

# The Sussex Bird Report

No. 56 2003



Published by  
The Sussex Ornithological Society

**THE SUSSEX BIRD REPORT  
NUMBER FIFTY-SIX, 2003**

*Recorder: JA Hobson*

*Editorial Team: PN Paul, Dr JA Cocks, RJ Fairbank, P James,  
Dr JA Newnham, TW Parmenter, RT Pepper, A Thomas & Dr BJ Yates.*

**CONTENTS**

	<i>Page</i>
Editorial.....	3
Review of 2003.....	4
Classified Records - Introduction.....	18
Systematic List.....	20
Escapes & Feral Birds.....	187
First and Last Migrant Dates.....	194
Breeding Surveys in Defined Areas.....	196
Contributors, Acknowledgements and Surveys.....	200
The Sussex Ringing Report for 2003, Robert Edgar and Sarah McKenzie	205
Breeding Waders of Wet Meadows 2002, Dr BJ Yates.....	211
Olive-backed Pipit at Seaford Head, J Curson.....	215
Map of Sussex and mini gazetteer.....	220

**The publication of the 2003 Sussex Bird Report was supported by a generous legacy from the late E.G. Robus and a contribution from West Sussex County Council.**

*Cover photograph by Ian Barnard.  
Desert Wheatear at Climping, November 2003.*

Published in December 2004  
By

**THE SUSSEX ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY**  
([www.sos.org.uk](http://www.sos.org.uk))



Best Annual Bird Report

*3<sup>rd</sup> place in the 2000, 2001 and 2002 competitions.*

# SUSSEX ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY

## OFFICERS AND MEMBERS OF COMMITTEES AT 30th JUNE 2004

*President:* Dr B Watson, 83 Buckingham Road, Shoreham-by-Sea  
*Vice Presidents.* Dr J Irons, B Marr, Mrs I Simpson.

### COUNCIL.

*Chairman of Council and Treasurer:* G Wenden, 2 Foxwarren, Haywards Heath, W. Sussex RH16 1EN. (treasurer@sos.org.uk)  
*Secretary:* R Cowser, Beavers Brook, The Thatchway, Angmering, W. Sussex, BN16 4HJ. ([secretary@sos.org.uk](mailto:secretary@sos.org.uk))  
*Recorder:* J Hobson, 23 Hillside Road, Storrington, W. Sussex, RH20 3LZ. ([recorder@sos.org.uk](mailto:recorder@sos.org.uk))  
*Assistant Recorder:* T Parmenter, 22 The Kiln, Burgess Hill, W. Sussex, RH15 8HL.  
*Editor of Bird Report:* PN Paul, Old Durfold, Warnham, W. Sussex RH12 3RY  
*Press and Publicity* Vacant  
*Surveys and Projects Officer:* Dr JA Cocks, Little Wyatts Farm, Earlsdown, Dallington, E. Sussex, TN21 9LY.  
*Conservation Officer:* J Gowers, 10 Westpoint, Newick, E. Sussex BN8 4NU. ([conservation@sos.org.uk](mailto:conservation@sos.org.uk))  
*Newsletter Editor:* R Ives, 90 Downlands Avenue, Worthing, W. Sussex, BN14 9HF. ([newsletter@sos.org.uk](mailto:newsletter@sos.org.uk))  
*Members of Council:* P.Everitt, 14 Foxglove Close, Ringmer, E. Sussex BN8 5PB.  
D Green, 10 Westmoreland Walk, Shoreham-by-Sea, W. Sussex, BN43 5FX.  
S Linington, Brambles, School Lane, Barcombe, E. Sussex BN8 5DS  
Miss J Simpson, Backsettown Farmstead, Furners Lane, Henfield, BN5 9HB.  
*Conference Organiser:* A Thomas, 40 Woodlands Close, Peacehaven, E. Sussex BN10 7SF.

### OTHER OFFICERS.

*Outings Organiser:* Mrs A Wende, Sunbeams, Green Road, Wivelfield Green, Haywards Heath, W. Sussex RH17 7QD ([outings@sos.org.uk](mailto:outings@sos.org.uk))  
*Membership Secretary:* J Trowell, Lorrimer, Main Road, Icklesham, Winchelsea, E. Sussex, TN36 4BS. ([membership@sos.org.uk](mailto:membership@sos.org.uk))  
*Archivist:* L Manns, 5 Downsview Avenue, Storrington, W. Sussex, RH20 4PS.  
*West Sussex Conservation Officer* A Perry, Edgehill Barn, Byworth, Petworth, W. Sussex GU28 0HR.

### COMMITTEES.

*Bird Report* PN Paul (*Editor*), Dr JA Cocks, R Fairbank, J Hobson, P James, Dr J Newnham, T Parmenter, R Pepper, A Thomas, Dr BJ Yates.  
*Scientific:* C Corrigan, (*Chairman*), Dr JA Cocks (*Secretary*), R Edgar, J Gowers, J Hobson, PN Paul, L Manns, A Perry, G Roberts, Dr B Watson.  
*Records:* J Hobson (*Recorder*), A Barnard, AS Cook, D Cooper, KM Johnston, O Mitchell, T Parmenter, NJ Thomas  
*Programme:* Mrs A Wende (*Organiser*) B Forbes, P Luffingham,  
*Membership/Publicity* Mrs V Bentley (*Chairperson*), J Gowers, R Ives, C Law, P Outhwaite, J Trowell, Mrs A Wende

## EDITORIAL

Thanks are again due to the many contributors who submitted their records for inclusion in this *56<sup>th</sup> Sussex Bird Report*. It is pleasing to see from the following table that there has been an increase in the number of contributors and a full list of acknowledgements, both to them and the many people who take part in regular surveys and counts, is given on pages 200 – 204.

	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
<b>Number submitting records</b>	542	394	383	472	507
<b>Number of records received</b>	46,562	53,271	49,553	60,031	59,040
<b>Number of species recorded</b>	259	269	257	261	258
<b>Number of birds ringed</b>	33,776	40,355	32,833	45,650	52,449
<b>Number of species ringed</b>	126	126	123	104	113

The species accounts were written by a large team of authors, namely *Mrs V Bentley, PM Brayshaw, C Brooks, C Holt, Dr JA Cocks, DEG Copeland, A Cotton, DE Crawley, J Curson, RJ Fairbank, D Green, JA Hobson, C Holt, A House, P James, ME Kalaher, R Knight, D Madgin, L Manns, MJ Mason, JA Newnham, PN Paul, RT Pepper, A Perry, R Prior, GCM Roberts, AB Watson, Mrs A Wende and TJ Wilson*. The initials at the end of each species account identifies the writer to whom sincere thanks are due.

Thanks are also due to *Richard Fairbank, John Hobson, Paul James, Robin Pepper, Adrian Thomas and Barry Yates* who read through the species accounts and suggested a number of improvements. As in previous years, some of the draft accounts have been altered and edited to reflect the suggestions made and to summarise the records in a more accessible form for future researchers. I trust that this action will not have offended any of the authors but, if it has done so, I offer my sincere apologies.

In addition to those already mentioned, special thanks must be given to *Tony Cocks* for editing the scientific papers, *Richard Fairbank* for writing the Review of the Year, *Tim Parmenter* for selecting the photographs for inclusion in the Report, *Robin Pepper* for coordinating the writing of the Systematic List, *John Newnham* for organising the computerisation of all the records and *David Brothwell* for typesetting the text.

Our thanks are also due to *Paul James* who has been the Editor for the past five years and who now takes a well-earned rest. The fact that the *Sussex Bird Report* has been placed third for the last three years in the BTO's Best Annual Bird Report Competition is a testament not only to the dedication of all those involved but also to his leadership during this time.

I trust that you will enjoy this Report. A study of the Report shows that we have again had good coverage of the less common birds and unusual activities of our more common species. However, the records of location and breeding of the more common species are less complete and I would urge all members to help correct this imbalance in future years. In addition a number of sightings of less common birds which were reported to the website have not been included in the species accounts since no description was received for consideration by the Society's Records Committee (see page 216).

*Nick Paul, November 2004*

## REVIEW OF 2003

by Richard Fairbank

This review of 2003 is a chronological summary of the year's highest counts, first and last arrival dates and other interesting or unusual records. The total of 258 species recorded in the county in 2003 was on the low side compared with recent years, the totals since 1996 being between 257 (in 1998) and 269 (in 2000). The undoubted highlight of the year was the county's first **Pacific Golden Plover**, seen at Rye Harbour in April. This, and acceptance of the 2002 **Sykes's Warbler**, take the total of species seen in the county to 388. Other rarities seen in 2003 included the county's second **Olive-backed Pipit** and **Paddyfield Warbler**, fourth **Hume's Leaf Warbler** and **Black-headed Bunting**, fourth and fifth **Blue-winged Teals**, fifth **Desert Wheatear**, sixth to ninth **Ring-necked Ducks**, ninth **Black Stork** and **Little Bunting**, tenth **Radde's Warbler** and a **Gull-billed Tern**. Most active observers in the county would have had the opportunity to see several of the above making it one of the best years for viewable rarities in the county for some time.

There were record counts of **Bitterns** (eight at Rye Harbour in February), **Coot** (2080 at Chichester Gravel Pits in January), **Mediterranean Gulls** (69 in Chichester Harbour in March and the fourth year running that a record count has been made), **Little Gulls** (564 east at Brighton Marina on 26 April and 1630 in the county during the year), **Sandwich Tern** (breeding pairs and young fledged), **Razorbills** (2000 off Brighton Marina in January) and **Water Pipits** (54 at Combe Haven in March). **Little Egrets**, **Honey Buzzards** and **Ravens** successfully bred in the county, while it is likely that **Marsh Warblers** did so too. Arrival and departure records were broken by the earliest **White Wagtail**, **Sedge** and **Garden Warblers** and autumn **Ortolan Bunting**, the latest **Sandwich Tern** and **Red-breasted Flycatcher** and the first spring/summer **Little Auk** and wintering **Lesser Whitethroat**. Most notable of the unusual races recorded during the year was a small autumn influx of **Continental Coal Tits** while the most interesting escape was a **White-headed Duck**, although a male **Silver Pheasant** would have been the best looking. Also notable was a young, French, colour-ringed **Great White Egret** which arrived in the county, via Cambridgeshire, in July. Photographs of some of the birds listed in this review can be found on Ian Barnard's Birds of Sussex web-site ([www.thebirdsofsussex.co.uk](http://www.thebirdsofsussex.co.uk)).

**JANUARY** started wet and thundery, with gusts of 51 mph recorded at Shoreham Beach on the 2<sup>nd</sup> (see [www.bbc.co.uk/weather/ukweather](http://www.bbc.co.uk/weather/ukweather) and [www.softwair.co.uk/weather](http://www.softwair.co.uk/weather) for more details). An anticyclone to the north brought very cold northeast winds, widespread overnight frost and up to 50 mm of snow early on the 7<sup>th</sup> (with snowfall in Greater London the heaviest since 1991) when  $-3.1^{\circ}\text{C}$  was the lowest temperature recorded all year at Shoreham Beach. As the high slipped south frost was displaced by mainly drier and milder conditions, but not before  $-9.9^{\circ}\text{C}$  was recorded at Redhill in Surrey on the 12<sup>th</sup>. It then became changeable with sunny periods and rain from mid month followed by a breezy but mostly dry and sunny period contributing to the well above average sunshine recorded during the month. An anticyclone to the southwest brought very mild air to many places on the 26-27<sup>th</sup> (when East Malling in Kent reached  $17.4^{\circ}\text{C}$  probably making it the warmest January day in England on record), although low pressure to the east and high pressure to the north fed progressively colder air southwards. Scarce and unusual birds remaining from 2002 included a **Spoonbill** roosting at Thorney Deepes (until the 6<sup>th</sup>), a **Rough-legged Buzzard** on the Lewes Levels (which remained in the area to at least the 27<sup>th</sup>), a **Glaucous Gull** at Pagham Harbour (to 16 February), a **Lesser Whitethroat** in a Worthing garden (until 14 April, providing the first county records for the first three months of the year), two **Snow Buntings** at Norman's Bay (until 8 February) and **Great Grey Shrikes** at Arundel and Ashdown Forest (where they ranged until 13 and 30 March respectively). On

the 3<sup>rd</sup> seven **Bitterns** were seen at Rye Harbour at dawn, with 2400 **Golden Plover** there later in the day, four **Pink-footed Geese** on Pevensey Bridge Level (to the 4<sup>th</sup>), three **Cranes** on nearby Hooe Level, a site record 38 **Jack Snipe** at Thorney Deepes, six **Short-eared Owls** at Selsey West Fields and five roosting **Hen Harriers** at Scotney Court Gravel Pit. Four apparent **Taiga Bean Geese** were recorded in the lower Cuckmere Valley on the 4<sup>th</sup> when an impressive 100 **Tree Sparrows** were counted at Pett Level.

The January *WeBS*' count, on the 5<sup>th</sup>, recorded 4397 **Wigeon** and 533 **Pintail** at Amberley Wild Brooks, 349 **Gadwall**, 559 **Tufted Duck** (a record count for the month) and 2080 **Coot** (a county record) at Chichester Gravel Pits, 1899 **Teal** at Pulborough Brooks and 36 **Goldeneye**, 1631 **Oystercatchers** and 289 **Common Snipe** in Chichester Harbour. Also on the 5<sup>th</sup> a **Whooper Swan** flew out to sea from Cuckmere Haven, a female **Ring-necked Duck** was seen on Lewes Brooks, and was relocated at Barcombe Reservoir on the 12-14<sup>th</sup>, and 51 **Blackbirds** were counted at Darwell Reservoir. The **Reed Bunting** roost on Ashdown Forest peaked at 140 on the 6<sup>th</sup>, well down on the 250 recorded there in 2002, while 25 **Wood Larks** were near Coates Common and three parties of **Crossbills**, totalling 103 individuals, at Stansted Forest on the 8<sup>th</sup>. At Brighton Marina an estimated 2500 **Common Gulls** flew east on the 9<sup>th</sup> with 2000 east there on the 11<sup>th</sup>, when a cold snap brought twenty **Wrens** and twenty **Robins** to feed along the tide line at Pagham Harbour.

On 13 January 150 **Red-breasted Mergansers** were present off Worthing, 10,680 **auks** flew west at Brighton Marina and an estimated 30 **Goldcrests** were seen at Arundel WWT while 57,000 **Black-headed Gulls** roosted at Bewl Water on the 20<sup>th</sup>. Two-hundred and ninety **Magpies** roosting in Brighton Wild Park on the 21<sup>st</sup> was exceptional (120 was the peak count there in 2002) while 140 **Knot** flew west at Worthing Beach on the 22<sup>nd</sup>. Six **Short-eared Owls** were seen at Thorney Island on the 23<sup>rd</sup>, a **Scandinavian Herring Gull** was identified at Pebsham on 25<sup>th</sup> and 150 **Sky Larks** were feeding at Hardham on the 26<sup>th</sup>. A **Long-eared Owl** roost in the west of the county peaked at five on the 27<sup>th</sup>, when a **Great Grey Shrike** was found at Iping Common, remaining until 26 March. An impressive 454 **Great Crested Grebes** were counted in Rye Bay on the 28<sup>th</sup> with a county record estimate of 2000 **Razorbills** offshore at Brighton Marina on the 31<sup>st</sup>.

*FEBRUARY was changeable and mainly dry at first but became mild and wet in the second week. This was followed by cold, dry east or southeast winds and a frosty third week with very mild sunny weather lasting to the months end. It was the coldest February since 1996, the driest since 1998 and the sunniest since 1988.* The month started with 2 **Tundra Bean Geese** among the **White-fronts** at Scotney Court GP and a count of 1200 **Canada Geese** at Greatham Bridge while Lewes Brooks hosted 800 **Fieldfares** and 800 **Redwing** on the 2<sup>nd</sup>. Also on the 2<sup>nd</sup> two **Tundra Bean Geese** were found with the **White-Fronted Goose** flock at Scotney Court Gravel Pit. The largest herd of **Bewick's Swans** was 51 at Amberley Wildbrooks on the 4<sup>th</sup>, when a **White Wagtail** at Wisborough Green was the earliest county record. On the 8<sup>th</sup> a female **Ring-necked Duck** was found at Wiston Pond (and was joined by another on the 17<sup>th</sup>, both remaining into April), a flock of 21 **Eider** off Church Norton was the year's highest count and a **Snow Bunting** in Billingshurst was an unlikely garden bird - another was at Seaford Head from the 10-22<sup>nd</sup>. An **Avocet** at Greatham Bridge on the 13<sup>th</sup> was unusual while 44 at Pagham Harbour on the 14<sup>th</sup> was the highest count of the year.

In Ashdown Forest at this time 100 **Bramblings** were in Pippingford Park on the 9<sup>th</sup> while 24 **Bullfinches** there on the 15<sup>th</sup> included 16 males and six females in one tree.

The February *WeBS*' count on the 16<sup>th</sup> recorded peak counts of 1019 **Shelduck** and 14,377 **Dunlin** in Chichester Harbour and 28 **Smew** at Rye Harbour. Also on the 16<sup>th</sup> there were six **Little Stints** at East Head, 64 **Ruff** in the Arun Valley, seven **Marsh Tits**, 38 **Great Tits** and ten **Jays** at Darwell Reservoir and an intermittent **Serin** at Newhaven Tidemills



into March. On the 17<sup>th</sup> four **Tundra Bean Geese** arrived in the lower Cuckmere Valley and remained to 2 March while 11 **Velvet Scoters** were on the sea off Pett Level. A county record eight **Bitterns** were seen at Rye Harbour at dusk on the 18<sup>th</sup> while **Caspian** and **Scandinavian Herring Gulls** were present in the daytime gull roost at Newhaven on 19<sup>th</sup>. Easterly diver passage on the 20<sup>th</sup> included 245 **Red-throated** off Brighton Marina and 290 **diver species** off Seaford while the **White-fronted Goose** flock at Scotney Court Gravel Pit reached a peak of 250 birds on the 20<sup>th</sup>, including five **Tundra Bean Geese** on the 21<sup>st</sup> and 270 **Meadow Pipits** were recorded in Ashdown Forest on the 21<sup>st</sup>.

Sea passage started in earnest on 22 February with 5200 **Brent Geese** east past Beachy Head and smaller numbers elsewhere along the coast, two **Garganey** off Newhaven and a very early **Sandwich Tern** past Brighton Marina. On the 23<sup>rd</sup> up to 38 **White-fronted Geese**, two **Pink-footed Geese** and a **Tundra Bean Goose** arrived at Piddinghoe Pond and remained in the general area into March. Other records on this date included 350 **Common Scoter** in Rye Bay, 105 **Lesser Black-backed Gulls** at Shoreham and six **Blackcaps** feeding on birdseed in a garden in Durrington. Eighteen **Dartford Warblers** were counted on Heyshott and Ambersham Commons on the 24<sup>th</sup> with 25 **Stonechats** at the former. Sightings on the 26<sup>th</sup> included five **Tundra Bean Geese** on Thorney Island (until 2 March), a male **Silver Pheasant** in West Dean Woods, 170 **Sanderling** on Goring Beach and 112 **Pied Wagtails** flying over Thorney Deep to roost.

*MARCH was changeable but mainly dry and mild during the first to weeks. It became cold and frosty in the third week, with minus 6.6°C being recorded at Redhill in Surrey on the 22<sup>nd</sup> although this was followed by very mild sunny weather (Central London's temperature rose to 20.0°C on the 23<sup>rd</sup>) making it the sunniest March on record.* A county record of 54 **Water Pipits** at Combe Haven on the 1<sup>st</sup> was followed by 25 **Buzzards** in West Dean Woods, the first two **Swallows** of the year at Ardingly, a very early **Whinchat** at Beachy Head and 114 **Chaffinches** northeast over Combe Haven on the 2<sup>nd</sup>. Three **Bitterns** at Burton Mill Pond on the 3<sup>rd</sup> was a high count away from Rye Harbour while the first **Wheatear** of the year was noted at Brooklands on the 4<sup>th</sup>. Three **Sand Martins** at Telscombe on the 7<sup>th</sup> were the first of the year while a **Mandarin** on the rocks at Brighton Marina on the 9<sup>th</sup> was unusual. Also on the 9<sup>th</sup> an estimated 52,000 **Common Gulls** roosted at Bewl Water and there were 45 **Corn Buntings** at New Erringham Farm. The first **Little Ringed Plovers** of the year were singles at Combe Haven and Pulborough Brooks on the 11<sup>th</sup>, when an impressive 150 **Pied Wagtails** were feeding on the marsh at Combe Haven and a flock of 300 **Siskins** was seen in Stansted Forest.

The first of 12 spring **Ospreys** was seen at Woods Mill on 12 March while records the next day included a female **Ring-necked Duck** at Cuckmere Haven, two **Rough-legged Buzzards** near Sheffield Park and the year's first **Willow Warbler** at Pulborough Brooks. A party of 40 **Crossbill** was seen in Brighton on the 14<sup>th</sup> while a somewhat suspect **White Stork** at Beddingham on the 14-15<sup>th</sup> and Pulborough Brooks on the 19-20<sup>th</sup> was two weeks earlier than any previous wild bird. Eight **Scaup** flew east off Selsey Bill on the 15<sup>th</sup> with three **Arctic Skuas** at Church Norton and a **Red-necked Grebe** at Weir Wood Reservoir on the 16<sup>th</sup> (the last remaining until 25 May). **Woodcock** were roding in Ashdown Forest from the 17<sup>th</sup> while 80 **Song Thrushes**, 60 **Mistle Thrushes** and 25 **Bullfinches** were seen at Old Idsworth on the 18<sup>th</sup>. A migrant **Firecrest** was seen by seawatchers at Seaford on the 20<sup>th</sup> while 1786 **Common Scoter** east there on the 21<sup>st</sup> were more expected, and the first spring **Ring Ouzel** was at Cold Coombes on the 22<sup>nd</sup>. On the 23<sup>rd</sup> a dark morph **Fulmar** flew east at Brighton Marina, a **Water Rail** spent several days in the flowerbeds at Brighton's Royal Pavilion Gardens, six **Little Stints** were counted at Pett Level Pools, the first **House Martin** arrived near Arundel and nine **Nuthatches** were recorded between there and South Stoke.

Sixty-nine **Mediterranean Gulls** counted in Chichester Harbour on 24 March was a new county record, and included 65 adults. The 24<sup>th</sup> also saw the first arriving **Yellow Wagtail** at Rye Harbour (with two at Beachy Head on the 27<sup>th</sup>) and **Sedge Warbler** at Arundel WWT (the earliest county record) with the first **Common Tern** at Telscombe and **Redstart** at Birling Gap on the 25<sup>th</sup>. A **Puffin** was seen off Brighton Marina on the 26<sup>th</sup>, with the year's only other record there on the 30<sup>th</sup>, while an early first **Whitethroat** was recorded at Pulborough Brooks and 19 **Tree Sparrows** flew off southeast from Peacehaven on the 27<sup>th</sup>. The first **Tree Pipits** of the year were seen in different parts of Ashdown Forest on the 29<sup>th</sup>, four **Scandinavian Rock Pipits** were identified at Cuckmere Haven and a **Garden Warbler** at Pulborough Brooks was the earliest county record on the 30<sup>th</sup> and the first **Cuckoo** was recorded at Sompting on the 31<sup>st</sup>.

*APRIL started with blustery thundery showers on the 1st but was then mainly dry, sunny and very warm. A band of light sleet and snow affected some areas during the 10th after which a Scandinavian high became the dominant feature of the weather. Some light rain on the 14th left dust deposits and southerly winds brought extremely high temperatures with records broken in many places (Shoreham beach recorded 23.3°C on the 17th). Thundery showers broke out early on the 21st, giving a second dust fall in places, and again towards the end of the month. It was the warmest April since 1987, the driest since 1997 and the sunniest since 1990.* A **Pacific Golden Plover**, a new bird for the county, was found in the **Golden Plover** flock at Rye Harbour on the 1<sup>st</sup> and once its identity had been established it became a popular attraction, remaining to the 19<sup>th</sup>. The first **Grasshopper Warbler** of the year was at Pulborough Brooks on the 4<sup>th</sup>, but the next record was not until three weeks later, while records on the 5<sup>th</sup> included the first migrant **Turtle Dove** near Arlington, **Hoopoe** in East Dean, **Nightingale** at Pagham Lagoon, with another at Cuckmere Haven the next day, and **Lesser Whitethroat** at Pulborough Brooks. The first **Hobby** of the year was seen coming in off the sea at Widewater on the 6<sup>th</sup> with an **Iceland Gull** at Rye Harbour and an early **Reed Warbler** at Pett Level on the 7<sup>th</sup>. Six **Black-necked Grebes** were seen offshore and the first **Arctic Tern** flew east at Brighton Marina on the 8<sup>th</sup> when a **Pied Flycatcher** at Pulborough Brooks was the first of just seven seen during the spring. Not quite matching Chichester Harbour, a count of 62 **Mediterranean Gulls** at Rye Harbour on the 12<sup>th</sup> was nevertheless impressive. Also on the 12<sup>th</sup> the first **Little Terns** were seen, including 27 east at Selsey Bill, a female **Serin** flew west at Birling Gap and 150 **Redpolls** at Broadwater Forest was the year's highest count.

On 13 April a single **Little Grebe** offshore at Birling Gap provided an unusual seawatching record while 73 **Velvet Scoter** flew east past Selsey Bill, with smaller numbers recorded elsewhere along the coast and 717 **Sandwich Terns** flew east at Seaford on the 13<sup>th</sup>. Five **Garganey** flew east past Brighton, Seaford and Beachy Head on the 14<sup>th</sup> when the first **Pomarine Skuas** were recorded - four at Selsey Bill, ten at Brighton Marina and six at Seaford. Also on the 14<sup>th</sup> an unusually early **Nightjar** was seen in Ashdown Forest and the first **Swift** arrived over Selsey Bill. On the 15<sup>th</sup> a **Spoonbill** flew east off Selsey Bill, the first **Black Terns** of the year were seen at Splash Point, Selsey Bill and Shoreham (2), the first of just four migrant **Wood Warblers** was at Stanmer Great Wood and a **Serin** flew north over Selsey Bill, the first of three there in April. Passage of **Mediterranean Gulls** continued with 29 east at Brighton Marina on the 16<sup>th</sup> and 27 east there on the 17<sup>th</sup> when the last spring **Redwing** was recorded at Troutbeck. On the 18<sup>th</sup> a **Spoonbill** was on Pevensy Levels, two **Egyptian Geese** flew east past Selsey Bill and a **Wryneck** was seen at Hastings Country Park. Another **Wryneck** was seen at Birling Gap on the 21<sup>st</sup> when notable easterly sea passage included 385 **Fulmars** at Brighton Marina and 60 **Velvet Scoter**, 22 **Pomarine** and 78 **Arctic Skuas** at Seaford while on the 22<sup>nd</sup> the



last departing winter visitors included two **Scaup** east at Seaford and three **Bramblings** in Ashdown Forest.

At Castle Water on 23 April 125 **Cormorant** nests were counted, while another **Spoonbill** was present in the lower Cuckmere Valley on the 24-25<sup>th</sup>. A male **Dotterel** at Rye Harbour from the 24<sup>th</sup> to at least 18 May proved almost as popular as the now departed Pacific Golden Plover while easterly sea passage at this time included 633 **Common Terns** at Brighton Marina on the 24<sup>th</sup> and 23 **Black-throated Divers**, 298 **Whimbrel** and a **Roseate Tern** there and 75 **Little Terns** at Worthing on the 25<sup>th</sup>. Thirteen **Coal Tits** at Falmer, also on the 25<sup>th</sup>, was the highest count all year while the 26<sup>th</sup> produced a **Kentish Plover** in Pagham Harbour, 564 **Little Gulls** (a county record) and 3048 “**commic**” terns east at Brighton Marina, 13 **Black Terns** east at Worthing and a **Red-rumped Swallow** at Arlington Reservoir. The last of only 15 spring **Ring Ouzels** was seen at Falmer on the 28<sup>th</sup> while the 29<sup>th</sup> saw departing **Water Pipit** at Combe Haven and **Fieldfare** at West Dean cross over with the first arriving **Spotted Flycatcher** at Church Norton. It was followed the next day by one at Shoreham Sanctuary, with 1144 **Bar-tailed Godwits** east at Worthing Beach and two **Red-rumped Swallows** at Arlington Reservoir which entertained visitors to 5 May.

*MAY started with unsettled and very wet weather for the first few days with frequent heavy showers, and gusts of 50 mph recorded at Shoreham Beach on the 2<sup>nd</sup>. It soon became more changeable with variable winds before a sunny and warm period, with rain and drizzle affecting many places on the 10<sup>th</sup>. A depression brought progressively cooler air as winds veered to the northwest and the weather became unsettled again with frequent showers alternating with sunny periods. Atlantic fronts pushed in from the southwest from mid month with a rather cool, unsettled period as bands of heavy rain, with hail and thunder, moved across the region on the 19<sup>th</sup>. After coastal fog on the 21<sup>st</sup> fresh fronts moved in from the west although an anticyclone to the south brought mainly dry, sunny and very warm conditions as it moved northeast. After the clearance of patchy hill and coastal fog and some light rain on the 26-27<sup>th</sup>, temperatures steadily rose with prolonged sunshine and warmer air being drawn in from the continent. More sea fog affected the coast on the 28<sup>th</sup> and it became hot during the 30-31<sup>st</sup> when Central London recorded 29.1°C (Shoreham Beach's highest temperature at this time was 27.1°C on the 29<sup>th</sup>). It may not have seemed it, but it was the sunniest May since 1997. The month got off to a slow start in the unsettled weather with 220 **Swallows** sheltering at Bewl Water and 200 at Arlington Reservoir, where the two **Red-rumped Swallows** lingered. The nocturnal **Whimbrel** roost at Rye Harbour peaked at 353 on the 3<sup>rd</sup> when six **Great Skuas** flew east at Beachy Head while on the 7<sup>th</sup> a male **Blue-winged Teal** was seen off Goring Gap before departing west with two **Shoveler**, a **Nightjar** arrived in off the sea at Brighton Marina and another **Red-rumped Swallow** was seen, this one at Charleston Reedbed. On the 8<sup>th</sup> a **Little Auk** on the sea off Seaford was the first to be recorded in the county between March and October and a **Hoopoe** was seen briefly in a Bexhill garden while a **Balearic Shearwater** flew east at Brighton Marina on the 9<sup>th</sup>. The last departing **Purple Sandpipers** were three seen at Newhaven East Pier on the 12<sup>th</sup> while on the 15<sup>th</sup> 55 **Arctic Terns** flew east at Seaford, the last departing **Short-eared Owl** was recorded at Rye Harbour and 12 **Spotted Flycatchers** arrived at Church Norton. Two **Balearic Shearwaters** flew west, and then back east, off Worthing and the year's only **Golden Oriole**, a male, was seen near Combe Haven on the 17<sup>th</sup>.*

A **Glaucous Gull** was present at Widewater on 20-21 May while 99 **Manx Shearwaters** east at Beachy Head on the 21<sup>st</sup> included an impressive flock of 27 in what was an otherwise poor year for the species. A singing male **Marsh Warbler** was seen at Hardham during the 24-28<sup>th</sup> with two pairs and a lone male at an undisclosed site from the

25<sup>th</sup>. A **Black Stork** flew west over Ashdown Forest on the 25<sup>th</sup>, a **Gull-billed Tern** was seen at Littlehampton on the 26-27<sup>th</sup> and a **Red Kite** came in off the sea at Selsey Bill on the 28<sup>th</sup> while a **Honey Buzzard** at Beachy Head on the 29<sup>th</sup> was the only coastal record in spring.

*Breeding* species in the county had, as usual, mixed fortunes. **Little Egrets** were recorded at six heronries with breeding confirmed at three where at least nine young fledged while 267 **Grey Heron** nests were counted at 23 heronries (up on 249 nests in 2002) and **Black Swan** was recorded breeding in the county for the third year running. Three pairs of **Honey Buzzards** each fledged two young, two of which were satellite tracked to West Africa (see later) while **Common Buzzard**, which just one decade ago numbered fewer than ten pairs in the county, now has a population probably of the order of 120-150 pairs. **Kestrels** using owl nest boxes were generally very successful with one pair fledging five young, another four, five others three and one pair just two, while a total of seventeen pairs of **Peregrines** produced 38 fledglings for the year. **Quail** records from two sites gave the best indications of breeding in the county for some years and a **Golden Pheasant** breeding territory at Kingley Vale was the first record since 1998 at what was its traditional stronghold in the county.

Breeding records of **Oystercatchers** were received from three areas only and involved a maximum of 46 pairs, of which 25 were at Rye Harbour. Hatching success seemed high where new fencing protected them, but low elsewhere while success of the 39 pairs of **Ringed Plover** at Rye Harbour was moderate. At least 100 pairs of **Lapwing** bred at 38 sites in the county producing at least 30 juveniles. At Rye Harbour the hatching and fledging success was high within the newly erected electric fencing (although ten young raised from 25 pairs might not seem so). At least 22 pairs of **Mediterranean Gulls** nested in the county with at least 13 pairs rearing 22 young, most of which fledged successfully. **Sandwich Terns** continued to increase at Rye Harbour with approximately 300 young fledging from up to 250 pairs, the highest totals since breeding was first recorded there in 1984 and new county records for both the number of pairs and young fledged. Twenty-five pairs of **Little Terns** at Rye Harbour produced 30 clutches from which 42 chicks hatched and 31 fledged. Nine pairs were recorded at North Stakes Island in Chichester Harbour but no young were raised.

**Barn Owls** were confirmed breeding at 99 sites, up on 73 in 2002 although some of the increase was due to greater knowledge of private nest boxes. Fifty-six pairs were in West Sussex and were likely to have fledged an impressive 120 young while 43 pairs in East Sussex were only marginally less successful with an estimated 76 young fledged. The **Nightjar** population, at an estimated 124 territories was little changed from recent years, although more are now in West Sussex (69 territories in 25 tetrads) than East Sussex (55 territories in 21 tetrads). The 70 pairs of **Wood Lark** recorded was most likely an underestimate with no reports from the far west, while 275 pairs of **Sky Larks** were recorded at 78 sites, a reduction on 2002 when there were 344–354 pairs at 90 sites. Fifty-two **Tree Pipit** territories in Ashdown Forest was slightly lower than in the last two years while *The Wealden Heaths Breeding Bird Survey* located a total of 65 pairs in West Sussex. A **Rock Pipit** survey suggested a total of eight pairs between Rottingdean and Peacehaven and a further pair at Newhaven while a pair of **Pied Wagtails** that bred at Brighton Wild Park was the first there for 12 years. Only “a mere handful” of pairs of **Yellow Wagtail** were found in likely breeding sites, especially around Pevensey Levels, with none on Glynde Levels and the total at Rye Harbour fell, after a marginal improvement in 2002, to only 12 pairs.

**Nightingales** had a poor year with reports from 35 sites across the county, a considerable reduction from the 2002 total of 61 sites. The population of six at Pulborough Brooks was

down on 2002's 11 birds, and only a single sang on Broadmare Common which had hosted six males in 2002. Four pairs of **Black Redstart** were proved to have bred in the county while the potential breeding population of **Redstart** was 40 pairs, six on the heaths in the northwest of the county and 34 in Ashdown Forest with, typically, Pippingford Park holding the largest number at 19 (as it did in 2001 and 2002). **Stonechats** in Ashdown Forest experienced a very small decrease on the 113 pairs there in 2002 while thrush numbers in Brighton Wild Park were down with 116 pairs of **Blackbirds** the lowest there in over ten years (cf. 132 pairs in 2002) and no **Mistle Thrushes** for the first time in 12 years (traditionally this area supported up to 20 pairs).

Singing male **Cetti's Warblers** were present during the breeding season at 15 sites including eight at Rye Harbour, six at Thorney Deeps which fledged 24-28 young, and six at Arundel WWT which had twice that number of females for company. Just nine reeling male **Grasshopper Warblers** were recorded while **Reed Warblers** were also lower than the previous two years with 50 territories at Arundel (cf. 70 in 2002 and 120 in 2001), 56 at Thorney Deeps (cf. 74 and 84) and 43 (cf. 51 and 61) at Sefter Farm. **Dartford Warblers** had mixed fortunes with *The Wealden Heaths Breeding Birds Survey* recording a total of 66 pairs, the highest total since the survey commenced in 1998, while in contrast, in Ashdown Forest the downward trend continued with only 35-40 pairs recorded (cf. 62 in 2002). Between seven and ten **Wood Warbler** territories were estimated with three males at Linchmere & Stanley Commons while a minimum of 23 singing **Firecrests** in West Dean Woods were the only records apart from a male at Broadbridge Heath for three months from mid April and one at Beachy Head for two weeks during May.

**Spotted Flycatchers** were recorded from 28 sites but breeding was only confirmed at nine of these, representing a further unwelcome reduction, while the only confirmation of breeding by **Willow Tits** was from Warnham where a pair fledged two young, although throughout the year the species was reported from more tetrads than it had been in 2002. An exceptionally poor breeding season was recorded for **Blue Tits** at Hotham Park where no young were observed in 26 nest boxes, although at Ardingly Reservoir 139 young fledged from 17 boxes. At the Loder Valley reserve four **Nuthatch** nest boxes raised 29 young while at nearby Ardingly Reservoir three boxes held 21 young.

A pair of **Ravens** bred at the same site near Shoreham as in 2002, hatching five chicks, of which three fledged after two had been shot in the nest, but there was no evidence that breeding took place in the Beachy Head area despite previous success (in 2001 and 2002) and the species presence there for most of the year. **Bullfinches** had a poor year with only 16 confirmed and 15 probable breeding pairs (cf. 37 and 25 in 2002) while a total of 251 singing male **Yellowhammers** were recorded from 71 sites across the county with 65 pairs on Ashdown Forest much higher than the 40 pairs recorded there in 2002. Up to 233 singing male **Reed Buntings** were recorded at 54 sites with 64 pairs at Rye Harbour the highest count there for at least six years while 72 singing male **Corn Buntings** at 31 sites across the county was a huge improvement and saw the return of breeding birds to Thorney Island.

*JUNE was to be the warmest since 1976, with sunny spells, broken by thundery outbreaks. Widespread storms affected the area early on the 2<sup>nd</sup> with 60 mm of rain being recorded from St Leonards. Mid month was generally more settled as high pressure remained close by and it became hot in places during the 15-16<sup>th</sup>. A breezy few days followed and a ridge of high pressure gave warm sunny days from the 20<sup>th</sup>. This was interrupted by the odd thundery outbreak overnight on the 25-26<sup>th</sup> followed by two days of very warm sunny conditions and then rain again on the 29<sup>th</sup>. A **Montagu's Harrier** came in off the sea and headed northeast at Ferring on the 3<sup>rd</sup> while a **Spoonbill** was seen briefly at Rye Harbour on the 5<sup>th</sup>, with two different immatures present near Pett Level on odd days during the*

month. A **Serin** was seen infrequently at Selsey Bill during the 8-10<sup>th</sup> with four **Roseate Terns** present at Rye Harbour on the 9<sup>th</sup> and the 11<sup>th</sup>. A male **Blue-winged Teal** near Pett Level from the 14<sup>th</sup> remained until mid July and may have been the individual seen off Ferring in May. A **Marsh Harrier** was seen at Ford on the 17<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> while a **Woodchat Shrike** at Charleston Reedbed on the 20-21<sup>st</sup> was a welcome, if short staying, attraction. An unidentified **grey shrike** was seen briefly at Rye Harbour on the 25<sup>th</sup> while 20 **Pintail** flew west past Brighton on the 30<sup>th</sup>.

*JULY began cool and unsettled but soon became mostly dry with rising temperatures as a high pressure settled to the south. This moved northeast mid month with warm winds from the continent causing temperatures to rise. It became more unsettled as depressions encroached from the west but it stayed mostly very warm or hot with some thundery rain during the 16-17<sup>th</sup> and some prolonged thunderstorms during the evening of the 19<sup>th</sup>. Breezy weather with sunny periods and some scattered showers followed, with more thunderstorms early on the 27<sup>th</sup> and further rain and cooler temperatures to the months end. Despite this, July was the warmest since 1999. On the 1<sup>st</sup> the last **Roseate Tern** of the year was seen off Pilsey Island while six **Guillemots** on the sea at Beachy Head, thought to be two pairs and two young, was an interesting record. Four hundred **Swifts** were seen over Pagham Harbour on the 2<sup>nd</sup> while on the 7<sup>th</sup> the Rye Harbour **Sandwich Tern** roost peaked at 650 and a **Spoonbill** roosted in Pagham Harbour flying off high to the west early on the 8<sup>th</sup>. A young colour-ringed **Great White Egret** was seen at Scotney Court Gravel Pit intermittently between the 12-18<sup>th</sup>, having arrived from Loire-Atlantique via Cambridgeshire. A male **Black-headed Bunting** at Sidlesham Common from at least the 13-26<sup>th</sup> was a major attraction and was considered to be a wild bird despite some minor damage to one of its feet. The first returning **Purple Sandpiper** was seen at Brighton Marina on the 14<sup>th</sup> while a **Bee-eater** was heard calling as it flew west over Beachy Head on the 19<sup>th</sup> with presumably the same reported over Seaford on the 20<sup>th</sup>. The July *WEBS*' count, also held on the 20<sup>th</sup>, included 190 **Great Crested Grebes** and 590 **Mallard** at Bewl Water, 1680 **Curlew** in Chichester Harbour and 55 **Common Sandpipers** at Rye Harbour while the first **Whinchat** of the autumn was seen at Pagham Harbour. A **Balearic Shearwater** flying west past Brighton Marina on the 25<sup>th</sup> was the only summer record while an influx of 43 **Mistle Thrushes** was noted at Coates Common on the 26<sup>th</sup> and a gathering of **Little Terns** at North Stakes Island peaked at 100 on the 30<sup>th</sup>.*

*AUGUST was the driest and sunniest since 1995 and the warmest since 1997. After a dull and breezy start high pressure quickly took control, bringing prolonged sunshine to most areas and a record breaking heat wave as temperatures soared. Shoreham Beach recorded its highest temperature of the year, 30.6°C on the 5<sup>th</sup>, while on the 10<sup>th</sup> 38.5°C was recorded at Brogdale, near Faversham in Kent, a new UK record. At this time most weather stations in London recorded around 38°C breaking their previous highest temperatures and coastal areas didn't feel much cooler! It continued mostly hot with occasional showers in places and slow moving fronts gave light rain and drizzle in many places during the 21-22<sup>nd</sup>. High pressure then re-established itself for a few days but retreated north allowing cloudier cooler conditions. A cold front on the 28<sup>th</sup> and a depression from the southwest brought some much needed rain, but the month ended dry. An unseasonal **Goldeneye** was seen at Pagham Harbour on the 2<sup>nd</sup> while a **Black Kite** was present for some hours in the Beachy Head/East Dean area on the 3<sup>rd</sup>. Thirty-three **Black Terns** were counted around Pilsey Sands at low tide on the 4<sup>th</sup>, 17 **Eider** flew east past Shoreham Harbour on the 5<sup>th</sup> and **Aquatic Warblers** near Pett Level on the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> were the first of five trapped there during the month. On the 8<sup>th</sup> six **Pied Flycatchers** were seen at Ovingdean and three at Beachy Head, where 32 **Wheatears** on the 9<sup>th</sup> was the highest number seen in the county all year. Also on the 9<sup>th</sup> 409 **Sedge Warblers** and 165*

**Reed Warblers** were trapped near Pett Level while on the 10<sup>th</sup> 75 **Willow Warblers** at Beachy Head included four birds considered to be of the northern race and an **Ortolan Bunting** at Combe Haven was the county's earliest autumn record. Twenty-seven **Grasshopper Warblers** were trapped near Pett Level on the 12<sup>th</sup> and 140 **Yellow-legged Gulls** roosted at Pagham Harbour while an impressive count of 500 **House Sparrows** at Henfield on the 13<sup>th</sup> was the highest in the county for some years. Three **Wood Sandpipers** at Rye Harbour on the 13<sup>th</sup> and ten **Green Sandpipers** at Weir Wood Reservoir on the 15<sup>th</sup> were the highest counts in a poor year for both these species while two **Sandwich Terns** over Cissbury Ring on the 16<sup>th</sup> were unusual, and only the second inland record of the year.

The August *WeBS*' count on the 17<sup>th</sup> included 400 **Ringed Plover** at Pilsea Island and 484 **Turnstone** at Pagham Harbour while 57 **Blue Tits** were ringed at Weir Wood Reservoir on the 18<sup>th</sup> and the maximum daily count of **Whitethroats** was only 65, at Beachy Head on the 19<sup>th</sup>, and well down on 2002. Five **Pied Flycatchers** at Wolstonbury Hill on the 22<sup>nd</sup> would have been a good count on the coast, let alone from an inland location, while a **Great White Egret** was seen at Rye Harbour on the 23<sup>rd</sup>. Highlights on the 24<sup>th</sup> included 52 **Mandarins** at Troutbeck, nine **Spotted Redshank** at Sidlesham Ferry, 15 **Garden Warblers** at Beachy Head and 30 **Spotted Flycatchers** at Chanctonbury Ring. Two **Red-necked Phalaropes** at Rye Harbour from the 29<sup>th</sup> remained into September while **Garganey** numbers at Scotney Court Gravel Pit built up to a maximum of 11 on the 30<sup>th</sup>. Also on the 30<sup>th</sup> the first autumn **Short-eared Owl** was observed at Pagham Harbour and an **Icterine Warbler** was trapped near Pett Level. The month ended with a suspect **White Stork** at Rye Harbour, 1000 **Sand Martins** moving through Pagham Harbour and another total of 27 **Grasshopper Warblers** trapped near Pett Level.

*SEPTEMBER was mainly dry, sunny and warm, especially during the first three weeks, after which it became cooler and more unsettled. After a very warm start thundery showers affected many parts on the 6<sup>th</sup>, when a waterspout was observed from Beachy Head moving east just offshore. More rain spread in on the 7<sup>th</sup> but dry, sunny and very warm weather then prevailed with 28.4°C being recorded at Gravesend in Kent on the 17<sup>th</sup>. Patchy mist and fog in the mornings quickly cleared and a cold front advanced south during the 22<sup>nd</sup> bringing heavy rain and in places temperature drops of ten degrees in less than an hour. Sunny dry conditions returned with some places having air frost on the 24<sup>th</sup> (minus 2.8°C being recorded at Redhill in Surrey while at Boscombe Down in Wiltshire it was the coldest September night since 1931). The month finished with occasional showers and sunny periods as a weak cold front moved southwards during the 26<sup>th</sup>. It was the sunniest September since at least 1961 with well below average rainfall.* Sixteen **Garden Warblers** were trapped near Pett Level on the 1<sup>st</sup> with a **Red-backed Shrike** there during the 1-6<sup>th</sup>, while four **Curlew Sandpipers** at Pilsey Island on the 2<sup>nd</sup> was the highest count in a poor year for another wader species. On the 3<sup>rd</sup> 100 **Yellow Wagtails** were at Crowlink, a **Grey Plover** at Partridge Green, one of only five inland records, and a **Red-backed Shrike** (delete s) at Pagham Harbour which remained to the 9<sup>th</sup>. The last **Nightjar** of the year was seen at Ashdown Forest on the 5<sup>th</sup> when 30 **Whinchats** were recorded at Sheepcote Valley, with 30 at Beachy Head the next day. Also on the 6<sup>th</sup> an estimated 650 **Great Black-backed Gulls** and 3000 **Swallows** were at Pagham Harbour, four **Nightingales** and the first returning **Ring Ouzel** were seen at Beachy Head and the year's last **Wood Warbler** was trapped near Pett Level. The 7<sup>th</sup> was even more productive with a **Great White Egret** in Pagham Harbour, **Montagu's Harrier**, three **Wrynecks**, 11 **Redstarts** and an **Ortolan Bunting** at Beachy Head, the last **Wood Sandpiper** at Arundel WWT and seven **Turtle Doves** at Partridge Green. On the 9<sup>th</sup> three **Spoonbills** in Pagham Harbour flew off south as did the/another **Montagu's Harrier** at Beachy Head while a

drake **Red-crested Pochard** was at Scotney Court Gravel Pit from the 10-13<sup>th</sup>. Also on the 10<sup>th</sup> were three **Ospreys** at Weir Wood Reservoir while four **Little Ringed Plovers** at Arlington Reservoir on the 11<sup>th</sup> were the last records for the year, an early departure. The first autumn **Firecrest** was seen at Sompting on the 11<sup>th</sup> with another, and 25 **Grey Wagtails**, at Newhaven Fort on the 13<sup>th</sup>. Other records on the 13<sup>th</sup> included 40 **Red-legged Partridges** at Chantry Hill, three **Tree Sparrows** at Pagham Harbour and an **Ortolan Bunting** near Beeding Hill.

The September *WeBS*' count held on the 14<sup>th</sup> included 1871 **Redshank** and an impressive 164 **Greenshank** in Chichester Harbour while the last **Cuckoo** was seen at Castle Hill. The last three **Little Terns** were present at Pilsey Island on the 15<sup>th</sup> when an **Aquatic Warbler** was found at Combe Haven and 3000 **Swallows** roosted at nearby Filsham. Five-thousand **House Martins** past over Beachy Head on the 16<sup>th</sup> with the last **Wryneck** at Birling Gap during 17-20<sup>th</sup> and the last **Nightingale** at Atherington on the 19<sup>th</sup>. On the 20<sup>th</sup> another **Montagu's Harrier** was seen at Beachy Head and 186 **Chiffchaffs** were trapped near Pett Level.

A **Honey Buzzard** at Beachy Head on the 21<sup>st</sup> was the last of three seen in autumn, following others at this site on the 8<sup>th</sup> and the 20<sup>th</sup>, although two juveniles radio-tagged in the county crossed the Channel unseen on the 23<sup>rd</sup>. Both then crossed the Mediterranean into Algeria on the same day (6 October) but otherwise their journeys were separate. Contact was lost with one in Mauritania in mid October while the other spent a month in Guinea before moving further south to Liberia for Christmas, its battery finally running out in early February 2004. (see the brilliant [www.roydennis.org/migration%20maps%202003.htm](http://www.roydennis.org/migration%20maps%202003.htm) for details). Also on the 21<sup>st</sup> 500 **Blackcaps** were estimated to be on Beachy Head and the last **Pied Flycatcher** was at Ovingdean while two **Swifts** on the Downs near Shoreham on the 23<sup>rd</sup> were the last of the year. The first returning **Fieldfares** and **Redwings** were seen on the 24<sup>th</sup>, four at Hellingly and singles at Hassocks and Hastings respectively. A **Purple Heron** was present at Filsham from the 27-30<sup>th</sup> with a **Corncrake** trapped there on the 27<sup>th</sup>. Also on the 27<sup>th</sup> were a **Spoonbill** at Arlington Reservoir, 218 **Shovelers** at Rye Harbour and a **Black-winged Stilt** appeared for a two day stay near Bognor Regis. An escaped **Black Kite** was seen at Beachy Head on the 28<sup>th</sup>, when the county's second **Paddyfield Warbler**, like the first in 1992, was trapped near Pett Level. The month ended with 400 **Rooks** at Pulborough Brooks on the 29<sup>th</sup> and the last **Black Tern** west at Selsey Bill and 15 **Grey Wagtails**, which arrived off the sea, circled Pagham Harbour and then flew off west, on the 30<sup>th</sup>.

*OCTOBER was the coldest since 1993, but the sunniest since 1997 with below average rainfall. A depression to the south gave warm and changeable weather at the start of the month before low-pressure systems brought cool and sometimes strong west or northwest winds, with some thundery outbreaks, during the 4-5<sup>th</sup>. There followed a mainly sunny dry period as high pressure exerted its influence but more low pressure to the south brought occasional showers from the 11-15<sup>th</sup> and overnight mist and fog in places. An anticyclone formed to the east by the 16<sup>th</sup> and it became chilly as easterly, then northeast, winds picked up the 18<sup>th</sup>. The third week was mostly unsettled and cold with outbreaks of thundery rain or showers in many places. A depression brought freshening easterly winds and thundery showers by the 22-23<sup>rd</sup> with the 26-27<sup>th</sup> mainly dry and sunny, with some overnight frost and fog patches. After a frosty start on the 28<sup>th</sup> bands of heavy rain and showers crossed the region. The month started with a **Pectoral Sandpiper** at Drayton Gravel Pit, to the 5<sup>th</sup>, the first autumn **Brambling** at Church Norton and a brief **Little Bunting** at Sheepcote Valley, while six **Shags** flew east at Selsey Bill on the 2<sup>nd</sup>. Departing migrants included the last **Turtle Dove** at Rye Harbour and **Garden Warblers** at Pett Level (2) and Newhaven Tide Mills on the 3<sup>rd</sup> and the last **Lesser Whitethroats** at Barcombe and Pett*

Level on the 4<sup>th</sup> while 3000 **Linnets** at Rye Harbour on the 5<sup>th</sup> was notable. A **Yellow-browed Warbler** was trapped near Pett Level on the 8<sup>th</sup> and the first three returning **Jack Snipe** were seen at Thorney Deepes on the 9<sup>th</sup>, with ten there by the 21<sup>st</sup>. The last **Garganey** of the year lingered at Pulborough Brooks until the 10<sup>th</sup> when the last two **Whitethroats** were seen at Lancing Clump. The 11<sup>th</sup> saw the last **Curlew Sandpiper** at Pagham Harbour and **Tree Pipit** at Hastings Country Park while a **Barred Warbler** was trapped near Pett Level and 20 **Bearded Tits** flew west at Thorney Deepes. Seven **Kingfishers** were seen at Rye Harbour and the last **Sedge Warbler** was at Pett Level on the 12<sup>th</sup> with a **Spoonbill** at Rye Harbour, the first returning **Water Pipit** at Combe Haven and a **Radde's Warbler** trapped near Pett Level on the 13<sup>th</sup>.

The 14<sup>th</sup> provided the last records of **Arctic Tern** at Newhaven Tide Mills and **Spotted Flycatcher** at Pulborough Brooks with another **Yellow-browed Warbler** trapped near Pett Level and a **Hawfinch** at Sheepcote Valley. Finch movements at this time included 1550 **Goldfinches** east at Church Norton on the 15<sup>th</sup> and 350 **Greenfinches** and 42 **Reed Buntings** east there and 250 **Siskins** at Sheepcote Valley on the 16<sup>th</sup>. An impressive 108 **Little Gulls** were present offshore at Brighton Marina and a **Marsh Warbler** was trapped near Pett Level on the 17<sup>th</sup> while the last **Yellow Wagtail** and **Grasshopper Warbler** were there on the 18<sup>th</sup>, the former an early departure. Also on the 18<sup>th</sup> eight **Ring Ouzels** were seen at both Cissbury Ring and Beachy Head while a **Yellow-browed Warbler** was present at Belle Tout Wood on the 18-19<sup>th</sup>. A **Continental Coal Tit** at Brighton seafront on the 18<sup>th</sup> heralded a small arrival of this attractive race with up to three at Belle Tout Wood from the 19<sup>th</sup> and two in the Pagham Harbour/Church Norton area from the 21<sup>st</sup>, the last staying into early November. The only **Stone-Curlew** of the year was seen on Seaford Head on the 19<sup>th</sup> when the year's last **Reed Warblers** were at Arundel and Shoreham Sanctuary and a **Great Grey Shrike** arrived at Iping Common, with others at Hastings on 21<sup>st</sup> and in Ashdown Forest from 25<sup>th</sup>. Over 1000 **Redwings** were recorded at Arundel and 120 **Bramblings** over Sheepcote Valley on the 20<sup>th</sup> with the last **Sand Martin** at Pett Level and a **Yellow-browed Warbler** at Combe Haven on the 21<sup>st</sup>. An estimated 1100 **Kittiwakes** flew west at Selsey Bill on the 22<sup>nd</sup> with a **Pallas's Leaf Warbler** in Belle Tout Wood on the 22-23<sup>rd</sup> and **Yellow-browed Warblers** at Atherington on the 23<sup>rd</sup> and in Belle Tout Wood on the 24-25<sup>th</sup>. Forty **Goldcrests** and the final two **House Martins** of the year were at Beachy Head on the 24<sup>th</sup>, a very early departure, with the first of just four late autumn **Little Auks** off the beach at Peacehaven, 50 **Robins** in Sheepcote Valley and 1500 **Jackdaws** at Lavington Common on the 26<sup>th</sup>. On the 28<sup>th</sup> 40 **Red-legged Partridges** were seen at Pagham Harbour and a very late **Willow Warbler** and a **Treecreeper** at Sheepcote Valley, the last was the first site record and remained for several days. **Pallas's Leaf Warblers** were seen at Beachy Head on the 28<sup>th</sup> with another in Belle Tout Wood on the 29<sup>th</sup> while a first-winter **White-headed Duck** on Scotney Court Gravel Pit from the 29<sup>th</sup> was popular, but only remained to 1 November. The month finished with a brief **Olive-backed Pipit** and the last **Redstart** at Seaford Head on the 30<sup>th</sup> and a **Pallas's Leaf Warbler** at Sheepcote Valley on the 31<sup>st</sup> when the last **Hobby**, at Rye Harbour, was a late departure and the last **Wheatear**, at Roedean, was early.

