hbr, on 31st.

Diurnal movements reported included 30E at Brighton Marina on 1 Jan, 6E at Bexhill and Hastings on 27th and 10E at the same site on 6 Mar. [JLN]

0486. GREY PLOVER

Pluvialis squatarola

Common winter visitor and passage migrant.

The *Wetland Bird Survey*' counts were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
<i>County totals</i>	2413	2372	2840	685	106	9	39	1827	1512	2823	3902	3191
Chichester Hbr	937	1508	2117	202	16	5	4	1202	1512	2224	1193	1434
Pagham Hbr	1198	656	622	481	85	4	35	625	nc	592	2452	1510
Climping	125	54	60	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	-	7	71	38
Goring Gap	121	120	-	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	-	-	114	151

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

	Mar	Apr		May	No. per hr (Apr-May)
Selsey Bill	9E	20E	200W	94E	1.21
Worthing Beach	-	2E	1W	5E	.09
Brighton Marina	-	5E	1W	34E	.34
Splash Point, Seaford	-	20E	-	64E	.33
Bexhill & Hastings	4E	8E	3W	32E	.34

During a five-hour watch on 5 Apr, 200 were observed moving W at Selsey Bill. Other maxima were 20E at Splash Point, Seaford, on 1 May; 44E at Selsey Bill on 2nd; and 25E at Bexhill and Hastings on 15th.

There was a small autumn movement of 15E at Brighton Marina on 25 Aug and, later in the year, 32W at Worthing Beach on 6 Nov; 12W at Selsey Bill on 20th and 10W at the same site on 25 Dec.

Maximum counts in January were 644 at Pilsley Sands on 10 Jan; 200 at Pett Level Pools on 13th; 400 in the Church Norton area of Pagham Hbr on 29th and 60 roosting at Kingston Gorse on the same date. On 8 Feb, there were 61 at Rye Hbr and 1200 at Pilsley Sands. A dusk count at Rye Hbr on 10 Feb revealed 90 birds. After a count of 1200 at Pilsley Sands on 8 Mar, numbers quickly diminished down to 2 birds on 24 Apr. May yielded 31 at West Pier, Newhaven, on 2nd; 40 at Church Norton on 13th and 41 at Pilsley Sands on 20th. On 19 June, there were 39 on the inter-tidal flats of Pagham Hbr, and 17 at Pilsley Sands on 22nd. The few July records comprised of 1 at Pilsley Sands on 4th, increasing to 4 by 26th. Six birds, none of them in breeding plumage, were on the Church Norton mud-flats on 5th.

Numbers generally increased in August, with 166 at Pilsley Sands on 5th, increasing to 800 on 20th. There were 250 at Church Norton on 9th, and 240 on the inter-tidal area of Pagham Hbr on 21st. September found 1400 at Pilsley Sands on 19th, and 80 at the North Wall, Pagham Hbr, on 23rd, whilst October yielded 55 at a high tide roost at Snowhill, West Wittering, on 4th and 1358 at Pilsley Sands on 18th.

November records included 60 at West Beach, Littlehampton, on 1st, 1000 at Pilsley Sands on 14th and 3 roosting at Goring Gap on 15th — a site from which they had hither to been absent. In December, there were 259 at Pilsley Sands on 13th, 80 at Kingston Gorse on 14th and 100 at Church Norton on 30th.

Inland records consisted of 1 at Pulborough Brooks on 28 Apr, 1 flying east at Hollingbury Camp on 29 Sept, 1 at Bramber on 20 Dec and 1, with a Golden Plover flock, at Annington, near Bramber, on 22 Dec. [JLN]

0493. **LAPWING**

Vanellus vanellus

Fairly common but decreasing breeder and very common winter visitor.

The *Wetland Bird Survey*' counts were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
<i>County totals</i>	341	10,975	572	383	278	2350	5662	6760	7171	8529	16,341	18,249
Chichester Hbr	109	1095	94	62	52	197	358	470	463	1229	1394	2287
Pagham Hbr	16	153	58	26	25	59	177	66	nc	225	1244	785
Amberley Brooks	5	24	21	36	19	184	35	3	78	2	3285	1592
Waltham Brooks	18	15	1	-	-	47	95	186	24	-	-	-
Pulborough Brooks	14	5966	53	57	25	93	405	331	661	1542	3096	3124
Lower Adur	35	875	nc	nc	Nc	nc	nc	nc	310	458	970	1140

Henfield Brooks	-	-	-	-	-	233	65	162	-	-	485	42
Newhaven	50	200	-	nc	Nc	nc	nc	nc	164	nc	1900	640
Glynde Levels	-	225	112	71	32	42	1	1	2	188	2	820
Cuckmere Hvn	16	650	-	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	112	320	4	750
Eastbourne Lakes	12	800	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	94	600	445	1000
Pevensy Levels	2	180	69	23	13	2	100	500	241	667	3485	1150
Pett Level	44	774	111	74	80	763	1195	2419	1900	1750	950	1285
Rye Hbr	11	332	13	20	14	687	3147	2604	2635	1205	1274	3202

The bitterly cold weather, combined with poor visibility, produced the lowest *WeBS* count in Jan for some years. On the Bexhill and Hastings shore, 108 roosted on the beach in snow showers on 1 Jan, with 68 there the next day. Counts in the first part of January were generally very low although 600 were recorded at Icklesham on 1 Jan and 250 there on 4 Jan. Temperatures rose above zero later in the month and there were several counts in the hundreds from 21st onwards, with 1000 at Lancing on 25th. Numbers reported continued to rise during Feb as the conditions improved. There were 2000 at Pulborough Brooks RSPB Reserve on 4th, rising to 5966 by the 9th and 2000 were counted at Pett Level on 10 Feb. The first displaying birds were observed on 28 Feb at Pevensy Bridge Level.

Displaying birds were reported from several sites during March, with the first sitting bird on 24th at Icklesham. A site at Holmbush Tip, Faygate, that held 6 incubating females on the 11th was ploughed over on the 20th. At a second attempt, 5 of them had each raised 3 young by 25 May, but the earliest breeding success was at the Royal Military Canal, Pett, where 2 pairs were seen with 2 and 3 chicks on 23 Apr. Confirmation of breeding came from a further 14 sites involving a minimum of 105 pairs and probable breeding from another 10, but with only 47 young reported. Thirty pairs nested at Pulborough Brooks RSPB Reserve and a further 5 at Amberley Wild Brooks. Thorney Island had 21 pairs which reared 20 young, and 10 pairs were reported from Rye Hbr LNR and from Henfield Levels. No conclusions can be drawn from these figures as in many cases the information provided is incomplete.

Flocks started to form up again in early June, with 52 at Thorney Deeps on 3rd and 170 at Glynde Level on the 9th. Between 300 and 500 were present at Rye Hbr LNR from 13 June to 22 June whilst the numbers at Thorney Deeps had increased to 160 by 24 June. Other notable flocks in the post breeding period were mostly in the East of the county, with 2500 at East Guldeford Village on 20 July, 1100 there on 24 Aug and 1500 on 21 Sept. Other counts included 1100 at Castle Fm, Rye, on 20 Aug, 2000 at Icklesham on 24 Aug and 2000 at Pett Level on 20 Sept.

In the second winter period, numbers in the county continued to rise. In the west, at Pulborough Brooks RSPB Reserve, there were 1542 on 20 Oct, increasing to 4000 on 6 Nov, 1000 at Henfield on 11 Nov, 2200 at Amberley Brooks on 21 Nov, 2500 at Pagham on 26 Nov and 4100 there on 10 Dec, with 1200 at Shoreham Airport on 28 Dec. Chichester Hbr provided refuge for 1229 birds on 19 Oct, rising to 2287 by 14 Dec. In the East, large flocks were to be found at the usual sites. At Pett Level there were 1450 on 19 Oct and 2000 on 15 and 23 Nov, 1200 at the Tidemills, Newhaven, on 30 Nov, with 1000 at Castle Fm, Rye, on the same date. There were 2500 at East Guldeford Level and 3500 at Castle Water, Rye LNR, on 14 Dec, and 1500 in the Brede Valley on 28 Dec. The *WeBS* counts from July to December suggest that a flock of between 4000 and 5000 was present in the Rye Hbr/Pett Level area during that time. Some of these birds may have helped to swell the numbers on Pevensy Level to 3485 on 16 Nov. At the Tidemills, Newhaven, where the count rose to 2500 on 20 Dec, a leucistic bird was seen by several

observers from 26 Sept to the end of the year. It, or a similar bird, has now been reported at this site, but nowhere else in the county, each winter since 1990. [RTP]

0496. **KNOT**

Calidris canutus

Common winter visitor and fairly common passage migrant.

The monthly *Wetland Bird Survey* counts were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
<i>County totals</i>	1214	1665	548	2	25	-	1	22	136	26	531	247
Chichester Hbr	984	1375	478	-	2	-	1	10	136	24	455	130
Pagham Hbr	228	290	70	1	23	-	-	12	nc	2	76	67
Pett Level	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	40
Rye Hbr	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	10

During the first winter period, counts at Pilsey Sands produced 1300 on 21 Jan and 8 Feb, then falling rapidly to 458 on 8 Mar. The *WeBS* low tide count for Chichester Hbr produced 1349 on 19 Jan and 1053 on 15 Feb. At Pagham Hbr, there were 420 on 16 Jan, 330 on 5 Feb, and 160 on 6 Mar. Elsewhere in the county, three were at Cuckmere Haven on 5-7 Jan, and 2 at Rye Hbr on 10 Jan. Single birds were at Hove on 5-7 Jan, Newhaven Tide Mills from 10-20 Jan, and the Crumbles GP on 18 Jan. Sea-watching stations produced 17W at Bexhill and Hastings on 3 Jan, and 40E at Selsey Bill on 26 Feb.

The only inland record during this period was of a single bird at Bewl Water on 12 Jan.

In spring, a notable count was 50 in Pagham Hbr on 15 Apr. In May, the *WeBS* count produced 23 in Pagham Hbr. Two were at Rye Hbr and 4 at Pilsey Sands on 7 and 20 May, respectively. The last spring record was of 3 at Pilsey Sands on 3 June.

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

	Mar	Apr	May	Total
Selsey Bill	-	18	-	18
Brighton Marina	4	21	-	25
Splash Point, Seaford	-	5	144	149
Glyne Gap, Bexhill	-	-	11	11
West Pier, Newhaven	-	-	154	154

Passage peaked with 154E at the West Pier, Newhaven, and 129E at Splash Point, Seaford, on 1 May.

Autumn passage commenced with a single bird at Pagham Hbr on 24 June, followed by another at Rye Hbr on 7 July. Notable counts were of 9W at Worthing Beach on 9 Aug, and 20 at Pilsey Sands on 31 Aug. The *WeBS* count at Chichester Hbr produced 136 on 20 Sept. Eighteen moved east at Glyne Gap, Bexhill, on 25 Sept, and 140 were in Pagham Hbr on 10 Oct. There were two inland records of 2 birds at Weir Wood Res on 14 Sept, with one remaining until the following day, and a single bird at Bewl Water on 28 Oct.

During the second winter period, 450 were at Pilsley Sands on 15 Nov. In December, the *WeBS*' count produced 40 at Pett Level Shore and there were 10 at Rye Hbr on 14th. Two hundred and fifty were still at Pilsley Sands on 19th, and there was also a single bird on the River Adur at Shoreham on 21st. Finally, 186 were at Pagham Hbr on 31 Dec. [CBC]

0497. SANDERLING

Calidris alba

Fairly common winter visitor and passage migrant.

The monthly *Wetland Bird Survey*' counts were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
<i>County totals</i>	184	396	259	6	108	-	62	328	13	22	277	112
Chichester Hbr	66	217	174	6	102	-	62	320	-	-	150	95
Pagham Hbr	-	-	-	-	6	-	-	-	nc	-	2	-
Climping	115	12	85	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	3	21	21	2
Goring Gap	1	77	-	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	-	1	58	5
Rye Hbr	-	90	-	-	-	-	-	8	10	-	45	10

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

	Mar	Apr	May	No. per hr (Apr-May)
Selsey Bill	21	191	231	1.63
Worthing Beach	-	66	82	1.64
Brighton Marina	-	-	34	.63
Splash Point, Seaford	-	3	130	.52
Bexhill & Hastings	-	3	37	.32

At Selsey Bill, peak movements were 54E on 26 Apr, and 47E on 2 May, whilst Worthing recorded 38E on 7 Apr and Brighton Marina 21E on 15 May. In addition, there was a small westerly movement with 9W at Worthing and 8W at Splash Point, Seaford, in April, and 8W at Worthing in May. Later in the year, there was a small movement of 7E at Selsey Bill in August. Bexhill and Hastings recorded 5W in September and 6E in October. There were also 11W at Selsey Bill in November.

Maximum counts in January were 112 at Pilsley Sands on 13th, 50 at Widewater, Lancing, on 24th and 70, roosting on the beach at Kingston Gorse, on 29th. February found 35 at Bracklesham Bay on 5th, 128 at Pilsley Sands on 6th, 90 at Rye LNR Beach Reserve on 9th, and 120 on the Rye SSI on 23rd. March yielded 50 at Camber on 8th, 60 at Kingston, Ferring, on 13th, 212 at Pilsley Sands on 14th and 70 at Goring Gap on 16th. Noted in April were 216 at Pilsley Sands on 3rd. On 5 Apr, there were 100 at Worthing Beach and 100 at Goring Gap. Later in the month, there were 168 at Pilsley Sands on 16th and 52 on West Beach, Selsey, on 26th. After a maximum count of 334 at Pilsley Sands on 1 May, numbers at this site decreased rapidly, with 117 on 17th, 76 on 27th, 39 on 3 June and only 3 on 20th. After a count of 2 only on 8 July, numbers increased again to 206 by 30th. August found 35 at Icklesham on 1 Aug, and 364 at Pilsley Sands on 11th.

Fluctuating totals were reported at Pilsey Sands in September and October. There were 282 on 3 Sept, reducing to 10 on 26th, whilst October yielded 16 on 1st, 140 on 16th and 70 on 28th.

In November, there were 20 at East Head, West Wittering, on 8th, 55 at Camber on 14th, 30 roosting at Goring Gap on 15th and 146 at Pilsey Sands on the same date. The month continued with 45 at Rye on 16 Nov and 55 at the river mouth, Rye Bay, on 29th. December totals included 30 on Lancing Beach on 9th, 77 at Pilsey Sands on 13th, 35 at Widewater, Lancing, on 20th and 90 at Brooklands, Worthing, on 26th. The highest count of the year at Atherington, Climping, was 130 on 31 Dec.

There were no inland records this year. [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 counts were as follows:

May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
4	-	5	21	13	7	1	1

None was reported until 1 May, when a single bird was at Pilsey Sands, followed by singles at Pagham Hbr on 2nd and 8th, at Rye Hbr on 26th and at Icklesham on 27th.

Autumn passage was slight, especially when compared with the record numbers of 1996. It started with one at Pett Level on 21 July, and continued quietly through August and September. Up to three birds, but mostly singles, were seen quite regularly at Pagham Hbr and Sidlesham Ferry, and intermittently at Pett Level and Pilsey Sands. There were 4 at Pilsey Sands on 7 Aug and 5 at Pett Level on 13th. Elsewhere, 3 were at Thorney Deeps on 24 Aug, and singles at Icklesham from 4th to 7th, at Rye Hbr on 15th, at Arlington Res on 20 Sept and at Bulverhythe, St Leonards, on 30th.

The October records were 4 at Thorney Deeps on 2nd, and singles at Pett Level on 2nd and 20th, and at Sidlesham Ferry from 15th to 18th. After one at Church Norton on 4 Nov, the last was at Sidlesham Ferry on 1 Dec. [KN]

0502. **TEMMINCK'S STINT**

Calidris temminckii

Very scarce spring and autumn passage migrant.

Just one record, of an adult bird at Icklesham on 23 and 24 May (PJW). [SJP]

0507. **PECTORAL SANDPIPER**

Calidris melanotos

Rare vagrant, mainly in autumn.

Two were found on 6 Sept, at Snowhill, West Wittering (GAT), and at Cuckmere Haven (AFB, SJB *et al*). The latter, which frequented the usually unproductive wader scrape, remained to 12th. There have been 50 records in total, including 7 during the 1990s. Most are recorded from mid-July until mid-October, the last spring record being in May 1987. [RJF]

0509. **CURLEW SANDPIPER**

Calidris ferruginea

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

The monthly *Wetland Bird Survey*' counts accounted for a mere three birds, two in July (a summer-plumage bird at Rye Hbr on 20th and another singleton at Pilsey Island on 22nd), and a single bird in September, at Pett Levels on 21st. Fortunately, this was not the true picture, however.

The first record of the year was of a single bird on the mud-flats of Pagham Hbr on 13 May. There were no more signs of this species until another single was present at Icklesham on 30th of that month, a bird which remained until 1 June. Thereafter, there was a gap until 20 July, after which mainly single birds were recorded at a number of widely-spaced localities, exclusively on the coast, right through until the last bird of the year at Atherington, Climping, on 6 Oct.

Records of the species in double figures were unusual. A flock of no fewer than 20 birds were roosting on the beach at Elmer, near Middleton-on-Sea, on 17 Aug. The next gathering of note was a flock of 21 at Galley Hill, Bexhill, on 25th. Nine were at Pilsey Sands, Chichester Hbr, on 1 Sept, and 11 on the mud-flats of Pagham Hbr on 9th. A flock of 10, on the western side of Pagham Hbr on 12 Sept, were presumably the same birds. In the main, Pagham Hbr continued to attract the species in small numbers, with five and four being recorded at Sidlesham on 22 Sept and 25th, respectively. [BW]

0510. PURPLE SANDPIPER

Calidris maritima

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

Peak monthly counts, from west to east, were:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
Shoreham Hbr	1	7	5	1	-	-	-	-	-	2	6	4
Southwick	4	5	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Brighton Marina	9	7	7	8	8	-	2	-	1	6	9	9
Newhaven Hbr	8	9	11	-	3	-	-	-	-	-	6	9
Galley Hill, Bexhill	3	10	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Glyne Gap, Bexhill	-	6	9	9	6	-	-	-	-	-	8	7

The over-wintering population remained until late May, when the last bird was seen at Glyne Gap, Bexhill, on 18th. During the Jan to mid-May period, numbers varied, with the main parties remaining faithful to the traditional sites: Shoreham Hbr – 7 on 13 Feb; Southwick Beach – 4 on 10 Jan; Southwick Canal – 5 on 22 Feb; Brighton Marina – 9 on 28 Jan; Newhaven Hbr – 9 on 10 Feb; Galley Hill and Glyne Gap, Bexhill, – 10 on 25 Feb and 9 on 6 Mar, respectively. Maximum counts at Brighton Marina varied from the foregoing 9 birds on 28 Jan, to 7 on 14 Feb, 7 on 23 Mar, 8 on 27 Apr and 8 on 1 May. The numbers at Newhaven Hbr were very similar, with a peak there of 11 birds on 1 Mar.

The first returning birds were two, recorded at Brighton Marina on 11 July, with singletons at various locations thereafter until 6 were noted, again at Brighton Marina, on 18 Oct. Newhaven Hbr hosted 6 birds on 14 Nov and Brighton Marina had a party of 9 on the same date. Again, throughout the early autumn and winter, numbers centred mainly on the customary sites: Brighton Marina, Newhaven and Shoreham Hbrs, and at Glyne Gap, Bexhill, with maximum numbers of 9, 9, 6 and 8 respectively. Newhaven Tide Mills had 9 on 28 Dec.

Interesting isolated records included a single bird on a navigation beacon in Chichester Hbr on 29 Mar; one at Elmer, Middleton-on-Sea, on 17 Aug; another singleton at Selsey Bill on 30 Aug; one at Church Norton, Pagham Hbr, on 16 Oct; another at Selsey Bill on 10 Nov; and a solitary bird on the shingle spit at Pagham on 16 Nov. [LGH]

0512. **DUNLIN**

Calidris alpina

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

The *Wetland Bird Survey*' counts were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
<i>County totals</i>	24,760	22,665	8698	1094	1020	48	688	2900	603	10,335	21,221	17,457
Chichester Hbr	17,848	18,967	6679	163	868	13	463	1743	460	8595	15,629	13,723
Pagham Hbr	4868	2119	1703	883	103	32	210	1129	nc	1594	4918	2652
Lower Adur	985	438	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	47	41	370	200
Rye Hbr	122	82	74	45	47	3	2	9	67	95	71	370

Smaller numbers were also recorded at Weir Wood Res, Lower Ouse Valley, Arlington Res, Pevensey Levels, Glyne Gap, and Pulborough. Once again, Chichester Hbr had the majority of birds, 76.3%, while Pagham Hbr had 18.1% and other areas 5.6%. A particular monthly count is not often significant in isolation as the figures depend on factors such as the weather both here and abroad, and the presence of the recorder and Dunlin together at the same time. It is interesting, however, to note that the County average mean monthly figure of 15,105 for 1998 is very similar to the monthly average of 14,900 for the period 1974/94.

The table on the following page shows the larger figures from the 352 other records which originate from a total of 44 sites. Records in places close to each other have been collated and the highest figure appears in the table below. The areas treated in this way are Pagham Hbr, Rye, Pilsey and Shoreham.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
Pagham Hbr	500	-	-	850	-	4	126	100	20	700	-	500
Rye	400	400	60	45	46	5	20	80	47	65	70	770
Pilsey	16,000	18,000	5000	400	800	34	1500	3000	1000	8000	14,030	11,000
Shoreham	150	250	-	36	-	-	-	-	15	-	-	-
Crumbles GP	30	180	-	-	-	-	12	20	15	2	-	160
Icklesham	-	20	10	3	7	-	22	35	8	3	-	-

Substantial numbers which do not feature in the above table include the following: in January there were 500 at Kingston Gorse; 200 in the Lower Adur Valley, and 600 at Newhaven Tide Mills. In November, at Goring Gap, there were 150, and in the Lower

Adur Valley, 250. Smaller numbers of birds were recorded at Arlington; Barcombe; Bewl Water; Bexhill and Hastings; Camber Shore; Cuckoo Corner, Coombes; in the Lower Cuckmere Valley; Darwell Res; Elmer; at Ford in the Arun Valley; at Widewater, Lancing; and at Weir Wood Res.

Sea-Watch Records:

There were no records for June. At all sites, eastward migration was greatest in April/May, while the westward movement was greatest in November/December and in January, except at Selsey Bill which also had a peak in April. Worthing Beach and Splash Point, Seaford, were used quite often as roosting/resting places. Significant numbers in this respect included 260 roosting on the beach at Worthing in January, a number which increased to 676 in February. Again, in November and December, Worthing Beach hosted a roost of 80 and 60 birds, respectively.

	Jan		Feb		Mar		Apr		May		Oct		Nov		Dec	
	E	W	E	W	E	W	E	W	E	W	E	W	E	W	E	W
Selsey Bill	30	9	2	1	4	-	93	150	384	49	3	-	5	160	-	-
Worthing Beach	-	-	-	-	5	60	87	19	24	5	-	-	70	-	-	-
Brighton Marina	3	15	-	4	9	-	14	-	56	-	-	2	3	-	22	-
Seaford	65	13	-	-	47	4	18	6	76	*	-	-	6	3	31	27
Bexhill	5	17	-	2	6	1	41	1	13	-	2	2	6	3	-	-

* Eleven were observed moving north at Splash Point, Seaford, in May.

A considerable number of hours were spent sea-watching: Splash Point, Seaford (516hrs); Worthing Beach (163hrs); Selsey Bill (425hrs); Brighton Marina (262hrs) and Bexhill & Hastings (442hrs). [BW]

0517. RUFF

Philomachus pugnax

Scarce winter visitor and passage migrant.

The *Wetland Bird Survey*' counts were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
<i>County totals</i>	6	12	16	6	-	-	3	5	2	-	-	15
Chichester Hbr	4	9	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Pagham Hbr	1	-	-	-	-	-	2	4	nc	-	-	1
Amberley Brooks	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	10
Waltham Brooks	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-
Pulborough Brooks	1	3	16	2	-	-	1	-	2	-	-	4
Pett Level	-	-	-	4	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

Numbers within the county were generally lower than last year. In the early part of the year, 23 were at West Wittering on 19 Feb. Pulborough recorded a maximum of 12 in Jan and 18 in Feb. Rye LNR played host to 19 on 8 Mar.

In April, lekking was reported at Pulborough: 6 males and 8 females were involved. This activity continued into May, but no actual breeding was reported. Male birds were also recorded at Rye LNR on 30 Apr and 14 were at Sidlesham Ferry, Pagham Hbr, on 2 May. On the following day, the total number of birds at Sidlesham had reached a total of 15.

Numbers were small in July and August, and throughout September, too, with a

maximum of 5 birds at the Ferry Pool, Pagham Hbr, on 4th. October witnessed a rise in records, with 6 at Pulborough Brooks on 2nd and 9 on 22nd.

It was not until November that numbers in the County returned to double figures, with 12 at Pulborough on 6th: numbers increased to 29 on 7 Dec. [RPu]

0518. **JACK SNIPE**

Lymnocyptes minimus

Scarce winter visitor and passage migrant.

The minimum monthly totals were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	Oct	Nov	Dec
No. of Sites	16	3	2	5	6	1	6
No. of Birds	26	15	10	5	12	4	20

During the first winter period, a minimum of 35 birds were recorded from 19 localities. Numbers were well down on last year. This was probably due to the extremely cold weather at the beginning of the year, and the driest January for over 200 years. In January, 2 were at Rodmell Brooks on 2nd, 2 at Kings Barn Fm, Steyning, on 3rd, and 2 at Warnham LNR on 12th. Only one could be found at Thorney Deeps during the cold spell, then the number increased as milder weather returned, reaching 7 on 20th, with 2 at Glyne Gap Marsh, Bexhill, on 26th. Single birds were recorded at 11 other sites. In February, there were single birds at Wishing Tree Res and Pilsey Island on 2nd and 5th respectively. As milder and wetter conditions returned, numbers at Thorney Deeps reached a maximum of 13 on 20th. In March, records came from only two sites: one was observed at Pulborough Brooks on 1st, and there were 9 at Thorney Deeps on 5th. In April, the *WeBS'* count produced single birds at Amberley Wild Brooks and Pulborough Brooks, with further singletons at Sidlesham Ferry and Rye Hbr on 6th and 16th respectively. The last spring record was of a single bird at Thorney Deeps on 23 Apr.

During the second winter period, a minimum of 27 birds were recorded from 10 localities. The first returning birds were 2 at Icklesham on 12 Oct, and the following day a single was at Rye Hbr. In October, the *WeBS'* count produced a single bird at Coldwaltham Brooks, and there were 2 at Pett Level on 18th. One was observed at Pulborough Brooks on 21st, and 5 were at Thorney Deeps on 22nd. In November, records came from only one site, with 4 at Thorney Deeps on 4th and 11th. In December, 3 were at Crowborough Bog on 6th, 12 at Thorney Deeps on 12th, and 2 at Arundel WWT on 13th: single birds were recorded at 3 other sites.

At least 62 birds were recorded during the two winter periods from 25 localities. [CBC]

0519. **SNIPE**

Gallinago gallinago

Fairly common breeder and common winter visitor.

The *Wetland Bird Survey'* counts were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
<i>County totals</i>	76	171	262	174	12	-	-	24	60	378	449	502
Chichester Hbr	12	34	49	18	-	-	-	-	3	4	44	137
Arundel WWT	1	nc	-	4	-	-	nc	1	2	1	26	65
Amberley Brooks	5	10	7	27	9	-	-	3	1	-	51	6

Waltham Brooks	12	3	28	8	-	-	-	4	8	66	23	13
Pulborough Brooks	14	29	100	80	-	-	-	1	8	199	172	143
Lower Adur	-	55	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	-	-	-	-
Weir Wood Res	-	24	12	8	-	-	-	3	-	18	1	-
Lower Ouse	4	-	-	-	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	4	-	-
Glynde Levels	3	7	14	9	-	-	-	-	-	2	9	24
Eastbourne Lakes	-	6	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	4	45	54	53
Pevensey Levels	4	1	18	6	2	nc	nc	1	7	23	29	18
Pett Level	15	4	16	-	1	-	-	10	26	15	-	1
Rye Hbr	1	3	-	8	-	-	-	1	-	9	36	2

The cold weather at the start of the year produced some unusual records, including one bird feeding in a front garden at Bushy Green, Ringmer, on 4 Jan and at least 5 seen on the old Pontins Holiday Camp site at Selsey, on 3rd and 4th. Elsewhere, there were good counts from a number of sites that were not repeated in the rest of the year, namely 20 on the Steyning Levels on 1 Jan, 25 at Rodmell Brooks, 40 at Filsham Reedbeds and 20 at Cuckoo Corner, Coombes, all on 2nd. Apart from the *WeBS*' counts, the best numbers recorded in the first half of the year were 49 at Glyne Gap Marsh on 26 Jan, 102 on Thorney Deeps on 20 Feb and 34 at Pulborough Brooks on 1 Mar.

During the breeding season, records were received as follows: up to 3 males held territory on Ashdown Forest, and one was displaying at Combe Haven on 1 May. There were 2 breeding pairs at Amberley Wild Brooks and 6 pairs at Pulborough Brooks, counted by the RSPB on 1 June.

Numbers began to rise again in August, with 16 on Pett Levels on 15th and 14 at Icklesham on 26th. Thereafter, small numbers were recorded from many sites until the first large counts of 50 on 15 Oct, and 199 on 20th at Pulborough Brooks. Other notable autumn counts were 45 at Botolphs, near Bramber, on 26 Nov; 95 at Thorney Deeps on 12 Dec; 130 at Nep Town, Henfield, on 17th; 120 near the North Wall of Pagham Hbr on 23rd and, finally, 124 at Combe Haven on 29th. [AH]

0529. WOODCOCK

Scolopax rusticola

Fairly common resident and winter visitor.

More records of this species were reported in January than for some years past. On 1 Jan, 24 individuals were noted, including 11 in the Sheepcote Valley, Brighton. Eight were still at this site on 5th. One bird was found dead on the road at Little Common, Bexhill, on 5 Jan. At a variety of sites, records of up to three birds were recorded throughout the county for the rest of the month. Most of the smaller numbers in February were reported from Icklesham where there were 3 on 9 Feb. March produced 10 records, probably involving 10 individual birds.

Up to the middle of July, territorial displays were extensively reported from as many as 25 sites, with various Ashdown Forest locations recording the most. Breeding was confirmed at one site only, West Dean Woods, though this is undoubtedly an inaccurate picture of breeding success in Sussex in 1997. Ten were seen at Tortington, Arundel, on 28 May, and there was some roding among the 10 seen at Ambersham Common on 27 June.

Reports became spasmodic in the winter months ending what can be regarded as a

good year for the species. [DEC]

0532. **BLACK-TAILED GODWIT**

Limosa limosa

Common winter visitor and passage migrant. Small numbers summer.

The *Wetland Bird Survey*' counts were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
<i>County totals</i>	279	382	221	807	148	7	112	349	156	385	536	432
Chichester Hbr	259	343	123	265	83	1	61	323	149	379	464	398
Pagham Hbr	16	39	98	542	65	6	51	26	nc	-	46	33

On the first day of the year, Icklesham had a flock of 57, with two pairs showing prolonged display behaviour. Otherwise, January' figures were markedly lower than in 1996, with 4 in the Lower Adur Valley on 5th, and counts of 1 or 2 at 7 other sites. In February, Thorney Deeps had 300 on 9th, the North Wall, Pagham Hbr, 210 on 25th, and Manor Fm, Apuldram, 185 on 20th. The highest count for March was of 160 on the mud-flats along the western shore on 21st.

April had the first reported summer-plumaged birds, with 68 at the Ferry Pool, Sidlesham, on 16 Apr, all in breeding plumage. The highest counts for the month were of 178 in Pagham Hbr on 2nd, followed by Thorney Deeps with 150 on 8th and 130 in Fishbourne Channel on 17th.

Summer *WeBS*' counts were as follows:

	Apr	May	June	July	Aug
County Totals	807	148	7	112	349
Chichester Hbr	265	83	1	61	323
Pagham Hbr	542	65	6	51	26

The numbers at Icklesham remained high, with 16 on 1 June, a day maximum of 57 on 16th and 45 on 30th, while up to 45 were present throughout July. Other July' figures included day maxima for the Sidlesham area of 74 on 16th and 61 at Thorney Deeps on 21st. The flock at Icklesham was recorded on 19 days in August, with a day maximum of 20 on 10th.

Thorney Deeps, which had counts of 322 on 22 Aug, 262 on 1 Sept, 350 on 18th and 350 on 2 Oct, reported 4 colour-ringed birds for the autumn, 2 ringed at Farlington and 2 on the Wash.

As opposed to last year's inland records, there were no reports from Weir Wood and Arlington Res, although Pulborough Brooks had birds recorded on 7 days between 23 Feb and 28 Apr, all numbers were below 10, excepting for 90 on 14 Apr. The only other there was a single bird on 6 July. [JKI]

0534. **BAR-TAILED GODWIT***Limosa lapponica***Common winter visitor and passage migrant. A few summer.**The *Wetland Bird Survey*' counts were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
<i>County totals</i>	1076	1208	217	50	15	45	180	639	605	1099	796	706
Chichester Hbr	880	1100	216	10	7	-	156	637	605	1083	780	700
Pagham Hbr	196	106	-	39	3	-	-	1	nc	16	16	6
Pett Level	-	1	-	-	5	45	24	1	-	-	-	-

There were two birds at Newhaven Tide Mills on the first day of January, and there were reports from 12 other sites in that month. These included a summer-plumaged bird at Pilsey Sands on 7 Jan, where there were 850 birds on 11th, together with 110 on the Pagham Hbr mud-flats on 14th. Pilsey sands had 800 on 8 Feb and 166 on 8 Mar.

There was no sea-movement of any consequence reported in March, but movement started in April, with Brighton Marina reporting a passage of 1573 in 4hrs and Splash Point, Seaford, a total of 1268 in 4.5hrs, both on 21 Apr. Monthly spring sea-watching totals for birds moving east and seen from principal stations were as follows:

	Apr	May	Total	No. per hr
Selsey Bill	110	89	199	0.8
Worthing Beach	95	54	149	1.6
Splash Point, Seaford	2055	157	2212	8.7
Brighton Marina	1857	157	2014	17.0
Bexhill & Hastings	630	63	693	5.5

Summer *WeBS*' counts showed 156 for July and 637 for August in Chichester Hbr. Pilsey sands reported 200 birds on 28 July and 350W on 9 Aug, and 450W on 3 Oct. December had a number of singles reported, from Pagham (two sites), Pett Level Pools, Rye Hbr, Cuckmere Haven and on the Adur, at Shoreham.

Finally, there were 5 birds on the fields behind the North Wall of Pagham Hbr on 20 Dec and 30 in the Harbour on 30th. [JKI]

0538. **WHIMBREL***Numenius phaeopus***Common passage migrant; a very scarce summering and wintering species.**The *Wetland Bird Survey*' counts were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
<i>County totals</i>	1	3	2	16	378	13	152	54	3	6	3	1
Chichester Hbr	-	2	1	13	172	10	110	44	3	4	1	-
Pagham Hbr	1	1	1	3	130	3	41	9	nc	1	2	1
Amberley Brooks	-	-	-	-	24	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Rye Hbr	-	-	-	-	43	-	1	1	-	1	-	-

As the table shows, numbers of wintering birds in the early part of the year were low. Spring migration began on 11 Mar with 2E at Brighton Marina. By mid-April, migration was well under way, with small numbers of birds being seen at coastal sites. There was a notable count of 122 at Thorney Deeps on 7 Apr. Highest passage counts for the month included 345E at Selsey Bill in 3.5 hrs on 21 Apr and a further 52E at the same site on 26th. At Splash Point, there were 40E on 26 Apr. A party of 69 roosted at Rye LNR on 21 Apr.

Movement continued throughout May, with 123E at Brighton Marina on the 1st, 44E at Selsey Bill on the 2nd, and 65E at Splash Point, Seaford, in 6.75 hrs on 4th. The month of May also featured 230 roosting at Rye LNR, on 2nd and 195 at the North Wall, Pagham Hbr, on 6th.

Numbers of birds were reported during the early summer, with 340 at Pilsey Island on 22 June and 128 at Thorney Deeps on 23rd: this site also recorded 239 birds on 21 July. As the summer progressed, so numbers decreased. On 8 Aug, 28 were at Icklesham and 36 on the Pagham intertidals on 5th. Overall numbers appear to be down on last year, however. The end of the year was typical, with just a few birds seen during the autumn. The only notable count was 18 at Littlehampton Marina on 1 Sept. [RPu]

0541. **CURLEW***Numenius arquata***Formerly a very scarce breeder; common passage migrant and winter visitor.**The *Wetland Bird Survey*' counts were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
<i>County totals</i>	738	1581	1444	1095	206	757	2366	1675	1596	1990	1138	2202
Chichester Hbr	389	451	719	749	204	663	1745	1258	1432	1474	748	1433
Pagham Hbr	206	399	568	330	1	87	612	360	nc	214	143	427
Newhaven	44	15	2	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	-	nc	18	39
Pett Level	63	623	1	11	-	7	8	43	110	234	177	290
Rye Hbr	33	46	152	5	-	-	1	14	45	67	42	11

In addition to the foregoing *WeBS*' figures, counts were made at four of the principal sea-watching sites:

	Feb	Mar	Apr	May
Bexhill & Hastings	4W	119E & 2W	51E & 2W	10E
Brighton Marina	-	13E & 1W	8E	11E
Seaford	6E & 1W	45E & 5W	53E & 2W	6E
Worthing	-	5E	24E & 3W	1E & 4W

Maximum counts were 45E at Bexhill and Hastings on 8 Mar, and 19E at Seaford on 9 Apr. Other movements reported during the year, included 12W and 4E at Brighton Marina on 4 Jan, 50SW at Beddingham on 19th, and 26E at Selsey Bill on 31 Mar. There was a small westerly movement in late June, with 5W at Brighton Marina on 21st, 15W at Worthing on 28th and, later, 6W at Bexhill and Hastings on 3 Aug.

January reports included 200 at Icklesham on 1st, 713 at dusk at Rye Hbr on 27th, whilst February yielded an unprecedented 44 in the Lower Cuckmere Valley on 6th, reducing to 30 by 15th. There were also 170 in the meadows behind the North Wall, Pagham Hbr, on 5 Feb, a dusk count of 180 roosting at Rye Hbr SSSI on 10 Feb and 220 at Manor Fm, Apuldram, on 20th, followed by 110 behind the North Wall, Pagham Hbr, on 21 Mar. After a count of 200 at South Stakes Island on 4 Apr, numbers decreased until the return of migrating birds. The main counts at Chichester and Pagham Hbrs, reflecting the migratory influx after the breeding season, are shown in the table on the following page:

South Stakes Island		Thorney Deepes		Pagham Hbr Intertidals	
24 June	270	23 Aug	600	28 June	170
4 July	550	18 Sept	600	8 July	403
7 July	769	2 Oct	250	29 July	550
7 Aug	800	-	-	21 Aug	420

Other autumn records included 117 at dusk at Rye Hbr SSSI on 31 Aug, c200 flying from wet meadows at Honer Fm on 16 Sept, and 150 over the North Wall, Pagham Hbr, on 23rd. In October, there were 450 at Pilsey Island on 18th, 120 at Pett Level on 26th, and 250 at Beckley on 31st. Counts in November, included 260 roosting at Rye Hbr SSSI on 2 Nov, 85 at Manor Fm, Apuldram, on 22nd, 150 at Pett Level on 25th, and 515 at Rye Hbr SSSI on 30th. December yielded 339 roosting in fields at Pett Level on 12th, 400 at Rye Hbr SSSI on 21st, c100 at Honer Fm, Pagham Hbr, on 30th, and, finally, 50 at Atherington on 31st.

Inland records of birds north of the South Downs included 6 at Bines Bridge, Ashurst, on 2 Jan, 5 flying S at Bewl Water on 3rd, 3 at Weir Wood Res on 8th, 2 at Stretham Manor, Henfield, on 11th, 2 at Brighthams Fm, Partridge Green, on 16th, and 5 at Arlington Res on 4 Feb. Pulborough Brooks recorded single birds in January, February and May, 2 in March and 6 on 18 Dec. There was also a single bird at Weir Wood Res in May. [JLN]

0545. SPOTTED REDSHANK

Tringa erythropus

Scarce passage migrant and winter visitor.

The approximate monthly totals were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
<i>County totals</i>	7	6	9	11	6	1	4	9	7	14	9	6
Chichester Hbr	3	2	3	3	2	-	1	1	-	4	2	2
Pagham Hbr	2	1	3	3	1	-	1	4	3	3	2	3
Rye Hbr	1	1	1	-	-	1	1	-	-	2	2	1
Icklesham	-	-	-	2	-	-	1	2	2	-	1	-

During the first winter period, all the records came from the western Harbours, except for single birds seen intermittently at Rye Hbr from 24 Jan until 9 Mar, and at Newhaven

Tide Mills where a lone bird, present from 1 Jan to 3 Mar, was joined briefly by a second on 15 Feb. The *WeBS*' count produced a single at Pett Level on 8 Mar.

Spring passage commenced with 3 at both Thorney Deeps and Pagham Hbr on 22 and 28 Mar, respectively. In April, a single was observed at Pilsey Island on 12th, and 2 remained at Thorney Deeps throughout the month, with another 2 at Icklesham on 20th and 30th. A single was at Pevensey Hooe Level on 21st and 3 were at Pagham Hbr on 24th. The only inland record was of 2 at Pulborough Brooks on 7 and 22 Apr, with one remaining until 3 May. Two were at Thorney Deeps and one at Combe Haven on 1 May. The last spring records were of single birds at Pevensey Hooe Level and Pagham Hbr on 5 and 10 May respectively.

Autumn passage began with single birds observed at Rye Hbr on 19 and 24 June, and another at Icklesham on 5 July. In August, 4 were at Sidlesham Ferry on 11th, with 2 at Icklesham from 20th until 26th. September' records featured 2 at Pett Level on 18th, 2 at Icklesham on 19th and 20th, and 3 at Sidlesham Ferry on 30th. In October, a single was observed at Cuckmere Haven on 4th, with 3 at Pett Level on 10th, and 2 at Snowhill, West Wittering, on 18th. Two remained at Thorney Deeps throughout the month, and the *WeBS*' count produced 3 at Pagham Hbr on 18th. Two were at Rye Hbr on 30th. The only autumn inland record was of a single bird at Bewl Water on 23 Oct. Autumn sea-watching produced 1W at Galley Hill, Bexhill, on 3 Aug.

During the second winter period, the *WeBS*' counts produced 2 at each of the following sites: Pagham Hbr, Pett Level and Rye Hbr on 16 Nov. Two remained at Thorney Deeps throughout November and December, and 3 were at Pagham Hbr on 31 Dec. [CBC]

0546. REDSHANK

Tringa totanus

Fairly common resident, passage migrant and winter visitor.