*NOVEMBER was mostly very changeable and mild with temperatures well above average. High pressure built up over the region with southerly winds becoming east or southeasterly. It was dry and very mild, with good sunny periods after early mist and fog patches cleared, before becoming changeable as fronts crossed the region from the west during the second week. Heavy rain accompanied gale force southwest winds on the 14<sup>th</sup> although the 15<sup>th</sup> was quieter with some sunshine. A mainly mild southwesterly airstream then ensued with some heavy rain from the 17<sup>th</sup> and local flooding following 75 mm of rain on the 21<sup>st</sup>. Mild, wet and windy weather continued, with some thunder on the 27<sup>th</sup>*



followed by a brief dry and sunny interlude before more mild wet and windy weather spread in from the west during the 29<sup>th</sup>. A **Long-tailed Duck** at Pagham Lagoon from the 1<sup>st</sup> was joined by a second from the 2<sup>nd</sup> while another arrived at Barcombe Reservoir on the 9<sup>th</sup>, one at each site stayed into December. Sixty-five **Yellowhammers** were present at Pulborough Brooks on the 3<sup>rd</sup> while a **Sabine's Gull** on Brighton Beach on the 4-5<sup>th</sup> was presumably that at Brighton Marina on the 14<sup>th</sup>. Also at this time 10,000 **Wood Pigeons** flew south over Crowborough on the 4<sup>th</sup> with 6000 south over Beachy Head and 6000 west over Middleton-on-Sea on 6<sup>th</sup>, a **Pallas's Leaf Warbler** was at Sheepcote Valley on the 4-5<sup>th</sup> with another there briefly on the 5<sup>th</sup>, the last **Whinchat** lingered at Thorney Deepes up to the 5<sup>th</sup> and a late, last **Osprey** was seen at Arlington Reservoir on the 6<sup>th</sup>. Beachy Head then had a purple patch for small warblers with a **Hume's Leaf Warbler** found in Belle Tout Wood on 6<sup>th</sup> and a **Pallas's Leaf Warbler** there on the 7<sup>th</sup>. Both remained over the weekend, to the 10<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> respectively, proving to be the county's biggest attraction of the autumn with many visitors coming to see them. A **Yellow-browed Warbler** was at Sheepcote Valley on the 8<sup>th</sup> and the last rarity of the year, an approachable male **Desert Wheatear**, was present on the beach at Climping on the 9-10<sup>th</sup>. One of two **Tawny Owls** roosting in Belle Tout Wood on the 10<sup>th</sup> was a very pale individual with 70 **Song Thrushes** at Arundel WWT the year's highest count. On the 11<sup>th</sup> 1000 **Knot** roosted at Pilsey Sands, the last **Ring Ouzel** was seen at Newhaven Cliffs and ten **Firecrests** were present at Sheepcote Valley, with ten at Church Norton on the 13<sup>th</sup>. Impressive counts on the 12<sup>th</sup> were 830 **Gannets** west at Worthing and 1000 **Fieldfares** flying over Chilgrove while two **Whooper Swans** were seen at Pagham Harbour North Wall on the 15<sup>th</sup> along with 56 **Grey Partridges** at Climping and the last **Common Tern** at Newhaven Tide Mills. Also on the 15<sup>th</sup> 350 **Sky Larks** flew west past Brighton Marina while 400 were present at Chantry Hill on the 16<sup>th</sup>.

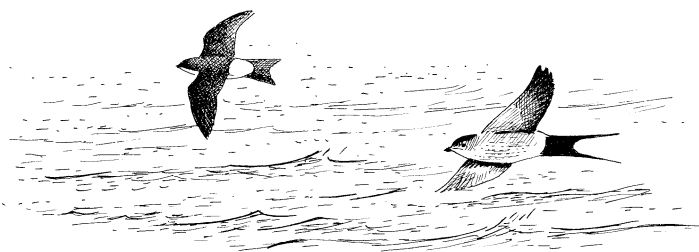
The November *WeBS*' count, also on the 16<sup>th</sup>, included 1053 **Black-tailed** and 662 **Bar-tailed Godwits** in Chichester Harbour while eight **Pink-footed Geese** dropped in briefly at Warnham LNR, the county's latest **Red-breasted Flycatcher** was in Belle Tout Wood, a **Serin** was again recorded at Newhaven Tidemills and a second **Great Grey Shrike** appeared in Ashdown Forest and remained to the end of the year. The year's highest count of roosting **Starlings** was 6000–8000 on Eastbourne Pier on the 20<sup>th</sup> while a **Kittiwake** which roosted at Bawl Water on the 23<sup>rd</sup> was the only inland record of the year. An unusually large flock of 19 **Snow Buntings** was seen at Rye Harbour on the 27<sup>th</sup>, the last **Swallow** of the year was seen over Steyning on the 28<sup>th</sup> and five **Scaup** flew east at Brighton Marina on the 29<sup>th</sup>. On the 30<sup>th</sup> a very late **Quail** hid under a caravan during a rainstorm at Ashdown Forest while five wintering **Bearded Tits** appeared at Piddinghoe Pond.

**DECEMBER** started very wet, however the rain gradually died out during the 2<sup>nd</sup> with a significant cold front moving south on the 6<sup>th</sup>. The high moved to the continent by the 7<sup>th</sup> maintaining mainly dry weather over the region before depressions passing to the north on the 10<sup>th</sup> brought bands of rain. It was very mild on the 11-13<sup>th</sup> before cooler northwest winds arrived. High pressure returned to the region and it was mainly dry with overnight frost at times, and some mist and fog patches on the 19<sup>th</sup>. A deep depression then formed bringing widespread heavy rain to most areas, and gusts of 49 mph at Shoreham Beach on the 20<sup>th</sup>. Low pressure to the north heralded the return of mild damp westerlies and although mostly dry at first, rain became more widespread over Christmas and Boxing Day. Heavy rain, thundery at times lashed the coast during the 27-29<sup>th</sup> with some sleet or snow on high ground. Shoreham Beach recorded rain on 147 days during the year with 33.3 mm on the 27<sup>th</sup> the highest daily total. Despite this December had well above average sunshine. On the 2<sup>nd</sup> the **Corn Bunting** flock at Rye Harbour peaked at 74 while 400

**Stock Doves** were recorded there and 3000-4000 **Herring Gulls** were present at Pebsham refuse tip throughout the month. Five **Sandwich Terns** near Emsworth on the 4<sup>th</sup> was an exceptional record for the time of year while a **Yellow-browed Warbler** found at Ivy Lake on the 5<sup>th</sup> remained into 2004 and three **Dartford Warblers** were seen at Newhaven Tide Mills on the 9<sup>th</sup>.

The December *WEBS'* count, held on the 14<sup>th</sup>, included 110 **Little Grebes**, 227 **Mute Swans**, 191 **Red-breasted Mergansers** and 1515 **Grey Plover** in Chichester Harbour, 570 **Grey Lag Geese** and 500 **Pochard** on Scotney Court Gravel Pit, 230 **Moorhen** at Chichester Gravel Pits and 6619 **Lapwing** at Rye Harbour. Also on the 14<sup>th</sup> a **Red-necked Grebe** was at Forest Mere and 30 **Long-tailed Tits** at Isfield while ten **Marsh Tits** were counted at Eartham Woods and a **Snow Bunting** turned up on the sea wall at Pett Level on the 16<sup>th</sup>. The bunting was joined by two others on Christmas Eve and these popular birds stayed into 2004. An adult **Caspian Gull** was recorded at Scotney Court Gravel Pit on the 18-19<sup>th</sup>, a melanistic female **Great Tit** was trapped at East Grinstead on the 18<sup>th</sup> and a **Hen Harrier** was seen at Brighton Marina on the 19<sup>th</sup>. On the 21<sup>st</sup> a **Great Northern Diver** arrived at Weir Wood Reservoir and was present until at least the 28<sup>th</sup> and two **Long-eared Owls** were noted at a winter roost at Rye Harbour while eight redhead **Goosanders** were present at Weir Wood Reservoir on the 23-24<sup>th</sup> and ten **Hawfinches** at Stapleash Farm on the 24<sup>th</sup>.

A large finch/bunting flock between Kithurst Hill and Wepham Down built up during December and included up to 400 **Chaffinches**, 250 **Bramblings**, 200 **Greenfinches** and 200 **Linnets** on the 26<sup>th</sup>. Three-thousand **Golden Plover** were at Thorney Island on the 27<sup>th</sup>, 500 **Rooks** at Bewl Water on the 28<sup>th</sup> and 25 **Smew** at Rye Harbour on the 29<sup>th</sup>. Off Church Norton **Slavonian Grebes** peaked at 37 on the 30<sup>th</sup> when 12 **Purple Sandpipers** at Brighton Marina was the year's highest count. The year finished with the counties latest **Sandwich Tern** off Cobnor Point on the 30<sup>th</sup>, leaving little time for a later one, and 150 **Reed Buntings** at Scotney Court Gravel Pit, the largest flock of the year, on the 31<sup>st</sup>.



## CLASSIFIED RECORDS FOR 2003

This list covers all species in Categories A and C of the BOU check list with records of Category D species listed separately. In October 2002, the BOU announced a new systematic order to replace the Vooos order that has been used for a number of years. Unfortunately, there have not been any corresponding changes to the EURING species numbers. The Society's Annual Reports have always included EURING numbers against each species and, in order to avoid confusion, the Society's Council has decided that the Vooos species order should continue to be used for the 2003 report.

Preceding each species account, there is a brief description of its status in the county. In most cases the term used is the same as in *Birds of Sussex* although some have been amended to take into account recent changes in status. The terms and their corresponding numerical ranges are as follows:

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

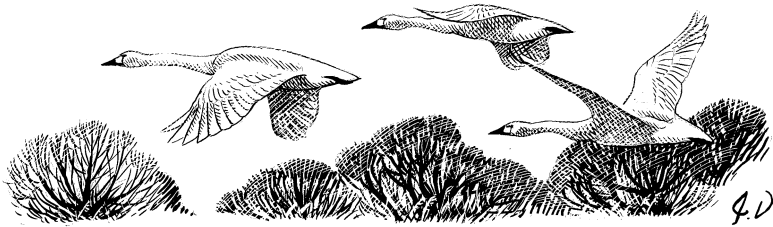
Seawatching records were received from several sites. The following table lists the hours watched in each month at the four locations for which this information was available:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>Selsey Bill</b>	22	35	68	139	117	73	41	12	12	18	29	22
<b>Worthing Beach</b>	14	18	29	75	51	8	11	21	22	23	25	16
<b>Brighton Marina</b>	44	38	56	140	94	14	2	0	4	1	17	18
<b>Splash Point, Seaford</b>	19	35	55	124	129	4	0	0	0	0	0	0

Many tables which are included in the accounts for wetland bird species refer to the monthly *WeBS*' counts. These counts are undertaken on a fixed date each month during the winter, and sometimes during the summer months as well. During 2003 the recommended dates were 5 Jan, 16 Feb, 23 Mar, 20 Apr, 18 May, 15 Jun, 20 Jul, 17 Aug, 14 Sep, 12 Oct, 16 Nov and 14 Dec. 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.

The following abbreviations are used in the Systematic List as standard practice:

<b>N,S,E,W etc.</b>	As cardinal compass points	<b>LNR</b>	Local Nature Reserve
<b>BBRC</b>	British Birds Records Committee	<b>NR</b>	Nature Reserve
<b>BTO</b>	British Trust for Ornithology	<b>NNR</b>	National Nature Reserve
<b>BOU</b>	British Ornithologists Union	<b>Res</b>	Reservoir
<b>CBC</b>	Common Bird Census	<b>RSPB</b>	Royal Society for the Protection of Birds
<b>CP</b>	Country Park	<b>SSSI</b>	Site of Special Scientific Interest
<b>Fm</b>	Farm	<b>WeBS</b>	Wetland Bird Survey
<b>FMD</b>	Foot and Mouth Disease	<b>WBBS</b>	Wetland Breeding Bird Survey
<b>GP</b>	Gravel Pit	<b>WWT</b>	Wildfowl & Wetland Trust
<b>GC</b>	Golf Course	<b>ha</b>	hectare(s)
<b>Hbr</b>	Harbour	<b>hr</b>	hour(s)
<b>IUCN</b>	The World Conservation Union	<b>km</b>	kilometre(s)
<b>MP</b>	Mill Pond	<b>km<sup>2</sup></b>	square kilometre(s)
<b>R</b>	River	<b>m</b>	metre(s)
<b>SF</b>	Sewage farm or works	<b>nc</b>	no count



0002. **RED-THROATED DIVER**

*Gavia stellata*

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

For this species, and the next, estimates of monthly totals have been made by combining records of birds inland with the totals from coastal sites, having made allowance for duplication. The larger of the counts of birds flying east and west at each site was added to the largest number of birds reported as ‘on sea’ or ‘offshore’. It is probable that most of the birds recorded as ‘Diver *sp.*’ in the winter months are, in fact, Red-throated, and these accounts should be considered together as, indeed, observers at some sites seem to assume.

The approximate monthly totals were as follows:

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
1164	1417	374	202	23	3	1	1	1	7	186	282

Records of birds moving offshore at the principal seawatching sites are summarised below, with estimated monthly totals for *all* sites:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun		Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>County Total (*)</b>	960	1320	327	196	23	1		1	158	251
<b>Selsey Bill</b>	59	361	28	74	6	1		1	56	46
<b>Worthing Beach</b>	114	85	23	32	3	-		-	49	30
<b>Brighton Marina</b>	772	1132	307	183	18	-		-	-	-
<b>Splash Point, Seaford</b>	40	262	99	40	9	-		-	-	-

(\*) adjusted to compensate for duplication.

The variation between site counts reflects the differences in time spent seawatching at each site.

As with recent years, peak counts occurred in the early part of the year. Notable movements in January included 111 W (together with 119 Diver *sp.*) past Worthing Beach on the 3<sup>rd</sup>, when there were also 70 offshore at Pett Level, 171 E at Hastings and 45 W and 64 E at Brighton Marina on the 5<sup>th</sup>. At the latter site there were 245 E, 117 E and 178 E on 20, 21 and 23 Feb respectively. The 23 Feb also saw counts of 83 E at Beachy Head and 146 E 50 W at Hastings and 290 Diver *sp.* were noted passing Seaford on the 20<sup>th</sup>. In addition, 312 Diver *sp.* noted passing Worthing Beach on 1 Feb were probably of this species. The largest spring movement after this comprised 56 past both Brighton Marina and St Leonard’s-on-Sea on 16 Mar. Thereafter only small numbers were seen until the last 1 E at Worthing Beach on 25 May.

Records of birds away from the open sea came from 11 sites. The Rye Hbr area held birds on six dates, with two on 5 Jan. Intermittent sightings came from Scotney Court GP from 6 Feb to 23 Mar with a peak of three on 16 Feb on which date singles were also on the R Adur at Shoreham-by-Sea and Shinewater Marsh (Eastbourne). Singles were at Thorney Deeps and Emsworth Channel over 23-24 Feb, Newhaven Tide Mills on 27 Feb and 13-14 Mar, Piddinghoe Pond on 1, 16 and 19 Mar, Hove Lagoon on 9 Mar, Arlington Res on 15 Mar and in Pagham Hbr on 19 Mar. Many of these birds showed signs of oiling.

Unusual records for June comprised 1 W past Selsey Bill on the 12<sup>th</sup> and then, offshore at Church Norton or in Pagham Hbr, a juvenile (an assumed first year bird) on the 20<sup>th</sup> and a summer plumaged individual from the 26<sup>th</sup> until the end of September.

The first returning birds were two in Rye Bay on 5 Oct. Coastal movements were small, with peaks at Brighton Marina of only 22 E and 4 W on 30 Nov and 40 E on 5 Dec.

Singles were recorded at Piddinghoe Pond on 4 Dec and R Adur (Shoreham-by-Sea) on 21 Dec. [PMB]

0003. **BLACK-THROATED DIVER**

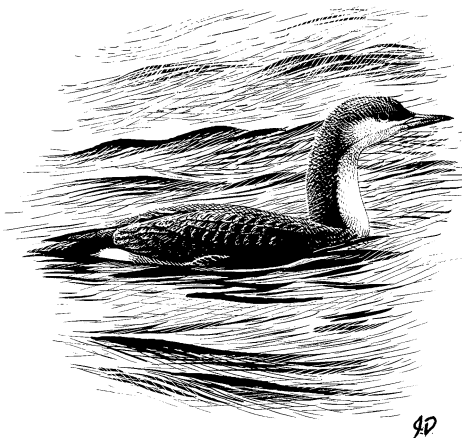
*Gavia arctica*

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

The approximate monthly totals were as follows:

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
10	25	7	116	29	-	-	-	-	1	6	7

The total of 201 represents a generally poor year for this species but with a good passage in late April.



Records from the main seawatching sites are summarised below:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun		Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>County Total (*)</b>	3	15	5	116	29	-		1	5	7
<b>Selsey Bill</b>	2	3	2	24	4	-		1	3	6
<b>Worthing Beach</b>	-	-	-	9	-	-		-	2	1
<b>Brighton Marina</b>	1	-	3	49	15	-		-	2	-
<b>Splash Point, Seaford</b>	-	12	-	96	14	-		-	-	-

(\*) adjusted to compensate for duplication.

Spring passage was moderate with peak movements of 18 E at Brighton Marina on 13 April, 12 E at Seaford on 21 Apr and 23 E and 16E respectively past these sites on 25 Apr. Smaller numbers of passage birds were also noted from Beachy Head, Bexhill/Hastings and Rye Bay during the late winter and spring.

The only other sightings away from the main seawatching sites came from Scotney Court GP on 5 Jan, Chichester Hbr on 16 Jan, Shoreham Hbr on 18 Jan and off Pett Level on 19 Feb.

The first autumn record was offshore at Rye Hbr on 21 Oct, with singles noted offshore at Church Norton on two dates during December. [PMB]

0004. **GREAT NORTHERN DIVER**

*Gavia immer*

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

The approximate monthly totals are given below:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun		Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>County Total (*)</b>	5	4	4	3	3	1		1	3	4
<b>Max off Selsey Bill</b>	-	4	3	2	3	1		-	3	3
<b>Number of days noted off Selsey Bill</b>	-	10	8	8	11	1		-	6	5

(\*) allowing for duplication.

Birds were regularly noted lingering off Selsey peninsula during the winter months: additional records were of up to three in Chichester Hbr in January and singles off Pilsley Island on nine dates in March and April. As in previous years, it is assumed that birds in flight off Selsey were on local feeding movements due to the frequency of such sightings and because the movements were not observed at other seawatching sites. The peak monthly counts at Selsey Bill were four on 15 Feb, three on 9 Mar, two on 7 Apr and three on 12 May. The last spring record was a single offshore on 1 Jun.

Other records comprised 1 W at Worthing Beach on 3 Jan, one offshore at Worthing Beach on 9 Mar and 1 E at Seaford on 25 Apr.

The first autumn birds were one briefly at Weir Wood Res on 28 Oct and one offshore at Selsey Bill on 2 Nov. Up to three were noted at the latter site during November and December. Finally an adult arrived at Weir Wood Res on 21 Dec and was present until at least the 28<sup>th</sup>. [PMB]

**DIVER Species**

*Gavia sp.*

The specific identification of divers in flight is difficult, particularly when they are in winter plumage. Those recorded as ‘diver sp.’ can form a significant proportion of those seen. The numbers of divers recorded at the main seawatching locations in January-May (J-M) and October-December (O-D) are shown in the table below. The totals for each site have been obtained by adding the monthly totals of flying birds (east + west) to the numbers seen on the sea. Duplication is likely both between sites and with divers specifically identified. No attempt should be made to add the columns, since many birds will have been seen at more than one site.

	Diver sp.		R-t Diver		B-t Diver		Total (*)		Number / hr	
	J-M	O-D	J-M	O-D	J-M	O-D	J-M	O-D	J-M	O-D
<b>Selsey Bill</b>	42	2	528	103	35	9	663	132	1½	2



<b>Worthing Beach</b>	580	49	257	79	12	3	851	131	4 ½	2
<b>Brighton Marina</b>	289	45	2412	335	115	2	2616	382	7 ½	10 ½
<b>Splash Point, Seaford</b>	1399	0	450	0	68	0	1918	0	5 ¼	0

(\*) allowing for duplication.

The rate of passage was greater than in 2002 at all sites, but particularly at Worthing Beach and Brighton Marina.

The year saw yet another increase in numbers. Notable passages were recorded in most weather conditions, with winds between east and south in mid-late February producing the peak diver passage. [PMB]

## 0007. LITTLE GREBE

*Tachybaptus ruficollis*

### Scarce resident, passage migrant and winter visitor

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

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>County total</b>	240	180	146	21	29	33	87	187	224	305	264	226
<b>Chichester Hbr</b>	60	48	35	-	8	6	6	14	51	65	96	110
<b>Pagham Hbr</b>	20	12	12	4	2	3	11	22	16	19	19	13
<b>Chichester GP</b>	23	8	9	1	4	7	-	-	5	13	14	13
<b>Gravetye Lake</b>	-	-	-	-	-	2	4	4	2	4	6	2
<b>Glynde Levels</b>	-	-	-	nc	2	-	-	1	-	-	-	1
<b>Cuckmere Haven</b>	26	27	9	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	15	35	29	29
<b>Bewl Water</b>	48	30	40	nc	nc	nc	44	94	59	69	7	5
<b>Powdermill Res</b>	-	-	1	-	-	2	-	-	2	-	-	-
<b>Pett Level</b>	-	-	-	2	-	-	1	1	4	1	4	-
<b>Rye Hbr area*</b>	32	24	23	14	13	11	17	39	46	63	69	26
<b>Scotney Court GP</b>	12	14	4	-	-	nc	-	3	2	3	9	8

\* the *WeBS*' counts listed as Rye Hbr include areas to the east, e.g. Northpoint GP.

The low counts from Bewl Water at the end of the year were due to reduced water levels depleting food stocks.

Breeding behaviour was first noted at Constantia Manor (Isfield) on 23 Mar. Approximately 66 breeding pairs were recorded at 17 sites, with 30 broods at Bewl Water, seven pairs at Rye Hbr and Selsey West Fields, and five pairs at Thorney Island. Success was generally moderate, with the possible exception of Bewl Water where only three broods totalling five young were reported. However the good August *WeBS*' total may indicate unobserved success at this site.

Post breeding dispersal was noted from mid June. The only notable counts in addition to those in the *WeBS*' table were in October, with 30 at Chichester GP on the 6<sup>th</sup>, 40 at Pagham Lagoon on the 18<sup>th</sup> and 41 at Thorney Island on the 28<sup>th</sup>. A single offshore at Birling Gap on 13 Apr provided a rare seawatching record. [PMB]

## 0009. GREAT CRESTED GREBE

*Podiceps cristatus*

### Fairly common resident, passage migrant and winter visitor.

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

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

<b>County total</b>	257	340	435	119	98	116	414	365	323	333	288	225
<b>Chichester Hbr</b>	17	15	21	6	7	15	4	5	12	24	17	16
<b>Pagham Hbr</b>	9	10	-	6	15	8	14	21	24	23	14	3
<b>Chichester GP</b>	38	61	51	2	-	4	6	7	10	22	29	41
<b>Petworth Park</b>	4	3	4	7	4	6	9	nc	2	2	1	5
<b>Goring Gap</b>	-	2	3	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	-	-	-	14
<b>Knepmill Pond</b>	-	-	7	6	6	4	6	4	5	8	5	4
<b>Weir Wood Res</b>	21	38	59	nc	nc	nc	74	36	12	-	-	2
<b>Arlington Res</b>	5	4	21	12	3	6	21	18	35	25	73	34
<b>Eastbourne Lakes</b>	1	2	9	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	8	6	17	10
<b>Bewl Water</b>	85	152	167	nc	nc	nc	190	180	151	114	50	26
<b>Darwell Res</b>	14	22	22	30	29	42	36	27	nc	32	37	25
<b>Powdermill Res</b>	1	2	2	6	2	6	5	4	3	2	2	-
<b>Rye Hbr area*</b>	38	15	19	23	14	22	14	41	39	49	25	24
<b>Scotney Court GP</b>	10	2	12	17	18	nc	27	17	14	10	3	4

\* the *WeBS*' counts listed as Rye Hbr include areas to the east, e.g. Northpoint GP.

The low counts from Bewl Water at the end of the year were due to reduced water levels depleting food stocks. The only notable inland counts that were in addition to the *WeBS*' totals came from Weir Wood Res with 44 on 12 Jan, 71 on 16 Mar, 68 on 13 Apr, 35 on 4 May, 110 on 29 Jun, 88 on 3 Aug, 110 on 23 Nov and 65 on 28 Dec. Elsewhere, observers at Bewl Water recorded 90 on 27 May, with 66 at Arlington Res on 29 Oct.

The peak coastal counts were from the Rye Bay area in January with 120 there on the 19<sup>th</sup> increasing to 454 by the 28<sup>th</sup>, but the widespread large numbers seen in recent years were not repeated. The first winter peak coastal movement was 36 W at Brighton Marina on 13 Jan.

Numbers built up on the coast again from early October, with counts at Church Norton increasing from 36 on the 11<sup>th</sup> to 75 by the 21<sup>st</sup>. Coastal movements included 22 E at Worthing Beach on the 23<sup>rd</sup>, 27 W at Selsey Bill on 2 Nov and, on 21 Dec, 18 W at Brighton Marina and 24 W at Worthing Beach.

Breeding behaviour was noted from 30 Mar and was confirmed at 12 sites, with the first young noted on 17 Apr at Forest Mere (Liphook). Up to 17 pairs were present at Darwell Res, eight pairs at Rye Hbr and at least ten broods at Bewl Water. Breeding success was generally reported as moderate. [PMB]

## 0010. **RED-NECKED GREBE**

*Podiceps grisegena*

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

The approximate monthly totals were:

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
3	4	4	3	2	-	-	-	1	1	4	6

In the early part of the year a single bird was present (possibly intermittently) at Scotney Court GP from 3 Jan to 11 Feb and up to two birds were reported from Selsey Bill/Pagham Hbr on three occasions. Elsewhere singles were noted off Pett Level on 20 Jan, Hastings on 23 and 26 Feb and Worthing Beach on 24 Feb.

During March one was reported from White's Creek (Pagham Hbr) early in the month before being found dead on the 13<sup>th</sup>. A single bird was seen at Church Norton on the 17<sup>th</sup>, while an individual at Weir Wood Res on the 16<sup>th</sup> remained until 25 May. Coastal passage

comprised single birds offshore at Seaford on 13 Mar, Brighton Marina on 15 Apr, east at Seaford on 21 Apr and finally offshore at Newhaven West Pier on 4 May.

The first returning bird passed east at Brighton Marina on 24 Sep, with the next sighting at Church Norton on 24 Oct. Numbers increased in November, with singles west at Selsey Bill on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and the 26<sup>th</sup>, Brighton Marina on the 3<sup>rd</sup> and offshore at Church Norton on the 10<sup>th</sup>. Five sightings of up to two individuals came from the Church Norton/Selsey Bill area in December with singles noted at Brighton Marina on the 4<sup>th</sup> and the 21<sup>st</sup>, and at Pett Level on the 24<sup>th</sup>.

A single was at Forest Mere (Liphook) on 14 Dec. [PMB]

## 0011. SLAVONIAN GREBE

*Podiceps auritus*

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

The approximate monthly totals were:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May		Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>County total</b>	12	19	11	10	1		4	28	38
<b>Max in Church Norton area</b>	7	15	8	1	-		3	22	37

Most winter records were from the western harbours. The peak count offshore at Selsey Bill was only 15 on 27 Feb, rather fewer than the 32-54 there in January/March 2002 but consistent with the low numbers of autumn 2002. Other sightings of singles came from Goring, Worthing Beach, Brighton Marina, Seaford, Rye Hbr, Scotney Court GP and, inland, from Chichester GP on 5 and 22 Jan and 16 Feb and Ifield MP from 12 to 19 Jan.

Spring passage comprised 11 individuals reported from the main seawatching sites, with a peak of 3 E at Brighton Marina and Seaford on 13 Apr. The last was a single passing east at Brighton Marina on 30 May.

The first returning bird was noted at Langney Point on 13 Oct, with small numbers noted offshore at Church Norton from the 18<sup>th</sup>. Numbers at Church Norton gradually increased to peaks of 22 on 21 Nov and 37 on 30 Dec, just exceeding the 1% Threshold Number of 35. Elsewhere singles were noted at Seaford, Brighton Marina and Rye Hbr LNR. [PMB]

## 0012. BLACK-NECKED GREBE

*Podiceps nigricollis*

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

The approximate monthly totals were:

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
2	4	7	18	1	-	-	2	1	1	1	2

A total of approximately 37 was recorded, with a good passage in April. The early winter period records came from Scotney Court GP (until 6 Feb), Pagham Hbr/Selsey Bill on three dates, Brighton Marina on 8 Feb and Chichester GP on 13 and 16 Feb.

Spring passage comprised singles offshore at Hastings on 15 Mar, with two offshore at Seaford and one at Birling Gap the following day. Further singles were noted from Seaford on the 8<sup>th</sup> and the 20<sup>th</sup>, and Brighton Marina on the 21<sup>st</sup>. Birds were noted along

the coast on eight dates in April, all singles except for 4 E at Seaford on 5<sup>th</sup>, six offshore at Brighton Marina on the 8<sup>th</sup> and 2 E at the latter site on the 14<sup>th</sup>. A single flew west over Brighton Palace Pier on 26<sup>th</sup>. The last spring record was a single off Goring Gap and Worthing Beach on 10 May.

Returning birds were noted in late August, with singles at Arlington Res on the 30<sup>th</sup> and a juvenile at Rye Hbr on the 31<sup>st</sup>. A further juvenile was noted at Arlington Res on 27 Sep. There were six sightings of singles between October and December; from Rye Hbr (4 and 17 Oct), Selsey Bill (singles east on 9 Nov and offshore on 21 Dec) and Scotney Court GP (17 and 30 Dec). [PMB]

## 0022. FULMAR

*Fulmaris glacialis*

**Fairly common breeding species and passage migrant, resident on coastal cliffs from November to September. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern.**

**2002:** Seven blue morph birds flew east past Brighton Marina on 2 Jan as a group of four and three singles. This record was exceptional, more so considering the absence of similar sightings at the Dungeness and Portland Bill Bird Observatories at this time. The blue morph bird first reported on the cliffs at Saltdean in 2001 (SxBR 54:19) was seen again there on 13 Feb and 11 Mar. (It is interesting to speculate that this might have been the same bird reported from Brighton and Newhaven in 2000 (SxBR 53:19)). This individual possibly accounted for most of the subsequent sightings from Brighton Marina where singles flew east on 5 Mar and 7 Apr and west on 26 May and, later, east on 12 and 19 Dec. At least one of those in December was considered to be different (all IJW).

Northern Fulmars are polymorphic. They vary in colour between what are termed the double-light morph (LL) and the double-dark (DD) or 'blue morph'. Intermediate forms grade between these two extremes and may be ascribed, with experience, to either the LD or DL morphs. The form which breeds in the British Isles, the Faroes, Norway and Iceland is the LL form. The darker morphs found in the North Atlantic area breed mainly in North-east Greenland, Bear Island and Svalbard in various proportions of the local populations. The photographic evidence suggests that the Saltdean bird of 2002 was an intermediate DL morph.

**2003:** Movements at the main seawatching localities were as follows:

	Jan-Feb		Mar-May		Jun-Jul		Aug-Oct		Nov-Dec	
	E	W	E	W	E	W	E	W	E	W
<b>Selsey Bill</b>	6	32	75	246	15	105	5	9	2	2
<b>Worthing</b>	5	8	164	121	4	2	-	17	-	-
<b>Brighton Marina</b>	948	56	2379	207	76	47	-	-	119	41
<b>Splash Point, Seaford</b>	115	36	nc	nc	nc	nc	-	-	-	-

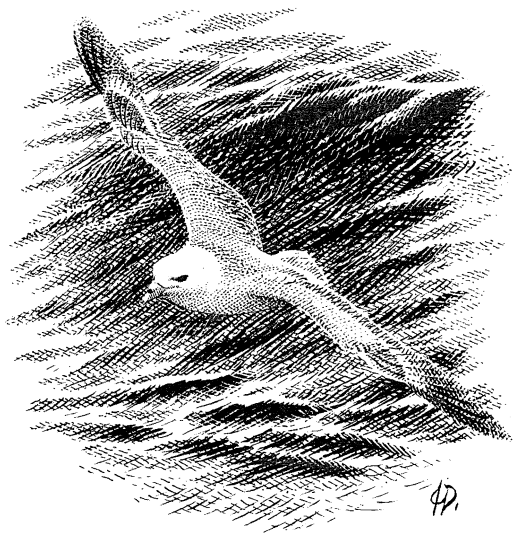
The only significant counts at the start of the year were from Brighton Marina where 155 flew east on 7 Jan and 105 E on 19 Feb. Possibly the same blue morph individual seen in 2002 at or between Brighton Marina and Saltdean was observed flying east at Brighton Marina on seven occasions between 7 Jan and 25 Apr, although interestingly the bird seen on 23 Mar was described as a double-dark morph so, presumably, the others were different intermediate dark morphs (IJW).

Peak spring counts came from Brighton Marina with 185 E on 16 Mar, a massive 385 E on 21 Apr, and 100 E 30 W on 4 May. These counts were not reflected elsewhere

along the Sussex coastline suggesting that the proximity of local breeding sites may be a key influence on the numbers observed.

The only breeding counts received comprised 59 pairs between Hastings and Fairlight. However, birds were also present along the cliffs between Rottingdean and Beachy Head during the breeding season.

Numbers rapidly diminished throughout September and typically the species was absent in October and early November. Birds returned to the cliffs from 19 Nov with the highest count of 70 E at Brighton Marina on 8 Dec. A blue morph bird flew east past Brighton Marina again on 2 Dec. [PMB]



0046. **MANX SHEARWATER**

*Puffinus puffinus*

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

The minimum total of 215 birds was considerably lower than the previous two years, due to a distinct lack of birds in the late summer/autumn period. The totals at the main seawatching localities were as follows:

	Apr		May		Jun		Jul		Aug	
	E	W	E	W	E	W	E	W	E	W
<b>Monthly Total</b>	23		180		6		5		1	
<b>Selsey Bill</b>		2	6	50	1	4	1	1		
<b>Worthing</b>	3			6		1				1
<b>Brighton Marina</b>	18		54	30				4		
<b>Splash Point, Seaford</b>	3	1	3	1						
<b>Beachy Head</b>	1		99	1						

The first record was a single, possibly the same bird, seen flying east at Brighton Marina, Splash Point and Beachy Head on 21 Apr. The bulk of the April records were on the 28<sup>th</sup> when 16 flew east at Brighton Marina. Passage was noted on 17 dates in May but

there were no double figure counts until the 21<sup>st</sup>. On that date 52 E were recorded at Brighton Marina in two hours and 99 E at Beachy Head included a flock of 27. Evidence of these birds moving back down-channel came from Selsey Bill with 22 W and 13 W on the 22<sup>nd</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> respectively.

Summer and autumn records were scarce and all consisted of singles, other than 3 W at Selsey Bill on 12 Jun and 4 W at Brighton Marina on 17 Jul. The last record for the year was 1 W at Worthing on 25 Aug. [TJW]

0046.01 **BALEARIC SHEARWATER**

*Puffinus mauretanicus*

**Very scarce spring to autumn visitor.**

There were three records this year. The first was a singleton which flew east into light easterly winds close to Brighton Marina on 9 May (IJW). Two birds were seen flying west, and then back east, off Worthing on 17 May (RAI, DIS). The last sighting was of 1 W past Brighton Marina on 25 Jul (IJW). [JAH]

0071. **GANNET**

*Morus bassanus*

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

A return to normal after the exceptional numbers in 2001 and 2002. Movements at the main seawatching localities were as follows:

	Jan - Feb		Mar - May		Jun - Jul		Aug - Sep		Nov - Dec	
	E	W	E	W	E	W	E	W	E	W
<b>Selsey Bill</b>	12	1012	403	964	214	145	215	520	-	479
<b>Worthing</b>	78	231	624	279	64	76	437	404	108	1049
<b>Brighton Marina</b>	1354	828	2612	161	416	19	545	27	211	267
<b>Splash Point, Seaford</b>	781	55	2432	495	300	1	-	-	-	-

At the start of the year, the highest counts were 250 W at Selsey Bill on 1 Jan, 155 E and 245 W at Brighton Marina on 13 Jan and 310 W at Selsey Bill on 1 Feb. The regular rooftop bird was present for its sixth year but was only occasionally seen between Kemp Town, Brighton and Saltdean and there were no reports of it from Seaford this year.

In the spring, there were 14 dates when counts of over 100 were made. The best of these were at Splash Point (Seaford) where there were 209 E on 13 Apr and 230 E on the 26<sup>th</sup> and at Selsey Bill where 269 flew east on 1 May.

In June, the highest counts were 259 E at Splash Point on the 12<sup>th</sup> and 600 lingering offshore at Selsey Bill on the 26<sup>th</sup>. Between July and September there were only five counts of between 100 and 150 with most of these coming from Rye Bay. Numbers increased from late October with 500 W at Selsey Bill on the 22<sup>nd</sup>, 400 E at Brighton Marina on the 30<sup>th</sup> and 830 W at Worthing on 12 Nov. From then until the end of the year the best count was just 185 W at Selsey Bill on 14 Dec. [TJW]

**Scarce breeding species and common winter visitor. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern.**

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

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>County total</b>	523	573	427	263	403	348	577	624	589	658	910	693
<b>Chichester Hbr</b>	51	23	23	19	19	7	40	82	83	97	100	24
<b>Pagham Hbr</b>	117	240	120	112	151	28	90	77	133	116	303	221
<b>Chichester GP</b>	59	55	42	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	33	47	160	80
<b>Weir Wood Res</b>	26	20	9	nc	nc	nc	nc	17	nc	5	12	24
<b>Barcombe Res</b>	12	28	10	3	nc	0	8	7	14	19	9	39
<b>Arlington Res</b>	10	18	6	nc	10	2	11	11	11	8	17	21
<b>Bewl Water</b>	20	12	10	nc	nc	nc	30	20	50	44	26	9
<b>Rye Hbr</b>	76	60	141	108	200	305	355	377	207	183	109	49

In the early part of the year the largest concentrations were, as usual, along the western coastal fringe with numbers reaching a maximum in February. On 16 Feb the daytime roost at Pagham Hbr held 240 birds coinciding with high occupancy of the western nocturnal roosts at South Stoke and Beeding Brooks. On 22 Feb at Worthing Beach 175 birds were seen fishing in a tight pack just offshore. There were few other reports of large numbers feeding or moving offshore apart from 151 at the Pagham Hbr roost on 18 May.

In spring, numbers built up rapidly in the east where breeding numbers at Rye Hbr LNR reached new heights. A count on 23 Apr revealed 120 nests on the large wooded island in Castle Water and a further five on a small wooded island nearby. There were probably more nests later in the season because chicks were present from March until August.

The only other proven breeding site was at Iford (near Lewes) where nest building was first seen on 27 Mar. Three nests were occupied in early May and two juveniles were seen on one of these nests on 5 Jul with two other juveniles nearby. This is the third year that breeding has occurred at Iford and is the only inland breeding site in the county.

Autumn saw a renewed influx of numbers into western coastal areas with 303 at the daytime roosts in Pagham Hbr on 16 Nov. Many inland ponds, lakes and reservoirs throughout the county also had their maximum numbers during the autumn. There were 50 birds at Bewl Water on 14 Sep, 53 at Arlington Res on 7 Nov, 60 at Kneppmill Pond on 15 Nov, 31 at Ardingly Res on 16 Nov, 39 at Barcombe Res, 24 at Warnham LNR and 15 at Burton MP all on 14 Dec, and 57 at Weir Wood Res on 28 Dec.

The table below shows numbers at some nocturnal roosts:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>Chichester GP</b>	52	37	61	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	42	41	53	104
<b>South Stoke</b>	248	150	71	51	44	51	76	nc	158	189	161	123
<b>Beeding Brooks</b>	137	96	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	54	nc
<b>Lewes Brooks</b>	34	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	75	73	nc	nc	nc

Rye Hbr is not included in the table because of lack of data, apart from one report of 121 at roost at Castle Water on 11 Jan. Rye Hbr almost certainly holds the largest nocturnal roosts through the middle part of the year because most of the birds which feed and breed there also roost there. South Stoke continued to be the major roost in the west. However, the Chichester GP roosts showed further signs of recovery with New Lake attracting most birds but with the islands in Ivy Lake also returning to favour. In the same gravel pit complex there was an unusual *WeBS*' report of 105 birds at Westhampnett North



Lake on 16 Nov. It was not clear if this was a nocturnal roost but it did occur on the same day as very high numbers were reported at Pagham and Chichester Harbours. In the Chichester GPs and at South Stoke, trees and bushes provided the roosts but at Beeding and Lewes Brooks electricity cables and pylons were preferred. [RK]

0080. **SHAG**

*Phalacrocorax aristotelis*

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

A fairly average year for this species. The approximate monthly totals were as follows:

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
23	9	6	10	5	2	3	2	2	11	14	15

The majority of records in the first three months of the year came from Brighton Marina where there were up to five offshore throughout, but these were not thought to be always the same birds. A total of 9 E and 8 W there in January probably consisted of different birds as no such movement was recorded in February or March. Away from the Marina, the only records were occasional singles at Selsey Bill and Splash Point (Seaford). A small increase took place in the spring with 6 E at Brighton Marina during April and two at Beachy Head on 30 Apr. Singles were also still lingering at the three main seawatching sites.

Up to two were seen on several dates at Brighton Marina between June and September, but the only other record during this period was a single at Rustington on 23 Jul. The number of birds increased in October; records included 6 E at Selsey Bill on the 2<sup>nd</sup>, one at Goring on the 14<sup>th</sup> and one at Shoreham Hbr on the 31<sup>st</sup>. In the last two months the highlights were three at Widewater (Lancing) on 24 Nov, one at Worthing on 5 Dec, two at Church Norton on 18 Dec, one at Newhaven on 26 Dec and up to five at Brighton Marina throughout. [TJW]

0095. **EURASIAN BITTERN**

*Botaurus stellaris*

**Scarce winter visitor. Rare outside the winter months. Red listed species of high conservation concern.**

An excellent year for this species with 115 records submitted and at least 42 birds recorded. The approximate monthly totals were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>County Total:</b>	15	18	12	-	-	1	-	1	-	3	5	5
<b>Thorney Deeps</b>	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
<b>Plashett Park</b>	1	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Pett Level</b>	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	1
<b>Rye Hbr</b>	7	8	2	-	-	1	-	-	-	1	3	3
<b>Other Sites</b>	5	8	9	-	-	-	-	1	-	1	1	-

The sites named in the table held birds in more than one month. Another 22 sites hosted birds that were only recorded for short periods. In January, seven were seen at dawn on the 3<sup>rd</sup> at Rye Hbr but multiple counts were made frequently at the main roost site there until 19 Mar. Also in the first month, singles were at Ardingly Res on the 1<sup>st</sup>, Robertsbridge on the 3<sup>rd</sup>, Arundel WWT from the 10<sup>th</sup> - 17<sup>th</sup>, Pagham Hbr from the 16<sup>th</sup> - 29<sup>th</sup> and Apuldram Manor Fm on the 2<sup>nd</sup>.

February brought even more records with a maximum of eight at Rye Hbr at dusk on the 18<sup>th</sup> (a new county record). Other records were of singles: at Beeding Brooks from the 1<sup>st</sup> - 10<sup>th</sup>, killed by a lorry at Hurstpierpoint on the 1<sup>st</sup> (skin now in the Booth Museum), Litlington on the 2<sup>nd</sup>, Swanborough Fishing Lakes from the 4<sup>th</sup> - 5<sup>th</sup>, Yapton on the 10<sup>th</sup>, Chichester GP on the 18<sup>th</sup>, Rodmell on the 18<sup>th</sup> and Powdermill Res on the 25<sup>th</sup>.

In March, further records came from Burton MP on the 1<sup>st</sup>, with three there on the 3<sup>rd</sup>, Newhaven and Pulborough Brooks RSPB on the 8<sup>th</sup>, Filsham Reedbed LNR on the 9<sup>th</sup>, two flying over Balcombe at midday on the 13<sup>th</sup> and one at Ambersham Common on the 18<sup>th</sup>. Although birds clearly wintered at Thorney Deeps and Plashett Park it would seem likely, given the elusive nature of this species, that some of these other birds were also wintering.

In June, what was presumably the same bird was seen on three dates between the 16<sup>th</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> at Castle Water (Rye Hbr), raising hopes that the new area created as part of the EU-LIFE Nature project "Reedbeds for Bitterns" will persuade Bitterns to breed in the county for the first time. Another bird flew from Hardham towards Pulborough Brooks on 14 Aug.

In the second winter period, the only records away from the main sites shown in the table above, were one at Pett Pools on 10 and 20 Oct and one at Tarring Neville on 29 Nov. [TJW]

## 0119. LITTLE EGRET

*Egretta garzetta*

**Formerly rare, but now breeds and is a fairly common autumn and winter visitor. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern.**

The species can now be seen virtually anywhere in the county where there are wetlands and again about 700 records were received. Birds are, however, still concentrated at four main sites and the monthly maxima at these are shown in the following table:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Chichester Hbr	34	41	53	28	35	43	78	146	194	228	69	54
Pagham Hbr	38	3	4	3	5	7	54	63	58	30	12	22
Cuckmere Valley	12	9	6	nc	3	2	13	21	44	41	13	11
Rye Hbr	36	28	nc	4	2	3	41	37	31	24	31	28

Away from the main locations, the only site where double-figure counts were recorded was the R Adur in Shoreham, where the species was present all year and up to 11 were seen in August and September.

Spring seawatching produced totals of 9 E and 1 W between 14 Apr and 18 May. The only records of more than one bird were 2 E at Brighton Marina on 14 Apr and 2 E at Worthing on 21 Apr.

In the breeding season, birds were recorded in the vicinity of heronries at six sites and at three of these breeding was confirmed. At one site, at least two adults were present in the spring with seven fledglings on 20 Jun and five of these flying on the 26<sup>th</sup>. In another site there were two active nests and, at a third site, one pair raised two young. At a further two sites birds were present in the spring, but breeding was not confirmed and at another site a single bird was seen flying into a herony on 15 May. [TJW]

0121. **GREAT WHITE EGRET***Ardea alba***Rare vagrant.**

Singles were seen at Scotney GP intermittently between 12-18 Jul (AJH *et al*), Castle Water (Rye Hbr) on 23 Aug (IJW *et al*) and in Pagham Hbr on 7 Sep (TJE, RWP *et al*). The Scotney individual was a young bird, colour ringed in France as a nestling at Lac de Grande-Lieu (Loire-Atlantique) on 30 Apr, and previously seen on the Cam Washes (Cambridgeshire) 582 km NE on 8-9 Jul. The Pagham individual was chased off by two Little Egrets and departed high to the west.

These records have been accepted by BBRC and, assuming they relate to different individuals, take the county total to just fourteen. Despite this it seems a long time ago that this species was a real rarity, as all but two records have been since 1996. It has been seen in the county in every month except May and December. [RJF]

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

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

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>County total</b>	92	99	109	46	51	102	112	136	175	164	122	137
<b>Chichester Hbr</b>	16	9	8	10	12	19	22	27	39	38	32	16
<b>Pagham Hbr</b>	1	6	4	2	9	20	12	10	10	1	6	10
<b>Chichester GP</b>	8	4	1	-	-	1	2	-	5	7	2	4
<b>Amberley Wild Brooks</b>	4	4	7	5	7	7	6	5	4	4	4	6
<b>Waltham Brooks</b>	1	1	-	4	4	5	1	3	3	3	1	-
<b>Pulborough Brooks</b>	3	3	9	6	3	10	5	9	4	7	7	4
<b>Kneppmill Pond</b>	2	5	10	7	4	6	1	3	6	1	1	1
<b>Lower Adur Estuary</b>	3	1	-	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	-	9	3	2
<b>Ardingly Res</b>	nc	2	6	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	3	6	4
<b>Weirwood Res</b>	1	10	18	nc	nc	nc	19	25	-	1	3	4
<b>Glynde Levels</b>	4	6	5	nc	4	7	5	7	5	3	2	3
<b>Arlington Res</b>	-	1	3	5	1	4	10	2	5	2	1	-
<b>Cuckmere Haven</b>	15	8	3	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	22	7	4	14
<b>Eastbourne Lakes</b>	1	6	3	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	7	7	6	8
<b>Pevensy Levels</b>	3	3	6	2	3	8	6	9	9	4	5	4
<b>Bewl Water</b>	4	3	5	nc	nc	nc	3	11	16	23	6	5
<b>Darwell Res</b>	1	2	1	-	1	6	5	5	nc	2	1	2
<b>Rye Hbr</b>	9	12	1	1	3	6	9	12	10	13	12	21

During the breeding season 267 nests were counted at 23 heronries (249 nests in 2002). Counts for individual heronries, listed from west to east, were as follows:

Fishbourne 13; Pagham 5; Church Norton 2; Flansham 17; Warningcamp 5; Parham 23; Knepp 14; Warnham 6; Henfield 23; Hurstpierpoint 1; Ardingly 8; Weir Wood Res 18; Iford 2; Firlie 11; Charleston 22; Hadlow Down 12; Eridge 12; Glynleigh 17; Wartling, Horsebridge Road 18; Burwash 8; Pebsham 3; Winchelsea 7; Leasam 20.

During the rest of the year single birds and small groups were seen in suitable habitat throughout the county. Apart from the lumped totals in the *WeBS*' counts, 16 were seen together at Cuckmere Haven on 4 Jan and there were 20 at Weir Wood on 26 Jan and 12 at Castle Water (Rye Hbr LNR) on 18 Nov. [ABW]

0124. **PURPLE HERON**

*Ardea purpurea*

**Rare vagrant.**

A juvenile was present at Filsham Reedbed LNR from 27-30 Sep (JAGD, KMJ *et al.*). Eleven have been recorded in the county since 1990, although the last blank year was 1997. Most are seen in spring or early summer and this is the latest autumn record since one was at Pett Level on 17 October 1993. [RJF]

0131. **BLACK STORK**

*Ciconia nigra*

**Very rare vagrant.**

One over Ashdown Forest on 25 May (RCO, LMO, MS-H) has been accepted by BBRC and is the ninth county record. It was seen soaring to the south of Wren's Warren just before 17.00 hr and flew southwest over Wych Cross, 6 km southwest, a few minutes later. All but one have been since 1989 when, interestingly, one flew southeast over Wych Cross on 26 May. There are two other May records (one in 2002) and five in August or September. [RJF]

0134. **WHITE STORK**

*Ciconia ciconia*

**Rare vagrant, mainly in the spring**

At least two individuals of unknown origin were seen during the year, one in early spring and one in autumn. An adult at Beddingham (near Lewes) on 13-15 Mar (DCL *et al.*) was presumably the individual present at Pulborough Brooks RSPB on 19-20th (PHu *et al.*). An adult at Rye Hbr on 31 Aug (PJWh *et al.*) was presumably that seen over Filsham on 2 Sep (KMJ) and at Scotney Court GP on 13 Sep (IJW *et al.*).

Several presumed escaped White Storks were at large in Britain throughout the year (see *Birding World*) making it difficult to determine the origin of any particular individual of this species. Records not fitting established patterns of occurrence, with excessively tame behaviour, uneven feather damage or plumage anomalies are best treated with a degree of suspicion. With this in mind it is probably safest to regard both individuals seen during the year as being of somewhat suspect origin. The former would be the earliest county record by nearly two weeks (the previous earliest was two on 25 March 2000, which quickly moved on to Surrey and Norfolk) while photographs of the latter, which was present in Kent from October to February 2004 (see *Birding World*) showed it to have damaged primaries and secondaries on its left wing. Discounting these records, about 50 individuals seen in the county since 1960 are presumed most likely to have been of wild origin. Of these, two were in March (detailed above), 11 in April, 15 in May, nine in June, four in July, four in August (from the 21st) and five in September. [RJF]

0144. **SPOONBILL**

*Platalea leucorodia*

**Very scarce visitor, most frequent in spring and autumn.**

The first-winter bird roosting at Thorney Deepes at the end of 2002 (*SxBR* 55:32) continued to do so until 6 Jan (CBC, MAC). In April, an adult flew east off Selsey Bill on the 15<sup>th</sup> (RP *et al.*), a third-year or non-breeding adult was seen on Pevensy Levels near Rickney on the 18<sup>th</sup> (CWM) and an immature was present in the lower Cuckmere Valley

on the 24-25<sup>th</sup> (PJWi *et al.*). One was reported from Pulborough Brooks RSPB on 2 May (*per* RSPB). In June, one was seen briefly on the Beach Reserve at Rye Hbr on the 5<sup>th</sup> (PMT) and two different immatures were present at Pett Level, one on at the 9<sup>th</sup> and the other on the 15<sup>th</sup> (RBRG). A first-summer bird roosting in Pagham Hbr on the evening of 7 Jul flew off high to the west at 07.10 hr on the 8<sup>th</sup> (TJE) while an adult and two juveniles there at high tide on 9 Sep flew off south at 11.30 hr (TJE). An immature was seen at Arlington Res on 27 Sep (CFB) with the last record of the year being of one at Castle Water (Rye Hbr) on 13 Oct (SS).