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

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
<i>County totals</i>	1457	1390	2039	930	226	434	1296	1671	1836	2517	2155	2063
Chichester Hbr	805	789	1442	355	104	289	1013	1286	1568	1761	1231	1267
Pagham Hbr	402	237	380	265	36	56	188	212	nc	424	479	442
Amberley Brooks	-	-	13	8	3	28	-	-	-	-	-	-
Pulborough Brooks	-	-	-	46	19	2	-	-	-	-	-	-
Lower Adur	139	169	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	82	117	202	94
Pett Level	48	107	102	115	22	20	13	29	22	26	31	45
Rye Hbr	3	18	41	82	18	15	82	144	139	141	136	159

Concentrations of more than 100 birds were reported at some sites. Pagham Hbr featured 200 on 29 Jan and 300 on 7 Feb. The figures for Thorney Deeps include 232 on 7 Apr, 260 on 24 June, 700 on 8 July, 1000 on 8 Aug, 800 on 17 Sept, and 1000 on 15 Oct. At Newhaven, there were 145 on 16 Nov. Other counts in the eastern part of the County revealed 104 at Rye Saltings on 21 Sept, 120 on 19 Oct, 107 on 16 Nov, and 139 on 14 Dec.

Breeding records of 76 pairs were received from the following sites. At Chichester Hbr, counts revealed 14 pairs at Thorney Deeps, 4 pairs at Thorney Island, 2 pairs at Pilsey Island, 2 pairs at Cobnor Cottage, 2 pairs at Snowhill, West Wittering, and 1 pair at Ellanore. There were 21 pairs at Pulborough Brooks. Three pairs raised 7 young at

Coldwaltham Brooks.

In the east, there were 6 pairs at Glynde Levels, about 10 pairs at Icklesham and 11 pairs at Rye Hbr. There were also 5 birds at Henfield Levels in May.

Although principally a coastal bird in Sussex, there were several records inland away from the breeding sites: at Bewl Water, 1 on 28 Mar, 1 on 11 Sept and 3 on 21st; at Arlington Res, 1 associating with Common Sandpipers on 27 Apr, and 1 on 3 June; and at Weir Wood Res, 2 on 22 June. [BJY]

0547. **MARSH SANDPIPER**

Tringa stagnatilis

Very rare vagrant.

One, initially seen at Icklesham and then at Pett Pools, on 11 Aug (PT), has been accepted by *British Birds*. It is the 12th to be recorded in the County. The species has now been recorded in all months between April and September. This is the second record for the month of August. [LGH]

0548. **GREENSHANK**

Tringa nebularia

Fairly common passage migrant; a few winter.

The approximate minimum monthly totals were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
<i>County totals</i>	11	8	9	30	50	7	141	236	193	149	39	16
Chichester Hbr	9	7	8	20	23	2	109	165	152	133	36	16
Pagham Hbr	-	-	1	3	4	2	15	18	14	11	1	-
Rye Hbr	-	-	-	1	3	-	3	9	2	2	1	-
Icklesham	-	-	-	2	2	1	5	11	-	-	-	-

During the first winter period, all the records were from Chichester Hbr, except for single birds at Newhaven Tide Mills from 1 Jan until 16 Feb, at Splash Point, Seaford, on 20 Jan, and in Pagham Hbr on 29 Mar.

Spring passage was once again particularly heavy at Thorney Deeps, and numbers built up in April, with 13 on 22nd, increasing to 20 on 27th, and a maximum of 23 on 1 May. There were 18 present on 8th, falling rapidly to 3 on 21st, with one remaining until 25th. Other notable records were of 3 at Rye Hbr and 4 at Pagham Hbr on 2 and 13 May respectively.

Inland records were of a single bird at Pulborough Brooks on 22 Apr, increasing to 6 on 3 May, with one remaining until 9th. On 2 May, a single bird was at Lewes Brooks and there were 2 at Barcombe Res, with another single at Coldwaltham Brooks on 1 June. The last spring record was of a single bird at Chichester GPs on 7 June.

Spring sea-watches produced 3 records: 1E at Worthing Beach, 4E at Brighton Marina, and 4E at Hastings and Bexhill, all on 2 May. The birds at Brighton and Hastings/Bexhill were probably same individuals.

Autumn passage commenced with 2 at Thorney Deeps on 17 June, followed by single birds at Sidlesham Ferry and Icklesham on 23 and 28 June respectively. Passage numbers built up rapidly in July, and counts at Thorney Deeps included 21 on 8th, 97 on 21st, increasing to 124 on 2 Aug, with a maximum of 165 on 24th, falling to 138 on 1 Sept.

Juveniles arriving from the breeding grounds swelled the numbers which peaked at 152 on 16 Sept. In October, there were 133 on 2nd: this is the largest October flock ever recorded in the County. The previous highest October count at this site was of 119 on 9 Oct 1994 and 115 on 5 Oct 1991 (CBC). Thereafter, the number fell rapidly to 50 on 17 Oct, 24 on 3 Nov, and 14 on 1 Dec.

Three colour-ringed birds were observed at Thorney Deepes during the autumn. Fourteen colour-ringed birds have now been recorded at this site since 1995-97. They have all been ringed at Farlington Marshes.

Other notable records were of 18 at Pagham Hbr on 7 Aug. A flock of 29 roosting at Pilsley Sands on 11 Aug was unusual for this site: they were constantly calling with great excitement, as if preparing to move to warmer climes. Nine were at Rye Hbr on 24 Aug, with 11 at Icklesham on 27th. Fourteen were at Pagham Hbr and 12 at Snowhill, West Wittering, on 10 and 19 Sept, respectively.

Inland autumn records of note were 3 at Coldwaltham Brooks on 21 Aug, 5 at Bewl Water on 31st, 3 at Weir Wood Res on 11 Sept, and 8 at Darwell Res on 21st.

Autumn sea-watches produced 4E at Hastings and Bexhill on 7 Aug, 2W at Worthing Beach on 27 Aug, and 1E at the latter site on 31 Aug. In the November/December period, records away from the western Harbours were of single birds at Rye Hbr on 1 and 9 Nov. One flew over the old airstrip, at Ashdown, on 10 Nov. [CBC]

553. **GREEN SANDPIPER**

Tringa ochropus

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

The *Wetland Bird Survey*' counts were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
<i>County totals</i>	3	10	4	2	-	2	6	29	19	13	10	6
Chichester Hbr	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	4	4	-	-	-
Pagham Hbr	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	nc	-	-	-
Chichester GPs	-	-	3	-	-	-	1	9	-	-	-	2
Burton MP	-	-	-	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	4	-	-	-
Arundel WWT	-	nc	-	1	-	-	nc	2	3	-	-	-
Bury Brooks	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Pulborough Brooks	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	4	-	-	-	-
Steyning Levels	nc	2	-	nc	-	-	-	nc	-	-	-	-
Henfield Brooks	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-
Gravetye Lakes	-	-	-	-	nc	nc	nc	nc	-	1	-	-
Weir Wood Res	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-
Barcombe Res	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	2
Pevensey Levels	-	8	1	-	nc	nc	nc	-	1	3	3	4
Darwell Res	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	1	-	nc	-
Pett Level	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	2	1	3	-
Rye Hbr	-	-	-	-	-	2	2	5	5	8	2	1

Figures extracted from daily records suggest minimum monthly numbers as follows:

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
34	26	27	32	6	10	45	80	46	21	30	15

The monthly totals generally show small increases over those for 1996. Records were

received throughout the year, with the largest gap between any two consecutive records being a mere 17 days, 27 May – 12 June. Records for January came mostly from the coastal strip or from the river valleys, with counts of 4 in the Steyning area, 3 at Lewes Brooks at the start of the month and 4 at Chichester GPs on 23 Jan. February records were of single birds, except for 3 on the Upper Adur Levels on 6th, and 2 at five sites on four other days. Chichester GPs scored 5 on 16 Mar and 6 on 28 Mar, whilst 3 were seen on Henfield Levels (on 2nd) and at Lumley, near Emsworth, (on 23rd). In April, sightings were spread right across Sussex, from the Chichester GPs (a notable maximum of 10 birds on 5th) and Sidlesham in the west, to Rye Hbr in the east. Most other records were of 1 or 2 birds, though 3 were at Castle Water, Rye LNR, on 13th.

Eight records from 5 sites were received in May, all singles except for 2 at Barcombe Res on 2nd. Four at Drayton Pit, Chichester GPs, on 28 June, was the largest for the month, preceded by 3 at Castle Water on 17th. By July, numbers had increased significantly, with the pits in the Chichester GPs complex being the most favoured sites, a count of 14 on 12 July being the largest. Records from well inland came from Weir Wood Res and Bewl Water, while counts of 6 were recorded at Sidlesham Ferry (on 13th) and Icklesham (on 30th). Rye LNR topped the count list in August, with 13 at Castle Water on 18th, while Drayton Pit at Chichester had 11 on 16th. Ten records of more than 7 birds at a site were received, including a flock of 7 seen flying south at Coldwaltham Brooks on 25th. A snapshot of the distribution of birds in August obtained from the summer *Wetland Bird Survey* showed 4 in Chichester Hbr, 9 at Chichester GPs, 2 at Arundel WWT, 4 on Pulborough Brooks, 2 at Darwell Res, 3 on Pett Level and 5 at Rye Hbr. Chichester GPs and Rye Hbr continued to be favourite sites in September, with maxima of 8 (on 9th) and 6 (at Drayton Pit on 5th), respectively. Counts of 6 came also from Thorney Deeps (on 4th) and at the Royal Military Canal, Pett (on 10th). The Union Canal at East Guldeford was top site in October, with 6 on 19th. Two records from Selsey on 31 Oct may relate to the same birds – 3 in a ditch on the West Fields and 4 on West Beach. Eight on the Upper Adur Levels on 17 Nov was the last sizeable count of the year and, indeed, the penultimate one of the year from the west of the County since in December only 2 at Nep Town, Henfield, on 17th, featured among the 14 records received. All those in East Sussex were of single birds, apart from 2 at Barcombe Res on 14 and 23 Dec. [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	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov
1	2	5	7	27	10	2	1

Apart from records from RSPB Pulborough Brooks, Coldwaltham Brooks and Weir Wood Res, observers only located birds at sites within 5 miles of the coast. The first sighting of the year was at Pulborough Brooks on 30 Apr (*cf* 10 Apr in 1996, at the same site), followed by one at Icklesham on 3 May. Drayton Pit, Chichester GPs, was the only other location where this species was noted in May – 1 bird on 31st.

A bird in summer plumage, seen at the Ferry Pool, Sidlesham, on 23 June (LGH), may have been either a late bird moving north, or an early south-bound individual. Three were on the West Fields at Cuckmere Haven and 1 at Icklesham on 29th.

In July, birds were recorded on 9 dates, all singles except 2 at Sidlesham Ferry on 12th and at Icklesham on 31st. As is the general pattern, August was the most productive month, with reports for every day. Birds were present at Icklesham throughout the month, with a maximum of 8 on 15th. It is difficult to assess just how many individual birds were involved, with possible movement from time to time to the nearby Pett Level and Pools, where there were sightings on 14 days in August, and with a maximum of 3 birds on 16th. Birds were seen at several locations within the Rye SSSI area, whilst in West Sussex two were at Coldwaltham Brooks on 9 Aug, and sightings of single birds were reported from the Pagham Hbr area (at 3 locations), RSPB Pulborough Brooks, Thorney Deeps and Chichester Hbr.

During September, a maximum of 3 was recorded at Coldwaltham Brooks on 17th and 20th; and two each at Thorney Deeps and Pett Level Pools on 4th and 12th, respectively. By far the most inland site to be host to this species (as in 1996) was Weir Wood Res where 2 were present on 3 Oct. The latest ever record for Sussex was a bird feeding around pools on water-logged pastures at Pett Level on 16 Nov (PT). [MJM]

0556. **COMMON SANDPIPER**

Actitis hypoleucos

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

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

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
<i>County totals</i>	1	1	-	1	7	1	58	107	25	2	1	1
Chichester Hbr	-	1	-	1	1	-	16	28	5	2	1	1
Pagham Hbr	-	-	-	-	2	-	9	14	nc	-	-	-
Chichester GPs	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	2	-	-	-
Arundel WWT	-	nc	-	-	-	-	nc	6	-	-	-	-
Steyning Levels	nc	-	-	nc	-	-	5	nc	-	-	-	-
Ardingly Res	-	-	-	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	2	-	-	-
Arlington Res	-	-	-	-	2	-	6	5	1	-	-	-
Cuckmere Hvn	-	-	-	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	2	-	-	-
Eastbourne Lakes	-	-	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	2	-	-	-
Bewl Water	-	-	-	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	4	-	-	-
Darwell Res	-	-	-	-	1	-	3	3	2	-	nc	-
Powdermill Res	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-
Pett Level	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	10	2	-	-	-
Rye Hbr	-	-	-	-	1	1	14	25	-	-	-	-

In January, single wintering birds were seen at Emsworth on 1st, Shoreham on 5th, Rye on 10th and 12th, Ford on 25th and Thorney Deeps on 27th. Two were seen at Thorney on 11 Feb, perhaps the Emsworth and Thorney birds from January. They were seen again together at Thorney on 1 Mar.

Two birds were seen at Pulborough Brooks on 16 Mar, perhaps too early for spring migrants. One was at Coldwaltham Brooks on 28th, surely a first for spring, but, as this was so close to Pulborough, could it have been one of the earlier two? The next to appear was also at Pulborough on 8 Apr followed by one at Weir Wood Res on 9th and

Kneppmill Pond on 15th. Singles appeared every few days until the end of the month, with 3 at Sidlesham on 27th and 3 at Piddinghoe on 28th. As usual, sites were widespread in May, but numbers were small at each, mainly singles, but with 4 at Bewl Water on 3rd, 5 at Harcombe on 5th and 7 at Arlington Res on 15th.

The first returning bird was on 22 June at Rye, followed by at least 2 at Sidlesham on 1 July, increasing to 15 by 16th. From that point, many records were received over a widespread area, and contrary to last year, groups were larger giving greater overall figures for both July and August. Notable figures were 15 on 26 July in the Lower Ouse Valley, 27 at Pagham Hbr on the 31st, 18 at Brighton Marina on 6 Aug and 50 along a 4-mile stretch of the River Arun between Littlehampton and Arundel on 9 Aug. Thorney Deepes had 15 on 11 Aug, rising to 26 on 22nd. Numbers tailed off in September and October, and by December there was just 1 wintering bird at Thorney on 4th, 2 at Ford on 26th and 1 near Rodmell, on the River Ouse, on 28th. [DEGC]

0561. **TURNSTONE**

Arenaria interpres

Fairly common winter visitor and passage migrant. Scarce in summer.

The *Wetland Bird Survey*' counts were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
<i>County totals</i>	627	302	503	317	288	37	89	416	268	467	591	599
Chichester Hbr	152	133	192	123	229	6	21	120	68	99	51	78
Pagham Hbr	281	102	181	134	44	29	66	232	nc	170	244	320
Climping	46	10	32	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	1	14	3	1
Lower Adur	38	3	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	14	14	25	25
Glyne Gap	102	nc	72	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	125	114	200	116
Pett Level	-	48	3	60	-	-	1	42	50	45	50	37
Rye Hbr	1	-	9	-	15	2	1	22	4	1	1	-

In January, apart from 100 reported at Pett Level Pools on 13 Jan, the most interesting records were from Selsey Bill, and Hastings and Bexhill. Selsey Bill had a month' total of 202 birds in 12.75hrs of sea-watching, with 119E and 83W and a maximum of 110 on 20 Jan. Bexhill and Hastings' observers reported 282 beach sightings in 33.25hrs (maxima of 91 on 19 and 26 Jan). There was no apparent relationship between weather conditions and the numbers on the beach at this last site.

Figures for easterly coastal movements showed that Selsey Bill's April and May total of 248 moved at a rate of 0.9 birds per hr, while Bexhill and Hastings' 170 birds had a passage rate of 1.3 per hr for the same period.

Counts at selected sites during the months of April – August were as follows:

	Apr	May	June	July	Aug
<i>County Totals</i>	317	288	37	89	416
Chichester Hbr	123	229	6	21	120

Pagham Hbr	134	44	29	66	232
Pett Level	60	-	-	1	42
Rye Hbr	-	15	2	1	22

In the autumn, Pett Level Pools reported 60 birds on 10 and 21 Sept, but there was little indication of an established westerly movement until October when Selsey Bill had 44W against 5E in its monthly total, followed by 143W and 2E in the November total. Other records of interest include 50 on Littlehampton Beach on 18 Oct, 88 at Pilsey Island on 17 Nov, and 97 at Galley Hill, Bexhill, on 25th, when birds were bathing in fresh rain-water pools. On 25 Dec, 101 birds were seen on the beach at Bexhill and Hastings in 1.5hrs, while 12 flew west during that time, all as part of the 206 month's total for that site. [JKI]

0565. **GREY PHALAROPE**

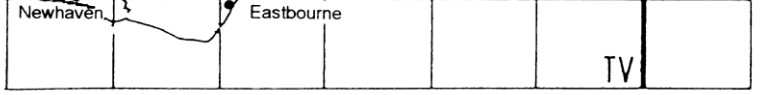
Phalaropus fulicarius

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

1994: A belated record brings the total reported for the year to 3. A first-winter bird was at South Heighton from 11-13 Sept (CAH *et al*). A photograph of this bird appeared in SxBR47.

1997: A first-winter bird was present at East Head, West Wittering, from 2-9 Sept (TJE). This was the poorest showing since 1993. [SJP]

Amberley Wild Brooks	TQ 0314	Camber Sands	TQ 9618	Filsham	TQ 7709
Ardingly Reservoir	TQ 3229	Castle Hill	TQ 3707	Firle	TQ 4706
Arlington Reservoir	TQ 5307	Chailey Common	TQ 3821	Fishbourne Channel	SU 8303
Arundel WWTF/Park	TQ 0208	Chalvington	TQ 5209	Flatropers Wood	TQ 8623
Ashcombe Bottom/Fm	TQ 3711	Chanctonbury Ring	TQ 1312	Fore Wood	TQ 7513
Ashdown Forest	TQ 42/43	Charleston Reedbed	TQ 5100	Friars Gate	TQ 4932
Balcombe	TQ 3130	Chichester Gravel Pits	SU 8703	Friston Forest	TV 5499
Balmer Down	TQ 3610	Chichester Harbour	SU7600	Glynde Levels	TQ 4609
Balsdean	TQ 3704	Chidham	SU 7903	Glyne Gap	TQ 7607
Barcombe	TQ 4314	Church Norton	SZ 8795	Goring Gap	TQ 1001
Reservoir/Mills					
Barnhorn Level, Hooe	TQ 6908	Chyngton Fm	TV 5098	Gravetye Manor	TQ 3634
Beachy Head	TV 5995	Cissbury Ring	TQ 1408	Greatham Bridge	TQ 0316
Beckley Woods	TQ 8622	Climping	TQ 0000	Henfield Brooks	TQ 2014
Belle Tout	TV 5695	Cobnor Point/Fm	SU 7901	Hodcombe	TV 5795
Bewl Water	TQ 6732	Cold Coombes, Kingston	TQ 3707	Hollingbury Camp/GC	TQ 3207
Birling Gap	TV 5596	Coldwaltham Brooks	TQ 0215	Hooe Level	TQ 6706
Bluebell Railway	TQ 4023	Combe Haven	TQ 77091	Horse Eye Level	TQ 6109
Bosham Channel	SU 7902	Cuckmere Haven	TV 5197	Houghton Bridge	TQ 0211
Bostal Hill, nr Berwick	TQ 4904	Darwell Reservoir	TQ 7121	Hurstpierpoint	TQ 2716
Bracklesham Bay	SZ 8294	Dell Quay	SU 8302	Icklesham	TQ 8815
Brede Levels	TQ 8417	Ditchling Beacon	TQ 3313	Ifield Mill Pond	TQ 2436
Broadwater	TQ 1404	East Dean	TV 5597	Iping Common	SU 8421
Brooklands, Worthing	TQ 1703	East Guldeford Level	TQ 9421	Isle of Thorns	TQ 4230
Broomhill Level	TQ 9818	East Head	SZ 7699	Ivy Lake	SU 8703
Buchan Park	TQ 2433	Ebernoe Common	SU 9726	Jury's Gap	TQ 9818
Bullock Hill	TQ 3606	Exceat Bridge	TV 5199	Kingley Vale	SU 8210
Bulverhythe	TQ 7708	Fairlight	TQ 8611	Kingston Hill	TQ 3807
Burton Mill Pond	SU 9717	Faygate	TQ 2134	Knepp Lake	TQ 1521



TQ 6401 Pevensey Bridge Level TQ 6607 Thorney Deeps SU 7503

Langley Point					
Lavington Common	SU 9418	Pevensey Levels	TQ 6408	Thorney Island	SU 7503
Lewes Brooks	TQ 4207	Piddinghoe	TQ 4302	Tilgate Forest	TQ 2632
Lower Cuckmere	TV 5198	Pilsey Island	SU 7700	Tillingham Valley	TQ 8519
Lullington Heath	TQ 5401	Pippingford Park	TQ 4431	Union Channel	TQ 9322
Lurgashall	SU 9327	Plumpton Plain	TQ 3612	Upper Beeding	TQ 2010
Malling Down	TQ 4211	Powdermill Reservoir	TQ 7919	Wakehurst Place	TQ 3331
Maynard's Green	TQ 5818	Printed	SU 7605	Waltham Brooks	TQ 0215
Midrips	TR 0018	Pulborough Brooks	TQ 0517	Warnham MP/LNR	TQ 1732
Mill Hill, Shoreham	TQ 2107	Rother Levels	TQ 8527	Weir Wood Reservoir	TQ 3934
Money Penny Gravel Pit	TQ 9420	Rye Harbour	TQ 9318	West Chiltington	TQ 0717
Moulsecomb Wild Park	TQ 3207	Scotney Court Gravel Pit	TR 0119	West Dean	TV 5299
Mount Harry	TQ 3812	Seaford Head	TV 4997	Westhampnett GP	SU 8805
Nap Wood	TQ 5832	Selsey Bill	SZ 8592	West Itchenor	SU 7901
Newhaven Tide Mills	TQ 4500	Seven Sisters Country Park	TV 5298	West Wittering	SZ 7798
Newmarket Hill	TQ 3607	Shillinglee Mill Pond	SU 9632	Whitbread Hollow	TV 5996
Normans Bay	TQ 6805	Sidlesham Ferry	SZ 8596	Widewater	TQ 2004
Northpoint Gravel Pit	TQ 9319	Sompting Brooks	TQ 1604	Wiggonholt Common	TQ 0516
Nutbourne Marsh	SU 7704	Sovereign Harbour Marina	TQ6403	Winchelsea Beach	TQ 9115
Old Lodge Reserve	TQ 4530	Splash Point, Seaford	TV 4898	Wishing Tree Reservoir	TQ7810
Pagham Harbour	SZ 8796	St. Leonards Forest	TQ 2230	Woodingdean	TQ 3705
Pagham Lagoon	SZ 8896	St Leonards on Sea	TQ 7908	Woods Mill	TQ 2113
Pebsham	TQ 7609	Strivens Reedbed	TQ 1811	Woolbeding Common	SU 8625
Pett Level	TQ 9015	Swanbourne Lake	TQ 0107	Worth Forest	TQ 3034
Pett Pools	TQ 9014	The Mens	TQ 0223		
Petworth Park	SU 9722	The Severals	SZ 8794		

The grid references given are intended as a guide only to finding the sites and are not necessarily where a species was observed.

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 19 in April and 156 in May (estimated as for Arctic Skua) were seen along the coast, giving a spring total which is just below the 1988-1996 average of 189 for these months. The first were singles flying E off Brighton Marina and Splash Point, Seaford, on 24 Apr. Next day, 16 flew E at the former site. Light SE winds on 2 May brought about a sizeable easterly passage with 107 (in 15.75hrs) at Selsey Bill, 25 (in one flock) at Worthing Beach, 48 (in 6.25hrs) at Brighton Marina, 87 (in 13hrs) at Newhaven, 61 (in 8hrs) at Splash Point, Seaford, 5 at Hope Gap, Seaford, 8 off Cuckmere Haven and 5 (in 2.75hrs) at Bexhill and Hastings.

Other notable records during May included 9E off Selsey Bill on 3rd, 12E at Splash Point, Seaford, on 5th and 7E at the latter site on 11th.

A juvenile flew W off Church Norton on 7 Oct (TJE), another flew E at Splash Point, Seaford, on 9 Oct (BRG) and yet another was on the beach at Cow Gap, Beachy Head, on 18 Oct (RJF). [SHL]

0567. **ARCTIC SKUA***Stercorarius parasiticus*

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

An annual total of 346 assumes that birds seen on consecutive days were different. The total is based on minimum daily figures from along the coast and the larger count (*either* E or W) when birds were recorded flying in both directions on a date. Monthly totals were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun ^e	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
Birds	-	-	2	90	132	8	5	57	30	16	5	1
Dates	-	-	3	21	22	7	4	11	17	11	5	3

This species was seen off-shore on nearly a third of the days during the year. April and May are the most likely months to see one.

None were seen until a dark phase bird was on the beach at Cuckmere Haven on 11 Mar. Perhaps the same bird was present at Newhaven Tide Mills, on 13 Mar. The only other March sighting was of one which flew E off Bexhill and Hastings on 29th. Spring sea passage E up the Channel was unspectacular, with the largest daily totals being 18 off Splash Point, Seaford, on 27 Apr, 16 there on both 10 and 11 May and 16 off Newhaven on 2 May. Totals of birds flying E at the major sea-watching sites were :

	Apr	May	No. per hr watched
Selsey Bill	38	78	0.45
Worthing Beach	5	17	0.24
Brighton Marina	38	64	0.87
Splash Point, Seaford	64	88	0.60
Bexhill and Hastings	14	12	0.21

Additionally, there were 5W off Selsey Bill, 1W off Worthing Beach and 1W and 1 off-shore at Splash Point, Seaford, during May. On 10th, there was the interesting report of one which flew south over Venus Wood, West Dean. The hourly rates should be

compared with those of 0.51 at Selsey Bill and 0.90 at Splash Point, Seaford, in spring 1996. The total of 222 seen in April and May was lower than the 1988-1996 average of 264 for these months.

In June and July, there were about 13 reports from along the coast. About 56 were along the coast during August, with 8W off Selsey Bill on 27th and 35W off Bexhill and Hastings in 2.25 hrs on 31 Aug. One was in Pagham Hbr on the latter date. Coastal records in September, October and November totalled 29, 16 and 5 respectively. Additionally, one was chasing terns in Chichester Hbr on 18 Sept.

Finally, one at Newhaven on 28 and 30 Dec was possibly the one seen off Shoreham Hbr on the 30th and patrolling Brighton beach on both 30th and 31st. [SHL]

0568. **LONG-TAILED SKUA**

Stercorarius longicaudus

Rare vagrant.

An adult flew east past Splash Point, Seaford, at 08.25 BST on 11 May (GCG, SHL *et al*). The slight increase continues, giving sea-watchers some measure of hope: seven records so far during the 1990s, compared to 5 in the 1980s. These occurrences have been equally divided between 8-16 May and 1 Sept-20 Oct. [RJF]

0569. **GREAT SKUA**

Catharacta skua

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

An annual total of 78 (estimated as for Arctic Skua) was remarkably similar to the number (76) seen in the previous year. The monthly totals were:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
Birds	1	3	-	19	23	8	2	6	6	8	-	2
Dates	1	3	-	10	13	7	2	5	5	5	-	1

The first was 1E off Splash Point, Seaford, on 7 Jan. There was 1E off Selsey Bill on 7 Feb, 1 at Church Norton Spit mudflats on 22 Feb and 1 off-shore at Rye Harbour next day.

The first of the spring were 2E past Splash Point, Seaford, on 14 Apr. The largest numbers were 5E there on both 26 Apr and 12 May and 4E past Worthing Beach on 15 May.

There were scattered coastal records during the rest of the year, including 1 at Pilsley Island on 3 July, 1 flying inland over Belle Tout, Beachy Head, on 12 Sept and 4E past Splash Point, Seaford, on 8 Oct in a force 8 SW wind. The December reports were all on Christmas Day when there were 2E at Worthing Beach, 1E at Atherington, Climping, and 1 on the sea off Rock-a-Nore, Hastings, which was disturbed and then chased out to sea by a Peregrine. [SHL]

0575. **MEDITERRANEAN GULL**

Larus melanocephalus

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

This was another excellent year for this species. The 461 records, reporting 734 sightings on at least 238 different days, is similar to the past few years. As usual, the records involved considerable duplication, and a close look at these records would suggest

that about 100 individuals may have been seen. 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, follows the patterns demonstrated in *Birds of Sussex*. The table reveals the usual spring peak with a small but clear passage of first-year birds in April and May. Comparison with the same table for 1996, shows a marked reduction in the number of second-year birds during the spring and a small increase in all age classes at the end of the year.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
Adults	9	17	20	17	8	5	6	10	10	13	16	16
2nd yrs	-	2	3	7	3	2	4	1	2	2	6	7
1st yrs	4	-	2	19	15	5	1	-	2	3	4	4
TOTAL	15	21	28	45	26	17	19	12	17	22	28	27
Inland	-	3	2	-	-	-	-	1	2	3	4	1

Wintering individuals were regularly recorded at Chichester Hbr, Selsey Bill, Pagham Hbr, Littlehampton, Goring, Shoreham Hbr and Bexhill. Peak counts during the winter were 7 roosting at Pagham Hbr on 12 Feb and 3 adults in Shoreham Hbr on 24 Feb.

As usual, there were many records between March and May from the regular sea-watching sites. Records from Selsey Bill suggested most observations were of birds loafing off-shore, whilst those from other sites were mainly of birds passing east. The east-bound spring totals were 13 at Worthing, 15 at Brighton, 6 at Newhaven, 7 at Seaford and 4 at Bexhill. Peak movements involved first-year birds, with 7E at Worthing on 23 Apr and 5E at Newhaven on 5 May.

At Rye Hbr, 2 pairs were displaying on 30 Mar and by mid-April at least 7 adults and 3 immatures were present. However, by mid-May, only one pair of adults remained but were not successful as the breeding island was disturbed by either a fox or a badger. A pair was also recorded displaying at Icklesham and although 2 adults were seen in Chichester Hbr during mid-April there was no suggestion of attempted breeding.

The largest groups seen during the summer and early autumn were at Chichester Hbr where 4 were seen on 12 June and at least 6 individuals were noted in late July. There were also 4 at Icklesham on both 28 June and 1 July. Wintering birds started to return during August, and by November most had been seen at the regular haunts mentioned above. The roost at Southwick Beach was well studied and observers considered at least 11 different birds were seen between July and December, with a peak of 6 on 2 Dec. At Pagham Hbr there were 5 on 10 Dec and 4 on 24th.

As usual, most were seen on or near the coast and only 16 were recorded inland. Apart from 2 adults at Pulborough Brooks on 18 Mar, and an adult and first-year at Arlington Res on 29 Sept, all were singles and the monthly distribution, also shown in the table above, reveals that most were recorded in the winter and autumn months, with none recorded inland between 18 Mar and 13 Aug.

In recent years, continental researchers have been marking Mediterranean Gulls with Darvic rings which can be read with good views through a telescope. Several ringed birds were reported again during 1997. The adult bearing the Dutch white '24H' returned to Shoreham Hbr, with sightings in January and February and after 4 Aug. Two first-year birds were seen at Rye Hbr (yellow '160' and cream '36V') during the spring, at Icklesham (white '87K') on 13 June, and a second-year ('41V') was at Newhaven during September and October. [JAN]

0578. **LITTLE GULL***Larus minutus***Scarce visitor and passage migrant, most numerous on passage in spring.**

Approximately 420 were seen during the year, a figure similar to 1996 and very near the average for the past twenty years. The following table of approximate monthly totals highlights the status of this species, with most recorded at coastal sites during the spring. Fewer than usual were recorded inland.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
<i>Total</i>	4	2	12	143	194	1	1	27	7	8	15	6
Inland	-	-	7	6	-	-	-	1	1	-	-	-

Apart from 2 flying E at Selsey Bill on 1 Jan, all the sightings until late March involved just single birds.

Significant coastal movements were first seen on 9 Apr, reached a peak in early May and had ended by 19 May. The totals seen from each site between March and May were 44 at Selsey Bill, 17 at Worthing, 144 at Brighton, 102 at Newhaven, 288 at Seaford, and 27 between Glyne Gap, Bexhill, and Hastings. As usual, most were seen in East Sussex, with over 82% of the spring birds being recorded at Splash Point, Seaford. Details of the seven best days of passage are shown in the table on the next page (number of hrs watched, to nearest whole number, are shown in brackets):

	9 Apr		21 Apr		23 Apr		24 Apr		1 May		2 May		3 May	
Selsey Bill	0	(2)	0	(4)	0	(6)	2	(4)	0	(14)	24	(16)	9	(9)
Worthing	1	(6)	-	(0)	0	(4)	1	(3)	1	(4)	0	(3)	6	(6)
Brighton	0	(4)	2	(4)	9	(5)	0	(3)	0	(4)	85	(6)	31	(6)
Newhaven	-	?	-	?	-	?	-	?	41	(12)	27	(13)	34	(5)
Seaford	19	(6)	17	(5)	26	(4)	36	(5)	62	(8)	53	(8)	37	(10)
Bexhill/Hastings	11	(7)	0	(5)	0	(3)	0	(3)	0	(3)	10	(3)	3	(6)

Although most were seen at the coast, there were singles inland at Pulborough Brooks on 18 Mar, at Ivy Lake, Chichester, on 27 Mar, 5 at Arlington Res on 31 Mar and 6 at Bewl Water on 18 Apr. Interestingly, all the inland records occurred when no coastal movements were seen.

None were seen after 19 May until a single immature was recorded in Chichester Hbr between 8 June and 29 July. An extraordinary record of 20E at Selsey Bill on 5 Aug started the autumn passage which thereafter was poor. With the exception of 4W and 3E at Bexhill on 5 Oct and 4W at Selsey Bill on 8 Nov, the records during the autumn and early winter involved just one or two birds. Those from inland sites were singles at Shoreham Airport on 27 Aug and at Hollingbury GC on 20 Sept. It is noteworthy that none were seen during the autumn at inland reservoirs. [JAN]

0579. **SABINE'S GULL***Larus sabini***Rare vagrant.**

A juvenile flew eastwards off Brighton Marina at 13.15 BST on 12 Sept (ADW, IJW) and was most probably the individual seen passing east off Portland Bill, Dorset, earlier that morning. A juvenile, presumably the same, was found at the mouth of the River

Cuckmere where it gave superb views later that afternoon (NJT *et al*). It remained to 08.15 BST on 13th, much to the delight of those who went to look for it the following morning. It finally flew off west, having earlier flown north up river, only to return 20 minutes later. It is only the 5th to be recorded during the 1990s and the 6th since the Great Storm of 1987, when at least 19 were seen. Most records are expected in September and October. [RJF]

0582. **BLACK-HEADED GULL**

Larus ridibundus

Common breeding species and abundant winter visitor and passage migrant.

There was no co-ordinated count of gulls during the winter so the records give no indication of the wintering population. The largest counts were 4500 at Shripney and Lidsey, both near Bognor Regis, on 8 Jan and 27 Jan respectively. The other 4-figure counts were 1000 at Arlington Res on 11 Jan, 1500 at Pebsham on 26 Jan, 1400 at Climping on 8 Feb, 2500 at Weir Wood Res on 22 Feb, 1000 at Cissbury on 9 Mar and up to 3000 at Icklesham between 13-17 Mar.

Although eastward coastal movements were larger than 1996, they were not impressive, with month-totals at Worthing of 558 in March, 375 in April and 258 in May, and between Bexhill and Hastings 2024 in March, 271 in April and 264 in May. The largest movement was 419E at Worthing on 12 Mar.

At Ternery Pool, Rye Hbr, there were 354 nests on 7 May: by 16 May several broods of chicks had hatched and 60 young fledged. In early March, pairs were also displaying at Icklesham. The colony on Stakes Island in Chichester Hbr has been unsuccessful in recent years and in 1997 no colony formed, with birds moving to a breeding site in Langstone Hbr.

The first 'returning' birds were recorded at Bewl Water on 11 June, and on 30 June there were 130, virtually all adults in full summer plumage, on a ploughed field at Coldwaltham. In July, there were 300 catching flying ants over Durrington on the 7th, 350 flew E in 1 hour at Worthing on the 9th and 500 were following a plough on downland at Findon on the 16th. The only large counts in the autumn and early winter were of roosting birds, with 2000 at Brighton Marina on 9 Oct, 1000 at Cuckmere Haven on 22 Nov and 2500, also at Brighton Marina, on 6 Dec. [JAN]

0589. **RING-BILLED GULL**

Larus delawarensis

Very rare vagrant.

1987: The record of a first-summer bird at the Crumbles GP on 6 June (*SxBR* 40:41) has been withdrawn by the observer. There are now only 5 records of this species in the county, all between November-February and during 1984-87. [RJF]

0590. **COMMON GULL**

Larus canus

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

During the winter, the largest counts were considerably smaller than in 1996, with 300 at Bewl Water on 24 Jan, 700 at Pilsey Sands on 29 Jan, 300 at Darwell Res on 9 Feb and 500 at Lewes on 15 Feb. Numbers were slightly larger in March, with 1000 at Cissbury on the 9th, increasing to 2000 on the 13th, and 1300 roosting at Southwick on 24th. Coastal

movements were noted in March and April, with east-bound totals at Bexhill of 627 in March and 122 in April; and 678 at Worthing in April. Peak movements were 368 at Bexhill on 11 Mar (7hrs); 307 and 301 at Worthing on 7 Apr (6hrs) and 8 Apr (5hrs) respectively. The only late spring gathering recorded was of 160 immatures in Pagham Hbr on 6 May.

An adult pair were nest building at Rye Hbr in early April, but deserted after disturbance by a predator. During July, numbers at Thorney Airfield increased from 55 on 10th, 132 on 12th, 400 on 17th to 500 on 28th, with 800 on 13 Aug. Thereafter, there were no significant autumn counts until November when there were 700 at Brighton Marina on the 8th and 480 at Icklesham on the 15th. In December, the largest counts were of 600 at Pilsey Sands on the 5th and 8000 roosting at Southwick on the 27th. [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.

1994: The record of 23 *fuscus* recorded at Wishing Tree Reservoir on 13 Apr were probably of the race *intermedius*; the race *fuscus* is now considered very rare in the UK and probably has never been recorded in Sussex.

1997: Few were recorded in the early part of the year, with 30 at Lidsey on 27 Jan and 18 at Pilsey Sands on 29th of the month being the only notable counts. Larger numbers were recorded from East Sussex in the spring, with 126 at Icklesham on 26 Mar and counts of 26 and 45 at Rye Hbr on 9 Mar and 12 Apr respectively. Sea-watchers recorded virtually no coastal movements, except at Bexhill and Hastings where the monthly totals for east-bound birds were 63 in March, 66 in April and 17 in May, with a peak of 27 on 9 Mar.

Breeding was again confirmed on roof tops in Worthing where 4-5 pairs were recorded, and in Brighton up to 9 adults and 3 juveniles were seen on 30 June. At least 3 pairs bred in Hastings, and 2 pairs in both Bexhill and St Leonards-on-Sea.

Like the spring, the largest autumn gatherings were in East Sussex with 400 at Scotney Court GP on 7 Sept, 46 at Brighton Marina on 9 Oct, and 140, associating with Black-headed Gulls on plough, at Alfriston, on 13 Nov. There were no large flocks recorded from the Horsham area this year: 26 at Warnham MP on 3 Nov was the highest count. [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 of 125 roosting in a field near a refuse tip at Shripney on 8 Jan, 400 at Lidsey on 26 Jan, and at Galley Hill, Bexhill, where up to 500 were counted roosting in January and February. The numbers at Bexhill increased during the spring, with counts at Glyne Gap of 800 on 8 Mar, 1600 on 13 Apr and 600 on 2 May.

Roof top nesting was reported from St Leonards-on-Sea, Saltdean, Haywards Heath, Worthing and Chichester, and at Rye Hbr a total of 9 pairs nested.

There were 140 at Pilsey Sands on 10 June and counts on 29 or 30 July were of 400 at Galley Hill, Bexhill, 200 at Brighton Marina and 230 loafing off-shore at Worthing. All the largest counts in the autumn and winter were from the Bexhill area, with 250 on 17 Aug, 500 on 30 Sept, 500 on 5 Oct, 750 on 16 Nov, 600 on 12 Dec and 400 on 25 Dec.

The highest inland count was of 100 at Arlington Res on 29 Sept.

A leucistic individual was seen in Chichester Hbr between 29 Jan and 8 Feb, and again on 18 Aug.

There were no records of individuals showing the characteristics of the race *L.a. argentatus*.

There is no clear consensus on the taxonomy of the yellow-legged gull and the British Ornithologists' Union has not yet made a decision to 'split' this group into one or several different species. Most records in Sussex involve the Mediterranean race, *L.a. michahellis*. The following table of the monthly minimum totals shows a return to the 1994/95 numbers and reveals the usual late summer peak:

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
4	1	5	-	-	25	308	327	229	178	1	10

The largest counts were in Pagham Hbr with 23 on 28 June, 98 on 5 July, 275 on 18 July, 318 on 1 Aug, 196 on 30 Sept and 170 on 13 Oct. Although there were 26 in Chichester Hbr on 30 July and 25 in the Adur Valley on 2 Sept, the records from other sites involved just a few birds. One was recorded at Chichester GPs on 24 Dec, otherwise none was recorded far from the coast.

[For comparison, roost counts in Pagham Hbr during **1996** were as follows: 29 June (18); 13 July (83); 19 July (205); 2 Aug (271); 16 Aug (302); 14 Sept (289); 8 Oct (215); 7 Nov (31); and 12 Dec (1). (TJE)]

A single first-year of the 'steppe race' known as the Pontic Gull, *L.a. cachinmans*, was seen on the River Adur at Shoreham-by-Sea on 15 Sept (RJF).

Members are reminded that descriptions are required for the sub-species other than *L.a. argentatus* and *L.a. michahellis*. [JAN]

0598. ICELAND GULL

Larus glaucoides

Rare winter visitor and passage migrant.

There were 5 records, possibly involving just 4 individuals. On 26 Feb, one, in second-winter plumage, roosted at Arlington Res (IJW), and on 14 Mar one, in similar plumage, was briefly seen at Splash Point, Seaford (BRG, SD). An adult, or third-winter, flew past Selsey Bill on 21 Mar (AH). A first-year, seen initially at Selsey Bill on 16 Nov (AH), was subsequently recorded in Pagham Hbr on 18 and 19 Nov (TJE, AH). An adult was also seen in Pagham Hbr on 18 Nov (TJE, AH). [JAN]

0599. GLAUCOUS GULL

Larus hyperboreus

Very scarce but regular winter visitor and passage migrant.

1996: One, in third winter plumage, was seen at West Worthing on 26 Dec (LJR).

1997: During the year, probably 10 different individuals were recorded and the following table gives the monthly distribution:

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

An adult seen in the vicinity of Selsey, Pagham and Chichester Hbrs, between 1 Jan and 27 Feb, was probably the regular bird which had wintered in successive years since Feb and 5 Mar, and the records suggest the same bird may have been seen at both

Shoreham Hbr and Worthing between 19 and 23 Feb. A first-year in Pagham Hbr on 27 Feb was clearly a different individual. There were two at Hastings on 16 Mar, one of which, a second-winter bird, stayed until 24 Mar. An immature, showing mixed characteristics of both first- and second-year, was at Worthing on 6 Apr. A first-year was noted at Winchelsea and Rye on the same day and at Hastings on the 7th. Later in April, a first-year, possibly the same, was seen at Rye Hbr on the 21st. All the sightings at the end of the year refer to first-year birds, with singles at Hastings on 6 Oct, at Pagham Hbr on 9 and 30 Dec, and at Rye Hbr on 22 Dec. It is noteworthy that the regular Selsey bird failed to return in the autumn.