About 13 individuals would seem to have been involved in these records, an average showing in recent years, although just one was seen in the county as recently as 1998 and only two in 1997. [RJF]

0152. **MUTE SWAN**

*Cygnus olor*

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

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

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>County Total</b>	663	603	579	250	339	299	359	429	676	869	695	799
<b>Chichester Hbr</b>	62	26	35	40	36	116	104	134	162	151	152	227
<b>Chichester GP</b>	141	127	84	4	7	4	10	6	68	86	94	113
<b>Climping</b>	71	56	65	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	92	101	97	96
<b>Arundel WWT</b>	41	33	31	42	39	33	45	45	18	14	15	19
<b>Arun (Offham- Houghton)</b>	38	11	9	7	4	2	2	3	-	8	5	11
<b>Bury Brooks</b>	9	29	17	13	nc	nc	nc	nc	1	4	4	14
<b>Amberley Wild Brooks</b>	43	11	16	4	34	18	12	12	23	32	15	27
<b>Pulborough Brooks</b>	2	8	8	21	28	8	8	8	6	22	14	12
<b>Henfield Brooks</b>	39	73	48	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	10	12	9	18
<b>Iford Brooks</b>	13	21	38	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	17	56	10	4
<b>Glynde Levels</b>	5	13	15	nc	25	22	16	23	22	25	16	6
<b>Eastbourne Lakes</b>	10	24	31	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	20	112	88	61
<b>Langney</b>	40	25	8	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	15	25	15	40
<b>Pevensy Levels</b>	28	51	43	25	43	33	6	34	34	41	70	59
<b>Rye Hbr</b>	10	11	6	1	13	42	40	30	41	23	5	14
<b>Scotney Court GP</b>	3	4	3	62	88	nc	126	114	15	-	4	-

Nesting activity was first noted on 9 Mar at Upper Beeding with at least one pair nesting at a fish farm, two days later than at the same location last year. The first hatched young were nine noted on 18 May at Pagham Lagoon. Thereafter, confirmed breeding records came from Thorney Deepes (pair with six cygnets of which five fledged); Pilsey Island (pair with seven cygnets - all predated by a fox); East Chidham (pair plus five young); Partridge Green (pair with five cygnets of which four fledged); Shipley (adult with seven cygnets); Copthorne Hotel (two adults and two young); Troutbeck near Eridge (one pair with five cygnets of which two fledged); Pett Level (three pairs successful) and at Rye Hbr where six pairs nested. Counts of breeding birds in defined areas are shown on pages 196 - 199.

On 26 Jun, 130 were at the mouth of the R Arun at Littlehampton and, in July, counts on the R Adur included 42 near Upper Beeding on the 19<sup>th</sup> and 71 in Shoreham on the 28<sup>th</sup>. Thereafter the only record of over 60 that is not included in the *WeBS*' total above was 86 at Tortington (near Arundel) on 10 Nov. Pairs or small groups were seen occasionally

flying along the coast in the second winter period and pairs lingered offshore at Lancing on 10 Dec and Worthing on the 31<sup>st</sup>. [TJW]

0153. **BEWICK'S SWAN**

*Cygnus columbianus*

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

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

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>County total</b>	20	25	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	10
<b>Arun (Offham-Houghton)</b>	-	16	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Bury Brooks</b>	8	9	-	-	nc	nc	nc	nc	-	-	-	-
<b>Amberley Wild Brooks</b>	10	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	8
<b>Pulborough Brooks</b>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2
<b>Henfield Brooks</b>	2	-	-	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	-	-	-	-

Numbers in January were well down on 2002 with the highest count in the Arun Valley being 30 at North Stoke on the 12<sup>th</sup> compared with 69 the previous year. The next highest count was 20 at South Stoke on the 26<sup>th</sup> although numbers increased to 50 at Pulborough Brooks RSPB and, no doubt, the same flock of 51 at Amberley Wildbrooks on 3 and 4 Feb respectively. No counts of juveniles were made although a flock of 40 that flew over Houghton on 8 Feb was described as being mostly adults. Elsewhere, 26 were on Henfield Levels on 1 Jan reducing to four by mid-January. These birds may have accounted for the increase in the Arun Valley. In the east of the county a herd on Lewes Brooks peaked at 13 on 12 Jan, including one juvenile, and at Scotney Court GP there were eight on 13 Jan and six on 2 Mar. The only record away from these sites in the first winter period was two at Warnham LNR on 16 Feb. The last record was of four at Bury on 14 Mar.

There were few records in the second winter period and, unusually, no records at all in November. The first record was of two on 6 Dec that roosted at Pulborough Brooks and spent that day on Amberley Wildbrooks. Numbers in the Arun Valley increased to ten on the 12<sup>th</sup> but no other double figure counts were made there before the end of the year. On Henfield Levels a pair on the 21<sup>st</sup>, which were reported as having no young, were accompanied by a juvenile by the 27<sup>th</sup>. At Jury's Gap, five were seen on the 30<sup>th</sup>, moving to Broomhill Level the next day and, on the last day of the year, two adults and four juveniles were on Lewes Brooks. [TJW]

0154. **WHOOPER SWAN**

*Cygnus cygnus*

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

As with 2002, there were only two records of presumed wild birds. The first was an adult that flew out to sea from Cuckmere Haven on 5 Jan (JC). In the second winter period there were two at Pagham Hbr North Wall on 15 Nov (LGH, ARK). In addition, a single at Glynde Levels on 26 Feb (ARK) may have been the long-staying feral bird regularly seen in the Cuckmere Valley/Glynde area in previous years. [TJW]

0157. **BEAN GOOSE**

*Anser fabilis*

**Scarce winter visitor and passage migrant.**

A bird seen at Tarring Neville (Newhaven) on 14 Mar has been accepted as a Bean Goose but the race could not be ascribed (MJH). [AH]

0157.01. **TAIGA BEAN GOOSE**

*Anser fabilis fabilis*

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

The only report for this, the scarcer of the two races seen in Sussex, was of four seen in the lower Cuckmere Valley on 4 Jan (PJW). This is only the second record since 1979. [AH]

0157.02. **TUNDRA BEAN GOOSE**

*Anser fabilis rossicus*

**Scarce winter visitor and passage migrant.**

A good year for this race. In February, two birds were seen among the goose flock at Scotney Court GP on the 2<sup>nd</sup> (PNP), with five there on 21<sup>st</sup> (DC) and a single bird first seen at Piddinghoe Pond with two Pink-footed Geese on the 26<sup>th</sup> was reported regularly until 2 Mar (ARK, GSG). On 16 Feb four birds were seen at Exceat Bridge (Cuckmere) remaining in the area until the 25<sup>th</sup> (GH) and five were present on Thorney Island from the 26<sup>th</sup> until 2 Mar (CBC). [AH]

0158. **PINK-FOOTED GOOSE**

*Anser brachyrhynchus*

**Very scarce winter visitor and passage migrant. Also recorded as a feral bird.**

A good year for this normally rare species began on 3 Jan when four were found on Pevensey Bridge Level (ITB, STU) and seen again the following day (TJW). From 22 Feb two birds took up residence with a flock of White-fronted Geese in the Piddinghoe Pond/Tarring Neville area until 16 Mar (MJH, ARK *et al*).

Autumn records are extremely uncommon in the county, so the report of a flock of eight birds that dropped in briefly at Warnham LNR on 16 Nov (SB), before heading off south, was particularly noteworthy. [AH]

0159. **WHITE-FRONTED GOOSE**

*Anser albifrons*

**Scarce winter visitor and passage migrant.**

At Scotney Court GP, the large flock present from December 2002 rose from 150 on 3 Jan to a peak of 250 birds on 20 Feb, before spring dispersal. Elsewhere, there were relatively few settled groups but a surprising number of birds on the move were reported. A flock of ten birds was present in the lower Cuckmere Valley from 15 Feb to 6 Mar; up to 39 were in the Piddinghoe/Lewes Brooks area from 22 Feb into March, the last two of which departed on the 16th, and up to 19 birds were present on Pett Level between 16 and 22 Feb.

In February, passage birds were noted on the 8th, when a flock of 17 flew over Pett Level. Another 23 passed both Pagham Hbr and Selsey Bill on the 13th when 19 birds



came in off the sea at Hastings. On the 28th, three birds passed Worthing Beach and, finally, in March two birds were seen passing Hastings on the 24th.

Autumn records were typically few, the first being three birds seen at Rye Hbr LNR on 1 Nov, rising to eight on the 9th. In December, three were seen in the lower Cuckmere Valley on the 7th, five on Glynde Levels on the 14th, three at Tarring Neville on the 21st and, finally, two reports of a flock of 23 birds seen in flight over Rye Hbr on both the 21st and the 31st. [AH]

## 0161. GREYLAG GOOSE

*Anser anser*

**Increasingly common introduced resident and winter visitor, scarce passage migrant.**

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

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>County total</b>	647	541	264	86	248	69	320	872	547	821	269	727
Chichester Hbr	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	2
Pagham Hbr	2	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Chichester GP	2	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	1	3	1	1
Burton MP	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	20
Petworth Park	-	-	2	12	-	2	2	-	-	4	-	-
Arun Valley	22	2	29	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	3
Coldwaltham Brooks	-	-	-	-	-	-	33	-	-	16	-	-
Amberley Wildbrooks	179	-	9	4	8	-	-	-	-	7	24	102
Pulborough Brooks	-	46	19	4	2	1	19	186	157	330	9	1
Henfield Brooks	3	-	12	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Ardingly Res	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	41	-
Weir Wood Res	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	111	-	-	-	-
Lower Ouse Valley	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	22	1
Barcombe Res	11	-	4	6	-	-	-	5	-	-	-	2
Glynde Brooks	1	3	41	-	79	8	-	9	-	135	100	13
Arlington Res	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	6	-	1	-	3
Cuckmere Haven	1	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	1
Bewl Water	6	-	2	-	-	-	-	16	32	-	-	6
Pett Level	7	20	75	49	74	38	35	-	32	2	20	-
Rye Hbr	1	10	67	9	25	18	70	21	202	69	-	-
Scotney Court GP	410	439	-	-	51	-	145	500	154	250	48	570
<b>8 Other sites</b>	2	16	3	1	2	2	-	-	-	-	1	-

Over 600 birds were recorded during the January *WeBS*' count on the 5<sup>th</sup>, the vast majority occurring in the species' strongholds of the Arun Valley in the west and Scotney Court GP in the east. Numbers remained high through February, peaking at 439 birds at Scotney on the 16<sup>th</sup>, then tailed away to 102 on 23 Mar. Away from these sites, totals struggled into double figures, though flocks of 68 at Partridge Green on 6 Jan, 65 on Pett Level Pools on 22 Feb and 56 at Ardingly Res on 15 Mar were noteworthy.

As usual, spring seawatching records were sparse, with totals for the period 1 Mar to 31 May as follows: Splash Point (Seaford) 33 W and 20 E, Hastings Beach two in off the sea, Worthing Beach 5 W and 12 E, and Brighton Marina 47 E.

There were only five reports of successful breeding activity this year: a pair with eight goslings was seen on the Henfield Levels on 28 Apr, a pair fledged two young from Troutbeck (near Eridge), seven pairs raised young at Rye Hbr LNR, 15 adults and broods of 7, 8 and 13 goslings were on the banks of Glynde Reach north of Beddingham Bridge

on 2 Jun and five adults with 11 fledged young were seen on Ivy Lake (Chichester GP) on 4 Jul. A pair also bred at Warnham LNR, but their three goslings died.

One hundred and forty-five birds at Scotney Court GP recorded during the *WeBS'* count of 20 Jul indicated the start of the post-breeding moult, and numbers there had reached 500 by 17 Aug. Just under 1000 birds were recorded in the county on this date, the peak for the year. Other locations also had significant counts around this time: Pulborough Brooks RSPB 186 on 17 Aug, Weir Wood Res 253 on 6 Sep, Rye Hbr LNR 296 on the 7<sup>th</sup> and Glynde Levels 215 on the 14<sup>th</sup>. By mid-October birds began to disperse, but in December significant flocks had reassembled at Scotney Court GP, where the highest count of the year was noted on the *WeBS'* count on the 14<sup>th</sup> and 200 birds were on Amberley Wildbrooks on the 27<sup>th</sup>. [AH]

0166. **CANADA GOOSE**

*Branta canadensis*

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

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

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>County total</b>	2863	1427	655	260	397	342	1191	2192	2920	1928	2289	2333
<b>Chichester Hbr</b>	119	41	22	10	12	23	13	127	109	30	96	180
<b>Pagham Hbr</b>	38	6	-	-	-	-	-	97	-	-	10	-
<b>Chichester GP</b>	68	106	45	-	-	-	-	82	89	59	57	
<b>Petworth Park</b>	36	109	45	62	36	108	97	-	5	285	-	14
<b>Arun Valley</b>	63	22	52	24	4	19	-	12	108	12	23	83
<b>Coldwaltham Brooks</b>	345	37	5	4	7	-	-	-	10	-	119	219
<b>Amberley Wildbrooks</b>	627	-	4	13	23	-	-	-	-	81	284	418
<b>Pulborough Brooks</b>	117	64	30	31	22	14	19	59	69	181	440	43
<b>Knepmill Pond</b>	-	84	11	8	5	-	-	-	1	-	-	17
<b>Warnham MP</b>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	63	-	1	-
<b>Henfield Levels</b>	260	5	11	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Weir Wood Res</b>	1	81	28	-	-	-	-	235	-	7	-	-
<b>Lower Ouse Valley</b>	135	9	17	-	-	-	-	-	50	20	-	40
<b>Barcombe Res</b>	72	15	3	17	-	25	28	188	156	18	43	43
<b>Glynde Brooks</b>	-	148	112	-	120	12	1	-	2	115	-	42
<b>Arlington Res</b>	-	-	5	1	-	3	16	635	703	21	-	5
<b>Cuckmere Haven</b>	67	128	13	-	-	-	-	-	128	38	570	445
<b>Eastbourne Lakes</b>	332	143	54	-	-	-	-	-	110	40	11	112
<b>Pevensey Levels</b>	52	102	20	17	14	-	4	12	-	91	167	163
<b>Bowl Water</b>	280	150	24	-	-	-	750	500	960	576	297	290
<b>Darwell Res</b>	-	-	-	4	1	33	17	130	-	-	-	-
<b>Pett Level</b>	94	40	71	31	108	61	46	2	-	146	55	40
<b>Rye Hbr</b>	84	78	15	15	24	40	26	105	324	86	98	109
<b>East Guldeford Levels</b>	-	-	-	-	2	-	14	67	-	37	-	-
<b>Scotney Court GP</b>	50	8	12	15	17	-	160	23	39	53	-	3
<b>11 Other sites</b>	23	51	58	8	2	4	-	-	1	2	16	10

During the *WeBS'* count on 5 Jan over 1100 birds were present in the Arun Valley between Pulborough and Arundel, most of which must have subsequently congregated at Greatham Bridge where there were 700 on 26 Jan increasing to 1200 on 1 and 5 Feb. Significant counts in the first winter period were made also at Bowl Water, where there were 404 on 10 Jan, at Cuckmere Haven where there were 331 on 5 Feb and at two other

locations with counts of more than 200 birds. By contrast, the biggest March total was a mere 112 at Glynde Levels on the 23<sup>rd</sup>.

Spring seawatching records were typically few, with totals for the period 1 Mar to 31 May as follows: Worthing Beach – 11 E and 2 W, Selsey Bill – 10 E, Brighton Marina – 14 E and 10 W, and Splash Point (Seaford) – 3 E and 14 W.

Breeding records were received from approximately 15 sites, ranging from Thorney Island and Chichester GP in the west, through to Milland, Pulborough, Weir Wood Res and across to Firle Park, Cuckmere Haven and Rye Hbr in the east. Most records were of one to two pairs, though Rye Hbr was the exception with around 14 pairs breeding.

By the *WeBS*' count on 20 Jul, post-breeding flocks were assembling at favoured sites, notably 750 birds on Bewl Water. By the end of August, flocks of 400 or more birds were seen at Weir Wood Res, Rye Hbr LNR, Partridge Green and Arlington Res, with a peak of 715 at the last site on the 28<sup>th</sup>. The *WeBS*' count on 14 Sep saw 960 birds present on Bewl Water. Interestingly though, whilst these large flocks were assembling in the east of the county, the Arun Valley held less than 200 birds. However, by December, over 850 birds were back in this area, whilst Bewl Water's numbers had dropped to 290 and Arlington to a mere five.

Whilst there is obviously some movement in and out of the county, it is interesting to note that the very similar total *WeBS*' counts for August (2230 birds) and November (2279) hide a remarkable change in the distribution of this species. In August the four reservoirs of Bewl Water, Arlington, Barcombe and Weir Wood held moulting flocks totalling 1650 birds (74% of the county total count) and the two main wintering sites of the Arun Valley and Cuckmere Haven a mere 75 birds combined (less than 1%). By November, however, the four reservoirs held just 338 birds (15% of total), whilst numbers had risen in the Arun Valley and Cuckmere Haven to 1366 birds (63% of the county total). [AH]

0167. **BARNACLE GOOSE**

*Branta leucopsis*

**Very scarce winter visitor, often in severe weather, and an increasingly common feral resident.**

This species was regularly recorded through the year, but all reports are likely to refer to feral birds. The biggest resident flock, at Barcombe Res, peaked at 74 birds on 27 Aug and 20 Sep, though there was no evidence of breeding. Two hybrids (possibly Barnacle x Snow Goose) were usually seen with them. Other permanent residents included up to 12 birds at Scotney Court GP, three on Pett Level and one in the Arun Valley, whilst groups of one to five were seen at Rye Hbr, Glynde Levels, Piddinghoe Pond, Icklesham, Arlington Res, Iford, Weir Wood Res and Chichester Hbr. However, it seems that the once regular flock at Arundel may have disappeared. [AH]

0168. **DARK-BELLIED BRENT GOOSE**

*Branta bernicla bernicla*

**Very common winter visitor and passage migrant; a few oversummer**

The monthly *WeBS*' counts from the principal sites were as follows;

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>County total</b>	9117	9344	1439	40	8	-	-	-	-	311	4607	8318
<b>Chichester Hbr</b>	7358	7090	1431	38	8	-	-	-	-	275	4092	7272
<b>Pagham Hbr</b>	1758	2252	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	514	1042

Warnham LNR	-	2	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Ardingly Res	-	-	4	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Langney Point	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	20	-	2	
Glyne Gap, Bexhill	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	-	-	
Rye Hbr	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	13	-	-	
Scotney Court GP	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	2	

The 1% Threshold Number for this species is 2200 and the table demonstrates the significance of the two western harbours.

In January and February, numbers at the two main wintering sites were similar to recent years, but numbers decreased very quickly in March, e.g. 1000 birds were reported in Pagham Hbr on the 8<sup>th</sup> but a mere 60 was the highest count after mid-month. Away from the two westerly sites, small numbers were seen at a range of sites, including Cuckmere Haven, Scotney Court GP, Rye Hbr, Pett Level, Climping and more unusually Warnham LNR, though none lingered.

The monthly totals from the main seawatching sites are shown below:

	Jan		Feb		Mar		Apr		Oct		Nov		Dec	
	E	W	E	W	E	W	E	W	E	W	E	W	E	W
Selsey Bill	20	11	235		1460		1726	2		45				
Worthing Beach	2	20	1421	42	552	4	499	1	62	70	38	106	11	3
Brighton Marina	27	14	5471		5370		2582			2	15	26	26	5
Splash Point, Seaford	49	9	4325	1	4194	1	2279	1						
Bexhill and Hastings			1565		4006									

There was little evidence of easterly passage until the relatively late date of 20 Feb, when 1055 passed Brighton Marina and 558 passed Splash Point (Seaford). Notable day counts on the 22<sup>nd</sup> included-2055 past Brighton Marina, 1585 past Splash Point and no less than 5200 past Beachy Head. Numbers then tailed off until 23 Mar when 2999 passed Brighton Marina, 1890 (presumably the same birds) were noted at Splash Point and 2350 at Beachy Head. The last two of the spring passed Selsey Bill on 17 May.

All the summer records came from Chichester Hbr, where up to 14 birds were regularly noted.

In autumn, the first returning birds were eight noted on 24 Sep heading west past Worthing Beach. From that date on, numbers began to build up slowly in the western harbours, though the first counts of 1000 were not recorded until 21 Oct in Chichester Hbr and 6 Nov in Pagham Hbr. There was a number of reports from elsewhere in the county, though most stayed only briefly, including a group of 90 birds that dropped in at Rye Hbr on the morning of 16 Oct, ten birds present on Widewater Lagoon (Lancing) on 24 Oct and 30 that settled briefly on Warnham LNR on 7 Dec. Like last year, the only place other than Chichester and Pagham Harbours to hold a sizeable flock for any length of time was Climping, where 135 birds present on 28 Nov rose to 1000 on 15 Dec, with 500 still present on Christmas Day. [AH]

0168.01. **PALE-BELLIED BRENT GOOSE**

*Branta bernicla hrota*

**Scarce winter visitor and passage migrant.**

During January and February, Pagham Hbr continued to host up to six individuals of this distinctive sub-species which had been present from late 2002, and which may have been responsible for reports of up to three birds seen at West Wittering at this time. The

last report from Pagham Hbr was of a single on 16 Mar. Elsewhere, a singleton was recorded on 11 and 15 Jan in the lower Cuckmere Valley and one flew east past Brighton Marina on 19 Feb.

In the autumn, one bird was regularly seen in Pagham Hbr (from 13 Nov onwards), although two seen there on 25 Nov may have been the pair present at Thorney Island the following day. Also, possibly co-incidentally, two birds passed Lancing heading west on the 25<sup>th</sup>. [AH]

0168.02. **BLACK BRANT**

*Branta bernicla nigricans*

**Very scarce winter visitor and passage migrant,**

The only record was of an adult present at Thorney Island between 16 and 26 Jan (CBC) and has been accepted by BBRC. This was presumably one of the two birds recorded in the area in December 2002. [AH]

0170. **EGYPTIAN GOOSE**

*Alopochon aegyptiaca*

**Rare visitor from introduced populations elsewhere in Britain, though possibly more commonly recorded as a presumed escape. Bred for the first time in 2000.**

Of the 62 records received, 40 were from the Arun Valley and in particular Pulborough Brooks RSPB, with one or two birds seen there in all months except June and July and three birds on both 17 and 30 Aug. The long-staying bird at Chichester GP was seen through until April, and what was presumably one individual wandered in the Scotney Court/Rye area between January and March.

Away from these sites, the only records were of singles at Hickstead on 29 Mar and at Shipley (the 2000 breeding site) on 5 May, two at Petworth Park Pond on two dates in midsummer, plus 2 E past Selsey Bill on 18 Apr and 2 E over Pagham Hbr on 13 Aug.

Once again there were no records of breeding. [AT]

0173. **SHELDUCK**

*Tadorna tadorna*

**Fairly common winter visitor and passage migrant; a scarce but regular breeding species. Amber list species of medium conservation concern.**

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

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>County total</b>	1199	1499	768	434	327	303	84	144	40	92	284	630
<b>Chichester Hbr</b>	849	1019	453	263	99	64	25	49	18	47	185	370
<b>Pagham Hbr</b>	197	316	130	76	135	134	10	42	4	28	82	161
<b>Arundel WWT</b>	56	57	27	26	26	20	nc	24	-	7	13	26
<b>Waltham Brooks</b>	6	-	2	2	3	4	6	-	-	-	-	4
<b>Pulborough Brooks</b>	-	7	23	8	8	36	7	-	-	-	-	4
<b>Pett Level</b>	8	14	22	14	8	7	-	8	-	-	-	10
<b>Rye Hbr</b>	11	11	14	24	18	24	36	16	16	-	-	12
<b>Scotney Court GP</b>	2	16	13	7	16	nc	-	-	2	6	-	23

Numbers in the first winter period peaked in February with, encouragingly, the total of 1499 being the highest *WeBS*' count since 1997. The Chichester Hbr tally that month was

the first individual site count over 1000 in the county since 2000 but is still some way below the 1% Threshold Number of 3000.

Other notable counts at the start of the year not included in the *WeBS*' table include 64 at Arundel WWT on 15 Jan, 44 at The Midrips on 22 Feb and 20 at Down Level (Pevensy) on 23 Mar.

Passage was unremarkable all year with, surprisingly, the best day being in midsummer on 14 Jun when 34 flew east past Selsey Bill and 24 past Worthing. The monthly totals at the main seawatching sites were as follows:

	Jan		Feb		Mar		Apr		May		Jun	
	E	W	E	W	E	W	E	W	E	W	E	W
<b>Selsey Bill</b>	-	-	-	-	2	2	22	2	14	2	34	-
<b>Worthing Beach</b>	4	5	2	4	15	4	23	12	-	-	24	-
<b>Brighton Marina</b>	7	14	9	6	41	1	-	-	29	37	-	6
<b>Splash Point, Seaford</b>	6	1	6	3	40	1	85	2	50	9	-	-

As the breeding season progressed, a pair on wetlands at Constantia Manor (Isfield) on 21 Apr was a first record for the site. Two pairs were at the confluence of the R Ouse and Glynde Reach on 25 Apr, and two pairs were at Horse Eye Level (Pevensy) on 4 May.

The first brood was seen on 6 May at Amberley Wild Brooks. The most successful county site, as usual, was Pagham Hbr where 55 adults accompanied 35 ducklings on 13 Jun, rising to 46 youngsters on 22 Jun. Also in West Sussex, 16 young fledged at Thorney Deeps, and young were also seen in the Upper Chichester Channel. Although no breeding activity was noted, Chingford Pond held birds from January through until June, with a maximum of 14 on 15 Jun. In East Sussex, two broods were seen at Cuckmere Haven, while at Rye Hbr breeding activity suggested at least six pairs at Flat Beach although only three broods were noted.

The breeding success ensured that numbers in August remained slightly higher than in some recent years, with *WeBS*' counts of 49 in Chichester Hbr and 42 in Pagham Hbr on 17 Aug, but once again county totals were very depressed in September and October. Autumn passage was very low with a daily maximum of just eight past Worthing Beach on 24 Oct. It was not until 7 Nov that there was a count anywhere in the county in excess of 50 birds, with 54 at Thorney Deeps.

Numbers built again to the end of the year with a peak count of 370 in Chichester Hbr on 14 Dec. [AT]

0178. **MANDARIN**

*Aix galericulata*

**Scarce but increasing introduced resident.**

**2002:** In the breeding season, four pairs bred at Troutbeck (near Eridge) and the maximum count was of 33 birds on 11 Aug (PAS).

**2003:** There were records from a high total of 63 widely-spread sites, of which 36 were in West Sussex. However, the four key sites Arundel WWT, Weir Wood Res, Troutbeck (near Eridge) and Darwell Res accounted for all but one of the counts in excess of 15 birds.

In the first winter period, the maximum count came from Arundel WWT with 34 birds on 17 Feb. There were also 27 at Weir Wood Res on both 26 Jan and 1 Feb, and 24 at Bells Yew Green on 27 Feb. Counts dropped largely into single figures by late March, although Arundel WWT still recorded a count of 31 on 21 Apr.

In the breeding season (April to July), birds were noted from 41 sites. Troutbeck recorded the largest counts, with 21 on 17 May when the first young of the year were seen, rising to 31 on 1 Jun, of which seven were juveniles. Elsewhere, young were reported from Arundel Mill Stream, Nymans (near Handcross), Loder Valley (Ardingly), Weir Wood Res, Constantia Manor (Isfield), Troutbeck, Markly Wood (Heathfield) and St Dunstan's (Warbleton).

The highest counts of the year came in the autumn, with 56 at Darwell Res on 12 Oct and 52 at Troutbeck on 28 Aug.

The most unusual record of the year was probably the bird seen on the rocks at Brighton Marina on 9 Mar, while two birds at Chichester GP on 14 Sep and a drake at Pagham Hbr on 4 Nov were also away from the core range. [AT]

## 0179. WIGEON

*Anas penelope*

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

**2002:** Successful breeding was confirmed at Pulborough Brooks RSPB with a brood recorded in the North Brooks in June. The report of a female Wigeon with young at Glynde Reach on 8 Jun was incorrect: it was a different species. Unfortunately, the error was caused by mis-reading the species' code.

**2003:** The monthly *WeBS*' counts from the principal sites were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>County total</b>	10680	7828	2783	69	12	5	2	7	673	2422	6013	8695
<b>Chichester Hbr</b>	1046	1103	406	12	-	-	-	-	206	631	1407	1547
<b>Pagham Hbr</b>	1402	1359	209	18	-	-	-	-	129	880	1080	984
<b>Amberley Wild Brooks</b>	4397	111	99	-	-	-	-	-	-	13	650	1513
<b>Waltham Brooks</b>	102	140	54	2	2	1	2	1	54	4	12	199
<b>Pulborough Brooks</b>	1371	2736	917	26	2	2	-	-	64	363	1171	1215
<b>Glynde Levels</b>	2	34	-	nc	-	2	-	1	13	4	79	90
<b>Cuckmere Haven</b>	370	620	470	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	57	11	630	740
<b>Pevensy Levels</b>	56	360	86	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	218	546
<b>Bewl Water</b>	258	327	85	nc	nc	nc	-	2	65	116	72	137
<b>Pett Level</b>	115	310	30	-	1	-	-	-	8	6	60	62
<b>Rye Hbr</b>	332	223	102	4	-	-	-	-	26	145	167	350
<b>Scotney Court GP</b>	300	310	253	5	7	-	-	3	14	87	285	900

Numbers were high in January, with the count of 4397 at Amberley Wild Brooks on 5 Jan being exceptional for that site, although not unprecedented in the Arun Valley. Counts taken between the *WeBS*' dates show the mobility of birds in the Arun Valley, with 1980 at Pulborough North Brooks on 24 Jan, 1000 at Greatham Bridge on 26 Jan, and 2500 at Amberley Wild Brooks on 8 Feb. Other large flocks for January not noted in the table include 700 on Lewes Brooks on 5 Jan, 600 at Partridge Green on 6 Jan, and 319 at Bewl Water and 680 at Castle Water (Rye Hbr) both on 10 Jan.

Movements offshore were once again light in spring, with considerably more birds seen in the winter periods. The peak day in the first quarter of the year was 22 Feb, when 67 flew east past Brighton Marina. The main movements at the key seawatching sites were as follows:

	Jan		Feb		Mar		Apr		Oct		Nov		Dec	
	E	W	E	W	E	W	E	W	E	W	E	W	E	W
<b>Selsey Bill</b>	-	-	57	-	18	-	6	-	25	65	-	-	-	-
<b>Worthing Beach</b>	47	-	84	7	-	-	4	-	6	96	1	26	-	-
<b>Brighton Marina</b>	9	17	106	-	22	-	7	-	-	-	-	11	21	13
<b>Splash Point, Seaford</b>	44	5	42	2	10	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

Small numbers of birds remained at a number of sites through to the first week of May, with a maximum of 12 at Pulborough Brooks RSPB on 1 May and seven at Scotney Court GP on 18 May. However, in June, the only records were of a male summering in the lower Cuckmere Valley, two on the Glynde Levels on 15 Jun, and two at Pulborough Brooks on several dates with perhaps another bird at Coldwaltham Brooks on 15 Jun. Breeding was not suspected at any site.

The first double-figure count as birds returned was at Ternery Pool (Rye Hbr) with ten on 30 Aug. By 8 Sep, 25 were at Pulborough Brooks, 175 were at Pagham Hbr on 13 Sep, and 350 were at Thorney Deeps on 18 Sep. By December, numbers had built to fairly average levels well-spread across the main sites. Although small in county terms, the flock at Lottbridge Lake (Eastbourne) was notable, maintaining numbers in excess of 30 from September onwards and peaking at 145 on 14 Dec. [AT]

## 0182. GADWALL

*Anas strepera*

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

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

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>County total</b>	911	761	248	75	53	35	5	90	156	363	567	781
<b>Chichester GP</b>	349	240	128	-	-	-	-	-	4	65	164	279
<b>Burton &amp; Chingford Ponds</b>	26	30	10	-	1	-	-	nc	19	-	11	12
<b>Swanbourne Lake</b>	92	37	26	6	2	1	nc	-	13	24	2	16
<b>Arundel WWT</b>	17	39	21	34	19	9	nc	26	4	85	58	78
<b>Amberley Wild Brooks</b>	21	-	2	6	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2
<b>Waltham Brooks</b>	4	-	-	5	8	3	-	8	6	2	7	-
<b>Glynde Levels</b>	2	16	7	nc	2	-	2	-	-	2	-	7
<b>Eastbourne Lakes</b>	75	96	2	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	4	10	31	26
<b>Pevensey Levels</b>	-	-	-	1	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Bewl Water</b>	138	186	13	nc	nc	nc	-	16	51	66	76	140
<b>Darwell Res</b>	9	24	-	-	-	-	-	-	nc	-	33	83
<b>Powdermill Res</b>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	34	8
<b>Pett Level</b>	10	34	4	8	14	13	3	1	9	49	52	38
<b>Rye Hbr</b>	94	27	12	10	5	7	-	33	44	49	30	25

The county *WeBS'* total in January was the highest ever total for that month, being just lower than the all-time county record in December 2001. The Swanbourne Lake total of 92 was noteworthy, as was the Eastbourne Lakes figure of 75, which increased by the February *WeBS'* count to 96. A count of 234 at Bewl Water on 10 Jan was substantially higher than the *WeBS'* figure, and 28 on the Adur Levels on 25 Jan was also notable.

At seawatching sites, the usual scatter of birds passed east in spring, with a maximum of eight past Splash Point (Seaford) on 15 Mar.



Breeding data were very scant, despite records of birds from 23 suitable sites between April and July. Highest counts were from Arundel WWT with 34 on 20 Apr and 26 on 20 Jul.

In the second winter period, Chichester GP maintained its status as the county's top winter site for the species, but 83 at Darwell Res on 14 Dec was a good total for the site and 120 at Selsey West Fields on 9 Nov was a surprise. [AT]

0184. **TEAL**

*Anas crecca*

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

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

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>County total</b>	7323	4680	1395	406	10	11	22	198	1650	2197	3296	5187
<b>Chichester Hbr</b>	1402	1433	270	35	1	1	5	30	240	526	579	1134
<b>Pagham Hbr</b>	1236	460	118	91	9	3	3	9	737	696	1455	1428
<b>Burton &amp; Chingford Ponds</b>	9	23	23	8	-	-	-	nc	72	114	134	-
<b>Amberley Wild Brooks</b>	1361	492	110	20	-	-	-	-	-	24	200	642
<b>Waltham Brooks</b>	211	89	18	18	-	3	5	3	12	24	43	54
<b>Pulborough Brooks</b>	1899	1332	510	146	-	-	2	86	349	290	252	786
<b>Weirwood Res</b>	1	11	-	nc	nc	nc	2	9	13	33	-	35
<b>Eastbourne Lakes</b>	84	91	93	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	13	16	38	37
<b>Pevensey Levels</b>	13	76	88	61	-	-	-	-	30	65	85	346
<b>Darwell Res</b>	5	20	-	-	-	-	2	1	nc	7	40	32
<b>Pett Level</b>	160	235	12	8	-	4	1	23	16	20	22	118
<b>Rye Hbr</b>	104	38	16	12	-	-	2	9	42	70	55	101
<b>Scotney Court GP</b>	2	16	13	-	-	nc	-	19	22	30	42	36

After several record-breaking years, there was no county record this year and no site exceeded the 1% Threshold Number of 4000, but the January *WeBS*' total was still the second highest count recorded in Sussex. Once again, the Arun Valley between Pulborough and Amberley produced some high cumulative totals. Together with Chichester and Pagham Harbours, these three albeit large sites accounted for over 80% of the county total in both January and February.

High counts not included in the *WeBS*' table include at least 1000 birds on the Lewes Brooks on 10 Jan and 400 at Kneppmill Pond on 19 Jan. The maximum winter count at Combe Haven was 120 on 29 Jan, and that at Partridge Green was on 2 Mar when there were 200 birds present. One feeding under a bird feeder on 2 Mar at Constantia Manor (Isfield) was unexpected!

The monthly totals for the main seawatching sites were as follows:

	Feb		Mar		Apr	
	E	W	E	W	E	W
<b>Selsey Bill</b>	9	-	21	-	-	-
<b>Worthing Beach</b>	-	-	31	-	35	-
<b>Brighton Marina</b>	4	-	110	-	46	-
<b>Splash Point, Seaford</b>	42	-	127	-	56	4

Numbers were unexceptional, with the peak movement occurring on 18 Mar with 62 E past Seaford. No passage was recorded in May, and there were no significant movements noted throughout the rest of the year.

There was a welcome confirmed breeding record, with one brood seen at Pett Level. A pair probably also bred at Warnham LNR where one juvenile was seen with a pair on four dates in August, and two juveniles were seen at Forest Mere (Liphook) on 20 Aug, there having been a pair there in May.

As usual, numbers built up quickly in September, with 737 at Pagham Hbr on 14 Sep a good early count. By the end of the year numbers were about average, although some sites recorded their best figures of the year with 246 at Arundel WWT on 9 Nov and 346 at Pevensey Levels on 14 Dec. [AT]

0186. **MALLARD**

*Anas platyrhynchos*

**Common resident and winter visitor.**

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

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>County total</b>	3354	2478	1823	892	908	1245	1646	2631	2788	3630	3435	3409
Chichester Hbr	440	276	142	33	43	69	78	55	298	230	386	454
Pagham Hbr	250	149	127	148	125	155	172	188	220	260	329	274
Chichester GP	308	257	253	8	16	29	24	21	206	177	242	310
Burton & Chingford Ponds	55	45	27	17	24	89	108	nc	63	44	10	66
Arundel WWT	214	354	211	241	246	355	nc	514	92	168	143	118
Pulborough Brooks	179	37	34	41	81	51	38	159	48	145	64	50
Ardingly Res	nc	110	105	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	165	95	76
Barcombe Res	116	41	4	13	nc	48	91	78	93	66	76	113
Glynde Levels	43	67	22	nc	38	36	56	52	110	225	160	83
Bowl Water	302	185	113	nc	nc	nc	590	540	534	551	402	322
Pett Level	53	42	14	19	31	64	51	95	71	39	34	39
Rye Hbr	174	96	84	67	44	55	77	224	184	228	297	290
Scotney Court GP	14	32	13	21	24	nc	58	460	25	50	84	32

At Bowl Water there were an estimated 42 broods totalling 160 young but fledging success appeared low, possibly due to low water levels. There were 30 broods at Arundel WWT by 23 Apr; at Rye Hbr 33 nests or broods were located; and 48 young were noted at Barcombe Res, 37 at Thorney Deeps and 18 at Weir Wood Res.

A pair nested in heather on Ambersham Common, and at Earls Down (Dallington) the local badgers once again caused problems predated ducklings with just six from a brood of 16 fledging. One hundred on Storrington Pond on 5 July suggested good breeding success locally. Counts of breeding birds in defined areas can be found on pages 196-199. [RWP]

0189. **PINTAIL**

*Anas acuta*

**Fairly common winter visitor and passage migrant; occasionally summers and breeds. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern**

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

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>County total</b>	831	527	88	21	6	1	1	1	29	76	276	537
Chichester Hbr	36	51	66	13	1	-	-	-	6	36	53	24
Pagham Hbr	51	282	17	4	2	-	-	-	21	31	210	107
Amberley Wild Brooks	533	56	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	78

Waltham Brooks	-	12	4	2	3	1	-	-	-	-	2	-
Pulborough Brooks	143	109	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	1	325
Arlington Res	3	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	1	1	-	1
Rye Hbr	-	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	5	-	-
Scotney Court GP	-	-	-	2	-	nc	-	1	-	-	7	-

The *WeBS*' count of 533 for Amberley Wild Brooks in January is close to the 1% Threshold Number of 600 and illustrates the increasing importance of the site to this species. Excluding the *WeBS*' counts, the highest concentration noted in the first winter period was of 400 at Waltham Brooks on 8 Feb.

Coastal movement early in the year was up on 2002, as shown by the monthly totals in the table below:

	Jan		Feb		Mar		Apr	
	E	W	E	W	E	W	E	W
Selsey Bill	-	11	75	-	82	-	2	-
Worthing	-	5	67	2	12	-	2	-
Brighton	-	-	81	-	51	2	14	-
Seaford	5	-	111	-	69	2	7	-

In the breeding season there was a pair at Waltham Brooks on 31 May and one was seen on 15 Jun but no breeding was proven. A lightly oiled male summered in Pagham Hbr and an injured female remained at Pulborough Brooks RSPB. There was a remarkable sighting of 20 W past Brighton Palace Pier on 30 June (RAI).

The first returning autumn birds were three at The Midrips on 10 Aug and there were 14 in Pagham Hbr by the end of the month.

Coastal movements were extremely light thereafter, 5 E past Brighton Marina on 7 Dec being the highest count. [RWP]

## 0191. GARGANEY

*Anas querquedula*

**Scarce passage migrant and rare summer visitor. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern.**

**2002:** At Pulborough Brooks RSPB at least two pairs were thought to have bred, with one pair producing eight young.

**2003:** Another good year with around 79 individuals reported from at least 23 different locations although, surprisingly, none was reported from Pulborough Brooks until the autumn. The monthly totals, showing that the species was recorded in nine months of the year, were as follows:

Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct
4	32	23	9	5	3	25	6	1

Early arrivals were two off Newhaven on 22 Feb, one past Seaford Head on 26 Feb and a male at Piddinghoe on the same date.

Coastal observers recorded 21 eastwards in spring, the biggest flock being five birds seen passing Brighton, Seaford and Beachy Head on 14 Apr.

Although pairs were present throughout the breeding season at Pett Level and Rye Hbr, no ducklings were noted. However, a female with at least two ducklings was seen just inside the county boundary at Lydd Ranges on 26 Jun (BJY). Singles at Glynde Levels on 18 May and Horse Eye Level (Pevensey) on 17 June were also of interest in this period.

Autumn movement began early with one at Scotney Court GP on 21 Jul, numbers building up at this site to a maximum of 11 on 30 August, constituting the largest gathering of the year. One remained there until 13 Sep. The last record was of one at Pulborough Brooks, which lingered until 10 Oct. [RWP]

0192. **BLUE-WINGED TEAL**

*Anas discors*

**Very rare vagrant.**

An adult male at Goring Gap on 7 May (CWM et al) was present close offshore for just over two hours before departing west with two Shovelers. It, or perhaps more likely another adult male, was present on a small reed-fringed pool at Pett Level from 14 Jun to mid July (ITB, RBRG et al). The Pett individual, which was often elusive, was noted going into eclipse plumage during the course of its stay. Both have been accepted by BBRC and are the fourth and fifth county records. The most recent previous record, off Splash Point (Seaford) in March 1999, was also seen on the sea accompanied by other ducks, on that occasion four Mallard. [RJF]

0194. **SHOVELER**

*Anas clypeata*

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

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

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>County total</b>	706	475	195	48	-	14	2	28	130	350	225	300
<b>Pagham Hbr</b>	17	9	3	1	-	-	-	2	-	5	1	8
<b>Chichester GP</b>	158	80	33	-	-	-	-	-	-	76	37	113
<b>Burton &amp; Chingford Ponds</b>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	nc	4	18	13	10
<b>Petworth Park</b>	39	35	6	1	-	-	-	nc	-	1	6	19
<b>Arundel WWT</b>	43	4	6	7	-	-	nc	3	-	6	8	8
<b>Amberley Wild Brooks</b>	113	2	4	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	17
<b>Waltham Brooks</b>	4	40	13	3	-	-	-	1	17	9	12	11
<b>Pulborough Brooks</b>	53	127	24	4	-	6	-	4	17	22	19	12
<b>Glynde Levels</b>	2	53	42	nc	-	7	-	-	3	1	5	12
<b>Eastbourne Lakes</b>	49	38	20	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	26	1	20	7
<b>Pevensey Levels</b>	nc	12	24	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Pett Level</b>	57	51	-	20	-	1	2	-	3	15	31	15
<b>Rye Hbr</b>	110	30	5	9	-	-	-	12	59	189	58	6
<b>Scotney Court GP</b>	6	3	9	-	-	nc	-	5	-	-	2	54

Significant records, other than those in the *WeBS'* table above, included counts of 95 at Pulborough Brooks RSPB and Rye Hbr LNR on 26 Jan and 80 at Waltham Brooks on 8 Feb. A combined total of 218 at Rye Hbr, Castle Water and Long Pits on 27 Sep was the largest gathering of the year.

The first eastwards movement was four past Brighton Marina on 24 Feb. A pair resting off Goring Gap on 7 May ended the recorded spring migration. This last sighting was particularly memorable as the birds had the exotic company of a male Blue-winged Teal! The peak movements were on 13 and 14 Apr. Monthly totals at seawatching locations are shown below:

	Feb		Mar		Apr		May		Oct		Dec		Peak days
	E	W	E	W	E	W	E	W	E	W	E	W	
<b>Selsey Bill</b>	-	-	13	4	66	-	-	-	10	-	-	-	49 on 14/4
<b>Worthing Beach</b>	-	-	6	-	24	-	4	-	-	-	-	-	14 on 14/4
<b>Brighton Marina</b>	4	-	29	-	137	1	8	-	-	-	12	-	57 on 14/4
<b>Seaford</b>	-	-	59	-	79	-	9	-	-	-	-	-	43 on 13/4
<b>Beachy Head</b>	-	-	15	-	30	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	13 on 15/4
<b>Bexhill/Hastings</b>	-	-	38	-	17	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	25 on 15/3

Breeding was confirmed from only one site: a pair bred at Pett Level, raising seven young. Elsewhere, a pair was present at Pagham North Fields until 26 Apr, but at Rye Hbr none were seen after 20 Apr and no breeding was suspected. [RWP]

#### 0196. RED-CRESTED POCHARD

*Netta rufina*

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

Seven individuals were recorded. A pair was at Isfield Mill on 21 Mar, and a female type at Rye Hbr LNR was first seen on 14 Aug and last seen on 9 Nov. There was a drake at Scotney Court GP from 10 to 13 Sep, a female at Sidlesham Ferry on 18 Sep, a tame male at Selsey East Beach pond from 28 Sep to 9 Oct and a female in Emsworth Channel on 5 Dec. [RWP]

#### 0198. POCHARD

*Aythya ferina*

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

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

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>County total</b>	1310	1122	170	49	12	21	15	77	45	201	820	1306
<b>Chichester GP</b>	312	205	87	-	-	-	-	-	9	13	75	153
<b>Forest Mere</b>	12	-	1	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	1	18	52	7
<b>Burton &amp; Chingford Ponds</b>	21	50	4	1	1	-	-	nc	1	-	12	24
<b>Swanbourne Lake</b>	76	164	15	7	-	2	nc	11	11	7	22	20
<b>Arundel WWT</b>	147	186	28	27	9	9	nc	6	1	26	115	174
<b>Weirwood Res</b>	13	4	1	nc	nc	nc	1	1	-	-	-	-
<b>Barcombe Res</b>	30	19	-	-	nc	2	-	-	-	7	14	24
<b>Glynde Levels</b>	-	1	-	nc	-	8	4	3	-	-	-	-
<b>Arlington Res</b>	-	4	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	4	15	2
<b>Bewl Water</b>	59	18	7	nc	nc	nc	2	8	2	5	19	16
<b>Rye Hbr</b>	186	148	3	7	1	-	-	5	6	22	215	233
<b>Scotney Court GP</b>	333	184	16	7	1	nc	7	43	13	83	221	500

The *WeBS*' counts illustrate that larger numbers wintered in the east of the county and totals in the west were down in comparison with 2002. Counts exceeding those in the *WeBS*' numbers included 395 at Scotney Court GP on 26 Jan, 261 at Arundel WWT on 9 Feb and 280 on 23 Nov at Long Pit (Rye Hbr). Overall, Pochards were recorded at 48 sites in the year.

Between 2 Apr and 21 Jul birds were present at Burton MP, Chingford Pond (Dunton), Arundel WWT, Warnham LNR, Weir Wood Res, Barcombe Res, Bewl Water, Castle Water (Rye Hbr) and Scotney Court GP but no evidence of breeding was noted.

There were only three records of Pochards flying offshore. On 22 Feb ten were tracked east past Worthing, Brighton and Beachy Head. Observers at the latter site recorded a single bird on 13 Apr and a further five the following day. [RWP]

**0200. RING-NECKED DUCK**

*Aythya collaris*

**Very rare vagrant.**

A first-winter female on Lewes Brooks on 5 Jan (ARK) was relocated at Barcombe Res on 12-14 Jan (ARK, RTP et al). A first-winter female at Wiston Pond on 8 Feb (ARK et al) was joined by another first-summer female on the 17th (ARK et al), both remaining to at least 14 Apr. Finally, an unaged female was present on the oxbow lake in Seven Sisters CP on 13 Mar (PFM et al).

The individuals at Wiston were considered to be different to that at Lewes Brooks/Barcombe, so four were recorded in the county which almost doubles the county total to nine. As one of the previous records was dead (at Seven Sisters CP in 1998), half the live records (including the county's first in 1982) have been found by the same individual! Barcombe Res also hosted birds in 2000 and 2001. [RJF]

**0203. TUFTED DUCK**

*Aythya fuligula*

**Scarce breeding species and fairly common winter visitor.**

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

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>County total</b>	1535	1392	677	367	176	188	301	587	578	762	927	1144
<b>Chichester Hbr</b>	40	35	25	4	9	3	2	6	28	2	31	13
<b>Chichester GP</b>	559	477	199	24	-	-	-	17	27	122	232	368
<b>Forest Mere</b>	2	-	4	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	31	26	-	-
<b>Burton &amp; Chingford Ponds</b>	18	26	30	18	4	9	17	nc	18	19	19	6
<b>Swanbourne Lake</b>	146	167	51	18	13	14	nc	41	42	29	68	54
<b>Arundel WWT</b>	87	82	19	38	31	31	nc	22	6	54	87	72
<b>Barcombe Res</b>	10	5	-	-	nc	19	4	4	21	12	31	21
<b>Eastbourne Lakes</b>	56	71	56	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	21	23	56	84
<b>Bewl Water</b>	95	84	113	nc	nc	nc	80	97	19	43	22	34
<b>Pett Level</b>	17	39	42	47	29	33	10	5	6	8	7	11
<b>Rye Hbr</b>	191	144	18	128	43	61	34	40	90	109	182	182
<b>Scotney Court GP</b>	132	42	33	44	27	nc	129	340	237	202	41	175

The *WeBS*' table shows that numbers at Bewl Water were particularly low in the second winter period, when low water levels were considered to be the cause. Significant counts above 50 birds, not shown in the table, were 70 at Barcombe Res on 12 Jan and 51 at Westhampnett Pit (Chichester GP) on 24 Jan.

Records of confirmed breeding were received from eight locations, involving a minimum of 33 broods (15 at Rye Hbr SSSI, six at Pett Level, six at Bewl Water and six at other sites). Actual fledging success, where recorded, was low: at Warnham LNR two fledged from a brood of eight ducklings and at Troutbeck (near Eridge), the first breeding

record for the site produced one fledged juvenile from seven ducklings. The latest broods reported were of two families at Drayton GP (Chichester GP) on 27 August.

Offshore records were typically sparse with evidence of spring migration provided by a modest total of 15 birds eastwards between 15 Mar and 2 May. [RWP]

0204. **SCAUP**

*Aythya marila*

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

The estimated monthly totals after allowing for duplication were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	Oct	Nov
<b>Monthly totals</b>	7	3	11	2	1	14
<b>Thorney Island</b>	2	2	2			
<b>Selsey Bill</b>			9			
<b>Pagham Hbr</b>	1				1	
<b>Worthing Beach</b>						1
<b>Brighton Marina</b>						1
<b>Seaford Head</b>				2		5
<b>Pett Level</b>	1					
<b>Rye Hbr</b>						2
<b>Scotney Court GP</b>	3	1				5

Very little coastal movement was evident in spring, a flock of 8 E past Selsey Bill on 15 March and 2 E past Seaford Head on 22 Apr being the highlights. Later in the year, one flew west past Worthing on 25 Nov and five moved east past Brighton Marina on 29 Nov.

Unusually there were no records in December. The annual total was 36. Once again this was below average in two generally mild winter periods. [RWP]

0206. **EIDER**

*Somateria mollissima*

**Scarce winter visitor and passage migrant, non-breeding birds summer annually. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern.**

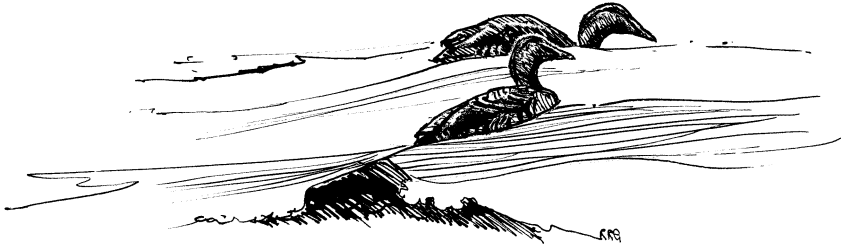
Wintering numbers were below average particularly in the latter part of the year when the estimated numbers wintering in the county were 14 in November and just nine in December. The largest gathering noted all year was just 21 off Church Norton on 8 Feb.

Spring migration was well up on 2002. The first three weeks of April saw the heaviest passage as shown in the following table:

	Mar	Apr	May
<b>Selsey Bill</b>	3	46	10
<b>Worthing Beach</b>	19	22	-
<b>Brighton Marina</b>	40	113	-
<b>Seaford Head</b>	60	95	2
<b>Bexhill/Hastings</b>	67	28	-

A number of birds was seen throughout the summer months in the Selsey Bill/Church Norton/Pagham Hbr area either offshore or roosting on mudbanks inside the harbour. The highest monthly total was 23 in June but numbers generally fluctuated between three and a maximum of 16 to the end of August. Single birds were noted offshore in Rye Bay on 9 Jun (surprisingly, the only record from that area) and in Chichester Hbr on 15 Jul.

Seventeen birds flew east past Shoreham Hbr on 5 Aug. There were no inland records. [RWP]



**0212. LONG-TAILED DUCK**

*Clangula hyemalis*

**Scarce passage migrant and winter visitor; usually scarcer in summer and autumn. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern.**

Early in the year just one was seen, offshore in Rye Bay on 4 Jan, and the species barely featured in spring seawatching logs as only two were sighted: singles past Worthing on 25 Apr and Brighton Marina on 29 Apr.

There were then no further records until 12 Oct when one was at Northpoint Pit (Rye). It was one of only 12 individuals recorded in the second winter period. These were one at Birdham Pool (Chichester) on 3 Dec, one at Pagham Lagoon from 1 Nov to 17 Dec, which was joined by a second from 2 to 15 Nov, a long-stayer inland at Barcombe Res from 9 Nov to at least 24 Dec, two at Rye Hbr on 14 Dec and one at Long Pit (Rye Hbr SSSI) on 28 Oct. Offshore there was one off Selsey Bill on 23 Dec, one offshore at Pagham Hbr on 16 Nov and three in Rye Bay on 18 Dec. [RWP]

**0213. COMMON SCOTER**

*Melanitta nigra*

**Common spring passage migrant and fairly common winter visitor; usually scarcer in summer and autumn. Red listed species of high conservation concern.**

In the first winter period the larger concentrations were in the far east of the county, the maximum count being 350 in Rye Bay on 23 Feb. Away from this area, totals of 34 past Seaford Head on 25 and 26 Feb were the highest counts.

Spring movements observed at the main seawatching sites were about average and the peak single-day movement was on 21 Mar. Totals are shown in the table below:

	Mar	Apr	May	Totals	Peak days
Selsey Bill	262	2516	643	3421	440 on 12 Apr
Worthing Beach	179	1282	486	1947	282 on 26 Apr
Brighton Marina	1799	7270	1773	10842	1003 on 21 Apr
Splash Point, Seaford	1582	7177	1383	10145	1786 on 21 Mar



In addition to the above, observers at Beachy Head reported a total of 6030 between 22 Feb and 31 May, unfortunately not broken down into monthly figures. Once migration finished in mid-June there were sightings of small groups summering offshore with peaks of 80 in Rye Bay and 55 off Selsey Bill on 25 and 29 Jul respectively. There were two inland records during the spring passage period: two at Arlington Res on 21 Mar and five at Ardingly Res on 6 Apr.

Autumn passage was light, observers at seawatching sites generally logging more birds east than west in the August to October period.