The Records Committee have now reinstated this species on the list requiring descriptive notes for all sightings. [JAN]

0600. **GREAT BLACK-BACKED GULL**

Larus marinus

Common winter visitor and passage migrant; small numbers summer.

The following table, showing the maximum number counted in each month from two sites where this species is regularly recorded, reveals the pattern of occurrence:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Chichester Hbr	246	-	-	130	120	80	87	60	80	340	-	-
Bexhill	377	318	503	5	23	-	3	242	300	330	218	230

Elsewhere, 330 were at Pagham Hbr on 14 Jan and 595 on 21 Oct. At Cuckmere Haven, counts in the later part of the year were 165 on 21 Nov, 370 on 6 Dec and 230 on 21 Dec. The only other notable gatherings were 200 at Brighton Marina on 24 Nov and 150 on the River Adur at Shoreham-by-Sea on 23 Nov.

The only significant coastal movements were recorded at Seaford during the winter when there were 188E in 2.5hrs on 31 Jan and 107E in 3hrs on 1 Feb. Small numbers were reported from several inland locations. An adult with a colour ring at Brighton on 14 Nov had been ringed on Jersey in May 1997. [JAN]

602. **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 east off East Sussex during the spring months, a west-bound movement at Selsey Bill in May and a mainly westward movement at the end of the year. The significance of these movements is unclear.

	Selsey Bill		Worthing		Brighton		Seaford		Bexhill	
	East	West	East	West	East	West	East	West	East	West
Jan	0	0	0	0	0	0	13	1	10	1
Feb	1	0	0	1	4	0	138	8	8	92
Mar	3	8	1	2	6	0	260	0	50	6
Apr	7	1	11	1	259	0	nc	nc	162	10
May	43	212	22	28	570	13	nc	nc	64	119
June	12	15	0	0	0	0	nc	nc	2	2
July	0	0	0	0	0	0	nc	nc	1	2
Aug	0	1	1	2	9	139	nc	nc	62	173
Sept	0	1	2	0	0	28	nc	nc	4	120
Oct	0	123	0	0	0	8	17	0	128	259
Nov	4	611	0	8	15	0	61	4	9	96
Dec	50	9	0	20	2	104	73	33	0	287

Movements in excess of 200 in a day were 260E at Splash Point, Seaford, on 4 Mar (2.5hrs), 230E at Brighton Marina on 19 May (4hrs), 100E and 180W between Bexhill and Hastings on 7 Oct (3.5hrs), 200W at Selsey Bill on 10 Nov (3.5hrs) and 207W at Bexhill on 27 Dec (2hrs).

During the summer, there were 545 birds at nests on Newhaven Cliffs and 901 at the colony at Seaford. An adult at Bewl Water on 1 July, after North Sea storms, was the only inland record. [JAN]

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 1 Mar with 1 at Splash Point, Seaford, then another there and a singleton at Brighton on 9th. The first double figure count was of 14 at Seaford on 21st and the first treble figure count was of 110 at Rye Hbr on 6 Apr. There was an unusual record of 2 at Weir Wood Res on 31 March.

The easterly spring passage totals at the main sea-watching localities were as follows:

	Mar	Apr	May
Selsey Bill	19	1615	1251
Worthing	15	573	442
Brighton	23	730	604

Seaford	76	1184	943
Bexhill & Hastings	26	1365	271

The first daily count off-shore in treble figures was of 104 at Selsey Bill on 8 Apr, followed next day by 205 at Worthing, 130 at Brighton, 306 at Seaford and 248 at Bexhill & Hastings. The next good passage period was from 23 Apr to 11 May, with the peak daily count of 513 (in 13 hours) at Selsey on 26th. During this time, the maximum recorded at the nesting/roosting site at Rye Hbr was 350 from 15 to 21 Apr.

At Rye Hbr, about 30 pairs nested in early May on an island at Ternery Pool, together with 120 pairs of Black-headed Gulls, but all were disturbed by fox or badger. Then, in mid-June, about 6 pairs nested on another island, but again all were disturbed by predators. At Rye Hbr, the first juvenile (possibly from Dungeness) was first noted on 7 July and the post breeding flock built up to just 40 by 8 July. At Pagham, up to 102 were present in early May, but nearly all had departed by the end of the month

The main period of autumn passage was at the end of August and beginning of September, but 111 flew east at Selsey on 20 Sept. The westerly autumn passage totals at the main sea-watching localities were as follows:

	July	Aug	Sept	Oct
Selsey Bill	11	72	125	25
Worthing	37	85	104	17
Brighton	-	15	74	9
Seaford	5	14	-	1
Bexhill & Hastings	10	372	163	32

There were 3 single-figure counts along the coast in November and the last record was of 2 at Brighton on 20 Nov. [BJY]

0614. ROSEATE TERN

Sterna dougallii

Very scarce passage migrant and non-breeding summer visitor.

The poorest year since 1992, with a total of 5 recorded. One was seen roosting with other terns on Pilsey Sands on 16 May (CBC) and one flew east at Splash Point, Seaford, on 8 June (BRG). Two adults (probably a pair) were recorded at the Ternery Pool, Rye Hbr, on 7 July (CAH, JCH) and an adult in Pagham Hbr on 15 July (TJE, AH). [PJ]

0615. COMMON TERN

Sterna hirundo

Scarce breeding summer visitor and common passage migrant.

Most of the records were from the coastal sites, but there were also a few from inland locations, especially the larger reservoirs. The first arrival was at Pagham on 5 Apr, an early date, then 1 at Bexhill on 6th. Double-figure counts were noted from 13th, with 49 at Bexhill, and 35 roosting at Rye Hbr on 14th and 80 there on 22nd. The first treble-figure count was of 438E in 5.8 hours at Bexhill on 3 May.

The number of breeding records showed mixed fortunes. None nested at Stakes Islands in Chichester Hbr. Between 25 and 30 pairs nested on rafts at New Lake, Chichester GPs (41 chicks were ringed and 2 were still being fed on the raft on 18 August). A single pair was noted at Icklesham on 2 May. About 120 pairs nested at Rye

Hbr, but there was poor breeding success due to adverse weather conditions, and losses to fox and badger - only 15 young fledged.

Single birds in first year, *portlandica*, plumage were noted at Rye Hbr from 1 June until 23 July. In July, there was a maximum of 30 at Icklesham, 34 at Pilsey Sands on 4th, and 140 at Rye Hbr on 20th

During the autumn passage, the maximum counts were as follows: 180 at Rye Hbr on 8 Aug, and 110 (inc 50 juveniles) on 9th. The last treble-figure counts were of 114 in 2 hours at Bexhill on 24 Aug and 115 in 3 hours there on 28th, and the last double-figure count was of 12 at Shoreham on 5 Oct. There were 3 records in November: 2 at Pilsey Sands on 2nd, 1 at Seaford on 14th and 1 at Newhaven on 16th. [BJY]

(See also Common / Arctic Tern)

0616. ARCTIC TERN

Sterna paradisaea

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

There were 60 records this year, many more than the 39 of last year and the 12 of 1995. The first record was of 2E on 13 Apr at Bexhill, followed by 2 on 20th at Church Norton, 1E on 25th at Seaford and 11 there next day. There was then a steady trickle of reports until 17 May, with a maximum of 335E at Lancing, reported on 3rd. After a gap in records, there were up to 5 at Seaford from 31 May until 4 June.

In August, there were 3W at Bexhill on 3rd, followed by 1 at Pagham on 16th and then regular reports until a juvenile at Pett Pools on 4 Sept. The next was at Church Norton on 16 Sept, followed by regular records from the coast until 2 juveniles at Pilsey Sands on 19 Oct. The only inland record was of 1 at Weir Wood Res 1-5 Sept.

The last records of the year were of singles at Cuckmere Haven on 2 Nov and at Newhaven Harbour on 21st and 23rd. [BJY]

COMMON/ARCTIC TERN

Sterna hirundo/paradisaea

Sea-watching produced many records of uncertain identity, with terns passing off-shore at a distance. In spring, the passage began on 6 Apr with 1E at Seaford and then, on 8th, 1 at Selsey Bill and 3 at Brighton.

The eastward passage is summarised below:

	Apr	May
Selsey Bill	596	2170
Worthing	86	468
Brighton	27	1549
Seaford	854	4430
Bexhill & Hastings	277	378

Spring daily counts of 100+ occurred from 26 Apr until 21 May, with the maximum of 2331E in 9.5 hours at Seaford on 3 May. Remained regular until 14 June and then an isolated record of 30E on 9 July at Worthing.

Autumn off-shore movement was typically light and less directional than in Spring. It started in late July, increasing into August and declining in September. The monthly directional counts are shown below:

	July		Aug		Sept		Oct	
	W	E	W	E	W	E	W	E
Selsey Bill	1	-	26	48	22	-	32	-
Worthing	3	30	54	28	78	13	2	1
Brighton	-	-	-	-	167	-	-	-
Seaford	-	15	1	6	20	-	16	20
Bexhill & Hastings	-	-	568	44	446	3	92	60

In November, there was 1 at Seaford on 5th and 1 at Newhaven on 26th. (see Arctic Tern) [BJY]

0624. LITTLE TERN

Sterna albifrons

Scarce breeding summer visitor and fairly common passage migrant.

All records this year were from coastal sites. First recorded on 10 Apr with 2 at Pagham, then, on 12th, a single bird at Selsey Bill and another at Pilesey Sands. The first double-figure count was of 10 at Rye Hbr on 19th.

Easterly spring passage was generally lighter than last year: the totals at the main sea-watching localities were as follows:

	Apr	May
Selsey Bill	44	317
Worthing	6	61
Brighton	11	152
Seaford	16	259
Bexhill & Hastings	9	123

The largest movement noted was on 3 May with 129E in 9.5 hours at Seaford. Sea-watching sites recorded 25+ daily from 2 until 15 May.

In the breeding season there were no pairs at North Stakes Island. At Rye Hbr about 35 pairs nested, but only 5 chicks were ringed and 4 fledged. Major losses were to fox, badger and, unusual for the site, high tides.

Post-breeding flocks were reported at Pagham with 60 on 13 July, 50 at Pilesey Island on 26th and 72 on 8 Aug. There were just 11 records in September, and 3 records in October, the last being of 2 at Seaford on 21st. [BJY]

0627. BLACK TERN

Chlidonias niger

Fairly common passage migrant.

Most records were from coastal sites, but in the autumn a few were seen at the larger reservoirs inland. The first returning spring birds were seen in April at Pagham Hbr on 5th and then at Bexhill and Hastings, 1 passing E on 21st and 2, likewise moving E, on 27th.

The eastward passage during April and May is summarised below:

	Apr	May
Selsey Bill	1	8
Worthing	-	10
Brighton	-	47
Seaford	-	104
Bexhill & Hastings	3	6

During June, there were 8 records of 1-2 on widely scattered dates. In July, there was 1 at Rye Hbr on 7th and 2 at Weir Wood Res on 12th. From 4 Aug until 19 Sept there were 33 records of up to 7, but mostly singles. The first juveniles were noted on 7 Aug with 3 at Pilsey Island where there were 7 juveniles on 28th.

The last bird of the year was at Pagham Hbr on 16 October. [BJY]

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	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
133	101	6	12	50	18	10	1	7	12	13	38

The total figures for the year show a more normal pattern and are less than half the count for last year. Totals included 4 dead, 4 oiled and dead, and 9 oiled, one of which was caught and taken to the *RSPCA*.

One bird was seen swimming in the river at The Pells, Lewes, on 7 Jan, and if six miles from the sea can be called 'inland', then this would be a first inland record for the county. [DEGC]

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	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
154	47	2	35	26	7	-	-	1	30	23	13

This year's total of 338 is even greater than the 289 last year which was remarkably large. Early winter birds were concentrated in a period of about 10 days at the end of January and beginning of February whilst the figure of 154 in January would appear to be unprecedented for that month. Totals include three found dead, 1 oiled and dead, and 2 oiled. [DEGC]

0638. **BLACK GUILLEMOT**

Cephus grylle

Rare vagrant.

1996: The date of the bird recorded as flying east off Rye Hbr on 5 May, should read 10 May. (MSH)

0647. **LITTLE AUK**

Alle alle

Very scarce but increasingly regular autumn passage migrant and winter visitor.

1996: The entry for 14 Nov which reads: 21W at Selsey Bill between 10.50 and 13.50 hrs (TJE) should be amended to read: 21W off-shore at Church Norton between 10.50 and

13.50 hrs (TJE).

One flying west at Galley Hill, Bexhill, on 18 Feb (IS) was only the 6th county record for the month since 1962. One found alive in Friston Forest on 7 Dec (P JL) died shortly afterwards. These additional records bring the total for 1996 to 36.

1997: A total of 6-7 was recorded as follows:

14 Oct	One, on the sea, at the end of the West Pier, Newhaven (EDU).
5 Nov	One flying east at Selsey Bill (TJE)
6 Dec	A single bird moving west at Selsey Bill (BJC).
22 Dec	Singles flying east at Selsey Bill at 07.50 (BJC) and at Brighton Marina at 09.12 (KGB) were possibly the same bird.
23 Dec	One eastwards at Splash Point, Seaford, (BRG).
25 Dec	One flying east at Brighton Marina (I JW).

[PJ]

0654. **PUFFIN**

Fratercula arctica

Very scarce visitor, most frequently recorded in spring.

For the third consecutive year, just 2 were recorded. One was found dead at Southwick on 24 Mar (CAH) while a live bird was seen close in-shore off Pett on 2 Nov (CHD, PT).

Of 64 Puffins recorded in the county since 1962, 5 have been in March and 3 in November. [PJ]

AUK Species

AUK spp.

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	4	-	6	28	3	-	10	12
Brighton	131	-	45	8	6	2	60	42
Seaford	6373	512	337	24	18	-	336	94
Bexhill and Hastings	58	644	13	3	3	-	14	21

Movement off Seaford was considered large last year, but 1997 shows a massive 63% increase, including 5432 east in January and 941 east in February. The highest daily count was on 28 Jan with 1401E and 3W in 2hrs. The best count for Bexhill and Hastings was 498W in 21 hrs on 4 Feb. [DEGC]

0665. **FERAL ROCK DOVE**

Columba livia

Common Resident.

1996: Reference to The Pells, Lewes, was incorrect. The localities concerned cover the centre of Lewes, by the river.

1997: A summary of the 1996 BTO Breeding Bird Survey' records for Sussex, showed that this species was not only present in a fifth of all squares but that it was the fourteenth most numerous species in the county. This source is likely to be more revealing in future

than the handful of records normally received.

In 1997, a flock of 100 was reported from Lewes throughout the year. All the other reports came from the coastal fringe, particularly from the Brighton conurbation, where 55 were at Toads Hall Valley on 6 Apr, 260 at Preston Park on 2 June, and 437 seen flying to roost in the city centre on 14 Oct. There were 300 birds on Newhaven Cliffs on 10 Dec.

Flocks feeding on farmland numbered 55 on stubble adjoining Littlehampton GC on 3 Dec and 210 at nearby Yapton on 19 Dec.

0668. **STOCK DOVE**

Columba oenas

Common resident and possible winter visitor.

There were widespread reports early in the year, with 30 at Scotney Court GP on 19 Jan, 190 at Rye Hbr on 6 Feb, and 40 at Weir Wood Res on 26 Feb. Large flocks continued to be seen well into the breeding season, with 200 at Thorney Island on 11 Apr, 50 at Lewes on 27 Apr, 80 at Sidlesham on 21 May, and 140 disturbed by shooting at Liss on 14 June.

Breeding reports came from all round the county, the first from Climping on 26 Mar and the last from Ashdown Forest on 13 Sept. Two chicks were ringed in a Barn Owl box at North Stoke and one pair raised two broods of two at Westmeston.

In the autumn, a flock of 93 was feeding on winter wheat at Honer Fm, Pagham, on 23 Oct, whilst three days later 100 were at West Fields, Selsey: this latter flock had grown to 300 on 2 Nov. On the next day, there were 235 on Glynde Levels. Thirty-eight flew west along Hastings Beach on 13 Nov. Curiously, in December, the reports dried up, with just a single record of 8 birds on 8 Dec at Pulborough. [RK]

0670. **WOODPIGEON**

Columba palumbus

Abundant resident and winter visitor.

A flock of 600 birds on oil seed rape at Ford, Arun Valley, on 3 Jan increased to an estimated 10,000 by 6 Jan. Two birds at Glossops Green, Crawley, gave every indication of having recently left the nest. Flock size decreased as the year progressed, but 700 were seen at Laughton Level on 12 Mar.

The results of breeding' surveys can be seen elsewhere in this Report.

Birds on passage were reported from several coastal sites during the latter half of the year. An estimated 7000 flew east at Seaford during a 30 minute period on 22 Oct, with 3800 at Beachy Head on the same date. A delightfully accurate count of 17,095 birds were seen on passage at Beachy Head between 0700 and 0800 on 1 Nov. The last record of birds on passage was a Bexhill/Hastings coastal count of 1120 on 22 Nov. [DEC]

0694. **COLLARED DOVE**

Streptopelia decaocto

Very common resident.

A species that is regularly ignored if the records that are submitted are anything to go by. In January, the largest counts were of 84 and 130 at Marsh Fm, Sidlesham. The results of breeding surveys are to be found elsewhere in this Report.

At the year's end, flocks of up to 265 were seen regularly at Harbour Fm, Rye Harbour

SSSI. [DEC]

0687. **TURTLE DOVE**

Streptopelia turtur

Common, but probably declining, summer visitor and passage migrant.

The first record was at Weir Wood Res on 21 Apr, and arriving birds continued to be recorded into May. Breeding was confirmed at Scobells Fm, Barcombe, where up to 5 birds were seen daily into September. Twenty-eight were recorded at Marsh Fm, Sidlesham, on 21 May, the count at this site rising to 38 on 27th.

Probable breeding was reported at a number of sites on Ashdown Forest. Confirmed breeding records were few in number, but there does not appear to be any suggestion of a major change in breeding success in the county.

Return passage started in August, culminating in a flock of 80 seen at the Beach Reserve, Rye LNR. The last records were at Harbour Fm, Rye Harbour SSSI, ending on 15 Oct. [DEC]

0712. *Cat. C* **RING-NECKED PARAKEET**

Psittacula krameri

Very scarce introduced breeding resident.

This species continues to be scarce in the county, with just a handful of reports received. As in previous years, most records were from the Brighton area, with singles at Hove on 1 Jan, Preston Park on 11 Apr, Hollingbury Camp on 2 and 18 May, and 2 at the University of Sussex, Falmer, on 27 Jan.

Elsewhere, there were 6 at Gatwick Airport on 12 May, 5 at Rusper on 5 July and singles at Sedlescombe on 23 Apr and at Icklesham on 11 Oct. One at West Fields, Selsey, on 20 Jan and 16 Feb may possibly have been the Alexandrine Parakeet reported in that area in late 1996 (*SxBR* 49: 163). [PJ]

0724. **CUCKOO**

Cuculus canorus

Fairly common summer visitor.

The first arrivals were early, with one at Lavington Common on 31 Mar and another 5, at various localities 'twixt Thorney Deeps in the west and Rye in the east, between 2 and 8 Apr. Records originated from many localities throughout April and May, both on the coast and inland.

Breeding reports included 8 pairs at Rye Hbr, 5, or possibly 6, pairs at Thorney Island, and in Kingley Vale and West Dean Woods, each of which had a single pair. Marsh Fm, Yapton, a CBC plot, also had a pair.

About 30, many of them noted as immatures, were reported from many localities from around mid-July to 11 Sept. Birds were noted at Icklesham; Paghham Hbr; Bewl Water; Widewater, Lancing; Thorney Deeps and Rye Hbr. A juvenile was being mobbed by Carrion Crows at Weavers Down, Liss, on 12 July. On 17th, a young bird, seen on Ashdown Forest, had fledged from a Meadow Pipits' nest. Another freshly-fledged bird was seen at Marsh Fm, Earnley, on 27th. One bird, of unknown age, was seen moving south at Selsey Bill on 18 Aug.

The last two records for the year were of a juvenile, seen at Sidlesham on 4 Sept, and an adult at Rye Hbr on 11th. [KN/LGH]

0735. **BARN OWL**

Tyto alba

Scarce breeding resident.

1994:

A single bird of the dark-breasted race (*T.a.guttata*) was seen at Thorney Deeps in mid-January (CW) and also at the end of that month, on the 30th (RJF). It was a possible migrant from the Continent, or may have been an escaped bird. The record has been accepted.

1997: The approximate numbers recorded each month were:

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
44	22	27	8	23	57	28	27	10	10	9	19

The total number of sightings was 278, an increase of 100 over those for 1996. Most of these extra reports were in the first half of the year, with January and June being the most notable months. One can only hope that this upward trend will continue. Birds were seen throughout the County, but reports from north-central and north-east Sussex were scarce.

Breeding was proven at 19 sites, and was probable at another 7. Approximately 37 young were fledged. However, of these, three were later found dead. Road deaths accounted for 5 adults. [JTAB]

0757. **LITTLE OWL**

Athene noctua

Fairly common resident.

The approximate numbers recorded each month were:

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
27	9	27	16	12	27	24	51	12	34	18	10

The total number of birds recorded was 267, which is back to 1995' levels, after dropping to 200 in 1996. August and October produced the most sightings, with 51 and 34 respectively.

The coast and the Downs of west and central Sussex provided the majority of contacts. Records from the east were thin on the ground.

Breeding was confirmed at 5 sites and was probable at another 3. However, only 9 fledged young were seen.

Two road deaths were reported. [JTAB]

0761. **TAWNY OWL**

Strix aluco

Fairly common resident.

The approximate numbers recorded each month were:

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
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8 5 25 17 31 13 18 19 14 10 7 6

A total of 173 birds were reported. Although records came from throughout the County, there were 70 fewer reports for the year than in 1996. Most of these were of calling birds. Only 4 pairs in Kingley Vale and 2 in West Dean Woods were confirmed as breeding. Both of these sites were the subject of the Common Bird Census.

Juveniles were seen at Pulborough and at Bexhill. There were no other breeding reports.

Two birds were the victims of road traffic accidents. [JTAB]

0767. **LONG-EARED OWL**

Asio otis

Rare resident and very scarce passage migrant and winter visitor.

The approximate numbers recorded each month were:

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
6	5	5	1	1	2	-	-	2	2	2	1

The total of 27 birds is an advance of 3 when compared to 1996 and, interestingly, nearly all the reports are from different localities, mainly spread along the coast. Only 5 records were from inland sites and all were in West Sussex. The report of a single bird at Billingshurst was the most northerly.

As expected, January through to the end of March produced the most records, possibly due to the bareness of foliage.

The most seen at any one time was of 3, hunting together, in the Newhaven area on 14th Feb. [JTAB]

0768. **SHORT-EARED OWL**

Asio flammeus

Scarce winter visitor and passage migrant. Has bred.

The approximate numbers recorded each month were:

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
10	13	26	18	5	-	-	-	7	17	5	4

This year's total is an increase of 30 over that for 1996. Records are mainly from the coastal levels and Harbours. Thorney Channel, together with Glynde and Laughton Levels, have produced the most records. Only 6 have come from other, inland, sites.

Although most contacts were with single birds, Laughton Levels produced 8 on 5th Feb. Unusually, a single bird was seen over the LEC Airfield, Bognor Regis, in December. It was very close to a large industrial area and railway line. [JTAB]

0778. **NIGHTJAR**

Caprimulgus europaeus

Fairly common summer visitor rarely seen on migration.

The first records were of 2 on 1 May on Ashdown Forest and 4 at Lavington Common. The next birds were not observed until 13 May, but these were quickly followed by others

in various localities across the County during that week. An interesting record is of one incoming bird, flushed from a breakwater at Brighton on 27 May.

Breeding season counts this year were down, with 110 territories recorded throughout the County, compared with 140 last year. These included 52 from Ashdown Forest, and 11 from 6 other sites in East Sussex. In West Sussex, 47 records came from 13 localities.

The last observations of the year were of two birds at Chiseldown, East Dean, on 20 Aug, and of a single bird at Icklesham on 8 Sept. [JB]

0795. **SWIFT**

Apus apus

Common summer visitor and passage migrant.

First recorded from Weir Wood Res on 21 Apr. Small numbers were reported for the remainder of the month. Numbers only began to increase during the first week of May, with 300 birds at Chichester GPs on 4th, and 190 at North Brooks, Pulborough, on 7th. The largest gathering of the month was, once again, at Chichester GPs, with 1000 birds there on 20th. Total numbers for the month were well down on last year.

Numbers were good into the early summer, with notable counts of 600 at Rye Hbr on 8 June, 348 at Goring Gap on 22nd and 854 at Bexhill and Hastings on 28th. Some unusually high counts were reported during July and August, with 2000 flying west at Pagham Intertidals on 31 July. Icklesham reported 1000 birds on 1 Aug and 5000 were at Selsey Bill on 9th. By the end of the month, numbers had fallen dramatically.

Breeding was reported from only one site, at Wick, Littlehampton.

During September, the highest count was of 36 at Balsdean, nr Rottingdean; otherwise, the species was recorded in very small numbers.

The last birds for the year were recorded at Pagham Hbr and Widewater, Lancing, on 6 Nov. [RPu]

0798. **ALPINE SWIFT**

Apus melba

Rare vagrant.

One, at Worthing, on 14 May, arrived from a southerly direction, off the sea, with a small party of Swifts (*Apus apus*). It moved away north-east. (PJ). It has been accepted by *British Birds*.

Two east over Belle Tout Lighthouse, Beachy Head, on 17 May (JB, RJF) circled around briefly before flying off north-east. They represent the first multiple occurrence of this species in the County and have been accepted by *British Birds*. Eight have been recorded during the 1990s and 33 in total, of which 13 have been in May and 15 at Beachy Head. [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	42	16	32	30

Number of inland sites	14	7	12	16
Number of coastal sites	13	7	10	9

Numbers show a marginal increase on those for last year, with a slight preference for inland sites. Single birds were the norm, but two together were seen at both Kneppmill Pond and at Icklesham on 1 Jan. There were three at Rodmell Brooks on 2nd and 2 at Hunston on 3rd. An additional two were at Arundel on 3rd.

Breeding probably occurred at Warnham LNR, but the only confirmation came from Pippingford Park, Ashdown Forest, when 4 juveniles were seen with an adult on 30 July. [DEGC]

0846. **HOOPOE**

Upupa epops

Very scarce spring and autumn passage migrant; has bred.

Only one record this year; of a single bird seen at various sites around the Church Norton area, Pagham Hbr, between 10 and 18 April. The worst showing since 1982. [SJP]

0848. **WRYNECK**

Jynx torquilla

Very scarce passage migrant; has bred.

Reports were received of 10 birds only, all singles. The two spring records were in April, at Birling Gap on 13th and St Leonards on 18th.

The autumn records began in late August, at Icklesham on 29th and Thorney Deeps on 31st. In September, there were reports from the Pagham Information Centre on 1st, Thorney Island on 4th, Chilver Bridge, Arlington, on 12th, Silverhill Park, Hastings, on 20th and Icklesham on 22nd. The last record of the year was from Northiam on 30 Oct, reported as attempting to feed on nuts in a garden. [LM]

0856. **GREEN WOODPECKER**

Picus viridis

Fairly common resident.

A total of 223 records was received from 107 sites across the county, with reports from 48 of the sites being in the breeding season. This was a further increase in reporting over the creditable level achieved in 1996 and is a very welcome trend.

CBCs and other surveys recorded pairs at Kingley Vale (3); Stedham Common; Lavington Common (2); Barns Copse, Binsted; Hotham Park, Bognor Regis; Pulborough Brooks RSPB (4); Pippingford Park, Ashdown (3); and at Grantleys Fm, Maynard's Green. Breeding was also confirmed at West Wittering; Stedham Common; Church Norton; Lavington Common; Rewell Wood, Arundel; Cissbury Ring; Streat; Ashdown Forest (4 locations); and Marline Wood, Hastings. Territorial males, or pairs, were reported from 15 other locations.

Juveniles were seen at West Wittering; Church Norton; Rewell Wood, Arundel; Atherington, Climping; Littlehampton GC; Cissbury Ring; Partridge Green; Streat; Isfield; Horney Common, Maresfield; Cuckmere Haven; Darch's Wood, Cross-in-Hand; Darwell Res; and Marline Wood, Hastings.

One was seen flying round the west breakwater at Brighton Marina on 2 Apr. Another

was feeding in the dunes at East Head, Chichester Hbr, on 24 Jul. At Cissbury Ring, one was re-trapped and 2 others trapped and ringed in September, and a further one was ringed in October. [LM]

0876. **GREAT SPOTTED WOODPECKER**

Dendrocopos major

Common resident.

The earliest territorial activity reported was on 9 Feb at Sandgate Park, Storrington. CBCs and other surveys recorded pairs at West Dean Woods; Stedham Common (2); Lavington Common (2); Hotham Park, Bognor Regis; Barns Copse, Binsted; Pippingford Park, Ashdown (5); Holtye (2); and Grantleys Fm, Maynard's Green (2). Breeding was confirmed at a further 9 locations and territorial males at 17.

Juveniles were observed at Chapel Common, Liphook; Wheatsheaf Common, Milland; Stedham Common; Bognor Regis GC; Tilgate Forest; Wivelsfield Green; Streat; Lewes Brooks; Scobells Fm, Barcombe; Chelwood Beacon, Ashdown; and Isfield.

There were seven records of movements at the coast: at Hastings Beach in September, 1N on 7th, 1E on 19th, 3E on 21st, and 1E on 28th; and at Galley Hill, Bexhill, in September, 1W on 13th, 1W on 14th, and in October, 1E on 24th. [LM]

0887. **LESSER SPOTTED WOODPECKER**

Dendrocopos minor

Fairly common resident.

Records were received from 49 sites across the county (27 of them in the breeding season). Pairs, or territorial males, were reported from Pond Copse, Stanstead; Burton MP; Burton Park, Duncton; Ebernoe Common; Warren Hill NT, Washington; Wiston Estate, Steyning; Holedean Fm, Henfield; Streat; the Ashdown Forest Centre; Millbrook, Ashdown; and Eridge Park (2 locations).

A total of 85 records was received for this year, a significant increase over the 68 for 1996; 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.

1996: The 25 Woodlarks recorded on 4 and 25 Jan were not seen on Woolbeding Common as such, but were seen on nearby stubble fields. Although the commons and heaths provide breeding areas, the species rarely winters there, preferring cereal and stubble fields. (LWO)

1997: In January, 42 were recorded from 4 localities in West Sussex, mostly from wheat stubble at Chapel Common, Liphook, where the highest day's total was 13. By the beginning of February, they had dispersed and were found throughout the month as singletons, pairs and trios on various western commons (10 sites). Birds were noted singing and pairing off. This behaviour was well in advance of that in 1996. By the end of March, 15 western sites had been occupied by 19 pairs and 8 singletons, and one pair was reported as breeding at Midhurst on 24th. In April, several pairs nested and were seen with young, and 8 singing males and a pair were reported. In May, a second brood was

found, and a pair with young elsewhere. There were no breeding records from East Sussex.

In July and August, parties of 11, 15, 19 and 11 were found in West Sussex. These broke up in September, and small groups and singletons were reported from several localities, including Beachy Head in the east. Throughout October, they separated even more and scattered widely, mainly on the coast from Thorney Deepes in the west, to Fairlight Glen in the east.

In November and December, many of the Woodlarks reassembled, and gatherings of 30 on 8 Dec and 24 on 22 Dec returned to cereal stubble at Chapel Common, Liphook, thus completing the cycle.

From the beginning of the breeding season, the RSPB carried out a thorough survey of potential and actual breeding sites throughout much of the County, in order to clarify the position of the Woodlark. The species was present in some 30 localities and actual breeding or breeding behaviour confirmed in many of them. [JB]

0976. SKYLARK

Alauda arvensis

Common resident, passage migrant and winter visitor.

Flocks of 10 or more birds were reported from 21 sites during the first winter period. By far the largest congregations were to be found around Shoreham during a very cold spell in January when 800 were reported on the 3rd and, at Cuckoo Corner, 20 on the 4th, flocks of 250 and 900 on the 5th, and 500 and 900 on the 6th. Other large flocks during this cold spell were 120 at Selsey on 4 Jan and 250 on Ditchling Beacon on 10 Jan. Winter numbers were very low at Thorney Airfield where 24 on 5 Feb was the highest recorded. This was also the only flock recorded in February. The last and only other flock reported was one of 80 at Earnley on 2 Mar. The only recorded movements were from Bexhill where the maximum seen, out of a total for January of 27, was 13 W on the 13th.

The first singing birds were reported from Horse Eye Level, Pevensey, on 14 Feb. During the breeding season, birds were reported from, and probably bred at, 42 sites involving a minimum of 300 pairs. Observers at Pulborough Brooks RSPB Reserve estimated the breeding population to be 48 pairs, with a further 17 on Amberley Wild Brooks, and 29 pairs were recorded at Rye Hbr LNR. The population on Ashdown Forest is difficult to quantify, but records of confirmed or probable breeding were recorded from 44 100m squares and possible breeding from a further 48 squares, giving a grand total of 92. Allowing for duplication, where the same pair may occupy adjacent squares, the probable population lies between 50 and 60 pairs. Singing birds were reported from Pevensey, with 8 on Horse Eye Level and 26 on Bridge Level. Various downland sites produced records of a minimum of 94 pairs.

The first autumn flocks were 15 at Kneppmill Pond on 29 Sept and 25 at West Wittering on 10 Oct. A count of 250 at Sheepcote Valley, Brighton, on 23 Oct and the same number at Rye Hbr LNR on 16 Nov, with 230 at Ovingdean on 27 Dec were the highest numbers recorded in the second winter period. Other major flocks to the end of the year were 140 at Pagham Hbr on 19 Oct, 100 at Amberley village on 14 Nov and, at Thorney Island, there were 100 on 22 Oct and 120 on 19 Dec. Few movements were reported. At Climping, 19 flew E on 18 Oct, at Pagham 140 flew E on 22 Oct and at Bexhill, 23 E and 17 W were the total recorded during October. The last observation of the year was of 7 W at Littlehampton on 29 Dec. [RTP]

0978. **SHORE LARK**

Eremophila alpestris

Rare winter visitor.

Seven were recorded in the best year for this species in the County since 1972. Two were seen along the seafront at East Wittering on 18 Oct (RFW), and three were at Sovereign Marina, Eastbourne, on at least 2-3 Nov (TJW *et al*), with one still present on 9th (RDME). Two flew north-east over Brighton Marina on 4 Nov (IJW) and one was at Rye Hbr Fm on 23 Nov (PMT). Only 13 have been recorded during the 1990s, all between mid-October and late April. [RJF]

0981. **SAND MARTIN**

Riparia riparia

Fairly common summer visitor and very common passage migrant.

A single bird seen at the Narrow Pit, Rye Hbr, on 5 Mar, joins that at Chichester GPs in 1994 as the earliest record in Sussex. Although small numbers were reported during the following 3 weeks, it was not until 26 Mar that there was a record in double figures when 37 were seen at Ivy Lake, Chichester GPs. The same site saw the first 3-figure count of the year when 200 were reported on 13 Apr. Sixty at Castle Water, Rye Hbr, on 12 Apr was the largest passage count in the east of the County.

Confirmed breeding records were received from Coates Common (10 – 20 holes in the Sandpit), Duncton Common (c40 adults at nest holes on 6 July), Eartham (only a few of the 210 holes in use), Sullington Warren (probably 5 pairs) and Washington Rock Common (c20 pairs with young on 19 July). Fifty birds were present at the sandpit on Lavington Common on 6 July which suggests probable breeding here. Heath End Sandpit, Petworth, had no colony in 1997.

Whereas numbers on spring passage are greater in West Sussex, it is the east of the County which generally produces more records in autumn. Movements were noted at Icklesham from 12 July through to October. An estimated 5000 were at roost there on 2 Sept. Records from other sites in August included 64 moving south in an hour at Selsey Bill on 5th, 500 at the North Wall, Pagham Hbr, on 26th, and 100 at Barcombe Res on 28th. September saw 379E in 5.75hrs along the shore at Bexhill and Hastings on 7th, and 1420W there in 3hrs on 14th. A thousand were seen at both the North Wall, Pagham Hbr, and in the Lower Cuckmere Valley on 10th; 2000 passed Birling Gap on 14th, 1000 were over Barcombe Res on 18th and the final significant count was of 200 at Arlington Res on 21st. The last record for the year was of a singleton along the west side of Pagham Hbr on 13 Nov.

The total of 4447 birds ringed at Icklesham in 1997 was a below-average annual figure, compared with over 13,000 the previous year. [MJM]

0992. **SWALLOW**

Hirundo rustica

Common summer visitor and abundant passage migrant.

The first record of the year was of a single bird flying east along the shore in the Bexhill/Hastings area on 16 Mar, followed by another there a week later. Not until 5 Apr was there a double-figure count, 20 at Pagham Hbr, recorded, and until 11 Apr, when 100 were over Arlington Res, only four other counts above 10 were reported. Spring passage

generally passed with smallish numbers. Further records in 3-figures were 100 at Barcombe Res (22 Apr) and at RSPB Pulborough Brooks (26 Apr and 6 May); 200 at Ivy Lake, Chichester GPs (6 May); 150 at Northpoint Pit, Rye, (12 May) and 230 over Long Pit, Rye, (21 May).

Few breeding records were received. Three nests fledged 11 young at Byworth, 61 *pulli* were ringed from 17 nests at three sites in mid-Sussex, a minimum of 8 pairs reared a substantial number of young at Streat, 3 juveniles fledged from a nest at Barcombe, and breeding was also reported from Patcham, Wivelsfield, Ditchling and at Bulverhythe, St Leonards.

Significant pre-dispersal gatherings were noted from the second half of July onwards. Some 450 were at the North Wall, Pagham Hbr, on 20th and 200 were seen at Thorney Deeps on 23rd. Three hundred at Pilsey Island on 5 Aug were followed by records of 200 juveniles over pasture at East Hoathly on 16th, 1000 at Icklesham (on 24th) and 500 at Pulborough Brooks on 26th.

Passage numbers increased noticeably at the end of the first week in September: 305 flew east off West Beach, Littlehampton, on 6th, while at Goring Gap, on the same day, 400 flew north off the sea. An estimated 5000 were seen in the evening of 9 Sept at Church Norton and the same number recorded in the Lower Cuckmere Valley the next day. On 14 Sept, 3706 passed west in 3hrs along the shore at Bexhill and Hastings; 3000 were over Arlington Res late in the day on 21 Sept, and a count at Pagham Hbr on 23rd revealed an estimated 3000 moving south.

Records in excess of 100 were received regularly up to 2 Nov. Notable among these were 300 feeding over Angmering Park Estate on 1 Oct, 250 picking at soil in a field on the west side of Pagham Hbr, close to Church Norton, on 6 Oct, 600 at Selsey Bill on 11 Oct, 400 moving south-east at Belle Tout, Beachy Head, on 20 Oct, and 100 at Icklesham on 2 Nov. The final sighting was of a single bird over Pett Level on the late date of 14 Dec (PT).

A total of 5413 Swallows were ringed at Icklesham during the year, which was considered to be a relatively good total. [MJM]

0995. **RED-RUMPED SWALLOW**

Hirundo daurica

Rare spring vagrant.

One flew north over Birling Gap at 08.10 BST on 2 May (RHC, PDL, IRT *et al*). This record has been accepted by *British Birds*. Another was seen at Sidlesham, Pagham Hbr, on 2 Sept (TJE) and has also been accepted by *British Birds*. These represent the 16th and 17th County records. Of these, 9 have been during the 1990s and only 3 were prior to 1985. All except one (the foregoing September sighting) have been recorded from mid-April to late May with, albeit brief, occurrences during 2-9 May in the Beachy Head area in 4 of the last 5 years. [RJF]

0998. **CLIFF SWALLOW**

Hirundo pyrrhonota

Very rare vagrant.

1996: A juvenile hawking for insects over the beach at Church Norton for approximately five minutes on 1 Oct (TJE), drifted off westwards with other hirundines and could not be re-found (see *Rare Birds* 2:198). It is the first to be recorded in the County and has been

accepted by *British Birds* as the 5th British record. It arrived just a day before the Black and White Warbler at Beachy Head (*SxBR* 49:155), these two birds almost doubling the County total of American passerines. [RJF]

1001. HOUSE MARTIN

Delichon urbica

Common summer visitor and abundant passage migrant.

An early bird was seen over Barcombe Res on 17 Mar, but then 10 days elapsed before the next 2 were sighted at RSPB Pulborough Brooks and a further week before 3 were at Horney Common, Maresfield, and 1 at Ferring. Spring passage then picked up, and by the end of April records of 180 at Pulborough Brooks (on 26th), 100 at Ivy Lake, Chichester GPs, and 600 at Bewl Water (both on 27th) were received. Passage continued in May, with reports of major counts of 600 and 400 at Ivy Lake, Chichester GPs, (on 6th and 12th respectively), 1000 at Bewl Water (on 7th) and 500 there on 23rd.

More breeding records were received in 1997 than in recent years and it is to be hoped that this trend will continue. Reports of breeding came from Horney Common, Maresfield; a site on the Upper Adur Levels; Hassocks; Mountfield (11 pairs), East Grinstead; Ditchling; Plumpton Agricultural College; Five Ash Down, Uckfield (5 nestlings found dead on the ground under the nest); West Durrington (6 pairs); Coolham; Maynard's Green (24 nests); Sheffield Park Station; Hankham Level, Pevensey; and in Bognor Regis.

The first indications of autumn passage came with birds being seen in fluctuating numbers over Icklesham from the beginning of August, and 62 birds moving west in 1.5hrs along the shore at Bexhill and Hastings on 17 Aug. Sizeable counts in that month included 100 at Whitbread Hollow, Beachy Head, on 21st, 200 over Darwell Res on 24th and 250 at RSPB Pulborough Brooks on 26th. By September, numbers had grown and sightings included 4000 at Church Norton (on 9th), 2350 moving westwards in 2.5hrs along the shore at Bexhill and Hastings, (on 14th); 8000 over Sheepcote Valley, Brighton, (on 18th), and 1000 at Pulborough Brooks on 21st.

The first half of October continued to see a strong passage along the shore in the Bexhill and Hastings area: 2500 flew west in 2.75hrs on 2nd, 2720, also west, in 3.75hrs on 5th, and 3000W and 40E in 3hrs on 12th. By 14th, numbers there had dropped to 650W and 150 E in 1.75hrs. A thousand birds were estimated at Whitbread Hollow on 4th, 400 flew east at Selsey Bill on 12th, on which day 1200 were counted at Birling Gap. The last record in 3-figures was of 150 feeding over Horseshoe Plantation, Beachy Head, on 19 Oct. Fourteen records of sightings in November were received, covering an area from Church Norton in the west to Rye in the east, with only one inland sighting, from Storrington. Three birds in Pett village on 29 Nov was the final record for the year. [MJM]

1005. TAWNY PIPIT

Anthus campestris

Very scarce visitor.

A juvenile at Littlehampton GC on 6 Sept (RJLK) was the only record for the year. It did not linger long, before flying off westwards. This is the 23rd to be recorded in the County during the 1990s (of which 17 have been in September) but is the only record in the last two years. [RJF]

1009. **TREE PIPIT**

Anthus trivialis

Fairly common but local summer visitor and passage migrant.

The first arrival was reported from Littlehampton on 30 Mar. The second was at Worth Forest on 8 Apr, immediately after which date immigrants were recorded throughout the month, both from the coast and from inland breeding areas.

This year, 81 pairs or singing males were reported from Ashdown Forest, the same as in 1996. Rather fewer than in 1996 were records of 19 from Pippingford Park and 57 from the rest of the County — 42 from West Sussex and 15 from East Sussex.

Return movement was first noted at Selsey Bill on 5 Aug, and the last at Icklesham on 12 Oct. Most of the autumn's few records were coastal, the only high count being 40 at Birling Gap on 31 Aug. Otherwise, observations were made of only 1 – 4 birds on each recording day. These were spread evenly over the period. A total of 172 migrant birds were recorded, compared to 569 in 1996. [JB]

1011. **MEADOW PIPIT**

Anthus pratensis

Locally common resident, very common passage migrant, winter visitor.

Groups of wintering birds turned up in typical habitats (e.g., 145 on an empty, grassed, caravan site at Chichester GPs on 6 Jan) and in rarely watched locations (e.g., 40 at Albourne Place on 4 Jan). Some sites held parties for some time: 50 at Ivy Lake, Chichester GPs, on 25 Feb may have been the residue of the January birds. Pulborough Brooks reported 23 on 3 Jan, 40 on 27 Feb and 50 on 7 Mar (with 30 at the end of the year, on 5 Dec).

The increase apparent on 7 Mar at Pulborough probably represented the first arriving birds. There were about 100 in off the sea at Brighton Marina on that day, but there were no further counts of migrants until 20 Mar, when good numbers were seen at Pagham Hbr (90) and between Bexhill and Hastings (86 flying east in 3.25 hrs). Subsequent counts from the latter area peaked at 231 (220 of which were passing east) in 3.5 hrs on 30 Mar, and the March total was 543 (but April brought only 47). Seaford recorded smaller numbers until 126 in 3 hours on 11 Apr. Spring passage seems generally to have been lighter than in 1996, though it was equally concentrated (1996: 10 Mar to 8-9 Apr).

There were scattered breeding season records from Ashdown Forest (where one was on territory at Millbrook on 5 Mar: cf. 15 Mar in 1996), Cuckoo Corner at Coombes, and Pilsley Island. Both Cuckmere Haven and Cissbury Ring held four pairs, and there were two singing birds on Telscombe Tye, with a further four nearby on Tennant Hill. At Rye Hbr SSSI, there were 23 pairs on 1 May, and a count of the Amberley–Pulborough Brooks area revealed 44 pairs on 1 June.

Forty-five were on Castle Hill, Woodingdean, by 30 July, and on the early date of 5 Aug, 30 flew south at Selsey Bill in one hour. Autumn records from the Bexhill and Hastings area provide an indication of the volume and timing of passage in the east of the

County to compare with movements (and direction) elsewhere:

Date	Number	Time	Direction	Reports elsewhere
14 Sept	152	3	W	
17 Sept				Church Norton, 150
				Reports elsewhere
18 Sept				Church Norton, 520
19 Sept	689	3.5	E	
20 Sept				Thorney Island, 100
21 Sept	678	4.75	E	Selsey Bill, 222; Goring, 100E; Worthing, 162E in 0.3 hrs
22 Sept	930	2.75	E	
23 Sept	612	1.75	E	Ticehurst/Bewl Water, 100
24 Sept	270	2.25	E	Greenlease Fm, Church Norton, 250
25 Sept	414	2.75	E	Greenlease Fm, Church Norton, 400
26 Sept	163	1.5	E	
27 Sept	435	2.25	E	Church Norton shingle spit, 500E; Climping, 106E
28 Sept	928	3.25	E	Birling Gap, 100E; Pett Pools, 250; Scotney Court GP, 140
29 Sept	34	3.75	E	
1 Oct				Church Norton, 280
2 Oct	228	2.75	W	
5 Oct	65	3.75	W	Greenlease Fm, Church Norton, 500+
10 Oct				West Wittering, 150
11 Oct				Brighton Marina, 250W
12 Oct	30	3	W	
13 Oct	63	2.25	W	
14 Oct	20	1.75	W	
15 Oct				Goring Gap, 150E
18 Oct				Goring Gap, 100
19 Oct	27	2	E	
22 Oct	63	1.5	E	Church Norton, 133E
24 Oct	60	1.75	E	
25 Oct	233	2.25	E	Duncton Common, 100

In addition to the high inland counts at Ticehurst and Duncton listed in the foregoing table, 40 at Holmbush Tip, Faygate, and up to 50 on Highdean Hill, Washington, coincided with heavy coastal movements on 21 Sept. It is of interest that peak movements at Dungeness, where the main passage started on 9 Sept, were between 22 Sept and 3 Oct, with subsequent high counts on 6, 10 and 11 Oct: most movement there is to the NW (*Dungeness Bird Observatory Report, 1997, p.37-38*).

Passage petered out at the end of October and thereafter the maximum count was 60 at Duncton Common on 21 Dec. Were these birds the hard core of the 100 there on 25 Oct? Here, perhaps, is an example of passage groups including birds stopping to winter in Sussex. [CB]

1012. RED-THROATED PIPIT

Anthus cervinus

Very rare vagrant.

1995: Two were recorded: a summer-plumaged adult on the edge of Littlehampton GC on 24 Apr (BA) flew off north when flushed by a dog walker, while one flew east, calling,

over Church Norton on 11 Oct (TJE). Both have been accepted by *British Birds* and are only the 6th and 7th to be recorded in the County. The first 4 records (1969-84) were in October, while the most recent other record was in late May-early June 1991. Regarding this last individual, the details in the *Birds of Sussex* are correct, despite the *addenda* suggesting otherwise! It was frequently to be found in song beside the Cuckmere Haven oxbows, just south of Exceat Bridge. [RJF]

1014. **ROCK PIPIT**

Anthus petrosus

Very scarce resident, fairly common passage migrant and winter visitor. Rare away from the coast.

There were reports from 14 sites in January and 11 in February, with maxima of 16 birds at Apuldrum on 23 Jan and 10 around Shoreham Fort on 7 and 25 Jan. Breeding season records came only from Brighton Marina, Saltdean, Newhaven Cliffs and Birling Gap. At the end of the year, the species was noted from 13 sites in November, and 15 in December, with 8 the highest congregation (on Thorney Island, 14 Nov, and at Apuldrum, 30 Dec). The furthest inland was one on the Union Canal at East Guldeford on 6 Dec. [CB]

1015. **WATER PIPIT**

Anthus spinoletta

Scarce winter visitor and passage migrant.

There were accepted records of about 34 birds, only four of which were in the second half of the year. The extreme dates were 2 Jan to 3 Apr and 21 Oct to 5 Dec: spring departure was earlier than in some years and the second winter period was, as is often the case, disappointing. Given the regular reports from the first days of January, it is not clear why this should be so. Nevertheless, the species is being seen at more locations than was the case a few years ago.

Thorney Island SF held two on 2 Jan and one the next day (CBC): surprisingly, these were the only records for this regular and well-watched site during the year. Freezing conditions on 5 Jan brought one to the edge of the mud and the saltmarsh by the River Adur at Shoreham Airport (CAH, JCH): this bird appeared to have flesh coloured legs. There was no note of the leg colour of what was the same or another bird seen nearby on 6 Jan (IJW), and on a number of dates thereafter. Other regular sites holding birds at the beginning of the year included Apuldrum SF from 7 Jan to 20 Feb (TJE); the North Wall of Pagham Hbr, with one on 14 and 16 Jan, and 2 on 26 Feb and also on 25 and 27 Mar, by which time one was attaining summer plumage (TJE, AH); Combe Haven, from 12–15 birds at the start of February (RTP, IS); and at Filsham which had 7 on 7 Feb, and 3 on 15 Feb (BFF, TF, RJF). In addition, one was at Icklesham on 15 Feb, with up to 5 there through March, gradually attaining summer plumage, and with the last one seen on 3 Apr (CHD, IJW). Nearby, at Pett Pools, one remained until April Fool's Day. The reporter of these birds rightly pointed to their "extremely tantalising behaviour, spending a lot of time once flushed flying in very broad circles until settling on the far side of an un-bridged ditch/inaccessible swamp/well-maintained barbed wire fence".

In the autumn, three birds were noted on one day only: at Marsham Sewer, Pett, on 21 Oct; at Apuldrum on 26 Nov (TJE) and at Littlehampton GC on 5 Dec (RJLK). The only long stayer was at Icklesham, from 16 Nov (CHD). [CB]

1014b. **SCANDINAVIAN ROCK PIPIT**

Anthus petrosus littoralis

1991: Two at Widewater on 23 Mar and a different individual present on 24th showed the characteristics of the Fenno-Scandinavian race *A. p. littoralis*, colloquially known as the Scandinavian Rock Pipit (RJF).

1992: One at Widewater on 28 Mar (RJF) was considered to show the characteristics of the Fenno-Scandinavian race *A. p. littoralis*. It was originally published as a Water Pipit (*SxBR* 45:62), but subsequently withdrawn (*SxBR* 49:122). These records have been reviewed, as were others of Water Pipits at this site during 1990s. Those published as Water Pipits and not mentioned above remain accepted as such.

1997: One on the beach at Cow Gap, Beachy Head, on 15 Mar (JB, RJF, PN) showed the characteristics of the Fenno-Scandinavian race *A. p. littoralis*, as did two at North Wall, Pagham Hbr, on 25 Mar (TJE, AH). Twenty-two have been recorded during the 1990s, but many more must be overlooked. Half were in March, 10 (in one flock) in late February and one in September. [RJF]

1017. **YELLOW WAGTAIL**

Motacilla flava

Fairly common but localised summer visitor and common passage migrant.

Recorded on 9 Mar at Rye Hbr, the earliest date for the County, and then from 22 Mar to 13 Oct (Shoreham Hbr.). Spring passage appeared, characteristically, to be little more than a dribble: there were only two double-figure counts in April: 13 at Thorney Island on 22nd, and 14 east over Bexhill and Hastings on 27th. Dungeness appears to be receiving more birds in the spring, and higher day-counts: the maximum there was 55 on 1 May (*Dungeness Bird Observatory Report, 1997, p.38*).

Twenty-five pairs were counted at Rye Hbr SSSI (*cf.* 28 displaying males in 1996, but 66 pairs in 1990); no more than 5 or 6 on Glynde Level; and, sadly, none on the Amberley-Pulborough Brooks (*cf.* 19 pairs at Pulborough in 1992). There was no count from the Pevensey Levels, though 25 juveniles on Horse Eye Level on 14 July may have been locally bred birds.

The first clear instance of passage came on 5 Aug, with 15 flying south from Selsey Bill in an hour. By 24 Aug, 60 were roosting at Thorney Deepes and 260 were around the intertidal zone at Pagham Hbr on 30 Aug. There were six double-figure counts on the last day of August, with 120 at Birling Gap: 185 were there on 1 Sept when a flock of about 100 flew over Belle Tout. Besides these two counts, the first ten days of September brought six three-figure counts, five from the Pagham Hbr area and one from Climping (maximum 170 at Halsey's Fm, Sidlesham, on 7th). There were no reports from Arlington after 1 Sept: indeed, only a handful of reports came from inland sites, with 7 at Barcombe Mills Res on 14 Sept being the largest group. There were 41 bird days in October. (*cf.* 83 in 1996; *ca.*200 in 1995; 23 in 1994; 88 in 1993). The main period of autumn passage in Sussex began later than that at Dungeness (8 Aug; 19 Aug in Sussex), but finished at the same time – 10 Sept (*Dungeness Bird Observatory Report, 1997, p.39*).

Blue-headed Wagtail, *M. f. flava*: there were three records of birds showing the characteristics of this, the nominate race. Each was male: at Selsey Bill (Pontins) on 27 Apr (TJE); on Glynde Levels on 9 June (IJW); and, finally, at Climping on 31 Aug (ARK).

Grey-headed Wagtail, *M. f. thunbergi*: a male at the North Wall of Pagham Hbr on 24 June and again on 5 July (TJE) was the eighth County record of this rare Scandinavian form. It was, perhaps, accompanied by a female on the first date. The County's three previous records are from 1995 (10 June), 1993 (11-12 May) and 1984. [CB]

1019. GREY WAGTAIL

Motacilla cinerea

Fairly common resident, passage migrant and winter visitor.

There were reports from 18 sites in January, but only 11 in February, a particularly disappointing month. Pairs were on territory from early March. Coverage of breeding was patchy, but the sites noted included the characteristic and the regular, e.g., Swanbourne Lake at Arundel, Hassocks (perhaps more surprising), and the outfall of Balcombe Lake. There were also pairs at Chelwood Beacon and Millbrook on Ashdown Forest and at Ardingly, Plumpton (where five young were reared) and Mountfield. No birds returned to the Darwell Res, where there had been three pairs in 1996.

One flying north at Seaford on 4 June was late arriving and single birds at Shoreham Sanctuary, Bexhill/Hastings and Durrington between 10 and 12 Aug were quite early departures. Passage records were regular from 21 Aug. (*cf.* Dungeness where the poorest passage since 1984 spanned the period from 7 Sept to 10 Oct: *Dungeness Bird Observatory Report, 1997*, p.39). Most September birds flew west along the coast. At the end of the month, the direction of movement changed to the east. Birds settled in for the winter from early October, at Thorney Deeps; Winterbourne, Lewes; Ringmer SF and in Hastings. This was an unexceptional year for the Grey Wagtail. [CB]

1020. PIED WAGTAIL

Motacilla alba

Common resident, passage migrant and winter visitor.

January roosts were smaller than usual (maximum only 50 at Apuldrum on 23 Jan). February saw one three-figure count (175 at Hollington on 26th, which had reduced to 100 by 25 Mar). The Chichester GPs' roost grew from 21 on 25 Feb to 270 on 9 Mar, then reduced to 70 on 19 Mar and 45 on 25 Mar, with one solitary bird left by 13 Apr. Little can be deduced from the scattered breeding season records other than a reminder of this species' foolhardy tenacity: four young fledged from a launch in the Upper Chichester Channel. Unusually, the bird was absent from the Maynard's Green CBC plot.

Autumn passage (rather late in getting under way) was evident from 20 Sept, when there were 30 at Pulborough Brooks. Sixty were at Arlington Res and 87 flew east between Bexhill and Hastings between 22 and 24 Sept. Interestingly, the first wintering bird appeared in Preston Park, Brighton, on the last date. The largest movement noted in the month was of 136 flying east in 3.25 hrs between Bexhill and Hastings on the 28th. In October, there was a good spread of double-figure counts, but only one in excess of a hundred: 250 at Church Norton on 5th. Passage at Dungeness started in late September and peaked between 3 Oct and 7 Nov, rather later than in Sussex (*Dungeness Bird Observatory Report, 1997*, p.39). There were no November or December counts of more than 100, of either moving or roosting birds. This was a disappointing year for the Pied

Wagtail.

A rather low total of between 20 and 25 White Wagtails (*M. a. alba*) was recorded from 4 Mar to 28 Apr, with a further six in the autumn. Five of the latter were among 53 Pied Wagtails at Beachy Head on the late date of 26 Oct. Henfield Levels and Chichester GPs were the only sites away from the coast. [CB]

1048. **WAXWING**

Bombycilla garrulus

A very scarce winter visitor.

After the exciting irruption of last year, things are back to normal again, with just a single sighting on 21 Jan at Mountfield, near Battle. [DEGC]

1066. **WREN**

Troglodytes troglodytes

Abundant resident.

Records were received for 23 sites but, regrettably, at least 6 sites from which reports were received last year, were missing. Consequently, continuity has been lost. This species also remains sadly under-reported and it is therefore impossible to monitor any trends satisfactorily.

Breeding was confirmed at 11 sites (7 last year) and was probable at 4 others. Breeding surveys found 22 territories at Marsh Fm, Yapton; 20 at Grantleys Fm, Maynard's Green; 16 singing males at Darwell Res; 10 territories at Barns Copse, Binstead; 9 at Lavington Common; 8 pairs at Scobells Fm, Barcombe; 6 pairs at Stedham Common; 3 pairs in West Dean Woods and 2 in Kingley Vale, and was confirmed at Hotham Park, Bognor Regis, and at Warnham LNR. Breeding was probable at Forest Mere (2 singing males); Lords Piece, Sutton Common (6 territories); Folly Pond, Liphook, (3 singing males) and at Hassocks Village (1 pair). Breeding densities for 3 sites varied from 0.33 through 0.44 to 0.63 pairs/ha. Breeding productivity was not recorded for any site.

The only autumn influx noted was of 8 at Whitbread Hollow, Beachy Head, on 30 Oct.

At Cissbury Ring, 38 birds, a reduction of 5 on 1996, were ringed (1-5 most sessions) during the April-November season. [JAH]

1084. **DUNNOCK**

Prunella modularis

Abundant resident.

There was a welcomed increase in reporting this abundant resident species this year, the true status of which is still grossly under-recorded and impossible to monitor. Records were received for 33 sites, compared with only 14 in 1996, but this total included only 8 from 1996 and 6 were missed.

Breeding was confirmed at 14 sites and was probable at 5 others (2 in each category from 1996 were missed). Breeding surveys found 16 pairs holding territories at Marsh Fm, Yapton; 8 singing males at Darwell Res; 5 pairs at Scobells Fm, Barcombe; 4 territories at Grantleys Fm, Maynard's Green; 3 pairs in Kingley Vale; 3 territories at both Barn Copse, Binstead, and on Lavington Common; 2 territories at Chithurst and 2 nests at Plumpton; and single pairs at Byworth, Horney Common, Littleworth and West Dean Woods. Breeding was probable, with 4 singing males at Folly Pond, Liphook, and single pairs or singing males elsewhere. Breeding densities varied from 0.1 to 0.48, average 0.25 pairs/ha

over 4 sites. Productivity recorded was for only 2 nests at Plumpton which produced 4 and 3 young respectively.

The only autumn movement recorded was of 30 along the western sea-wall, Pagham Hbr, on 29 Sept.

At Cissbury Ring, 44 birds were ringed during the April-November season. [JAH]

1099. **ROBIN**

Erithacus rubecula

Abundant resident, passage migrant and winter visitor.

An apparent improvement in the number of records for this species from 18 sites in 1996 to 25 in 1997, masks the fact that 17 sites were new this year, while 10 of last year's were not reported on. It remains a sadly under-reported species the welfare of which is impossible to monitor satisfactorily.

Breeding was confirmed at only 13 sites (4 more than in 1996) and was probable at 2 others. Breeding was confirmed from 42 pairs at Kingley Vale; 23 at Grantleys Fm, Maynard's Green; 16 at Stedham Common; 15 at Marsh Fm, Yapton; 12 at Scobells Fm, Barcombe; 11 at Darwell Res; 11 at West Dean Woods; 9 at Lavington Common; 6 at Sedlow Wood, Westmeston; and single pairs at several other sites. Breeding densities were 0.22 pairs/ha at Marsh Fm, Yapton, and 0.51 pairs/ha at Grantleys Fm, Maynard's Green, but productivity was reported for only 1 site where 1 pair produced 4 young in Hove Park. There were no maximum count figures comparable with those for 1996.

At Cissbury Ring, 60 new birds were ringed during the April-November season, compared with 34 last year, involving from 1 to 7 per session. [JAH]

1104. **NIGHTINGALE**

Luscinia megarhynchos

Fairly common summer visitor and infrequently seen passage migrant.

The first bird was seen at Pulborough Brooks on 28 Mar (SJB): this remarkable date is the second earliest recorded, beaten only by one at Littlehampton on 21 Mar 1988. Singles at Ebernoe on 9 Apr and at Southwater and Pulborough Brooks on 10 Apr were more typical early arrivals. By the end of April, at least 45 had been recorded from 27 different sites, with 7 at Milton Hide on 26 Apr and 8 at Ebernoe on 27 Apr being the maximum counts in the month. By the end of June, 94 birds, mostly singing males, had been recorded from 54 different sites, and May maxima were 7 at Pulborough Brooks on the 9th and 5 at Sedlow Wood, Westmeston, on the 28th. During the spring, Nightingales were recorded from 28 different tetrads in West Sussex and 18 in East Sussex. Members are reminded that this species will be the subject of a national survey in the spring of 1999.

During August, this species was recorded from 12 sites, with 5 at Sedlow Wood and 7 at Milton Hide on the 1st, and 5 at Icklesham on the 2nd and 3rd being the largest counts. Observers at Icklesham recorded Nightingales on 7 dates until 25 Aug, whilst at Beachy Head the species was noted on 7 dates between 3 Aug and 24 Aug, with a maximum of 3 on the 10th. The last and only records for September came from Cissbury where there were 3 on the 19th and one on the 21st. [JAN]

1121. **BLACK REDSTART**

Phoenicurus ochruros

Rare resident, fairly common passage migrant and scarce winter visitor.

Winter birds were seen from the beginning of the year, a favourite site being Shoreham Harbour where 4 were recorded on 11 Jan. The shore between Bexhill and Hastings had a wintering bird that was seen regularly, while another (the same?) was found on several occasions feeding around the De La Warr Pavilion, Bexhill. In the west, the only regular bird was recorded at Widewater, Lancing.

During the period of spring passage, the Cuckmere Lower Valley featured as many as 6 on 15 Mar. There were 6 at Whitbread Hollow, Beachy Head, on 31 Mar. A singing male was observed at the Cement Works, near Shoreham, on 22 May. This was the only such record. There were no further reports until 3 Aug when movement started. Most subsequent records across the county were of individuals. Three were at Birling Gap on 21 Oct. One or 2 birds were seen at regular wintering sites until the end of the year. [DEC]

1122. **REDSTART**

Phoenicurus phoenicurus

Scarce summer visitor and fairly common passage migrant.

The first bird arrived early, on 17 Mar at Pagham Hbr, followed by almost daily arrivals on the coast until 1 May. The highest count was of 35 on Selsey Bill on 30 Apr. Otherwise, all other counts were very low. The first record from an inland locality was at Steyning on 11 Apr, and the first territorial behaviour observed was on Ashdown Forest on 21st.

During the breeding season there were 21 territories or singing birds on Ashdown Forest and 24 in Pippingford Park. There was only one possible breeding record from East Sussex and 2 from West Sussex, a considerable decrease compared with 1996.

The first departure was noted on 11 Aug at Littlehampton, followed by almost daily records of small numbers until 6 Oct when passage tailed off. The last were seen at Sidlesham and at Selsey on 25th. Peak figures were of 10 at Beachy Head and of 20 at Beachy Head and of 20 at

1137. **WHINCHAT**

Saxicola rubetra

Rare summer visitor and fairly common passage migrant.

Recorded from the typical date of 11 Apr (with the next not until the 23rd) to 11 May and from 5 July to 29 Oct. One hundred and fifteen bird days in spring (maximum 14 at Selsey Bill on 30 Apr) represents a decline from the 1996 total of 174 (and *cf.* 87 in 1995, 66 in 1994 and 120 in 1993).

Most encouraging, was the successful breeding recorded at Pulborough Brooks, where 2 young were seen on 28 June. Other mid-summer records – at Icklesham, on 3 June and at Chapel Common, Liphook, on 14 June – were presumably of wandering birds. There were 9 bird days in July, 308 in August (maximum, 43 at Sheepcote Valley, 31 Aug), 379

in September (maximum, 45 on Steyning Round Hill, 2 Sept) and only 13 in October. Characteristically, small groups were recorded at several irregularly or rarely watched locations – 15 by the Long Man above Wilmington on 24 Aug and on Glynde Levels on 26 Aug, with 10 at Fairlight on 31 Aug. The totals given here considerably understate the actual numbers passing through (not least given the absence of detail from Icklesham and that Sheeppcote Valley recorded a further 151 not included in the month totals above), but it does seem to have been a reduced passage, compared to the situation in the first half of the 1990s. It is, though, worth noting that numbers are still above those characteristic of the early and mid 1980s. Double-figure counts in the autumn spanned the period 24 Aug to 10 Sept, very similar to the peak at Dungeness (27 Aug to 6 Sept: *Dungeness Bird Observatory Report, 1997*, p.41). [CB]

1138. **STONECHAT**

Saxicola torquata

Scarce resident and partial migrant.

Records came from only 8 sites in January and 13 in February. This was a disappointing start to the year: reports were received for 33 localities in January 1996 and from 17 in January 1995. Two birds were already on territory at the Old Airfield, Ashdown Forest, by 27 Feb. Breeding season records were concentrated on Ashdown Forest, where there were probably more than 20 pairs. Others were along the coast, from West Wittering to Beachy Head; and on the Downs, especially in the west of the County (e.g., Mill Hill, Shoreham; Cissbury Ring; and West Dean Woods), though with a pair above Plumpton; in the river valleys (e.g., at Coldwaltham Brooks); and on the western commons. A male at Woolbeding Common kept close company with a female Dartford Warbler and there was a similar relationship on Iping Common (where, in 1996, the Dartford Warblers had been harassing the Stonechats). These males seem to have been unmated, and others were noted at Pilsley Island and on Thorney Island (where there were 3 males on 10 Apr, but no females were seen all spring).

Reports from the Seven Sisters Country Park give details of breeding in 1997. The five pairs which were studied had varying rates of success. One of the most interesting aspects was the habitat preferences, one pair remaining faithful to low-lying Bramble, another to an embankment with Sea Crouch Grass, and yet another to Gorse bushes.

Birds trickled back to the coast from July, with 12 at Thorney Island on 15 Oct being the largest group recorded. Reports came from 21 sites in November (seven from north of the Downs) and from 18 sites in December (five north of the Downs). There were apparently fewer than 50 birds in the County in December: those at Woolbeding and Iping were seen in the New Year, still accompanied by a Dartford Warbler. [CB]

1146. **WHEATEAR**

Oenanthe oenanthe

Very scarce breeding summer visitor and common passage migrant.

A good year, with exceptionally early spring and late autumn dates and a successful breeding season at several sites, with additional birds at several potential breeding sites.

The first returning birds were noted in March with 1 at Selsey and 3 at Rye Hbr on 1st, then single figures all along the coast until 12 at Yapton on 19th. Numbers increased from 30th with many sites reporting double figures throughout April.

In the second half of May, and in June, there were birds present at Pagham Hbr, Goring Gap, and the Midrips, and breeding was confirmed at Newhaven Tide Mills, where a pair had 6 young. Nine pairs at Rye Hbr had good breeding success and there were many second broods.

Notes published by the Seven Sisters Country Park give details of breeding success. A female was seen carrying nesting material on 17 and 18 Apr. Thereafter, both the female and the male were seen occasionally until the latter was seen carrying food to a nest on 30 May. Seven young were ringed during the first week of June. The male was still feeding the fledged young on 7 July, and the pair and two of the young were last seen on 13th.

One other pair was thought to have bred in the Park. A male was displaying to a female early in the season: later on, she was seen carrying food to recently fledged youngsters.

The autumn passage started with 1 at Thorney Island on 13 July, followed by 3 at Church Norton on 22nd and then there were numerous records. The largest counts were of 121 at Beachy Head on 16 Aug, 38 at Selsey Bill on 31st, 65 at Steyning Round Hill, on 2 Sept, and 49 at Beachy Head on 6th. The last double-figure count was of 10 at Castle Water, Rye Hbr, on 10 Oct. Records became scarce after the end of the month, with 10 records of single birds in November. The last record was of 2 at Thorney Island on 19 Dec, an exceptionally late date. [BJY]

1149. **DESERT WHEATEAR**

Oenanthe deserti

Very rare vagrant.

A first-winter male was found on the beach at Cow Gap, Beachy Head, on 30 Nov (DC, JFC, BK *et al*), remaining, to the delight of many, to 5 Dec. A photograph of it was published in *Birding World* (10:449). An unprecedented 17 were recorded in Britain and Ireland at this time (see *Rare Birds* 4:29). It has been accepted by *British Birds* and is the 4th County record. The others were on the same beach in mid-April 1966 and at Selsey Bill in late October-November 1960 and early November 1989. [RJF]

1186. **RING OUZEL**

Turdus torquatus

Passage migrant, scarce in spring, often fairly common but local in autumn.

A rather poor year, with records of 9 birds in spring and 70 in autumn, the previous ten-year averages being 31 and 184. The approximate monthly totals were as follows:

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
-	-	1	8	-	-	-	-	3	61	5	1

The first report was of a male at Whitbread Hollow, Beachy Head, on 30 Mar. In April, there were reports of a single bird at Church Norton and 2 at Hollingbury Camp on 2nd, and 2 at Cow Gap, Beachy Head, on 11th, followed by singles at Alfriston on 12th, Patcham on 25th and Fairlight CP on 27th.

The autumn began with singles in September at Galley Hill, Bexhill, on 14th, West

Wittering on 20th and Moulsecoomb Wild Park, Brighton, on 30th. In October, there were reports as follows, set out geographically from west to east: 2 at West Fields, Selsey, on 24th; Paghham Harbour records of singles on 13th and 16th and of 2 on 14th and 15th at Church Norton, with a single at the Ferry Lagoon on 15th; a male at Littlehampton on 20th; a single at Hove on 14th; 8 at Moulsecoomb Wild Park, Brighton, on 24th; at Plumpton, 20 on 15th (of which 5 were trapped and ringed), 2 males and a female on 24th, single males on 26th and 29th, and a female on 31st (with 2 females on 1 Nov); 3 at Seaford Head on 12th; Beachy Head records of 6 at Birling Gap, singles at Horseshoe Plantation and Hodcombe, and 3 at Cow Gap, all on 12th, with a single at Cow Gap on 18th; a male at Glyne Gap Beach, Bexhill, on 25th; 3 on Hastings Beach on 19th; 2 at West Hill, Hastings, on 24th; and a single at Fairlight on 26th.

In addition to the Plumpton report above, November brought records of singles at Church Norton on 20th; Cuckmere Valley on 21st and a first winter male at Sheepecote Valley, Brighton on 24th. The year ended with a single at West Pier, Newhaven, on 12 Dec. [LM]

1187. **BLACKBIRD**

Turdus merula

Abundant resident and winter visitor: perhaps a passage migrant.

Early in the year, the highest counts were 40 at Darwell Res on 12 Jan, 52 at Gallop Hill, Bexhill, on 27 Jan, and 65 at Alexandra Park, Hastings, on 9 Feb. A nocturnal movement of about 100 was noted at Bexhill on 5 Mar.

The first breeding reports were of two nests at Partridge Green on 7 Mar. Eleven pairs reared 32 young at Plumpton and 4 pairs reared 14 young at Hassocks. Nevertheless, the regular breeding surveys as listed elsewhere in this *Report*, show a further decline of some 25%. Although a small sample, these figures may signify a substantial drop in total numbers. This would correspond with the BTO's national figures which show the species in a long term decline of some 50% since 1981. There was some contradictory evidence: 62 birds were ringed at Cissbury up to November, the highest total for 14 years, whilst a count of 65 in Preston Park, Brighton, on 2 July was the highest there for 5 years.

In the autumn, 2 dusky-billed migrants were at Aldwick, Bognor Regis, on 3 Oct. Counts of 72 were made at Sheepecote Valley, Brighton, on 26 Nov, 90 at Church Norton on 27 Nov, and 54 at Darwell Res on 15 Dec.

Partial albinos were reported from three different sites in East Grinstead. Some other distinctively-marked individuals helped show that many resident birds rarely seem to stray more than a few metres from their territory. A leucistic individual was reported for the third successive year from near the Little Egret roost at Thorney Island and a striking partial albino male in Hotham Park, Bognor Regis, has never been seen more than a few paces from the local fountain over the same period. [RK]

1198. **FIELDFARE**

Turdus pilaris

Common to abundant passage migrant and winter visitor.

Widespread during the first winter period though with no reports exceeding the one of 400 at RSPB Pulborough Brooks on 7 Mar. Bearing in mind that large flocks will, if seen, usually be reported, it is possible, by adding the maximum monthly numbers in each 10km

square, to obtain a *very rough* picture of the distribution of the species across the County and one which could be used for future comparisons of wintering numbers:

Easting	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr
SU/SZ 70-99	309	108	41	-
TQ/TV 00-49	460	850	676	282
TQ/TV 50-99	331	656	121	2

Last of the spring were 60 moving south over Guildenhurst, Billingshurst on 27 Apr.

The first returning birds were seen on 12 Oct when there were reports of up to 20 from the coastal belt between West Wittering and Icklesham (*cf.* Redwing). Numbers were then generally low until reports of 100 at Golding Barn, Upper Beeding, on 21 Oct, 200 at the Old Airstrip, Ashdown, on 25 Oct and 300 on the Upper Adur Levels on 29 Oct. There were widespread reports of up to 400 during November and 1300 at Hurstpierpoint on 29th. The species was rather scarce in December, with only 8 reports and, of these, none numbered more than 70. [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 featured a passage of 15W at Bexhill and Hastings shore on 1 Jan, 24 at Ferring Rife on 3rd, 11 at Littlehampton GC on 5th and 20 at Newhaven Tide Mills on 10th. A roost of 16 at Bexhill and Hastings shore on 27 Jan, was reduced to 11 by 1 Feb. Night passages of 160E in three hours on 5 Mar and 70E in 2.75 hrs on 6 Mar were recorded at the same site. There was a maximum January-March count of 6 in Hotham Park, Bognor Regis, on 11 Mar.

In the breeding season, CBC' surveys revealed 3 pairs at Kingley Vale, 2 at West Dean Woods, 1 at Barns Copse, Binsted, and 2 at Marsh Fm, Yapton. There were also 4 pairs at Rye SSSI, 10 pairs in 200ha of heath and woodland at Pippingford Park, Ashdown, and 4 pairs in 45ha of pasture and small coppice at Grantleys Fm, Maynard's Green. Five pairs reared 17 young at Streat. The maximum April-June count in Hotham Park, Bognor Regis, was of 7 birds, reducing to 5 in July-September. At Cissbury Ring, 37 birds were ringed between May and November. Between 1 and 5 birds were ringed during most sessions, but numbers were higher in the late autumn. In general, numbers were considered to be above average.

At Aldwick, in July, four nestling Song Thrushes were taken directly from the nest by a raiding Sparrowhawk.

Late in the year, records included 6 at Pulborough Brooks on 27 Sept, 8 at Seaford Head on 29th, a party of 20 Continental birds at St Helen's Wood, Hastings, on 12 Oct, and 20 at Icklesham on 26th. A passage of 50W was noted on 12 Oct at Hove. There were 15 at Hastings on 14 Oct, 10 at Pulborough Brooks on 17th, and 17 at Seaford Head on 22nd. A migrant party of 5 was noted on the western sea-wall at Pagham Harbour on 29th. The maximum count at Darwell Res in the second half of the year was of 3 birds on 15 Dec. [JLN]

1201. REDWING

Turdus iliacus

Abundant passage migrant and very common winter visitor.

Widespread during the first three months of the year with larger counts being 500 at RSPB, Pulborough Brooks, between 27 Feb and 7 Mar and 459 at Marsh Fm, Yapton, on 19 Feb. A very rough picture of the distribution of the species across the County can be obtained as for Fieldfare:

Easting	Jan	Feb	Mar
SU/SZ 70-99	35	495	332
TQ/TV 00-49	579	830	728
TQ/TV 50-99	247	194	267

Larger easterly nocturnal passages were reported from Bexhill and Hastings on 5 and 7 Mar. On the latter date, they were similarly noted at Broadwater, Worthing. As is often the case with flocks remaining in the County at the end of winter, singing was noted at Millbrook, Ashdown, on 15 Mar and Pippingford Park, Ashdown, on 27 Mar. The species was reported on only one date in April when 2 flew E at Bexhill and Hastings on 12th.

The first of the autumn was reported from Alexandra Park, Hastings, on 24 Sept. The next were on 3 Oct when one was noted at Icklesham and when at least 3 were heard at night passing over West Worthing. Next day, there were singles at RSPB, Pulborough Brooks, and at Hotham Park, Bognor Regis. A very large, mainly westerly, passage occurred on 12 Oct when a phenomenal 10,000 flew over Roedean, Brighton, between 0930-1030. Other large counts that day were mainly from the coast between Bognor Regis and Roedean and included 1000 at Aldwick, Bognor Regis, 1200 (in 0.45 hr) at Goring Gap, 2540 (in 0.8 hr) at Worthing Beach and 5170 (in 4 hrs) at Hove. Inland, there were 1000 (in 2 hrs) at Wappingthorn, Steyning. Smaller numbers were then reported during the rest of the year, the largest count being 400 at Hurstpierpoint on 7 Dec. [SHL]

1202. MISTLE THRUSH

Turdus viscivorus

Very common resident and partial migrant.

In the early part of the year, reports were received of 5 on fields at Lumley, near Emsworth, on 19 Jan, and 6 on Bexhill Down on 23rd, followed by maximum counts of 3 at Sompington Downs on 6 Feb, 2 at Marsh Fm, Yapton, on 19th and 2 at Hotham Park, Bognor Regis, on 27th. March records included 15 at Pulborough Brooks on 12 Mar, 6 at Icklesham, on 13th and 3 singing males at Hesworth Common on 20th.

In the breeding season, there were 5 pairs at Rye Harbour SSSI and 2 pairs at Stedham Common. Regular CBC' surveys found single pairs at West Dean Woods; Barns Copse, Binsted; and at Marsh Fm, Yapton.

Later in the year, maximum counts noted included a flock of 21 at Marsh Fm, Sidlesham, on 17 June, 8 at Chapel Common, Liphook, on 12 Jul, 10 at Scobells Fm, Barcombe, on 5 Aug, and a group of 40 at Long Furlong, Findon, on 16th.

Autumn records included 28 at Clapham Wood on 24 Sept, feeding in a sheep-grazed field, 10 at Bognor Regis GC on 25th, and 18 at Pulborough Brooks on 27th. In October, 4 were noted flying W at Hove on 12th, and 4E at Hastings Beach on 19th. There were also 10 at Littlehampton GC on the same date.

Early winter found 4 at Steyning Bowl on 1 Nov, a maximum of 3 during a Winter

Census at Marsh Fm, Yapton, on 26th, and 4 at Icklesham on 1 Dec. [JLN]

1220. **CETTI'S WARBLER**

Cettia cetti

Very scarce resident, passage migrant and winter visitor.

During the first three months of the year, there were reports from just three sites. A male and a female were at Icklesham in early January, there were 2 at Thorney Deeps on 3 Feb, and 2 at Arundel WWT on 15 Mar.

Birds were seen or heard during the breeding season at Arundel WWT, where there were 4 singing males on 16 Apr; at Arundel Mill Stream; Hastings; Lewes; Burpham and at Streat, where a female was trapped on 26 May and a juvenile male was found on 5 July. Unfortunately, there was no evidence of breeding at Thorney Deeps in 1997, probably due to the cold winter. In fact, the species was not recorded at the site between 11 Feb and 29 Sept when 2 were heard. The only record well away from the coast was of a juvenile at Folly Pond, near Liphook, on 10 Sep.

During the period October–December, single individuals were at Castle Water, Rye Hbr; Thorney Deeps and Combe Haven, with 2 noted at Icklesham, on 29 Nov. [VPB]

1236. **GRASSHOPPER WARBLER**

Locustella naevia

Very scarce and declining summer visitor and fairly common passage migrant.

The first records were of single birds on 11 Apr at Littlehampton Marina and at Belle Tout, Beachy Head. Arrivals were later at Pagham, where the first male was not heard until 23 Apr.

Breeding season reports of reeling males came from 8 sites, including West Dean Woods on 10 and 23 May, at Weir Wood Res on 14th, at Rye Hbr on 1 May and 20 June, and at Littlehampton GC on 11 May and 1 June, where breeding is thought to have occurred.

Five hundred and fifty were ringed during passage at Icklesham, the second highest year-total for the site, and the last individual of the year was trapped on 31 Oct, only missing the County record by one day. [VPB]

1238. **SAVI'S WARBLER**

Locustella luscinioides

Very scarce visitor, presumed to have bred.

An adult male was trapped at Icklesham on 13 Apr (RBRG). It is the first record since 1993, but the 8th during the 1990s. The last 7 have all been trapped at this site, during the period mid-June to mid-August, the other being in song at nearby Pett Pools in early June 1991. [RJF]

1242. **AQUATIC WARBLER**

Acrocephalus paludicola

Scarce autumn visitor to selected sites, very scarce elsewhere.

Thirty were trapped at Icklesham, double the previous best year's total (in 1995). All

records were in August, and all but 3 were juveniles, as follows: 4th (adult), 6th (adult), 7th, 9th (5), 10th (3), 12th (2), 14th (3), 15th, 16th (3), 17th, 18th, 21st (4 including one adult), 24th (3) and 25th (RBRG). Eighty-eight have been recorded during the 1990s, more than half the County's total. Of these, 84 were trapped, 80 at Icklesham. The records during the 1990s have been in July (30th), August (77), September (9, though interestingly including 3 of those not trapped) and October (6th). [RJF]

1243. **SEDGE WARBLER**

Acrocephalus schoenobaenus

Fairly common summer visitor and abundant passage migrant.

The first records of the year were 2 birds at Icklesham and singles at Thorney Deeps and Ivy Lake, Chichester GPs, on 8 Apr. The latter was heard singing. Within the next 2 days, sightings were made at a further 4 locations, totalling a minimum of 43 birds. Breeding records came from Rye Hbr LNR with 92 pairs (86 in 1996), Thorney Deeps with 38 pairs (48 in 1996) and Pulborough Brooks RSPB Reserve with 9 pairs (13 in 1996). Breeding was also confirmed at Aldingbourne Rife, Littlehampton GC, Amberley Wild Brooks and at Yapton, with 20 singing males reported from a further 10 sites. One of these, at Cuckoo Corner in the Arun Valley, was singing from a field of oil seed rape. No breeding records were obtained from Icklesham (120 pairs in 1996) and the 8738 ringed at this site was the lowest yearly total since 1991.

The first evidence of autumn movement was of a bird on 29 July at Whitbread Hollow, Beachy Head, where the maximum recorded was 40 on 9 Aug. At Sheepcote Valley, Brighton, the autumn total was 48, with a peak count of 11 on 8 Aug. There were 36 birds at Combe Haven on 10 Aug. Thereafter, most records were of single birds, the last being seen at Pagham Hbr on 15 Oct. [RTP]

1250. **MARSH WARBLER**

Acrocephalus palustris

A rare summer visitor and passage migrant.

At one site, 13 birds were ringed which included 4 pulli. The first record was of 2 adults trapped on 30 May, one of which was re-trapped on 18 July. An adult caught on 4 June was re-trapped on 15 July. Two adults ringed on 6 June included one male. Another adult was trapped on 13 and 17 June.

Four pulli, ringed on 1 July, were re-trapped as follows: 17 and 24 July; 17, 26 and 31 July; 27 July and 4 Aug; 24,29,31 July, 10 and 11 Aug. Other immature birds were caught on 10 and 11 Aug.

A very late record was of an immature bird ringed on 22 Oct which was re-trapped on 24 and 25 Oct. [SJP]

1251. **REED WARBLER**

Acrocephalus scirpaceus

Common summer visitor and very common passage migrant.

The earliest record was from Icklesham on 12 Apr. Twelve singing birds were at South Stoke, Arun Valley, on 30 Apr. Numbers increased slowly during May. At Rye Hbr, 200

pairs were counted during the breeding season. There were 67 pairs at Thorney Deeps and 25 singing males were recorded along the Chichester Canal. At Aldingbourne Rife, 61 territories were counted along 4km of the Rife in June and 20 counted in 67ha of mixed farmland.

Return passage seems to have commenced during the second week of August, with birds reported from Whitbread Hollow, Beachy Head, and at Sheepcote Valley, Brighton, which had a peak count of 11 on 7 Aug. Numbers were generally low during the autumn, with the County peak numbers being 40 at Whitbread Hollow, Beachy Head, on 21 Aug. This site also recorded the last bird of the year – a single bird on 4 Oct.