Wintering flocks up to the end of the year were considerably smaller than those at the start of 2003, with maxima of 120 in Rye Bay on 15 Nov and 120 off Selsey Bill on 27 Nov. [RWP]

## 0215. VELVET SCOTER

*Melanitta fusca*

**Scarce passage migrant and winter visitor along the coast; rare inland. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern.**

The approximate monthly totals were as follows:

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May		Oct	Nov	Dec
16	14	17	190	44		2	30	43

The majority of records at the start of the year involved small numbers seen with the Common Scoter flock in Rye Bay, with a maximum of 11 off Pett Level on 17 Feb. Elsewhere, singles were seen off Worthing on 1 Jan and Selsey Bill on 1 Jan and 6 Feb.

The heavy spring passage was protracted, spanning mid March through to early May. Monthly totals for the main seawatching localities and the counts on the peak days of 13 Apr, 21 Apr and 2 May were as shown in the table below:

	Mar		Apr		May		Peak Counts		
	E	W	E	W	E	W	13 Apr	21 Apr	2 May
<b>Selsey Bill</b>	5		151		17		73E	35E	16E
<b>Worthing Beach</b>			18	9	23		10E		22E
<b>Brighton Marina</b>	6		153		28		51E	42E	23E
<b>Splash Point, Seaford</b>	3		150		27		38E	60E	25E
<b>Beachy Head</b>			79		2		32E	31E	

Following 2 E at Worthing on 23 Oct, small numbers were recorded to the end of the year, predominantly in the west of the county. Peak counts were 5 E at Brighton Marina on 7 Dec followed by eight off Church Norton and four at Selsey Bill on 23 Dec.

Away from the open sea, a drake was at Newhaven Tide Mills on 25-27 Apr and singles were in Chichester Hbr on 11 and 16 Dec (when caught in fishing net) and in Pagham Hbr on 23-24 Dec. [CAH]

0218. **GOLDENEYE***Bucephala clangula*

Scarce winter visitor; rare in summer. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern.

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

	Jan	Feb	Mar		Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>County total</b>	56	46	7		1	1	13	12
<b>Chichester Hbr</b>	36	26	1				6	7
<b>Pagham Hbr</b>	8	7						1
<b>Chichester GP</b>	3	3	1			nc	5	
<b>Barcombe Res</b>		1			1	1		1
<b>Bewl Water</b>	3	3	5					
<b>Darwell Res</b>	2				nc		2	2
<b>Rye Hbr</b>	3	5						1

Additional to the above table, birds were seen in the opening months at Exceat Bridge (Cuckmere) on 13 Jan and 2 E at Seaford on 19 Feb with 1 E the following day. The only apparent spring migrant was one off Hastings on 15 Mar and all birds had left the county by the end of March.

Following an unseasonal single at Pagham on 2 Aug, another early returner was at Barcombe Res on 27 Aug. This individual was still present nearly two months later when the next birds were seen offshore at Selsey Bill and Worthing on 14 and 16 Oct respectively. Thereafter, totals were relatively low with numbers barely reaching double figures in either Chichester or Pagham Hbrs. [CAH]

0220. **SMEW***Mergellus albellus*

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

The approximate monthly totals and the monthly maxima at each site were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar		Nov	Dec
<b>Monthly total</b>	28	31	13		6	25
<b>Pagham Lagoon</b>	1	1				
<b>Ifield</b>					1	
<b>Pett Level</b>		1				
<b>Rye Hbr LNR</b>	16	28	7		3	25
<b>Northpoint GP, Rye</b>	6	19	6			7
<b>Scotney</b>	5	1				

Typically, the majority of birds were in the east of the county at Rye Hbr, Northpoint GP and Scotney Court GP in both winter periods. During the first winter period, peak counts were in mid February: 28 at Rye Hbr LNR on the 16<sup>th</sup> and 19 (3 drakes) at Northpoint GP next day (assumed to relate to many or all of the same birds). Elsewhere, one favoured Pagham Lagoon from 11 Jan to 23 Feb and one was at Pett Level on 22 Feb.

The first returning bird was at Ternery Pool (Rye Hbr) on 12 Nov with five there by the 16<sup>th</sup> when a single bird visited the more unusual location of Ifield Mill Pond. High numbers had returned to the Rye area by the end of the year with a peak of 25 (3 drakes) at Castle Water (Rye Hbr LNR) on the 29 Dec. [CAH]

0221. **RED-BREASTED MERGANSER***Mergus serrator***Fairly common winter visitor and passage migrant to the coast; a few summer.**The monthly *WeBS*' counts at the principal sites were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr		Nov	Dec
<b>County total</b>	117	129	227	13		78	197
<b>Chichester Hbr</b>	111	128	184	13		71	191
<b>Pagham Hbr</b>	2	1	6			5	6
<b>Goring Gap</b>			35	nc			

The largest counts received during the first winter period were 60 off Goring on 11 Jan and an impressive 150 off Worthing on the 13<sup>th</sup>.

The monthly counts from the main seawatching sites were as follows:

		Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May		Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>Selsey Bill</b>	E	16	32	186	208				5	
	W	3	57	14	17			6	64	64
<b>Worthing Beach</b>	E	6		81	62	2		11		541
	W	83			6			8	12	195
<b>Brighton Marina</b>	E	7	33	44	290	16				
	W	33	8	4	18					2
<b>Splash Point, Seaford</b>	E		13	31	237	7				
	W		1							

The heaviest day of spring passage was 11 Apr when 71 were noted off Brighton Marina and 47 off Selsey Bill. Two birds were noted during the summer: singles in Thorney Channel on 30 Jun and Pagham Hbr on 27 Aug.

At the end of the year, numbers built up from the second half of October to peaks of 45 off Atherington on 10 Nov and 70 off Worthing on 25 Dec. As noted in 2002, the species appears to be remarkably scarce in the far east of the county.

Unusually, there were several records from freshwater sites, comprising one at Scotney Court GP on 3-5 Jan, two at Chichester GP on 19-25 Jan and 16 Nov, one at Northpoint GP on 6 Dec, and four at Arlington Res on 6 Dec. [CAH]

0223. **GOOSANDER***Mergus merganser***Scarce winter visitor and passage migrant.**

A relatively poor year with no cold weather influxes. The monthly totals were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Nov	Dec
<b>Monthly total</b>	9	4	2	0	12
<b>Selsey Bill</b>					2
<b>Chichester GP</b>	2				1
<b>Beeding Brooks/Adur</b>		1			
<b>Weir Wood Res</b>					8
<b>Barcombe Res</b>	3	2	2		
<b>Arlington Res</b>	3				
<b>Willingdon</b>		1			

West Langney, Eastbourne	1						
Scotney							1

The first birds of the year were at Arlington Res where there were two redheads on 2 Jan and a male on the 4<sup>th</sup>, followed by one at West Langney Lake (Eastbourne) on the 6<sup>th</sup>. Three were at Barcombe Res on 12 Jan after which two redheads were reported there intermittently until 15 Mar. Elsewhere, singles were at Shinewater Marsh (Willington) on 16 Feb and Beeding Brooks on 17<sup>th</sup> and 23-24 Feb.

During the second winter period a drake at Scotney Court GP on 6 Dec was followed by a pair past Selsey Bill on the 7<sup>th</sup> and one at Chichester GP on the 14<sup>th</sup>. The year ended with a notable group of eight redheads at Weir Wood Res on 23-24 Dec. [CAH]

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

*Oxyura jamaicensis*

**Scarce resident and winter visitor.**

Monthly maxima at the principal sites were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Chichester GP	4	6	1		2		2	
Swanbourne / Arundel WWT	22	7	15	15				
West Langney, Eastbourne					2	2	5	
Pett Level	1		4	8	6	4		
Rye Hbr LNR		2	3	5	1	5	2	6
Scotney	3				12	6	10	2

The most unusual sightings away from the principal sites listed above were singles at Widewater (Lancing) on 23 Feb and at Broadwater Lake (Eastbourne) on 24 Mar.

Breeding season records were received from Rye Hbr LNR (5-7 pairs), Pett Level (4 broods seen) and Selsey West Fields, although the species is likely to have bred elsewhere in the county.

During the post-breeding period, wandering birds included singles at Iford on 5 Jul, both Amberley and Coldwaltham Brooks on 18 Aug, and at Earnley on 5-16 Sep. [CAH]

0226. **WHITE-HEADED DUCK**

*Oxyura leucocephala*

**Escape/Very rare vagrant. Considered endangered by IUCN.**

A first-winter bird was present at Scotney Court GP from 29 Oct-1 Nov (NAD, PS et al). It had previously been seen on Lade GP (Greatstone-on-Sea, Kent), 7 km northeast, on 26-27 Oct. Its identification has been accepted by BBRC but the species is not currently on the British List. All records are currently considered to relate to escapes from captivity by the BOU Records Committee who maintain the British List. However, this individual would seem to have as good credentials as any, and better than most for being a wild bird (i.e. age, location and short stay). [RJF]

0231. **HONEY BUZZARD**

*Pernis apivorus*

**Very scarce breeding summer visitor and spring and autumn passage migrant.  
Amber listed species of medium conservation concern.**

The Sussex Honey Buzzard Group has provided data for breeding pairs within the county. Three pairs each fledged two young with a fourth pair producing one chick, which sadly died in the nest when approximately three weeks old. There is an abundance of suitable habitat in Sussex and there is no reason why there should not be other pairs, as yet undiscovered.

Elsewhere, there was a dark morph bird, which was seen on six different occasions throughout the summer at one location in the east of the county. In the same general area on 7 June, there was a single sighting of a pale bird, which was thought to be a male. There was no proven breeding at this site.

There were isolated records of single birds at two other localities on 31 May and 8 July.

The only spring coastal record for the year was an adult male at Beachy Head on 29 May (JFC). There were three other sightings at this locality in the autumn passage, with single dark morph juveniles on 8 Sep (JFC) and 20 Sep (ITB) and a dark morph adult on 21 Sep (DC).

Two juveniles from the same nest in Sussex were fitted with satellite tags and their fascinating journey to West Africa (via France, Spain and Morocco) can be found on the website at [www.roydennis.org/honeybuzzard.htm](http://www.roydennis.org/honeybuzzard.htm). [MEK]

## 0238. **BLACK KITE**

*Milvus migrans*

### **Rare vagrant.**

One was present in the Beachy Head/East Dean area for several hours on 3 Aug (MEC, RHC et al). On three occasions it was watched from Beachy Head attempting to head south out to sea over Birling Gap but it changed its mind each time soon after crossing the coast and drifted back inland. Following its third sortie over the sea, it flew inland more purposefully and was finally lost from view heading northeast behind East Dean. Its age caused some debate, although most observers considered it to be a juvenile. It has been accepted by BBRC and is the ninth record since 1990 and the 22nd in total. Half of the county records have been in May and, perhaps surprisingly, this is the first for August.

A juvenile wearing jesses was seen at Beachy Head on 28 Sep and is included in the Category D list. [RJF]

## 0239. **RED KITE**

*Milvus milvus*

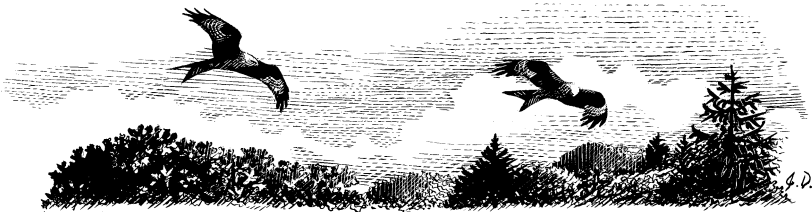
### **Scarce visitor, recorded in all months. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern.**

It proved to be another fascinating year with a large number of records involving approximately 30 different birds. Whenever possible, records should be submitted with details such as wing tags and an assessment of maturity. It is possible to differentiate between juveniles, 2<sup>nd</sup> calendar year birds and full adults and this information would undoubtedly help when attempting to analyse what is happening within the county.

The monthly totals are summarised as follows:

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
5	6	13	8	5-6	2	1	1	0	0	1	0

This species may be seen anywhere in the county at any time of the year but the West Sussex downland is currently favoured. The two juveniles holding winter territories in the west of the county in 2002 were still present into March and, whilst Red Kites do not usually breed until their third calendar year, there was certainly a degree of expectancy when spring approached. On 31 Mar one of the 2<sup>nd</sup> calendar year birds spiralled up and engaged in a display flight in which it flapped its wings in an exaggerated manner and this activity soon drew in two others, which then resulted in a prolonged exhibition of aerial jousting. Although this young Kite stayed on territory for the whole of the summer there was no evidence of pairing.



However, within a few kilometres of this site, two birds were displaying on 17 Apr and disputing territory with Common Buzzards a few days later on the 20<sup>th</sup>. In all probability they were the same birds mentioned above and quite clearly were engaged in pair activity. Since Kites begin their breeding cycle quite early in the year and one would expect the female to be incubating by mid April, it seems likely that these birds were paired but not involved in a serious breeding attempt.

In the east of the county in the early part of the year, there were two and quite possibly three different birds at one locality. There was certainly site fidelity and some evidence of territoriality, such as display flights and mobbing behaviour towards the local Buzzards but unfortunately with the arrival of spring they departed.

Other sightings of note included two at Woods Mill (Henfield) on 10 Jan, two at Chailey Warren on 28 Jan and two on the Hampshire border at Deanlane End (near Rowlands Castle) on 12 Apr.

In keeping with recent years there was good evidence of a spring passage with a single at Galley Hill (Bexhill) on 22 Mar, two over Pagham Village on 23 Mar, singles at Brighton Wild Park and Sidlesham Ferry on 26 Mar and a further single at Brede Valley on 1 Apr. In May, there was an isolated record of a bird coming in off the sea at Selsey Bill on the 28<sup>th</sup>. [MEK]

## 0260. MARSH HARRIER

*Circus aeruginosus*

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

Seen in every month, except July, there were approximately 36 different birds in the first part of the year and 49 in the second part, making it another very good year for this

species. The numbers seen at the major localities and the county monthly minima were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>County Total</b>	1	4	9	10	10	2	0	14	20	7	5	3
<b>Chichester &amp; Pagham Hbrs</b>	-	1	2	4	2	-	-	4	3	1	1	-
<b>Beachy Head</b>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	4	-	-	-
<b>Filsham Reedbed LNR</b>	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	1	1	-	-	-
<b>Rye Bay</b>	1	1	1	2	1	1	-	3	2	3	4	2
<b>Other sites</b>	-	2	6	4	6	1	-	6	10	3	-	1

As usual, there were many records from the far west of the county in the area which includes Pagham Hbr, Selsey and Thorney Island and also a large number in the far east of the county, in the Rye Bay area. Approximately two thirds of the 105 records submitted came from these two general localities.

Away from these favoured sites this species can be found with some regularity in the principal river valleys and in the early part of the year there were singles at Beeding Brooks on 10 Feb, at Arundel WWT on 11 Feb and, higher up the R Arun at Amberley Wildbrooks and Pulborough Brooks, a bird was seen on several occasions during the early part of March.

There was an extended spring passage between 16 Mar and 9 May with a trickle of records thereafter. On 16 Mar there was a single at Pett Level, followed by other singles at Sompting on the 17<sup>th</sup>, at Pagham Hbr on the 18<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup>, at Ambersham Common on 23 Mar, at Brighton on the 26<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> and at Thorney Island on the 27<sup>th</sup>. In April there were further singles at Pagham Hbr on the 3<sup>rd</sup>, at Hastings on the 4<sup>th</sup>, at Thorney Island on the 11<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup>, at Splash Point (Seaford) on the 13<sup>th</sup>, at Pulborough Brooks RSPB on the 14<sup>th</sup>, at Combe Haven on the 18<sup>th</sup>, at Selsey Bill on the 25<sup>th</sup> and at Rye Hbr LNR on the 27<sup>th</sup>. In May there were singles at Beeding Brooks and Pagham Hbr on the 4<sup>th</sup>, at Beachy Head and Combe Haven on the 6<sup>th</sup>, at Rother Valley (east) on the 7<sup>th</sup>, at Southeast in the Ouse Valley on the 9<sup>th</sup> and finally at Pett Level on the 31<sup>st</sup> and 1 Jun. It is evident that the majority of these sightings are from coastal localities and inland records during spring passage are distinctly uncommon, most probably because migrating birds usually fly too high to be easily seen.

In June there was a single female at Ford in the Arun Valley on the 17<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup>.

The earliest date for late summer/early autumn was 3 Aug at Rye Hbr LNR followed shortly after by another single at Selsey on the 6<sup>th</sup>. Juvenile dispersal for this species can be quite early and this year juveniles were recorded at Rye Hbr LNR on 8 Aug and at Thorney Island on the 16<sup>th</sup>. Also during August there were three immature birds at Pagham Hbr on three separate days, the 13<sup>th</sup>, 23<sup>rd</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup>, and at Weir Wood Res there were two singles, with a female present on the 15<sup>th</sup> followed by a male the next day.

As the autumn passage progressed there was a total of eight over Brighton, two at Scotney Court GP on 13 Sep, two at Beachy Head on 17 Sep, two over Hastings on 18 Sep, two at Pagham Hbr on 23 Sep, two at Rye Hbr LNR on 14 Oct, a single at Warnham LNR on 17 Oct, two at The Midrips on 16 Nov and two at Scotney Court GP on 30 Nov. To finish off the year there were one or more different birds in the Rye area throughout December and a single heading west at Beeding Cement Works on the 15<sup>th</sup>. [MEK]

**Scarce, but regular, winter visitor and passage migrant. Red listed species of high conservation concern.**

Approximately 200 records were received but as usual for a comparatively small number of localities. The principal areas involved together with the probable monthly minima are summarised as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>County Total</b>	19	13	12	7	1	0	0	0	2	8	12	13
<b>Chichester &amp; Pagham Hbrs</b>	2	1	-	1	-	-	-	-	1	2	2	1
<b>W. Sussex Downland</b>	2	3	4	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	4	1
<b>Arun Valley</b>	3	2	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	2
<b>NW Sussex Commons</b>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
<b>E. Sussex Downland</b>	1	1	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	1
<b>Ashdown Forest</b>	4	3	2	2	-	-	-	-	-	1	2	3
<b>Beachy Head</b>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-
<b>Pevensey Levels</b>	1	1	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-
<b>Rye Bay</b>	5	1	1	2	1	-	-	-	-	2	2	3
<b>Other Sites</b>	1	1	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1

In the early part of the year there were three recognised roosting areas with a maximum of three males and two ringtails at Scotney Court GP on 3 Jan, one male and two ringtails in the Arun Valley on 21 Jan and one male and three ringtails at Ashdown Forest on 27 Jan. Elsewhere, there were three ringtails in the West Dean Woods area, a male was regular at Lewes Brooks and an occasional ringtail was seen at Pevensey Levels.

As spring approaches one expects numbers to fall away, so the 6-7 different birds seen in April were somewhat unusual. There was a ringtail at Ashdown Forest on 8 and 12 Apr with a male present on the 19<sup>th</sup>, single ringtails in the Rye area on 9 and 30 Apr, an adult male flying high northwest over Pilsey Island on 16 Apr, a male coming in off the sea at Splash Point (Seaford) on 24 Apr and perhaps the same male at Ovingdean also on the 24<sup>th</sup>. The final record was for 2 May with a ringtail hunting over the reed bed at Pett Level.

The earliest autumn record was a ringtail at Beachy Head on 1 Sep and there was another single ringtail in the Pagham Hbr area on the 23<sup>rd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup>. Numbers started to build up slowly in October but with no apparent evidence of any site fidelity. There were downland sightings at Steyning Round Hill on 23 Oct and at Mount Harry (near Lewes) on the 26<sup>th</sup> but, as previously mentioned, birds can appear anywhere on the South Downs and these records often reflect observer bias rather more closely than any special preference for these specific localities. However, the game-cover crops at Lee Fm (Patching) once again proved very attractive to this species and there were two and sometimes three ringtails patrolling this area during November and December. Elsewhere, there were two males at Scotney Court GP on 17 Dec and another male was seen on passage at Brighton Marina on 19 Dec.

The Ashdown Forest roost site was probably first occupied on 3 Nov when a male appeared at dusk but on 14 Nov there was clearly both a male and a ringtail present and the maximum number recorded was a male and two ringtails on 5 Dec. [MEK]



0263. **MONTAGU'S HARRIER**

*Circus pygargus*

**Very scarce spring and autumn visitor; last bred successfully in 1962. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern.**

2002: Good views were obtained of a very interesting small harrier species at Scotney Court GP on 16 May (KMJ). Its long slim wings, buoyant flight and plumage details were all very indicative of a 2nd calendar year Montagu's Harrier but there were some features suggestive of a Pallid Harrier, and this possibility could not be ruled out.

2003: It was rather a poor year with just one authenticated record in early June and three more in September.

Whilst seawatching at Ferring on 3 Jun one observer watched an immature bird coming off the sea and heading northeast (CEH). As is often the case with passage raptors at coastal localities it was immediately mobbed by a Herring Gull.

A juvenile provided fairly close views for a number of observers in the Beachy Head area on 7 Sep (JC, ARK, TJW et al). When last seen it was drifting west and it may have been the same bird or another juvenile that was recorded on 9 Sep but on this occasion the bird was clearly heading out to sea when it was lost to view (DRC, JFC, RHC). Later in the month there was yet another juvenile at Beachy Head on the 20th (ITB, IJW) and this one was seen to catch a prey item, which it then proceeded to devour on the ground. [MEK]

0267. **GOSHAWK**

*Accipiter gentilis*

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

There was a sharp increase in the number of authenticated records from the northwest of the county. There were displaying pairs at three different locations, the first on 8 Jan (MPL), the second on 24 Feb (BFF *et al*) and the third on 12 Mar (BFF *et al*). There was also a single female at the first location on 4 Feb (BFF *et al*) and a single male at the third location on 19 Mar (BFF *et al*).

The three records of displaying pairs were all within 12 km of each other and whilst it is just possible that three different pairs were involved, it is perhaps more likely that there was just one pair wandering around the area. One Goshawk's nest was found but it was incomplete and never finished. Clearly with this degree of activity the species may be breeding in the county but this has yet to be confirmed.

Although display may take place on any sunny day throughout the winter, the second half of February through to the middle of March is probably optimal and the degree of activity is likely to vary according to whether there is an isolated pair or several pairs in close proximity. The male will patrol a sizeable territory and, if the weather is favourable, one should be able to observe this patrolling flight on a reproducible basis over a period of several weeks. [MEK]

0269. **SPARROWHAWK**

*Accipiter nisus*

**Common resident and passage migrant.**

Over 400 records were received but they were mostly casual observations and provided little information on breeding densities or fledging success. Some 30-40

probable breeding pairs were found but this does not reflect the true status of this species in the county. At one nest site five juveniles were ringed and, whilst this number of chicks may be a little unusual, it does indicate just how productive this species can be.

The usual range of small prey was noted but one chasing a Turnstone and another trying to raid a House Martin's nest were the only unusual records submitted.

There were a number of sightings at the seawatching stations but none appeared to involve birds coming in off the sea and therefore no passage migration, as such, was reported.

At Shoreham Sanctuary one adult and three juveniles were ringed. [MEK]

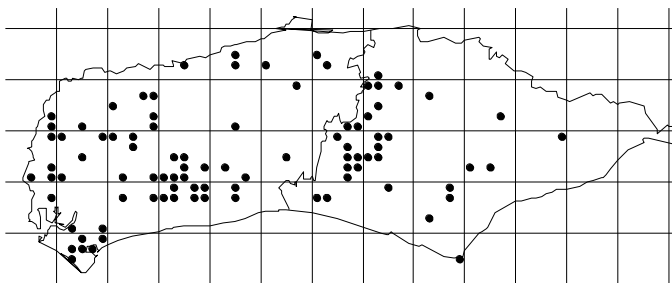


0287. **BUZZARD**

*Buteo buteo*

**Fairly common but localised resident and passage migrant and possible winter visitor.**

This species continues to do well with good evidence of increasing numbers year-on-year. Just one decade ago there were fewer than ten pairs in the county but now the population is probably of the order of 120-150 pairs and the map below shows all records during the 2003 breeding period. Casual observation suggests that the breeding density in the core areas has increased but without any significant expansion in the breeding range. More-or-less the whole of the downland in West Sussex has been populated and elsewhere there are several pairs both in the Petworth area and the Sussex/Surrey border.



In the east of the county the core population is present in the area between Lewes and Ashdown Forest. Elsewhere, there is a scattering of pairs, but as the numbers increase the evidence suggests a general preference for pairs to nest just 1-3 km from each other rather

than move further afield to breed in isolation. This incremental approach to expansion may delay the exploitation of many habitat-rich areas for some years to come. However, such is their productivity it would seem only a matter of time before there are breeding birds throughout the whole of rural Sussex.

Multiple sightings have become commonplace and these gatherings tend to be most obvious in late winter and early spring. In the west of the county there were 12 at Chilgrove on 16 Feb, 25 in the general area of West Dean Woods on 2 Mar and seven at Goodwood Park on 4 Mar. In the east of the county there was a maximum of ten at Barcombe on 2 Mar.

In the second half of the year, ten were present at Arundel WWT on 1 Oct, eight at Harrow Hill on 13 Nov and nine at Warningcamp on 4 Dec.

Commenting on passage migration is now fraught with difficulties. It seems likely that there are wandering birds in every month of the year and it is perhaps only in those areas where there are no known breeding pairs that a meaningful statement can be made. At Brighton there were 15 birds recorded in the spring, with most of them flying north, and in the autumn a further 31 were counted. [MEK]

## 0290. ROUGH-LEGGED BUZZARD

*Buteo lagopus*

### Rare winter visitor.

The first-year bird first reported on the Lewes Levels in late Nov 2002 (SxBR 55:59) remained in the Mount Caburn/Rodmell area to at least 17 Feb (ASG et al) while two were seen at Ketchen's Lane (near Sheffield Park) on 13 Mar (GB). Three is the most seen in the county since four were recorded in 1985 with just three other records in the intervening years (one each in 1987, 1996 and 1997). The Sheffield Park record is the first to involve more than one individual since four were seen on Glynde Levels in February 1976. [RJF]

## 0301. OSPREY

*Pandion haliaetus*

### Scarce passage migrant. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern.

There were just eight different birds recorded in the first half of the year but there was a fairly good autumn passage involving at least 28 birds. The minimum monthly totals, together with the numbers seen at the principal sites are summarised as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>County Total</b>	0	0	3	3	2	0	3	12	13	0	1	0
<b>Chichester &amp; Pagham Hbrs</b>	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	3	4	-	-	-
<b>Weir Wood Res.</b>	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	2	3	-	-	-
<b>Beachy Head</b>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Arlington Res.</b>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	1	-
<b>Bowl water</b>	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	2	-	-	-	-
<b>Other sites</b>	-	-	3	1	1	-	2	5	4	-	-	-

There was an early spring migrant at Woods Mill (Henfield) on 12 Mar followed by a single at Brighton Marina on 17 Mar and another in off the sea at Shoreham Beach on the 30<sup>th</sup>. An adult and an immature bird were present at Thorney Island on 12-14 Apr and a single over Shoreham Airport on 25 Apr. Singles at Bowl Water on 26 May and Combe Haven on the 30<sup>th</sup> completed the spring passage.

In the second half of the year there were three July records with a singles at Cuckmere Haven and Pett Level on the 7<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> and an early juvenile at Weir Wood Res on the 28-29<sup>th</sup>. Thereafter, the majority of records came either from the principal county reservoirs or from Thorney Island. At Bewl Water there was a single on 9 Aug with singles seen on a further seven dates until 30 Aug. There were many sightings at Weir Wood Res with two present on 17, 20 and 22 Aug and 4 Sep, three seen on 10 Sep and singles seen on many dates until 16 Sep. At Ardingly Res there were two present on 17 Aug and singles on 28 Aug, 5, 16, 25 and 26 Sep. At Arlington Res there were singles on 13, 23 and 25 Sep and a very late bird on 6 Nov. At Thorney Island there were two on 31 Aug and 2 Sep and singles on many dates until 28 Sep.

Elsewhere, there were singles at Rye Hbr LNR on 30 Aug, Brighton on 31 Aug, the R Adur (Shoreham) on 9 Sep and Bells Yew Green on 13 Sep. [MEK]

0304. **KESTREL**

*Falco tinnunculus*

**Fairly common resident and passage migrant. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern.**

There were records for approximately 50 pairs but breeding data was only available for just nine of these. Clearly these figures do not reflect the true status of this species within the county. A feature of recent years has been the occupation of owl boxes and this does allow for accurate counting of chick numbers. One pair successfully fledged five, one pair fledged four, five pairs fledged three and one pair just two chicks. Since most of this data was derived from nesting boxes it is quite possible that these figures somewhat over-state the usual productivity of this species.

In the Rye Hbr area there was a male with a blue wing tag seen on 24 Aug and on 10 Oct. This bird was originally caught and tagged in June 1999 (BYJ).

Seawatching produced a good number of records of birds considered to be passage migrants, with the monthly totals summarised as follows:

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
1	0	1	2	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

There was another record of a Kestrel eating carrion. On this occasion it was a juvenile feasting on a cock Pheasant that had been shot the previous day. [MEK]

0309. **MERLIN**

*Falco columbarius*

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

More than 200 records were received with the usual bias towards the eastern and western harbours, downland and the major river valleys of the Arun and Adur. This bias undoubtedly reflects this species preference for large open tracts of countryside but there is a strong probability that it ranges over many other parts of the county where it is either over-looked or there are no observers to report its presence. Simply listing a few localities where birds were seen provides some support for this contention: Ashdown Forest, Barcombe, Bewl Water, Combe Haven, Horsham, Ifold, Newhaven and Weir Wood Res.

The approximate monthly figures are summarised in the table below:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>County Total</b>	8	9	8	10	0	0	0	2	15	21	18	12
<b>Arun Valley/Pulb. Brooks</b>	1	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	1
<b>Beachy Head</b>	-	-	-	3	-	-	-	-	3	3	1	-
<b>Chichester &amp; Pagham Hbrs</b>	2	2	3	2	-	-	-	2	2	3	4	2
<b>E. Sussex Downland</b>	-	1	1	1	-	-	-	-	1	2	2	-
<b>Rye Bay</b>	2	2	-	1	-	-	-	-	3	3	2	3
<b>W. Sussex Downland</b>	1	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	1	2	4	2
<b>Other Sites</b>	2	3	2	3	-	-	-	-	5	7	4	4

In the first half of the year there were singles only, except for two at Beachy Head on 17 Apr. The final spring record was a single at Combe Haven on 26 Apr.

In the second half of the year there were no early records with the first sighting at Thorney Island on 24 Aug and further records in the Selsey/Pagham Hbr area on 28-30 Aug. Multiple sightings were much more in evidence with two in the Chichester/Pagham Hbr area on 5 and 16 Oct and 15 and 28 Nov, two on downland at Benfield Valley (Hangleton) on 4 Oct, two at Beachy Head on 5 Oct, two at Park Brow (Findon) on 28 Oct, two at Combe Haven on 1 Nov and finally two in the Rye area on 10 Nov and 23 Dec.

Seawatching produced several records with a single in off the sea at Selsey Bill on 30 Mar, a single at Splash Point (Seaford) on 13 Apr, two heading east at Warren Glen (Fairlight) on the 17 Oct and a single at Selsey Bill heading north on 16 Nov. [MEK]

## 0310. HOBBY

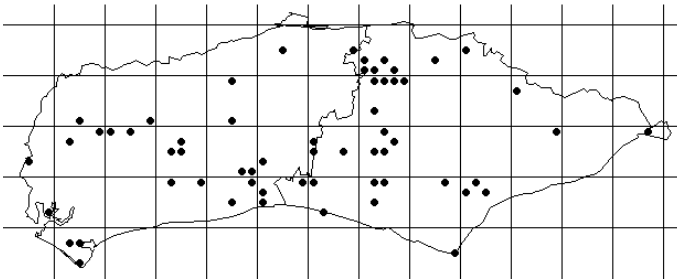
*Falco subbuteo*

### Scarce breeding summer visitor and regular passage migrant.

**2002.** The last record of the year was of one at Troutbeck (near Eridge) on 27 Oct (PAS).

**2003.** There were a number of early arrivals, with the first seen coming in off the sea at Widewater (Lancing) on 6 Apr, followed by other singles at the University of Sussex, Deanlane End and Henfield on 8, 12 and 14 Apr respectively, with two more singles seen at Ashdown Forest and Lewes on the 15<sup>th</sup>. The only spring multiple sighting of any note was of six birds at Pulborough Brooks RSPB on 4 May.

At the various seawatching stations there were records for Worthing Beach on 26 Apr, Selsey Bill on 27 Apr, Brighton Marina on 2 May and other singles at Selsey Bill and Worthing Beach on 25 May.



There were almost 300 records in total, representing just 30-40 probable breeding localities, and the map shows all records during the 2004 breeding period. As usual,

information on fledging success was very limited with incomplete data on just four pairs. Since the likely breeding population is of the order of 120-160 pairs, these fairly typical annual figures do not reflect the true status of this species within the county.

Few 'kills' were witnessed but the only prey item identified was a Dunlin, which was taken at Thorney Island on 14 Jul.

A feature of recent years has been the large number of late autumn records but this year there were only seven October reports with the latest on the 31<sup>st</sup> at Castle Water (Rye Hbr LNR). [MEK]

## 0320. **PEREGRINE**

*Falco peregrinus*

### **Scarce breeding resident.**

A huge number of records were received, which clearly reflects the increase in the breeding population within the county. It is worth remembering that twenty years ago there were just five authenticated records. How times have changed!

The Sussex Peregrine Study Group provided comprehensive data on all the known breeding pairs. There was a total of seventeen pairs of which nine were situated on chalk headlands, five were nesting at inland quarries and three were in nest boxes on tall buildings.

Three pairs failed in their breeding attempt, two pairs fledged one young, two pairs fledged two young, eight pairs fledged three young and two pairs fledged four young, making a total of 38 fledglings for the year.

The Chichester Cathedral pair was monitored on CCTV. The first egg was laid on 24 Mar, the second egg on the 26<sup>th</sup>, the third egg on the 28<sup>th</sup> and the fourth egg on the 31<sup>st</sup>. There were four small downy young on 11 May and by 12 Jun all four had fledged.

Although the Sussex Heights and Chichester Cathedral pairs provide good opportunities for easy viewing, Pagham Hbr in July often proves to be good value with five different birds present on both the 16<sup>th</sup> and the 31<sup>st</sup>. It is likely that these birds were all members of the same family party from Chichester Cathedral.

Prey items included Moorhen, Lapwing, Dunlin, Black-headed Gull, Common Tern and Feral Pigeon. [MEK]

## 0358. **RED-LEGGED PARTRIDGE**

*Alectoris rufa*

### **Introduced resident. Population augmented annually by captive-bred stock.**

Records were received from 35 sites, 28 of them from downland or near the coast; this pattern of distribution is probably influenced by observer activity and further biased by captive-bred birds being released for shooting.

Only three double figure counts were noted up to the end of March; 15 at Sidlesham Ferry Pool, 12 at Banks Fm (Barcombe) and 11 in the Arun Valley from Arundel to South Stoke.

The majority of sightings were recorded during the breeding season, with only two of them from north of the Downs. The only positive sign of natural breeding was two coveys totalling 14 birds seen at Chantry Hill on 25 Aug.

Higher counts were received in the second winter period, including 40 at both Chantry Hill on 13 Sep and Pagham Hbr on 28 Oct. Thirty-one at Kingsfold were in a cage ready

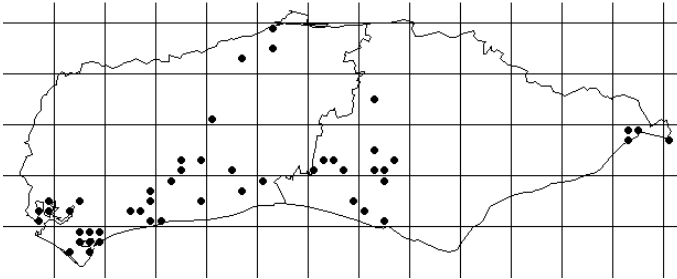
for release on 28 Sep and birds at Pilsey Island, with a maximum of 34 on 19 Nov, were noted as 'some of the released birds from Thorney Island'. A pair at Tinker's Marsh Lane (Bewl Water) on 8 Sep was the first seen there since 1966. [RTP]

0367. **GREY PARTRIDGE**

*Perdix perdix*

**Fairly common but decreasing resident. Red listed species of high conservation concern.**

Records were received from 53 sites, all but seven of them from the coastal region and the South Downs (see map below). In the first winter period, the only notable count was of 38 in three coveys at Mount Caburn (near Lewes) on 7 Jan. These were likely to be of captive origin. Of the 44 other records during this period, only seven were in double figures.



During the breeding season, pairs were recorded from 20 sites. At Rye Hbr SSSI, numbers were again low (although slightly up on 2002) with about four pairs in the Harbour Fm/Beach Reserve area (where two or three broods were seen) and a further brood at Castle Water. A breeding survey at Sefter Fm (Pagham) found two territories in 95 ha and at Marsh Fm (Yapton) one in 67 ha. There were five pairs at Thorney Island and two at The Midrips. Up to four birds were seen in a garden at Sidlesham on a number of occasions between January and June but no young were reported.

In the second winter period coveys were regularly reported at Climping. On 27 Aug there were two coveys of 8 and 13 but by 15 Nov the total counted was 56. At Rye Hbr the peak count was 23 on 15 Oct. At Stakers Fm (Yapton) there were 16 on 18 Oct and winter censuses in December at Marsh Fm and Sefter Fm found 12 and one respectively. Elsewhere there were 16 at Lidsey Rife (Barnham) on 23 Oct and counts of up to 12 at various sites around Pagham Hbr and Church Norton. [RTP]

0370. **QUAIL**

*Coturnix coturnix*

**Scarce summer visitor, recorded in variable numbers from year to year. Formerly occasional in winter. Red listed species of high conservation concern.**

Records were received from 17 sites involving a possible 23 different birds. The first arrival was noted at Tegdown Hill (Brighton) on 1 Jun followed by two at The Burgh (Burpham) on the 6<sup>th</sup>, one at Plumpton Plain on the 7<sup>th</sup>, one at Nook Meadow (Rye SSSI) on the 14<sup>th</sup>, one at Balsdean on the 19<sup>th</sup> and one at Kingley Vale on the 29<sup>th</sup>.

At Thundersbarrow Hill (north of Shoreham) a singing male and responding female were found on 6 Jul. At Steep Down (Lancing) two pairs were seen on 10 Jul with further records from there on 13 Jul, 15 Jul and 5 Aug. The records from the latter two sites give the best indications of breeding in the county that have been reported for some time.

Late records were received from Fairlight Glen on 3 Oct and from Ashdown Forest on 30 Nov. The latter was seen hiding under a caravan during a rainstorm and was wearing a blue leg ring. Winter records are rare in Sussex although one was seen at Lancing Clump on 15 Nov 2001. Prior to that there was a record from Southease on 8 Feb 1976 and des Forges and Harber referred to about ten December records (*Birds of Sussex*). [RTP]

0394. **PHEASANT**

*Phasianus colchicus*

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

Records were received from many sites across the county. In the first winter period notable counts were 25 at Pulborough Brooks RSPB on 1 Jan and 28 at Westmeston (Ditchling) on 20 May. During the breeding season, reports came from 46 well scattered sites but with little evidence of confirmed breeding. A pair was copulating at Isfield on 8 May. At Rye Hbr SSSI, broods were seen at Castle Water and Harbour Fm with the comment that over recent years numbers have been continuing to increase. Elsewhere, territories were identified at five sites totalling 19 pairs. In the second winter period, 28 were at Sefter Fm (Pagham) on 4 Nov, 86 at Stump Bottom (Steyning) on 8 Nov and the same number at Lychpole Hill (Steyning) on 9 Nov, which were presumably birds released for shooting. [RTP]

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

*Chrysolophus pictus*

**Very scarce introduced resident.**

Only two records were received for the year. Two males were interacting and calling at dusk at Monkton House (Didling) on 1 May (ACG) and a single breeding territory was identified at Kingley Vale (GC). [RTP]

0407. **WATER RAIL**

*Rallus aquaticus*

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

The approximate monthly totals from all sites were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>Sites</b>	31	17	23	10	2	5	3	7	15	21	30	22
<b>Birds</b>	135	55	90	21	13	6	7	13	41	55	77	96

Summing the maximum counts from each site between October 2002 and March 2003 inclusive gives a rough estimate of the winter population. In 2003 this was 302, considerably more than the 232 recorded for 2002 and equal to the high of 306 in 1999-2000. During the first winter period the highest counts came from Arundel WWT with 30 in January, Filsham LNR with 40 also in January and from Combe Haven with 30 in March. One was heard calling from a nettle patch on 19 Jan at Whitbread Hollow (Beachy



Head), formerly a regular wintering site, and there were two there on 23 Feb. Presumably, one of these was the bird recorded there in November 2002. Extraordinarily, one spent several days in the flowerbeds at the Royal Pavilion Gardens (Brighton) in March.

During the breeding season, birds were noted from 17 different sites. At Combe Haven a possible six pairs bred and at Glyne Gap Marsh, two pairs. At Rye Hbr LNR birds were noted at two locations at Ternery Pool. At Arundel WWT the maximum April count was five and there were a possible eight at Pett Level. Otherwise only singles or pairs were noted. The only positive evidence of breeding was a single fledged young seen at Pulborough Brooks RSPB. These numbers represent a decline over recent years. In *The State of the Nations Birds* (Mead, 2000) the species is noted as ‘may be declining’. We are obviously a long way from the position in the 19<sup>th</sup> century when ‘eggs were regularly collected for the table’ (Mead, 2000).

The first returning bird was noted on 17 Aug at Thorney Deeps. Autumn numbers were lower than in 2002. At Arundel WWT, numbers had built up to 20 by 3 Nov. The only other double figure counts were 11 at Thorney Deeps on 17 Dec and ten at Rye Hbr LNR on 16 Nov. [RTP]

#### 0421. CORNCRAKE

*Crex crex*

**Rare passage migrant, formerly bred. Considered vulnerable by IUCN.**

One, considered to be an adult female, was trapped at Filsham Reedbed LNR on 27 Sep (GD, KMJ). This is the second year running that this species has been recorded at this locality in September. Records continue to average one a year, with all but one of the post-1980 records falling between late August and late October. [RJF]

#### 0424. MOORHEN

*Gallinula chloropus*

**Very common resident and winter visitor.**

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

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>County total</b>	687	695	648	269	223	269	439	590	786	740	786	776
<b>Chichester Hbr</b>	68	78	29	17	10	17	8	13	23	43	49	50
<b>Pagham Hbr</b>	19	37	15	26	16	21	25	18	30	28	35	22
<b>Chichester GP</b>	121	149	95	2	5	0	4	15	80	92	103	230
<b>Petworth Park</b>	10	10	14	19	2	6	5	nc	9	16	19	8
<b>Swanbourne Lake</b>	21	35	17	15	10	4	nc	13	45	13	27	11
<b>Arundel WWT</b>	54	71	68	61	56	50	nc	73	41	57	67	79
<b>Amberley Wild Brooks</b>	36	3	27	14	13	13	15	12	10	23	20	8
<b>Waltham Brooks</b>	1	2	5	4	11	14	8	7	6	8	3	6
<b>Pulborough Brooks</b>	13	14	20	9	21	23	22	59	25	27	15	14
<b>Iford Brooks</b>	5	14	35	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	17	19	10	4
<b>Glynde Levels</b>	4	4	10	nc	11	25	25	26	22	21	19	5
<b>Bewl Water</b>	72	61	62	nc	nc	nc	215	160	176	100	83	36
<b>Darwell Res</b>	5	7	17	6	9	10	32	9	nc	1	2	1
<b>Alexandra Park</b>	39	nc	20	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	23	43	35	38
<b>Pett Level</b>	28	18	31	18	16	17	0	34	22	28	60	58
<b>Rye Hbr</b>	33	53	40	30	26	41	46	64	66	58	52	56

Records for this species were received from 108 sites across the county. The main concentrations are shown in the *WeBS'* table above. Other notable counts were of 39 at Alexandra Park (Hastings) on 5 Jan, a maximum for the year of 27 at Brooklands (Worthing) on 16 Feb, 36 in the Arun Valley between Arundel and South Stoke on 25 May, 48 at Falmer Pond on 6 Oct and 28 at Weir Wood Res on 14 Sep and again on 5 Oct. The monthly *WeBS'* counts were exceeded at Bewl Water with 100 on 10 Jan, with 99 on 25 Dec and at Pulborough Brooks RSPB with 30 on 24 Jan.

Breeding records were received from only 21 of the sites noted above, totalling 220 pairs. Counts of breeding birds in defined areas can be found on pages 196 - 199. In addition, at Bewl Water 80 pairs produced only 18 broods and 70 young. Breeding success was recorded for 40 pairs which averaged marginally over two young per pair but many more pairs failed to produce any fledged young. [RTP]

0429. **COOT**

*Fulica atra*

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

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

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>County total</b>	4887	4025	2080	586	523	585	2292	3128	4310	4287	3886	3736
<b>Pagham Hbr</b>	72	124	64	64	50	58	98	73	82	94	94	76
<b>Chichester GP</b>	2080	1633	833	80	69	136	324	295	885	889	1166	1250
<b>Arundel WWT</b>	46	52	51	54	37	41	nc	68	33	43	52	86
<b>Pulborough Brooks</b>	6	22	13	9	36	2	1	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Brooklands Worthing</b>	47	30	24	21	23	35	51	72	57	82	44	52
<b>Eastbourne Lakes</b>	321	283	83	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	152	203	195	194
<b>Bewl Water</b>	683	621	383	nc	nc	nc	706	796	1586	1334	741	574
<b>Pett Level</b>	187	156	102	45	47	0	13	145	97	118	128	86
<b>Rye Hbr</b>	533	439	158	115	71	165	290	533	679	520	409	480
<b>Scotney Court GP</b>	420	280	115	64	74	nc	698	997	430	636	602	550

The January count at Chichester GP was the highest county total for a single site, just exceeding the 2013 at Bewl Water in 1987. The county total in January has only been exceeded on one occasion since the figure first became available from 1986: in January 1987 the total from all sites was 5146. Few counts were received that exceeded those listed above but on 10 Jan at Bewl Water there were 788 and at Barcombe Reservoir on 16 Nov the maximum count of the year was 161.

The first sign of breeding activity was noted at Brooklands (Worthing) on 16 Mar where a bird was sitting on a well-constructed nest, apparently incubating. The first hatching was recorded on 13 Apr at Arundel WWT including a partially albino chick. Breeding records came from 14 different sites across the county: at Bewl Water 100 pairs produced only 18 broods totalling 34 young, at Rye Hbr SSSI there were at least 42 pairs and at Thorney Deeps there were 13 pairs.

On 9 Aug an adult flew out low over the sea for about ½ mile from Pagham Hbr before settling on the water and swimming east. [RTP]

**Rare visitor**

Three adults on Hooe Level, Pevensey on 3 Jan (STU *et al*) flew off northeast. There is only one previous county record for January, also on Pevensey Levels, in 1982. This species has been recorded in the county in five of the last ten years and during this period records have averaged one per year. The other occurrences since 1990 have been during March-June and September-January. [RJF]

## 0450. OYSTERCATCHER

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

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

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>County total</b>	2279	1196	1067	766	581	424	715	1135	899	1361	1423	1462
<b>Chichester Hbr</b>	1631	647	652	418	357	318	457	786	599	937	966	1219
<b>Pagham Hbr</b>	302	327	171	135	103	65	85	244	269	214	184	179
<b>Rye Hbr</b>	307	203	222	196	105	41	164	101	20	95	219	30

Recorded throughout the year almost exclusively along the coast, the main concentration as usual was at Pilsey Island in Chichester Hbr. The monthly maxima there were as follows:

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
823	nc	300	200	200	224	400	700	700	700	626	573

Other notable counts were from Thorney Island (Chichester Hbr) with 154 on 4 Jan and 155 on 8 Dec, Birling Gap with 100 on 5 Apr and Ternery Pool at Rye Hbr LNR with 410 on 24 Feb and 280 on 29 Oct. The only inland records were singles or pairs at Pulborough North Brooks on 11 Feb, at Bewl Water on 31 Mar and 20 Jul, at Southease on 9 May and at Weir Wood Res on 26 Jul and again on 12 Oct.

A partially albino bird was observed at Pagham Hbr on 16 and 23 Feb.

Breeding records were received from three areas only and involved a maximum of 46 pairs. At Rye Hbr SSSI about 25 pairs were located. Hatching success seemed high on the Beach Reserve (15), where new fencing protected them, but low elsewhere. The first chick was seen on 2 Jun. At Pagham Hbr up to five pairs bred and two juveniles were seen on 12 Jul. Within Chichester Hbr, six nests containing 17 eggs were found at South Stakes Island, seven nests but only four eggs at North Stakes Island, one pair was at Thorney Deepes and another two probably bred on Pilsey Island. At Arundel WWT, between one and six were noted every month from January to August with three pairs displaying at the end of February and the beginning of March, but no further breeding activity was reported.

The largest numbers logged from the seawatching sites were in March, April and May. Movements were in both directions in approximately equal numbers and were probably associated with movements between feeding grounds. [RTP]

0455. **BLACK-WINGED STILT***Himantopus himantopus***Rare vagrant**

One near Bognor Regis on 27-28 Sep (RK) has been accepted by BBRC. It is only the third county record since 1987, and the first since April 2000. The last to be recorded in the county in September was as long ago as 1958. [RJF]

0456. **AVOCET***Recurvirostra avosetta***Scarce winter visitor and passage migrant. Rare breeder.**

The approximate minimum monthly totals allowing for duplication were as follows:

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
66	75	83	67	15	17	15	20	4	26	41	70

Although a maximum of 17 were seen at Thorney on 1 Jan, the main wintering site continues to be Pagham Hbr where there was an early winter maximum of 44 on 14 Feb. Seven settled on water in Hook Straight at Bewl Water on 12 Feb, one was at Greatham Bridge on 13 Feb and four at Rye Hbr LNR on 27 Feb.

A steady spring passage was noted during March and April starting with 1 E at Worthing on 16 Mar and with peaks of 12 at Brighton Marina on 31 Mar and 11 at Splash Point (Seaford) on 30 Apr.

Breeding was attempted at three sites, one site being successful with seven chicks being seen. At another site three chicks were hatched but subsequently disappeared and, at the third site, mating and scrape making were observed but breeding failed.

The maxima at the end of the year were three at Rye Hbr on 16 Oct, 20 in Chichester Hbr on the 16 Dec and 14 in Pagham Hbr on 27 Dec. [AJW]

0459. **STONE-CURLEW***Burhinus oedicnemus***Rare passage migrant. Formerly a scarce breeding summer visitor. Red listed species of high conservation concern.**

One was found on Seaford Head on 19 Oct (ARK). Records are currently averaging just under one per year and this is the first to be seen in the month of October since 1992. [RJF]

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

One hundred and eighty-nine records were received covering 29 sites, of which 17 were inland. The first sightings for the year were singles at Combe Haven and Pulborough Brooks RSPB on 11 Mar. The first bird at Rye Hbr was seen on 13 Mar and at Pett Level on 26 Mar. The first record from Pagham Hbr was on 2 Apr. Five birds were seen at Thorney Island on 29 Apr and counts of four came from five other sites during April, four of them inland.

Successful breeding was recorded from at least three sites. Two pairs bred successfully at Pett Level, one adult was seen with two small juveniles at Chichester GPs on 20 Jun and a pair with two juveniles was seen at Drayton Pond near Chichester GPs on

8 Aug. A pair with one juvenile seen at The Midrips on 5 Jul, although recorded as only 'probably breeding', was more likely to be 'confirmed'. Four birds were seen on 30 Apr at Constantia Manor (Isfield) but although a nest was made it was abandoned. Although birds were present at Pulborough Brooks (and at several other suitable sites) during spring, including six on 1 Jul, no obvious breeding attempts were noted. Four birds seen at Manor Royal (Crawley) on 17 and 27 Jun were thought to be probably breeding.

Four birds at Arlington Res on 8 and 11 Sep were the last records for the year. [AJW]

## 0470. RINGED PLOVER

*Charadrius hiaticula*

Fairly common breeder, passage migrant and winter visitor.

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

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>County total</b>	279	243	111	79	123	64	75	443	369	133	335	299
<b>Chichester Hbr</b>	103	86	12	41	78	8	18	215	80	27	129	100
<b>Pagham Hbr</b>	5	6	5	7	8	4	3	124	88	2	5	8
<b>Climping</b>	11	24	-	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	-	-	-	3
<b>Goring Gap</b>	16	-	-	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	25	34	37	22
<b>Lower Adur Estuary</b>	60	35	-	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	48	22	22	87
<b>Newhaven</b>	3	8	4	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	47	-	nc	-
<b>Cuckmere Haven</b>	14	16	-	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	-	1	-	-
<b>Langney</b>	1	-	5	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	1	-	41	15
<b>Rye Hbr</b>	59	59	80	24	30	50	50	104	79	47	94	62
<b>Scotney Court GP</b>	-	8	-	4	2	nc	2	-	-	-	-	-

The monthly maxima at Pilsey Island (Chichester Hbr) were as follows:

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
16	58	54	58	74	18	76	400	127	90	126	95

The numbers for eight months were lower than last year, especially in October. Only July showed a good increase. The August total exceeds the 1% Threshold Number of 290.

Records came from most suitable coastal localities during all months of the year. Early winter numbers included 40 on the Cuckmere meanders on 11 Feb, one in the gardens of the Royal Pavilion (Brighton) on 27 Feb and six at Newhaven Tide Mills on 15 Mar. Breeding was confirmed at ten sites, but young were seen at only eight sites. The main site was again at Rye Hbr where 39 pairs nested and hatching success was moderate. Probable breeding took place at The Midrips, Newhaven Tide Mills and Thorney Island.

During August a maximum total of 1162 was seen at four sites along the coast. The only reports from sites inland came from Weir Wood Res and Arlington Res with a maximum of five at Weir Wood on 5 Oct and three at Arlington on 30 Aug.

Small coastal movements were recorded in most months, especially past Worthing Beach where the most notable was 125 E in 2 hr on 25 Aug. The high tide roost at Rye Hbr contained 22 on 22 Dec and 80 were at Brighton Marina on 30 Dec. [AJW]

0477. **KENTISH PLOVER**

*Charadrius alexandrinus*

**Very scarce spring and autumn passage migrant, formerly bred.**

An adult male was seen in Pagham Hbr on 26-27 Apr (ARK *et al*). A poor showing, 1992 was the last blank year. Twenty-five of the 32 recorded in the last ten years have been in April or May. [RJF]

0482. **DOTTEREL**

*Charadrius morinellus*

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

A long staying and widely appreciated male present on the Beach Reserve (Rye Hbr) from 24 Apr to at least 18 May (SS, PMT, BJY *et al*) was the only record. This is the worst showing since 1984, the county's last blank year. It is also the first year since then that no records have been received for the Downs. [RJF]

0484. **PACIFIC GOLDEN PLOVER**

*Pluvialis fulva*

**Very rare vagrant.**

One seen with a large flock of Golden Plover on the Beach Reserve at Rye Hbr during 1-19 Apr (RJF, PMT, BJY *et al*) has been accepted by BBRC and is the first county record. It was considered to be a first-year bird and was present for several days before its identification was firmly established. It was generally fairly easy to find in the flock and showed well to most visiting observers, making it one of the year's highlights for many. This species features amongst the discredited Hastings Rarities, with a male and two females shot at Wartling Marsh near Herstmonceux on 23 April 1914. There is just one county record of the similar American Golden Plover *P. dominica*, at Pagham Hbr in September 1988. [RJF]

0485. **GOLDEN PLOVER**

*Pluvialis apricaria*

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

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

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>County total</b>	2938	759	156	3	-	-	-	35	1007	401	2320	5054
<b>Chichester Hbr</b>	2237	560	-	2	-	-	-	28	70	149	1456	2323
<b>Pagham Hbr</b>	129	156	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	31	55	130
<b>Pevensey Levels</b>	15	40	4	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Pett Level</b>	212	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	600	600
<b>Rye Hbr *</b>	260	-	151	-	-	-	-	4	137	-	9	2000
<b>Scotney Court GP</b>	50	-	-	-	-	nc	-	3	800	220	200	-

\* The Rye Hbr figure of 260 in January includes 209 birds counted on Walland Marsh

Notable counts in addition to those in the table were 2400 at Rye Hbr on 3 Jan, 30 at Wicks Fm (Yapton) on 5 Jan, 50 on Lewes Brooks on 11 Jan and 200 at Pulborough Brooks RSPB on 3 Feb. Fifteen records were received for April with a maximum of 445 roosting at Rye Hbr on 2 Apr; the last bird of the spring was at Rye Hbr on 28 May.