Icklesham had a slightly below average year for ringing, with a total of 4940 birds. [RPu]

1256. **BOOTED WARBLER**

Hippolais caligata

Very rare vagrant.

1996: A first-winter bird, trapped at Icklesham on 30 Sept (RBRG), has been accepted by *British Birds*. It is the 4th County record, appearing 2 days after the individual found at Pagham Hbr (*SxBR* 49:135). The earlier records were in 1993 (also at Icklesham in September) and 1994 (Beachy Head in early June). [RJF]

1259. **ICTERINE WARBLER**

Hippolais icterina

Very scarce visitor.

Two were trapped in August,: one at Whitbread Hollow, Beachy Head, on 9th-10th (JAGD, RDME, SPH), and a juvenile at Icklesham on 16th (RBRG). Nine have been recorded during the 1990s, but these are the first since 1993. The individual at Beachy Head is, surprisingly, the first to be recorded in the County on more than one day, although as it was only seen in the hand and immediately after release on both days, it was not particularly obliging. Nineteen of the total of 34 records have been in August. [RJF]

1260. **MELODIOUS WARBLER**

Hippolais polyglotta

Very scarce visitor.

One seen briefly at Church Norton on 3 Sept (TJE) was the only record. It is the 12th to be recorded during the 1990s and the 48th in total, of which 25 have been in September. Three of the last 4 records have been found by the same observer at this location. [RJF]

1262. **DARTFORD WARBLER**

Sylvia undata

Scarce resident.

In January, there were only 2 records from the coast, and of the 7 inland records, 2 involved singing birds. There were no coastal records for February, but 8 birds were seen or heard singing at 4 inland sites. Territorial behaviour was observed in breeding localities throughout the month of March, only 3 birds being observed in coastal locations.

During the breeding season, 53 territories were noted on Ashdown Forest and 11 from 6 localities in West Sussex. In Moulsecomb Wild Park, Brighton, a male was present all the year, and one was recorded at Hollingbury Camp on 17 May.

Return passage to the coast was first observed on Thorney Island on 23 Sept, although an immature or female, the status of which is uncertain, was seen in an area of Gorse on Pilsey Island on 15 July. Throughout October and November, a total of 64 was seen in ones and twos on most days in coastal environments, mainly at Pagham Hbr and Thorney Island, but there were only 8 in the east. This large number decreased to 13 in December, with 11 reported from inland localities. In view of this paucity in December, January and February, it is possible that most of the birds had moved farther west for the winter, to the Hampshire coast and into the New Forest. [JB]

1265. **SUBALPINE WARBLER**

Sylvia cantillans

Rare vagrant.

A superb male in song at Shooter's Bottom, Beachy Head, on 24-25 May (CFB, KM *et al*) was often to be seen nest building in a gorse bush. It has been accepted by *British Birds* and is the 8th County record. Excellent photographs were taken of it on the second day (see *Birding World* 10:173), although this activity may have hastened the bird's departure. The darkness of its brick-red throat, broadness of sub-moustachial stripes and the contrastingly whiter flanks and belly would suggest that it was of the eastern race *S. c. albistriata*. Four of the 5 recorded during the 1990s were at Beachy Head, three of them in May, as was one of the earlier records (in 1988). [RJF]

1273. **BARRED WARBLER**

Sylvia nisoria

Very scarce autumn visitor.

Four juveniles were recorded in autumn: at Shooter's Bottom, Beachy Head, from 17-23 Aug (DC, JFC *et al*), near Church Norton on 2 Oct (TJE), trapped at Icklesham on 5 Oct (RBRG) and at Church Norton on 25 Oct (AFB, SJB, NMG *et al*). Eleven have been recorded during the 1990s (6 in 1996-97) and 43 in total. Despite the timing of these records, most have been in September (29) with 7 in both August and October. [RJF]

1274. **LESSER WHITETHROAT**

Sylvia curruca

Common summer visitor and passage migrant.

Thorney Deeps provided the first record for the year when 4 males were reported there on 15 Apr, followed by individuals at Bewl Water and Glyne Gap on 18 and 19 Apr, respectively.

Breeding season records came from approximately 20 sites. There were 3 pairs at Thorney Deeps, compared with 6 in 1996; three pairs at Rye Hbr, and single pairs at Washington village; Swandean Hospital, Worthing, and at Shoreham Sanctuary. Breeding survey records can be found in the appropriate section of this *Report*.

Numbers on autumn passage were generally lower than in 1996. Although Steyning Ringing Group ringed 20 at Cissbury, a similar number to the previous year, at Icklesham only 99 were trapped, the lowest total since 1986, and Beachy Head recorded the worst ever autumn for this species at Whitbread Hollow. In October, there were 8 records from 5 sites, with the last individual seen at Icklesham on 18 Oct. [VPB]

1275. **WHITETHROAT**

Sylvia communis

Very common summer visitor and passage migrant.

An individual at Bewl Water on 6 Apr was the first record for the year, and the earliest recorded at this site, followed by sightings at Pulborough Brooks on 7th, and at Selsey Bill and Castle Water, Rye, on 9th. By the end of the month, the species was reported across the County. There were 10 at Lewes Race Course on 20 Apr, a maximum of 19 at Moulsecoomb Wild Park, Brighton, on 27th and 42 at Selsey on 30th.

There were 42 males holding territory at Thorney Deepes, 11 less than in 1996; 36 pairs at Rye Hbr and 25 pairs at Peacehaven GC. 1997 was a year of mixed fortunes for the species, with two ringing sites reporting very different results, compared with 1996. Numbers were much lower at Icklesham, where the annual total was 428, only just over a third of the record 1996 total of 1132. However, Steyning Ringing Group noted a significant increase to 126 at Cissbury, compared with 65 the previous year. Breeding survey records can be found in the appropriate section of this *Report*.

During autumn passage, 105 were reported at the Pagham Harbour Information Centre on 13 Aug, and there were 100, 80 and 100 at Whitbread Hollow on 10, 16 and 31 Aug, respectively. Numbers reduced rapidly through September and the last record was of 10 at Sreat on 6 Oct. [VPB]

1276. **GARDEN WARBLER**

Sylvia borin

Very common summer visitor and passage migrant.

A male singing at Crowlink on 2 Apr was the first report for the year, 12 days earlier than in 1996, though the main arrival was not until towards the end of the month.

There were records from 33 sites across the County during the breeding season. Ten singing males were at Darwell Res on 11 May and a family party was also seen there on 22 June. An adult was feeding four fledglings at Bewbush on 15 June, and an adult and two juveniles were noted at Chelwood Vachery on the same day. The results of the Breeding Surveys can be found in the appropriate section of this *Report*.

The total of 47 ringed at Cissbury showed an increase over the very low 1996 total of 16. However, the Rye Bay Ringing Group reported an annual total of 389 which was their lowest at Icklesham since 1989 and significantly less than the 719 ringed there the previous year. At Whitbread Hollow, there were 90 on 9 Aug, 60 on 10 Aug and 50 on 16th. Virtually all the birds had departed by the middle of September, and the only October' records were of individuals at Icklesham on 2nd, 4th and 10th. [VPB]

1277. **BLACKCAP**

Sylvia atricapilla

Very common summer visitor and passage migrant; small numbers winter.

During the first three months of the year, there were records of 66 birds from over 50 sites, very similar to 1996 figures. On 27 Jan, 2 females were seen in Upper Beeding, feeding on Honeysuckle fruits and Crab-apples. The first singing male was heard at Birdham on 27 Feb.

Migrants began to arrive in late March, with a main influx in early April. There were 7

at Eartham Woods on 1 Apr, the same number at Norton Priory the following day, and 10 at Bewl Water on 10th. The CBC sites at Kingley Vale and West Dean Woods held 7 and 5 pairs, respectively. Breeding survey records can be found in the appropriate section of this *Report*.

After a poor breeding season in 1996 led to a drop in numbers of this species ringed in the County that year, 1997 saw a return to more normal levels. The Rye Bay Ringing Group reported an average year, with 1995 birds ringed. A total of 308 trapped at Cissbury showed a marked increase from only 241 the previous year. One hundred passed through Whitbread Hollow on 31 Aug, 175 on 4 Sept, 350 on 6th, 250 on 10th and 120 on 14th.

During November and December, there were at least 30 birds seen at 24 sites, though some early November' individuals were undoubtedly late migrants. These were mostly records of single birds, although 2 were at Swandean Hospital, Worthing, on 28 Nov and 2 males were seen at Wick, Littlehampton, on Boxing Day. [VPB]

1298. **PALLAS'S LEAF WARBLER**

Phylloscopus proregulus

Very scarce visitor, mostly in late autumn.

One was found in scrub at Beachy Head, between Belle Tout Wood and Birling Gap, on 19 Oct (ASC, JAGD *et al*), but did not linger. A more obliging individual was present around the rugby pitch in Shepcote Valley, Brighton, on 15-16 Nov (IJW *et al*), with it, or more likely another, in the same general area on 22nd-23rd (IJW, TJW *et al*) and possibly the same, although, again more likely, a different individual at Whitehawk Hill, Brighton, on 23 Nov (JC, TJW). The last of these were the latest County records since 1987 (when 2 were seen in December). That three different individuals should be found in Brighton is less surprising when the records are considered alongside those of the next two species. Assuming four birds were involved, the County total moves to 51, of which 30 have been during the 1990s (and 24 since 1994). These have been in March (1992), October (16, earliest 14th) and November (13). [RJF]

1300. **YELLOW-BROWED WARBLER**

Phylloscopus inornatus

Very scarce visitor, mostly in autumn.

1966: One at Belle Tout Wood, Beachy Head, from 13-17 Nov (*SxBR* 19:45) has been accepted as Britain's first record of Hume's Leaf Warbler and so should be deleted as an *inornatus* (see next species).

1996: One was found in the small plantation immediately west of Birling Gap on 6 Oct (GVE, DIS, NJT *et al*), while details are awaited of another, seen by a number of observers, at Hodcombe on 2 Oct. Excluding this last individual, the total for the year becomes 9, surpassing the 8 in 1985 to become the best year ever.

1997: Three were seen in autumn, a below average showing. One was seen briefly in First Wood, Littlehampton GC, on 13 Oct (RJK), while one by the car-park at Pagham Harbour Visitors' Centre on 3 Nov (AH *et al*) was present for most of the day. The final

record was of a mobile individual north of the caravan park in Sheepcote Valley during 24-29 Nov (ADW, IJW *et al*). Thirty-five have been during the 1990s, in September (2 on 26th), October (25) and November (8). The Sheepcote individual is the latest to be recorded in the County since December 1986. The County total stands at 85, including 2 in early 1975 (*SxBR* 28:40) which were considered, at the time, to show some of the characteristics of *humei* and may be best regarded as indeterminate. [RJF]

1300.1 HUME'S LEAF WARBLER

Phylloscopus humei

Very rare vagrant .

1966: One at Belle Tout Wood, Beachy Head (ES), from 13-17 Nov (see Quinn, A. *The Beachy Head Bird Report 1960-70*) has been accepted as Britain's first record of Hume's Leaf Warbler. Formerly considered to be a race of Yellow-browed Warbler, full species status has recently been adopted by the BOURC.

1997: One around the children's play area in Sheepcote Valley from 16-22 Nov (JFC, RJF, IJW *et al*) attracted in excess of 500 admirers and was photographed (see *Birding World* 10:413). It was the 2nd county record although approximately 30 have now been recorded in Britain. Not positively identified until the morning of its second day, the calls, which were recorded, offered the best clue to its identity. They were transcribed as *dzueet* or *tsuee* with a downwards inflection, rather than the *tsuu-weet* or *tswee-weest* associated with Yellow-browed Warbler. [RJF]

1307. WESTERN BONELLI'S WARBLER

Phylloscopus bonelli

Very rare vagrant.

Bonelli's Warbler has recently been split into two species by the BOURC, Western *P. bonelli* and Eastern *P. orientalis*. The main differences would appear to be in the hand measurements and the call, and on this basis *British Birds* have examined all accepted records with a view to determining which ones could be ascribed to one or other form. The following of the Sussex records are acceptable to *British Birds* as Western Bonelli's Warblers:

1972: One at Whitbread Hollow, Beachy Head, on the morning of 9 Apr.

1977: One trapped at Whitbread Hollow, Beachy Head, on 15 Sept.

1986: One trapped at Hodcombe, Beachy Head, on 30 Sept. Another record of this species would seem overdue, although there was a strong claim in August 1996 which just failed to be accepted by *British Birds* but was included by Evans (*Rare Birds* 3:35). [RJF]

/1307. EASTERN/WESTERN BONELLI'S WARBLER *P. orientalis/bonelli*

Very rare vagrant.

Following the review described above, only two Eastern Bonelli's Warblers have been accepted for Britain. It is therefore likely that most of the following, which *British Birds* have felt unable to ascribe with certainty to either form, were Western Bonelli's Warblers, although this is not a very satisfactory outcome for the observers concerned:

1970: One at Hodcombe, Beachy Head, on 25 Aug.

1973: One in gardens at Alfriston on 7 Aug.

1979: One at Cow Gap, Beachy Head, on the morning of 5 May and one in the wood at Rye Hbr from at least 28 Aug-1 Sept. [RJF]

1308. **WOOD WARBLER**

Phylloscopus sibilatrix

Very scarce summer visitor and passage migrant.

The first bird of the season was recorded from Worth Forest on 20 Apr, followed by 5 records from coastal areas during the remainder of the month. A singing male was recorded on The Mound, Church Norton, on 10 May.

During the breeding season, there were 17 records of singing birds from Ashdown Forest, and possibly 10 pairs attempted to breed. At least one pair produced fledglings, a brood of 3. Elsewhere in East Sussex, song was heard at 2 sites. In West Sussex, there were records from 5 sites, holding 7 birds. No additional birds were reported inland after 21 June.

Return passage was first noted at Winchelsea on 28 July and at Icklesham on 17 Aug. Six emigrants were seen, mostly in the Pagham Hbr area, between 14 Aug and 9 Sept when the last was recorded at Church Norton. [JB]

1311. **CHIFFCHAFF**

Phylloscopus collybita

Very common summer visitor and passage migrant; small numbers winter.

Until 3 Mar, wintering birds, mainly singletons, were almost all recorded from 25 localities along the coast, from West Wittering to Rye Hbr. Eleven birds were recorded in January, and 10 in February, far fewer than in 1996. In the first 4 days of March, 13 were found. The first report of individuals which were probably genuine incoming migrants was of 7 at Ivy Lake, Chichester GPs, on 4 Mar. During the remainder of the month, migrants were recorded every day. The highest counts in March were of 14 on 11th, 17 on 12th, 15 on 13th, 37 on 18th and 20 on 20th and 21st at Pagham. On 22nd, there were 15 at Hellingly Park Wood. The first song was reported from Aldsworth Pond on 6th, and a breeding pair was located at Littlehampton GC on 22nd. Otherwise, a large number of breeding records was received from many sites throughout the County.

The first birds which were clearly emigrating were 60 at Whitbread Hollow, Beachy Head, on 6 Sept, followed by 200 there on 10th, 250 on 14th and 150 on 17th. Some 100 were recorded there on 4th Oct, and again on the following day. After that, numbers were much reduced. In November, 39 were seen at the coast, and 55 in December, mainly in the west.

Birds showing characteristics of the *tristis* or *abietinus* races were observed at Rye Bay on 25 Nov, and at Ivy Lake, Chichester GPs, on 25th and 28th. [JB]

1312. **WILLOW WARBLER**

Phylloscopus trochilus

Abundant summer visitor and passage migrant.

The first arrivals noted were 2 birds on 7 Mar at Lewes Race Course and one at Pulborough Brooks on 9th. The next sighting was not until 30th, but thereafter several

were recorded almost every day, until the end of April, most being on the coast. Instances when large numbers were recorded were 200 in the Pagham Hbr – Selsey Bill area on 9 Apr, 94 there on 10th, 46 on 22nd and 57 at Norton Priory, Pagham Hbr, on 25th. Other numbers and dates which illustrate major arrivals are 60 at Pagham and 70 at Norton Priory on 25th, and a major count of 179 at Selsey Bill on 30th. A pale individual, showing characteristics of the race *t. acredula* was seen at Mewsbrook Park, Littlehampton, on 30 Apr.

Breeding records were received from all over the County, and in particular revealed 6 pairs at Stedham Common, 10 at Darwell Res, 29 at Pippingford Park, 10 at West Dean Woods and 5 pairs at Thorney Island.

The autumn exodus was noted initially on 16 July at Pagham, followed by sporadic and small numbers until towards the end of the month when they increased. In August, at Beachy Head, there were 100 recorded on 3rd, 600 on 9th, 800 on 10th, 200 on 12th, 150 on 16th, 75 on 23rd and 120 on 31st. The month's total was c2600. During September, numbers dwindled greatly and in October there were only 5 records up to the last bird seen at Pagham on 21st. At Icklesham, 147 were ringed during the year.

There were 2 examples of birds showing the characters of the northern race, *Phylloscopus t. acredula* at Whitbread Hollow, Beachy Head, on 10 Aug. [JB]

1314. **GOLDCREST**

Regulus regulus

Very common breeding resident, common passage migrant and winter visitor.

Records were received from 51 sites across the county (15 of them in the breeding season). Of the 24 records in the first quarter, all were in single figures, except for counts from the Hastings area of 11 at Marline Woods on 1 Jan, and 12 and 14 at Alexandra Park on 12 Jan and 9 Feb respectively.

During the breeding season, reports of territorial males were of one at Chichester GPs, 7 at West Dean, 2 at Folly Pond, Liphook, 6 at Burton Mill Pond, 3 at Sutton Common, singles at Storrington, West Hoathly and Sharpethorne, and of a pair at Rye Town. There was only one report from Ashdown Forest, of a pair in the Lavender Platt area, and only one CBC-type report, of a pair at Grantleys Fm, Maynard's Green.

The largest counts in the last four months of the year were: in September, 150 at Icklesham on 28th and 70 at Church Norton on 23rd; in October, 50 at West Wittering on 1st, 26 at Fairlight on 3rd, 32 at Chapel Common, Liphook, and also at Littlehampton GC on 4th, 90 at Church Norton on 18th and 100 at Beachy Head on 20th; in November, 20 at Church Norton, 20 at the Climping-Littlehampton Gap and 15 at Whitbread Hollow, Beachy Head, all on the 2nd; and in December, 12 at Binsted, Arundel, and 14 at Lordship Wood, Cripps Corner, on 7th.

A total of 448 birds were ringed at Icklesham during the year, an average figure, with a further 189 ringed at Cissbury Ring in the period 6 Sept to 2 Nov, and 50 at Streat in October. The only report of movement was a of total of 4 in off the sea at Brighton Marina during October. [LM]

1315. **FIRECREST**

Regulus ignicapillus

Rare breeder and scarce passage migrant and winter visitor.

The numbers reported in the late winter and spring (60) were above the previous ten-year average (49); the autumn and winter numbers (89) were below the average of 112. The approximate monthly totals were as follows:

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
13	7	32	3	8	7	-	1	8	37	25	18

Singles were seen in January at Rackham Woods and Marline Wood, Hastings, on 1st; at West Wittering on 2nd; Cuckmere Haven on 2nd, 5th, and 22nd; on Eastbourne seafront on 4th; Newhaven on 6th; Alexandra Park, Hastings, on 12th; Icklesham on 18th; and Sompting Abbots on 29th. At Pagham Harbour, there were 3 on 2nd and 1 on 5th. In February, singles were seen at Goring Gap on 1st; Church Norton and Exceat Bridge, Cuckmere, on 8th; Saltbarn, near Playden, Rye, on 10th; Cuckmere Haven on 11th; Shoreham Sanctuary on 15th; and Preston Park, Brighton, on 28th.

In March, there were 2 at Pagham Harbour on 8th, 5 on 11th and 12th, and singles on 13th, 15th and 18th; 3 at Hope Gap, Seaford, and 4 at Cuckmere Haven on 7th; 1 at Littlehampton GC on 8th; singles at Selsey Bill and Friston Forest on 9th; 1 at Moulsecomb Wild Park, Brighton, on 13th; 2 at Sheepcote Valley, Brighton, on 15th; with singles at Goring Gap on 19th, Pulborough Brooks RSPB on 21st, Littlehampton Marina, Birling Gap and Carters Fm, Pett, on 22nd, Glyne Gap Beach, Bexhill, on 23rd, and Cuckmere on 25th. The April records were of singles at Cuckmere Haven on 10th; Beachy Head and Linchball Wood, West Dean, on 26th; and a singing male at West Dean Woods on 30th. Singles were seen in May at Beachy Head on 3rd and 16th, and at Elmer, Middleton-on-Sea, on 11th.

Singing males were reported in May and June from: West Dean Woods (2); West Dean (3); Holmbush Fm, Faygate; and Cripps Manor, Wych Cross (2). Birds were seen carrying nest material at West Dean and a brood was produced at West Dean Woods.

The only record in August was of one at St Leonards Forest on 5th. The approximate totals of individuals in the autumn/winter were:

	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
Pagham Harbour	1	7	7	7
Beachy Head areas	3	18	6	1
Other locations	4	12	12	10

The 'other locations' records were, in September, singles at Icklesham on 1st and Chichester on 14th, with 2 at Moulsecomb Wild Park, Brighton, on 15th; in October, singles at Selsey Bill on 4th, Preston Park, Brighton, on 10th, Rottingdean on 15th, Icklesham on five dates between 3rd and 26th, with 2 at Littlehampton GC on 29th and 3 at West Hill, Hastings, on 30th; in November, singles at Mewsbrook, Littlehampton, from 4th to 9th, Rye Hbr on 11th, Kingston Gorse on 22nd, Sheepcote Valley, Brighton, on 23rd and 24th, Moneypenny, East Guldeford, on 25th, Pannel Sewer, Pett, on 29th, and Stanmer Park, Brighton, on 30th, with 2 at Cuckmere Haven on 7th, and 2 at All Saints Wood, Hastings, on 20th; and in December, singles at Preston Park, Brighton, on 8th, 9th and 12th, Sompting Abbots and Beeding Hill on 12th, Longmere Point, Thorney Island, on 13th, Ivy Lake, Chichester GPs, and Ringmer SF on 21st, Brighton Cemetery on 27th, Combe Haven on 29th and Kingston Gorse on 31st. One was trapped and ringed at Plumpton on 14 Dec. [LM]

1335. **SPOTTED FLYCATCHER***Muscicapa striata***Fairly common summer visitor and passage migrant.**

1996: The report of a confirmed breeding pair in Hove Park should be amended to read: The first confirmed breeding was at Hove Park where there was a nest with young in July, being ringed on the 31st.

1997: First noted at Ivy Lake, Chichester GPs, on 24 Apr in the west, and at Harbour Fm, Rye Harbour SSSI, on 26 Apr, in the east of the county. There was a steady influx through May, though the numbers referred to were mostly of single birds and occasionally of twos. Eight were seen at Church Norton, Pagham Harbour, on 22 May. There were approximately 20 reports of confirmed breeding from a variety of sites. Results of breeding surveys can be found elsewhere in this Report.

The first autumn record at Whitbread Hollow, Beachy Head, was 9 Aug. The highest counts were 15 at Whitbread Hollow on 31 Aug, 15 at Goodwood on 2 Sept, 20 at Church Norton and Pagham Harbour on 7 Sept. The last birds were seen at the Pagham Information Centre on 2 Oct and at Pulborough Brooks (RSPB) on 5 Oct. A late individual was at Birling Gap on 1 Nov. As in 1996, the species was well observed, especially during autumn migration, but the total number recorded seemed to be down in 1997. [DEC]

1349. **PIED FLYCATCHER***Ficedula hypoleuca***Scarce passage migrant, more numerous in autumn than spring. Has bred.**

Approximate monthly totals were:

Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct
12	7	-	2	40	26	2

The above approximate totals compare favourably with 1996, although the April figures were down. The first record was at Sidlesham Ferry Pool, Pagham Hbr, on 9 Apr. This area in general produced the best records for the month, with up to 4 at Poplar Copse, Church Norton, on 27 Apr and 5 at Selsey Bill on 30 Apr.

A singing male was seen on several dates in mid-May at Ifield Railway Station and was re-located singing in mature oaks on 19 May. This individual was last seen on 26th. Another singing male was at Nap Wood, near Frant, on 15th.

Individuals were trapped and ringed at Cissbury Ring and Icklesham in August. Up to 8 were seen in the Pagham Harbour area on 28 and 30 Aug. Passage continued with single birds seen at several sites. The last bird of the year was recorded at Harbour Fm, Rye Harbour SSSI, on 12 Oct. [DEC]

1364. **BEARDED TIT***Panurus biarmicus***Very scarce breeder, scarce passage migrant and winter visitor.**

The minimum monthly totals outside the breeding season were:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
No of Sites	5	1	3	3	4	4	7	5
No of Birds	58	6	20	30	48	55	32	14

Five sites were involved in the first winter period and 9 in the second, including only 4 from the first period, with 10 sites in all, including a late record from one site where a bird over-wintered in both 1996/97 and November/December 1997. Unfortunately, recording at all sites was neither continuous nor consistent, as often the only comment made was either 'present' or 'several'.

Breeding was confirmed at three sites, as in the two previous years. At site 'A', 11 breeding males produced 11 broods, but there was no indication of productivity. Fifteen birds, 10 males and 5 females, were colour ringed. At site 'B', 2 pairs nested and 2 juveniles were seen on 13 June, but there was no other indication of productivity. At site 'C', 4 pairs fledged *ca.* 30 young; 3 juveniles seen on 13 May had probably been out of the nest 3 days; juvenile numbers seen had increased to 14 by 17 June; and 2 (1 of each sex) seen on 8 July were just out of the nest.

Although there was no ringing activity at site 'C' in 1997, birds with rings on their right legs were seen on 5 occasions: 1 male and 1 female in January, 2 males in May, 1 male and 1 female again in both June and December - suggesting either that birds ringed there in previous years had survived or that birds ringed elsewhere had dispersed to this location.

High-flying dispersal activity was first seen at site 'C' on 7 July and continued into November. Post-breeding dispersal was evident, with birds recorded in small numbers (max 8) at 5 non-breeding sites across the County. [JAH]

1437. **LONG-TAILED TIT**

Aegithalos caudatus

Very common resident.

During the first three months of the year, there were numerous reports of small parties, mainly less than 10, from all round the County. There were bigger groups, with 38 at Marline Wood, Hastings, on 1 Jan and 20 at Pulborough Brooks on 2 Feb. During these winter months, reports of birds feeding on peanuts came from as far afield as Keymer, Partridge Green, Hove, Angmering, and Bognor Regis. At this last site, they also took bread and fat from the ground.

The regular breeding surveys as listed elsewhere in this *Report*, showed a marked reduction in numbers of breeding pairs. A total of 60 were ringed at Streat and a further 23 at Cissbury up to Nov, but this latter number was fewer than in 1996.

During the autumn, reports of medium-sized parties were numerous: 20 at the Severals, Church Norton, on 12 Aug, 20 at Amberley Wild Brooks on 24 Aug, 18 at Littlehampton Marina on 28 Sept, and 27 at Chichester GPs on 15 Oct. Towards the end of the year, there were even bigger counts: 25 at Climping on 2 Nov, 30 each at Weir Wood Res and West Wittering on 6 Nov, 35 in two groups at Pulborough Brooks on 9 Dec, and 28 in four groups at Darwell Res on 15 Dec. [RK]

Three individuals with apparent white heads were seen in a mixed tit flock on the Downs north of Peacehaven on 24 Aug (RGS), while one with a completely white head

and one with only a faint pale grey eye-stripe were seen at Whitehawk Hill on 26 Oct (JC). Continental forms of Long-tailed Tits (*europaeus* and *caudatus*) are extremely rare in Britain, although may be under-recorded. Although a white head is a feature of *caudatus*, it can also be shared by some *europaeus* breeding in Holland and Western France, where the forms are considered indistinguishable in the field (B. Aarts *pers. comm.*). While the date of the Whitehawk Hill birds may suggest continental origin, this would seem much less likely with the earlier birds and it may be that all records relate to an aberrant brood. [RJF]

1440. **MARSH TIT**

Parus palustris

Common resident.

1996: A Marsh Tit was seen at Sidlesham Ferry on 7 July. This is a very unusual location for this species (PJ).

1997: A slight decrease in breeding season' records this year, with reports from 22 widely-scattered sites, though from fewer parts of Ashdown Forest than last year, and from a further 13 areas at either end of the year. Maxima for the year were 10 at Darwell Res on 15 Dec, and 8 at Marline Wood, Hastings, on 1 Jan.

Pairs using nest-boxes included two at Ardingly Res, raising 15 young and another at Weir Wood Res, fledging 6 young. A breeding survey at Darwell Res located four pairs.

On 15 May, at Westmeston, one bird was re-trapped, presumably breeding, that had been originally ringed as a juvenile at the same site in 1990, highlighting site fidelity and the species known longevity.

A bird seen at Whitbread Hollow, Beachy Head, on 24 Aug, was considered unusual for that site, although occurring on a similar date to the singleton in 1996.

All counts of pairs in the breeding season from defined areas are welcomed. [JESC]

1442. **WILLOW TIT**

Parus montanus

Common resident.

Another encouraging increase in reports throughout the year, mostly as single birds or pairs, encompassing 31 localities. A maximum of 6 was recorded at St Johns, Crowborough, on 6 Apr, and also at Wheatsheaf Common, Milland, on 12 July, the latter comprising a family party.

During the breeding season, no specific counts from defined areas were received. Densities of this species are unlikely to be high anywhere, and the records of singles or pairs at other times of the year probably reflects the likely breeding status at most locations.

All counts of pairs in the breeding season from defined areas are welcomed. [JESC]

1454. **CRESTED TIT**

Parus cristatus

Very rare vagrant.

Individuals were seen in gardens in Ringmer Road, Worthing, on 10 May (GLP) and

Rockmead Road, Fairlight, on 12 June (EJR, FWR). This species has not been recorded in the County before and extensive enquiries were made as to their likely origin. The possibility of escaped Black-crested Finches *Lophospingus pusillus*, which is superficially similar and has been mistaken for Crested Tit in the past, was also considered. This was discounted and, in any event, appears to be much less frequent in captivity in recent years, following the ban on bird exports from its native South America (T. Inskipp *pers. comm.*).

The Crested Tit would appear to be an unlikely vagrant (with no records from nearby counties), especially at this time of year, although it occurs from September to November in northern Pas-de-Calais, France (I. Hodgson *in lit.*). The Crested Tit is, however, thought to be 'very rare or extremely unusual in captivity' (P. Clement *in lit.*). Following quite agonising deliberations, the SOS Records Committee accepted these birds as most likely to be wild, while recognising, given that it was not a unanimous verdict, that there must be a small question mark over their origin. [RJF]

1461. COAL TIT

Parus ater

Very common resident.

As in recent years, few winter gatherings of note occurred, although 16 birds were recorded at Lordship Wood, Cripps Corner, on 7 Dec. At Rivers Wood, Haywards Heath, one pair raised eight young in a nest-box.

At Aldwick, on 22 Sept, a Red Admiral butterfly (*Vanessa atalanta*) was seen to form part of the diet of one individual.

Following the autumn influx of 1996, birds showing characteristics of the continental race, *Parus a. ater*, were much more scarce this year. Two each were noted at Birling Gap and at Belle Tout, Beachy Head, on 22 Oct (JCH), with the latter pair staying until 23rd (IJF). A single was also seen at Pulborough Brooks on 27 Nov. [JESC]

1462. BLUE TIT

Parus caeruleus

Abundant resident.

The largest winter counts noted were at Alexander Park, Hastings, where 103 were present on 12 Jan and 137 on 9 Feb. Other sizeable flocks were at Darwell Res, with 59 on 9 Mar and 47 on 15 Dec. There was a large summer flock of about 50, with Chaffinches, at Weavers Down, Liss, on 14 June.

The regular winter census at Hotham Park, Bognor Regis, produced peaks of 11 birds in 7ha of urban park in the first winter period, and 9 in the second. A similar census at Marsh Fm, Yapton, produced 16 and 12 birds respectively on 67ha of mixed farmland. Both these figures were lower than the previous two years, presumably as a result of harsh weather at the start of the year.

Notable breeding records were received as follows: at Ardingly Res 131 young were fledged from 15 boxes (with 5 others failing); at Hove Park 5 boxes fledged 30 young; at Rivers Wood, Haywards Heath, one box (out of 3) fledged 7 *pulli* and at Sedlow Wood, Westmeston, 20 pairs raised 101 young. Regular CBC counts showed 3 breeding pairs at Kingley Vale and 5 in West Dean Woods, but there were few other breeding records reported. [AH]

1464. **GREAT TIT**

Parus major

Abundant resident.

There were very few winter counts, the highest being only 30 at Darwell Res on 9 Feb, and there were few other double-figure counts in the whole year, surely a serious case of under recording. The regular winter counts produced a maximum of 13 birds on 67ha of mixed farmland at Marsh Fm, Yapton, on 28 Jan, and a maximum of only 5 on 26 Oct, while the counts at Hotham Park, Bognor Regis, produced 5 birds on 5 Mar and 6 on 26 Oct in a 7ha urban park. These figures were broadly similar to the previous 2 years.

During the breeding season, 5 (out of 6) boxes at Ardingly Res produced 36 *pulli*; 2 boxes at Hove Park fledged 9 young and one box at Rivers Wood, Haywards Heath, fledged 7. Elsewhere, 15 pairs at Sedlow Wood, Westmeston, produced 100 young, and the regular CBC counts showed 8 pairs at Kingley Vale and 7 in West Dean Woods. [AH]

1479. **NUTHATCH**

Sitta europaea

Very common resident.

Widely reported, with a predominance of records from the well-wooded west of the County. The largest winter count was of 6 at Darwell Res on 15 Dec.

Breeding records included 10 pairs at Darwell Res, 1 pair in Kingley Vale, 3 pairs in West Dean Woods and another 3 pairs using nest-boxes at Ardingly Res. Unfortunately, two pairs failed at the egg stage, but from the remaining nest, 3 *pulli* fledged.

All counts of pairs in the breeding season from defined areas are welcomed. [PL]

1486. **TREECREEPER**

Certhia familiaris

Very common resident.

Few records were received from North of the Downs where the species is most frequently seen (but more often heard) in suitable woodland areas. There were, however, a number of reports from coastal sites, including singles at Church Norton on 14 Feb, 6 Aug and 16 Nov, and at Whitbread Hollow, Beachy Head, from 6-31 Aug. At Rye Hbr, there were singles on 9 Jan and 16 Mar, and 2 on 25 Jan. Up to 2 were present in Hotham Park, Bognor Regis, in October and November.

There were no counts of breeding pairs in defined areas. [PJ]

1490. **PENDULINE TIT**

Remiz pendulinus

Rare autumn vagrant.

A first-winter male, trapped at Icklesham on 25 Oct (RBRG), was found to be wearing a ring from the Rijks Museum, Stockholm, although details of its original capture are not

known at this stage. It was the 15th County record, the 7th to be trapped at Icklesham and complemented the individual that was trapped at Icklesham in 1988 and re-trapped in southern Sweden the following May (*SxBR* 42:73). All records have been since 1987 (but only 6 during the 1990s) and all have been during the period 4 Oct-1 Nov. [RJF]

1508. **GOLDEN ORIOLE**

Oriolus oriolus

Very scarce passage migrant and summer visitor, may have bred.

Four were recorded, all in May. A female flew in off the sea at Selsey Bill on 2nd (BJC, OM *et al*), a female was seen briefly along the west side of Pagham Hbr on 9th (TJE, BS), a first-summer male was at Nap Wood on 25th (MRG, MW), and a female was seen briefly at Church Norton on 27th (TJE). Twenty-seven have been recorded during the 1990s, of which 15 were in May, although that at Selsey is the earliest record since a female at Icklesham on 27 Apr 1987 (itself possibly the earliest record since 1854). [RJF]

1515. **RED-BACKED SHRIKE**

Lanius collurio

Very scarce passage migrant; formerly a breeding summer visitor.

Six birds were seen, the same total as 1996. There was one spring record, of a female at Sheepcote Valley, Brighton, on the evening of 31 May (JW *et al*).

An immature bird was trapped at Icklesham on 20 Aug (TS *et al*). Immature males, considered to be different birds, were seen at Birling Gap, Beachy Head, on 31 Aug (RAI *et al*) and at Cow Gap on 6-7 Sept (RJF *et al*).

In October, immature birds were seen at Newhaven Cliffs on 1st and 2nd (HP, RTP), and at Pagham Hbr on 2nd (LGH, SH). [SJP]

1519. **LESSER GREY SHRIKE**

Lanius minor

Rare vagrant.

An adult in winter plumage was present by Ham Fm, Sidlesham, on 24 Oct (PWB *et al*). It was present, mainly on telegraph wires, until dusk, when it went to roost in a nearby hedge, but a clear night and the first frost of the autumn may have contributed to its departure, leaving those who went to look the next morning disappointed. At first glance, it appeared to lack a black forehead, suggesting a first-winter, but, on closer inspection, black mottling was present. It was aged as an adult due to this, a faint pinkish flush on the breast and lack of any whitish edges to the flight feathers or brownish tones to the upper-parts (see Zimmerman *et al*, *Birds of Kenya & Northern Tanzania*). It has been accepted by *British Birds* and is the first County record since 1982. It is the third to be recorded in the Sidlesham area and the seventh in total. The other records have been in late May, early June, July (2), early September and mid-October. [RJF]

1520. **GREAT GREY SHRIKE**

Lanius excubitor

Very scarce winter visitor and passage migrant.

Probably only three birds in total, all in Ashdown Forest. One at Crow's Nest on 2 Jan

and another at Millbrook on 14th and 19th. There were six sightings between 6 and 13 Mar in the Ellisons Pond/Old Lodge area and these were almost certainly the same bird. [DEGC]

1539. **JAY**

Garrulus glandarius

Very common resident; passage migrant and winter visitor.

The January records were of a tame bird with a red metal ring, which stayed for the winter at Selsey Bill, a single at Woods Mill, Henfield, on 2nd, 3 at Pulborough Brooks RSPB and 3 at Darwell Res on 12th. In February, there was one at Washington Common on 6th, 2 at Pulborough Brooks RSPB on 8th, and singles at Forest Mere on 10th and Church Norton on 14th.

CBCs and other surveys recorded single pairs at Kingley Vale; West Dean Woods; Stedham Common; Lavington Common; and Grantleys Fm, Maynard's Green. Daily counts at Icklesham yielded a maximum of 10 on 11 Oct; Pulborough Brooks RSPB and Darwell Res each had counts of 12 on 24 Nov and 15 Dec respectively. The only movements reported were of 3N at Selsey Bill on 26 May; and 1E at Galley Hill, Bexhill, on 11 Sept.

The other end-of-year records were, in November, singles at Sheepcote Valley, Brighton, on 2nd, Chichester GPs on 7th and Warnham MP on 11th, and in December, 2 at Church Norton on 10th, and 2 at Icklesham on 11th. [LM]

1549. **MAGPIE**

Pica pica

Very common resident.

The highest counts in the first quarter were: 20 at Rye Harbour on 20 Jan, 21 at Warnham MP on 15 Feb and, in March, 14 at Warnham MP on 2nd, 21 at Sainsburys, West Hove, on 3rd and 27 at Fairlight CP on 23rd.

CBCs and other surveys recorded pairs at Kingley Vale (4); Stedham Common; Marsh Fm, Yapton (5); Hotham Park, Bognor Regis; and Grantleys Fm, Maynard's Green (2). Breeding was also confirmed at Warnham MP; Sayers Common; Hassocks; Scobells Fm, Barcombe; and High Hurstwood.

A pre-roost count at Moulsecomb Wild Park, Brighton, yielded a total of 230 on 13 Nov, likely to be the largest such count in Sussex. Other autumn/winter counts were: 17 at Beachy Head on 7 Sep; 21 at Littlehampton GC on 14 Nov; and 14 at the *LEC* Airfield, Bognor Regis, on 19 Dec. A flock of 17 flew over West Wittering on 18 Oct. [LM]

1560. **JACKDAW**

Corvus monedula

Very common resident.

The highest counts recorded were: 500 going to roost at Arundel on 3 Jan; 300 at Upwaltham Hill on 8 Feb; 200 at Pulborough Brooks RSPB on 26 Feb; 300 at Icklesham

on 1 July; 120 at Boreham Bridge on 29 July; 100 at Folly Pond, Liphook, on 9 Aug; 150 at West Wittering on 18 Oct; 100 at Cuckmere Haven on 29 Oct; 150 at Forest Mere on 13 Nov; and 450 at Pebsham on 29 Dec.

CBCs and other surveys recorded pairs at West Dean Woods; Marsh Fm, Yapton; and Rye Harbour SSSI (30). Coastal movements reported were: 3SE and 4E at Galley Hill, Bexhill, on 16 and 30 Mar respectively; 24W, 24W and 3E at Hastings Beach on 2 Oct, 22 Oct and 14 Nov respectively; and 75E and 20E at Selsey Bill on 23 and 24 Oct respectively. [LM]

1563. **ROOK**

Corvus frugilegus

Very common resident.

The highest counts in the first two months were, in January: 800 at Shripney on 8th; 650 at Lidsey on 27th; and in February: 100 at Upwaltham Hill on 3rd; 900 at Lidsey on 17th; 320 at Marsh Fm, Yapton, on 19th; and 200 at Pulborough Brooks RSPB on 26th.

The highest autumn/winter counts were: 150 at Henfield Levels on 23 Aug; 232 at Marsh Fm, Yapton, on 11 Nov; 100 at Horse Eye Level, Pevensey, on 22 Dec; and 300 at Pebsham on 29 Dec.

At dusk on 16 July, 130 were seen flying west from Thorney to roost at North Hayling. [LM]

1567. **CARRION CROW**

Corvus corone

Very common resident.

The largest concentrations reported were of 180 at Moulsecoomb Wild Park, Brighton, on 14 Jan and 250 on the refuse tip at Pebsham on 29 Dec. From other counts made, there were 79 at Aldingbourne Rife on 19 Mar; 40 at Folly Pond, Liphook, on 10 Sept and 14 Oct (of which 30 on the latter date were mobbing a Sparrowhawk); and 66 at Goring Gap on 26 Oct. An Osprey was mobbed by 37 at Aldingbourne Rife on 13 Oct and a Sparrowhawk also mobbed there by 48 on 21 Oct.

Breeding season surveys recorded pairs at Kingley Vale (2); West Dean Woods; Stedham Common (2); Hotham Park, Bognor Regis (4); Marsh Fm, Yapton (5); and Grantleys Fm, Maynard's Green (4). Breeding was also confirmed at Aldingbourne and Scobells Fm, Barcombe.

Hooded Crow *C. c. cornix*. There was one record of an adult at Galley Hill, Bexhill, on 26 Jan. [LM]

1572. **RAVEN**

Corvus corax

Formerly a breeding resident, now a very scarce visitor.

One at Belle Tout, Beachy Head, on 6 Apr (JR). One flying over Playden, near Rye, on 30 Sept, 4 Oct and 31 Dec (RBG) was presumably that seen at Nook Beach, Winchelsea, on 24 Oct (BJY). The records towards the end of the year relate presumably to the bird present on the Dungeness peninsula for most of the winter. This bird was present in Kent the previous winter and could conceivably have been the bird seen at

Beachy Head too, although the species is increasing on the Isle of Wight, so a more westerly origin is also possible. Assuming two individuals were involved, the total for the 1990s becomes only 6 (although a great increase on the 4 records during 1960-89).

Observers are reminded of the need to submit descriptions of this species. [RJF]

1582. STARLING

Sturnus vulgaris

Abundant resident, passage migrant and winter visitor.

BTO breeding census figures show that Starling numbers plummeted by 41% between 1988-97, and woodland numbers alone dropped by 80%. A trend of steep decline has been surmised in Sussex, but the degree has been difficult to assess because of a paucity of reports. The new Breeding Bird Survey should make things clearer in the future. An analysis of the 29 squares surveyed in Sussex in 1995 and 1996 showed the species present in 90% of the squares and ranking first in abundance of all species in 1995 and second in 1996.

1997 saw a welcome increase in routine reports. The highest count in the early months was of 3000 at Hankham Level, Pevensey, on 15 Feb. In the breeding season, 10 pairs were confirmed breeding in Hassocks Village. The small sample of regular breeding surveys showed a decline to one pair in every 8.6ha.

Post-breeding flocks of 700 were at Pett Level Pools on 13 June and 800 at Apuldram SF on 18 June.

On 7 Aug there were 5000 at Pevensey Bridge Level and on 29 Sept a roost of 15,000 at Pett Level Pools. The highest report in October was of 2000 at Bewl Water on 16th. On 11 Nov there were 2000 at Shoreham Airport. The highest count of the year was of 50,000 roosting at West Pier, Brighton, on 14 Dec.

A pied bird was seen at Uckfield on 19 Jan, whilst reports of albinos came from Rye Hbr on 24 June, Hurstpierpoint on 25 and 28 June, and Pett Level on 2 Oct. [RK]

1584. ROSY STARLING

Sturnus roseus

Rare vagrant.

An immature Rosy Starling was seen at Church Norton on 31 Dec, accompanying a small flock of Starlings (*Sturnus vulgaris*) which had flown across Pagham Harbour, before flying away farther, over farmland to the west. It was the 7th record for the County and has been accepted by *British Birds* (TJE). [LGH]

1591. HOUSE SPARROW

Passer domesticus

Abundant resident.

During January and February, the maxima at the regularly counted sites of Marsh Fm, Yapton, and Hotham Park, Bognor Regis, were 17 and 15, respectively. However, breeding territories held at Marsh Fm were down from 9 in 1996, to only 6 this year. Three pairs bred successfully at Plumpton. Results of breeding surveys can be found in the appropriate section of this *Report*. A small flock of 15, seen at Weir Wood Res on 21 July, was noted as being unusual for the site. Other post-breeding flocks included c75

around livestock pens at Mill Hill, Shoreham.

Significant flocks were 200 at Marsh Fm, Sidlesham, on 30 Jan, 300 at New Salts Fm, Lancing, on 3 Aug, 250 at Newhaven Tide Mills on 17th and 300 at a roost at Southlands Hospital, Shoreham, on 1 Oct. [VPB]

1598. **TREE SPARROW**

Passer montanus

Scarce and declining resident, passage migrant and winter visitor.

1996: The statement that 20 were recorded at Danny, near Hurstpierpoint, on 8 and 12 Dec was incorrect. The locality was at Carman's Fm, Hurstpierpoint, and 12 Dec should be amended to 14 Dec. This site is no longer suitable for Tree Sparrows.

Additional records for 1996 are as follows: In January and February, a single bird was recorded three times in Upper Beeding, and then two were seen together at local riding stables. In the latter month, others may have been present, too (JS, JS).

1997: The stronghold for this species is now the extreme south-east of the County, with no confirmed breeding records from West Sussex this year. However, two were seen at Coolham on 3 Apr, where nest-boxes had been erected.

From January to April, records were received from 17 different sites, with flocks of around 20 seen at Hurstpierpoint on 11 Jan and 8 Feb, at Lower Standean on 5 Feb, and at Icklesham on 30 Jan, 9 Mar and 20 Apr. Larger flocks were 75 at Castle Fm, Rye Hbr, on 10 Jan and 60 at Winchelsea Beach on 14 Feb, the former being the largest recorded since early 1990 when more than 90 were noted at Sidlesham.

Breeding season records were of 20 pairs at Rye Hbr, a level similar to that of 1996, a pair at Barcombe on 5 May and a family party of 8 at Hooe Level, Pevensey, on 29 Dec.

On 24 Aug, 32 were recorded at Cadborough, Rye. Among the few reports for the period September–December, were 6 at Birling Gap on 21 Oct, 5 at Sheepcote Valley on 23 Oct, 9 at Combe Haven on 16 Nov, 30 at Winchelsea Beach on 16 Nov and 6 at Pebsham on 29 Dec.

For the first time in many years, there were no records from Stretham, Henfield, and only a maxima of 4 seen at Sidlesham, with no reported sightings there after 5 Apr. [VPB]

1600. **LINNET**

Carduelis cannabina

Very common resident and partial migrant.

At Castle Fm, Rye LNR, on 10 Jan, 220 birds were recorded, followed by 130 at Rodmell Brooks on 11th, with 50 at Long Pit, Rye, on 29th. Waltham Park, Coldwaltham, recorded 100 on 8 Feb, 20 at Cuckoo Corner, Coombes, on the same date, and 40 at New Salts Fm, Lancing, on 21st. Numbers increased during March, with 50 on 8th at Castle Water, Rye, 32 at Lynchpole Hill, near Cissbury, on 22nd, rising to a climax of 191 on 30th at Bexhill and Hastings. Numbers remained high in April, starting on 1st with 300 at Selsey Bill, 78 at Splash Point, Seaford, on 11th, 60 at Normans Bay on the same date, and 100 at Toads Hole Valley, Hove, on 15th. The monthly total at Worthing Beach was 185, at Splash Point, Seaford, 190, and 588 at Bexhill and Hastings.

Numbers decreased in May, with 100 at Castle Fm, Rye, on 7th, 50 at Streat on 10th, which figure included 8 young which were ringed, 50 at Barcombe on 27th and 300 at Rye

Hbr on 29th. Breeding was recorded in June, with 4 pairs at Pulborough, 25 pairs at Peacehaven on 5th, and a flock of 30, including juveniles, at Weavers Down, Liss, on 17th. Only one large flock was recorded in July, 100 at Streat on 15th, with 20 at Highdown, near Worthing, on 30th.

August records showed an increase, with 250 at West Fields, Selsey, on 10th, 70 at Newhaven Tide Mills on 24th, and 120 on 30th at Climping. September numbers exploded, with 150 at Belle Tout, Beachy Head, on 13th, 200 at Crowlink, near Eastdean, on the same date, 264 on 19th at Bexhill and Hastings, 200 at Golding Barn, Upper Beeding, on 22nd, 500 on 24th at Amberley Mount, 200 at West Fields, Selsey, on 25th, 100 at Littlehampton GC on 27th, 180 on 28th at Scotney Court Gravel Pit, and 350 at the North Wall, Pagham Hbr, on 30th. The monthly total at Bexhill and Hastings was 784.

Numbers remained high in October, with 250 at Birling Gap, Beachy Head, on 1st, 100 on 4th at Weavers Down, Liss, on 12th, 100 on 18th at Whitbread Hollow, Beachy Head, and 1200 at Church Norton, Pagham Hbr, on 22nd. Monthly totals were 228 at Worthing Beach, 795 at Selsey Bill, 97 at Splash Point, Seaford, and 856 at Bexhill and Hastings. November totals were down on previous months, with 80 on 2nd at Moulsecoomb Wild Park, Brighton, 45 at Shoreham Airport on 15th, 60 at Lidsey Old Canal & Tip on 19th, with monthly totals of 24 at Worthing Beach, 64 at Selsey Bill and 35 at Bexhill and Hastings. There were just three records for December: 70 on 4th at Crumbles GPs, 60 at Nep Town, Henfield, on 15th and 30 at Thorney Island on 19th. [JLH]

1636. **CHAFFINCH**

Fringilla coelebs

Abundant resident, passage migrant and winter visitor.

Early in the year, notable flocks were 250 at Midhurst on 5 Jan, 400 at Stapleash Fm, Chilgrove, on 10 Jan, a similar number at Coldwaltham on 8 Feb and 300 at Greatham Common on 2 Mar. A partial albino was noted at Locks Manor, Hurstpierpoint, on 5 Jan.

CBC records revealed 32 territories in 67ha at Marsh Fm, Yapton, 17 in 45ha at Grantleys Fm, Maynard's Green, and 10 at Scobells Fm, Barcombe, the first two sites both showing a reduction of 6 territories over 1996. These and other breeding survey records can be found in the appropriate section of this *Report*.

The only significant autumn movements reported were 150 flying west at Birling Gap on 12 Oct and 137 flying east at Church Norton on 22 Oct. A December flock of 72 at Marsh Fm, Yapton, was similar in size to that recorded in January/February. Two hundred were seen at Henley on 8 Dec and at Linchball Wood, West Dean, on 28th. On the latter date, a flock of 400 was also reported feeding on beech-mast and seeds at Folly Pond, near Liphook. [VPB]

1638. **BRAMBLING**

Fringilla montifringilla

Fairly common winter visitor and passage migrant.

The first records were of singles on New Year's Day at Marline Wood, Hastings, and at Apuldram, and 15 at New Pond, Midhurst, on 5th. February saw 10 at Coldwaltham Park on 8th, and 15 at Marline Wood, Hastings, on 9th. March featured 23 records totalling 56 birds, with a maximum of 15 at Burton Mill Pond on 18th and 7 at Four Counties,

Ashdown, on 27th. April records produced 3 singing males on Ashdown Forest, and 70 at Denches Copse, Worth Forest, on 8th, including several males in summer plumage. A party of 15 was recorded on Ashdown Forest on 13th.

Autumn records started with 2 at Church Norton, Pagham Hbr, on 24th Sept. The 55 records submitted during October totalled 409 birds, starting with 6 at Pulborough Brooks on 1st, whilst Birling Gap, Beachy Head, recorded 80 flying W, 95 flying NW and 100 between Birling and Belle Tout on 12th. Records for November featured a maximum of 8 at Whitbread Hollow, Beachy Head, on 1st, with a total of 42 birds seen during the month.

The year ended with counts in December of 40 at Millbrook, Ashdown, on 11th, 90 at Broadstone Warren, Ashdown, on 17th, and 20 at West Dean Woods on 20th. The last records were of 2 at Coates Common and of 5 at Wych Cross, Ashdown, on 29th. [JLH]

1640. **SERIN**

Serinus serinus

Very scarce passage migrant. Has bred.

The poorest showing since 1992, with probably only 6 birds recorded. The first record was of a male at Ferry Corner, Sidlesham, from 2-8 Apr where it was often heard singing (TJE, HEP). Another male, presumably a different bird, was singing at Selsey Bill on 8 Apr before flying off N (TJE).

On 16 Apr, 2 flew NW over Thorney Deeps at 06.35 hrs whilst the Little Egrets were leaving their roost (CBC).

A male was seen feeding with Goldfinches and Linnets on the football pitch at Selsey Bill on the morning of 28 Apr (CBC, TJE). It was not seen again that day, but appeared the following morning, before flying out to sea. Possibly the same bird flew E over Church Norton the same day (TJE). Finally, a male was seen and heard singing on 20 and 22 May at Church Norton (TJE). [SJP]

1649. **GREENFINCH**

Carduelis chloris

Very common resident, passage migrant and winter visitor.

The year started with 10 on 1 Jan at Marline Wood, Hastings, 30 at Rye LNR on the 2nd, and 26 at Bexhill and Hastings on 12th. Also on 12th were 30 at Alexandra Park, Hastings. Chichester GPs had 50 on 19th. February records featured a monthly total of 67 at Bexhill and Hastings, with 24 at Marline Wood, Hastings. Kingley Vale recorded 80 on 2 Mar and 20 at Slinfold Park Fm on 22nd. April records included a monthly total of 131 for Bexhill and Hastings, with 35 at Sompting Downs and Abbots on 26th. Breeding records included 3 pairs at Kingley Vale on 1 May. Six pairs raised fledged young at Streat on 10th.

June featured five records totalling 24 birds, whilst July had 150 on 31st at North Wall, Pagham Hbr. Numbers increased in August, with 50 at Angmering Park Estate on 24th, 200 at Climping on 29th, whilst Bexhill and Hastings recorded a monthly total of 41. Icklesham recorded 150 on 13 Sept, with 100 at Shoreham Hbr on 20th, and 118 at Atherington, Climping, on 28th.

In October, records remained high, with 220 at Bramber Fm, Pagham, on 5th, 200 at

the Crumbles GPs on 8th, 300 at Pagham Beach on 13th, 150 at Shoreham Beach on 19th, 450 at Church Norton, Pagham Hbr, on 22nd, and a monthly total of 165 at Selsey Bill. November numbers continued with 60 on 11th at Pilsey Island, 250 at Shoreham Beach on 16th, 240 at Pagham Lagoon on 20th and with a monthly total of 163 at Bexhill and Hastings. Numbers dropped in December, records being 50 at Thorney Island on 19th, and 140 at Shoreham Hbr on 23rd. [JLH]

1653. **GOLDFINCH**

Carduelis carduelis

Common summer visitor and passage migrant and fairly common winter visitor.

Large numbers were recorded to start the year, with 61 at Marline Wood, Hastings, and 20 at Icklesham on 1 Jan; 60 at Albourne Place on 4th; 74 at Wishing Tree Res and 40 at Weir Wood Res on 5th; and 50 on 13th at Bewl Water. February saw records of 200 at Bewl Water on 9th, with 50 at Weir Wood Res on 16th and 37 at Thorney Island on 21st, ending with 30 at Rye Hbr on 27th. March recorded a maximum of 80 at Weir Wood Res on 9th and 50 at Bewl Water on same day. Four Counties, Ashdown, recorded 50 singing males on 6 Apr, with 20 at Splash Point, Seaford, on 30th and a monthly total of 54 at Bexhill and Hastings.

There were 60 recorded at Ripe on 3 May and a monthly total of 57 at Bexhill and Hastings. June numbers dropped, with 26 birds from 7 records, but included in this number was a breeding record of 5 young at Hassocks Village on 15th. Icklesham recorded a maximum count of 30 on 27 July, with North Wall, Pagham Hbr, having 46 on 31st. August records included 100 at Ardingly Res on 23rd and 65 at Darwell Res on 24th.

September started with 50 at North Brooks, Pulborough, on 1st, 100 on 2nd at Halsey's Fm, Sidlesham, 250 at West Fields, Selsey, on 6th, 500 at Newtimber Hill, Poynings, on 14th, 280 at Pett Level Pools on 28th, and with 307 at Atherington, Climping, on the same day. A monthly total of 2737 was recorded at Bexhill and Hastings which included 284 on 22nd, 774 on 27th and 767 on 28th. Even larger numbers were seen in October, with 165 at Selsey Bill on 10th, 200 at Belle Tout, Beachy Head, on 12th, 330 at Halsey's Fm, Sidlesham, on 13th, 2420 on 22nd at Church Norton, Pagham Hbr, 400 at Beachy Head on 22nd, with monthly totals at Worthing Beach of 1232, at Selsey Bill of 952, and of 1622 at Bexhill and Hastings.

Numbers dropped during November, with monthly totals of 88 at Selsey Bill and 94 at Bexhill and Hastings. The year ended with 100 at Bewl Water on 3 Dec, 23 at Thorney Island on 15th and a monthly total at Selsey Bill of 23. [JLH]

1654. **SISKIN**

Carduelis spinus

Common winter visitor and passage migrant. Probably now a very scarce breeder.

1996: The pair with fledged young, recorded as being at Cowdray Park, Midhurst, on 8 June, were in fact in Cowdray Forest, near Crawley.

1997: The year started with good numbers, 82 being recorded at Marline Wood, Hastings, on 1 Jan, 40 on 5th at Weir Wood Res, 40 at Rackham Woods on 8th and 50 at Mill Pond, Ifield, on 30th. Numbers increased in February, with 150 at South Ambersham on 2nd, 100 at Broad Halfpenny, Coates, on 8th, 70 on 9th at Darwell Res, 100 at Bewl Water on 19th, 250 at Chingford Pond, Duncton, on 22nd and with 100 at Paddockhurst Place,

Worth, on 27th. Numbers remained high in March, with records of 50 from Lords Piece, Sutton Common, on 3rd, 150 at Burton Mill Pond on 8th, 200 at Newbridge, Ashdown, on 12th and 300 at Ambersham Common on the same day. On 13th, a party of 100 singing males were recorded at Chelwood Gate, Ashdown, whilst at Kidds Hill, Ashdown Forest, 220 were seen on the same day. The month finished with 100 at Cripps Corner on 28th and 175 at Four Counties, Ashdown, on 30th.

April saw numbers recorded slump to 50 on 4th and 150 on 6th at Four Counties, Ashdown Forest. Breeding records were received in May, with one pair at West Dean Woods on 1st and a pair at Lavington on 17th. June records remained low with 5 at Denches Copse, Worth Forest, on 4th, 10 at Ambersham Common on 8th and a pair with a juvenile at Duncton Common on 27th. July saw no improvement, with only 16 records of low numbers with 8, including two juveniles, at Bewl Water on 22nd. August saw some movement, with 20 flying west from Selsey Bill on 5th, and 13 at Ashdown Forest Centre on 11th. Cissbury Ring recorded 933 over eight dates, including 189 on 19th and 482 on 21st.

September had high numbers in total, with 226 at Thorney Island on 6th, 210 at West Wittering on 9th, 308 at Bexhill and Hastings on 10th, 150 at Sheepcote Valley, Brighton, on 11th and 1035 there on 19th. Pett Level recorded 1000 on 20th, Bexhill and Hastings counted 955 on 21st, with 400 at Widewater, Lancing, likewise on 21st. Church Norton, Pagham Hbr, noted 375 on 25th, 200 at Birling Gap, Beachy Head, on 28th, with 141 on 29th at Seaford Head. October started with 155 at Church Norton, Pagham Hbr, on 1st, 254 on 5th at Bexhill and Hastings, 300 at Birling Gap, Beachy Head, on 12th, another 260 at Church Norton, Pagham Hbr, on 19th, 360 there on 22nd, and 280 on 23rd. The month ended with 220 at Selsey Bill on 31st. Numbers dropped during November, with 60 at Tilgate Lake on 1st, 30 at North Heath, Horsham, on 3rd, 29 on 22nd at Bexhill and Hastings and 20 at Maynard's Green on 24th. The year ended with 55 at Rackham Woods on 1 Dec, 35 on 14th at Bewl Water, 35 at Weir Wood Res on 22nd and 7 recorded at Barcombe Res on 31st. [JLH]

1662. **TWITE**

Carduelis flavirostris

Scarce winter visitor and passage migrant.

1996: A late record was for 3 birds (2 males & 1 female) at East Head, West Wittering, on 26 Nov (CWM).

1997: Another poor year, with only four records. In January, 2 were seen on the River Adur, Shoreham, on 10th (PJW) and a pleasing group of 6 were watched at Thorney Island on 24th (MS). In October, 2 were found at Church Norton, Pagham Hbr, on 23rd (TJE) and 3 flew over Sheepcote Valley, Brighton, on 26th (IJW). [JAH]

1663. **REDPOLL**

Carduelis flammea

Fairly common breeder, passage migrant and winter visitor.

The first record of the year was of 80 feeding on 3 Jan at Bewl Water, with 8 at Rackham Woods on 4th. February saw 12 at Weir Wood Res on 13th, and 35 on 17th at Hesworth Common which also had 80 on 5 Mar. Darwell Res claimed 28 on 9 Mar, 45 at Greenwood Clump, Ashdown, on 21st, and 75 at Four Counties, Ashdown, on 31st, with one singing. Twenty were singing there on 4 Apr, whilst Duncton Common recorded 30

on 5th. May had small numbers: 4 on 4th at Four Counties, Ashdown, 6 on the same day at Camp Hill, Ashdown, and lower numbers at various other Ashdown sites.

Only one bird was recorded in June, on 9th in Tilgate Forest. Numbers during July remained low, recorded at various Ashdown sites. No records were received for August. Numbers increased during September, with 110 at Cissbury Ring on 14th, 30 on 24th at Weir Wood Res, 65 at Bexhill and Hastings on 27th and 76 on 28th. Even higher numbers were recorded in October, with 41 at Church Norton, Pagham Hbr, on 2nd, 67 at Bexhill and Hastings on 5th, 150 on the same day at Whitbread Hollow, Beachy Head, another 100 on 13th, and yet another 100 on 18th. Church Norton, Pagham Hbr, recorded 75 on 22nd, and another 50 were at Whitbread Hollow, Beachy Head, on 26th.

Numbers dropped in November, with 18 at Sheepcote Valley, Brighton, on 6th, and 5 at Stansted Forest on 12th. The year ended with 6 at Icklesham on 1 Dec, 5 at Nep Town, Henfield, on 4th and 5 at Bexhill and Hastings on 27th. [JLH]

1666. COMMON CROSSBILL

Loxia curvirostra

Scarce visitor occurring in large numbers in irruption years. Breeds occasionally.

January recorded one on 20th at Weavers Down, Liss, with none during February. March had 2 on 10th, also at Weavers Down, Liss, and 4 on 11th at Ashdown Forest Centre. One was recorded on 16th Apr at Church Norton, Pagham Hbr. Eighteen were seen on 24 May at Pippingford Park, Ashdown, with 3 on 30th at Ambersham Common.

June had increased numbers, with 18 on 5th at Shoreham Sanctuary, 12 at Holmbush Fm, Faygate, on 15th, 15 at Ashdown Forest on 16th, and 15 drinking in the Ardingly Res Dam area on 17th. West Dean Woods recorded 45 on 28th, with 20 at Stedham Common on the same day. Twyford Lane Fm, Ashdown, saw 14 on 29th with 15 on 30th at The Goat, Ashdown. The numbers increased again in July, with 120 at West Dean Woods on 4th, 40 at Stanstead Pond Copse on 6th, 48 at Worth Forest and 20 in Tilgate Forest, both on the same day. The 10th saw 20 at Whiteley Hill, Worth Forest, with 20 at Paddockhurst Place, Worth, on 11th. Twenty-five were seen at Millbrook, Ashdown, on 15th, with 27 at Icklesham on the same date. West Dean Woods reported 120 on 18th, with 45 at Whitbread Hollow, Beachy Head, next day, with the month ending there with 38 on 30th.

Numbers were lower during August, with 10 on 1st at Moulsecomb Wild Park, Brighton, 22 on 2nd at Marline Wood, Hastings, and 35 at Cissbury Ring on the same day. Galley Hill, Bexhill, recorded 17 on 10th, also 36 on 11 Sept. West Dean Woods reported 40 on 18 Sept, with 9 on Duncton Common on 21st. October saw many more records, with 25 at Press Ridge Warren, Ashdown, on 4th, and 30 on 12th at Graffham Common. Lords Piece, Sutton Common, recorded 20 on 15th, with 53 at Church Norton, Pagham Hbr, next day. There were 28 at Bexhill on 25th, whilst 25 were seen on the same day at Sharpthorne, the month ending with 40 at Old Lodge Reserve, Ashdown, on 30th. Ashdown Forest reported 20 on 1 Nov, Stansted Forest recorded 60 on 12th, with 21 on Lords Piece, Sutton Common, on 21st, and 16 in Broadwater Forest on 24th. At least 16 were seen at Ashdown Old Airstrip on 9th Dec, 22 at Weavers Down, Liss, on 12th, 30 at Old House Warren, Worth Forest, on 26th, and 40 on 28th in Worth Forest. The month

continued with 30 at Ambersham Common on 29th, 30 at Ashdown Forest on 30th, and 30 at Old House Warren, Worth Forest, on the last day of the year. [JLH]

1679. **SCARLET ROSEFINCH**

Carpodacus erythrinus

Rare, but increasing, vagrant.

1995: A female east of Belle Tout Wood, Beachy Head, on 18 June (PN, MN) was the 3rd record of the year, equalling the totals of 1990, 1991 and 1994.

1997: A juvenile by Pagham Hbr Information Centre on 5 Sept (TJE) was the first record for two years, although 16 have now been recorded during the 1990s. These have been in May (4), June (8), August, September (2) and October, although 6 of the 9 previous records were in autumn. Three have been found in recent years near the Information Centre at Pagham Hbr, while a total of 16 have been recorded at Beachy Head. [RJF]

1710. **BULLFINCH**

Pyrrhula pyrrhula

Very common resident.

Maximum counts during the year were 17 at Darwell Res on 9 Feb, 11 at Warnham LNR on 8 Mar, 11 at Pulborough Brooks on 9 Dec and 19 at Weir Wood Res on 26 Dec.

There were 7 pairs breeding in Kingley Vale and 3 pairs in West Dean Woods. The results of the Breeding Surveys can be found in the appropriate section of this *Report*. More annual breeding season counts of this common but under-recorded species would be useful.

Poor numbers were reported from Whitbread Hollow, Beachy Head, in September, with only a daily maximum of 3. Forty individuals were ringed at Streat during the year, and Cissbury saw its highest number in 14 years' activity at the site, with 47 ringed between April and November, double the 1996 total.

Unusually for the site, there were 5 present in Sheepcote Valley on 14 Nov, and these remained into December. [VPB]

1717. **HAWFINCH**

Coccothraustes coccothraustes

Scarce breeding resident and very scarce passage migrant.

Very low numbers were recorded throughout the year, with 8 records in January, including 2 at West Dean on 9th, 4 at Stapleash Fm, Chilgrove, on 10th, and 6 at Darwell Res on 12th. February recorded one on 1st at Stapleash Fm, Chilgrove, 2 at Linchball Wood, West Dean, on 8th, and 3 on 27th at West Dean. The only March record was at Warningore, Plumpton, on 1st.

Singing males were heard at West Dean Woods, with 2 on 5th June and one at Marline Wood, Hastings, on 26th.

Singles were reported from Halsey's Fm, Sidlesham, on 17 Sept, from Hastings Beach on 22 Oct, from Church Norton, Pagham Hbr, on 30 Oct, and from Glebe Meadow, Church Norton, on 30th.

The year ended with 4 at Stapleash Fm, Chilgrove, on 13th Dec and one at Graffham on 20th. [JLH]

1847. **LAPLAND BUNTING**

Calcarius lapponicus

Very scarce winter visitor and passage migrant.

Another poor year, with only 2 birds recorded. A first-winter female was at Atherington from 5-10 Oct (RJLK, SJP). The bird was usually with Meadow Pipits and was sometimes fairly confiding. A first-winter male was seen with Skylarks at East Head, West Wittering, on 14 Dec (BFF, RAI, DIS). [SJP]

1850. **SNOW BUNTING**

Plectrophenax nivalis

Scarce passage migrant and winter visitor.

1997 was a poorer year than 1996, with records down from 21 sites to only 10, of which 2 were inland, and the number of individuals down from minima of 42 to 23. There were, unusually, no records from the Rye/Camber Sands area which, 25 years ago, was a major stronghold of the species. Either the birds, or the observers, have deserted the area!

In the first winter period, records involved a possible 14 birds from 4 sites. One at Sovereign Hbr Marina, Eastbourne, on 1 Jan had been joined by 2 others by the 11th, and 1 flew in from the sea at Brighton Marina on 5th. Four (2 males and 2 females) at East Head, Chichester Hbr, remained from 1996 until at least 19 Jan, but there was only 1, possibly a different bird, there on 8 Feb. Pilsey Sands, Chichester Hbr, held 4 (2 males and 2 females, and different from the East Head birds), from 10-13 Feb and a presumably different singleton from 17-23 Mar.

Inland records came from Arlington Res where 1 was seen on 8 Jan and even further inland a single adult male was seen at Ifold on 10 Jan.

In the second winter period, records involved 11 birds from 7 sites. Four flew west past Galley Hill, Bexhill, on 25 Oct and a probable male flew east past Goring Gap, Worthing, on 1 Nov. Two birds were seen at Sovereign Hbr on 8 Nov and a juvenile female was seen on the shingle spit at Church Norton, Pagham Hbr, from 8-9 Nov. At Atherington, Climping, a singleton stayed from 25-31 Dec. [JAH]

1857. **YELLOWHAMMER**

Emberiza citrinella

Very common resident.

Many records were sent in, possibly prompted by the alarming reports of a decline in numbers of this and other farmland species. Early in the year, 81 were counted at West Itchenor on 9 Jan, while Lower Standean produced 100 on 5 Feb and Kithurst Hill, Storrington, 80 on 2 Mar. There were numerous counts of 20 or more into the spring.

The usual wintering flock in a private garden at Aldwick, near Bognor Regis, maintained a steady figure of between 15 and 20 birds during the first winter period. A few birds remained right through the summer and into the autumn, to be joined by others in the second winter period when figures rose to between 20 and 30 birds most days.

During the breeding season, there were more than 130 records of birds holding territories. Records of breeding success came from Cuckmere Haven, where 2 adults were seen feeding 3 young on 28 June, and another 2 adults were feeding 3 newly-hatched young on 5 July.

At the end of the year, flock sizes averaged somewhat smaller than in the spring, with 30 recorded near the Long Man at Wilmington, 31 feeding in stubble at Street, and 40 at

Sidlesham SF on 4 Dec.

All counts of pairs in the breeding season from defined areas are welcomed. [PL]

1877. REED BUNTING

Emberiza schoeniclus

Common resident, passage migrant and winter visitor.

A 30% increase in records to over 180 (well spread, with 70 in the west and 110 in the east of the County), covering more than 90 sites (40 west, 50 east), make this a quite well-documented species.

Significantly, large flocks were noticeably absent this year. During the first winter period, the largest parties noted were 50 at Castle Fm, Rye Hbr, on 10 Jan, 40 on the West Beach, Selsey, on 22 Mar and 28 at Coombe Haven on 2 Feb. During the second winter period, the largest counts were of 150 at Icklesham on 26 Oct (but only 40 there on 20 Nov) and a flock of 85 at one site in Ashdown Forest, and a further 20 elsewhere there, on 14 Dec.

Evidence of coastal passage was limited. One flying east over the beach at Glyne Gap, Bexhill, on 16 Mar was the only first winter record. In the autumn, 21 east at Church Norton, Pagham Hbr, on 19 Oct were followed by 18 east there on 22nd. Ones or twos were also seen over White Rock Gardens, Hastings Beach, on 5 dates in Oct and Nov.

Breeding was confirmed at 12 sites, involving 48 pairs; probable (assuming all singing males are holding territories) at 31, involving 85 pairs or territories; and suspected at a further 18, involving 24 pairs or territories. These figures are a significant improvement on those for 1996. Breeding was confirmed for 11 pairs at the North Brooks, 9 at the Mid Brooks and 3 at the South Brooks, Pulborough; 6 pairs at Marsh Fm, Yapton; 5 pairs each at Aldingbourne Rife and Amberley Wild Brooks; 2 pairs each at Pippingford Park, Ashdown, and at Littlehampton GC; and single pairs elsewhere in the Ashdown area. The 40 pairs which bred at Rye in 1996 were reported as only probable this year. The highest numbers of probable breeders were 5 at Iping Common and 4 at Glyne Gap Marsh, Bexhill. Otherwise, in general, single pairs were recorded. [JAH]

1882. CORN BUNTING

Miliaria calandra

Fairly common but decreasing resident.

Among 29 reports from 17 sites in January were ten in excess of 100. There were at least 150 at the roosts at Sidlesham MP and at Scotney Court, with 112 at Lower Standean and 100 at Cuckoo Corner, Coombes. On 1 Feb, 104 were in Cricketing Bottom. The Shoreham Airport roost held about 70 birds from New Year's Day through to 25 Feb. Small flocks (of up to 40 birds) were in evidence throughout the spring, with 36 together at Marsh Fm, Sidlesham, as late as 13 May. This last record may indicate passage: movement in May was very marked at Dungeness in 1997 (*Dungeness Bird Observatory Report, 1997, p.58*).

Birds were on territory around Rye Hbr by 8 Mar. Breeding records came from the coastal strip (Rye to Selsey) and the Downs (especially in the west: Chanctonbury and Lavant, e.g.). Regularly monitored sites sadly showed evidence of some continuing decline: Rye Hbr SSSI held 5 pairs (6 in 1996) and Marsh Fm, Yapton (CBC count), only 1 (3 in 1996, 2 in 1995).

At the end of the year, there were 160 on Rodmell Brooks on 18 Oct, and 80 at Sidlesham SF on 4 Dec. Groups of reasonable size could be found, too, at less obvious locations: 20 drinking at a dew pond on Ditchling Beacon (24 Oct), 40 on the downs near North Stoke (13 Dec) and 60 on Harrow Hill, Patching, on the same day. The difficulties for this compelling bird remain formidable. [CB]

ESCAPES and FERAL BIRDS

All records of BOU Category C species, of apparently feral individuals of other species and of probable or certain escapes from captivity, will be welcomed by the Hon. Recorder for this annual feature. Notes on age/sex, plumage, behaviour, and, where known, status, will be of particular interest. Such records should be submitted in the normal way but on separate recording forms from the main records.

The following escaped or feral birds, other than those Category C species in the main list, were recorded in the county in 1997. It should be noted that the identity of these birds has not been checked by the Records Committee. List compiled by Lawrence G Holloway, with some species, as indicated, written up by Sarah Patton and Richard Fairbank.

BLACK SWAN

Cygnus atratus

Escaped individuals were seen at Northpoint Pit, Rye; at Scotney Court GP; at Bewl Water and at Weir Wood Res, on a number of dates between February and August.

GOOSE HYBRIDS

A probable Brent Goose x Barnacle Goose was seen at Halsey's Fm and on the fields behind the North Wall, Pagham Hbr, on 15 and 16 Jan, respectively. Perhaps the same bird was at West Wittering on 3 Feb.

A bird thought to be a Canada Goose x Barnacle Goose hybrid was on the west side of Pagham Hbr on 9 Feb.

BAR-HEADED GOOSE

Anser indicus

Single Bar-headed Geese were seen at a number of sites in the County on various dates throughout the year. Records came from Scotney Court GP, Amberley Wild Brooks, Thorney Deeps and Chichester Hbr, Pagham Hbr, Cuckmere Haven, Barcombe Res and the Upper Adur Levels. On at least two occasions, the birds had joined up with Canada Geese.

SNOW GOOSE

Anser caerulescens

In the first part of the year, 3 birds were at Scotney Court GP from 2-15 Feb, three white-phase birds were at Rye Hbr on 14 Feb and 1 was at South Heighton on 16 Mar.

A juvenile blue-phase bird was with Canada Geese at Cuckmere Haven from 18 Aug until the end of the year. Other singles were seen on 16 Sept with Canada Geese at Goddards Green, at Scotney Court GP on 26 Oct (a blue-phase bird) and at Glynde Levels on 14 Nov. [SJP]

EMPEROR GOOSE

Anser canagicus

A single Emperor Goose was seen intermittently on a number of dates throughout the year in Chichester Hbr and at Thorney Deepes. One was also seen at Aldsworth Pond on 23 Mar.

EGYPTIAN GOOSE

Alopochen aegyptiacus

A single bird, of uncertain origin, was present at Pett Level and Pools on various dates in April.

MUSCOVY DUCK

Cairina moschata

One at Chichester GPs had a more natural plumage than the usual domestic varieties of this species.

RINGED TEAL

Calloneta leucophrys

Escaped Ringed Teal were seen on various dates throughout the year at a number of locations: Folly Pond, Liphook; Weir Wood Res; Barcombe Res and Arlington Res. Apart from two together at Folly Pond, all the remainder were single birds.

WOOD DUCK

Aix sponsa

An escaped drake at Bewl Water on 3 Jan.

CHILOE WIGEON

Anas sibilatrix

One, at New Salts Fm, Lancing, on 15 Jan, was consorting with a flock of Eurasian Wigeon. Another was at Beeding Brooks on 11 May. The Chiloe Wigeon is a familiar member of wildfowl collections.

CHILEAN TEAL

Anas flavirostris

Various races of this South American species are variously known as Sharp-winged Teal, Speckled Teal and Chilean Teal. All are recorded here under Chilean Teal. In July, a single bird was seen at the Ferry Pool, Sidlesham, on 8th. Two free-flying individuals were seen there later in the month. A single bird, perhaps one of these, was seen at Climping on 18 Sept. Another single bird was seen at Weir Wood Res in November.

PERUVIAN RUDDY DUCK

Oxyura (jamaicensis) ferruginea

The male, present at Ternery Pool, Rye Hbr, in 1996 (SxBR: 161) was recorded until 23 Apr at least. The last sighting seems to have been on 18 June.

RED-TAILED HAWK

Buteo jamaicensis

A single Red-tailed Hawk was seen at Nep Town, Henfield, on 26 Feb.

LANNER/SAKER FALCON

Falco biarmicus/cherrug

A Lanner/Saker Falcon hybrid was seen at Oldhouse Warren, Worth Forest, on 18 May. It was wearing jesses.

CHUKAR PARTRIDGE

Alectoris chucar

Forty Chukar Partridges were recorded at Lower Standean on 20 Jan.

SILVER PHEASANT*Lophura nycthemera*

A single bird was seen in West Dean Woods on 18 June.

SPUR-WINGED PLOVER*Hoplopterus spinosus*

An adult at Pett Level on 13-14 June (JABG, MS *et al*) had previously been seen in Holland and at Stodmarsh, Kent. It then moved to Dungeness, Kent, remaining to mid-January 1998, when it returned to Holland. The bird had some primaries missing and was generally thought most likely to have been of captive origin (see *Birding World* 10:217-219). [RJF]

COCKATIEL*Nymphicus hollandicus*

Escaped Cockatiels were seen in a number of localities on various dates through the year

BUDGERIGAR*Melopsittacus undulatus*

Three escaped Budgerigars were reported, one at Shoreham on 10 Jan, another at Burgess Hill on 22 Mar and a third at Linchball Wood, West Dean, on 30 Apr. At Aldwick, a Budgerigar was the subject of an attack by a Sparrowhawk which tried to reach its intended victim through double-glazing.

PEACH-FACED LOVEBIRD*Agapornis roseicollis*

A familiar member of aviary collections. One was seen at Hempstead, Hailsham, on 14 Feb. An escaped individual of the yellow variety of the Peach-faced Lovebird was seen at Shoreham-by-Sea on 10 Feb.

ALEXANDRINE PARAKEET*Psittacula eupatria*

An Alexandrine Parakeet, perhaps the same one as seen in 1996, was present and recorded around the Information Centre, Pagham Hbr, on a number of dates in January.

MONK PARAKEET*Myiopsitta monachus*

A party of 5 was at Burgess Hill on 16 Feb.

BLACK-HEADED WEAVER*Ploceus melanocephalus*

An individual described as shabby in plumage was seen at West Itchenor on 8 July.

RED-BILLED QUELEA*Quelea quelea*

An escaped aviary bird was seen at Sunnyside, East Grinstead, on New Year's Day.

Summary of Common Breeding Bird Counts - Figures relate to pairs, nests or territories unless otherwise stated. The use of a small hyphen (-) does not necessarily mean that the species was absent.

Species	AL	BC	GF	KV	LC	LP	MF	SC	SF	WDW	WP
Mallard	16	-	1	-	-	-	7	-	-	-	-
Sparrowhawk	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1
Kestrel	-	-	-	-	1	-	1	-	-	-	2
Moorhen	13	1	3	-	-	-	10	-	-	-	-
Grey Partridge	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	1
Pheasant	-	2	-	17	-	-	3	-	-	10	2
Lapwing	3	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-
Stock Dove	-	-	4	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	4
Woodpigeon	-	3	12	17	-	-	6	-	-	5	58
Collared Dove	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	2	29
Turtle Dove	-	-	-	1	2	-	1	-	1	2	-
Cuckoo	-	-	-	1	1	-	1	-	-	1	-
Tawny Owl	-	-	-	4	-	-	-	-	-	2	-
Nightjar	-	-	-	-	2	1	-	-	-	-	-
Green Woodpecker	-	1	1	3	2	1	-	1	-	-	2
Great Sp Woodpecker	-	1	2	-	2	1	-	2	-	1	2

Skylark	-	-	-	1	-	-	3	-	1	-	8
Pied Wagtail	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-
Wren	-	10	20	2	9	6	22	6	8	3	73
Dunnock	-	3	4	3	3	2	16	-	5	1	52
Robin	-	13	23	42	9	5	15	16	12	11	124
Stonechat	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-
Blackbird	-	5	20	28	9	4	15	4	6	7	128
Song Thrush	-	1	4	3	1	2	2	-	1	2	16
Mistle Thrush	-	1	1	-	1	-	1	2	-	1	6
Sedge Warbler	7	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	-
Reed Warbler	61	-	-	-	-	-	20	-	-	-	-
Lesser Whitethroat	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	3
Whitethroat	5	1	1	1	-	1	9	-	2	-	26
Garden Warbler	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2
Blackcap	-	2	6	7	2	1	3	-	3	5	11
Chiffchaff	-	2	7	1	6	3	-	1	2	4	10
Willow Warbler	-	-	-	-	1	8	-	6	-	10	9
Goldcrest	-	-	1	-	-	3	-	-	-	-	-
Spotted Flycatcher	-	-	1	-	1	1	-	-	-	-	-
Long-tailed Tit	-	1	1	-	1	-	-	-	1	1	-
Marsh Tit	-	2	-	1	-	1	-	-	-	3	9
Coal Tit	-	1	-	-	6	4	-	1	-	1	-
Blue Tit	-	14	24	3	4	7	12	1	4	5	62
Great Tit	-	7	13	8	3	3	5	2	4	7	38
Nuthatch	-	3	2	1	2	13	-	-	-	3	-
Treecreeper	-	-	5	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-
Jay	-	-	1	1	1	-	-	1	-	1	2
Magpie	-	1	2	4	-	-	5	1	1	-	40
Jackdaw	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	1	-
Carrion Crow	-	2	4	2	-	-	5	2	1	1	15
Starling	-	-	8	-	-	-	5	-	-	-	39
Species	AL	BC	GF	KV	LC	LP	MF	SC	SF	WDW	WP
House Sparrow	-	-	-	-	-	-	6	-	-	-	16
Chaffinch	-	8	17	15	16	15	32	8	10	14	40
Greenfinch	-	-	2	3	2	-	8	-	-	1	29
Goldfinch	-	-	1	-	2	3	3	-	-	-	4
Linnet	-	-	-	-	2	-	1	1	-	-	9
Bullfinch	-	1	2	7	-	1	1	-	1	3	4
Yellowhammer	-	1	2	-	5	2	7	2	-	-	11
Reed Bunting	5	-	-	-	-	-	6	-	-	-	-

Key to sites.

AL	Aldingbourne and Lidsey Rife. 4.0km of Waterways Bird Survey
BC	Barns Copse, Binstead. 16.1 ha deciduous woodland. Common Bird Census
GF	Grantleys Fm, Maynard's Green. 45.3 ha farmland. Common Bird Census.
KV	Kingley Vale. 57.9 ha yew/ash woodland on chalk slopes. Common Bird Census.
LC	Lavington Common. 28.8 ha lowland heath surrounded by pine & deciduous woods. Common Bird Census
LP	Lord's Piece, Fittleworth. Heathland. Territory mapping.

MF Marsh Fm, Binstead. 67.5 ha mixed farmland. Common Bird Census.
 SC Stedham Common. 39.7 ha heathland with some woodland. Common Bird Census.
 SF Scobells Fm, Barcombe. 10.4 ha grass farm with woodland. Territory mapping.
 WDW West Dean Woods. Common Bird Census.
 WP Moulsecomb Wild Park area, Brighton. Downland scrub, farmland and setaside. Figures = pairs or single males.