The first returning bird was noted at Thorney Island on 18 Jul building up to 60 by 31 Aug. Forty were noted flying west at Cissbury on 4 Oct and peak counts in the second winter period (not shown in the WeBS table) were 1100 at Rye Hbr on 10 Nov, 1500 at West Wittering on 16 Dec and 3000 at Thorney Island on 27 Dec.

Inland records in the latter part of the year were one at Lychpole Hill (near Cissbury) on 9 Nov, one at Ashcombe Bottom (Lewes) on 3 Nov and one at Glynde Levels on 14 Dec. [AJW]

## 0486. GREY PLOVER

*Pluvialis squatarola*

### Common winter visitor and passage migrant

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

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>County total</b>	1978	2355	1358	334	97	57	113	989	826	1080	1768	2173
<b>Chichester Hbr</b>	1193	1497	1042	16	58	28	70	605	615	631	994	1515
<b>Pagham Hbr</b>	456	704	282	305	37	28	43	378	210	430	542	563
<b>Climping</b>	95	110	14	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	1	-	120	56
<b>Goring Gap</b>	154	-	-	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	-	13	104	-

Both Chichester and Pagham Harbours hosted numbers well in excess of the 1% Threshold Number of 430. However, Chichester Hbr continues to be the main wintering area where 1497 were counted on 16 Feb and 1515 on 14 Dec. Sixty five were at Goring Gap on 3 Jan, 59 on 4 Jan at Rye Hbr, 50 in fields at Climping Gap on 12 Jan and 50 in Pagham Hbr on 29 Jan. On the Adur Saltings at Shoreham 30 were noted on 7 Feb and five at Pett Level on 22 Feb.

The first spring passage was noted at Brighton Marina on 13 Apr with 21 E in 6 hr and at Selsey Bill on 14 Apr with 22 E in 11 hr. Easterly passage was also noted at Splash Point (Seaford), Worthing Beach and Rye Bay.

Records from inland sites were one at Pulborough Brooks RSPB on 15 May, five at Bewl Water (which flew off west) on 17 Aug, one at Partridge Green on 3 Sep, and one at Cedar Fm (Hurst Green) and two at Weir Wood Res on 14 Oct.

The first westerly movement was noted at Selsey Bill with 14 in 3 hr on 27 Jul. Of the 115 seen at Pagham Hbr on 14 Aug 95% were adults in summer plumage. Four hundred were on Pilsey Sands on 29 Aug and 130 on the beach at Worthing on 31 Dec. [AJW]

## 0493. LAPWING

*Vanellus vanellus*

### Scarce breeder and very common winter visitor. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern.

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

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>County total</b>	11323	8455	421	234	248	477	1668	2799	2885	3754	8770	16964
<b>Chichester Hbr</b>	2675	1141	27	53	99	110	350	235	459	570	1698	2856
<b>Pagham Hbr</b>	1450	1184	11	23	15	75	113	22	364	91	436	1066
<b>Arun (Offham to Houghton)</b>	590	22	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Amberley Wild Brooks</b>	548	689	11	22	19	18	15	34	2	55	208	667

<b>Pulborough Brooks</b>	473	1106	53	45	27	69	336	169	220	892	1672	570
<b>Adur (Steyning-Henfield)</b>	nc	nc	31	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	Nc	nc	nc
<b>Iford Brooks</b>	280	320	26	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	56	-	19	4
<b>Glynde Levels</b>	1	-	96	nc	24	6	1	-	-	230	-	715
<b>Cuckmere Haven</b>	50	250	-	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	-	150	450	2
<b>Pevensey Levels</b>	466	272	85	98	48	15	8	90	55	80	998	488
<b>Bewl Water</b>	311	100	1	nc	nc	nc	102	140	130	158	210	215
<b>Pett Level</b>	1464	140	24	11	-	-	-	365	290	570	580	1400
<b>Rye Hbr</b>	1796	1670	23	26	14	191	579	1485	619	541	1326	6619
<b>Scotney Court GP</b>	200	10	16	-	17	nc	50	180	500	200	400	500

The annual distribution pattern of high counts in January decreasing to low counts in April/May and then steadily increasing to high counts in November and December is typical for this species in Sussex. In the peak months of January and December 65% and 70% respectively of the county totals were counted at the four sites of Chichester Hbr, Pagham Hbr, Pett Level and Rye Hbr.

Independently of the WeBS' counts, many other records were received for every month of the year and showed a similar pattern. Notable counts included 1500 on 4 Jan at Lewes Brooks, 3000 on 11 Feb at Scotney Court GP, 800 on 30 Jul at Pett Level, 500 on 10 Nov at Climping Gap, 5000 on both 2 Dec and 14 Dec at Welland Marsh and 3500 on 14 Dec at Rye Saltings.

Breeding records commenced with sightings of numerous pairs displaying at many locations in March. A pair sitting in March at Bewl Water was the first breeding record there since 1992, confirmed by several pairs probably with young seen in April. The last record was an adult seen with a half-grown juvenile on 6 Jul at Steyning Levels. Overall figures indicated that at least 100 pairs bred at 38 sites producing at least 30 juveniles. Thirteen pairs bred at Thorney Island (four pairs fledged ten young), 16 pairs bred at Amberley Wildbrooks, 20 pairs bred at Pulborough Brooks RSPB (two pairs fledged six young) and 46 pairs bred in the Rye Bay area, including 35 pairs within the Rye Hbr SSSI raising 15 young to fledging. At Rye Hbr the hatching and fledging success was high within the newly erected electric fencing (10 young raised from 25 pairs).

Observed movements offshore were minimal with 170 W on 31 Jan at Worthing Beach. Post-breeding birds were evident with 32 returning on 13 Jun at Thorney Deepes. [JAC]

#### 0496. **KNOT**

*Calidris canutus*

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

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

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>County total</b>	128	536	131	-	-	2	-	-	42	5	146	231
<b>Chichester Hbr</b>	113	526	128	-	-	2	-	-	40	-	146	69
<b>Pagham Hbr</b>	13	10	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	4	-	159
<b>Cuckmere Haven</b>	-	-	-	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	-	1	-	-

Ninety-nine per cent of the birds counted during the year were in Chichester Hbr (84%) and Pagham Hbr (15%). These proportions are similar to those for 2002: Chichester Hbr 71% and Pagham Hbr 27%.



Independently of the WeBS' counts, records were received for every month of the year with significant numbers seen on or near the coast but none inland. Good numbers were recorded from January to March decreasing dramatically until September when numbers increased steadily to the end of the year. Notable counts were 300 on 14 Jan at Thorney Island, and 400 on 26 Feb and 220 on 3 Mar at Pilsley Sands. Thereafter, numbers decreased to double and single figures until November when 100 were seen on the 1st at Pagham Hbr and 100 on the 9th at Pilsley Sands. Monthly maxima of 38 on 29 Aug, 48 on 30 Oct, 1000 on 11 Nov and 500 on 06 Dec were recorded at Pilsley Sands.

Observed movements offshore were recorded from four sites between 22 Jan and 5 May as summarised below.

	Jan	Mar	Apr	May	Peak Movements
<b>Total</b>	140 W	73 E	87 E	2 E	
<b>Selsey Bill</b>	140 W	-	5 E	-	140 W on 22 Jan 5 E on 25 Apr
<b>Worthing Beach</b>	-	-	31 E	-	31 E on 25 Apr
<b>Brighton Marina</b>	-	73 E	51 E	-	53 E on 23 Mar 50 E on 23 Mar
<b>Splash Point, Seaford</b>	-	-	-	2 E	2 E on 5 May

Peak spring passage offshore was in April. There were no offshore records for autumn passage, but the first two autumn birds returned on 16 Aug to Pilsley Sands. [JAC]

## 0497. SANDERLING

*Calidris alba*

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

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

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>County total</b>	176	182	121	2	23	-	1	12	53	-	275	68
<b>Chichester Hbr</b>	24	1	18	2	23	-	1	6	-	-	65	-
<b>Climping</b>	19	62	11	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	-	-	-	25
<b>Goring Gap</b>	33	-	39	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	1	-	119	11
<b>Widewater Lancing</b>	42	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Rye Hbr</b>	57	119	53	-	-	-	-	6	52	-	86	32

The February peak recorded 65% of the count in Rye Bay and the November peak 43% at Goring Gap. This is a different pattern to 2002 when the peak months were February and August with 63% of the former count and 96% of the latter count in Chichester Hbr. These figures indicate continued variability in site fidelity and a high degree of mobility of this species in Sussex. The count of 23 birds in May possibly reflects birds on passage.

Independently of the WeBS' counts, records were received for every month of the year. All were associated with or close to the coast except for two inland records: six birds on 15 Mar at Pulborough Brooks RSPB and 11 birds on 23 May at Arlington Res. Notable counts were 105 on 16 Jan roosting at Rye Hbr LNR, 170 on 26 Feb at Goring Beach, 150 on 18 Mar at Kingston Gorse, 115 on 22 Dec roosting at high tide at Rye Hbr LNR plus several large counts at Pilsley Sands including 134 on 20 Apr, 130 on 29 Aug, 150 on 5 Sep and 120 on 16 Nov. An unusual record was of a single bird on 10 Jun at Church Norton and a single bird on 19 Sep at Shoreham Airport was rare for that site.

Observed movements offshore were recorded from four sites. Birds on spring passage moving eastwards up-channel were recorded from 18 Mar with 46 E at Brighton Marina to

5 Jun with 5 E at Worthing Beach. The monthly totals for 500 sightings uncorrected for duplication were as follows:

	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Total
<b>Total</b>	115 E	196 E	184 E	5 E	500 E
<b>Selsey Bill</b>	-	41 E	47 E	-	88 E
<b>Worthing Beach</b>	53 E	108 E	61 E	5 E	227 E
<b>Brighton Marina</b>	62 E	19 E	27 E	-	108 E
<b>Splash Point, Seaford</b>	-	28 E	49 E	-	77 E

Peak movement offshore was in April. Fewer birds were recorded moving east than in 2002 indicating another poor spring passage. [JAC]

0501. **LITTLE STINT**

*Calidris minuta*

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

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

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>County total</b>	5	4	-	2	-	-	-	2	1	-	-	1
<b>Chichester Hbr</b>	5	4	-	2	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-
<b>Pett Level</b>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	-
<b>Scotney Court GP</b>	-	-	-	-	-	nc	-	-	1	-	-	1

Although only 16 birds were noted during the monthly *WeBS'* counts, additional records (allowing for some duplication) produced a further 36 birds (13 from 5 Jan-26 Apr and 23 from 27 Jul-22 Dec).

The approximate minimum monthly totals, taking into account records in addition to the *WeBS'* counts, were as follows:

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
5	7	10	2	-	-	2	5	10	3	5	3

The highest counts were of five at East Head on 16 Jan and six there on 16 Feb and another six on 23 Mar at Pett Level Pools. There were again five at East Head on 24 Nov. Otherwise counts at coastal sites were of ones or twos.

Inland records came from three sites. A single bird was at Pulborough Brooks RSPB on 11 Aug, three at Weir Wood Res from 14 to 21 Aug, one increasing to three from 1 to 12 Sep at Arlington Res.

There were no records for spring or autumn passage from any of the seawatching sites. [JAC]

0507. **PECTORAL SANDPIPER**

*Calidris melanotos*

**Rare vagrant, mainly in autumn.**

A juvenile was present on Drayton GP (Chichester) from 1-5 Oct (THE, OM *et al*). Despite a big national influx into the UK in September involving at least 150 individuals (*Birding World* 16:360) this was the only Sussex record. Twenty have been recorded since 1990, all between 23 July and 30 October. [RJF]

0509. **CURLEW SANDPIPER**

*Calidris ferruginea*

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

Only one bird was noted during the monthly WeBS' counts: in Chichester Hbr on 17 Aug. Additional observations were of, conservatively, another 25 birds.

The approximate minimum monthly totals for the county were as follows:

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
-	-	-	1	4	1	2	5	12	1	-	-

Only five occurred during the spring (29 Apr-29 May) as single birds at four coastal or near coastal sites and a moulting adult (presumably non-breeding) was seen at Sidlesham Ferry on 30 Jun. Returning birds were first noted on 31 Jul when there were two at Rye Hbr LNR and, with the exception of two at Pagham Hbr and four at Pilsley Island on 2 Sep, were all single adults or juveniles.

Arlington Res was the only inland site to record this species with one juvenile on 30 Aug, an adult on 16 Sep and two juveniles there on the 25th.

The last record was of one at Pagham Hbr on 11 Oct.

There were no records of spring or autumn passage from the usual seawatching sites. [JAC]

0510. **PURPLE SANDPIPER**

*Calidris maritima*

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

The monthly *WeBS*' counts produced only 13 birds but covered only one of this species' four traditional coastal strongholds (Bexhill). The following table, a combination of the *WeBS*' and other counts, shows the maximum monthly numbers at each of these sites plus additional birds seen elsewhere:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>County total</b>	31	27	30	14	5	-	1	2	7	9	30	30
<b>Shoreham/Southwick</b>	4	5	5	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	1	3
<b>Brighton Marina</b>	10	10	10	10	3	-	1	2	5	7	11	12
<b>Newhaven</b>	11	7	4	4	1	-	-	-	1	2	11	10
<b>Bexhill</b>	4	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	3
<b>Other sites</b>	2	3	11	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	6	2

The highest counts came from the traditional sites. Counts at Brighton Marina for the first half of the year were of ten on 1 Jan, 12 Feb, 21 Mar and 15 Apr and, in the second half of the year, 11 on 24 Nov and 12 on 30 Dec (the latter equalling the highest count of 2002). In the Newhaven area, notable counts in January were of 11 on the 1st and 2nd and 10 on the 18th (under the East Pier) and later, 11 on 19 Nov and ten on 26 Dec. Elsewhere the highest counts in the first winter period were of five on three dates at Shoreham and five at St. Leonard's on 21 Mar. Although this species appears to be regular in the Pagham Hbr/Church Norton area there were only ones or twos at any one time.

The last spring birds were three seen under the East Pier (Newhaven) on 12 May. The first bird to return was one seen on 14 Jul at Brighton Marina. Both of these dates are fairly typical. [JAC]

**Abundant winter visitor and common passage migrant. Small numbers in summer. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern.**

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

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>County total</b>	15607	15919	1554	258	424	19	114	781	563	1723	9569	14161
<b>Chichester Hbr</b>	12633	14377	1211	180	321	4	60	483	247	1110	8542	12552
<b>Pagham Hbr</b>	1459	1086	235	74	65	6	15	273	198	584	908	1207
<b>Rye Hbr</b>	533	222	69	2	33	9	35	21	72	10	61	84

The county total numbers for February and December represent 2.9% and 2.5% respectively of the estimated British wintering coastal population (555,800). Chichester Hbr held at least 88% of the total *WeBS*' counts and numbers there exceeded the 1% Threshold Number of 5300 during four winter months.

Records additional to the above *WeBS*' counts were also received for flocks associated with muddy shores and estuaries all along the coast. Notable numbers in the first half of the year included 3000 on 16 Jan, 2500 on 23 Feb and 700 on 19 Mar at Pilsley Sands and, in the second half, 500 on 17 Aug at Pilsley Island, 500 on 6 Sep at Pagham Hbr, 560 on 13 Oct, 5000 on 8 Nov and 6 Dec again at Pilsley Sands.

Inland records included singles on 10 Jan, 9 Mar and 20 Oct at Bewl Water, five on 25 Jan, 22 on 27 Feb and six on 19 May at Pulborough Brooks RSPB, one to six birds on several dates between 23 May and 14 Oct at Arlington Res, one on 3 Jul at Barcombe Res and two to six birds on several dates between 26 Jun and 19 Oct at Weir Wood Res. These were very low numbers compared to 2002.

Records of birds moving offshore at the five main seawatching sites are summarised in the table below.

	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Oct	Total
<b>Total</b>	134 E 2 W	199 E 15 W	61 E 75 W	2 E -	- 24 W	13 E -	- 4 W	409 E 120 W
<b>Selsey Bill</b>	- -	2 E 2 W	2 E 75 W	- -	- 18 W	- -	- -	4 E 95 W
<b>Worthing Beach</b>	8 E -	115 E 11 W	38 W -	2 E -	- 6 W	13 E -	- 4 W	176 E 21 W
<b>Brighton Marina</b>	76 E	42 E	15 E	-	-	-	-	133 E
<b>Splash Point, Seaford</b>	44 E 2 W	40 E 2 W	6 E -	- -	- -	- -	- -	90 E 4 W
<b>Bexhill/Hastings</b>	6 E	-	-	-	-	-	-	6 E

Easterly movement was observed from 16 Mar at Bexhill/Hastings to 3 Jun at Worthing Beach, peaking in April. Westerly movement was observed between 14 Mar at Splash Point (Seaford) and 13 Oct at Worthing Beach, peaking in May. [JAC]

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

The monthly *WeBS*' counts at ten sites, of which only three were coastal, were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>Total</b>	2	24	28	-	1	-	2	13	6	11	9	23
<b>Chichester Hbr</b>	2	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-
<b>Amberley Wild Brooks</b>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	15
<b>Waltham Brooks</b>	-	22	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	7	-
<b>Pulborough Brooks</b>	-	-	6	-	-	-	1	4	3	3	-	-
<b>Weirwood Res</b>	-	-	-	Nc	nc	nc	-	-	1	-	-	-
<b>Iford Brooks</b>	-	-	2	Nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	-	-	-	-
<b>Arlington Res</b>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-
<b>Pevensey Levels</b>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	-
<b>Pett Level area</b>	-	-	2	-	1	-	1	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Rye Hbr &amp; Saltings</b>	-	-	11	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	5
<b>Scotney Court GP</b>	-	-	7	-	-	nc	-	7	1	8	1	3

However, the above numbers do not show the whole picture as significant numbers were counted on other dates and at other sites. By adding only the additional numbers seen at any *WeBS*' site to the maximum monthly count at other sites and assuming that all the various counts from several different but adjacent sites in the Arun Valley (i.e. Pulborough Brooks, Amberley, Greatham, Houghton, Bury) were of one population moving around the area, the following table of additional numbers is obtained:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>Total</b>	44	71	62	9	1	1	2	25	10	6	14	6
<b>Arun Valley</b>	20	42	13	2	-	-	1	4	2	5	6	2
<b>Scotney Court GP</b>	-	-	20	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Other sites</b>	24	29	29	7	1	1	1	21	8	1	2	4

A conservative estimate of the county totals is obtained by adding the total lines from each of the above tables. Totals for January and February were at least 95 and 90 respectively and for November and December 23 and 29.

As usual for this species, the highest numbers were associated with grassy wetlands and damp meadows such as Pulborough Brooks RSPB and the Arun Valley, where the highest daily count was 64 on 16 Feb, and Horse Eye Level (Pevensey), where 25 were counted on 23 Mar. The last spring bird was one in the Pett area on 18 May.

The first returning bird was a black-ruffed male at Rye LNR on 20 Jun followed by one at Pett Level on 1 Jul. There was then a gap until 20 Jul when one was seen at Pulborough Brooks. The highest autumn count was of ten at Piddinghoe on 9 Aug. [JAC]

## 0518. JACK SNIPE

*Lymnocyptes minimus*

### Scarce winter visitor and passage migrant.

The minimum monthly totals were as follows:

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr		Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
50	24	38	25		0	23	17	13

In the first winter period the majority were, as usual, at Thorney Deep, with a maximum of 38 there on 3 Jan (a site record). Elsewhere in this period up to two were seen at Rye Hbr, Filsham, Ferring Rife and Pett Level and singles at Pilsey Island, Hailsham, Holmbush Tip (Faygate), Beeding Brooks, Amberley Wild Brooks and Henfield Levels. There were three at Pevensey Levels on 30 Mar and 19 Apr. The last bird of the spring was one at Rye Hbr on 23 Apr.

The first autumn birds were seen on 9 Oct when there were three at Thorney Deeps, increasing to ten there on 21 Oct. Numbers at Thorney Deeps were much lower than in the first winter period with only seven there on 5 Nov and up to two during December. Elsewhere, there were seven at Rye Hbr on 23 Nov (with six there on 30 Dec), two at Pulborough Brooks RSPB on 27 Oct and singles at Arundel WWT, Warnham LNR, Breech Pool, Lavington Common and Ferring Rife. [JC]

0519. **SNIPE**

*Gallinago gallinago*

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

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

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>County total</b>	607	392	330	57	-	2	1	14	53	131	345	114
<b>Chichester Hbr</b>	289	68	52	19	-	-	-	3	16	14	18	33
<b>Pagham Hbr</b>	30	4	3	1	-	-	-	-	6	-	7	-
<b>Arundel WWT</b>	-	-	9	1	-	-	nc	-	-	6	21	3
<b>Amberley Wild Brooks</b>	28	94	17	5	-	-	-	-	2	38	45	21
<b>Waltham Brooks</b>	-	16	2	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	1	-
<b>Pulborough Brooks</b>	11	107	45	17	-	-	1	9	21	51	65	22
<b>Lower Adur Estuary</b>	148	1	8	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	-	-	84	-
<b>Henfield Brooks</b>	2	20	17	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	-	-	3	4
<b>Weirwood Res</b>	-	-	-	nc	nc	nc	-	-	3	2	38	-
<b>Glynde Levels</b>	12	3	21	nc	-	-	-	-	1	2	1	5
<b>Eastbourne Lakes</b>	20	21	10	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	-	6	8
<b>Pevensy Levels</b>	7	43	100	15	-	2	-	1	2	7	10	2

With no FMD restrictions this year, the *WeBS*' counts for the first winter period were considerably higher than in 2002, though there was no noticeable increase in the latter part of the year. Records outside the *WeBS*' counts were also up on the previous year with other notable counts during the first winter period being 177 at Thorney Deeps on 3 Jan, 100 at Pagham North Fields on 11 Jan, 94 at Amberley Wild Brooks on 16 Feb, 98 at Rye Hbr on 27 Feb, 120 at Pulborough Brooks RSPB on 8 Mar and 100 at Bodiam Park Farm on 12 Mar. At Thorney Deeps the last bird of the spring was on 7 May.

Breeding records were again few and far between and it would appear that, as a breeding bird, this species is in serious trouble in the county. There were three pairs recorded at Amberley Wild Brooks and birds were recorded in June, but with no evidence of breeding, at Pevensy Levels (2) and Barcombe (1). None were recorded breeding at Rye Hbr this summer, the last success having been in 1996.

The first autumn migrants were at Thorney Deeps with three on 13 Aug, although there were July records from Pett Level, Pulborough Brooks and Ambersham Common. Numbers were again lower during the second winter period, with notable counts including 50 at Pulborough Brooks on 23 Sep, 84 in the lower Adur on 16 Nov, 38 at Weir Wood Res on 16 Nov, and a seasonal high count of 111 at Rye Hbr on 30 Dec. [JC]

0529. **WOODCOCK***Scolopax rusticola*

**Fairly common resident and winter visitor. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern.**

As usual, numbers in the first winter period were generally low with mostly single birds at a variety of sites. Unlike last year there were no double-figure counts, with the highest number being four at Pulborough Brooks RSPB on 4 Feb. There were also three at Pett Level on 12 Jan and three at Beddingham on 17 Feb.

The first recorded roding bird was at the Old Airstrip (Ashdown Forest) on 17 Mar, coincidentally the same date as last year, though the location was different. Roding birds were recorded from most of the regular locations in the county, with up to four at Wych Cross (Ashdown Forest) and Stanley Common (near Liphook). There were also four pairs in a 1 km sq at Linchmere Common. Once again, there were no records of confirmed breeding.

Numbers during the second winter period were slightly higher than earlier in the year, with records of singles, twos and threes from several sites across the county, and seven at Rye Bay Wood on 16 Dec. More notably, there were up to 22 at Markly Wood (Heathfield) regularly throughout the second winter period. [JC]

0532. **BLACK-TAILED GODWIT***Limosa limosa*

**Fairly common winter visitor and passage migrant; a very scarce summering and wintering species. Red listed species of high conservation concern.**

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

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>County total</b>	1050	148	471	441	101	9	90	314	876	963	1062	923
<b>Chichester Hbr</b>	224	79	419	405	71	5	90	267	855	952	1053	797
<b>Pagham Hbr</b>	826	68	51	35	26	4	-	16	15	11	9	124
<b>Pett Level</b>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	16	-	-	-	-

The county total numbers for January and November represent 6.8% and 6.9% respectively of the estimated British wintering coastal population (15,390). With a 1% Threshold Number of 70, it can be seen that both Chichester and Pagham Harbours provide significant wintering sites for this species.

The above numbers were generally higher than last year, with particularly notable counts of 826 at Pagham Hbr in January and 1053 in Chichester Hbr in November. Other notable counts in the first winter period included 450 at Pagham North Fields on 21 Jan increasing to 480 there on 25 Jan, and 150 at Dell Quay (Chichester Hbr) on 31 Jan. There were no significant counts recorded for Thorney Deeps this year. Inland there were ten at Amberley Wild Brooks on 8 Feb.

Spring migration involved mainly small numbers at the coastal sites and inland records at Arundel WWT (single birds on several dates and six on 19 May). There were no significant movements recorded from seawatch sites.

Birds were present throughout the summer at Sidlesham Ferry, but numbers during June were considerably lower than last year, with a maximum of six on the 1<sup>st</sup>. Numbers there increased in July, with a peak of 40 on the 9<sup>th</sup>. At Thorney Deeps there were 21 on 3 Jul, which increased to 45 on 15 Jul, and 200 on 30 Jul and an autumn high count of 240 on 31 Aug. Inland there were ten at Pulborough Brooks RSPB on 17 Sep.

In the second winter period, notable counts not covered by the *WeBS*' counts included 406 on Thorney Island on 9 Oct and 320 at Pagham Hbr on 30 Dec. Inland singles were recorded at Weir Wood Res, Pulborough Brooks and Amberley Wild Brooks.

The monthly distribution of inland records was as follows:

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
7	23	7	7	7	3	11	37	13	1	1	1

[JC]

0534. **BAR-TAILED GODWIT**

*Limosa lapponica*

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

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

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>County total</b>	203	313	32	40	25	51	4	1	361	404	666	114
<b>Chichester Hbr</b>	202	313	29	1	16	51	4	-	359	403	662	113
<b>Pagham Hbr</b>	-	-	3	10	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Pett Level</b>	-	-	-	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Rye Hbr</b>	-	-	-	26	9	-	-	1	-	1	-	-

The number in Chichester Hbr during November just exceeded the 1% Threshold Number of 620. Other notable counts in the first winter period included 360 at Pilsley Sands on 9 Jan and 450 on Thorney Island on 1 Mar.

Spring passage, involving birds moving east along the coast, was recorded from the main seawatching sites and is summarised below:

	Mar	Apr	May	Peak movement
<b>Selsey Bill</b>	2	254	9	161 on 30 Apr
<b>Worthing Beach</b>	nc	2229	457	1144 on 30 Apr
<b>Brighton Marina</b>	48	2095	544	1093 on 30 Apr
<b>Splash Point, Seaford</b>	3	124	249	171 on 31 May

The main spring passage period was at the end of April and there was a particularly large movement at Worthing and Brighton on 30 Apr. These seem to have been missed at Selsey Bill and Splash Point however, with only 161 and 94 respectively seen at those sites on the same day. There was another, smaller, peak on 31 May (which is a noteworthy late date), with 244 past Worthing Beach, 284 past Brighton Marina and 171 past Splash Point (but only nine past Selsey Bill).

Small numbers were seen at coastal sites throughout the summer, with 39 at North Stakes Island (Chichester Hbr) on 27 Jun. The highest counts by far during the autumn and second winter periods were at Pilsley Sands, where there were 71 on 4 Aug, building to 80 on 28 Sep, 500 on 12 Oct and a peak of 700 on 6 Dec. Most other sites recorded only single figures or low teens during this period. [JC]



**Common passage migrant; very scarce summering and wintering species. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern**

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

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>County total</b>	7	1	4	68	28	5	26	18	8	2	3	3
<b>Chichester Hbr</b>	3	-	2	14	14	3	23	16	6	2	2	2
<b>Pagham Hbr</b>	4	1	2	17	11	2	1	2	1	-	1	1
<b>Pulborough Brooks</b>	-	-	-	6	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Newhaven</b>	-	-	-	nc	nc	nc	nc	Nc	1	-	nc	-
<b>Rye Hbr</b>	-	-	-	13	3	-	2	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Scotney Court GP</b>	-	-	-	13	-	nc	-	-	-	-	-	-

In the first period, wintering birds were recorded in Pagham and Chichester Harbours, with maxima of four in Pagham Hbr on 5 Jan and three in Chichester Hbr on the same date (see *WeBS*' table).

Spring passage eastwards began on 23 Mar when a single bird flew past Worthing Beach. This was the only March record from the seawatching sites, although 27 were recorded inland at Pulborough Brooks RSPB on the 27<sup>th</sup>. The eastbound spring totals at the main seawatching sites were as follows (very few were recorded at Bexhill/Hastings and are not included in the table):

	April	May	Total
<b>Selsey Bill</b>	350	18	368
<b>Worthing Beach</b>	900	41	941
<b>Brighton Marina</b>	1381	177	1558
<b>Splash Point, Seaford</b>	864	186	1050

Peak passage was in late April, with relatively few recorded in May. Along with certain other species (notably Pomarine Skua) this species appears to be moving eastwards earlier in spring than a few years ago. The peak daily count was 298 at Brighton Marina on 25 Apr. At Selsey Bill the peak daily count was 61 on 26 Apr, at Worthing Beach 257 on 28 Apr and at Splash Point 222 on 26 Apr.

At the Rye Hbr nocturnal roost, numbers increased from 54 on 24 Apr to 287 on 29 Apr and a peak of 353 on 3 May before dropping to 190 on 4 May and 145 on the 5<sup>th</sup>. During the day these birds spread out to feed in the surrounding grasslands. Elsewhere small numbers were noted with inland records from Pulborough Brooks on 20 Apr (8), 26 Apr (11) and 15 May (6), and from Weir Wood Res (1 on 18 Apr), the Arun Valley at Offham (3 on 20 Apr), Arundel WWT (1 on 22 Apr) and Henfield Levels (5 on 26 Apr).

Small numbers were present at various coastal sites throughout the summer making it difficult to determine where spring migration ended and return autumn passage began. One flying west past Worthing Beach on 12 Jul was presumably an early returning bird and there were 3 W past the same location eight days later. As usual, numbers in autumn were much lower than in spring and spread among the usual coastal locations, with notable counts of 23 in Chichester Hbr on 20 Jul, 17 at Castle Water (Rye Hbr LNR) on 31 Jul and 12 at Pagham Hbr, also on 31 Jul.

In the second winter period there was one at Pagham Hbr and at least two in Chichester Hbr; at the latter site two were recorded widely within the harbour and there may have been more than two birds involved. [JC]

0541. **CURLEW***Numenius arquata*

**Formerly a very scarce breeder; common passage migrant and winter visitor. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern**

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

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>County total</b>	1940	1882	1490	881	217	212	2010	2016	2015	1777	1259	1020
<b>Chichester Hbr</b>	1130	1151	1326	646	170	147	1680	1448	1482	1252	980	566
<b>Pagham Hbr</b>	569	204	107	235	47	65	296	336	388	285	128	315
<b>Pett Level</b>	171	260	43	-	-	-	-	75	75	87	20	-
<b>Rye Hbr</b>	1	220	7	-	-	-	26	157	38	109	108	101

The county total number for August represent 1.4% of the estimated British wintering coastal population (147,100). Both Chichester and Pagham Harbours held numbers in excess of the 1% Threshold Number of 530 during a significant proportion of the year.

Other notable counts in the first winter period included 628 at Rye Hbr on 3 Jan, 400 there on 9 Feb and 39 at Newhaven Tide Mills on 16 Feb. Coastal movements at the main seawatching locations are shown in the following table:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>Selsey Bill</b>	-	-	2E	63E 2W	-	16W	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Worthing Beach</b>	-	-	4E 2W	5E 3W	-	4W	7W	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Brighton Marina</b>	-	23	9E	52E	5E	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Splash Point, Seaford</b>	-	19E	5E 3W	12E 2W	-	-	-	-	-	2W	2E	2E

The only significant daily movement eastwards was of 40 E past Selsey on 11 Apr. Otherwise small numbers were involved, with more notable concentrations in some estuaries, such as the *WeBS*' count of 235 at Pagham Hbr on 20 Apr.

Small numbers were present at several coastal sites throughout the summer. Singles inland on Ashdown Forest on 30 Jun and 12 Jul were notable but breeding was not suspected.

Presumed return passage was first noted on 12 Jun when 11 flew west past Selsey Bill. Notable autumn and second winter period counts not noted in the *WeBS*' table above included a maximum count of 711 at South Stakes Island (Chichester Hbr) on 1 Aug, 300 at Pilsley Island on 28 Sep, 239 at Rye Hbr on 9 Oct, 446 at the same location on 7 Dec, and 39 at Newhaven Tide Mills on 15 Dec.

Inland records came from eight sites, with a maximum count of 12 at Pulborough Brooks RSPB on 6 Jan. The monthly distribution of inland records is shown below:

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
15	0	2	1	0	2	3	0	0	1	1	0

[JC]

0545. **SPOTTED REDSHANK***Tringa erythropus*

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

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

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>County total</b>	3	9	4	6	-	1	-	5	3	2	5	4
<b>Chichester Hbr</b>	2	2	1	1	-	-	-	4	3	2	2	1
<b>Pagham Hbr</b>	-	6	1	3	-	1	-	1	-	-	3	1
<b>Pevensey Levels</b>	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Rye Hbr</b>	1	1	1	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2

The approximate minimum monthly totals, taking into account records in addition to the *WeBS*' counts, were as follows:

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
12	11	13	8	7	3	3	17	12	10	10	8

As usual, the Pagham Hbr area held most of the wintering birds. During the first winter period there were four regularly seen at this location, with a maximum of eight on 11 Jan. Elsewhere, singles were seen regularly at East Head and Thorney Island, Chichester Hbr and the Rye Hbr areas, with two seen at Northpoint Pit on 17 Feb.

The presence of wintering birds makes the start of spring passage difficult to ascertain. There were six at Pagham Hbr on 2, 5 and 20 Mar and these may have included some migrants. Presumed early migrants were also seen at Selsey West Fields and Piddinghoe on 14 Mar, followed by singles at Rye Hbr on 22 Mar and Pevensey Levels the following day. Small numbers, mostly single birds, were then recorded at the usual coastal localities on many dates through the spring, with most sightings being in the Pagham Hbr area. Inland there was one at Pulborough Brooks RSPB on 19 Apr. The last spring record was a single at Sidlesham Ferry on 22 May.

After a three week gap, the first returning bird was also at Sidlesham Ferry, on 15 Jun. The next was at Pulborough Brooks on 21 and 23 Jun and there was a steady trickle of birds, mostly singles, from early July at the main coastal sites of Pagham, Chichester and Rye Harbour areas. More notable autumn counts included four at Thorney Island on 17 Aug and an autumn high count of nine at Sidlesham Ferry on 24 Aug. There were few records away from the main sites, but there were singles at Pulborough Brooks on 3 Sep, Drayton GP (Chichester) on 5 and 9 Sep and Weir Wood Res on 10 and 12 Sep. Autumn migration probably finished by mid to late September; with birds seen at the regular sites from the end of September into October involving returning winter birds.

The winter flock at Pagham Hbr started to arrive in late September when two were present; numbers increased to a maximum of five, recorded on 28 Oct and 23 Nov. Elsewhere, there were up to three in Chichester Hbr, two in the Rye Hbr area and one on the R Adur at Shoreham. [JC]

## 0546. REDSHANK

*Tringa totanus*

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

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

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>County total</b>	2267	1412	1528	519	199	176	1136	1354	2398	1911	2224	2109
<b>Chichester Hbr</b>	1486	1142	1072	222	109	76	911	789	1871	1322	1732	1341
<b>Pagham Hbr</b>	478	103	164	137	36	23	163	423	244	267	217	366
<b>Pulborough Brooks</b>	-	-	9	10	18	19	3	1	-	-	-	-
<b>Lower Adur Estuary</b>	169	23	27	Nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	76	91	104	91
<b>Rye Hbr</b>	40	65	141	114	9	46	57	140	199	177	121	148

The county total number for September represents 2.1% of the estimated British wintering coastal population (116,100). The highest counts by far were from Chichester Hbr where numbers exceeded the 1% Threshold Number of 1100 during a number of months and confirm the importance of the area as a wintering site.

In the first winter period, significant counts not included in the *WeBS*' table included 380 at Thorney Deeps on 3 Jan and 360 there on 6 Mar, 148 at Sidlesham Ferry on 5 Jan, 60 at Scotney Court GP on 21 Jan, 60 at Pilsey Island on 6 Mar and 40 at Newhaven Tide Mills on 6 Jan.

Spring passage was not particularly marked. Numbers at Thorney Deeps decreased from 260 on 6 Apr to 120 ten days later, indicating a departure of wintering birds during this time. At Brighton Marina 11 flew east on 25 Apr.

Breeding, or attempted breeding, was confirmed at nine sites. At Thorney Deeps there were 12 pairs present; at Thorney and Pilsey Islands there were two pairs at each site; at Amberley Wild Brooks up to eight pairs were present (but there was no information on success); at Breech Pool (Pagham Hbr) breeding was confirmed but there was no other information; at The Midrips there were ten pairs and one chick was seen, plus 18 juveniles; at Pulborough Brooks RSPB there were 16 pairs and broods of two and four were seen on the North Brooks; and at Rye Hbr an estimated ten pairs fledged about 15 young.

The first non-breeding birds started returning at the end of June. Numbers at Thorney Deeps increased from 28 on 13 Jun (presumably breeding or summering birds) to 200 on 26 Jun, 468 on 3 July, 620 on 14 Jul and an autumn/late winter peak of 1000 on 27 Jul. The first returning bird was at Newhaven Tide Mills on 15 Jul.

Notable counts during the second winter period included 700 at Thorney Deeps on 9 Oct, 568 there on 7 Nov and 500 there on 8 Dec, 139 at Sidlesham Ferry on 26 Oct, 111 at Rye Saltings on 14 Dec, 60 at both Scotney Court GP and Union Channel (East Guldeford) on 14 Dec (which were possibly the same birds) and 42 at Newhaven Tide Mills on 31 Dec. [JC]

0548. **GREENSHANK**

*Tringa nebularia*

**Fairly common passage migrant; a few winter.**

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

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>County total</b>	9	-	14	24	7	1	60	126	179	119	43	12
<b>Chichester Hbr</b>	7	-	14	13	6	1	49	89	164	118	42	12
<b>Pagham Hbr</b>	-	-	-	3	1	-	-	2	2	-	-	-
<b>Pevensey Levels</b>	2	-	-	1	-	-	-	3	-	-	1	-
<b>Rye Hbr</b>	-	-	-	7	-	-	11	8	7	-	-	-
<b>Scotney Court GP</b>	-	-	-	-	-	nc	-	9	-	-	-	-

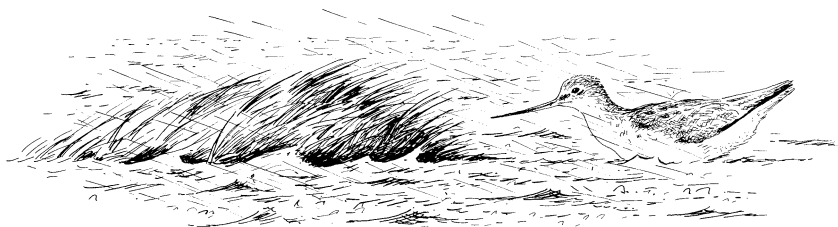
The British wintering coastal population of Greenshanks is estimated to be about 600 birds and the 1% Threshold Number is 50. Chichester Hbr therefore represents an important area for this species during the autumn passage.

During the first winter period most records were again from Chichester Hbr, where there were up to 12 at Thorney Deeps, four at Hermitage Channel (Emsworth) and a single bird in the West Wittering/East Head area throughout. Elsewhere there were two at Pevensey Levels plus singles at Pagham Hbr and Chichester Gravel Pits.

The first spring migrant was probably one at Pagham Hbr on 8 Apr followed by two at Rye Hbr the following day. Birds were then recorded virtually daily throughout the spring at the usual coastal sites, with regular inland records from Pulborough Brooks RSPB and occasional records from a variety of other locations, including one at Duncton on 21 Apr. The highest numbers were recorded from Thorney Deepes (as usual) with double figures recorded on several dates in April and May and a high count of 24 on both 30 Apr and 3 May. The spring passage past the main seawatching sites was again light with just 15 recorded in total; 7 E past Splash Point (Seaford) on 15 Apr, 1 E past Selsey Bill on 17 Apr and 7 E past Splash Point on 30 Apr. The last spring records were four at Sidlesham Ferry, one at Pilsley Sands and one at Thorney Island, all on 1 Jun.

The first returning bird was one at Thorney Island on 11 Jun. The typical build up of numbers at this site occurred during the autumn, reaching 120 on 4 Aug and a peak of 130 on 28 Sep. Numbers then declined to leave the regular wintering flock of a dozen or so by December, although there were still 34 there on 8 Nov. As usual, Thorney Island recorded far higher numbers than any other site, but other notable autumn counts included 11 at Rye Hbr on 20 Jul, 15 at Fishbourne Channel (Chichester Hbr) on 1 Aug, 12 at Hope Gap (near Cuckmere Haven) on 17 Aug, ten at Weir Wood Res on 24 Aug, 11 at the same location on 7 Sep and 18 at Emsworth on 1 Oct. One on Pevensey Levels on 16 Nov was either a late migrant or perhaps a wintering bird.

Away from Thorney Deepes, wintering birds were recorded at Pagham Hbr, West Wittering and at Nutbourne, where there were two. [JC]



0553. **GREEN SANDPIPER**

*Tringa ochropus*

**Scarce spring and fairly common autumn passage migrant. Small numbers winter. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern.**

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

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>County total</b>	7	-	4	4	-	3	19	33	6	6	5	4
<b>Chichester Hbr</b>	-	-	-	-	-	1	2	2	-	1	-	-
<b>Pagham Hbr</b>	-	-	1	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Chichester GP</b>	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	1	-	2	-	-
<b>Burton &amp; Chingford Ponds</b>	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	nc	1	-	-	-
<b>Arundel WWT</b>	-	-	-	-	-	-	nc	-	1	1	1	2
<b>Arun (Offham to Houghton)</b>	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Bury Brooks</b>	-	-	1	-	nc	nc	nc	nc	-	1	-	-
<b>Amberley Wild Brooks</b>	1	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Pulborough Brooks</b>	1	-	-	-	-	-	5	4	-	-	-	-

Weirwood Res	-	-	-	nc	nc	nc	1	7	1	-	-	-
Barcombe Res	3	-	-	1	nc	-	1	-	-	-	-	1
Glynde Levels	-	-	2	nc	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Arlington Res	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-
Pevensey Levels	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	5	-	-	2	-
Bewl Water	-	-	-	nc	nc	nc	-	-	-	1	1	-
Darwell Res	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	2	nc	-	1	-
Pett Level	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	6	-	-	-	-
Rye Hbr	1	-	-	-	-	-	2	6	8	2	-	1

Figures extracted from daily records suggest minimum monthly numbers for the county to be as follows:

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
28	25	11	34	-	11	44	75	37	17	17	18

These figures show a typical peak in August but the monthly totals are generally lower when compared with 2002. In the first winter period the maximum counts were three at Hailsham SF on 4 Jan and three at Barcombe Res the following day. Spring records were scattered around the county with notable counts of four at Constantia Manor (Isfield) and seven at Troutbeck (near Eridge), both on 17 Apr. Near the coast, records were received from the Sidlesham/Pagham area, Piddinghoe, Pevensey Levels and Rye Hbr. The last spring record was of a single bird at Pagham Hbr on 29 Apr.

The first returning birds of autumn were reported from Thorney Deeps on 15 Jun, and during the *WeBS*' counts on that day at Chichester Hbr and at Castle Water (Rye Hbr LNR). Notable counts in July, though not at the levels of 2002, were five at Thorney Deeps on the 3<sup>rd</sup>, five at Pulborough North Brooks on the 8<sup>th</sup>, 22<sup>nd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup>, while nine were at Rye Hbr LNR on the 9<sup>th</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup>. On 4 Aug a total of seven birds were at Drayton and Portfield pits in the Chichester GP complex and six were at Pett Level on 17-18 Aug. A monthly maximum of ten birds was reported from Weir Wood Res on 15 Aug and up to eight birds were noted at Castle Water throughout the month. An unusual record was of a bird flushed at dusk on the R Mole at Gatwick on 14 Sep. Five birds were present on Pulborough Brooks on 4 Nov and three on Steyning Levels on 13 and 25 Dec, but otherwise records up to the end of the year were only of ones and twos. [MJM]

#### 0554. WOOD SANDPIPER

*Tringa glareola*

**Scarce spring and autumn passage migrant; recorded once in winter. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern.**

The monthly totals in a below average year were as follows:

Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep
1	1	1	3	10	2

The first sighting of the year was from Pulborough Brooks RSPB on 18 Apr. Pett Level's only spring migrant was on 23 May, whilst in June there was a singleton at The Midrips on the 27<sup>th</sup>.

The end of July saw the first birds of autumn with one at Pett Level on the 22<sup>nd</sup> and one on Pulborough North Brooks the next day where there were sightings of single birds on several days until 29 Jul. Halsey's Fm Field (Pagham) held a single bird on 6 Aug; there was a maximum of three on Ternery Pool (Rye Hbr LNR) on the 13<sup>th</sup> and two each at Pett Level on the 23<sup>rd</sup> and at Sidlesham Ferry on the 26<sup>th</sup>.

The final records of the year were of single birds at Weir Wood Res on 3 Sep and at Arundel WWT on the 7<sup>th</sup>. [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	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>County total</b>	1	1	1	2	8	1	96	70	15	3	-	-
<b>Chichester Hbr</b>	-	-	-	-	2	-	9	10	4	-	-	-
<b>Pagham Hbr</b>	-	-	-	-	2	1	4	5	1	-	-	-
<b>Weirwood Res</b>	-	-	-	nc	nc	nc	3	2	1	-	-	-
<b>Iford Brooks</b>	-	-	-	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	1	-	-	-
<b>Barcombe Res</b>	-	-	-	2	nc	-	7	3	2	-	-	-
<b>Arlington Res</b>	-	-	-	-	2	-	5	3	1	-	-	-
<b>Cuckmere Haven</b>	-	-	-	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	-	1	-	-
<b>Eastbourne Lakes</b>	-	-	1	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	-	-	-	-
<b>Bewl Water</b>	-	-	-	nc	nc	nc	6	1	-	-	-	-
<b>Darwell Res</b>	-	-	-	-	1	-	2	3	nc	-	-	-
<b>Powdermill Res</b>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-
<b>Rye Hbr</b>	1	1	-	-	1	-	55	37	5	-	-	-

Figures extracted from daily records suggest minimum total monthly numbers for the county as follows:

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
4	5	5	27	81	7	199	167	52	13	5	4

A small number of birds were present in both winter periods. In the first winter period there were singles in the Lower Cuckmere Valley on 1 Jan, 3 Jan, 8 Feb and 23 Feb, in the Lower Adur Valley from 1-4 Jan, at Rye Hbr Saltings on 5 Jan, at Ford (Arundel) on 21 Jan, at Upper Beeding on 2 Feb, at Sidlesham Ferry Pool on 5 Feb, at Castle Fm (Rye Hr LNR) on 14 Feb, at Pett Level on 15 Feb, at Shinewater Lake (Eastbourne) on 23 Feb and at Pulborough Brooks RSPB on 27 Feb.

In the second winter period there were singles at Henfield Levels on 1 Nov, in the Lower Adur Valley on 6 Nov and 17 Dec, in the Rother Valley on 9 Nov, on Worthing Beach on 20 Nov, at Weir Wood Res on 29 Nov, at Charleston Reedbed on 19 Dec, at Pett Level on 24 Dec and by the R Ouse (Lewes) on 31 Dec.

Coastal migration was noted at Brighton Marina on 16 and 23 Apr when 1 E was noted on both dates. Four were recorded on wetlands at Constantia Manor (Isfield) on 17 Apr, but otherwise no more than two were seen at any one site in that month. In May further coastal movements were recorded with 10 E at Brighton Marina in 94 hr sea-watching, 2 E at Splash Point (Seaford) in 129 hr, and at Worthing, in 51 hr, two birds were seen on the same day: 1 E and one on the beach. Records in May were spread from Chichester Hbr in the west to Rye Hbr LNR in the east and inland as far as Weir Wood Res where ten were noted on the 16<sup>th</sup>.

After a quiet June, birds returned across the county in significant numbers in July with 13 at Thorney Deeps on the 18<sup>th</sup>, 22 in the Rye Hbr SSSI area on the *WeBS*' count day, (20<sup>th</sup>), and also 33 nearby east of the R Rother, whilst 11 were counted at Arlington Res on the 27<sup>th</sup>. In August records of sightings on 28 days were received; notable counts included ten at Thorney Deeps on the 14<sup>th</sup>, 37 in the Rye Hbr/Northpoint Pit/Union

Channel area on the 17<sup>th</sup> (*WeBS*' count), 16 at Piddinghoe on the 19<sup>th</sup>, and 14 at Sidlesham Ferry on the 29<sup>th</sup>.

Although birds were seen on 20 days in September, numbers were much lower with a maximum of five at Arundel WWT on the 7<sup>th</sup> and at Piddinghoe on the 23<sup>rd</sup>. For the remainder of the year the only records of other than singletons were all in October; two at Powdermill Res on the 12<sup>th</sup>, three at Upper Beeding on the 18<sup>th</sup> and two at Pulborough Brooks RSPB on the 27<sup>th</sup>. [MJM]

0561. **TURNSTONE**

*Arenaria interpres*

**Fairly common winter visitor and passage migrant. Scarce in summer. Amber list species of medium conservation concern.**

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

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>County total</b>	454	486	445	184	79	41	51	626	625	502	646	483
<b>Chichester Hbr</b>	90	17	71	114	2	-	1	82	35	29	143	116
<b>Pagham Hbr</b>	176	326	75	43	30	26	41	484	351	116	216	130
<b>Climping</b>	14	26	71	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	7	121	43	64
<b>Lower Adur Estuary</b>	18	-	6	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	11	-	32	29
<b>Glyne Gap</b>	108	97	192	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	204	188	173	138
<b>Pett Level</b>	20	7	26	-	-	-	-	40	7	10	17	6
<b>Rye Hbr</b>	2	12	4	27	47	15	9	20	-	18	4	-

Other notable counts in the first winter period included 200 at Galley Hill (Bexhill) on 1 Jan, 53 on the beach at Worthing on 3 Jan and 51 on Pilsey Island on 23 Jan.

The monthly totals of eastbound birds at the main seawatching locations were as follows:

	Mar	Apr	May	Total
<b>Selsey Bill</b>	78	134	-	212
<b>Worthing Beach</b>	3	9	9	21
<b>Brighton Marina</b>	-	-	2	2
<b>Splash Point, Seaford</b>	-	1	-	1

On no one day was passage noted along the whole coast (cf 2002 in *SxBR* 55:89). Counts of 31 on 25 Apr and 30 on the next day at Selsey Bill were the highest reported. In the autumn, 28 W were recorded at Rustington on 12 Aug and 29 W at Church Norton on 15 Sep.

The *WeBS*' counts continue to show that a significant number of birds are summering in the county with the main concentration being in Pagham Hbr and Rye Hbr. Significant autumn counts not shown in the *WeBS*' table above included 180 in Pagham Hbr on 10 Aug, 78 on Pilsey Island on 8 Nov, and 180 on Pagham Beach on 30 Nov.

No inland records were received. [MJM]



0564. **RED-NECKED PHALAROPE***Phalaropus lobatus***Rare spring and autumn passage migrant.**

Two probable juveniles were present on Ternery Pool (Rye Hbr) from 29 Aug-2 Sep with one remaining to the 8<sup>th</sup> (AJH, BJY *et al*). Twelve have been recorded since 1990, of which four were in August (from the 26<sup>th</sup>) and seven in September (up to the 24<sup>th</sup>). Two have been recorded together in the county only once before, at Pett Level in mid September 1952. [RJF]

0566. **POMARINE SKUA***Stercorarius pomarinus***Passage migrant in varying numbers in spring but very scarce in autumn; a rare visitor in winter.**

Spring 2003 was better than that in the preceding year with an estimated minimum 138 birds seen, compared with only 73 in 2002. Principal site totals reported were as follows:

	Apr	May	Total
<b>Selsey Bill</b>	18	8	26
<b>Worthing Beach</b>	21	18	39
<b>Brighton Marina</b>	47	43	90
<b>Splash Point, Seaford</b>	45	28	73
<b>Beachy Head</b>	17	10	27
<b>Bexhill/Hastings</b>	-	8	8
<b>Rye Bay</b>	4	3	7

The first sightings were reported on 14 Apr with records of four at Selsey Bill, ten at Brighton Marina and six at Seaford. Further birds were seen on the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> and then daily from 21 - 30 Apr. The highest single-day count in April at one site was 22 (all E), in 15 hr seawatching at Seaford on the 21<sup>st</sup> in almost ideal conditions with a wind force 4 from the southeast veering southerly. During May there were records on most days between the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup>, followed by a single on the 23<sup>rd</sup> and a pair on the late date of the 29<sup>th</sup>. The highest daily total in May was also 22 (4 W and 18 E) in 9 hr at Brighton Marina on the 4<sup>th</sup> (when the wind was recorded as force 3-4 from the southeast).

No further records were received for the remainder of the year. [MJM]

0567. **ARCTIC SKUA***Stercorarius parasiticus***Fairly common to scarce spring and autumn passage migrant; very scarce in summer and rare in winter.**

The annual total of approximately 535 birds is based, as for 2002, on minimum daily figures and assumes that birds seen on consecutive days were different. The approximate monthly totals were as follows:

	Apr	May	Total
<b>Selsey Bill</b>	18	8	26
<b>Worthing Beach</b>	21	18	39
<b>Brighton Marina</b>	47	43	90
<b>Splash Point, Seaford</b>	45	28	73
<b>Beachy Head</b>	17	10	27

<b>Bexhill/Hastings</b>	-	8	8
<b>Rye Bay</b>	4	3	7

No birds were reported as having been seen in January, February, November or December.