Arrival and Departure Dates of Summer Visitors

	First Recorded Date		Last Recorded Date	
	Prior to '97	1997	Prior to '97	1997
Garganey	21 Jan	07 Feb	13 Dec	21 Sept
Osprey	10 Mar	30 Mar	09 Dec	13 Oct
Hobby	12 Apr	19 Apr	31 Oct	30 Oct
Quail	21 Mar	22 May	01 Dec	06 Sept
Little Ringed Plover	06 Mar	17 Mar	08 Oct	04 Oct
Wood Sandpiper	11 Feb	30 Apr	03 Nov	03 Oct
Pomarine Skua	02 Apr	24 Apr	20 Nov	18 Oct
Arctic Skua	29 Feb	11 Mar	21 Dec	31 Dec
Roseate Tern	17 Apr	16 May	30 Sept	15 July

Common Tern	21 Mar	05 Apr	26 Nov	16 Nov
Arctic Tern	13 Apr	13 Apr	15 Nov	23 Nov
Little Tern	02 Apr	10 Apr	04 Nov	21 Oct
Black Tern	04 Apr	05 Apr	21 Nov	16 Oct
Turtle Dove	22 Mar	21 Apr	12 Nov	15 Oct
Cuckoo	15 Mar	31 Mar	11 Nov	11 Sept
Nightjar	08 Apr	01 May	05 Nov	20 Aug
Swift	10 Apr	21 Apr	22 Nov	06 Nov
Wryneck	09 Mar	13 Apr	05 Nov	30 Oct
Sand Martin	05 Mar	05 Mar	05 Dec	13 Nov
Swallow	04 Feb	16 Mar	28 Dec	30 Nov
House Martin	01 Feb	17 Mar	22 Dec	29 Nov
Tree Pipit	17 Mar	30 Mar	09 Nov	05 Oct
Yellow Wagtail	10 Mar	09 Mar	23 Nov	31 Oct
Nightingale	23 Mar	09 Apr	19 Oct	21 Sept
Redstart	13 Mar	17 Mar	29 Nov	25 Oct
Whinchat	18 Feb	11 Apr	02 Dec	25 Oct
Wheatear	13 Feb	01 Mar	31 Dec	19 Dec
Ring Ouzel	02 Feb	30 Mar	27 Dec	12 Dec
Grasshopper Warbler	04 Apr	11 Apr	01 Nov	25 Sept
Sedge Warbler	27 Mar	08 Apr	29 Oct	15 Oct
Reed Warbler	09 Apr	14 Apr	13 Nov	04 Oct
Lesser Whitethroat	04 Apr	15 Apr	21 Nov	10 Oct
Whitethroat	19 Mar	06 Apr	17 Dec	06 Oct
Garden Warbler	01 Apr	02 Apr	16 Nov	18 Sept
Wood Warbler	07 Apr	20 Apr	01 Oct	09 Sept
Willow Warbler	04 Mar	07 Mar	26 Dec	21 Oct
Spotted Flycatcher	08 Apr	24 Apr	18 Nov	01 Nov
Pied Flycatcher	03 Apr	09 Apr	01 Nov	12 Oct

Departure and Arrival Dates of Winter Visitors

	Last recorded date		First recorded date	
	Prior to '97	1997	Prior to '97	1997
Black-throated Diver	30 June	30 June	20 Aug	10 Sept
Great Northern Diver	21 June	10 May	14 July	20 Nov
Red-necked Grebe	31 May	25 Apr	19 Aug	27 Aug
Bewick's Swan	26 Apr	30 Mar	16 Oct	22 Oct
White-fronted Goose	01 Apr	14 Mar	20 Oct	16 Oct
Long-tailed Duck	11 June	23 May	23 Aug	03 Dec
Velvet Scoter	31 May	15 June	10 July	16 Oct
Goldeneye	23 May	13 Apr	08 Oct	19 Oct
Smew	23 Apr	06 Mar	03 Nov	06 Dec

Goosander	22 May	07 Apr	16 Sept	12 Sept
Hen Harrier	19 June	21 May	04 Aug	27 July
Purple Sandpiper	26 May	18 May	05 Aug	25 July
Jack Snipe	12 May	23 Apr	29 Aug	13 Oct
Water Pipit	28 May	03 Apr	01 Sept	21 Oct
Fieldfare	05 June	27 Apr	06 Aug	12 Oct
Redwing	26 May	30 Apr	05 Sept	24 Sept
Great Grey Shrike	14 May	13 Mar	07 Sept	no record
Brambling	12 May	01 May	17 Sept	24 Sept

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E Ball	NJ Champion	RD Evans
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MH Barnard	PB Clarke	Mrs AN Everett
C Barwood	Miss CM Clarkson Webb	P Everett
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RF Bird	JES Cooper	BH Flack
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DP Bowtell	Mrs DJ Cox	MG Freeman
P Bradbeer	R Crane	P Friston
CLG Brand	DE Crawley	DJ Funnell
PM Brayshaw	D Crespin	
R Bromley	K Crisp	JAB Gale
C Brooks	L Crowhurst	SW Gale
P Brown	PR Cullen	MR Garwood
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Ms SA Gray	R Ingram	CW Melgar
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V Grout	CM James	O Mitchell
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CJ Raymond	Mrs J Steedman	PJ Whitcomb
Mrs PJ Raynor	MJ Stenning	IJ Whitcomb
M Reader	Mrs V Stevens	AD Whitcomb
G Rich	PJ Strangeman	GC White
J Riddle	GA Sutton	P&C White
GCM Roberts	RG Sutton	B Whitewood
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G Ruffles	Mr – Swainbank	Mrs AM Whitman
J Ruggles		Mrs J Wicks
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SURVEYS:

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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 1997 were: PC Bance, R Carver, PB Clarke,

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Wetland Bird Survey (WeBS): This BTO/WWT/RSPB/JNCC survey was carried out between Apr 1997 and Mar 1998. Counts were carried out, those for both the coast and inland 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. Thanks are due to the two survey organisers and to the following counters: R Antonini, PC Bance, K Benyon-Tinker, G Binns, GF Boniface, Dr C Brooks, M Buckley, DJ Burges, KF Burn, T Callaway, Dr J Chapman, GA Cockburn, D Codd, CB Collins, C Cook, A Cotton, Ms A de Potier, G Durey, AR Eales, P Edwards, M Emery, S Evans, Mrs AE Everett, B Fellows, A Foster, DJ Funnell, J Glover, DJ Golds, Miss H Gordon, A Grace, N Greenaway, RR Greenhalf, G Griffin, G Gowlett, RG Harris, JL Herring, D Heryett, R Hill, D & Mrs S Hilton, Mrs PA Hollow, RL Izzard, D Julian, S Knapp, R Knight, L Lacey-Johnson, DC Lang, I Lang, HJA Lee, M Love, CD Lowmass, R Morris, Mrs BM Mortlock, Mrs SJ Patton, B Puttock, CJ Raymond, S Richardson, H Roberts, B Savage, A and Mrs IM Simpson, Miss A Skinner, Ms C Skinner, DI Smith, M Smith, Miss CA Taylor, P Troake, JE Trowell, PC Turner, ED Urquhart, Mrs P Williams, RLC Williamson, J Willsher, PJ Wilson, H Wingfield-Hayes, CW and Mrs KI Woodburn, K and Mrs J Wright, Dr BJ Yates, and S Younger.

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Common Birds Census: A number of members carry out annual breeding bird censuses for the BTO on a range of sites throughout the county; those tabulated on pages 167 & 168 were from R Crane, MJ Emery, R Knight, RT Pepper, W Raymond and PC Turner.

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 from 1995 - 1997.

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1996 ARUN VALLEY BREEDING WADER SURVEY and CHANGES since 1991

By Simon Allen

Introduction

The Arun Valley is one of the top ten sites in the UK for Lapwing, Snipe and Redshank

(Corrigan, 1996). However, breeding wader surveys in 1982 and 1991, together with anecdotal evidence, suggest a decline in numbers, particularly in the Lapwing. As five years had passed since the last survey (Pilcher, 1991 and Corrigan, 1993), 1996 was considered an appropriate year for a repeat survey to monitor change.

There have been significant changes in the valley over this period. The establishment of the Pulborough Brooks RSPB Reserve in 1989 is believed to have had an effect on distribution and total numbers of waders within the lower Arun Valley. Furthermore, the loss of suitable habitat for breeding waders has apparently continued. By recording habitat details, observations could be made relating to habitat and to wader distribution.

Method

The flood-plain between Arundel and Pulborough, together with the Western Rother to Lower Fittleworth, was surveyed; an area of 1589ha., totalling 609 fields. The area was divided into 18 sub-units as in 1991 (Appendix 1). Survey techniques were based upon the 1989 Breeding Waders of Wet Meadows Survey (O'Brien & Smith, 1992). Three visits were made, one in each of the periods 15 April-2 May, 3 May-22 May and 23 May-17 June, with successive visits separated by at least one week.

The number of waders were recorded field by field on each visit, noting nuptial and territorial displays, and behaviour indicative of the presence of young. The number of pairs was estimated as follows:

Lapwing: maximum number of non-flocking birds on any visit, divided by two.

Snip: maximum number of drumming plus chipping birds, so long as there were displaying birds present in May.

Redshank: mean number of individuals recorded between mid-April and late May (Visits 1 & 2), divided by two.

Habitat

Information was recorded on management, vegetation height, percentage area of tussock vegetation, wetness and standing water, and ditch levels below each field surface.

Results

The results are summarised in the following tables:

Table 1	Breeding Wader Numbers
Table 2	Management
Table 3	Areas of Wet Fields and Standing Water
Table 4	Breeding Wader Densities
Tables 5A & 5B	Change in Breeding Wader Numbers between 1991 and 1996
Table 6	Change in Area of Management Types between 1991 and 1996
Table 7	Breeding Wader Numbers and Densities for the Arun Valley and Other Important Wader Sites
Table 8	Percentage Change in Breeding Wader Numbers for the Arun Valley and Other Important Wader Sites

Discussion

Arun Valley (Table 1)

The survey has shown the Arun Valley to support small numbers of breeding waders,

concentrated in a few sites.

Lapwing

Of a total of 77 pairs, 55 pairs (71.4%) were found in Pulborough Brooks (North and South), Amberley Central, Amberley South and Offham Island (23.9% of the survey area).

Snipe

A total of 37 pairs were found at only five sub-units: Pulborough Brooks (North and South), Amberley West, Amberley Central, Amberley East and Amberley South (35.3% of the survey area).

Redshank

Of a total of 86 pairs, 54 pairs (63.5%) were found in Pulborough Brooks (North and South), Amberley West and Amberley South (21.4% of the survey area).

Table 1 Arun Valley 1996: Numbers of Breeding Waders

Sub-Unit	Area (ha)	Lapwing	Snipe	Redshank	Total Waders
Fittleworth	148	-	-	-	0
Pulborough-Marehill	46	-	-	-	0
Pulborough Brooks North	55	27	6	33	66
Pulborough Brooks South	94	10	14	10	34
Pulborough-Greatham	182	4	-	-	4
Coldwaltham	145	2	-	4	6
Amberley West	97	4	1	9	14
Amberley Central	88	7	8	1	16
Amberley East	85	3	2	4	9
Amberley South	92	5	3	8	16
Timberley	115	2	-	4	6
North Stoke	96	1	-	-	1
South Stoke-Offham	67	1	-	-	1
Pepperering	52	-	-	-	0
Offham Island	50	5	3	5	13
Wepham	79	1	-	6	7
Arundel	79	-	-	-	0
WWT	19	4	-	2	6
Total inc Pulborough Brooks N&S	1589	76	37	86	199
Total exc Pulborough Brooks N&S	1440	39	17	43	99

Habitat details (Tables 2 & 3)

Management The distribution of the most suitable management-types for breeding waders are described.

Unimproved pasture

Unimproved pasture comprises 191ha., 81% of which is found in Fittleworth, Pulborough Brooks North, Pulborough Brooks South, Coldwaltham and Amberley West.

Semi-improved pasture

Semi-improved pasture, comprising 1057ha. (67% of the survey area), is found throughout the survey area.

Vegetation - Tussocky grass

Tussocky grass comprises 174.lha. (10.9% of the survey area), of which 70.7% is found in Rother, Coldwaltham, Amberley West, Amberley East, Amberley Central and Amberley South.

Wetness and Standing Water

Wet fields comprised 289.6ha. (18.3% of the survey area) in April, dropping to 117.lha. (7.6% of the survey area) in May. Of this, 261.8ha. (90.4%) are found in Pulborough to Marehill, Pulborough Brooks South, Timberley to Houghton and North Stoke. 80.3% of that which remained in May was found in North Stoke.

Standing water comprised 50.5ha. (3.2% of the survey area) in April, dropping to 16.1ha. (1% of the survey area) in May. Of this area, 43.5ha. (86.1%) are found in Pulborough Brooks North, Pulborough Brooks South, Amberley West, Amberley Central, Amberley East and Timberley to Houghton. 70.8% of that which remained in May was found in Pulborough North and Pulborough South.

Table 2 The Arun Valley 1996: Agricultural Management

Sub-unit	Area (ha)	Management Area (ha)					
		RG	SG/IG	CH	CS	A	U
Fittleworth	148	38	116	-	2.6	-	-
Pulborough-Marehill	46	-	24	20	2.6	-	-
Pulborough Brooks N	55	25	21	7	-	-	-
Pulborough Brooks S	94	14	62	8.9	8.6	-	-
Pulborough-Greatham	182	2.5	109	-	-	70	-
Coldwaltham-Bury	145	56	94	-	-	-	-
Amberley West	97	21	79	-	5.5	-	4
Amberley Central	88	8	85	-	-	-	-
Amberley East	85	2.2	65	-	8	-	-
Amberley South	92	3.5	64	-	29	-	-
Timberley-Houghton	115	3.4	94	-	18	-	-
North Stoke	96	3.1	76	-	18	-	-
South Stoke-Offham	67	0,3	65	-	-	-	-
Peppering	52	7.5	40	6.3	-	-	2.5
Offham Island	50	3.1	22	-	28	-	-
Wepham	79	2.7	64	-	11.9	-	-
Arundel	79	-	74	-	13.7	-	2
WWT	19	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total inc Pulborough Brooks N&S	1589	162	1154	27	101	70	6
Total exc Pulborough Brooks N&S	1440	152	974	26	134	81	8

Some of the foregoing figures do not total exactly, due to minor discrepancies in the calculation of field size. Table 2 should be read in conjunction with the following definitions.

RG	Unimproved pasture
SG/IG	Improved/semi-improved pasture
CH	Hay
CS	Silage Meadow
A	Arable
U	Unmanaged

Table 3 The Arun Valley 1996: Areas of Wet Fields & Standing Water

Sub-unit	Area (ha)	Wet Fields				Standing Water			
		Visit 1		Visit 2		Visit 1		Visit 2	
		(ha)	%	(ha)	%	(ha)	%	(ha)	%
Fittleworth	148	-	-	1.7	1.1	-	-	0.2	-
Pulborough-Marehill	46	35.8	77.8	-	-	1.1	2.4	1.1	2.4
Pulborough Brooks N	55	41.7	77.2	-	-	7.2	13.3	7.4	13.7
Pulborough Brooks S	94	10.8	11.5	-	-	9.6	10.2	4	4.3
Pulborough-Greatham	182	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Coldwaltham-Bury	145	11.1	7.7	13.7	9.4	2	1.4	-	-
Amberley West	97	-	-	-	-	5.4	5.6	-	-
Amberley Central	88	-	-	-	-	4.4	5	1.1	1.3
Amberley East	85	-	-	-	-	5.1	6	0.6	0.7
Amberley South	92	-	-	3.5	3.8	1.3	1.4	0.4	0.4
Timberley-Houghton	115	94.3	82	-	-	11.8	10	-	-
North Stoke	96	90.0	93.8	94	97.9	-	-	-	-
South Stoke-Offham	67	0.75	1.1	0.75	1.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1
Peppering	52	2.5	4.8	0.8	1.5	0.2	0.4	0.2	0.4
Offham Island	50	2.6	5.2	2.6	5.2	0.6	1.2	1	2
Wepham	79	-	-	-	-	1.7	2.2	-	-
Arundel	79	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
WWF	19	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total inc Pulborough Brooks	1589	290	18.3	117	7.6	50.5	3.2	16.1	1
Total exc Pulborough Brooks	1440	239	16.6	121	8.4	33.7	2.4	4.7	0.3

Distribution of Breeding Waders in Relation to Habitat Details

Densities of Breeding Waders are summarised in Table 4. As perhaps expected, the highest densities of Snipe correlate with unimproved grassland i.e., Pulborough Brooks and Amberley Central. The Redshank is less restricted in its distribution, highest densities being found in Pulborough Brooks, Amberley West, Amberley South, Offham Island and Wepham to Warningcamp. Within these are generally found significant areas of semi-improved grassland. Lapwings are found almost throughout the survey area, though higher

densities were normally recorded where grassland was less improved.

Table 4 The Arun Valley 1996: Breeding Wader Densities (Pairs/Sq Km)

Sub-unit	Area (ha)	Lapwing	Snipe	Redshank
Fittleworth	148	-	-	-
Pulborough-Marehill	46	-	-	-
Pulborough Brooks N	55	49	11	60
Pulborough Brooks S	94	11	14.8	10.6
Pulborough-Greatham	182	2.2	-	-
Coldwaltham-Bury	145	1.4	-	2.8
Amberley West	97	4.1	1	9.3
Amberley Central	88	7.9	9.1	1.1
Amberley East	85	3.5	2.4	4.7
Amberley South	92	5.4	3.3	8.7
Timberley-Houghton	115	1.7	-	3.5
North Stoke	96	1	-	-
South Stoke-Offham	67	1.5	-	-
Peppering	52	-	-	-
Offham Island	50	10	6	10
Wepham	79	1.3	-	7.6
Arundel	79	-	-	-
WWT	19	21	-	10.5
Total inc Pulborough Brooks N&S	1589	4.8	2.3	5.4

Change in Breeding Wader Numbers Since 1991 (Tables 5A & 5B)

Although these data have not been tested statistically it is probable that the declines in the numbers of Snipe and Redshank are significant. Locally, Lapwing increased at Pulborough Brooks North, less so at Amberley West, Central and South, and Offham Island, and declined at most other sub-units. There were fewer Snipe at both Pulborough Brooks North and Coldwaltham to Bury whilst an increase was observed at Pulborough Brooks South. Redshank increased at Pulborough Brooks North and Amberley West and declined at North Stoke.

Table 5A Change in Breeding Wader Numbers in the Arun Valley between 1991 and 1996 - Lapwing, Snipe and Redshank

Sub-unit	Area (ha)	Lapwing			Snipe			Redshank		
		'91	'96	% change	'91	'96	% change	'91	'96	% change
Fittleworth	148	1	0		1	0		1	0	
Pulborough-Marehill	46	0	0		0	0		0	0	
Pulborough Brooks North	55	19.5	27	39	34	6	-82	26	33	27
Pulborough Brooks South	94	8	10		8	14	75	9	10	
Pulborough-Greatham	182	0.5	4		0	0		2.5	0	
Coldwaltham-Bury	145	1.5	2		18	0	-100	6.5	4	
Amberley West	97	0.5	4		4	1		2	9	
Amberley Central	88	2	7		10	8		2.5	1	
Amberley East	85	12	3		3	2		6.5	4	
Amberley South	92	3	5		9	3		6.5	8	
Timberley-Houghton	115	1.5	2		0	0		4	4	
North Stoke	96	7	1		0	0		6	0	
South Stoke-Offham	67	2.5	1		0	0		0.5	0	
Peppering	52	1	0		0	0		4.5	0	
Offham Island	50	2.5	5		1	3		7.5	5	
Wepham	79	8.5	1		0	0		9.5	6	
Arundel	79	0.5	0		0	0		1.5	0	
WWT	19	5.5	4		0	0		1	2	
Total inc Pulborough Brooks N&S	1589	77	76	0	88	37	-58	97	86	-11
Total exc Pulborough Brooks N&S	1440	49.5	39.0	-19	46	17	-63	62	43	-31

Table 5B Change in Breeding Wader Numbers in the Arun Valley between 1991 and 1996 - Summary covering all three species

Sub-unit	Area (ha)	Total Waders			Pairs/sq km	
		1991	1996	% change	1991	1996
Fittleworth	148	3	0		2	0
Pulborough-Marehill	46	0	0		0	0
Pulborough Brooks North	55	79.5	66	-17	144.6	120
Pulborough Brooks South	94	25	34	36	26.6	36.2
Pulborough-Greatham	182	3	4		1.6	2.2
Coldwaltham-Bury	145	26	6	-75	17.9	4.1
Amberley West	97	6.5	14	115	6.7	14.4
Amberley Central	88	14.5	16		16.5	18.2
Amberley East	85	21.5	9	-58	25.3	10.6
Amberley South	92	18.5	16		20.1	17.9
Timberley-Houghton	115	5.5	6		4.8	5.2
North Stoke	96	13	1	-92	13.5	1
South Stoke-Offham	67	3	1		4.5	1.5
Peppering	52	5.5	0		10.6	0
Offham Island	50	11	13		22	26
Wepham	79	18	7	-61	22.8	8.9
Arundel	79	2	0		2.5	0
WWT	19	6.5	6		34.2	31.6
Total inc Pulborough Brooks North & South	1589	262	199	-24	16.5	12.5
Total exc Pulborough Brooks North & South	1440	158	99	-39	11	6.5

Change in Habitat Details Since 1991 (Table 6)

Dr. Ken Smith of the RSPB made a statistical comparison of the two data sets for each sub-unit. 1991 figures are not included here: however, the following comments summarise his conclusions:

Vegetation height at Visit 1 was always significantly greater in 1996. The difference — though less significant — persisted at Visit 2. Ditch levels at Visit 1 were always significantly higher in 1996, with the exception of Pulborough Brooks North. The difference — though less significant — persisted at Visit 2, with the exception of Peppering. The total area of flooding at Visit 1 was always greater in 1996; significantly so in six sub-units. At Visit 2, there was no significant trend. The proportion of fields

containing some surface flooding at Visit 1 was always greater in 1996 (correlates with ditch level data). By Visit 2, the proportion was less in 1996. In other words, the 1996 season started with more flooding compared to 1991, but lost it rapidly.

Habitat Change and Change in Breeding Wader Numbers

Hydrographs show the early spring of 1991 to have been much wetter and cooler than that in 1996, and at Amberley Wild Brooks a trial two-inch rise in sluice heights was introduced in the spring/summer of 1996. At first, the results appear anomalous. It may be expected that a wetter spring would lead to higher ditch levels and more flooding. A knowledge of farming and drainage operations in the Arun Valley, however, provides an explanation. After a rainy spell, farmers ask for the sluices to be maintained at a lower level to remove 'excess' water. Ditch levels were, therefore, lower at Visit 1 in 1991 and there was little flooding. In 1996, the drier spring resulted in ditch levels not being lowered so much and patches of flooding were present on the fields. In 1991, then, soil moisture levels would have been wet in the absence of flooding, whereas in 1996 patches of flooding occurred on fields that were otherwise dry. This would explain the decline in waders at Fittleworth, Coldwaltham-Bury, Amberley East and South, North Stoke, Peppering and Wepham-Warningcamp. This effect may have been compounded at sites such as Fittleworth, Amberley East and South and Peppering, where hay meadow was lost to pasture and silage. At Pulborough-Greatham the conversion of pasture to arable resulted in the loss of Redshank.

By 1996, several parts of the valley were being managed for wildlife and here flooding was encouraged. These are the sites where the total area of flooding was significantly greater at Visit 1 and include Pulborough Brooks, Amberley West and Amberley Central. Here, an increase in Lapwings and Redshanks was recorded. Increases in Snipe occurred where there was a concurrent increase in unimproved pasture i.e., Pulborough Brooks South. It is also thought that increased winter flooding at Pulborough Brooks North (prolonged into spring) to encourage winter waterfowl is changing the nature of the food supply in favour of Redshank. The milder spring of 1996 led to an earlier growing season and, therefore, greater vegetation height at Visit 1. By Visit 2, livestock had been put out and so 'masked' this difference.

Table 6 Change in Area of Management Types in the Arun Valley between 1991 and 1996 - Figures shown are change in area expressed as a percentage of the sub-unit area. For explanations of abbreviations RG; SG/IG etc., see display following Table 2.

Sub-unit	Total	RG	SG/ IG	CH	CS	AC	SC	B	U
Rother	157	23	2.5	-28	1.7				
Pulborough-Marehill	47		-6.4	0	5.5				
Pulborough Brooks North	55	45	18.2	-65					
Pulborough Brooks South	94	12	7.4	-29	9.1				
Pulborough-Greatham	182	1.4	-23.6		-16	21	6.6	10.4	
Coldwaltham-Bury	150	13	-10	-3.4					
Amberley West	101	-5.9	4.9						3.9
Amberley Central	90	-7.7	16.6						
Amberley East	75	1.3	2.7						
Amberley South	97	3.6	37						

Timberley Bridge-Houghton	115	2.3	37						
North Stoke	98	3.2	34						
South Stoke-Offham	65	0.5	37						
Peppering	56	10.9	29						4.5
Offham Island	53	0.9	3.8						
Wepham to Warningcamp	81	3.3	-1.2						2.9
Arundel	89		19						2.2

Comparison with Other Areas Tables 7 and 8

Although the density of breeding waders in the Arun Valley is higher than in other important wader sites, the general decline appears to be part of a national wader ‘crash’.

Table 7 Breeding Wader Numbers and Densities for the Arun Valley and Other Important Sites

Site		Area (ha) surveyed	Lapwing		Snipe		Redshank		Total	
			prs	/sq kms	prs	/sq kms	prs	/sq kms	prs	/sq kms
Arun Valley 1996		1589	76	4.8	37	2.3	86	5.4	199	12.5
Broads marsh & pasture 1995		21400	693	3.6	95	0.9	301	1.5	1089	5.1
Somerset Levels 1993		Insufficient data available								
Upper Thames Tributary 1994	total	3096	69	2.2	23	0.7	20	0.6	112	3.6
	Grass land	2792	23	0.8	20	0.7	23	0.8	88.5	3.2

Table 8 Percentage Change in Breeding Wader Numbers for the Arun Valley and Other Important Wader Sites

Site	Period	Lapwing	Snipe	Redshank	Total
Arun Valley	1991 to 1996	0	-58	-11	-24
Broads marsh & pasture	1988 to 1995	-14	-40	0	-15
Somerset Levels	1987 to 1993	40	7	-11	24
Upper Thames Tributary	Insufficient past data available				
Avon Valley	1990 to 1996	-27	-70	-43	-38

Summary

A repeat of the 1991 Arun Valley Breeding Wader Survey was carried out in 609 fields and 1589 hectares. The survey was conducted on a field-by-field basis, using standard methodology. In addition, details of management and habitat were collected, quantified

and stored to enable further monitoring analysis. The following breeding wader populations were found:

Lapwing	<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>	76 pairs	(4.9 pairs/sq km)
Snipe	<i>Gallinago gallinago</i>	37 pairs	(2.3 pairs/sq km)
Redshank	<i>Tringa totanus</i>	86 pairs	(5.4 pairs/sq km)
Total Waders		199 pairs	(12.5 pairs/sq km)

These small populations were concentrated in a number of sites, including Amberley Wild Brooks and Pulborough Brooks. A total wader decline of 26% since 1991 was recorded.

Unimproved pastures comprise 191ha. (12% of the survey area), 81% of which is found in Fittleworth, Pulborough Brooks, Coldwaltham and Amberley North.

Semi-improved/Improved pasture comprises 1154ha. (73% of the survey area) and is found throughout the survey area.

Tussocky grass (10.9% of the survey area) and standing water (3.2% of the survey area) were found to be concentrated in Amberley Wild Brooks and Pulborough Brooks.

Comments are made relating habitat details to breeding wader numbers.

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Simon Allen is the Arun Valley Countryside Project Officer. The Arun Valley Countryside Project is a partnership between Arun District Council, The Environment Agency, Sussex Downs Conservation Board, West Sussex County Council and the Countryside Commission.

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**Spring Arrival Dates of Migrants in Sussex and Leicestershire
(1966-1996).**

By RG Loxton, TH Sparks, JA Newnham

INTRODUCTION

One of the authors (THS) is currently engaged in studying the timing of biological events (phenology) in relation to climate (Sparks and Carey 1995; Sparks and Yates 1997). Current interest in this field of study is stimulated by concern over the possibility of 'global warming' as a result of human activity and its effect on biological organisms. Crick *et al* (1997) have found, over the 25 year period 1971 – 1995, significant trends to earlier egg laying in 31% of the British bird' species they examined, using the data held by the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) on its nest record cards. McCleery and Perrins (1998) have found an advance in the egg laying date of Great Tits in Wytham Wood, Oxford, over the same period and were also able to show that the date of first egg laying was closely related to temperature both before and after 1971. There is to date little published data relating arrival dates of migrants to temperature. Southern's (1938a,b, 1939, 1940, 1941) pioneering work relating bird migration to temperature was interrupted by the Second World War and unfortunately he never returned to it. Berthold (1995) has suggested that "global warming is likely to favour obligate partial and short-distance migrants at higher latitudes and to be disadvantageous to long distance migrants, and may lead to further reduction of species' diversity".

The arrival dates of migrant birds have been of interest to naturalists for many years and data on a few species exist as far back as the 18th century (Sparks and Carey 1995). As part of a wider collection of data from old records and from the data held by the Bird Observatories, it interested us to compare the records of migrant arrival in Sussex with the data published by Mason (1995) for Leicestershire. Mason (1995) was able to show a significant trend to earlier arrival in four species (Chiffchaff, Sand Martin, Blackcap and Sedge Warbler) and a significant trend to later arrival in five species (Tree Pipit, Cuckoo, Whitethroat, Whinchat and Garden Warbler) over the period 1942-1991. Huin has been looking at the geographical pattern of bird arrivals using historical data (Huin and Sparks, in preparation). The present paper is concerned with comparing the arrival dates of migrants in the two counties, examining the data for significant trends and relating the arrival dates to average monthly temperatures.

METHODS AND DATA

The data with which we are concerned is the first day on which a species is recorded which we will refer to for convenience as the arrival date. We have rendered these arrival dates to Julian day numbers where 1 is the 1st of January. The 1st of March is therefore 60, except on leap years where it becomes 61. The data for Leicestershire were obtained from Dr Mason up to 1991 and thereafter we extracted it from the annual Reports of the Leicestershire and Rutland Ornithological Society. The Sussex data were initially extracted from the annual Reports from 1951 onwards. There were gaps in the data, particularly in the earlier years when either the date of the first arrival was not recorded or there was no mention of the species in the Report. Where possible, we made good these gaps by recourse to the original records held by the Sussex Ornithological Society (SOS).

In tabulating the Sussex data, it became apparent that for many species the data for the earlier years were either incomplete or based on very few records. Despite there being good records for some species prior to 1966, for consistency we fixed on 1966 as a baseline as this is where observer numbers reached the current level (James 1996). Where we are comparing the two counties, we have matched the data-runs year for year as there are a few gaps in the data. The prevalence of over-wintering by Chiffchaff and Blackcap in Sussex means that we have no reliable data; even in Leicestershire it has been deemed impossible since 1994 to distinguish the over-wintering birds from the newly-arrived migrants. Therefore, our data for Chiffchaff and Blackcap are restricted to Leicestershire between 1966-1994. We have 21 species for comparison (Table 1). In addition we have added Osprey and Hobby, two species which were not included in Mason (1995). These two species are included at the bottom of Table 1, but what data we have is fragmented and often based on only a few records each year. As a coastal county, Sussex has good records of species which do not occur regularly in Leicestershire. The data for an additional 13 species are shown in Table 2, along with the data for Chiffchaff and Blackcap for Leicestershire. Also at the bottom of Table 2 is the full data for Osprey in Sussex and also for Wryneck. Although there are few records for Wryneck each year, never more than three, it has been recorded in the spring in 24 out of the 31 years. We have not included any more species in this account, either because there are too many years when the species is not reported or, as in the case of Common and Arctic Tern, where identification can be a problem.

Mason (1995) discussed the reliability of county data and considered that the analysis of the data by trends is likely to overcome the problem of aberrant records. He was also able to point to the fact that there has been a steady and fivefold increase in the number of observers submitting records since the 1950s in Leicestershire, but only four species show a steady advance in first arrival dates while five species show the reverse trend. Clearly, the increase in observers has not influenced the recording of first arrivals and he suggested that bird-watchers have always been assiduous in recording first arrivals. For the period we are considering, 1966–1996, the number of recorders in Sussex has not differed greatly from year to year and there is no reason to suppose that SOS recorders are any less assiduous than those of Leicestershire. However, we have examined the Sussex data for geographical bias as it could be that early records come from one or two localities. This could be done conveniently as the mapping of records had already been undertaken in the preparation of James (1996). We have also examined the data for ‘weekend bias’ by which we mean an imbalance in the days of the week in which the records occur.

We have tested the significance of the differences in mean arrival times between Sussex and Leicestershire with a paired t test. The significance of trends was tested by

calculating the regression between arrival date and year value. The threshold for statistical significance has been set at $p=0.05$. Where lists of species occur, they are arranged in order by their average arrival date in Sussex.

Much of the analysis in this paper is concerned with the arrival dates of single species. In addition, we have attempted to examine the data from an overall perspective, attempting to ask the question whether there is a general trend in the arrival dates of all the species for which we have data. Excluding Hobby, Osprey and Wryneck, for this analysis we have data for 23 species in Leicestershire and 33 species in Sussex, a total of 56 series of arrival dates. We first looked at the data to see in which years a species arrived earlier than its average arrival date. Then, by adding up all the series in which birds arrive earlier than their average in each year, we obtain the number of series for which birds arrived earlier than their average arrival date. We then examined the data to see if they show any significant trend over the years or relation to average monthly temperatures. It is possible to examine the data further by partitioning the species into three groups:

1. Series where the average arrival dates are earlier than 1st April (15 series).
2. Series where the average arrival dates are between 1st and 20th April (26 series).
3. Series where the average arrival dates are after 20th April (15 series).

We can take this further as we also have the number of days a species arrived earlier than average. Here, we have added up the total number of days earlier than average/year for all the series and have also partitioned the series into early, middle and late categories as above. Finally, we have repeated the whole exercise using only the Sussex data where we have 12 species in the early period, 15 in the middle period and 6 in the late period.

RESULTS

1. Geographical distribution of early records in Sussex.

We examined maps of the distribution of first arrivals for the years 1976-96 and all arrivals prior to the mean first arrival date. For this exercise, we looked at Hobby, Little Ringed Plover, Sandwich Tern, Turtle Dove, Sand Martin, Swallow, Nightingale, Wheatear, Whitethroat, Willow Warbler and Pied Flycatcher. Maps of nine of these species indicate a general spread of records with no bias in distribution between East and West Sussex. The two exceptions were Sand Martin and Whitethroat. Early Sand Martin records were concentrated at open water sites at both Chichester and Rye. In the case of Whitethroat most of the early records came from Beachy Head or Selsey Bill.

2. Distribution of records between days of the week.

The data we have analysed in this paper has its origins in the activity of recorders who will not necessarily be equally active on all days of the week. We might expect that there would be a preponderance of records on Saturdays and Sundays. This is a familiar criticism of data collected in this way and though, as we will argue below, we do not think this criticism invalidates our conclusions, we have thought it reasonable to confront this problem by examining the data for this bias. We have combined the data for both counties for all species (Tables 1 and 2) from 1966-1996 and determined the day of the week for a total of 1,452 records (Figure 1):

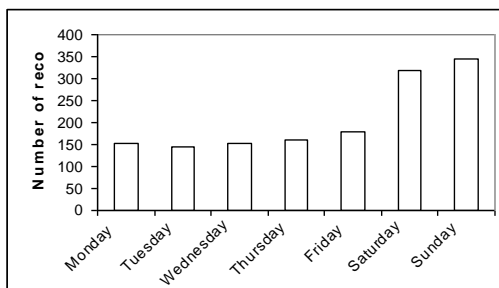


Figure 1. Distribution of Sussex and Leicestershire records, 1966-1996, between days of the week.

There is a clear bias to Saturday and Sunday, and a χ^2 test gives a very significant result ($p < 0.0001$). The distribution of records between the weekdays (Monday-Friday) does not differ significantly from a random distribution. However, it is reasonable to suppose that this weekend bias is constant and its effect on the data will be to generate arrival dates a few days later than if the activity of observers were to be equally distributed over the week. It may be that our data therefore slightly underestimate how early migrant birds arrive but if we assume a constancy of bias this does not invalidate analysis to examine the data for trends in arrival time over the years.

3. Average arrival dates in Sussex and Leicestershire. The data is laid out in Tables 1 and 2.

Column	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	Sussex		Leicestershire				
Wheatear	10 Mar	21 Feb-22 Mar	23 Mar	11 Mar-15 Apr	13,****	0	0.22 ns
Swallow	19 Mar	4 Feb-10 Apr	31 Mar	12 Mar-11 Apr	12,***	6	0.11 ns
Sand Martin	20 Mar	5 Mar- 3 Apr	20 Mar	6 Mar- 2 Apr	0 ns	11	0.74 ***
Willow Warbler	24 Mar	4 Mar- 2 Apr	2 Apr	21 Mar-16 Apr	9,****	0	0.43 *
Yellow Wagtail	28 Mar	10 Mar- 7 Apr	3 Apr	18 Mar-12 Apr	6,***	8	0.34ns
House Martin	30 Mar	3 Mar-15 Apr	9 Apr	13 Mar-22 Apr	10,****	5	0.60 ***
Redstart	3 Apr	13 Mar.-15 Apr	18 Apr	6 Apr- 5 May	15,****	2	0.05 ns
Tree Pipit	5 Apr	25 Mar.-14 Apr	13 Apr	22 Mar-27 Apr	8,****	4	0.40*
Cuckoo	7 Apr	21 Mar.-17 Apr	16 Apr	2 Apr-26 Apr	9,****	2	0.28 *
Sedge Warbler	7 Apr	27 Mar.-17 Apr	17 Apr	4 Apr-19 Apr	10,****	4	0.22 ns
Whitethroat	11 Apr	19 Mar.-30 Apr	20 Apr	9 Apr-29 Apr	9,****	3	0.28 ns
Whinchat	11 Apr	17 Mar.- 1 May	25 Apr	14 Apr- 7 May	14,****	2	0.22 ns
Nightingale	13 Apr	21 Mar.-22 Apr	26 Apr	11 Apr-26 May	13,****	2	0.37 *
Garden Warbler	15 Apr	1 Apr.- 2 May	26 Apr	12 Apr- 8 May	11,****	3	0.24 ns
Turtle Dove	16 Apr	22 Mar.-29 Apr	28 Apr	19 Apr- 8 May	12,****	1	-0.12 ns
Grasshopper Warbler	16 Apr	4 Apr.-27 Apr	19 Apr	8 Apr-13 May	3,*	12	-0.18 ns
Lesser Whitethroat	16 Apr	4 Apr.-30 Apr	24 Apr	11 Apr-6 May	8,****	4	0.06 ns
Reed Warbler	19 Apr	9 Apr.-27 Apr	30 Apr	17 Apr-12 May	11,****	2	0.32 ns
Wood Warbler	20 Apr	7 Apr-30 Apr	28 Apr	7 Apr-16 May	8,***	6	0.26 ns

Swift	21 Apr	10 Apr-30 Apr	25 Apr	17 Apr- 4 May	4,****	4	0.72 ***
Spotted Flycatcher	28 Apr	10 Apr- 8 May	5 May	16 Apr-15 May	5,**	4	-0.07 ns
Osprey	13 Apr	3 Mar- 7 May	12 Apr	21 Mar- 5 May	-1, ns	9	0.36ns
Hobby	20 Apr	27 Mar-29 Apr	22 Apr	27 Mar- 6 May	2, ns	9	0.01 ns
<i>Levels of significance; *p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001, ****p<0.0001.</i>							
	Column 1 and 3	Average arrival dates in each county					
	Column 2 and 4	Range of arrival dates in each county					
	Column 5	Average number of days later in Leicestershire					
	Column 6	Number of 'reverse' years					
	Column 7	Correlation coefficient r					

Table 1. Average arrival dates of migrant species in Sussex (1966-1996) compared with those in Leicestershire over the same period. 'Reverse' years refers to those in which birds arrived in Leicestershire before they arrived in Sussex. The correlation coefficient measures the level of association between the two counties, e.g. early years in Sussex occur with early years in Leicestershire.

Nearly all species arrived earlier in Sussex (Column 5) which is to be expected, as the movement of migrants in spring is from south to north. The average date of arrival for Osprey is actually one day earlier in Leicestershire, but the difference between the means is not significant. The data for Osprey and Hobby are based on incomplete data, but seem to show that the birds arrive on average at about the same time in both counties. An interesting case is that of the Sand Martin which on average appears to arrive on the same day in both counties. The arithmetical means for Sand Martin are slightly different, with that of Leicestershire being 0.52 days later, but the rounding up generates the same calendar date and there is no significant difference between these means. We will return to discussing the Sand Martin after considering other aspects of Table 1.

There is a tendency for the range of the arrival date to be greater in the earlier species than in the later ones. Correlating the average arrival date with the standard deviation of the average arrival date, for the 56 series, gives a value of $r = -0.299$ ($p < 0.05$). The negative value of r for this relationship indicates a decrease in the range of arrival date with later arrival times.

	Average arrival date in Sussex	Range	Average arrival date in Leics.	Range
Garganey	11 Mar	2 Feb- 5 Apr		
Sandwich Tern	15 Mar	10 Feb- 3 Apr		
Chiffchaff			17 Mar	1 Mar- 4 Apr
Blackcap			3 Apr	12 Mar-18 Apr
Ring Ouzel	26 Mar	9 Feb- 9 Apr		
Little Ringed Plover	31 Mar	7 Mar-30 Apr		
Common Sandpiper	31 Mar	10 Mar-20 Apr		
Whimbrel	1 Apr	10 Mar-14 Apr		
Little Tern	10 Apr	3 Apr-16 Apr		
Pied Flycatcher	18 Apr	3 Apr- 1 May		
Black Tern	21 Apr	9 Apr- 9 May		
Hobby	23 Apr	27 Mar- 6 May		
Pomarine Skua	23 Apr	10 Mar- 9 May		

Nightjar	13-May	29 Apr-29 May
Osprey	16 Apr	3 Mar-12 May
Wryneck	24 Apr	22 Mar-25 May

Table 2. Average arrival dates of some migrant species in Sussex and Leicestershire, 1966-1996.

Although the average arrival date in Leicestershire of the 21 main species for which we have comparable data is significantly later in nearly all cases (mean difference between arrival dates = 9.05 +/- 3.87 days, Table 1, Column 5), there are nevertheless years when a species arrives earlier in Leicestershire (Column 6). We have no way of relating this to weather conditions in a particular year as at the time of writing we have insufficiently fine-grained weather data to make this possible. However, Leicester is only approximately 220 kilometres north of Brighton, so the distance between the two sampling points is probably well within the range of a single day's flying in favourable conditions for all these species. Unfavourable conditions in the south may divert birds to the east or west of Sussex, however, so that the earliest arrivals bypass or perhaps may even overfly the county.