After a slow start to the year with three at Church Norton on 16 Mar being the first, the main seawatching months of April and May produced significantly higher numbers with 370 at Brighton Marina and 301 at Splash Point (Seaford) compared with 247 and 141 respectively in 2002. On 21 Apr, 78 E (including 49 dark-phased birds) in 15 hr at Seaford was the highest daily total; wind conditions were almost ideal being a force 4 from the southeast, veering south. In May, birds were recorded on 26 days with the biggest movement being 31 E on the 2<sup>nd</sup> at Brighton Marina. Monthly totals at the main seawatching localities were:

	<b>Apr</b>	<b>May</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>No per hr watched</b>
<b>Selsey Bill</b>	108	51	159	½
<b>Worthing Beach</b>	84	31	115	1
<b>Brighton Marina</b>	259	111	370	1 ½
<b>Splash Point, Seaford</b>	201	100	301	1 ¼

In the autumn there were no significant movements but five birds were recorded along the Pett Level shore on 16 Sep and a similar number (all adults) were in Rye Bay on 23 Sep. The final record of the year was 1 E at Selsey Bill on 23 Oct. [MJM]

## 0569. GREAT SKUA

*Catharacta skua*

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

This was another good year with an estimated 211 birds reported as compared with 147 in 2002. The records may be summarised as follows:

	<b>Jan</b>	<b>Feb</b>	<b>Mar</b>	<b>Apr</b>	<b>May</b>	<b>Jun</b>	<b>Jul</b>	<b>Aug</b>	<b>Sep</b>	<b>Oct</b>	<b>Nov</b>	<b>Dec</b>
<b>County totals</b>	18	2	3	107	53	3	1	-	16	3	2	1
<b>East</b>	12	2	3	95	50	2	-	-	1	1	-	1
<b>West</b>	4	-	-	11	2	1	1	-	1	1	2	-
<b>Off-shore</b>	2	-	-	1	1	-	-	-	14	1	-	-

Birds were seen in all months of the year except for August, though the most records were in the spring passage months of April (on 19 days) and May (on 17 days), with the peak passage being on 25-29 Apr. In these months, totals at the principal seawatching sites were:

	<b>Apr</b>	<b>May</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Selsey Bill</b>	9	6	15
<b>Worthing Beach</b>	12	3	15
<b>Brighton Marina</b>	42	19	61
<b>Splash Point, Seaford</b>	33	15	48

Summer records were 1 E and 1 W at Selsey Bill and 1 E at Seaford in June and 1 E at Brighton Marina in July. The first record of the autumn was 1 W at Brighton Marina on 10 Sep; on the 14<sup>th</sup> one was harassing terns at Pilsey Sands. A single bird was in Rye Bay on 16 Sep. In October, one was causing havoc at Hermitage (Emsworth) later flying east

over Thorney Little Deepes on the 13<sup>th</sup>, whilst there was 1 W at Worthing on the 22<sup>nd</sup> and 1 E at Selsey Bill the next day. Two sightings in November were of single birds flying west at Selsey Bill on the 12<sup>th</sup> and Brighton Marina on the 14<sup>th</sup>. The latter site produced the final record of the year, 1 E on 26 Dec. [MJM]

## 0575. MEDITERRANEAN GULL

*Larus melanocephalus*

**Scarce but regular visitor throughout the year. A few pairs have bred in recent years. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern.**

This was another exceptional year for this species with records from 91 different sites on 242 different days. There were 43 records involving more than ten individual birds, 19 counts in excess of 20 birds and a gathering of 69 in Chichester Hbr on 24 Mar (CBC) that creates, for the fifth consecutive year, a new county record.

The abundance of records, especially from several sites near the Selsey peninsula and the coastal seawatching locations, makes it impossible to evaluate the number of different individuals in the county and, as in previous years, the following table of monthly totals has to be approximate:

	Adult	2 <sup>nd</sup> Yr.	1 <sup>st</sup> Yr.	Juv	Total **	Inland	Highest number recorded
Jan	10	5	4	-	29	1	14 (7 adults) at Pagham Hbr on the 21 <sup>st</sup> .
Feb	24	7	3	-	58	3	21 (11 adults) at Pagham Hbr on the 6 <sup>th</sup> .
Mar	110	5	5	-	174	9	69 (65 adults) in Chichester Hbr on the 24 <sup>th</sup> .
Apr	55	10	20	-	238	4	62 (8 first years) at Rye Hbr on the 12 <sup>th</sup> .
May	58	5	25	-	102	2	61 (17 first years) at Rye Hbr on the 14 <sup>th</sup> .
Jun	62	3	12	1	99	3	16 (8 adults) in Chichester Hbr on the 25 <sup>th</sup> .
Jul	29	2	6	23	71	1	19 (16 adults) Rye Hbr on the 3 <sup>rd</sup> .
Aug	10	2	2	1	24	1	6 West Beach, Selsey on the 9 <sup>th</sup> .
Sep	13	1	1	-	23	1	12 (11 adults) at Pagham Hbr on the 30 <sup>th</sup> .
Oct	6	5	1	-	20	3	8 at Selsey Bill on both the 10 <sup>th</sup> and 23 <sup>rd</sup> .
Nov	11	7	2	-	34	-	19 (11 adults) at Church Norton on the 20 <sup>th</sup> .
Dec	13	5	4	-	35	-	10 (10 adults) at Church Norton on the 3 <sup>rd</sup> .

\*\* Total includes individuals with no precise age assigned.

The table shows that the pattern of occurrence was similar to other years with the highest number being recorded in spring. Adults were the most frequently recorded age group with a notable increase in the number of first year birds seen in late spring. The numbers seen between March and June were the highest recorded but the autumn and winter numbers were slightly lower than 2002; indeed the estimated county total for October was the lowest since 18 were recorded in November 1999.

During both winter periods the highest numbers were seen at Pagham and Chichester Harbours whilst numbers in East Sussex increased during March. Birds were absent from Rye Hbr after 11 Aug. Other high counts, not shown in the above table, include 14 at Pett Level on 25 Mar, 47 at Rye Hbr on 28 Mar, 21 at Thorney Island on 21 Apr and 13 at Hermitage SF on 18 May.

Coastal movements were predominantly in an eastward direction and were most evident in spring. The largest spring movements occurred in April and were seen from Brighton Marina where 29 passed east on the 16<sup>th</sup>, 27 E on the 17<sup>th</sup>, 16 E on the 21<sup>st</sup>, 18 E on the 22<sup>nd</sup> and 19 E on the 26<sup>th</sup>. The following table shows the monthly totals of birds passing the regular seawatching sites. It is evident that after June there were few coastal movements except at Selsey Bill where the largest winter movement was 10 W on 22 Dec.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	
Selsey Bill	E	-	10	19	11	5	21	4	2	-	12	9	4
	W	6	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	10
Worthing Beach	E	-	3	2	49	5	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	W	-	-	-	1	1	2	1	-	-	-	-	-
Brighton Marina	E	1	-	25	144	8	2	-	-	-	-	-	1
	W	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Splash Point	E	-	-	4	40	3	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
	W	-	-	-	-	7	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

A minimum of 22 pairs, and probably 25, nested in the county with at least 13 pairs rearing 22 young, most of which fledged successfully.

Records away from coastal locations occurred in all months with the exception of November and December and, as usual, involved small numbers. Up to three were seen in the gull roost at Bewl Water on six dates between January and March with one there on 2 May; one or two were regularly recorded at various sites in the Arun Valley between 27 Feb and 22 Jul; two were seen with Black-headed Gulls near Finchdean on 28 Mar and singles were recorded at Chichester GP on 10 Jun, at West Dean on 9 Aug, at Storrington on 8 Sep, at Arlington Res on 14 Oct, at Warnham LNR on 17 Oct and at Weir Wood Res on 19 Oct.

Once again several Mediterranean Gulls were noted wearing white, green or blue colour rings; observers are requested to record, where possible, not only the ring colour but the three characters on these rings to help trace their origins and movements. (See the Sussex Ringing Report for 2003 on pages 205 - 210). [JAN]

## 0578. LITTLE GULL

*Larus minutus*

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

This was another remarkable year with approximately 1630 individuals being recorded. The previous high annual totals were 1483 in 1990, 1094 in 2002 and 1024 in 2001. The year's record total is due mainly to a large coastal movement in April. The following table of approximate monthly totals demonstrates that, as usual, most were seen at coastal locations during the spring and autumn passage.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>Monthly total</b>	88	12	18	1290	28	2	3	4	6	146	26	7
<b>Inland</b>	-	-	4	43	3	-	1	4	1	10	-	-

Most of the early winter birds were seen in the first two days in January with 14 at both Rye Bay and Hastings and 12 E at Brighton Marina on the 1<sup>st</sup> whilst on the 2<sup>nd</sup> a total of 44 flew southwest at Rye Bay. Thereafter small numbers were seen until 19 Jan. A first winter bird flew west at Widewater (Lancing) on 2 Feb but the first suggestions of spring passage were 3 E at Brighton Marina on 19 Feb with 2 E there and at Hastings on the 22<sup>nd</sup>. Thereafter small numbers were recorded on most days from late February until early April with most records comprising one or two birds in the Sidlesham area. Although small numbers were noted from inland waters, the count of 25 at Arlington Res on 10 Apr, rising to possibly as many as 37 on the 16<sup>th</sup>, was noteworthy.

Coastal passage started in earnest on 13 Apr and, during the following two weeks, record numbers were seen from the seawatching points and included a county day record of 564 E at Brighton Marina on the 26<sup>th</sup>. Details of the seven best days are tabulated below

with the number of hours watching (rounded to the nearest whole hour) recorded in brackets:

	13 Apr	15 Apr	16 Apr	17 Apr	21 Apr	25 Apr	26 Apr
<b>Selsey Bill</b>	11 (7)	31 (9)	11 (4)	19 (7)	10 (11)	2 (7)	17 (7)
<b>Worthing Beach</b>	6 (3)	1 (2)	5 (2)	0 (2)	9 (2)	12 (15)	172 (8)
<b>Brighton Marina</b>	18 (6)	37 (8)	73 (7)	41 (6)	258 (9)	93 (13)	564 (12)
<b>Splash Point, Seaford</b>	24 (14)	12 (6)	30 (5)	89 (4)	133 (15)	34 (6)	67 (3)
<b>Beachy Head</b>	-	-	-	13 (2)	150 (?)	10 (?)	-

The following table of the monthly totals from each site shows that the spring passage ended abruptly with poor numbers recorded in May:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	
<b>Selsey Bill</b>	E	5 os*	-	-	111	8	-	-	-	1	9	-	1
	W	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	13	-	-
<b>Worthing Beach</b>	E	-	-	-	219	1	-	-	-	-	4 os*	-	-
	W	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	4	-
<b>Brighton Marina</b>	E	15	8	6	1160	3	-	-	-	-	108 os*	-	-
	W	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Splash Point</b>	E	-	-	9	411	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	W	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

\* off-shore

With the exception of 1 E at Selsey Bill on 5 Jun and 10 Sep the records between mid-May and late September were of small numbers at Rye Hbr, Arlington Res and Weir Wood Res, the most being three at Weir Wood Res on 10 Aug.

The table shows that the autumn passage was generally unremarkable; however, 108 offshore at Brighton Marina on 17 Oct, with 65 lingering there on the following day, was noteworthy. The only other significant records were 14 at Selsey Bill on 23 Oct, 11 in the Rother Valley on 30 Nov and five at Harbour Fm (Rye Hbr) on 20 Dec.

During the late autumn, birds were recorded inland with two at Weir Wood Res, two at Arlington Res and up to three Bawl Water. [JAN]

## 0579. SABINE'S GULL

*Larus sabini*

### Rare autumn vagrant.

A first-winter bird was present off Brighton Beach on 4-5 Nov (DGH *et al*) with presumably the same individual seen at Brighton Marina (where it roosted) on the 14<sup>th</sup> (IJW *et al*). Records since 1990 average one per year although the most recent were in 2000, when five were seen. This individual is the latest in the county since 1971 when one was recorded at Pagham Hbr in late December. [RJF]

0582. **BLACK-HEADED GULL***Larus ridibundus*

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

The highest counts in the year were at the evening roost at Bewl Water where large numbers gathered in stormy conditions (see *Sussex Bird Report* 55:199-203). Examples include 50,000 on 1 and 3 Jan, 40,000 on 17 Jan, 57,000 on 20 Jan and 24,000 on 1 Mar. By 9 Mar the roost count had fallen to 10,000 and 9000 on the 14<sup>th</sup> was the last large roost count. Elsewhere there were just three records involving 1000 or more birds: 2000 at Goring Beach on 1 Jan, 1000 on floods at Goring Gap on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3000 roosting at dusk in Thorney Channel on 26 Jan.

Spring coastal passage was poor and was inconsistently recorded. The monthly eastbound totals and peak movements for the spring are shown below:

	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Peak movement
<b>Selsey Bill</b>	-	-	188	-	129 on 17 Apr (7 hrs)
<b>Worthing Beach</b>	-	174	816	196	259 on 17 Apr (2 hrs)
<b>Brighton Marina</b>	400	-	344	-	400 on 23 Feb (4 hrs)

The breeding season was again successful with approximately 1400 pairs recorded. At Rye Hbr about 800 pairs bred with approximately 600 pairs at Ternery Pool and 200 pairs at Castle Water. Both sites were successful with an estimated total of between 700 and 1000 fledglings. At Pett Level breeding success was reported as “reasonable” with many young fledged from the estimated 370 pairs. In West Sussex there were 160 pairs on Stakes Island (Chichester Hbr) which produced at least 48 young and at Arundel WWT there were 86 nests counted on 24 Apr. There were no later records detailing success or failure of the Arundel colony.

Apart from 200 immature birds at Chichester GP on 6 Apr, the numbers recorded during the spring and early summer away from the breeding colonies and the coast were small. The first notable counts of the autumn were 1500 feeding in Chichester Hbr on 26 Jun, 400 picking insects off the sea at Worthing on 11 Jul, 200 at Pagham Hbr on 26 Jul and 8000 aerial feeding on flying ants at Rye Hbr on 6 Aug.

The roost counts at Bewl Water at the year’s end were smaller than those in the first winter period with 1800 on 17 Oct, 4200 on 23 Oct, 17,000 on 29 Nov and 31,000 on 27 Dec. Records from other sites were of fewer birds, the largest count being 450 at Warnham LNR on 15 Oct.

An albino individual was seen in the Bewl Water roost on 9 Mar. [JAN]

0590. **COMMON GULL***Larus canus*

**Common winter visitor and passage migrant; small numbers summer; bred until 1963. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern.**

Roost counts at Bewl Water, particularly during stormy weather, were again impressive with 10,000 on 3 Jan, 26,000 on 20 Jan and 1 Mar, 40,000 on 4 and 5 Mar, 52,000 on 9 Mar and 36,000 on 14 Mar (see *Sussex Bird Report* 55:199-203). These figures dwarf the counts from other sites although 2220 roosting on Pilsey Sands (Chichester Hbr) on 6 Jan and 5000 roosting in Thorney Channel on 26 Jan were notable. At Brighton Marina there were 2500 E on 9 Jan and 2000 E on 11 Jan during short watches in cold weather. All other records from the winter and early spring involved smaller numbers.

The coastal spring passage was inconsistently recorded and few birds were seen; the monthly eastbound totals and peak movements for the spring are shown in the following table:

	Mar	Apr	May	Peak movement
<b>Selsey Bill</b>	-	34	-	15 on 15 Apr (9 hrs)
<b>Worthing Beach</b>	40	236	9	98 on 12 Apr (5 hrs)
<b>Brighton Marina</b>	700	1158	-	1158 on 15 Apr (8 hrs)

This species is scarce in the county in the late spring and early summer; thus 40 at Arundel WWT on 4 May was unusual. There were five still at Arundel on the 5<sup>th</sup>; otherwise, Common Gulls were only recorded at Worthing and Newhaven Tide Mills during May and early June, and at Rye Hbr a single adult (presumed male) held territory during May and June and even paired with Black-headed Gulls from time to time. The first returning bird was recorded in Chichester Hbr on 18 Jun and the rising counts thereafter were five on 23 Jun, 13 on 27 Jun, 30 on 9 Jul, 80 on 16 Jul, 400 on 22 Jul and, finally, 600 on 6 Aug.

There were few records in the late part of the year. Even the roost at Bewl Water was small by comparison with the early spring with counts of 50 on 17 Oct, 400 on 14 Nov, 1000 on 11 Dec and 4500 on 31 Dec. The only triple figure counts elsewhere were 100 at Barlavington Down on 15 Oct and the same number in Pagham Hbr on 27 Dec.

An albino individual was seen at Shoreham-by-Sea on 5 Mar and was possibly the same individual recorded at the same site on 11 and 19 Mar 2002. [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. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern.**

The largest counts in the first winter period were 105 on the R Adur at Shoreham-by-Sea on 23 Feb with 40 there on 5 Mar. Up to 30, mainly *intermedius*, were noted at Pagham Hbr during February and 18 were at Rye Hbr on 6 Feb. These apart, the records for the first three months involved small numbers of birds.

Likewise no notable passage was recorded in spring with 18 NE over Bewl Water on 1 Apr, 20 at Pagham Hbr on 2 Apr, 26 E at Worthing on 12 Apr and 22 at Arlington Res on 8 May being the highest counts.

A breeding survey, conducted in 2000 and 2001, was reported in the *Sussex Bird Report* (54: 181-182) but since then few breeding records have been received. Successful nesting in 2003 was reported from Rustington, Worthing, Hove, Brighton and Newhaven. At Newhaven there were eight nests on roof tops with at least five chicks seen on 6 Jun. At Rye Hbr two pairs nested on the ground inside the new electric fencing for the first time and another pair was at Ternery Pool.

During the summer and early autumn the largest numbers were recorded in Pagham Hbr with 30 on 14 Jun and 45 on 8 Sep. There were 21 at Rye Hbr on 23 Jul, 22 at Thorney Island on 6 Aug and 20 (all juveniles) at Brighton Marina on 20 Aug. Unprecedented numbers were recorded at the Bewl Water roost during October with 130 on the 17<sup>th</sup>, 102 on the 18<sup>th</sup>, 76 on the 21<sup>st</sup>, 40 on the 23<sup>rd</sup> and 50 on the 25<sup>th</sup>. The only other double figure counts at the end of the year were 24 and 20 at Hurst Green on 16 and 18 Oct respectively and 30 in Pagham Hbr on 8 Nov.

A first calendar year bird of the race *intermedius* at Brighton Marina on 30 Sep was wearing a blue colour ring originating from Norway (IJW). [JAN]

0592. **HERRING GULL**

*Larus argentatus*

**Common breeding resident, passage migrant and winter visitor. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern.**

The highest counts in the first winter period were, as usual, from coastal sites with 2000 at Pebsham refuse tip on 2 Jan, 3000 at the same site on the 13<sup>th</sup> and 700 at Brighton Marina on 20 Jan. Smaller numbers were recorded in spring with the only three figure counts being 120 at Cuckmere Haven on 8 Mar, 100 at Felpham on 16 Mar, 200 near The Hermitage (Emsworth) on 8 Apr, 220 at Thorney Deeps on 29 Apr, 200 immatures at Newhaven Tide Mills on 17 May and 1200 on Pebsham refuse tip on 30 May.

Nesting behaviour was noted in February at Rye Hbr village, but most breeding records were for the period May until July. There was only sketchy recording of nesting with just nine areas represented; the current breeding status however, was described in detail during 2001 (*Sussex Bird Report* 54: 182-185). Nesting was recorded from Bognor Regis, Worthing, Brighton, Saltdean, Newhaven (up to 45 nests), Fairlight and Hastings Cliffs (26 pairs), Rye Hbr LNR (one or two pairs at four locations), Rye Hbr village, and at The Midrips.

During June there were 600 at Worthing on the 24<sup>th</sup> and the same number recorded offshore at Selsey Bill on the 26<sup>th</sup>. The count of 430 at Brighton Marina on 1 Aug comprised entirely juveniles. During the late autumn and second winter period there were just five notable counts: 335 flying northwest from Warnham refuse tip on 28 Sep, 270 on the R Adur at Shoreham-by-Sea on 10 Oct, 107 roosting at Bewl Water on 2 Nov, 3000-4000 at Pebsham refuse tip throughout December and 2500 at Rye Hbr on 27 Dec.

Single adults showing the characteristics of the northern Scandinavian Herring Gull (*L. a. argentatus*) were recorded at Pebsham refuse tip on 25 Jan (KMJ) and at Newhaven on 19 Feb (JFC). Members are reminded that descriptions are required for all sub-species other than *L. a. argenteus* and *L. a. michahellis*. [JAN]

0592.02. **YELLOW-LEGGED GULL**

*Larus argentatus michahellis*

**Fairly common but localised visitor, mainly in late summer and autumn.**

The following table, showing the minimum monthly totals and highest counts at each of the main sites, reveals the usual summer peak:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>Total</b>	4	2	1	1	2	28	146	183	13	54	19	7
<b>Selsey Peninsula</b>	2	-	1	-	1	14	105	140	nc	25	14	2
<b>Shoreham</b>	-	1	-	-	-	2	13	10	12	29	5	3

The table shows the typical occurrence with a scattering of records from a small number of coastal sites until the mid summer influx to the Selsey Peninsula. The highest counts were, as usual, from Pagham Hbr where 11 were recorded on 14 Jun, 80 on 7 Jul, 105 on 31 Jul and the peak roost count of 140 on 12 Aug. There were no counts from Pagham Hbr in September but there were still 25 there on 27 Oct. In Chichester Hbr there were 14 in the Entrance Channel on 25 Jun with 17 and 26 on Thorney Island on 22 Jul and 6 Aug respectively. In the Adur Valley the highest count of 19 was on 8 Oct. Inland



records included singles at Barcombe Res on 12 Jul, Ardingly Res on 17 Jul and Warnham LNR on 8 Dec with two at this last site on 21 Dec. [JAN]

0592.03. **CASPIAN GULL**

*Larus argentatus cachinnans*

**Very scarce winter visitor.**

**1997:** The record of a first-year bird seen on the R Adur at Shoreham-by-Sea on 15 Sep (SxBR 50:101) has been withdrawn by the observer as it would not meet the strict criteria set by the BBRC for acceptance of pre-2000 records (prolonged or multi-observer reports preferably backed by photographic evidence).

**2001:** Two birds were seen at Combe Haven marsh: an adult on 12 Jan and one in second winter plumage on 30 Jan (both KMJ).

**2003:** An adult was at Newhaven on 19 Feb (JFC) and another adult was seen and photographed at Scotney Court GP on 18 and 19 Dec (DW). [JAN]

0598. **ICELAND GULL**

*Larus glaucooides*

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

The only record was one, in second year plumage, seen and photographed at Rye Hbr on 7 Apr (PMT). [JAN]

0599. **GLAUCOUS GULL**

*Larus hyperboreus*

**Very scarce but regular winter visitor and passage migrant.**

A single adult was seen at Pagham Hbr on 15 dates between 2 Jan and 16 Feb (ARK *et al*) and, presumably, was the same bird which has been recorded in this area for several years. The only other record was one in first summer plumage at Widewater (Lancing) on 20 and 21 May (BFF). [JAN]

0600. **GREAT BLACK-BACKED GULL**

*Larus marinus*

**Common winter visitor and passage migrant; small numbers summer; recent rare breeding species. Confirmed breeding for the first time in 2000.**

This species was recorded regularly only at Chichester and Pagham Harbours and the following table shows the maximum count in each month from these sites:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Chichester Hbr	60	-	-	23	14	37	90	89	36	111	19	120
Pagham Hbr	-	130	5	-	350	-	5	-	650	450	300	-

At all other coastal sites counts were sporadic and the only additional three-figure counts were 250 at Pebsham refuse tip on 2 Jan and 650 on the Ouse Estuary Project at Newhaven on 1 Feb. The record of 350 immatures in Pagham Hbr on 31 May is noteworthy.

Breeding reports were similar to 2002 with no additional areas colonised. In Brighton three pairs raised seven young and the success of a fourth pair was unknown. A pair on a

Newhaven rooftop had three chicks of which two fledged and a pair probably nested again on the roof of a building at Rye Wharf.

The highest numbers in the autumn and second winter period were recorded at Paghham Hbr with 650 on 6 Sep, 540 on the 8<sup>th</sup> and 450 on 12 Oct. Elsewhere there were 300 roosting at Seaford Head on 23 and 26 Oct, 200 at Brighton Marina on 15 Nov and 200 at Shoreham-by-Sea on 17 Nov.

The year's largest coastal movement was a mere 21 E at Seaford Head on 18 Feb. As usual, inland records involved small numbers and the highest counts were nine at Rodmell Brooks on 16 Feb and five at Bewl Water on 2 May and 11 Dec.

A bird bearing ring orange C, originating from Jersey, was recorded again at Brighton Marina on 3 Sep and on the R Adur at Shoreham-by Sea on 17 Nov (IJW). [JAN]

0602. **KITTIWAKE**

*Rissa tridactyla*

**Common but localised breeding species; common winter visitor and passage migrant. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern.**

As usual, nearly all the records of this species were of coastal movements. The following table, showing the monthly totals for the main seawatching sites, demonstrates that most were recorded from Selsey Bill and Brighton Marina and that the summer and early autumn months were the quietest months in 2003. The close proximity of a breeding colony to Splash Point (Seaford) makes recording movements at this site unreliable during the spring and summer.

	Selsey Bill		Worthing Beach		Brighton Marina		Splash Point, Seaford	
	E	W	E	W	E	W	E	W
Jan	-	190	2	250	1380	1802	111	28
Feb	34	442	112	95	1144	420	nc	nc
Mar	10	2	51	2	1750	-	nc	nc
Apr	36	6	67	5	984	20	nc	nc
May	56	118	10	33	567	81	nc	nc
Jun	12	23	-	2	108	16	nc	nc
Jul	-	5	-	-	-	4	nc	nc
Aug	-	-	-	2	-	-	nc	nc
Sep	6	-	2	1	15	-	nc	nc
Oct	112	1100	-	1	64	-	nc	nc
Nov	-	23	68	351	995	55	nc	nc
Dec	-	12	19	8	1506	13	nc	nc

The table also shows that fewer were seen than during 2002. However, there were still 30 movements in excess of 100 birds in a day and the movement of 1100 W at Selsey Bill during 4 hr on 22 Oct is only the tenth day when a four-figure count has been reached. The most significant movements for each month are shown in the following table.

Jan	At Brighton Marina 380 E in 2 hr on the 1 <sup>st</sup> , 710 W in 3½ hr on the 13 <sup>th</sup> and 400 W in 1½ hr on the 29 <sup>th</sup> .
Feb	At Brighton Marina 190 W on the 1 <sup>st</sup> and 400 E in 4 hr on the 23 <sup>rd</sup> .
Mar	At Brighton Marina 307 E in 2¼ hr on the 15 <sup>th</sup> and 595 E in 3¾ hr on the 16 <sup>th</sup> .
Apr	200 at Beachy Head on 13 <sup>th</sup> and 15 <sup>th</sup> and 120 E in 6 hr at Brighton Marina on the 13 <sup>th</sup> .
May	135 E in 8¾ hr at Brighton Marina on the 4 <sup>th</sup> . (The last three figure count until October).
Oct	1100 W in 4 hr on the 22 <sup>nd</sup> and 100 E in 2½ hr on the 23 <sup>rd</sup> at Selsey Bill.
Nov	500 E at Brighton Marina and 200 W at both Widewater, Lancing (1 hr) and at Worthing in 2¼ hr.
Dec	At Brighton Marina 350 E in 1¼ hr on the 7 <sup>th</sup> and 400 E in 1 hr on the 9 <sup>th</sup> .

There were no breeding season counts of the cliffs at either Newhaven or Splash Point (Seaford) and the only inland record was of an adult which roosted 20 m from the main gull roost at Bewl Water on 23 Nov. [JAN]

0605. **GULL-BILLED TERN**

*Gelochelidon nilotica*

**Rare vagrant.**

An adult feeding on the R Arun at Littlehampton on 26-27 May (CWG *et al*) has been accepted by BBRC. It had been seen at Titchfield Haven (Hampshire) earlier on the 26<sup>th</sup>. This is the first to be seen in the county since 1999 and only the eighth in the last 20 years. The regularly reported single flypasts at Selsey Bill in the early 1960s certainly belong to a distant era. [RJF]

0611. **SANDWICH TERN**

*Sterna sandvicensis*

**Scarce breeding summer visitor and common passage migrant; rarely recorded in winter. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern.**

The first spring migrant was very early with a single past Brighton Marina on 22 Feb. A further 14 days passed before the next was seen from Telscombe on 5 Mar and from Hastings Beach on the same day (perhaps the same bird) and then further singles from Brighton Marina on the 7<sup>th</sup> and Splash Point (Seaford) on the 9<sup>th</sup>. Numbers increased on the 14<sup>th</sup> with six at Brighton Marina and eight at Selsey Bill, increasing almost daily with maximum counts at Rye Hbr of 120 on the 24<sup>th</sup>, 200 on the 27<sup>th</sup> and 160 on the 28<sup>th</sup>.

The easterly spring passage totals at the main seawatching localities were as follows (no records were submitted from Bexhill/Hastings):

	Mar	Apr	May	Total	No. per hr watched
<b>Selsey Bill</b>	96	2842	441	3379	10½
<b>Worthing</b>	56	2245	292	2593	16¾
<b>Brighton Marina</b>	194	3840	999	5033	17½
<b>Splash Point, Seaford</b>	49	3097	660	3806	13¾

Passage totals were higher than in 2002 at all sites except Selsey Bill. Numbers peaked in April on the 13<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> and again on the 21<sup>st</sup>. There were 24 day counts over 200 during the month. The highest came from Splash Point (Seaford) with 717 E on the 13<sup>th</sup> and 705 E on the 21<sup>st</sup>. Observers at Brighton Marina recorded 479 E on the 13<sup>th</sup>, 432 E on the 14<sup>th</sup>, 394 E on the 15<sup>th</sup>, 400 E on the 21<sup>st</sup> and 349 E on the 26<sup>th</sup>. At Selsey Bill there were six counts over 200, the highest being 330 E on the 13<sup>th</sup>, 305 E on the 14<sup>th</sup> and 421 E on the 15<sup>th</sup>. There were four counts over 200 at Worthing, the highest being 383 E on the 25<sup>th</sup>. With fewer birds in May, the only count over 200 was 261 E at Brighton Marina on the 2<sup>nd</sup>. There was little passage in June, the highest count being 55 E at Selsey Bill on the 22<sup>nd</sup>. High tide roosts of between 360 and 500 were reported from Rye Hbr LNR from 3 Apr to 4 May with the highest on 28 Apr.

Breeding was even more successful than the good season in 2002 at Ternery Pool (Rye Hbr LNR) with approximately 300 young fledging from up to 250 pairs from 19 Jun. These are the highest totals since breeding was first recorded at Rye Hbr in 1984 and become new county records for both the number of pairs and the number fledged.

In July, the Rye Hbr roost increased to 650 on the 7<sup>th</sup> but reduced to 98 by the 23<sup>rd</sup> including 25 juveniles. A low count of only 80 was the highest recorded at Pagham on the 31<sup>st</sup> and westerly passage was slight throughout the month, the best being 45 W at Selsey

Bill on the 17<sup>th</sup>. Counts of no more than double figures continued in both August and September, the highest being 20 W at Worthing on 25 Aug and 45 W at Brighton Marina on 30 Sep. By October numbers were down to single figures and the only record in November was of two on the 2<sup>nd</sup> at Chichester Hbr Entrance Channel. It was a further month before the next sighting, again in the Chichester Channel, with five near Emsworth on 4 Dec and a single bird there on the 5<sup>th</sup>, perhaps one of the five. The last bird of the year was seen off Cobnor Point on 30 Dec exceeding the previous latest date of 22 Dec at Selsey Bill in 1999.

There were just two inland records, both in August, with three at Bewl Water on the 5<sup>th</sup> and two over Cissbury Ring on the 16<sup>th</sup>. [DEGC]

0614. **ROSEATE TERN**

*Sterna dougallii*

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

**2002:** Four flew past Brighton Marina on 14 May (IJW).

**2003:** The first spring record was an adult seen flying east very close to Brighton Marina on 25 Apr (PMB, JAN) and the next was at Birling Gap, also flying east on 26 May (JFC). At Ternery Pool (Rye Hbr LNR) where this species is often seen, birds were noted on 11 dates in June between the 5<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> (PMT, BJY *et al*). The total bird-days amounted to 20 with maxima of four on the 9<sup>th</sup>, seen clearly on shingle islands including two with rings on both legs (GRB), and four again on the 11<sup>th</sup> (AJH, BJH, BJY). Elsewhere, two flew west at Selsey Bill on 8 Jun (TJE, DIS *et al*). The final record was of one seen fishing for 15 min off Pilsey Island on 1 Jul (CBC). [DEGC]

0615. **COMMON TERN**

*Sterna hirundo*

**Scarce breeding summer visitor and common passage migrant.**

The first record was at Telscombe on 25 Mar followed by another at Brighton Marina on the 30<sup>th</sup>. As usual, most observers at the main seawatching localities recorded birds on spring passage as “Commic” Terns, but at Brighton Marina 633 Common Terns were recorded flying east on 24 Apr. The pre-breeding gathering at Rye Hbr LNR was smaller than usual with 155 on 24 Apr, reducing to 130 by the 28<sup>th</sup>. There was a gathering of 450 at Pilsey Sands on the 26<sup>th</sup>.

In the breeding season at Rye Hbr, 100 chicks fledged from 74 pairs at Ternery Pool and 20 fledged from 12 pairs at Castle Water. At Pett Level 110 pairs were reported to have had reasonable success but numbers were not quoted. Three chicks survived at Weir Wood Res and one immature was seen at Darwell Res on 24 Jul. At Stakes Island in Chichester Hbr at least 34 fledged from 45 pairs and at New Lake (Chichester GP), there were six chicks and seven eggs on 19 Jul. Breeding may have occurred at Pagham Hbr with one or two pairs appearing to nest.

The remaining months were relatively quiet and apart from 300 at Pilsey Sands on 15 Aug and 140 on 1 Sep, records were in single or double figures. The last birds were at Pilsey Sands on 12 Oct and Newhaven Tide Mills on 15 Nov. [DEGC]

0616. **ARCTIC TERN***Sterna paradisaea*

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

A few were ascribed to this species passing east at the main seawatching localities but no doubt many more will have been recorded as "Commic" Tern. The first was at Brighton Marina on 8 Apr followed by two there on both the 13<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup>. There were records on five further dates in April, the highest being 11 at Splash Point (Seaford) on the 25<sup>th</sup> and 12 at Brighton Marina on the 26<sup>th</sup>. The only inland record was of two at Arlington Res on the 16<sup>th</sup>, bringing the total for April to only 56 over eight dates. In May there were six records over four dates, the best being 20 at Brighton Marina on the 4<sup>th</sup> and, at Splash Point, 30 on the 4<sup>th</sup> and 55 on the 15<sup>th</sup>. There were no records in June or July.

In the autumn only 11 birds were recorded on five dates commencing with one at Rye Bay on 9 Aug and one at Selsey Bill on the 28<sup>th</sup>. On 30 Sep there was one offshore at Brighton Marina and 6 W at Selsey Bill. The last were seen in October with one at Pagham Hbr on the 10<sup>th</sup> and one at Newhaven Tide Mills on the 14<sup>th</sup>. [DEGC]

**COMMON/ARCTIC TERN***Sterna hirundo/paradisaea*

Most birds passing seawatching localities remain unidentified as "Commic" Terns.

Spring passage numbers were up by a third on 2002 and were heavier in April with a peak on the 26th. The highest counts were at Brighton Marina, with 324 E on the 25th and 3048 E on the 26th. Observers at Worthing recorded 2699 E on the 26th while the highest counts at Splash Point (Seaford) were of 385 E on the 13th, 642 E on the 21st and 1320 E on the 26th. The best counts at Selsey Bill were 381 E on the 21st and 350 E on the 26th and there were 420 at Beachy Head on the 21st.

The totals at the main seawatching localities were as follows (no records were submitted from Bexhill/Hastings):

	Apr	May	Total	No. per hr watched
<b>Selsey Bill</b>	1285	549	1834	7½
<b>Worthing</b>	3382	143	3525	28
<b>Brighton Marina</b>	4235	437	4672	20
<b>Splash Point, Seaford</b>	2845	553	3398	14½

Passage continued to be mainly east but at a much slower rate in June, July and August before returning west in September. There were no records in October, but one was seen at Camber Sands on 30 Nov. There were three inland records of two at Arlington Res on 15 Apr, one at Barcombe Res on 17 Apr and one over Barcombe Cross on the 25<sup>th</sup>. [DEGC]

0624. **LITTLE TERN***Sterna albifrons*

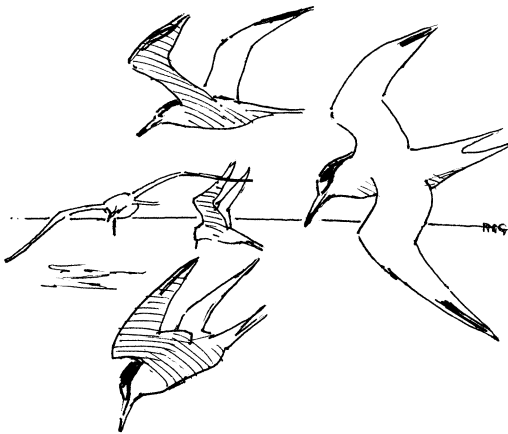
**Scarce breeding summer visitor and fairly common passage migrant. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern.**

The first three records were on 12 Apr: two at Pagham Hbr, 1 E at Worthing and 27 E at Selsey Bill. Daily records occurred throughout the month, notably 60 E at Selsey Bill on the 21st and a peak of 75 E at Worthing on the 25th. May was unusually quiet with records in single figures on ten dates, 16 E at Brighton Marina on the 15th and 12 E again

on the 16th. The totals at the main seawatching localities were as follows (no records were submitted from Bexhill/Hastings):

	Apr	May	Total	No. per hr watched
<b>Selsey Bill</b>	207	12	219	1
<b>Worthing</b>	133	8	141	1
<b>Brighton Marina</b>	87	51	138	½
<b>Splash Point, Seaford</b>	82	31	113	½

At Rye Hbr LNR 25 pairs produced 30 clutches from which 42 chicks hatched and 31 fledged, mainly from the early laying period of 12 to 24 May. Weather was generally good and predation by Kestrels was not considered to be a serious problem. Many older chicks moved down the shingle slope towards the shore and may have been vulnerable to foxes. Nine pairs were recorded at North Stakes Island in Chichester Hbr but no young were raised.



A gathering of 60 occurred at North Stakes Island on 27 Jun which was still there on 3 Jul and had increased to 100 by the 30<sup>th</sup>. Other records in July were in single figures, the highest being nine at Rye Hbr, including one chick. In August, the gathering in Chichester Hbr had reduced to 40 at Pilsey Sands on the 4<sup>th</sup> and six other records were again mainly in single figures. Only four birds were seen in September, the last three at Pilsey Island on the 15<sup>th</sup>. There were no inland records. [DEGC]

0627. **BLACK TERN**

*Chlidonias niger*

**Scarce passage migrant.**

The approximate monthly totals were as follows:

Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep
52	17	5	2	45	14

The first records were on 15 Apr when singles appeared at Splash Point (Seaford) and Selsey Bill and two at Shoreham. These were followed by five at Brighton Marina on the 16<sup>th</sup> and two at Selsey Bill on the 18<sup>th</sup>. Sightings totalled 32 from the 21<sup>st</sup> to the 28<sup>th</sup>,

mainly in twos and threes, apart from 13 E at Worthing on the 26<sup>th</sup> and 5 E on the 28<sup>th</sup>. There were only seven records in May, mainly singles, other than 5 E at Beachy Head on the 4<sup>th</sup> and 6 E at Brighton Marina on the 15<sup>th</sup>.

In June four birds were at Stakes Island in Chichester Hbr on the 27<sup>th</sup> and another at Rye Hbr on the 28<sup>th</sup>. Only two birds were seen in July: one at Rye Hbr on the 6<sup>th</sup> and one at Selsey Bill on the 29<sup>th</sup>.

There were records on 15 dates in August and September with no general peak but at Pilsley Sands 33 were counted at low tide on 4 Aug. Birds were seen at this site on six other dates, mainly as singletons, with the last being two on 8 Sep. Elsewhere there were four at Weir Wood Res on 18 Aug and a single bird at Church Norton on the 26<sup>th</sup>. There were three at Rye Hbr on 9 Sep, two at Arlington Res on the 10<sup>th</sup>, three at Pagham Hbr on the 14<sup>th</sup>, two at Scotney Court GP also on the 14<sup>th</sup> and one at Worthing on the 16<sup>th</sup>. The last record was a single flying west at Selsey Bill on the 30<sup>th</sup>. [DEGC]

## AUK species

*Auk spp.*

Total numbers were up by 35% on 2002 but an estimated 89,721 were still 7% short of the record numbers in 2001. However, a number of observations suggested that some birds were making circuits to find shoals of fish on which to feed. This leads to some duplication and makes accurate counting difficult. The following are approximate monthly totals (including positively identified Guillemots and Razorbills) recorded at the main seawatching localities (no records were submitted for Bexhill/Hastings):

	Jan - Feb			Mar - May			Jun-Jul		Aug-Oct		Nov-Dec	
	<i>E</i>	<i>o/s</i>	<i>W</i>	<i>E</i>	<i>o/s</i>	<i>W</i>	<i>E</i>	<i>W</i>	<i>E</i>	<i>W</i>	<i>E</i>	<i>W</i>
<b>Selsey Bill</b>	4043	-	1960	162	-	76	-	5	-	-	30	32
<b>Worthing Beach</b>	1242	-	5457	44	20	34	-	-	-	-	397	175
<b>Brighton Marina</b>	39694	3300	34416	3946	100	497	4	3	7	1	2256	2080
<b>Splash Point, Seaford</b>	6538	-	691	2239	-	35	-	-	-	-	-	-

There were 17 counts of over 1000 in January, starting with 1774 W in 3¾ hr at Worthing Beach on the 3<sup>rd</sup>. Brighton Marina accounted for the largest figures with 1535 E and 200 W in 2¼ hrs on the 6<sup>th</sup>, 2675 E and 65 W in 2½ hr on the 7<sup>th</sup>, 1475 E in 2 hr on the 8<sup>th</sup>, 1300 E and 100 W in 1 hr on the 10<sup>th</sup>, 1800 E in 1¾ hr on the 11<sup>th</sup> and 1500 E in 1½ hr on the 12<sup>th</sup>. On the 13<sup>th</sup> the wind changed from a light northerly to a force 4 south-westerly and produced the following figures totalling 15,749, a new county record for a single day, exceeding the previous record of 11,552 on 28 Dec 2001:

Direction	E	W	Hrs
<b>Worthing Beach</b>		3000	1¼
<b>Brighton Marina</b>	1900	10,680	3½
<b>Splash Point Seaford</b>	18	151	½

Large numbers continued at Brighton Marina with 170 E and 2050 W in 2¾ hr on the 14<sup>th</sup>, 110W in 1½ hr on the 15<sup>th</sup>, 160 E and 3850 W in 3¼ hr on the 17<sup>th</sup> and 300 E and 1300 W in 2 hr on the 18<sup>th</sup>. Much smaller counts occurred until the 29<sup>th</sup>, with 1690 W in 1½ hr, 2100 E and 600 W in 1½ hr on the 30<sup>th</sup> and 3150 W in 2 hr on the 31<sup>st</sup>. February began well on the 1<sup>st</sup> with 4000 E and 800 W in 2½ hr at Selsey Bill, 640 E and 1250 W (time unstated) at Brighton Marina.

There were 15 counts over 1000 in February including 225 E and 1050 W in 1½ hr again at Brighton Marina on the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 2360 E in 2½ hr on the 6<sup>th</sup>. Another good day on the 8<sup>th</sup> saw 1000 W in ¾ hr at Selsey Bill, 1630 E and 400 W in 1½ hr at Brighton Marina. On the 13<sup>th</sup> there were 6000 E and 2000 offshore at Brighton Marina. This latter site had all the large counts for the rest of the month – 18 E and 1800 W in 1½ hr on the 14<sup>th</sup>, 2900 E and 500 offshore on the 16<sup>th</sup>, 2000E and 800 offshore on the 19<sup>th</sup> being the highest. Notable counts in March were 967 E in ¾ hr at Brighton Marina on the 13<sup>th</sup> and 902 E in 2½ hr at Splash Point.

At the end of the year, it was again Brighton Marina with the good counts having 40 E and 450 W in 1 hr on 24 Nov and 25 E and 1220 W in 2 hrs on 21 Dec.

It is interesting to see the proportion of Guillemots to Razorbills reducing in recent years. This used to be 80 : 20 but in this year's figures for specifically counted birds, the proportion has reversed to 10 : 90 and on 1<sup>st</sup> Feb the count of 670 auks at Worthing Beach was considered to be 95 % Razorbills. [DEGC]

## 0634. GUILLEMOT

*Uria aalge*

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

The approximate monthly totals were as follows:

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
157	272	70	21	43	18	7	3	6	22	120	39

Although the total for the year was seemingly lower than those for the previous years, the monthly totals above should be treated with caution, as observers at Brighton Marina did not report fully the numbers of specifically identified auks at this site. The totals recorded at the main seawatching localities were as follows (there were no records for Bexhill/Hastings):

	Jan – Feb			Mar – May			Jun-Jul		Aug-Oct		Nov - Dec		
	E	o/s	W	E	o/s	W	E	W	E	W	E	o/s	W
<b>Selsey Bill</b>	-	1	7	9	2	15	3	13	-	-	2	-	10
<b>Worthing Beach</b>	1	7	-	1	8	1	-	-	16	3	67	5	2
<b>Brighton Marina</b>	See Auk sp.			6	-	-	See Auk sp.						
<b>Splash Point, Seaford</b>	122	60	9	41	17	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

Considering the huge numbers of auks in January and February, the records for those specifically identified as Guillemots were relatively few. At Rye Bay there were 25 W on the 1 Jan, 20 on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 30 on the 19<sup>th</sup>. Observers at Splash Point recorded 8 E and four offshore on the 10<sup>th</sup> in 1 hr. An unusual sighting was of a bird with white primaries on both wings flying east at Brighton Marina on the 15<sup>th</sup>.

In February at Lancing 50 were seen offshore on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 29 W in ½ hr on the 3<sup>rd</sup>. Observers at St Leonards recorded 20 W on the 5<sup>th</sup>, whilst at Splash Point there were 11 E and 13 offshore in ¾ hr on the 8<sup>th</sup>, 22 E and five offshore in 1½ hr on the 13<sup>th</sup> and 20 E and two offshore in ¾ hr on the 20<sup>th</sup>. Six birds on the sea at Beachy Head on 1 Jul were thought to be two pairs and two young.

Increased numbers appeared on 24 Nov at Shoreham with 40 offshore and at Worthing 58 E and 2 W in ¾ hr. Highest counts in December were 11 offshore at Rye Bay on the 18<sup>th</sup> and 8 W in ¾ hr at Selsey Bill on the 20<sup>th</sup>.



The RSPCA has reported that a total of 151 dead birds were washed up on the coast in East Sussex and 79 in West Sussex. Almost all of these had died as a result of oiling. [DEGC]

0636. **RAZORBILL**

*Alca torda*

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

The approximate monthly totals were as follows but should be treated with caution as observers at Brighton Marina reported specifically identified Razorbills only in January and February:

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
2403	5803	77	44	27	6	0	3	4	28	176	37

The following are the totals recorded at the main seawatching locations (no records were submitted for Bexhill/Hastings):

	Jan – Feb			Mar – May			Jun-Jul		Aug-Oct		Nov - Dec		
	E	o/s	W	E	o/s	W	E	W	E	W	E	o/s	W
<b>Selsey Bill</b>	12	6	2237	11	8	11	4	2	29	1	21	20	75
<b>Worthing Beach</b>	-	40	4	8	2	3	-	-	-	-	3	38	8
<b>Brighton Marina</b>	-	4200	800	See Auk sp.									
<b>Splash Point, Seaford</b>	388	60	17	49	18	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

The highest counts in January were 200 W in 4 hr at Selsey Bill on the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2000 offshore at Brighton Marina on the 31<sup>st</sup>, exceeding the previous county record of 700 in 2001 at the same site. February started with 907 W at Selsey Bill in 2½ hr on the 1<sup>st</sup>. Brighton Marina followed with offshore records of 500 on the 6<sup>th</sup>, 800 on the 8<sup>th</sup>, 800 in 1½ hr on the 10<sup>th</sup> and 900 in 1½ hr on the 11<sup>th</sup>. Also on the 11<sup>th</sup> were 1000 offshore in 2¾ hr at Selsey Bill. The best count at Splash Point was 123 E in 1½ hr on the 13<sup>th</sup>.

In December records were down to single figures, except for 20 offshore at Selsey Bill on the 6<sup>th</sup>.

The RSPCA has reported that a total of 22 dead birds were washed up on the coast in East Sussex and eight in West Sussex. Almost all of these had died as a result of oiling. [DEGC]

0647. **LITTLE AUK**

*Alle alle*

**Very scarce but now annual autumn passage migrant and winter visitor.**

After the last two good years for this species, this was a rather poor year with only five birds.

A single bird offshore at Splash Point (Seaford) on 8 May (EDU, STU et al) is the first county record for this month. In October one bird was seen just off the beach at Peacehaven on the 26<sup>th</sup> (PHo). In November one flew west past Selsey Bill on the 4<sup>th</sup> (OM) and another was close to the shore at Splash Point on the 22<sup>nd</sup> (DM). The last was one offshore at Widewater (Lancing) on 5 Dec (SRA). [DEGC]

0654. **PUFFIN**

*Fratercula arctica*

**Very scarce visitor, most frequently recorded in spring. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern.**

This is the ninth consecutive year with just two records and, as usual, both were at Brighton Marina. One lucky observer saw both in five days, the first very close on 26 Mar and the second on the 30<sup>th</sup> (ITB). [DEGC]

0665. **FERAL ROCK DOVE**

*Columba livia*

**Common Resident.**

Over 80 records were submitted, which is more than double the usual number for this generally ignored species. Many records merely indicated that birds were present with no further details. This increase in reports is due to the inclusion of records from the BTO Migration Watch. Most other records come as a result of annual censuses at regular sites. No large flocks were reported and breeding was confirmed at only one site. There is insufficient evidence to indicate whether the status of this species has changed or is changing. [DEC]

0668. **STOCK DOVE**

*Columba oenas*

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

In January the largest numbers recorded were 100 at Thorney Island and 200 at Pease Pottage. In February, 23 were at Pulborough Brooks RSPB and the maximum monthly count at Pett Level was 44. There were 50 feeding on set-aside at Pett Level early in March and 40 at Combe Haven feeding with Woodpigeons on 12 March. Groups in excess of 40 were at Pulborough Brooks and Pease Pottage during March.

Two birds were seen regularly from early April at an owl box at Wilbees Fm (Arlington) and on 5 Apr at Deanlane End (near Rowlands Castle) 50 were recorded where only ten would normally be expected. Counts of breeding birds in defined areas can be found on pages 196 - 199. In addition, birds were behaving territorially at Millbrook and Nutley Mill (Ashdown Forest) on 8 Apr. There were 40 confirmed breeding records, 29 of which were discovered in owl boxes. Records of boxes with eggs continued into September, the last being on the 9th.

Numbers built up on Thorney Island with 120 on 17 Oct and 200 on the 26th. Flocks of 400 were at Harbour Farm and Castle Water (Rye Hbr SSSI) in November and December. A male was singing at Millbrook on 30 Dec.

There was little indication of movement in the autumn except for about 30 involved with a big Woodpigeon movement on 16 Nov at Selsey Bill. [DEC]

0670. **WOODPIGEON**

*Columba palumbus*

**Abundant resident and winter visitor**

In January the largest reported flock of 500 was feeding on sweetcorn stalks at Pease Pottage. On 16 Jan 500 were at West Fields (Selsey) and West Dean Woods boasted a flock, conservatively estimated as 3000 birds, on 19 Jan. Three Corner Copse (Hove) held

2000 on 8 Feb. There were no further records of this magnitude in the early part of the year and noticeably no large groups reported in East Sussex.

Breeding records, as in previous years, in no way reflect the status of this species as a resident breeder. Counts of breeding birds in defined areas can be found on pages 196 - 199.

October saw the first larger gatherings with 2600 at Brighton Wild Park on the 25<sup>th</sup>, 1000 at Hurst Green on the same date and 800 at Beachy Head on the following day. Movement began in earnest in early November with 10,000 moving south over Crowborough between 07.00-09.00 hr on the 4<sup>th</sup>. Six thousand moved south over Beachy Head on 6 Nov and on the same date 6000 moved west over Middleton-on-Sea. Substantial movements over Brighton were first noted from the Wild Park, where 2650 flew over on 25 Oct, but the total autumn movement over the town was estimated to involve 90,000 birds. Smaller but substantial flocks continued moving south and west on a broad front up to 16 Nov. All of these movements took place during the two or three hours after daybreak. [DEC]

0684. **COLLARED DOVE**

*Streptopelia decaocto*

**Very common resident**

No flocks exceeding 50 birds were reported. In January there were two confirmed breeding records plus one probable and on 15 Jan at Littleworth (Partridge Green) a pair was seen copulating. The maximum monthly count for February at Pett Level was 45 and this represented the highest reported gathering of adult birds for the year in the county. The absence of larger gatherings probably relates to the lack of grain spillages and reduced access to grain stores .

Counts of breeding birds in defined areas can be found on pages 196 - 199. These, and records from other sites, suggest that the overall numbers and status as a breeding bird remain unaltered. [DEC]

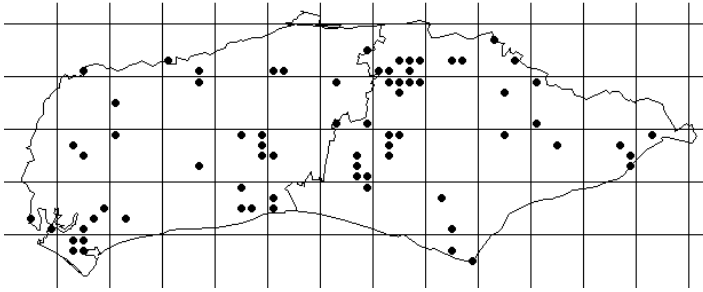
0687. **TURTLE DOVE**

*Streptopelia turtur*

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

On 5 Apr the first bird of the year was recorded at Wilbees Fm (Arlington). There have been only three occasions in the past 20 years when birds have arrived as early or earlier. Single birds were noted at East Dean of 14 Apr and Rye Hbr on 18 Apr. After that, ones and two were reported almost daily during the main arrival period. There were three at Offham in the Arun Valley on 3 May and the monthly maximum at Arlington Res was three on 4 May.

The first singing male was noted at Lewes Race Course on 26 Apr. There were only six confirmed breeding records involving 15 pairs, seven of those being at Rye Hbr. Approximately 30 records of probable breeding were also reported. Counts of breeding birds in defined areas can be found on pages 196 - 199. Additionally about 50 records of birds singing or apparently holding territory were noted and the map shows the location of all records in the breeding period. Singing was recorded into August.



Returning birds were noted mainly in ones or twos but there were five birds at Thorney Deeps on 26 Aug and seven at Partridge Green on 7 Sep. The last recorded were singles at Rye Hbr on 1 and 3 Oct.

Records for this species do not appear to give cause for further alarm about the decline, for example there were over 30 records from the general area of Ashdown Forest, a slight increase on 2002 but still lower than 2001. [DEC]

0712. *Cat. C* **RING-NECKED PARAKEET**

*Psittacula krameri*

**Very scarce introduced breeding resident.**

A total of nine birds was responsible for all the reports this year, with all but one being located to the west of Lewes. The first record was of two birds at the University of Sussex on 19 Feb and during the rest of the year singletons were seen at Horsham on 10 May, at Lancing on 26 Jun, at Selsey on 5 Sep, at two locations at Sompting on 7 Oct, at Ore (Hastings) on 10 Nov, at Ovingdean on 13 Nov and at Apuldram (Chichester) on 16 Dec.

A parakeet seen at The Pells (Lewes) in Jan, Mar and Sep was considered to be most likely the Alexandrine Parakeet which was present in the area throughout 2002 (SxBR 55:176). [DEC]

0724. **CUCKOO**

*Cuculus canorus*

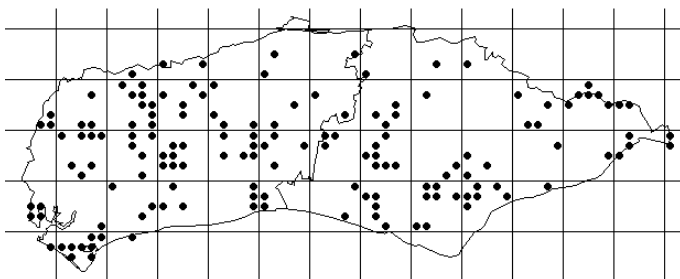
**Fairly common summer visitor. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern.**

The first bird was recorded at Sompting (near Worthing) on 31 Mar, only marginally earlier than the ten-year average arrival date of 1 Apr. Two were at Pulborough Brooks RSPB on 3 Apr and then from 11 Apr birds were reported arriving almost daily until the end of the month. Four males and a female were at Thorney Island on 26 Apr and at Waterlot/Manxey Levels (near Wartling) three were seen and heard. Two were subsequently calling from this site on 28 May.

There was only one record of confirmed breeding: a juvenile was seen being fed by Dunnocks at Pulborough Brooks RSPB on 20 and 26 June. There were, however, many reports from across the county of birds being heard during the season, suggestive of probable breeding, and juveniles were reported from widespread sites near the coast from mid-August to September, presumably on migration. The last one was seen at Castle Hill (near Falmer) on 14 Sep. [DEC]

0735. **BARN OWL***Tyto alba***Scarce breeding resident. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern.**

Records of all sightings are shown in the map below.

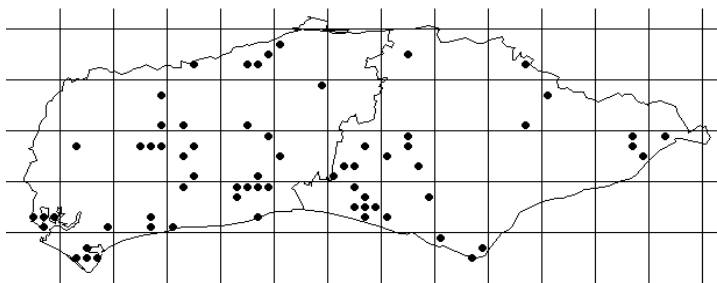


The monthly totals, excluding visits for ringing, were as follows:

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
40	36	24	14	16	12	9	9	6	9	18	26

Breeding was confirmed at 99 sites (73 in 2002) of which 56 were in West Sussex and 43 in East Sussex. Some of the increase is due to discovery of landowners' and farmers' nest boxes which have been occupied for years, but two new sites in West Sussex were of boxes erected as part of Countryside Stewardship Schemes and two as part of planning consent for "barn conversion" to a dwelling. Not all known potential sites were visited. Young known and likely to have fledged totalled 120 in West Sussex and 76 in East Sussex. Eight more nests were reported as successful, without the number of young recorded.

Reported deaths were of three owls killed on roads and a chick found dead in a nest box with a heavy infestation of parasitic nematodes. [ABW]

0757. **LITTLE OWL***Athene noctua***Fairly common resident.**

Records were received from 69 sites, compared to 81 in 2002 and 63 in 2001. The majority of the records (39) were from West Sussex as shown in the map above. Breeding was confirmed at six sites although, with the sedentary nature of the species, breeding was probable at most other sites. Information on productivity was very limited: one pair reared

two, one pair reared three and another pair reared four. Two pairs were regularly seen at South Mundham. [DJM]

0761. **TAWNY OWL**

*Strix aluco*

**Fairly common resident.**

Records were received from 78 sites, compared to 87 in 2002 and 67 in 2001. Most records were of calling birds; however a pair roosted most days at Scobells Farm (Barcombe) from 4 Jan until 8 Mar, when it reduced to one until 5 Apr. A further pair was present all year at Troutbeck (near Eridge). There was one recorded casualty near a road tunnel at Petworth Park on 13 Jan.

Breeding was confirmed at 12 sites and was very probable at a further five sites. At Weir Wood Res only one of the two nestlings survived. At Friston Forest two pairs produced a total of three nestlings. At Abbots Wood (Hailsham) two pairs produced two nestlings each. At West Chiltington three nestlings fledged on 19 May, with other sites recording one or two nestlings. Two birds were noted at Belle Tout (Beachy Head) on 10 Nov, one of them being a very pale bird. [DJM]

0767. **LONG-EARED OWL**

*Asio otus*

**Very scarce resident, passage migrant and winter visitor.**

Twenty one records were received from 13 sites, compared to 26 records from 15 sites in 2002. Thirteen of the records were in the breeding season but no proof of breeding was received. However, display flights were noted in the west of the county on 13 Mar, and a further pair of birds was seen at another site in the west of the county on 7 and 15 Apr. Site details for this species are strictly confidential because of the species' sensitivity to disturbance.

At a winter roost in the west of the county four birds were noted on 1 Jan, five on the 27<sup>th</sup> but only one on 2 Mar and by the 13<sup>th</sup>, none. More typically, records were of singles at the Upper Adur Levels on 19 Feb and Plumpton Plain on 8 Mar. Two birds were noted at a winter roost at Rye LNR on 21 Dec. [DJM]



0768. **SHORT-EARED OWL***Asio flammeus*

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

The following table gives approximate monthly totals taking account of possible duplication at well watched sites. Summing the monthly totals should not be attempted as there will be duplication between months.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>2002</b>	15	9	14	9	2	0	6	30	29	18
<b>2003</b>	24	16	20	17	3	2	7	16	12	8

A total of six birds was present at West Fields (Selsey) on 3 Jan, and at Thorney Island on 23 Jan. A single bird was resident at Pagham Hbr from the beginning of the year until 9 May and the last of the season was recorded at Rye LNR on 15 May.

The first autumn migrant was observed at Pagham Hbr on 30 Aug, with a number of single birds recorded at other sites in the county in the following days. The first multiple sighting was recorded at Beachy Head on 7 Sep, with two birds. A single bird flew in off the sea at Church Norton on 24 Oct. Three birds were recorded both at Selsey on 5 Oct and at Amberley Wild Brooks on 7 Nov. Otherwise all the other autumn records were of ones and twos from coastal areas. [DJM]

0778. **NIGHTJAR***Caprimulgus europaeus*

**Fairly common summer visitor rarely seen on migration. Red listed species of high conservation concern.**

The year commenced with an unusually early sighting on 14 Apr on the western edge of Ashdown Forest. *Birds of Sussex* notes the earliest recorded date as 8 Apr 1912. Normality resumed after this early sighting with the next recorded on 1 May at Chailey Common and steady, almost daily, reports from 3 May, typically the beginning of the peak arrival period. An individual male was seen arriving off the sea on 7 May at Brighton Marina, five days earlier than a similar sighting in 2002.

Records were received in the breeding season from 21 tetrads in East Sussex and 25 in West Sussex. The Ashdown Forest Bird Group identified *ca.*46 territories (50 in 2002) and the numbers appear, in the short term at least, to have steadied after the drop in 2001 from 69 churring males. The remainder of East Sussex held nine territories at six sites, the only counts of over one being from Broadwater Forest (2-3) and Chailey Common (2). *The Wealden Heaths Breeding Birds Survey* (see page 199) identified 42 churring males from 12 heaths with the largest count as usual from Ambersham & Heyshott Commons (including Goldballs Plantation) of 16. The next highest counts were of five at Lavington and six at Iping and Stedham Commons. Heaths such as Lords Piece, which provide ample suitable habitat, held only three churring males, probably due to disturbance since heathland management and the discovery of these heaths during the FMD crisis has led to greater recreational use. At least a further 24 further birds were found at 14 sites in West Sussex (the highest count being of four at St Leonards Forest), which has now drawn ahead of East Sussex (69 to 55) in total recorded territories. The county breeding population is accordingly estimated at 124 territories (122 in 2001 and 2002).

Two daytime churring birds were detected, one on 10 May at 10.30 hr on Lavington Common, and the other at 13.00 hr on 31 May on Ashdown Forest. The former site reported a similar incident in 2002.

Two migrants were seen on six occasions during the latter half of August at Pett Level. Reporting continued from the breeding areas throughout August with a final record from Ashdown Forest on 5 Sep. [AP]

0795. **SWIFT**

*Apus apus*

**Common summer visitor and passage migrant.**

The first migrant was a singleton at Selsey Bill on 14 Apr, one day earlier than the average arrival date for the past ten years, followed by three at Rye Hbr LNR on 18 Apr and two at Weir Wood Res on 20 Apr. Sightings became daily from 23 Apr, mostly from coastal locations. Notable counts in April were 30 at Barcombe Res on the 27<sup>th</sup>, 60 at Ivy Lake (Chichester GP) on the 28<sup>th</sup>, 135 at New Lake (Chichester GP) on the 29<sup>th</sup> and 100 at Barcombe Res on the 30<sup>th</sup>. Peak counts in May included 200 at Westhampnett East Pit (Chichester GP) on the 3<sup>rd</sup>, 150 at Barcombe Res on the 15<sup>th</sup>, 130 at Stanmer Park (Brighton) on the 15<sup>th</sup> and 110 at Bewl Water on the 16<sup>th</sup>.

The first screaming parties of breeding birds were reported from Chichester on 6 May. It is most welcome to report that more information than usual was submitted on nest sites which included two churches, a number of houses, a shop and a barn. Ten to fifteen pairs bred in “nestboxes” on Wilkins House (Billingshurst); forty-four nest chambers were provided here by the SOS in autumn 2001 to secure the future of this important colony, which was under threat due to roofing works.

There were very few large counts during the breeding season, the largest being 400 at Pagham Hbr on 2 Jul. During August, 120 were recorded at Brighton Wild Park on the 2<sup>nd</sup>, 100 at Malling Down (Lewes) also on the 2<sup>nd</sup>, 150 at Broadwater (Worthing) on the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 200 at Pagham Hbr on the 7<sup>th</sup>.

There were 16 sightings in September, the last being two on the Downs near Shoreham on the 23<sup>rd</sup>. [GCMR]

0831. **KINGFISHER**

*Alcedo atthis*

**Fairly common resident and occasional winter visitor. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern.**

Observations during the winter months were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Nov	Dec
Number of birds	37	28	47	43
Number of inland sites	18	12	14	17
Number of coastal sites	12	9	16	13

The total number of birds reported was a third lower than in 2002, but the number of sites was slightly higher.

Breeding was confirmed at five sites and probable at a further twelve. There was little breeding detail reported; a juvenile was seen at Troutbeck (near Eridge) on 1 Jun and there was a minimum of three pairs at Bewl Water, where adults with two young were seen on 20 Jul.

In the final quarter of the year, in addition to the usual ones and twos, there were larger concentrations including six at Bewl Water and seven at Rye Hbr on 12 Oct and four at Rodmell Brooks on 23 Dec. Two at Chichester GP on 8 Dec were



engaged in much chasing and calling. At Brighton Marina, two were present throughout the period and ones and twos were seen at various sites up to the end of the year. [LM]

0840. **BEE-EATER**

*Merops apiaster*

**Rare vagrant; has bred.**

One was heard calling, but frustratingly not seen, as it flew west over Horseshoe Plantation (Beachy Head) on 19 Jul (MS-H) with presumably the same individual reported over Seaford on the 20<sup>th</sup> (JC). There are now 14 records since 2000 (five being in July) and in that respect this is a well below average showing, although it should be noted that none were recorded during 1995-99. [RJF]

0846. **HOOPOE**

*Upupa epops*

**Very scarce spring and autumn passage migrant; has bred.**

Two spring records were accepted: one at Friston Water Tower (East Dean) on 5 Apr (KM) and one, briefly, in a Bexhill garden on 8 May (IG). A below average showing as 55 have been seen in the county since 1990, of which 26 were in April and four in May. [RJF]

0848. **WRYNECK**

*Jynx torquilla*

**Very scarce passage migrant; has bred. Red listed species of conservation concern.**

The reports received indicated a minimum of 12 different birds in the year, a considerable reduction on the 31 in 2002. The spring records fitted the long-established pattern, with singles in April at Hastings CP on the 18<sup>th</sup> and Birling Gap on the 21<sup>st</sup>.

The August records were of two at Pagham Hbr on the 24<sup>th</sup>, one at Toad's Hole Valley (Hove) on the 28<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> and two at Beachy Head on the 30<sup>th</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup>; the latter were still present on 7 Sep, when a single was also seen at Birling Gap. The remaining September records were of at least two at Thorney Island on the 15<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup>, with singles at Rye Hbr on the 8<sup>th</sup> and Birling Gap between the 17<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup>. [LM]

0856. **GREEN WOODPECKER**

*Picus viridis*

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

A total of 440 records was received from 225 sites across the county. Reports relating to the breeding season came from 16 1-km squares on Ashdown Forest and 117 other sites. Breeding was confirmed or probable at 64 locations. Heathland surveys in West Sussex yielded 34 pairs in 23 1-km squares.

Two were drumming at Arundel WWT on 13 Jan. Two seen on Pilsey Island on 27 Mar were probably from Thorney Island. Three individuals were ringed at Shoreham Sanctuary, the highest annual total there for the species in more than 50 years. [LM]

0876. **GREAT SPOTTED WOODPECKER**

*Dendrocopos major*

**Common resident.**

A total of 403 records was received from 201 sites across the county, with reports for 139 of the sites being in the breeding season. The earliest territorial activity reported was in January, with drumming at Arundel WWT on the 13<sup>th</sup> and two males in a territorial dispute at Parham Park on the 27<sup>th</sup>. One was drumming on 14 Dec at Bewl Water.

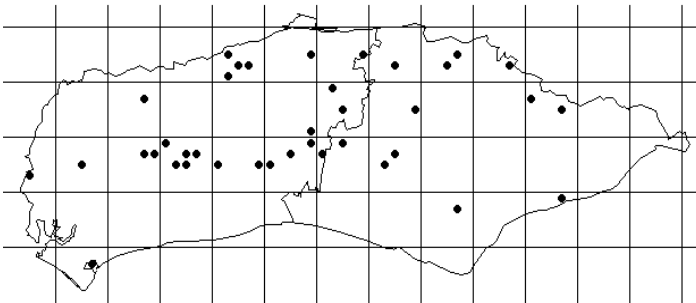
Breeding was confirmed or probable at 65 locations. Heathland surveys in West Sussex yielded 31 pairs in 24 1 km squares. Coincidentally to the Green Woodpecker report above, three individuals were also ringed at the Shoreham Sanctuary, the highest annual total there for the species in more than 50 years.

Coastal movements included a total of 13 flying north at Sheepcote Valley (Brighton) between 1 Oct and 13 Nov, with singles at Selsey Bill on 24 Sep and at Beachy Head on 26 Mar, 29 May and on 14 dates between 9 Aug and 10 Nov. [LM]

0887. **LESSER SPOTTED WOODPECKER**

*Dendrocopos minor*

**Scarce resident. Red listed species of high conservation concern.**



Records were received from 38 tetrads across the county as shown in the map above, with reports during the breeding season from 26 locations and from a further 21 at other times.

Confirmed or probable breeding was reported from Burton Park (Duncton), Eridge Park and Combe Haven. There were reports of territorial activity from ten other locations: West Dean Woods, Ebernoe Common, Rackham, Parham Estate, Pulborough Brooks, Warren Hill (Washington), Broadbridge Heath, Furnace Green (Crawley), Troutbeck (near Eridge) and Etchingham.

A total of 83 records was received, a disappointing reduction from the 102 last year. Reports of all records, especially of territorial behaviour or confirmed breeding, would be appreciated as this species is on the Red List. [LM]

**Scarce resident and passage migrant. Red listed species of high conservation concern.**

Records were received in every month of the year with the majority of the reports from the first winter period typically being from the Wealden Heaths in the northwest of the county. The now traditional flock, which inhabits the weedy stubble fields around Coates Common, was first noted on 5 Jan when 14 birds were seen. There were then 25 on the 8<sup>th</sup>, 16 on the 26<sup>th</sup> and a final count of 18 on 16 Feb prior to dispersal to breeding grounds. *The Migration Atlas* (2002) suggests that birds in the south of the UK winter close to their breeding grounds and this would appear to be endorsed by the Coates flock. After a disappointing maximum count of 14 in 2002, it is encouraging to observe the return to higher numbers although still well short of the 44 counted in 2000. There were no spring passage reports.

The evocative song of the Woodlark can be heard over the breeding areas from mid January onwards, but the four birds found singing on 8 Feb at Iping Common more typically represented a return of the population to their breeding grounds. *The Wealden Heaths Breeding Bird Survey* (see page 199) omitted the bulk of the breeding records with a total of 36 pairs from 11 locations. Ambersham & Heyshott Common plus the adjoining Goldballs Plantation held the highest number at nine pairs followed by Iping & Stedham (six pairs) and Linchmere & Stanley Commons (five pairs). Stopham Woods was a new location with one, possibly two pairs, and there was an encouraging confirmation of an expanding population of three pairs at Idesworth/West Marden on the southern slopes of the South Downs. Blackdown on the Surrey/Sussex/Hants borders boasts Sussex's highest altitude breeders at ca.260-280 m with two pairs. The West Sussex total of 40-41 pairs remains well below the peak of 66 recorded in 2000. This is due, in no small part, to a lack of observer coverage in the area west of Midhurst and north of the A272 Petersfield road close to the Hampshire border. Ashdown Forest held 14 possible pairs (11 in 2002) while numbers at Broadwater Forest remained stable with four or five pairs against four in 2002. There were no reports from Worth Forest.

This year's county total of between 68 and 70 pairs is undoubtedly lower than the true figure, due to the aforementioned lack of reports from the far west. Breeding was confirmed when young were seen being fed in a nest at Lavington on 17 Apr and Ambersham on 24 Apr. Later breeding was evidenced by recently fledged young at Ashdown Forest on 20 Jul.

Autumn passage numbers were poor. Only 13 individuals were reported from 1 Oct at Beachy Head (4), Sheepcote Valley (Brighton) (4), Combe Haven (2) Widewater (Lancing) (1) and Goring (1). The last sighting, and the only one from the far west, was on 27 Oct at Church Norton. It is possible that some of these coastal birds seen on passage or during the winter could be continental birds (*The Migration Atlas* 2002). Inland, birds continued to be seen on their breeding grounds with the largest single count of five at Lords Piece (Coates Common) on 14 Nov and a final record of a single bird at the same location on 8 Dec. [AP]

**Fairly common resident, passage migrant and winter visitor. Red listed species of high conservation concern.**

Winter coastal flocks included 74 in a rhubarb field during the winter census at Sefton Fm (Pagham) on 12 Jan and from 40 on 2 Jan to 20 on 11 Jan in the Pagham Spit area. In

the Chichester Hbr area there were 20 on Pilsey Island and another 20 at Thorney Island on 4 Jan, 32 feeding in the sand dunes at Pilsey on 7 Jan and 50 at East Head on 16 Jan. Further east, 20 were noted at Cuckmere Haven on 5 Feb. The largest inland flocks reported were on barley stubbles at Hardham with 95 on 10 Jan and 150 on 26 Jan. Other inland flocks were of 27 at Newmarket Hill on 17 Feb and 37 at Bewl Water on 1 Apr. Data from the BTO Migration Watch included 33 at Plumpton Plain on 8 Mar, 21 at Telscombe Tye the following day and 31 at Albourne (near Hurstpierpoint) on the same day.

Spring passage was first noted at Rye Bay on 24 Feb when 50 flew east. Other seawatching produced three past Worthing Beach on 24 Feb and three singles past Selsey Bill between 17 and 26 Apr.

Singing was first noted on 25 Jan at Pagham Hbr and was quickly followed by territorial birds at Newhaven Tide Mills the following day and at Millbrook (Ashdown Forest) the day after that. The total number of pairs or territorial males reported was 275 from 78 sites, a reduction on 2002 (344–354 from 90 sites) but roughly comparable with 2001 (267 from 58 sites). Ashdown Forest held 62 pairs (60–70 in 2002), Amberley ten pairs, Hangleton ten pairs, Lavant Down 12 pairs, Pulborough Brooks RSPB 14 pairs and Rye Hbr SSSI 22 pairs. A singing bird was heard at Newhaven Tide Mills on 18 Dec. Counts of breeding birds in other defined areas can be found on pages 196 - 199. Passage was larger in autumn than that in spring. It was first noticed on 11 Oct when 40 flew west past Hastings CP and 25 were noted at Beachy Head. Movement continued through October into early November. Movements at Brighton Wild Park totalled 560 between 24 Sep and 7 Nov, with a peak of 65 on 25 Oct. Other large counts in October included 35 past Selsey Bill and 14 over Cow Lane (Sidlesham) on the 14th, a peak movement of 110 through Sheepcote Valley (Brighton) on the 16th and 27 east at Church Norton on the 27th. Movement continued in November with 70 SW at Millbrook and 80 in off the sea at Brighton Marina on the 6th, 14 over Five Ways (Ashdown Forest) on the 7th and 350 W past Brighton Marina on the 15th. The last migrant was a single west past Worthing on the 30th.

The first large inland flocks started to gather at the end of October. One hundred were noted at Mount Harry on the 26th. In November three figure counts came from Lychpole Down with 100 on 8 Nov, 128 at Ovingdean on 12 Nov, 400 at Chantry Hill on 16 Nov, 140 in an oil seed rape field at Harvey's Cross on the same day, and 140 at The Burgh (near Burpham) on 30 Nov. The last big inland flock was 200 at Wepham Down on 1 Dec. The largest coastal flock was 70 at Thorney Island on 30 Dec. [APC]

## 0981. SAND MARTIN

*Riparia riparia*

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

The first records came in March, with three on the 7<sup>th</sup> at Telscombe, ten at Pulborough Brooks RSPB on the 11<sup>th</sup> and a single at Beachy Head on the 12<sup>th</sup>. These are all close to the 10 yr average arrival date of 11 Mar. From one to four birds were reported on eight further dates to the end of the month. April opened with an influx of birds on the 1<sup>st</sup> when 125 were seen at Chichester GP, 50 at Arlington Res and 20 at Bewl Water. Reports from coastal and inland sites up to the middle of the month were mainly in single figures, but there were 37 at Castle Water (Rye) on the 3<sup>rd</sup>, 50 at Barcombe Res on the 12<sup>th</sup>, 40 each at Sullington and Rye Hbr SSSI on the 18<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> respectively, and 100 at Pulborough Brooks on the 27<sup>th</sup>.

Breeding was reported from five sandpits: ten pairs at West Heath and 15 at Fitzhall (Iping); eight at Dunton; 40 at Pendean and 50 at Sullington. No breeding was reported from Earham, Stedham, Coates or Rock Common (Washington). The run of years with no breeding at Rye Hbr LNR continued, but two pairs nested nearby.

A count of 70 birds moving west at Thorney Island on 5 Jul and 40 at Selsey Bill the next day, heralded the late summer movements which led up to 200 moving south at Pagham Hbr on the 27<sup>th</sup>. In August there were several counts between 150 and 300, but there were 500 at Barcombe Res on the 17<sup>th</sup> and 1000 moving through Pagham Hbr on the 31<sup>st</sup>. The September inland records included 200 at Barcombe Res on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 30 at Weir Wood Res on the 10<sup>th</sup>. On the coast, 200 were counted at Earmley on the 5<sup>th</sup> and 300 at Church Norton on the 6<sup>th</sup>.

The October records from Pagham Hbr included three on the 2<sup>nd</sup>, ten on the 4<sup>th</sup> and singles on the 8<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup>. Five were at Pulborough Brooks on the 5<sup>th</sup>, and singles at Goring on the 5<sup>th</sup>, Beachy Head on the 13<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup>, Emsworth Hbr on the 14<sup>th</sup> and the last of the year at Pett Level on the 21<sup>st</sup>, an average date. [LM]

## 0992. SWALLOW

*Hirundo rustica*

**Common summer visitor and abundant passage migrant. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern.**

The first records of the year were in March, with two at Ardingly on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and a single at Shoreham Airport on the 5<sup>th</sup>, about a week before the average arrival date. These were followed by a scattering of singles up to the 26<sup>th</sup> reported from the coast and inland to Pulborough Brooks RSPB and Hartfield. In April, most of the 131 records were in single figures, apart from 19, 30 and 50 at Barcombe Res on the 4<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> respectively, 30 at Arlington Res on the 9<sup>th</sup> and 20 near Rowlands Castle on the 14<sup>th</sup>. There was a small influx from the 18<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> with 15 at Pagham Hbr, 34 at Arlington Res and 15 at Rye Hbr. Numbers built up towards the end of the month with 200 each reported from Pulborough Brooks on the 27<sup>th</sup> and Chichester GP on the 28<sup>th</sup>, 100 at Worthing on the 29<sup>th</sup> and 200 at Selsey Bill on the 30<sup>th</sup>. The May reports included counts of 220 at Bewl Water and 200 at Arlington Res on the 2<sup>nd</sup>, with 150 moving north at Worthing Beach on the 20<sup>th</sup>.

The first report of breeding was of a bird picking up grass cuttings at Climping on 5 May. Other records were of four pairs producing 11 young at Byworth, two pairs at Pulborough Brooks and single pairs with young at Climping, Henfield and Etchingham. Records of young birds with adults came from Kingscote Old Station (near Turners Hill) and Isfield. At Lee Fm (Patching) on 19 Aug, there were several pairs with recently fledged young and others still feeding young in nests. Two juveniles on wires at Pulborough Brooks on 12 Sep were being fed by adults.

Reports of flocking at coastal sites included 80 at Thorney Island on 4 Jul and 250 at Church Norton on the 30<sup>th</sup>, with 100 in a reedbed roost at Thorney Deeps the next day. Numbers built up in August, with inland counts of 200 at Barcombe Res on the 17<sup>th</sup>, 250 at Weir Wood Res and 200 at Pulborough Brooks on the 28<sup>th</sup>. Coastal records included 700 on the 13<sup>th</sup> and 800 on the 26<sup>th</sup> at Thorney Deeps and there were 1300 at Hollingbury Camp on the 13<sup>th</sup>. An estimated 2000 birds over Beachy Head on 4 Sep was the start of the movements in that month which included 3000 at Pagham Hbr on the 6<sup>th</sup>, with 3000 and 1500 roosting at Filsham LNR on the 15<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> respectively. Passage continued to be reported throughout October with 600 and 500 at Beachy Head on the 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> respectively, 700 over Sheepcote Valley (Brighton) on the 15<sup>th</sup> and 115 E in 3½ hr at

Fairlight on the 17<sup>th</sup>. There was a late influx of 250 (mainly immatures) at Bewl Water on the 18<sup>th</sup>, in cold easterly winds.

During November there were 18 reports on 13 days, mainly of singles, but with two flying south at Beeding Brooks on the 27<sup>th</sup>. The final record was of a single immature over a garden in Steyning on the 28<sup>th</sup>, near the 10 year average departure date. [LM]

0995. **RED-RUMPED SWALLOW**

*Hirundo daurica*

**Rare vagrant.**

One was present at Arlington Res on at least 26 Apr (JC et al) with two there from 30 Apr to 5 May (ITB, MJH et al). Another was seen in the Cuckmere Valley at Charleston Reedbed on 7 May (JCP), flying off northwest after about 15 min. All have been accepted by BBRC and are the first county records since 1999. The two at Arlington, which were sometimes seen resting together on the banks of the reservoir, proved to be popular. They are the first occurrence in the county involving more than one individual and only the second to stay for more than a day (the other also being at Arlington Res from 12 to 15 May 1995). Assuming three birds were involved the county total moves on to 20, all but one between 17 Apr and 29 May and the other in early September. [RJF]

1001. **HOUSE MARTIN**

*Delichon urbicum*

**Common summer visitor and abundant passage migrant. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern.**

The first records of the year were near the average date, with a single at Offham (Arundel) on 23 Mar, three at Pagham Hbr on the 27<sup>th</sup>, two singles at Steyning on the 29<sup>th</sup> and a single at the University of Sussex on the 31<sup>st</sup>. In April there were almost daily sightings in single figures from coastal and inland sites, apart from 30 at Barcombe Res on the 20<sup>th</sup>, 300 and 100 at Pulborough Brooks RSPB on the 24<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> respectively, 30 at Emsworth SF on the 27<sup>th</sup>, 150 at Chichester GP and 50 at Weir Wood Res on the 28<sup>th</sup>. The month ended with ten each at Selsey Bill and Worthing Beach on the 30<sup>th</sup>.

The earliest report of breeding activity was of three birds which returned to a nest site in Wisborough Green on 16 Apr. There were records of pairs at 23 other sites, including six feeding young at Slindon College, four pairs at Houghton, six pairs at West Durrington, 15 nests at Kneppmill Pond, 11 nests at Sheffield Park Station, four pairs at Ashdown GC, 12 nests at Wilbees Fm (Arlington), four nests at Earls Down (Dallington) and 29 nests on six houses in Northiam. Six birds were seen collecting mud at Sayers Common on 26 Jul, presumably for nest repairs. Breeding was also reported from Lee Fm (Patching), where five nests were still occupied on 19 Aug. The small breeding population in Rye Hbr village continued to be active. All breeding records are welcomed.

There were gatherings at several inland and coastal sites in July and August of between 100 and 500 birds, the latter being at Pulborough Brooks on 21 Aug. The first large coastal movement was on 4 Sep with 1000 birds at Beachy Head. Other significant counts were of 500 at Pagham Hbr and 520 at Brighton Wild Park on the 13<sup>th</sup>, 500 roosting in maize at Wilbees Fm on the 15<sup>th</sup>, with 1500 over Earnley, 500 at Selsey Bill and 5000 over Beachy Head on the 16<sup>th</sup>, 500 moving west at Hastings CP on the 20<sup>th</sup> and 500 over Filsham LNR on the 28<sup>th</sup>. An albino bird was seen at Castle Water (Rye Hbr LNR) on 9 Sep.

In early October, there were reports of between 135 and 420 birds from six sites up to the 5<sup>th</sup>, but thereafter counts were in double figures apart from an estimated total of 1000 moving through Sheepcote Valley (Brighton) on the 12<sup>th</sup>. The final record of the year was of two moving west with 30 Swallows near Horseshoe Plantation (Beachy Head) on 24 Oct, nearly a month earlier than the 10 year average departure date of 20 Nov. [LM]

1008. **OLIVE-BACKED PIPIT**

*Anthus hodgsoni*

**Very rare vagrant.**

One seen briefly at Harvey's Copse (Seaford Head) on 30 Oct (JC) has been accepted by BBRC. It is the second county record, the first being at Beachy Head on 11 Oct 1987. Most observers will be hoping the county's third is seen by a wider audience! [RJF]

1009. **TREE PIPIT**

*Anthus trivialis*

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

The only March records were of singles on Ashdown Forest at the Old Airstrip and Friends Clump on the 29<sup>th</sup>. The spring coastal records were of single birds, one of which appeared at a school in Brighton on 1 Apr, two others at Selsey Bill on 23 and 30 Apr, and one at Ovingdean on 7 May. The first record of a singing bird was at Broadwater Forest (Tunbridge Wells) on 12 Apr, a late date compared with previous years. From the 12<sup>th</sup> to the end of the month, there were increasing reports of territorial males, with four at Broadwater Forest, three at Ambersham Common and singles at Iping Common and 14 locations on Ashdown Forest. The number of territories recorded on Ashdown was 52, slightly lower than the numbers recorded in the last two years, with observations coming from 23 different 1 km squares. Breeding records for the 60 pairs located during the *Wealden Heaths Breeding Bird Survey* are shown on page 199. In downland habitats, two singing and displaying males were seen at Heyshott and a pair were feeding a juvenile at Bignor Hill.

As is usual, there were few records in July and the first half of August. From mid-August, there were almost daily single-figure reports from coastal areas, with a maximum of 12 at Pett Level on the 23<sup>rd</sup>. Birds were still on Ashdown Forest in September, with records of three up to the 14<sup>th</sup> and a single on the 19<sup>th</sup>, and migrants were seen in single figures at Isfield, Bewl Water and Chichester GP. The reports from eight coastal areas were of singles, with a maximum of only four at Beachy Head on the 9<sup>th</sup>, which is considerably lower than normal. The final birds of the year were singles at Beachy Head on 4 Oct and Hastings CP on the 11th. [LM]

1011. **MEADOW PIPIT**

*Anthus pratensis*

**Locally common resident, very common passage migrant and winter visitor. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern.**

There were higher counts in the first two months than in 2002. Of the eight counts in double figures in January, the maxima were of 70 birds on maize stubble at Partridge Green on the 4<sup>th</sup> and 75 on barley stubble at Hardham on the 26<sup>th</sup>. February brought three high counts of 110 roosting in heather at Lavington Common on the 7<sup>th</sup>, 270 at the Old

Airstrip (Ashdown Forest) on the 21<sup>st</sup> and 150 at Crow and Gate (Ashdown Forest) on the 23<sup>rd</sup>. Records were received from 15 sites in January and 30 in February.

The earliest report of song was of two males at Devils Dyke on 22 Feb. Passage was first reported in March with 16 flying in off the sea at Pilsley Island on the 16<sup>th</sup> and 37 N at Brighton Wild Park on the 26<sup>th</sup>. Several small parties flew in north at Shoreham Beach and 31 at Brighton Marina on the 30<sup>th</sup>, a day of strong northeast winds. Counts at Selsey Bill produced a total of 459 on seven dates between the 14<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup>, with a maximum of 200 on the 26<sup>th</sup>. There were 16 double-figure counts in April, the largest being 37 at Bewl Water on the 1<sup>st</sup>, 61 at Saldean on the 4<sup>th</sup> and 30 at Selsey Bill on the 14<sup>th</sup>.

Breeding reports came from a wide range of inland and coastal sites, mostly of single pairs, producing a total of about 110 pairs at 34 sites. Of particular note were nature reserve survey results of 18 pairs at Amberley Wild Brooks, 24 at Pulborough Brooks RSPB and 16 at Rye Hbr LNR. The leucistic bird which bred at Cuckmere Haven in 2002 was present again this year. A male was seen in display flight in May near the 08B holding point at Gatwick Airport.

Counts in September produced totals of 100 at Steyning Round Hill on the 11<sup>th</sup>, 300 at Upper Beeding on the 13<sup>th</sup> and 165 at Brighton Wild Park on the 24<sup>th</sup>. The first large coastal movement was of 150 at Pagham Hbr on the 22<sup>nd</sup>, followed by 100 at Thorney Island on the 24<sup>th</sup>, 250 at Pagham on the 27<sup>th</sup> and 50 E at Worthing Beach on the same day. There was not the heavy passage seen in 2002. October brought counts of 200 at Beachy Head and Cissbury Ring in the first four days and a peak autumn report of 190 at Brighton Wild Park on the 11<sup>th</sup>. Easterly movements from mid-month included totals of 40 at Selsey Bill, 80 at Climping, 80, 50 and 60 at Worthing Beach and 41 at East Hill (Hastings). An estimated 300 were seen at a roost at the Old Airstrip (Ashdown Forest) on the 27<sup>th</sup>.

As in 2002, many of the wintering groups and roosting flocks were in substantial numbers. At dusk on 3 Nov, 100 were seen at Iping Common. The Old Airstrip roost held 75 on 10 Nov and 200 a month later. An estimated 270 were reported from Poundgate (near Crowborough) on 12 Nov. There were several flocks of about 50 birds at Constantia Manor (Isfield). A coastal movement of 35 birds into south east winds on 4 Nov was reported from West Hill (Hastings). A group of 20 was seen on 26 Nov at the Wader Pool (Rye Hbr LNR) following heavy rain and a high tide. The total number of birds recorded in December, apart from the 200 each at Constantia Manor and the Old Airstrip, was only 111 – a low figure of some concern, as commented on in 2002. [LM]

## 1014.0. **WATER PIPIT**

*Anthus spinoletta*

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

An excellent year opened at Combe Haven with 30 on 2 Jan, 42 on 23 Feb and a county record of 54 on 1 Mar (KMJ); 17, mostly in full summer plumage, were still present on 30 Mar (KMJ). It is likely that several birds were present at Sidlesham SF from early in the year with four reported on 20 Feb (OM) and 27 Mar (OM, BFF) and a maximum of five on 29 Mar (OM, ALB). At Thorney Deeps there were reports of two from 3 Jan to 8 Apr (CBC). There were also at least two in April in the Breech Pool/North Wall area of Pagham Hbr on the 12th and 13th (ARK). A single was reported from Hooe Level (Pevensey) on 21 Apr (TJW) and the last record of the spring was of a single at Combe Haven on 29 Apr (KMJ).

In the autumn, the first record was from Combe Haven with a single on 13 Oct, followed by ten on the 21st, increasing to 20 at roost on 24 Nov (KMJ). There were



singles at Thorney Deeps between 15 Oct and 12 Nov, with two on 19 Nov (CBC). The first reports from Coldwaltham SF came in December with singles on the 14th and 24th (ASC, RJF, RAI, DIS). Thorney Deeps had singles reported on the 4th, 17th and 28th (CBC). The last record of the year was of 20 at Combe Haven on the 30th (KMJ). [LM]

#### 1014.2. **ROCK PIPIT**

*Anthus petrosus*

##### **Scarce resident and scarce visitor. Rare away from the coast.**

There were reports from 12 locations in January (cf. 17 in 2001 and ten in 2002), the first record being of five on the shore at Pagham Hbr on the 2<sup>nd</sup>. Nine birds were recorded along the coast from Saltdean to Peacehaven and a further five in the Newhaven area. Winter reports included a total of ten at Pilsey and Thorney Islands, four at the North Wall (Pagham Hbr), singles at Selsey Bill and Goring Beach and two at Shoreham. The only indication of spring passage was of a single at Arlington Res on 2 Apr.

A displaying male was seen at Rottingdean on 29 Mar. Further reports and survey results in the breeding season suggested a total of eight pairs between Rottingdean and Peacehaven and a further pair at Newhaven. Only three juveniles were noted; one at Saltdean and two at Telscombe Cliffs. Records from Beachy Head indicated presence throughout the year and possible breeding.

The first three reports in the late summer were of two on the beach at Saltdean on 25 Aug and, in September, singles at Pagham Hbr on the 25<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup>, two at Shoreham on the 26<sup>th</sup> and two feeding on the beach at Hove Lagoon on the 27<sup>th</sup>. A single was seen at Hastings in a coastal movement into southeast winds on 4 Nov. There were no inland winter records. Small numbers were reported in November from 14 locations away from the cliffs, the maximum being four each at Pilsey Island, East Head, Pagham Hbr, Climping and Newhaven. The totals reported in the last two months of the year were about 29 and 16 respectively. [LM]

#### 1014.3. **SCANDINAVIAN ROCK PIPIT**

*Anthus petrosus littoralis*

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

A single bird at Cuckmere Haven on 15 Mar (JC) was probably one of the four seen in the same area on the 30<sup>th</sup> (TJW). A single was also seen at Widewater (Lancing) on 17 Mar (JC). [LM]

#### 1017. **YELLOW WAGTAIL**

*Motacilla flava*

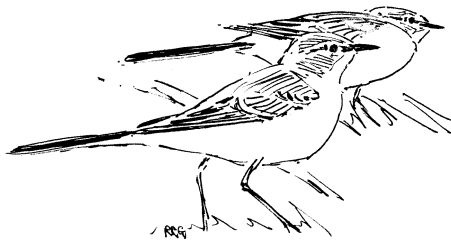
##### **Scarce and localised summer visitor and fairly common autumn passage migrant. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern.**

The first two records were in March, with a single at Rye Hbr LNR on the 24<sup>th</sup> and two at Belle Tout (Beachy Head) on the 27<sup>th</sup>. The ten-year average arrival date up to 2002 was 21 Mar. About 100 birds were seen in April: this year there was only one double-figure count, from Combe Haven, where 11 flew east on the 15<sup>th</sup>. Three flew over Hollingbury Camp on the 16<sup>th</sup>, the only spring record there and one of only three inland records away from the river valleys (the other two being of a one and a two at Falmer). The first bird at Thorney Deeps was seen on 17 Apr. A very light passage continued into May (for which only 14 records were received), by which time a mere handful of pairs had been found in

likely breeding sites, especially around Pevensey Levels. None was found on Glynde Levels and the total from Rye Hbr fell back, after a marginal improvement in 2002, to only 12 pairs. With the exception of a single at Cliff End (Pett) on the 13<sup>th</sup>, the handful of June records came from Rye Hbr and Pevensey Levels. Between 15 Jun and 14 Aug, the only record came from Rye Hbr on 23 Jul.

The first returning birds were two flying over Selsey West Fields on 14 Aug, with one over Five Ways (Ashdown Forest) the next day; the first at Thorney Deeps were on the 18<sup>th</sup>. There were double-figure counts on seven of the 14 days from 17 Aug to the end of the month, with 50 in a sheep field at Pett Level on the 22<sup>nd</sup> and 65 at Rye Hbr and 40 at Thorney Island on the 27<sup>th</sup>. There were scattered inland records, the most notable of which were of 11 at Partridge Green and 45 around cattle on Chantry Hill both on the 30<sup>th</sup>. Records for September came from 27 of the 30 days, but there were only 17 double-figure counts (34 in 2002, 31 in 2001). Around 100 were at Crowlink on the 3<sup>rd</sup>. A gathering at Sidlesham Ferry included 40 birds on the 12<sup>th</sup>, increasing to 60 the next day. The autumn maximum at Ovingdean was 22 on 21 Sep; these were also the last birds to be noted at that site. The last bird at Pilsey Island was on the 26<sup>th</sup>. There were a few inland records, mainly from the crest of the Downs, but Yellow Wagtails do stop off in unusual places: this year one was with Pied Wagtails at Pease Pottage on the 13<sup>th</sup>. There were a mere ten October records, with a maximum of 5 E flying over Worthing Beach on the 1<sup>st</sup> and the last at Pett Level on the 18<sup>th</sup>.

It has been recognised for a number of years that the Yellow Wagtail was disappearing from the county as a breeding bird. The evidence this year suggests that autumn migrants are now far fewer than in the recent past: in 2000 there were 88 October birds (as there had been in 1993); in 2001, 106; in 2002, 18. The last bird of 2003, on 18 Oct, was very early: the average last date for the 1990s being 3 Nov. [CB]



## 1019. GREY WAGTAIL

*Motacilla cinerea*

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

Records in the early months were marginally fewer than in 2002. January brought 31 records of *ca.*50 birds, characteristically from the Levels, reservoirs and sewage works. Most were of singles but a group of six frequented cattle sheds and waste treatment works at Houghton. There were 23 records in February, including two together in Worthing town

centre. Surprisingly, there were no reports from central Brighton or Hastings during the first months of the year. Two were in Chichester early in March and may have been those which subsequently nested on the Cathedral. The first song was noted at Millbrook (Ashdown Forest) on 4 Mar and a pair was displaying at Buchan Park CP on 9 Mar. A bird which had wintered at Lindfield Scrase LNR was last seen there on 10 Mar.

Migrants arrived from mid-March, with one flying north over Beachy Head on the 16<sup>th</sup>, three over Pagham Hbr on the 20<sup>th</sup> and one along Worthing Beach on the 21<sup>st</sup>. Two on Duncton Down on 30 Mar were unexpected. No obvious migrants were seen in April and this very disappointing spring passage ended with singles over Rye Hbr and Splash Point (Seaford) early in May. The origin of the three singles which appeared at Selsey Bill between 9 and 17 Jun is unclear.

Breeding season reports came from a number of inland bodies of water, including the regular sites of Warnham LNR and Burton MP, and less predictable spots at Sakeham Fm (Shermanbury), Constantia Manor, (Isfield), Chailey Common, Rushlake Green, Bells Yew Green and Burwash. There was one territory on 3 km of the eastern Rother at Kilsham Fm (near Petworth). As in 2002, a pair bred on the roof of Goodwood House, rearing two young. The first young reported were two at Swanbourne Lake (Arundel) on 3 May; a pair had seven chicks at Northbrook Fm (West Ashling) on the 5<sup>th</sup>. Breeding continued to the end of July, by which time adults and juveniles were leaving breeding sites with 17 at Barcombe Res on both 3 and 18 Jul and solitary birds being found at migration spots like Rye Hbr and Newhaven Tide Mills. Barcombe Res was the only locality to record a double figure count in August, with 11 on the 6<sup>th</sup>; the maximum elsewhere was only three. Birds were reported from central Brighton and Ovingdean at the end of August and in central Worthing on 3 Sep.

Coastal movement was apparent from about 6 Sep when there were two at Beachy Head and three at both Church Norton and Middleton-on-Sea. One hundred and sixty birds were reported in September, with two double figure counts: 25 from Newhaven Fort on the 13<sup>th</sup> and 15 from Pagham Hbr on the 30<sup>th</sup>. These latter birds arrived off the sea, circled the harbour and then flew off west.

October was a disappointing month with records of only 73 birds submitted; the maximum was five over Warren Glen (Fairlight) on the 17<sup>th</sup>. Ten at Weir Wood Res on the 23<sup>rd</sup> was the maximum for November, a month in which only 41 birds were reported. Garden records at the end of the year came from Hove, Plumpton Green and Willingdon. A Christmas Day tour of Bewl Water produced eight of the month's meagre total of 25 birds.

The year appears from our records to have been a disappointing one for the Grey Wagtail. Migration counts, in particular those for spring, were low and there were few concentrations of birds. However, the number of reports from inland sites off the birdwatcher's beaten-tracks suggests that good numbers continue to grace the many ghylls and ponds of the county. [CB]

## 1020. **PIED WAGTAIL**

*Motacilla alba yarrelli*

**Common resident, passage migrant and winter visitor.**

Twenty-seven records were received for January and 40 for February. Unusually, the highest count for January was not from a roost but was of 100 on a bare field at Cooksbridge. The largest roost counts were of 80 at Castle Water (Rye Hbr) on 18 Feb and 50 at East Grinstead station on 29 Jan, although 112 were counted flying over Thorney

Deepes towards North Hayling at dusk on 26 Feb. Large congregations appear to have been fewer in 2003 than in 2002, but it is not known whether some traditional sites went unvisited or whether there were unreported absences. Winter censuses in January revealed 19 on 95 ha at Sefter Fm (Pagham) (the same as in January 2002) and six at Marsh Fm (Yapton) (two in January 2002); both sites held a mere two birds in February (45 had been at Sefter Fm in Feb 2002).

Migration was first indicated by 30 on Goring Beach on 6 Mar, followed by the remarkable total of 150 feeding on the marsh at Combe Haven on the 11th. Other than these counts, numbers along the coast were low in March: only four were recorded at Selsey Bill and two at Splash Point (Seaford). Worthing Beach alone recorded migrants in April and those a mere four singles. Inland, 16 at Barcombe Res on 7 Apr was the only spring flock.

Counts of breeding pairs in defined areas are shown on pages 196 - 199. Young were recorded from 7 May at Pulborough Brooks RSPB. The pair that bred at Brighton Wild Park was the first there for 12 years. Although Pied Wagtails were absent from the SSSI at Rye Hbr, several pairs bred along the industrial strip on the Rye Hbr road and there was probably a pair at Winchelsea Beach SF. Census work suggested stability on three plots: as in 2002, single pairs were found on a WBBS count of 3 km of the western Rother at Kilsham Fm (nr Petworth), at Sefter Fm and Marsh Fm.

Post-breeding congregations were found from 20 Jun, when there were 18 at Darwell Res, and 20 at Barcombe Res on the 21st had increased to 40 (with many juveniles) the next day. Nineteen were there in mid-July and 24 on 3 Aug, while observers at Darwell Res recorded 26 on 24 Jul and 38 on 24 Aug. In addition, two pairs with nine juveniles were together at Earls Down (Dallington) on 12 Jul. Further substantial gatherings in August were 30 at Weir Wood Res on the 11th and 35 at Pulborough Brooks on the 28th. Only eight records were received for September: these included 51 on 400 m of the Bawl Water shoreline on the 14th and about 70 at a pre-roost gathering on a rough field at Pease Pottage. The Bawl Water record notwithstanding, reservoirs were less attractive to Pied Wagtails in September: the maximum counts at Barcombe and Weir Wood were only eight and 22 respectively.

Autumn movements were apparent from early October. On the 3rd 40 flew east over Whitehawk (Brighton) and 50 flew northeast over the R Adur at Shoreham. Coastal movement continued the next day when about 80 were feeding in Whitbread Hollow (Beachy Head). Large counts resumed from the 11th and included birds both flying over and resting. Observers at Sheepcote Valley (Brighton) recorded a highest count of 80 on the 12th while, on the 13th, 71 flew east along Worthing Beach, 85 were at Castle Water (Rye Hbr) and 34 were seen leaving a roost at Centenary House (Durrington). Sixty-three were feeding on the greensward at Goring Gap on the 23rd. Thirty were at the Bawl Water dam on the 18th, but the monthly maximum at Barcombe Res was only four. The autumn roost in the reed bed at Pett Level was considered to be 'small': it peaked at 72 on 11 Oct.

Most November records were of coastal birds, including a report of 55 flushed by a hunting Barn Owl at Castle Water on the 28th. However, inland there were 25 at Partridge Green on the 2nd and over 60 were scampering around the car park of a supermarket in Broadbridge Heath on the 8th. With meadows at Constantia Manor (Isfield) once again saturated, up to a dozen birds were present. Counts at reservoirs picked up with 26 at Weir Wood Res on 2 Nov and 20 at Darwell Res on the 16th. Census counts revealed 14 at Sefter Fm on 12 Nov, with 18 there on 6 Dec, and nine at Marsh Fm on 16 Nov, with only a single present on 18 Dec. There were only seventeen records for December, led by the 107 found around Bawl Water on Christmas Day. Groups included 21 at Heritage SF (Emsworth) on the 4th, 22 at Coldwaltham SF on the 14th, 30 at Apuldram on the 16th,

and 25 at Lidsey SF on the 19th. The absence of roost counts was striking: it is hoped that it derives from lack of observer interest rather than of birds. [CB]

1020.01 **WHITE WAGTAIL**

*Motacilla alba alba*

**Probably a scarce spring and autumn passage migrant. Both pure and mixed pairs have bred.**

The first bird, the earliest county record, was found consorting with Pied Wagtails in Wisborough Green on 4 Feb (PJE). The next was at Rye Hbr on 21 Feb, followed by one on the beach at Littlehampton with a group of Pied Wagtails on 12 Mar. Four singles and a threesome followed by the end of March but April brought only a scattering of birds with one at Bewl Water on the 16<sup>th</sup>. Singles were noted on several days at Beachy Head from 13 Apr to 4 May. Slight passage continued into May.

The first autumn bird was in the lower Cuckmere Valley on the early date of 14 Aug; the next stayed at Arlington Res from 2 to 9 Sep. Observers at Arlington Res on 5 Sep considered a number of birds in a flock of 200 *alba* wagtails to have been Whites. Other than these, only four birds were reported: singles at Whitbread Hollow on 5 Oct, two at Church Norton on 21 Oct, and a final single at Goring Gap on 29 Oct.

Numbers in both spring and autumn were lower than they have been in recent years. Observers are reminded of the extreme difficulty of separating autumn Pied and White Wagtails in the field and of the timing and direction of the White Wagtail passage through England in that season. The *Migration Atlas* (p.483-486) also comments that “there are few records, if any, of White Wagtails in Britain & Ireland in the winter”. [CB]

1066. **WREN**

*Troglodytes troglodytes*

**Abundant resident.**

Winter censuses revealed 12 birds at both the 95 ha Sefter Fm (Pagham) on 3 Jan and the 67 ha Marsh Fm (Yapton) on the 7<sup>th</sup>. A cold snap brought twenty to feed on the tide line of Pagham Hbr on 11 Jan, but this kind of movement was not witnessed elsewhere in the county. The February total for Sefter Fm was a mere five; for Marsh Fm, 13.

Counts of breeding pairs in defined areas are shown on pages 196 - 199. The increase in numbers recorded at the above farms between winter and the breeding season was of note. In addition, 18 were found along 3 km of the eastern Rother at Kilsham Fm (Petworth) on 8 Apr, with 26 counted there on 5 Jun. A survey of Goldballs Plantation (Heyshott) (47 ha of mainly conifers with some chestnut) revealed 24 birds. Regular counts at the University of Sussex in the first half of the year showed how precarious extrapolation from single monthly counts can be: counts in February in TQ3409 ranged from nine to 18, in March from seven to 17, in April from seven to 26, in May from 14 to 27 and in June from 11 to 24. A similar tale is told in counts from Preston Park (Brighton). Notwithstanding such variations, monthly counts from two sites and winter census counts command respect:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Darwell Res	17	15	20	21	28	19	16	3	nc	5	14	10
Hotham Pk, Bognor	3	2	5	9	7	6	6	3	4	4	6	3
Marsh Fm, Yapton(*)	12	13									9	9
Sefter Fm, Pagham(*)	12	5									7	10

Note: (\*) = see also table of Breeding Bird Counts on pages 196 - 199.

In 27 ringing sessions from June to October at Shoreham Sanctuary 43 birds were handled: six had been ringed in previous years (cf. 34 new and four retraps in 2002).

Only five reports were received for August, seven for September and nine for October. Very few of the submitted records offered any comment on the level of the population, but at Constantia Manor (Isfield), a considerable increase was noted, with up to 30 being counted. [CB]

1084. **DUNNOCK**

*Prunella modularis*

**Abundant resident. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern.**

Birds were widely reported throughout the year, but rarely in a way as to provide the basis for comment on the fortunes of so widespread a species. Definite information can, though, be drawn from regular walks and from census work:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	July	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Hotham Park, Bognor	7	6	8	4	3	4	1	1	2	2	4	2
Marsh Fm, Yapton(*)	9	11									12	10
Sefter Fm, Pagham(*)	13	4									14	6
Newhaven Tide Mills	p	10	10(s)	10(s)	3 pr	3 pr	3	6	13	15	6	6

Note: p = present; (s) = in song; pr = pairs; (\*) = see also table of Breeding Bird Counts on pages 196 - 199.

Evidence suggestive of migrant arrival came from the University of Sussex where regular counts of four to 12 rose to 24 on 17 and 18 Mar; such numbers were subsequently attained again on 21 Mar and on 3 Apr, with 22 present on both dates.

Counts of breeding pairs in defined areas are shown on pages 196 - 199. In addition, three birds were located during counts along 3 km of the western Rother near Petworth on 8 Apr and 5 Jun. At Cissbury Ring, between May and October, up to eight birds were ringed at each session and about five pairs bred in 6.6 ha. The 59 pairs which were judged to have bred in Brighton Wild Park was a considerable increase over 2002 (46) and 2001 (43). A survey of Goldballs Plantation (Heyshott) (47 ha of mainly conifer plantation with one small area of chestnut,) found eight pairs on 6 May.

In the autumn, one was singing at Upper Beeding on 12 Oct and one was seen feeding from a seed feeder, 'half-perching and half-hovering'. There was no suggestion of autumn movement this year.