In the seventh column of Table 1, we have correlated the yearly arrival dates for each species in the two counties. This gives a means of examining the degree to which a year when a species was late in Sussex was also a late year in Leicestershire and *vice versa*. Only seven species are significantly correlated: Sand Martin, Willow Warbler, House Martin, Tree Pipit, Cuckoo, Nightingale and Swift. It is interesting to note that these species include three of the aerial insectivores, Sand Martin, House Martin and Swift, which may be particularly sensitive to the prevailing temperature and the consequent availability of flying insects. Sand Martins arrive in the two counties at very similar average dates, which range in Sussex from 5th March to 3rd April and in Leicestershire from 6th March to 2nd April and are strongly correlated ($p < 0.001$). This can be seen in Figure 2:

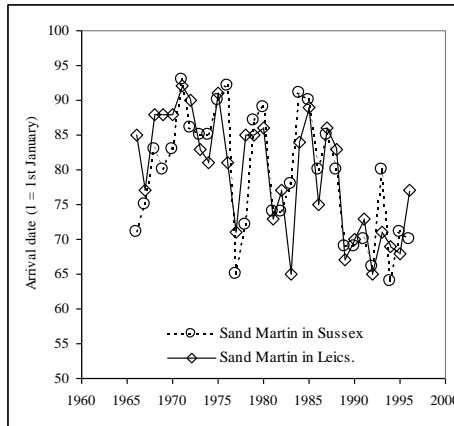


Figure 2. Arrival dates of Sand Martin, 1966-1996, in Sussex and Leicestershire.

The data suggest that the earliest arrivals in Britain fly directly to their breeding areas or perhaps to favoured feeding grounds in the early spring. It would clearly be of interest to see if this apparent simultaneity of arrival is found with other inland recording

locations.

4. Trends in Arrival Dates from 1966-1996.

Tables 3a & 3b list the species that have shown a significant trend to earlier arrival dates since 1966. If a species is arriving earlier, the numerical value of the arrival date coefficient will be negative, as shown in the Tables. In addition to the 22 series (39.3%) showing a statistically significant trend towards earlier arrival, only two series give a positive value for r and neither of these is significant. The two series are Common Sandpiper ($r = 0.094$) and Grasshopper Warbler in Sussex ($r = 0.201$). The data seem to show a clear tendency to earlier arrival over this period of 31 years. We can strengthen this impression by examining all the data collectively in the next section:

Significant trend to earlier arrival in Sussex	Regression coefficient (days/year)	
Wheatear	- 0.28	$r = - 0.35^*$
Sandwich Tern	- 0.58	$r = - 0.44^*$
Sand Martin	- 0.41	$r = - 0.43^*$
Willow Warbler	- 0.34	$r = - 0.40^*$
Yellow Wagtail	- 0.34	$r = - 0.45^*$
House Martin	- 0.54	$r = - 0.44^*$
Little Ringed Plover	- 0.90	$r = - 0.56^{**}$
Whimbrel	- 0.76	$r = - 0.69^{***}$
Redstart	- 0.37	$r = - 0.37^*$

Tree Pipit	-0.31	$r = -0.49^{**}$
Whinchat	-0.41	$r = -0.35^{*}$
Garden Warbler	-0.42	$r = -0.54^{**}$
Pied Flycatcher	-0.38	$r = -0.53^{**}$
Hobby	-0.28	$r = -0.51^{**}$
<i>r</i> = correlation coefficient.		
Levels of significance: * $P < 0.05$; ** $P < 0.01$; *** $P < 0.001$		

Table 3a, Significant long-term trends in arrival dates of spring migrants in Sussex 1966-1996.

Significant trend to earlier arrival in Leicestershire	Regression coefficient (days/year)	
Sand Martin	-0.59	$r = -0.64^{***}$
Wheatear	-0.40	$r = -0.47^{**}$
Swallow	-0.53	$r = -0.58^{***}$
House Martin	-0.56	$r = -0.54^{**}$
Grasshopper Warbler	-0.32	$r = -0.44^{*}$
Garden Warbler	-0.31	$r = -0.38^{*}$
Nightingale	-0.54	$r = -0.43^{*}$
Wood Warbler	-0.47	$r = -0.40^{*}$
<i>r</i> = correlation coefficient.		
Levels of significance: * $P < 0.05$; ** $P < 0.01$; *** $P < 0.001$		

Table 3b, Significant long-term trends in arrival dates of spring migrants in Leicestershire, 1966-1996.

5. Trends in the Combined Data

There is clearly a strong tendency in the combined data for more series to be arriving earlier than average over the period of this study (Table 4). Table 4 also shows that the number of days earlier is increasing. Of course, the trends apparent in Table 4 are expected since in Tables 3a & 3b, 54 series out of 56 were negatively correlated with year (tending to earlier arrival). But in Tables 3a & 3b, we are only able to pick out those species which show a statistically significant trend whereas in Table 4 we can examine all the species, irrespective of whether individual species have a significant trend or not. Although Table 4 is another way of looking at the same data, it does draw attention to a fresh aspect of the data. The tendency to earlier arrival with time is strongest (bigger value of r) in the earliest species and weaker in the late arriving group. This is true for both the combined data of both counties and also for the data for Sussex alone and is not a function of sample size. This is also the case for the Sussex data separately. This indicates that a tendency to earlier arrival, 1966-1996, is stronger in the migrant species arriving earlier in the spring than those arriving later.

	r
Sussex and Leicestershire combined	
1) No. of series earlier than average.	0.701^{***}
2) No. of early series arriving earlier than average.	0.590^{***}
3) No. of intermediate series arriving earlier than average.	0.571^{***}
4) No. of late series arriving earlier than average.	0.470^{**}
5) Total no. of days earlier than average for series.	0.624^{***}
6) Total no. of days earlier than average for all early series.	0.589^{***}
7) Total no. of days earlier than average for all intermediate series.	0.471^{**}

8) Total no. of days earlier than average for all late series. Levels of significance: *P<0.05; **P<0.01; ***P<0.001	0.416*
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Table 4. Correlation of overall data with year. A positive value of *r* indicates an increase of series or days with time. Early series are defined as those with an average arrival date before 1st April; intermediate series as those with an average arrival date 1st - 20th April; late series as those with an average arrival date after 20th April.

6. Temperature and Arrival Date of Individual Species.

The weather data we have are the average monthly temperatures for Central England which are broadly applicable to the UK and have been successfully used in other phenological studies (e.g. Sparks and Carey 1995). We have correlated the average monthly temperatures, 1966-1996, with year (Table 5) and these data show a significant trend to higher average temperatures during April and over March and April combined.

	<i>r</i>
February	0.035 ns
March	0.268 ns
April	0.352*
March and April	0.442 *
Levels of significance: *P<0.05	

Table 5. Trends in average temperatures for central England, 1966-1996. A positive value of *r* indicates rising average temperatures over the period.

Clearly, it would be useful to have more finely-grained data perhaps as 5-day averages to examine relationships with the arrival dates and also to have more regionally based data. Nevertheless, the temperature data available to us is sufficient to examine the relationships between arrival dates and temperature (Tables 6 and 7).

	February	March	April	March and April
Wheatear	-0.174	-0.298	0.033	-0.239
Garganey	-0.154	-0.113	-0.122	-0.171
Sandwich Tern	0.076	-0.242	0.016	-0.200
Sand Martin	-0.189	-0.667***	0.156	-0.484**
Swallow	-0.238	-0.281	-0.038	-0.266
Willow Warbler	-0.298	-0.414*	-0.181	-0.466**
Ring Ouzel	0.119	0.165	0.203	0.263
Yellow Wagtail	-0.115	-0.404*	0.007	-0.345
House Martin	-0.262	-0.389*	-0.072	-0.380*
Little Ringed Plover	-0.195	-0.195	-0.344	-0.220
Common Sandpiper	0.057	-0.015	0.207	0.111
Whimbrel	-0.274	-0.188	-0.326	-0.326
Little Tern	0.022	0.045	-0.154	-0.053

Redstart	-0.326	-0.364*	-0.376*	-0.539**
Tree Pipit	-0.254	-0.512**	-0.138	-0.525**
Cuckoo	-0.414*	-0.336	-0.369*	-0.510**
Sedge Warbler	-0.345	-0.489**	0.042	-0.398*
Pied Flycatcher	-0.024	-0.279	-0.332	-0.439*
Whinchat	-0.075	-0.364*	-0.205	-0.438*
Whitethroat	-0.155	-0.259	0.002	-0.223
Nightingale	-0.14	-0.09	-0.30	-0.26
Garden Warbler	-0.228	-0.396*	-0.168	-0.443*
Grasshopper Warbler	-0.392*	-0.253	-0.103	-0.281
Lesser Whitethroat	-0.414*	-0.559***	-0.093	-0.539**
Turtle Dove	-0.128	0.193	-0.065	0.128
Black Tern	0.067	-0.033	0.041	-0.004
Reed Warbler	-0.220	0.023	-0.479**	-0.265
Wood Warbler	-0.214	0.073	-0.481**	-0.223
Swift	-0.192	-0.234	0.021	-0.190
Pomarine Skua	-0.095	-0.037	0.178	0.074
Hobby	-0.015	-0.073	-0.099	-0.122
Spotted Flycatcher	0.001	0.158	-0.257	-0.016
Nightjar	-0.199	0.188	-0.141	0.079
<i>Significance of coefficient of correlation: *p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001</i>				

Table 6. Correlation of arrival dates of migrants in Sussex with average monthly temperature (February, March and April) and the average temperature over March and April.

Significant correlations between arrival date and average temperature are highlighted in Table 6. This shows that the arrival dates of almost all of the larger species (Garganey, Hobby, the waders, Pomarine Skua, terns or Turtle Dove) are not significantly correlated with temperature. The only exception among these larger species is the Cuckoo where the arrival dates are significantly correlated with temperature in February, March and April, and April: this is hardly surprising as the Cuckoo and Hobby alone among this group are insectivores. The Hobby arrives later (average date 23rd April in Sussex) and it is possible that later arrivals are less sensitive to temperature as we will see below. The correlation has a negative sign as earlier arrival (smaller numerical value) is correlated with higher temperature. Most of the smaller insectivorous species show a negative correlation with one or more months. Exceptions are Wheatear, Swallow, Ring Ouzel, Whitethroat, Nightingale, Swift, Spotted Flycatcher and Nightjar. Possibly the Wheatear and Ring Ouzel which feed on the ground and take a variety of invertebrate food are not so sensitive to temperature as are the other small insectivores. But we might expect that the Swallow would show a strong relationship with temperature. The Sand Martin and Swallow arrive at similar average dates in Sussex (19th and 20th of March respectively) and yet the Sand Martin is significantly correlated with March temperatures and the Swallow is not. Whether this difference is related to a biological difference between the species or is an artefact of sampling is not clear. The data in general seem to show that as the season advances and the temperature is rising, the arrival dates of later species are less related to temperature. This also seems to be the case with the data for Leicestershire (Table 7).

	February	March	April	March and April
Chiffchaff	-0.157	-0.593***	-0.056	-0.540**
Sand Martin	-0.194	-0.638***	0.048	-0.524**
Wheatear	0.022	-0.356*	0.139	-0.225

Swallow	-0.118	-0.398*	-0.121	-0.416*
Willow Warbler	-0.247	-0.528**	0.061	-0.420*
Yellow Wagtail	-0.351	-0.609***	-0.063	-0.564***
Blackcap	-0.067	-0.205	0.170	-0.077
House Martin	-0.336	-0.382*	-0.274	-0.494**
Tree Pipit	-0.423*	-0.493**	-0.380*	-0.653***
Cuckoo	0.010	0.110	-0.351*	-0.113
Sedge Warbler	-0.129	-0.164	-0.408*	-0.384*
Redstart	-0.162	-0.017	-0.005	-0.018
Grasshopper Warbler	-0.213	-0.202	-0.155	-0.267
Whitethroat	-0.077	0.140	-0.219	-0.009
Lesser Whitethroat	-0.063	-0.093	0.009	-0.075
Whinchat	0.128	0.005	-0.140	-0.079
Swift	0.059	0.015	-0.129	-0.064
Garden Warbler	0.058	0.105	-0.155	-0.001
Turtle Dove	0.196	0.412*	0.004	0.359*
Nightingale	0.222	-0.027	-0.160	-0.118
Wood Warbler	0.063	-0.102	-0.108	-0.155
Reed Warbler	-0.164	-0.036	-0.310	-0.215
Spotted Flycatcher	0.016	0.141	0.162	0.218
<i>Significance of coefficient of correlation: *p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001.</i>				

Table 7. Correlation of arrival dates of migrants in Leicestershire with average monthly temperature (February, March and April) and the average temperature over March and April.

In Table 7, the only instances of significant correlation are among the earlier species, except for the anomalous case of the Turtle Dove. Here, the correlation is positive and significantly so for March, and also for March and April. This indicates that Turtle Dove in Leicestershire was arriving earlier in that county when the average temperature was lower. In Leicestershire, the Swallow is significantly correlated with temperature, as was also found by Sparks and Carey (1995) and also by Huin and Sparks (in preparation). Also, using the March and April combined temperature it is worth noting that for Sussex 28 species show a negative correlation with temperature and only 5 species are positively correlated and for Leicestershire 21 species are negative and only 2 positive.

7. Temperature and the Combined Data

In Table 8, we have examined the relationship between the combined data (as in Table 4) and average monthly temperature.

Sussex and Leicestershire combined	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	Mar./Apr
1) No. of series arriving earlier than average.	0.296	0.456**	0.282	0.563***
2) No. of early series arriving earlier than average.	0.226	0.586***	0.023	0.521**
3) No. of intermediate series arriving earlier than average.	0.420*	0.481**	0.401*	0.655***
4) No. of late series arriving earlier than average.	-0.086	-0.111	0.133	-0.017
5) Total no. of days earlier than average for all series.	0.406*	0.457**	0.224	0.528**
6) Total no. of days earlier than average for all early series.	0.265	0.456**	0.074	0.439*
7) Total no. of days earlier than average for all intermediate series.	0.507**	0.564***	0.281	0.656***
8) Total no. of days earlier than average for all late series.	0.104	-0.125	0.173	-0.006
<i>Significance of coefficient of correlation: *p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001</i>				

Table 8. Correlation of average monthly temperature (February, March and April) and

the average temperature over March and April with number of series arriving earlier than their average arrival date and the total number of days earlier than average for all the series. Early, intermediate and late series defined as in Table 4.

In the previous section, we had seen that the later arriving species showed little significant correlation with temperature, and in Table 8 the same relationship can be seen with no significant relationship between the later group of species (Rows 4 and 8) and average monthly temperature. The intermediate group of series appears to be most correlated with temperature. We have not shown the Sussex data separately as this shows the same relationships as the data combined for the two counties.

ILLUSTRATION - ???

We have shown the data for Rows 1, 5 and 7 with the average temperature in degrees centigrade over March and April in the form of graphs, Figures 3-5. Figure 6 shows one of the sets of data for Sussex alone.

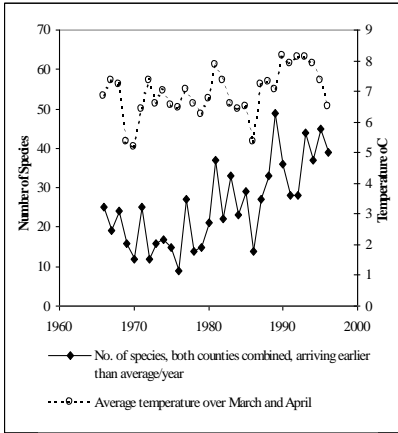


Figure 3. See Text

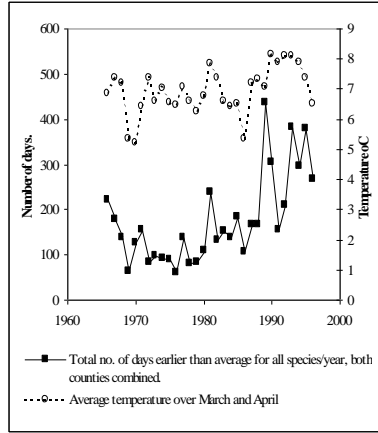


Figure 4. See text

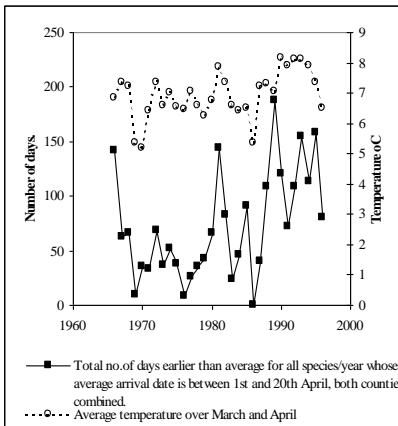


Figure 5. See text

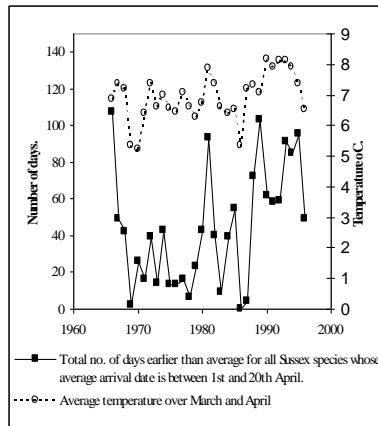


Figure 6. See text

Looking at the data in this graphical form, we can pick out a few facts and questions, which are not apparent from the statistical summaries. In no year (Table 2) do all series arrive earlier than average, the most being 49 in 1989 out of a possible 56, and the least number of series arriving earlier than average is 9 in 1976. There is no year when all series are late or all early. We can see some correspondences between peaks and troughs. The lowest temperatures occurred in 1969 (5.35°C), 1970 (5.2°C) and 1986 (5.35°C) and are associated with troughs in the arrival date data in all four figures. However, there is a period of three years, 1990-1992, where temperatures are high (7.9-8.15°C) and there is a trough in the arrival date data where only half the species (28) arrive earlier than average in 1991 and 1992 (Figure 3). This pattern is seen in all the figures and we have no way of explaining what might have caused this unlinking of temperature and arrival date. Possibly, examination of more detailed weather records would furnish some explanation, but at present we must be content with demonstrating an overall relationship between

arrival date and temperature. Although the data show a trend with time for both temperature and arrival date, we must note that if by chance we had chosen to start our run of data at about 1970, rather than 1966, we would have found even more significant trends in the data. Figures 3-6 show some high values for the arrival data in 1966 and 1967. For comparison, we have recalculated the correlation coefficients for the data in Figures 3-6 from 1970-1996 with year and temperature. As expected, this results in higher values of the correlation coefficient with year and with temperature. We will return to this when discussing our findings in relation to Mason (1995).

DISCUSSION

As Mason (1995) pointed out, the data we are considering is prone to 'noise' around individual data points. This arises from the way the data are collected by varying intensity of observation as we have demonstrated in the existence of 'weekend' bias, from occasional misidentification, and inclement weather when the birds remain silent and undetected. We have been able to show for the Sussex data that the records are not significantly biased by the location of observers. During the period of our data-run, the number of observers has remained approximately constant and bird-watchers are keen to record the arrival of migrants, and as we are able to analyse data over 31 years these sources of error are likely to be overcome by the method of analysis by trends. However, if we accept that the data are worth analysing and that trends can be detected, it is worth considering a little closer what we are measuring. The date of the first bird of a species recorded is only one tail of a distribution. We have no way of determining whether an early arrival date is reflected in the mean population arrival date. It could be argued that any trend in the arrival of the earliest individual may not be related to the more biologically significant date of the mean arrival date of the population.

We are perhaps too prone to assume that a detected trend in the arrival date reflects a trend to earlier arrival of the population and a change in the breeding phenology of a species. There is no simple way of arguing this point though we are at present examining data from the Bird Observatories where continuous observation and daily counts of birds on passage make it possible to determine a mean arrival date. However, there is data from another source to suggest that we can be reasonably confident that what we are detecting in the arrival date is related to earlier general arrival in some species. The recent paper by Crick *et al* (1997) found a significant trend to earlier egg laying in the period 1971 to 1995 in 20 species (31%) out of 65 species studied, using data from the BTO's Nest Record Cards. Only one species showed a significant trend to later egg laying and analyses of all species showed a tendency to earlier egg laying. Some of the species showing a significant trend to earlier egg laying were insectivorous migrants: Tree Pipit, Redstart, Whitethroat, Blackcap, Wood Warbler, Chiffchaff and Willow Warbler. The period of time covered by the study by Crick *et al* (1970) is similar to that in this study and would seem to justify our assumption that we are indeed detecting a trend to earlier arrival and breeding by migrants over this period.

There is a difference in the results obtained by Mason (1995) and our analysis of the Leicestershire data due to the different time spans involved. Mason (1995) found a significant trend to earlier arrival in only four species in Leicestershire and a significant trend to later arrival in five species (1942-1991). Whereas we found that for the period 1966-1996 the Leicestershire data gave significant trends to earlier arrival in eight species, with no species showing any trend at all to later arrival.

We have found a significant relationship between higher spring temperatures and

earlier arrival in Leicestershire between 1966 and 1996 for 10 species, and Mason found this relationship in 8 species (Table 9).

1942-1991	1966-1996
Chiffchaff	Chiffchaff
	Sand Martin
Wheatear	Wheatear
	Swallow
Willow Warbler	Willow Warbler
	Yellow Wagtail
	House Martin
Tree Pipit	Tree Pipit
Cuckoo	Cuckoo
	Sedge Warbler
Whitethroat	
Lesser Whitethroat	
Garden Warbler	

Table 9. Species showing a significant negative correlation between spring temperatures and arrival date in Leicestershire for the two time periods 1942-1991 and 1966-1996.

There appears to be a different, if overlapping, group of species showing a significant relationship between earlier arrival and warmer temperatures in the two time periods. If species *are* responding to temperature in their arrival dates, we would expect this to be similar, irrespective of the time periods involved. Part of the explanation of this disparity may lie in the occurrence of some rather warm springs in the early 1990s.

Whilst we have shown beyond reasonable doubt that migratory birds have been arriving earlier over the last three decades and that the arrival date is, at least in part, related to spring temperatures, the crucial link to population effects still needs to be established. This is not a trivial task – it requires the examination of extensive data collections. The UK is fortunate in this respect, having data from BTO monitoring schemes as well as information from Bird Observatories and county bird Reports. As these become increasingly computerised, then these questions will start to receive answers. Only by examining the response of species to changes in climate can we understand the full implications that global warming may bring, if it occurs.

SUMMARY

Contemporary first arrival dates of birds in Sussex and Leicestershire are compared. These data are then further examined to investigate trends over the last three decades and response to spring temperatures. In general, birds arrived earlier in Sussex than in Leicestershire, but there were some important features where this pattern was less clear. The majority of bird species were arriving earlier, many of these significantly so. Trends to earlier arrival in warmer springs were detected. The accumulation of data from many locations would help to fully understand the relationships suggested here.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We are most grateful to Dr Mason for making available to us his original data for Leicestershire, and to Phillip Jackson at the BTO Library for his help in finding references. We are also aware of the great debt we owe to the innumerable contributors of records in both counties and to those who have preserved the data over the years.

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OBSERVATIONS ON THE MOVEMENT OF YOUNG BROODS OF HEATHLAND' WOODLARKS IN 1997

by Leslie Osborne

The literature on this species has very little to say about the travels of newly fledged broods. In his *History of Sussex Birds*, Walpole-Bond says a great deal about nests and eggs, but nothing on this subject, while in the B.W.P, there is very little beyond a report from Polish records that the young are normally moved away from the nesting area if there is going to be another breeding attempt by the parents.

In the past few years, management work on heaths and commons has improved the habitat for this bird' species and, in 1997, for the first time, I have been able to study in detail the breeding and rearing activities of two pairs of Woodlarks on a stretch of heathland extending over a distance of more than 2 kilometres. The nesting locations of the two pairs were about 1 kilometre apart. One pair bred once only and the other pair bred twice.

By the end of February, the two pairs had settled into their respective breeding areas and, on 7 March, I observed a male Woodlark (he later sang) with a dark, smudgy patch on the lower left side of his breast. Both male and female of the species are known to initiate work on preparing a few foundations for the nest, and he had presumably been engaged in pushing soil with his breast to form the shallow depression which is required. The local soil was blackish and was damp from recent rains. Both pairs continued to be active in their nesting areas during March. One pair chose to do much of their feeding together on a piece of cereal stubble, a set-aside area, adjacent to their heathland home, often flying up to 400 metres to do so. However, they did not at any time take their young to this stubble field.

Both pairs left their respective nesting areas with their two broods at about the same date, at the end of the first week of April. The single-brooded pair fledged five young and were by then carrying food to their (presumably fledged) young at about 300 metres from the nesting area. The other pair, which fledged three young in their first of two broods, had moved their young some 700 metres but, a few days later, had again moved them to another feeding area some 350 metres away from their first stopping place. At both these sites, the parent birds were still feeding the young and appeared reluctant to ask the young birds to fly when an observer approached them so he respected the parents' wishes and withdrew. For this reason, several days elapsed before a count of the young could be made. The vacated nest had already been located and contained one unhatched egg.

By 24 April, both the parents of this brood of three young had left their young family to fend for themselves, and were already back in their breeding area where they later hatched and reared four young in their second brood of the year, from a nest just 8 metres distant from the first. In the meantime, the single-brooded pair, which had hatched five young from their first and only nest, had possibly run into difficulties in feeding such a large family and had moved them about 1 kilometre to a small area of cleared heathland

where they were still feeding the four survivors, which were later moved a further 300 metres to another area of cleared scrubland.

From about this time onwards, the seven surviving young from the two first broods of the year became independent and their movements became much more difficult for an observer to follow. They appeared to move freely within the limits of the 2 kilometres of heathland.

Thus, the single brood of four were back in their hatching area on 19 May and were already independent of the two parents. On the same day, the presumed parents of this four were also back in their nesting area and remained independent of their young. Indeed, the adult male of this pair had chased away a challenging male Woodlark. This pair did not breed a second time that year. It is possible that the extra burden of rearing the original family of five young may have proved more stressful than the rearing of a smaller brood.

Returning to the double-brooded pair, they were, in mid-May, still in their nesting area, which they finally left sometime before the 26th. At this time, their second nest was located, containing no unhatched egg. This pair, with their four fledged young, were located, being fed by the parents, some 650 metres from the nest site. Soon after this date, it became impossible to distinguish young from adults, but frequent and intensive counting suggested that the 2 kilometres stretch of heathland still contained all the four breeding adults and the surviving eleven young. These, together with a presumed single unpaired challenging male, which had been present all season, made a total population of 16 Woodlarks by late summer. By the end of October, all had departed from the heathland under study and none would return until early February. In the meantime, they would have travelled to their wintering areas which may have included one of the two areas where groups were located in late December and in January. These groups then contained 24 and 30 Woodlarks, all using unploughed stubble fields, which also held wintering Skylark groups of 64 and 30 respectively. These two wintering areas for the two species of lark species were situated at a maximum distance of 8 kilometres from the heathland study area. Both these wintering areas have been used by wintering Skylarks for some years, one of them being so occupied during the three years of the Winter Atlas starting in 1981-82.

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THE SUSSEX RINGING REPORT FOR 1997

by Roy Sanderson

A total of 51,336 birds were ringed in Sussex in 1997. Of these, 36,456 (71%) were ringed by the Rye Bay Group. The number of species ringed was 123, plus eight rehabilitated species.

A solitary **YELLOW-BROWED WARBLER**, ringed at Cissbury, a **CROSSBILL** at Marley Common and five **RING OUZELS** on the Downs, were the only species not in the Rye Bay' total for 1997. The **YELLOW-BROWED WARBLER** was the eighth ringed in Sussex since 1979, the **CROSSBILL** only the fourth.

Among the more unusual birds ringed at Icklesham, with the total ringed in Sussex since 1979 shown in brackets, were:

Spotted Crake	1	(22)	Corncrake	1	(2)	Wood Sandpiper	2	(11)
Nightjar	1	(22)	Wryneck	1	(22)	Savi's Warbler	1	(7)
Aquatic Warbler	30	(88)	Icterine Warbler	1	(5)	Barred Warbler	1	(9)
Red-backed Shrike	1	(4)	Marsh warbler	13	(36)	Cetti's Warbler	2	(40)

An **ICTERINE WARBLER** was also ringed at Beachy Head, and three **CETTI'S WARBLERS** at Plumpton College.

Some readers may have heard already the account concerning the **PENDULINE TIT**, but it is well worth repetition.

In 1988, a **PENDULINE TIT** was caught and ringed at Icklesham. It was only the third to be ringed in Britain. Against all the odds, it was recovered the following summer, breeding in Sweden.

By the end of 1995, still only 13 Penduline Tits had been ringed (six of them in Sussex) and there had never been a foreign-ringed bird found in Britain. So, what a wonderful conclusion to the season when, on 25 October, a Penduline Tit with a Swedish ring (yes – Sweden again!) was trapped at Icklesham. The bird, with a black colour ring, was seen a few days later at Dungeness.

The Rye Bay group began in 1986. Since then, numbers of birds ringed in Sussex have soared. Without Rye Bay, what might numbers look like, bearing in mind that individual ringers have come and gone since 1979, the year used as a baseline for Sussex ringing totals? Activity within some ringing groups is also variable from year to year. So, although not on a like-for-like basis, it might be interesting to look at ringing numbers away from

Icklesham.

The overall trend has been downwards, with fewer birds being ringed. In 1985, the last year before the Rye Bay Group was formed, 21,029 birds of 98 species were ringed. In 1997, the total had fallen to 13,360 birds of 71 species. A look at the TOP TEN species, then and now, will show the changes in ringing activity that have taken place. Some, like the cessation of the gull studies, or the ringing of fewer tit *pulli*, were the effect of a decision by a ringer or ringing group, but some differences result from a change in the number of birds available to ring.

The 1997 total for **SONG THRUSH** includes 341 *pulli*, ringed as part of an RSPB study, which has now been concluded.

1985		1997 (excluding Rye Bay)	
Blue Tit	3779	Blue Tit	2271
Willow Warbler	2287	Blackcap	1094
Great Tit	1509	Willow warbler	1059
Black-headed Gull	1243	Great Tit	1029
Blackcap	1222	Chiffchaff	898
Chiffchaff	1208	Song Thrush	498
Greenfinch	1029	Greenfinch	495
Blackbird	777	Goldcrest	494
Starling	747	Siskin	426
Chaffinch	622	Reed Warbler	416

If we take a low-key look at some Sussex ringing totals for 1997 and compare them with 1988 and 1993, there are some interesting, but probably not too significant, changes in numbers. As with the previous table, we are unable to compare like-with-like, taking into account changes in ringers and the fact that in 1988 the Rye Bay Ringing Group had not yet explored the possibilities of luring by tapes. However, it might be worth taking stock and looking back at a few species to see how some common species are faring:

The first list looks at some of the songbirds and small passerines ringed in Sussex:

	1998	1993	1997	
Wren	806	682	350	Lowest since 1991
Duncock	484	434	356	Low again, after recent improvement
Robin	800	1092	531	
Blackbird	752	644	822	
* Song Thrush	341	412	671	330, without special RSPB study
Mistle Thrush	21	16	17	
Goldcrest	644	453	946	Most sites did well
Long-tailed Tit	263	242	260	
Marsh Tit	26	40	52	Mixed fortunes
Willow Tit	16	7	8	Mixed fortunes
Coal Tit	91	64	72	
Blue Tit	3297	988	1236	
House Sparrow	244	29	84	
* Tree Sparrow	158	35	20	All at Rye Bay. A BTO High Alert species

Chaffinch	410	304	372	
Greenfinch	1019	1153	776	Fewer wintering birds
Goldfinch	245	329	535	On a rising trend
Siskin	92	368	432	Likewise, on a rising trend
Linnet	226	181	69	Rye Bay 47
* Redpoll	772	1050	887	
* Bullfinch	186	197	256	
Yellowhammer	185	55	40	The low numbers since 1990 continuing
Reed Bunting	256	716	612	Only 50, away from Rye Bay

The **HOUSE SPARROW** still seems to be out of favour with ringers. Only 1688 have been ringed in Sussex since 1979. In view of its almost total disappearance from Central London, it might be a species well worth studying.

Species above, marked with an asterisk, are **BTO High Alert Species** (report summarised in **BTO News** 214).

The next list looks at numbers of some of the more common migrants. Rye Bay' figures for 1997 are shown in brackets with their comments on numbers – the comments above regarding comparisons apply here too.

	1998	1993	1997	(Rye Bay)	
Sand Martin	3897	4457	4452	(4447)	Rather scarce
Swallow	4778	2452	5636	(5413)	
House Martin	715	762	690	(415)	
* Yellow Wagtail	23	11	7	(7)	
Nightingale	19	40	35	(16)	
Redstart	67	65	84	(9)	51 pulli by John Cooper
* Grasshopper Wblr	35	397	561	(550)	Second highest yr. 103 on 31 Aug.
Sedge Warbler	1632	12,620	8960	(8738)	Lowest since 1991
Reed Warbler	2050	6978	5368	(4940)	Slightly below average
Lesser Whitethroat	465	308	175	(99)	Lowest since 1986
Common Whitethroat	753	1205	797	(418)	Lowest since 1991
Garden Warbler	387	1061	589	(389)	Lowest since 1989
Blackcap	1654	4925	3089	(1995)	About average
Chiffchaff	2753	2633	2368	(1469)	About average
Willow Warbler	3593	2184	2533	(1474)	About average
* Spotted Flycatcher	69	25	28	(10)	

Species above, marked with an asterisk are **BTO High Alert Species** (report summarised in **BTO News** 214).

Along the coast at Beachy Head, there was agreement about the low numbers of **LESSER WHITETHROATS** – their worst year ever. The numbers were also down on **REED WARBLERS**. They had an excellent **REDPOLL** year (174 ringed) but, against the trend, had a low 'crest year, although with 64 **GOLDCRESTS** and 7 out of the 10 **FIRECRESTS** ringed in Sussex last year, they are not too unhappy!

A new ringing site was cleared from an area of scrub on the hillside overlooking Foxhole, in the Seven Sisters Country Park. It was a good first season, with 539 birds ringed. They had a particularly good day on 18 September 1997, when, at 9 a.m., after closing the nets, they became aware of large numbers of hirundines overhead. Two nets

were erected beside a bush and the roosting call of the **HOUSE MARTIN** played for two hours. Two hundred and fifty-seven birds were caught, all but one being juvenile birds.

Less fortunate was Chris Hamilton who lost her Constant Effort Site at Warnham Mill to a golf course. A new boardwalk now goes right down the middle of her old ringing site! Golf trolleys and mist nets are just not compatible!

Two nest-box schemes were discontinued last year . Anyone looking to take one over should contact the writer.

Selected recoveries of birds ringed in Sussex notified during 1997

Some of the recoveries relate to 1995 and the majority to 1996. At the time of writing, May 1998, there is still a delay in receipt of recovery data for several months. Icklesham' recoveries have been selected from the January 1998 Wetland Trust *Newsletter* as more recent data, several hundred recoveries, have yet to be sorted out and computerised.

Most of us, at one time or another, have walked along a beach, looking for ringed birds that may have been brought in by the last tide. But it seems that we should also be on the alert for rings, already taken off birds. Busy wildlife officers (who shall remain nameless) habitually put rings from ducks into drawers (now trained to at least add sticky tape with the date and species!). But what about the ring from a **REDSHANK**, ringed in 1982 on the Ribble Marshes, Lancashire, found on the window ledge of an information centre at Pagham, and still unreported 'after many years'? Or the ring from a **COMMON TERN**, ringed as a *pullus* on a tern raft on a Chichester Gravel Pit in July 1996, and found by a Frenchman in Grand Mbao, Senegal, sometime around October 1997, on a necklace being offered for sale! So, vigilance at all times!

As general observers, we may not be in a position to ring **BEWICK'S SWANS**, but we can, certainly, follow the movements of those with neck collars, by making a point of looking carefully at any wild swans we may see. The itinerary of one with a blue neck collar showed that it had travelled extensively and, thanks to the Internet, the following illuminating details emerged:

- 1991 Ringed as a juvenile on 4 August near Kashin Island, north of the Arctic Circle in the Pechora Delta.
By November, it had travelled south-west to the Netherlands.
- 1992 Seen in Estonia in May and back in the Netherlands again in December.
- 1993 Germany in March, back in Russia by June, then south to the Netherlands in November.
- 1994 Estonia in April and the Netherlands in November.
- 1995/96 Spotted again in the Netherlands at both ends of the year.
- 1997 Romney Marsh in February.
After visiting the Netherlands on its way back in the autumn, it returned to England, being seen at Henfield (Adur Valley) in December.
- 1998 Still at Henfield on 6 January, then on to Greatham Farm in the Arun Valley, where it was seen on 21 and 22 January.

If reading neck collars on swans is not to your taste, what about Darvic rings on **CORMORANTS**? Details of three out of four Darvics read while the birds roosted on power lines and pylons at the Chichester Gravel Pits, were as follows:

- 1993 Ringed as a *pullus*, in spring, at Silloth, Cumbria, and found at Chichester Gravel Pits 1993/95 and again October/November 1997.

1997 Ringed as a *pullus*, in May, at a tree-nesting colony at Besthorpe, Notts, and seen at the Chichester Gravel Pits on 19 October.

Year? – Ringed in Denmark and seen at Chichester Gravel Pits, October 1997.

details
awaited

Many of the Cormorants seen at the Chichester Gravel Pits commute between the pier at Bognor Regis and Pagham Harbour on a daily basis.

The number of raptors ringed in the county, 47, was slightly down on last year. They comprised **SPARROWHAWK** (22); **KESTREL** (24) and **HOBBY** (1). There were two recoveries of **KESTRELS**. One, ringed as a nestling at Sidlesham on 15 June 1996, was found dead below power lines at Hamstreet, Kent, on 6 September, the same year. Another, ringed at Icklesham on 7 October 1995, was found dead at Ashmanworthy, Devon, on 27 February 1996.

Another **KESTREL**, ringed as a nestling (one of a brood of 8) in the Netherlands on 12 July 1995, was found freshly dead on a Worthing golf course on 8 August, just 27 days later.

A **GREENSHANK**, ringed and colour-marked at Farlington Marshes, Hampshire, on 8 August 1994, was spotted on St Agnes, Isles of Scilly, next day. It was seen on St Mary's on 25th, before being sighted again many miles to the east, in Christchurch Harbour on 26 May 1995. Its journeys were not over, however, because it was seen again, this time on the shores of the Ferry Pool at Pagham Harbour, on 13 July.

A **WOODCOCK**, ringed on 14 August 1996 at Beachy Head, was shot at Finistère, France, on 15 December 1996, a distance of 372 kms. This is the second recovery from only four birds ringed at the site. The first was recovered in Sweden. A 50% recovery rate for a species averaging under 8%. Twenty-seven **WOODCOCK** have so far been ringed in Sussex, including a rehabilitated bird ringed in 1997.

LAPWINGS are not immune to the gun. A *pullus*, ringed at Icklesham on 18 June 1995, was shot at Foucarville, Manche, France, on 6 February 1997.

BLACK-HEADED GULL' recoveries from the busy cannon-netting days on the Worthing beaches and refuse tips still keep coming in. Foreign recoveries notified in 1997 were from the Netherlands (3), Denmark (3), Germany (4), Poland, Lithuania, Estonia (2), USSR (1), Finland (5) and Sweden (2). Some of our Scandinavian colleagues are good with their binoculars and 'scopes. This results in occasional multiple sightings of gulls. A **BLACK-HEADED GULL** ringed on the Sompting Tip, on 5 February 1986, was controlled in Copenhagen, Denmark, on 2 April 1987, followed by a single record on 10 April 1996 at Lemland, Finland. Another, ringed at Sompting Tip on 19 February 1986, has been seen four times in different years at different locations in Denmark: three of those were field records.

COMMON GULLS, also from Sompting, (1983 and 1984), had their rings read in the field in Rostock, GDR, (June 1997), and Copenhagen, Denmark, (August 1996). Darvic rings are now added by some continental ringers. **COMMON GULLS** with white rings and black letters (series AA *etc*) are from Germany, red rings are added in Copenhagen, Denmark.

It is always exciting to watch a **BARN OWL** quartering the ground at dusk in search of prey. The wet weather of late spring 1997 caused many broods to fail, so it was especially sad to see three reports this year of birds found dead, all within a year of

ringing. One apparently died during violent weather at Sidlesham, in February 1997, within sight of its nest-box. Another corpse was left on the doorstep of Bognor Regis Police Station (April 1997). The third was found dead on the road near Chichester in March 1997. An exception was a bird ringed as a nestling at Sidlesham on 20 June 1994, found roosting in a nest-box at Arundel on 4 June 1997. Nineteen **BARN OWLS** were ringed in 1997, 15 of them nestlings, bringing the Sussex total since 1979 to 574.

As there are so few recoveries of Sussex-ringed birds from Scandinavia, it is worth reporting a first-year male **BLACKBIRD**, ringed at Marley Common on 15 March 1993, found dead at Kristionstad, Sweden, on 7 May 1997.

From Beachy Head comes news of a **CETT'S WARBLER** ringed there on 19 October 1996, moving north, to be controlled at the Priory Country Park in Bedford on 25 January 1997. A **BLACKCAP**, ringed at Beachy Head on 21 August 1994, was controlled in Guernsey in April 1996 and 1997. Two other autumn-ringed **BLACKCAPS** from 1994 were found in Morocco in October 1996 and March 1997. I liked particularly this **WILLOW WARBLER** recovery. Ringed at Beachy Head on 22 August 1996, it was found 'fate unknown' in Ghana, 100 days later, a distance of 4941 kms. This should surely find a place in the **BTO Ringing Report** for 1996; there have only been about 15 previous recoveries of **WILLOW WARBLERS** south of the Sahara. A **WILLOW WARBLER**, ringed at Littlington on 3 September 1995, was found after violent weather in Morocco on 7 June 1996. The prize for the fastest **WILLOW WARBLER** must surely go to the bird ringed on the Faroe Islands on 7 September 1996. It was controlled at Cissbury on the 14th, having travelled 1292 kms in seven days!

What is probably only the second **BTO-ringed MARSH WARBLER** to be recovered abroad has just been notified to Icklesham. The first-year bird was ringed there on 20 Aug 1996 and was recovered at Velbert, Düsseldorf, Germany, on 7 Aug 1997, an easterly movement of 448kms. The first recovery was in Greece, way back in 1985. The species winters in East Africa.

A long-distance **GREENFINCH** was controlled at East Grinstead on 23 January 1997: it had been ringed as a first-year male at Ickburgh, Norfolk, on 17 January 1995, a movement of 162 kms. A first-year cock **GOLDCREST**, ringed at Beachy Head on 11 October 1996, was found dead at Saint Quentin, France, on 12 February 1997, a distance of 237 kms in 124 days.

Recoveries of **LONG-TAILED TITS** are rather uncommon and movements of any distance even rarer, so it is good to hear of one that was ringed at Church Norton on 8 August 1993, and found dead on 28 May 1997 at Iver, Bucks, almost four years later and at a distance of 87 kms.

My grateful thanks to all who contributed records for the 1997 ringing report and especially to Colin Raymond who computerised the ringing numbers for this report.

Finally, I am sure you will all wish me to say a big 'Thank you' to Derek Crawley who has produced the *Ringing Report* for the *Sussex Bird Report* for more than a decade – well done Derek!

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Roy Sanderson, 15 Stephenson Drive, East Grinstead, West Sussex. RH19 4AP (01342-326714).

STOP PRESS:

Inevitably, some items of news and records have come to hand too late to include in the main body of the text of the current *Report*. The following records have been accepted since 1st June 1998 and relate to 19??, 19?? and 19??, as indicated:

It is important to note that there are currently a large number of records awaiting acceptance, not only for 1997, but also for earlier years. Full details regarding the above records and many more will be included in the 1998 *Report*.

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