At Shoreham Sanctuary, 36 birds (21 young and 15 adult) were handled in 27 ringing sessions between mid May and late October of which several were retrapped and ten had been ringed there in previous years. [CB]

1099. **ROBIN**

*Erithacus rubecula*

**Abundant resident, passage migrant and winter visitor.**

Only one unusual record was submitted for the first few months of the year: on 11 Jan, 20 were found feeding on the tide line at Pagham Hbr during a cold snap. Regular counts and reports of census work included the following:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>Sefter Fm, Pagham</b>	13	9	nc	nc	nc	11	nc	nc	nc	nc	10	7
<b>Hotham Park, Bognor</b>	8	13	7	8	12	5	4	8	9	nc	5	3
<b>Marsh Fm, Yapton</b>	30	12	nc	nc	nc	33	nc	nc	nc	nc	7	9
<b>Darwell Res</b>	26	32	35	32	35	13	16	17	nc	29	23	21

Twenty-six birds were noted at Warren Hill (Washington) on 24 Jan. Around the University of Sussex a count of 19 on 27 Feb increased erratically to 32 on 20 Mar and 34 on 28 Mar. April counts there did not exceed that latter total; the May maximum count was 28 but only 22 could be found in June. Numbers seen and heard in Stopham Woods totalled 18 on 17 Feb, 35 on 6 Mar but only 23 on 28 Mar. This represented a considerable decline from the 2002 maximum of 45 on 27 Mar. By contrast, the 2002 and 2003 March counts at Darwell Res were identical, though the April count in 2003 was slightly down. Bexhill Cemetery, where only a single bird had been found on 30 Jan, held 17 on 29 Mar. There were two singing males at Newhaven Tide Mills during March but only one in April. Only one obvious migrant was reported: a bird found on the very tip of a groyne at Splash Point (Seaford) on 21 Mar.

Counts of breeding pairs in defined areas are shown on pages 196 - 199. The 152 pairs which bred in Brighton Wild Park compares with 148 in 2002 and 129 in 2001. Nine territories at Rye Hbr SSSI compares with the exceptional 11 of 2002. A number of additional breeding season records were received. In late April, a pair nested in a window box at Sandgate Wood (Storrington). A WBBS survey found 11 birds along 3 km of the western Rother at Kilsham Fm (Petworth). Nineteen territories were mapped in a survey at Goldballs Plantation (Heyshott) (47 ha of conifer with some chestnut). Twenty birds were singing between Arundel and South Stoke in mid-May, while eight males were singing along a 1 km stretch of the Old Canal at Lidsey on 6 May. There were probably seven pairs in 6.6 ha around Cissbury Ring. The only comment on the relative success of the breeding season was provided by observers at Three Corner Copse (Hove) where the productivity of three nests (three birds raised from one and two failing) compare unfavourably with 2002 (15 young raised from three nests and three failing).

The first autumn song was heard at Beachy Head on 24 Aug. There were 30 in the vicinity on both 3 and 13 Sep, 35 on 8 Oct and 30 again on 6 Nov, but observers there considered it a poor autumn. Past experience suggests that the early September birds are probably British-bred, while those found after late September are of continental origin (*Birds of Sussex*). An observer at Isfield reported the species as present in one particular area during only eight weeks in the final quarter of the year but, at nearby Constantia Manor, an unusually high number was found along the banks of the R Ouse in November and December. Nine birds visited Newhaven Tide Mills on 15 Sept and 12, including three singing birds, were there on 15 Dec. There were 50 in Shepcote Valley (Brighton) on 26 Oct.

Ringling records were received from Cissbury Ring (29 birds ringed between 11 May and 11 Oct) and Shoreham Sanctuary (63 birds handled in 27 sessions between 11 May and 26 Oct). Of those 63, 11 had been ringed in earlier years, 41 were young and 22 adult birds (*cf.* 42 and 14 in 2002). [CB]

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

The first summer arrival was reported from Pagham Lagoon on 5 Apr, spot on the ten-year average for the decade to 2002. It was followed by another coastal migrant seen at Cuckmere Haven the next day. There were few other coastal records in spring. Most records were of birds noted at inland sites, some pausing in unsuitable breeding habitat such as one singing from bushes in Preston Drove (Brighton) on 15 Apr, and one at Manor Royal (Crawley) the next day, with others on their breeding territories. Allowing for multiple counting, it seems likely that at least 80 were recorded in April, a substantial increase on the 2002 total of 47.



Counts of breeding pairs in defined areas are shown on pages 196 – 199 and the map shows the location of all records in the breeding period. In addition, five were singing at Wilbees Fm (Arlington) on 18 Apr; on the 20<sup>th</sup>, six were on Ditchling Common (a high number given the popularity of the area with visitors) and the next day a similar number was at Pulborough Brooks RSPB. Thirteen singing birds were heard in two 1 km squares near Plaistow at the end of the month. Birds were reported from 33 sites across the county in May and a further two sites were added in June. This was a considerable reduction from the 2002 total of 61 sites.

There were no reports from many areas with apparently suitable habitat, especially in the east. The potential of the area between Heathfield, Robertsbridge, Battle and Brede is clear, but the only records in May from this area were of single birds at Brightling and Etchingham, four singing at Hurst Green, and as many as eight noted in song in Ashes Wood (near Battle). There were no reports from Kirdford, Plumpton Agricultural College or Marline Wood (Hastings) this year. The population of six at Pulborough Brooks was down on 2002's 11 birds, and only a single sang on Broadmare Common (near Henfield) which had hosted six males in 2002.

The last singing bird was heard at Amberley Wild Brooks on 29 Jun (*cf.* 20 June 2002) and the first departing bird turned up at Pett Level on 14 Jul. The last inland record was of one at Pulborough Brooks on 11 Aug. The last coastal record was of one at Poole Place (Atherington) on 19 Sep, five days later than the 10-year average. Perhaps a more indicative date is that on which two birds were noted for the last time: that was 6 Sep when four were around the Beachy Head area and a single was at Pett Level. Return passage continues at a very low level: is this a consequence of their unobtrusiveness or do they rarely rest on migration through the county? [CB]



## 1121. **BLACK REDSTART**

*Phoenicurus ochruros*

**Rare resident, fairly common passage migrant and scarce winter visitor. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern.**

There were eighteen records for January, all of singles apart from two at Pett Level. All were along the coast, except for two around Robertsbridge (one at a grain store) and one in Lewes, which stayed from mid January to mid February. A bird at Hastings had been present since 5 Dec 2002 and a female at Saltdean was present until 8 Mar. There were only ten records for February, one at Widewater (Lancing), two at Saltdean and one at Telscombe Cliffs but, interestingly, six were away from the coast. One in Goodwood Park, which may have been the bird there in Nov 2002, was last noted on 3 Mar, a fortnight before the expected arrival of migrant birds which was clearly signalled by records from 21 Mar. However, this was an unexceptional season, with records of only around 40 birds to the end of the month. One at Hurst Green on 12 Mar was presumably one of the earlier Robertsbridge birds. A bird at Lewes prepared for the coming breeding season by taking mealworms provided by the staff of English Nature! Inland records in March came from Pulborough Brooks RSPB on the 24<sup>th</sup> and from Isfield (the first bird there for three years) on the 26<sup>th</sup>.

A calling bird remained at Cissbury Ring for a week from 3 Apr and from 12 to 27 Apr five birds were found between Rottingdean and Birling Gap, with two on the Downs at Balsdean and above Willingdon. During May, there were one-day reports of a pair at Pulborough Brooks RSPB on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and of singles at Rye Hbr on the 3<sup>rd</sup>, at Birling Gap on the 8<sup>th</sup> and Shoreham Power Station on the 11<sup>th</sup>.

Four pairs were proved to have bred in the county. By 24 May, three juveniles at Bulstrode Fm (Ovingdean) were being fed by the female, the male having, apparently, already left. A pair at Ecclesbourne Glen (Hastings) brought off two broods; a female was watched feeding a juvenile at Shoreham Power Station in the last ten days of June; and feeding was observed in Horsham in the first half of July.

The period from mid-July to mid-October produced only four records, three on the coast and one, on 12 Sep, at Firle. Passage birds, and those which would winter in the county, arrived from 7 Oct when one (which stayed into 2004) was found in Brighton. November brought 12 records of 17 birds; most were along the coast but there were singles on Lewes Brooks and on Brightling Down. Only 12 birds were reported in December, all close to the coast but not necessarily on the beach or by the cliffs as one was on rooftops in the middle of Southwick on 10 Dec.

This was another moderate year for the Black Redstart in the county, though four breeding pairs bodes well. Perhaps most striking was the number of individual birds noted in the interior of the county; presumably at least several others pass through or winter unnoticed. [CB]

## 1122. **REDSTART**

*Phoenicurus phoenicurus*

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

As usual there were few records from the spring period, the first being of a male at Birling Gap on 25 Mar. This compares with a current earliest date of 13 Mar and a 10-year average of 25 Mar. A further eight records were received from mainly the Beachy Head area, and the final spring coastal bird was a female at Birling Gap on 26 Apr. Nine birds is a poor year, particularly after the 67 reported in 2002.

The first potentially breeding male was found at Ambersham and Heyshott Common on 24 Apr and the first record from Ashdown Forest was for 30 Apr. Regular reports from the Forest during May until the end of June indicated a total potential breeding population of 34 pairs with, typically, Pippingford Park holding the largest number at 19 (also 19 in 2001/02). The heaths of the northwest produced a total of six potential territorial birds: Ambersham & Heyshott Commons two, Stanley Common two, Weavers Down one and Blackdown one. Worthlodge Forest was the site of a singing male on 2 May. There were no records from the former population in the far northeast of the county on the Kent border. There appears to be a retreat to the west of England as Hampshire reported a dramatic decline (2002) from the heaths close to our own in their northeast corner, whereas Devon and Cornwall in their 2002 Reports noted an equally dramatic increase. The Sussex total was 41 potential pairs (39 in 2002 and 42 in 2001). *The Population Status of Birds in the UK 2002-2007* has amber listed the species as being of “unfavourable conservation status, concentrated in Europe”.

The first post-breeding dispersal report from the coast was one at Beachy Head on 9 Aug followed by almost daily sightings until the end of September with a sharp fall thereafter. The last one was seen at Seaford Head on 30 Oct (10-year average 25 Oct). One hundred and thirty records referred to *ca.*235 birds (well down on the county total of 401 in 2002) of which 134 were in East Sussex and 101 in the West. There were 77 birds reported in August, 155 in September and eight in October. The Beachy Head area as usual held the most with peak counts of eight on 6 Sep and 11 on 7 Sep. Pagham Hbr produced the majority in the west of the county and there was a highest day count of five on 9 Sep, Cissbury Ring had the highest day count of six on 7 Sep and Pulborough Brooks RSPB reported 13 birds with a maximum count of five at, appropriately, Redstart Corner on 7 Sept. Peak day totals for the entire county were 21 on 6 Sep, 28 on 7 Sep and ten on 9 Sep. [AP]

## 1137. WHINCHAT

*Saxicola rubetra*

### **Rare summer visitor and fairly common passage migrant.**

One very early bird was seen at Beachy Head on 2 Mar (AJH). The next bird was not found until 14 Apr at Crowlink (near Eastdean) and there then followed a further ten-day interval until the third, on 24 Apr, which heralded the start of more regular passage. There were only 19 April records (*cf.* 26 in 2002) and only 13 in May (*cf.* 80+ in 2002, when there had been a fall on 3 May; 38 in 2001 and 26 in 2000). One was well inland at Compton on 26 Apr and six were on Heyshott Common on the 30<sup>th</sup>.

There were no breeding reports in 2003.

The first bird of the autumn was seen at Pagham Hbr on 20 July. The first migrant at Pett Level dropped in on 29 Jul and observers at that site reported daily arrivals, with a maximum of 15 on 24 Aug. There were five double-figure counts during August, but none in excess of 15: the total for the month was probably around 325 (*cf. ca.*250 in 2002). There was a scattering of birds around Ashdown Forest and at other inland locations, with high counts of six at Constantia Manor (Isfield) on the 12<sup>th</sup> and at Partridge Green on the 30<sup>th</sup>. There were sixteen double-figure counts in September with a maximum of 30 at Sheepcote Valley (Brighton) on the 5<sup>th</sup> and at Beachy Head the next day: the last was of 15 at Pulborough Brooks RSPB on the 23<sup>rd</sup>. The September total was around 625, very similar to that for 2002. The 190 recorded in the autumn at Beachy Head was a welcome increase on the 132 counted there in 2002. The dead thistles at Constantia Manor proved attractive to Whinchats throughout the month and, on the 21<sup>st</sup>, two were feeding with

Stonechats on Steep Down (Lancing). Records for October were even fewer than last year and six at Constantia Manor on the 7<sup>th</sup> was the only notable group.

The last bird to be seen at Beachy Head was on 4 Oct but at Pett Level the last was on the 11<sup>th</sup>. A bird at Thorney Deepes from 9 to 15 Oct may have been the same as that noted in the area on 25-26 Oct and on 4-5 Nov. A last date of 5 Nov is very near the average for the past decade. Perhaps more significant is the last date on which birds were seen in more than one location: that was 11 Oct, when birds were at Charleston Reedbed and at Pett Level. [CB]

## 1139. STONECHAT

*Saxicola torquatus*

**Fairly common resident and partial migrant. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern.**

The year started well, with 68 reports being received for January from some 45 localities. Several groups were found: eight at Thorney Island and six on Ambersham Common on the 3<sup>rd</sup>, six at Heyshott Common on the 22<sup>nd</sup> and, at Iping Common, three on the 3<sup>rd</sup>, 12 on the 19<sup>th</sup> and 13 on the 26<sup>th</sup>. Around 125 birds were probably involved (*cf.* 80+ in 2002). On 3 Jan, a winter census of Sefter Fm (Pagham) found a single bird, as in 2002. At Lee Fm (Patching), a pair was in a field of *brassica* grazed by sheep on the 8<sup>th</sup>; while at No Man's Land (Findon), a pair used the boundary of a set-aside field on the 18<sup>th</sup>.

Seventy-two reports were received for February. A massive total of 25 was on Heyshott Common on the 24<sup>th</sup>, while Iping Common could only muster five or six mid-month and into March. In March, there were six at Castle Water (Rye Hbr) on the 5<sup>th</sup>, at Rodmell Brooks on the 16<sup>th</sup> and eight at Newhaven Tide Mills on the 15<sup>th</sup>. Several new sites held birds in February, both on the Downs (e.g. Chilgrove, Wepham, Burpham, Mount Caburn), and in the river valleys (e.g., Isfield, Stretham Manor, Henfield and Fittleworth Mill). There were certainly no more coastal birds than in previous years; one on shingle at Splash Point (Seaford) on the 24<sup>th</sup> may have been a migrant.

The first singing birds were reported from Millbrook (Ashdown Forest), on 4 Mar. On the 15<sup>th</sup>, there were three males singing on Thorney Island but only a single female in the vicinity. On the 17<sup>th</sup>, eight were singing around Millbrook and six around Wrens Warren (Ashdown Forest). Two pairs were disputing territory at Ashdown Res on the 20<sup>th</sup>, with a further four pairs nearby. Overall breeding numbers in Ashdown Forest were slightly down on the 113 pairs in 2002. Four pairs were nesting at Combe Haven on the 22<sup>nd</sup> with nine territorial males on Ambersham Common on the 26<sup>th</sup>. On the same day, there were three pairs and a male on the west side of Steep Hill (Lancing). Only at Iping Common in April and on Stedham Common at the end of May were unmated females reported, alongside five or six pairs at Iping and a single pair at Stedham. Heyshott Common held 12 pairs in April.

Counts of breeding pairs in defined areas of Heathland are shown on page 199. The first juveniles were seen at Newhaven Tide Mills on 9 May and on Ambersham Common the next day. On the 11<sup>th</sup>, a female had two juveniles out of the nest on Weavers Down (Liss), and a pair was feeding three young at Newhaven Tide Mills. By mid-May, the number of territories plotted around Millbrook had risen to 13.

There were surprisingly few breeding records from the coastal strip, though there were four pairs at Newhaven Tide Mills in mid April, ten pairs at Beachy Head on 1 Jun (with breeding success considered good) and a single pair at Selsey West Fields on 5 Jun. A pair

with one juvenile was at the Seven Sisters CP on 29 Jun and a pair with two juveniles at Ovingdean on 2 Jul.

The autumn started quietly. Most August records were of small family parties in breeding locations. Movement began around 9 Sep when eight were found in Sheepcote Valley (Brighton). Two had returned to Southease Brooks by the next day. Interestingly, inland sites soon provided similar evidence of movement: on 13 Sep there were singles at both Holmbush Tip (Faygate) and Partridge Green. On the 14<sup>th</sup>, two turned up at Three Corner Copse (Hove), and three were on the Railway Reserve (Lewes). The first autumn migrant at Pett Level was noted on 17 Sep. On the 20<sup>th</sup>, 21 were around Beachy Head and 12 were in Sheepcote Valley on the 23<sup>rd</sup>. There were 12 double-figure counts in October with 21 at Paghham Hbr on the 8<sup>th</sup> and the same number around Beachy Head on the 12<sup>th</sup>. November produced only two double-figure counts: ten birds on Iping Common on the 6<sup>th</sup> and on Thorney Island on the 11<sup>th</sup>. There were 40 records in all for November, amounting to *ca.*100 birds, and 33 for December, amounting to *ca.*110 birds (*cf.* *ca.*175 and *ca.*90 in 2002). Both in terms of wintering and breeding, this seems to have been an excellent year for Stonechats, consolidating their position in the county. [CB]

#### 1146. **WHEATEAR**

*Oenanthe oenanthe*

##### **Very scarce breeding summer visitor and common passage migrant.**

The first bird of the year was noted at Brooklands (Worthing) on 4 Mar, marginally later than the previous ten-year average arrival of 2 Mar. The next was on Goring Beach on the 6<sup>th</sup>. Subsequently, birds were reported on all but nine days until 13 May. The first downland record came from Ditchling Beacon on 15 Mar and one was on Ditchling Common on the same day. That was the only bird to be recorded north of the Downs in March; it was followed by three in April and a female on Iping Common on 7 May. There were only three double-figure counts during spring passage. Fourteen were at Selsey Bill on 20 Mar and the same number at Shoreham Beach on 30 Mar. The only double-figure count in April was of ten at Worthing on the 29<sup>th</sup>. Although passage was lengthy, it was often sparse. Some 205 birds in all were seen during March but only *ca.*90 in April. In 2002, birds had been few and far between from 2 to 14 Apr; in 2003, there was only one count in excess of five from 31 Mar through to 29 Apr.

Nest prospecting was noticed from early May: on the 3<sup>rd</sup> a rabbit hole was being investigated at Paghham Lagoon, while on the 9<sup>th</sup> there was an agitated male at Newhaven Tide Mills and another male entered a rabbit hole on Castle Hill (Woodingdean). The first brood of seven young fledged at Rye Hbr Beach Reserve on 25 May. Eight pairs nested at Rye Hbr 'with good success'. The only other confirmed breeding was reported from the Midrips (three families on 1 Jun) and the Seven Sisters CP (a pair with two newly fledged young around rabbit burrows on 29 Jun).

Autumn passage began at the end of July, with one at Climping Beach on the 27<sup>th</sup>. There were records for 27 days in August and for 29 in September. There were 14 double figure-counts in August and ten in September (*cf.* 14 in 2002 and 11 in 2001). The total logged at Beachy Head, between 2 Aug and the end of passage on 18 Oct, was 321 (*cf.* 474 between 3 Aug and 19 Oct in 2002). Another decline was registered at Brighton Wild Park, where observers reported only 33 birds between 4 Aug and 28 Sep.

Twelve of the August records came from north of the Downs (with three at Rudgwick on the 23<sup>rd</sup> perched on the Sussex-Surrey border fence!) and ten were received for September. These inland records included several from Ashdown Forest (which seems not to have been touched by spring passage) and the year's sole record from Bewl Water was

on 29 Aug. Twenty-one at Bo-peep (above Alciston) on 5 Sep was the peak inland count; 32 on the early date of 9 Aug was the peak at Beachy Head. At Ovingdean, the peak count of 25 came on 7 Sep while at Stump Bottom, Steyning, the peak of 21 came on 18 Sep, with the last record being eight on the 23<sup>rd</sup>. There were no days on which substantial numbers appeared simultaneously in several locations. Only 27 birds were recorded in October, a very marked decline from totals in excess of 100 in 2002 and 2001. The last bird was at Roedean on 31 Oct; the ten-year average for last dates up to 2002 was 15 Nov. This appeared to be a very poor autumn passage and a surprisingly early departure. [CB]

1149. **DESERT WHEATEAR**

*Oenanthe deserti*

**Very rare vagrant.**

A very smart male present on the beach at Climping on 9-10 Nov (PMAG, RG *et al*) has been accepted by BBRC. It was generally very approachable and photographs of it appeared in *Birding World* (16:450). One of these can be seen on the front cover of this Annual Report. It is the fifth county record and the first since 1997, making it one of the year's highlights for those who saw it. Records have been in April (in 1966) and between 28 Oct and 5 Dec. Previous records are shared between Selsey Bill and Beachy Head. [RJF]

1186. **RING OUZEL**

*Turdus torquatus*

**Passage migrant, scarce in spring, often fairly common but local in autumn. Red listed species of high conservation concern.**

A disappointing year with a total of only 99 birds contrasting with the 167 seen in 2002. The approximate monthly totals were as follows:

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
		4	11					4	79	2	

The first spring record was from Cold Coombes (near Lewes) on 22 Mar, which is an average first date. All the spring reports were of single birds, except for a pair at Sidlesham in mid April, and were mainly spread evenly across the south of the county. However, there was a single bird at Bewl Water on 1 Apr and a late bird at Ashdown Forest on 22 Apr was superseded only by one at the University of Sussex on the 28<sup>th</sup>.

Return migration started with a single at Whitbread Hollow (Beachy Head) on 6 Sep (an average date) followed by further singles at Beachy Head on the 8<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> and at Sheepcote Valley (Brighton) on the 20<sup>th</sup>. The main passage was in October with 58 birds reported in just eight days, from the 14<sup>th</sup> to the 21<sup>st</sup>. Most of the records were of single birds: 31 were reported from the Beachy Head area, 14 from Sheepcote Valley, eight from Cissbury Ring and three from the Pagham area. A bird reported at West Wood (Ashdown Forest) on 4 Oct was 10 km further north than any other during autumn. November singles were at Sheepcote Valley on the 7<sup>th</sup> and the last bird was seen at Newhaven Cliffs on the 11<sup>th</sup>, nearly a week earlier than the 10-year average. [JW]

1187. **BLACKBIRD***Turdus merula***Abundant breeding resident and winter visitor; perhaps a passage migrant.**

This species is inconsistently recorded, there being just five reports in August but 218 in May.

First winter counts included 51 birds at Darwell Res on 5 Jan and 48 on 2 Feb while 42 birds were found in the 95 ha census at Sefter Fm (Pagham) on 12 Jan, 35 in the 67 ha census at Marsh Fm (Yapton) on 7 Jan and 36 at the University of Sussex on 17 Feb. Old Idsworth (near Finchdean) and Pagham Spit hosted 30 each on 10 and 11 Jan respectively and 22 were observed at Sreat on 15 Mar.

While nest building was reported from Lewes on 10 Feb, the earliest breeding report was from Isfield on 7 Mar followed by one from Partridge Green on 4 Apr and another from Fairlight Cove on the 15<sup>th</sup>.

Counts of breeding birds in defined areas can be found on pages 196 - 199. The 116 pairs at Brighton Wild Park in May was the lowest in over ten years (PJW), there being 132 pairs there last year. The 36 territories at Rye Harbour SSSI indicated a recovery to 1998 levels following the decline to 15 territories in 2001. Other major breeding sites included Ashdown Forest which had reports of 143 territories through the summer. In May, there were 44 birds at Offham in the Arun Valley, 37 at Preston Park, 34 at the University of Sussex and 31 at Darwell Res (including 16 singing males). Overall, breeding numbers appear similar to last year; fewer than 500 territories were reported and there was a high rate of nest failure.

In the autumn 37 birds were seen at Whitehawk (Brighton) on 13 Oct and another 36 at Darwell Res on 16 Nov. The survey at Sefter Fm showed a return to 47 birds on 6 Dec and that at Marsh Fm to 32 on the 9<sup>th</sup> (RK). Other sites held less than 20 birds and the counts were barely half those for 2002, suggesting migration had returned to the rather low levels of the late 1990s.

Fifty-five birds were ringed at Shoreham Sanctuary between 11 May and 26 Oct, a further 31 birds by the Steyning Ringing Group and 18 at the Mumbles (Steyning) in about the same period. [JW]

1198. **FIELDFARE***Turdus pilaris***Common, occasionally very common, passage migrant and winter visitor. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern.**

The reported numbers in the first winter period were the highest since the corresponding period of 1996. A total of 13,650 was reported, compared with 25,000-30,000 birds in the latter year, but well above the average of 5,200 seen since then. The autumn total of 7,718 was also high though lower than 2002. The approximate monthly totals in three east-west bands of the county are shown below and show bias more to the east than usual.

Eastings	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr		Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
SU/SZ70-99	615	1894	439	131			75	1869	261
TQ/TV00-49	2254	3291	1963	433			1744	1842	219
TQ/TV50-99	702	387	1318	225		4	104	669	931

The year opened with flocks of 400 at Swains Fm (Littleworth) on 2 Jan and of 100 at Horse Eye Level (Pevensey) on the 4<sup>th</sup>. A dozen flocks of 200 or more were noted from

mid January with 390 at Sefter Fm (Pagham) on the 24<sup>th</sup> and 470 at Bewl Water on the 31<sup>st</sup> following strong north winds. Lewes Brooks hosted 800 on 2 Feb and a fortnight later there were 600 at Stapleash Fm (Chilgrove) for a few days. Two large flocks gathered in March: 650 were at Park Fm (Bodiam) on the 12<sup>th</sup> and 500 birds flew north at Warnham on the 27<sup>th</sup>.

One hundred and eighty birds were seen at Beddingham Hill on 16 Apr and, while most of the April birds were east of Brighton, the final bird left West Dean on the 29<sup>th</sup>, a week later than the 10-year average.

The first returning birds were four at Hellingly on 24 Sep, a week earlier than the 10-year average date and these were followed by singles at Whitbread Hollow (Beachy Head) and Cedar Fm (Hurst Green) on 4 and 6 Oct. Forty birds left southwest from Five Ways (Ashdown Forest) on the 12<sup>th</sup> and three birds appeared in Bognor Regis on the 13<sup>th</sup>. Large movements were signalled when 400 were sighted at Arundel WWT on 20 Oct and 800 at Sheepcote Valley (Brighton) the same day. The maximum recorded at Pagham Hbr was 140 birds over the North Fields on 5 Nov. Another 320 were recorded at Arundel WWT on 10 Nov followed by 1000 flying over Chilgrove on the 12<sup>th</sup> and a week later at least 500 flew in to Quell Fm (Greatham) at dusk. The last major count in November was of 300 birds at Pett Level on the 23<sup>rd</sup>.

There were 600 birds at Cedar Fm on 6 Dec and 125 at the Sidlesham Sewage Works on the 24<sup>th</sup>. The year ended with 330 birds at Bewl Water on the 31<sup>st</sup>. [JW]

## 1200. SONG THRUSH

*Turdus philomelos*

**Decreasing resident and partial migrant; common passage migrant and winter visitor. Red listed species of medium conservation concern.**

An encouraging winter led to average breeding and autumn counts. This once abundant species is seemingly still in deep trouble.

Cold weather in January brought small flocks mainly to the west side of the county, notably 24 to Sidlesham Sewage Works on the 7<sup>th</sup> and 18 to Bewl Water with Fieldfares on the 31<sup>st</sup>. Old Idsworth on the Hampshire border hosted 56 birds in early February which built up to 80 birds on 18 Mar alongside 60 Mistle Thrushes. Meanwhile, there were 27 birds at the University of Sussex on 17 Feb. A flock of eight birds flew east near Rowlands Castle on 17 Apr.

Singing was reported on 5 Jan at Warnham and nest building a day later in Ashdown Forest, but the first food carrying was not noted until 7 Mar at Isfield. Breeding was proven for 43 pairs and was probable for another 76. A further 100 birds were seen in suitable habitats. Counts of breeding birds in defined areas can be found on pages 196-199. In addition, there were 12 males singing at West Dean Woods, and ten at Chiseldown (west of Selhurst Park). At Brooklands (near Worthing) four nests fledged ten young but there were six failed nests, and it was worse in Three Corners Copse (Hove) where there was one successful nest of four young and seven failures (JCH).

Four night migrants were noted over Orr (Hastings) on 8 Oct at the start of a disappointing autumn movement, the highlights of which were flocks of 15 at Whitehawk (Brighton) on the 13<sup>th</sup> and 20 at Constantia Manor (Isfield) on the 27<sup>th</sup> followed by 70 at Arundel WWT on 10 Nov. These movements did not match those of the past two years and were a little below the 10-year average. A peak of ten birds was recorded at Beachy Head on 16 Nov.

Between May and October, 15 new birds were ringed at Cissbury Ring, at the Mumbles (Steyning) 11 were ringed and at Shoreham Sanctuary another nine plus one controlled. Three birds of the continental race were trapped at Whitbread Hollow in October and another one in November. [JW]

1201. **REDWING**

*Turdus iliacus*

**Common, occasionally very common, passage migrant and winter visitor. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern.**

The count in the first winter period of 7,000 was the highest since the same period in 1996 when over 10,000 birds were recorded and is well over the 10-year average of 2,800. The autumn influx was similar to 2002 but peaked earlier. The approximate monthly totals in three east to west bands of the county are shown below.

Eastings	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
SU/SZ70-99	979	337	205	16	Nil	41	74	46
TQ/TV00-49	1138	2208	1023	31	Nil	1823	449	19
TQ/TV50-99	136	23	772	96	2	332	50	303

There were moderate counts throughout the county in January: 200 at Coates Common on the 18<sup>th</sup> was the highest until 500 birds were reported around Burton Mill Pond on the last day. This heralded an influx including 300 birds at Pulborough Brooks RSPB on 1 Feb and 800 the next day at Lewes Brooks. Two weeks later on 15 Feb, 180 birds were reported from Amberley Wild Brooks and on the 25<sup>th</sup>, 200 were further west at Upper Norwood. Sightings of up to one hundred birds were still being reported in March but the only noteworthy ones were 300 at Earls Down (Dallington) on 10 Mar and 370 at Park Fm (Bodiam) two days later.

April records were spread widely and 81 birds were noted at Cedar Fm (Hurst Green) on the 15<sup>th</sup>. The last spring record was a singleton at Troutbeck (near Eridge) on the 17<sup>th</sup> exactly one week later than the 10-year average.

Single birds, were reported at Hassocks and at Hastings CP on 24 Sep, a week later than the average first date of autumn. Early October reports included birds along the entire south of the county with only a few northern sites. The first major flocks were of 350 seen at Five Ways (Ashdown Forest) on 12 Oct and 250 at Cedar Fm the next day. Over 1000 birds were recorded at Arundel WWT on 20 Oct but November was quieter, as was December apart from 300 birds at Cedar Fm on the 6<sup>th</sup>. [JW]

1202. **MISTLE THRUSH**

*Turdus viscivorus*

**Common resident and partial migrant. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern.**

Overall numbers were the highest for at least ten years but there was a paucity of breeding records. Six hundred and forty individual birds were reported of which 280 were seen in flocks of ten or more.

Winter reports were biased to the east of the county and mainly in groups of one to four birds. Seven pairs were seen at Stopham on 17 Feb and, exceptionally, 60 birds were seen, with even more Song Thrushes, during the week ending 18 Mar at Old Idsworth on the Hampshire border. A similar gathering took place in 2002 at Cricketing Bottom



(Southeast). In early May 12 birds were counted at Cissbury Ring and another six at Offham (Arun Valley) and at Preston Park (Brighton).

Confirmation of breeding at Warnham LNR was received but no details were provided. Twenty other territories were identified and another 160 birds were seen in suitable habitats. However, for the first time in 12 years, none bred in Brighton Wild Park, a site which traditionally supported up to 20 pairs (PJW). There were at least three pairs at Pulborough Brooks RSPB. No reports were submitted from some previously regular sites. However, the late summer flocks were bigger than any in the last ten years suggesting that overall breeding success was good and confirming a steady recovery from the slump in 1999 when numbers halved.

Thirty birds appeared at Constantia Manor (Isfield) on 26 June rising to 50 which split into three flocks a month later. There were 11 birds at Rye Hbr on 5 July, Coates Common had an influx of 43 on the 26<sup>th</sup> and Barpham Fm (Burpham) hosted 40 on 19 Aug. Smaller numbers were recorded at Thorney Island, where 12 on 24 Aug, fell to eight in early September, and there were 12 at both The Severals (Church Norton) on 16 Oct and at Hastings CP on the 25<sup>th</sup>. [JW]

## 1220. CETTI'S WARBLER

*Cettia cetti*

### **Very scarce resident, passage migrant and winter visitor.**

In January, eight were heard calling at Arundel WWT, there were five at Thorney Deeps, the same number at Combe Haven in East Sussex and three were noted at Rye Hbr on the 12<sup>th</sup>. Away from these favoured sites, there were reports of singles at Beeding Brooks on 10 Feb, Warnham LNR at the end of March-early April, East Head/Snowhill Marsh on 23 Mar and at least five different locations in Pagham Hbr.

Singing males were present during the breeding season at 15 sites. There were at least eight at Rye Hbr (and possibly more just outside the reserve) and six at Thorney Deeps which fledged 24-28 young. The polygynous nature of this species (*Bibby 1982*) was evident at Arundel WWT where six singing males had twice that number of females for company. Filsham LNR held two pairs, Pett Level four, Pagham Hbr/Selsey Peninsula 12, and single records were received from Chichester GP, Pulborough Brooks RSPB, Warnham LNR, Beddingham, below Newhaven Cliffs, Piddinghoe, Cuckmere Valley, Cooden, and the Royal Military Canal (Pett).

The first juveniles seen were four young with parents at Thorney Deeps on 5 Jun and the following day three young were noted at Filsham LNR. A month later two broods were still being fed by adults at Thorney.

Autumn and winter records of note were ten at Thorney Deeps on 17 Sep, 15 at Arundel WWT on 29 Sep, 20 Oct and 16 Dec, and a minimum of ten at Filsham LNR on 27 Oct.

This species was first recorded in the county in 1962, only the second record for Britain at that time, and there were no further reports until 1968. Breeding was only confirmed in 1975 (*Birds of Sussex*), but over the past five years there has been a steady increase in numbers and sites, with more individuals being noted away from the usual areas. [VB]

1236. **GRASSHOPPER WARBLER**

*Locustella naevia*

**Very scarce and declining summer visitor and fairly common passage migrant. Red listed species of high conservation concern.**

The first report of the year came from Pulborough Brooks RSPB on 4 Apr, but the next record was not until three weeks later when birds were first noted at West Dean Woods.

Sadly, there were fewer breeding season records than for the previous year, with just nine reeling males: two at Pett Level, a maximum of four pairs at Amberley Wildbrooks, only two at West Dean Woods (four in 2002) and one at Thorney Island. As in 2002, young birds were seen in Ashdown Forest with singles at Five Ways on 12 and 31 Jul and 25 Aug and, probably a different individual, at the Old Airstrip on the 27<sup>th</sup>.

Autumn passage at Pett Level was comparable with 2002: birds were trapped daily during August with a maximum of 27 on the 12<sup>th</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup>. Beachy Head Ringing Group noted a better passage than usual with 16 passing through. A single bird was at Ovingdean on 27 and 30 Aug, two were ringed at Charleston reedbed in early September and good views were had of one flushed from grass at Atherington on 6 Sep. During October, singles were recorded at Five Ways (Ashdown Forest) on the 1<sup>st</sup> and Beachy Head on the 4<sup>th</sup>. Nine were trapped at Pett Level where the last migrant of the year was seen on 18 Oct. [VB]

1242. **AQUATIC WARBLER**

*Acrocephalus paludicola*

**Very scarce autumn visitor to selected sites, rare elsewhere. Red listed species of high conservation concern. Considered vulnerable by IUCN.**

Five juveniles were trapped at Pett Level in August: on the 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup> (2) and 20<sup>th</sup> (RBRG) while an adult was seen at Combe Haven on 15 Sep (KMJ *et al*). Thirteen have been recorded since 2000 - a yearly average currently of only one third of what it was during the 1990s. Most records are in August and all have fallen between late July and early October. [RJF]

1243. **SEDGE WARBLER**

*Acrocephalus schoenobaenus*

**Fairly common summer visitor and abundant passage migrant.**

The first arrival was at Arundel WWT on 24 Mar, beating the previous county record by three days. The main influx started on 10 Apr and by the end of the month there were records of singing males from across the county with at least ten at Beddingham, 14 at Thorney Deeps, 16 at Filsham LNR, 20 at Rye Hbr and 30 at Arundel WWT.

The minimum number of breeding pairs reported was 288 with the population split roughly equally between East and West Sussex. There were 41 territories at Thorney Deeps, 46 at Arundel, 34 at Filsham LNR and 81 at Rye Hbr, but there was no report of numbers at Amberley where there were 28 pairs in 2002. This species is obviously under-recorded since the county population was estimated in *Birds of Sussex* at ca.840 pairs. An unusual record was of an individual singing loudly by the M23 at Copthorne on 26 May.

Monthly maxima trapped at Pett Level were 121 on 31 Jul, 409 on 9 Aug and 155 on 7 Sep. The best year since 1995 was reported at Beachy Head, with twice as many birds ringed than in 2002. Most birds had departed by the end of September, though 21 were

caught in October at Pett Level; the last individual of the year was at this site on 12 Oct. [VB]

1247. **PADDYFIELD WARBLER** *Acrocephalus agricola*

**Very rare vagrant.**

One trapped and photographed at Pett Level on 28 Sep (RBRG) has been accepted by BBRC and is the second county record. The first was also trapped at Pett Level on 13 and 18 Oct 1992. A viewable bird in the field would be appreciated by many. [RJF]

1250. **MARSH WARBLER** *Acrocephalus palustris*

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

A singing male was present at Hardham (near Pulborough) on 24 and 28 May (MPL, RJL), two pairs and a lone male were present at an undisclosed site from 25 May to early June and a juvenile was trapped at Pett Level on 17 Oct (RBRG). There are now four October records, of which three were trapped at Pett Level, including the county's latest on 25 Oct 1997. [RJF]

1251. **REED WARBLER** *Acrocephalus scirpaceus*

**Common summer visitor and very common passage migrant.**

Early arrivals were single birds at Pett Level on 7 Apr, at Rye Hbr on the 10<sup>th</sup> and Arundel WWT on the 14<sup>th</sup>. Six were heard singing at South Stoke on 16 Apr and there were at least ten at Glyne Gap Marsh on the 18<sup>th</sup>.

By the end of April suitable habitat held good numbers of singing males, and breeding records came from at least 40 sites. However, numbers reported were lower than the previous two years (2002 and 2001 figures respectively are given for comparison in brackets below where available). There were 50 (70, 120) territories at Arundel, 56 (74, 84) at Thorney Deeps, 53 at Aldingbourne Rife, 43 (51, 61) at Sefter Fm (Pagham) and 24 (30, nc) at Marsh Fm (Yapton). The population at Rye Hbr was probably around 200 pairs, with 120 pairs mapped.

Two ringing sites in East and West Sussex differed in their fortunes with this species in 2003. At Shoreham Sanctuary, the second highest annual total of 66 different individuals was handled, slightly lower than in 2002. Conversely, Beachy Head Ringing Group saw the lowest total ringed since 1997. During return passage monthly maxima trapped at Pett Level were 105 on 27 Jul, 165 on 9 Aug and 144 on 7 Sep.

The last individuals were seen at Pett Level on 18 Oct in the east of the county and at Arundel WWT and Shoreham Sanctuary on the following day in the west. [VB]

1256.01 SYKE'S WARBLER

*Hippolais rama*

**Very rare vagrant.**

**2002:** A first-winter bird at Whitbread Hollow (Beachy Head) on 31 Aug (DC, JFC, RJF *et al*) has been accepted by BBRC. It is the first county record and the first British record to be accepted without being trapped.

A photograph was published in the 2002 Report (*SxBR* 55:96) while a detailed account of the occurrence, with more photographs, can be found in *Birding World* 15:378-380. These excellent photographs taken by Les Bird were judged to be the winner of the Carl Zeiss Award 2004, a competition run by BBRC for the most instructional photograph of a British rarity assessed during the year (see *British Birds* 97:542-544 and in particular plates 310-313).

In autumn 2002, the BOURC's taxonomic subcommittee considered Sykes's Warbler to be a separate species from the very similar Booted Warbler *H. caligata*. There are four county records of Booted Warbler, all during 1993-96. One was in early June (at Beachy Head) and three in mid-September to early October (two trapped at Pett Level and one seen at Pagham Hbr). [RJF]

1259. ICTERINE WARBLER

*Hippolais icterina*

**Very scarce visitor.**

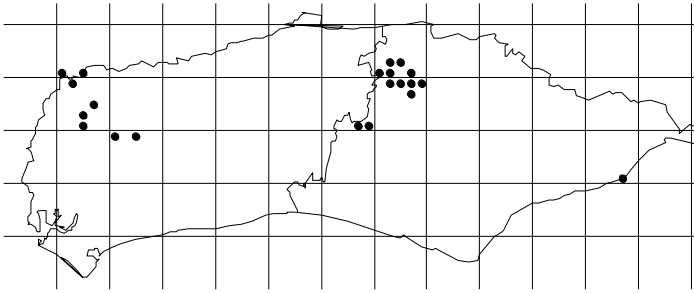
A juvenile was trapped, and photographed, at Pett Level on 30 Aug (RBRG). This is the first county record since 1999 and the 35<sup>th</sup> in total. Five of the 11 recorded since 1990 have been in August with the others in May (2), July and September (3). With most records relating to birds trapped, this remains one of the more sought after scarcities in the county. There were no county records of Melodious Warbler *H. polyglotta* in 2003, the first blank year since 1998. [RJF]

1262. DARTFORD WARBLER

*Sylvia undata*

**Fairly common but localised resident. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern.**

Eight birds were seen at Ambersham and Heyshott Common on 3 Jan. Other records during January and February were mainly from the western heaths, the highest counts being 13 at Iping Common on 26 Jan and 2 Mar, and 18 at Ambersham and Heyshott Commons on 24 Feb. During this period there were 16 records from Ashdown Forest, mostly of single birds with the exception of four at the Old Airstrip on 21 Feb. The only coastal record for the first winter period was from Thorney Deepes where a single bird, first seen on 22 Jan, remained until 16 Mar.



The map shows the location of all records during the breeding period and the northwest of the county and Ashdown Forest provided, as usual, the majority of the breeding records. *The Wealden Heaths Breeding Birds Survey* recorded a total of 66 pairs (51 in 2002) from the seven heaths, details of which are shown on page 199. This is the highest total since the survey commenced in 1998. In contrast, Ashdown Forest continued a downward trend with only 35-40 pairs reported (62 in 2002). This may be due to both the open nature of the heathland and its height above sea level (on average just over 200 m) rendering the habitat susceptible to the influence of bad weather. Two such periods occurred during the early winter period, one of nine and another of eleven days when there were daylong frosts. It was noted that the higher eastern side of the Forest suffered a greater decline in numbers than the lower western heaths (D King *pers comm*). It is also possible that careful scrutiny of the data provided from the Forest has led to a more accurate assessment of breeding numbers. However, these explanations cannot conceal a decline of the breeding population there, which is contrary to the trend in West Sussex and other counties in the west. Devon had reported a decline in numbers, but has noted a recent increase (*Devon Bird Report 2002*). The situation should be monitored carefully and possibly a specific survey undertaken to assess breeding numbers more accurately. Two other sites, away from the main centres, reported two or three pairs. The estimated county total for 2003 was 103-109 pairs (115 in 2002).

This year there was a noticeable increase in the number of records received in the autumn from coastal areas. Autumn always provides many more coastal sightings than spring due to the post breeding dispersal of mainly juveniles displaced from breeding grounds by renewed territorial activity after the autumn moult (*Migration Atlas 2002*). The first record was of two at Hastings CP on 25 Sep. East Sussex provided 16 reports from seven sites, the Beachy Head area being the most productive. West Sussex had 33 reports from only two areas: 27 from the Pagham Hbr area and six from Thorney Deepes. Most of the reports for these two locations probably refer to just one individual at each site, as there were very few counts of more than one. The number of birds reported reflects a definite increase compared with 2002 when only ten were noted. This year, allowing for possible duplication, there were three in September, 24 in October, eight in November and four in December, a conservative total of 39. The highest single count was of three at Newhaven Tide Mills on 9 Dec.

The breeding heaths continued to report birds until the end of the year. The largest single count was of ten at Ambersham and Heyshott Commons on 27 Nov. [AP]

1273. **BARRED WARBLER**

*Sylvia nisoria*

**Very scarce autumn visitor.**

A first-winter bird was trapped and photographed at Pett Level on 11 Oct (RBRG). This is the 19<sup>th</sup> record since 1990, eight of which have been in October. The county total moves on to 51 with all records falling between 17 Aug and 31 Oct. September is generally the best month, accounting for 33 records. [RJF]

1274. **LESSER WHITETHROAT**

*Sylvia curruca*

**Common summer visitor and passage migrant.**

The overwintering individual in Worthing continued to feed in KCH's garden until 14 Apr (*Sussex Bird Report* 55: 205-206) and the first returning migrant appeared at Pulborough Brooks RSPB on the 5<sup>th</sup>, only one day later than the county record. It was not until the 19<sup>th</sup> that there was a further report of one, at Sheepcote Valley (Brighton).

Numbers appeared slightly lower than in the previous year, with three pairs at Cissbury and 11 at Thorney Island, both one less than in 2002. The maximum at Pulborough Brooks RSPB was five pairs, half the 2002 total, although six pairs at Rye Hbr was an increase of one. A pair was feeding young at Church Norton on 11 Jun, and on 20 Aug one was seen with a Common Whitethroat and Spotted Flycatcher at Wolstenbury Hill. Counts of breeding birds in other defined areas can be found on pages 196 - 199.

Steady numbers passed through Beachy Head on return migration, with daily totals of approximately 20 in the last week of August. At Hill Barn GC (Findon) ten were counted in 30 min on 2 Sep. Only a few birds lingered until the following month: the final West Sussex bird was on 1 Oct at Arundel WWT and in the east the last sightings were at Scobells Fm (Barcombe) and Pett Level on the 4<sup>th</sup>. [VB]

1275. **WHITETHROAT**

*Sylvia communis*

**Very common summer visitor and passage migrant.**

As in 2002, the first West Sussex arrival was relatively early with a single bird at Pulborough Brooks RSPB on 27 Mar. The next sightings were at Wilbees Fm (Arlington) and Isfield on 3 Apr followed by daily reports from the 14<sup>th</sup>.

This species was widely recorded during the breeding season. There were seven singing males at Newhaven Tide Mills, eight at Tegdown Hill (near Brighton), up to 22 at Pulborough Brooks, and *ca.*32 on Ashdown Forest, all similar numbers to the previous year. However, four pairs in 6.6 ha at Cissbury was only half the 2002 total. Counts of breeding birds in other defined areas can be found on pages 196 - 199.

After an excellent return passage in 2002, numbers passing through Beachy Head in the autumn of 2003 were disappointing, with the maximum daily count there being only 65 on 19 Aug compared with up to 250 on 22 Aug 2002. There were 50 at Whitbread Hollow on 13 Sep and a minimum of 30 the next day at nearby Shooters Bottom. These figures suggest that breeding success was not good this year.

Most birds had departed by mid September. There were just seven October records, all from near the coast, and the final report was of two at Lancing Clump on 10 Oct. [VB]

1276. **GARDEN WARBLER**

*Sylvia borin*

**Very common summer visitor and passage migrant.**

An individual at Pulborough Brooks RSPB on 30 Mar was the earliest county record, beating the previous (2001) date by two days. The next reports were of one at Dean Lane End (near Rowlands Castle) on 14 Apr and another singing at Thorney Deeps on the 15<sup>th</sup>. By the end of April records had been received from 20 different sites.

Two pairs bred at Warnham LNR, three at Pulborough Brooks, three at Pendean Sandpit and two in 6.6 ha at Cissbury. Breeding records came from 41 different sites with ten singing males on Ashdown Forest, numbers similar to the previous year. Counts of breeding birds in defined areas can be found on pages 196 - 199.

However, as with Whitethroat, lower numbers were seen or trapped for ringing on passage. The highest daily total at Beachy Head was 15 on 24 Aug and the maximum daily catch at Pett Level was 16 on 1 Sep.

The last individual at Beachy Head was noted on 25 Sep, and the final sightings were on 3 Oct when two were at Pett Level and one at Newhaven Tide Mills. [VB]

1277. **BLACKCAP**

*Sylvia atricapilla*

**Very common summer visitor and passage migrant; small numbers winter.**

Wintering records from January to early March were slightly higher than in 2002 with at least 47 individuals at 31 different locations. On 19 Jan one was feeding with a wood mouse on peanut scraps on the ground in Wisborough Green. A female which was using nut and seed feeders in a Worthing garden on the 26<sup>th</sup> might have been the same individual seen displaying similar feeding behaviour there in February 2002. On 23 Feb five males and one female were feeding on birdseed in a garden in Durrington.

The first singing male was heard in Hollingbury Woods on 4 Mar, and returning migrants swelled the numbers from mid to late March, with one heard singing at Southerham Fm (Lewes) on the 16<sup>th</sup> and at Rope Walk (Littlehampton) on the 21<sup>st</sup>.

Breeding season records of this most common of our *Sylvia* warblers were widespread. There were 18 pairs between Arundel and South Stoke, and five at Amberley Wildbrooks. Ten pairs on Thorney Island and four at Marsh Fm (Yapton) were lower figures than in 2002. Counts of breeding birds in other defined areas can be found on pages 196 - 199. However, unlike Garden Warbler and Whitethroat, ringing totals were good. One hundred and forty-one different birds were trapped at Shoreham Sanctuary, the highest ever annual total for this species in over 50 years of ringing at the site, and 964 were ringed at Beachy Head, the best figures since 1998 and the third highest since 1980. The maximum daily catch at Pett Level in September was 284 on the 13<sup>th</sup>.

Numbers noted on passage at Beachy Head were also high with 250 on 20 Sep, 500 on the 21<sup>st</sup>, 250 on the 27<sup>th</sup>, 200 on 4 Oct and 250 on the 11<sup>th</sup>. Final departures were later this year with the last migrants at Beachy Head being five seen on 16 Nov. There were six at Pett Level on the 25<sup>th</sup> and a single individual there on the last day of the month.

Reports of wintering birds from November and December were mostly from gardens, with a minimum of 18 individuals at 14 sites. Two males were feeding on *cotoneasters* at Fishbourne for two weeks to 3 Dec and one individual was seen at Pagham Hbr Information Centre on the 16<sup>th</sup>. [VB]

1298. **PALLAS'S LEAF WARBLER**

*Phylloscopus proregulus*

**Very scarce visitor, mostly in late autumn.**

Four were recorded at Beachy Head in the autumn; at Horseshoe Plantation on 22-23 Oct (JFC *et al*); Hodcombe on the 28<sup>th</sup> (MEC, RHC *et al*) and at Horseshoe Plantation on the 29<sup>th</sup> (NB) and 7-9 Nov (JFC *et al*). There were also up to three at Sheepcote Valley (Brighton) with singles on 31 Oct, 4-5 and another, presumed different, on 5 Nov (IJW *et al*).

Horseshoe Plantation, where ten have been recorded since 1996, offers the best opportunity in the county of seeing this exciting, if no longer rare, species. The last individual, being present during a weekend and at the same time as a Hume's Leaf Warbler (see later listing), performed for many admirers. 2003 represents a return to form after three lean years (when only three were seen). At least 37 were recorded during the 1990s (including nine in 1996), eleven during the 1980s, seven during the 1970s and three in 1968. Most records are from mid October to mid/late November. [RJF]

1300. **YELLOW-BROWED WARBLER**

*Phylloscopus inornatus*

**Very scarce visitor, mostly in late autumn.**

Juveniles were trapped at Pett Level on 8 and 14 Oct (RBRG) while singles were found in Horseshoe Plantation (Beachy Head) on 18<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> (RJF *et al*), Combe Haven on the 21<sup>st</sup> (KMJ), Atherington on the 23<sup>rd</sup> (OM *et al*), Horseshoe Plantation on the 24<sup>th</sup>-25<sup>th</sup> (JFC *et al*), Sheepcote Valley (Brighton) on 8 Nov (IJW) and Ivy Lake (Chichester GP) from 5 Dec into 2004 (DIS *et al*). This is the best showing since 1997 when nine were recorded, the best ever year for the species. This species continues to match the previous one almost exactly with a return to form after three lean years when only three were recorded (c.f. 37 recorded in the 1990s - all during 26 Sep to 29 Nov). There are only two previous winter records for this species, both in 1975, although both were considered to show some characteristics of the next species, something this winter individual did not! [RJF]

1300.1 **HUME'S LEAF WARBLER**

*Phylloscopus humei*

**Very rare vagrant.**

One was seen, and heard, in Horseshoe Plantation (Beachy Head) from 6 to 10 Nov (JFC *et al*). It has been accepted by BBRC and its occurrence over a weekend meant it attracted significant interest from within and outside the county. It is the fourth county record and the first to be seen by more than a handful of observers since 1997. The previous records were in November (2) and December, although this is the earliest by a week. Horseshoe Plantation hosted the county's, and Britain's, first in 1966. [RJF]

1301. **RADDE'S WARBLER**

*Phylloscopus schwarzi*

**Very rare vagrant**

One was trapped at Pett Level on 13 Oct (RBRG) and has been accepted by BBRC. It is the tenth county record and the first since 2000. It is the third to be trapped at this site, following records in 1992 and 1995, with the Beachy Head area accounting for two records and singles at Selsey Bill, Church Norton, Worthing and Combe Haven. All



records fall between 30 Sep and 3 Nov. The superficially similar Dusky Warbler *P. fuscatus* has been recorded in the county just three times, the most recent as long ago as 1992, despite the number of British records of the two species being very similar. [RJF]

1308. **WOOD WARBLER**

*Phylloscopus sibilatrix*

**Very scarce summer resident and passage migrant. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern.**

After an excellent number of records in 2002 (40, relating to 34 individuals) this year was rather disappointing, with 29 records referring to approximately 20 individuals or pairs. Sussex is on the eastern edge of this species' breeding range, the nearest substantial population being to the west in the New Forest. The strongholds remain Devon, Wales and central-western Scotland with smaller populations in the Welsh borders, Lake District and New Forest.

The first bird of the spring period was at Stanmer Great Wood on 15 Apr. *Birds of Sussex* notes that, between 1965 and 1994 the earliest recorded arrival date was 7 Apr, with an average of 22 Apr. The only other spring migration records were three records of singles at Brighton Wild Park on 17 Apr, 26 Apr and 4 May.

Trilling birds were reported from the traditional, but declining, population situated on the sandstone ridges in the northwest, on the Surrey/Sussex/Hants borders. Two singing males were reported from Blackdown, three males were at Linchmere & Stanley Commons and a single returned to Bexley Hill (near Lodsworth) where an individual was heard in 2001. After holding four territories in 2002 there was only one definite record from Ashdown Forest, with a possible second bird holding territory. Accordingly, the estimated number of territories for the county was between seven and ten. Albeit tenuously, Sussex holds onto its small breeding population. Despite there being apparently suitable habitat, there are no signs of expansion even in the west of the county. The latest results from the BTO Breeding Bird Survey highlight a decline nationally and show that numbers have fallen by 58% between 1994 and 2002.

A total of ten individuals from coastal sites were noted in the autumn period, ranging from Rye in the east to Pagham in the west. The first record was of a bird trapped and ringed at Pett Level on 1 Aug and subsequently three others were controlled on 15 and 17 Aug and 6 Sep, the latter being the last reported bird of the year. [AP]

1311. **CHIFFCHAFF**

*Phylloscopus collybita*

**Very common summer visitor and passage migrant; small numbers winter**

The first two months of the year brought reports from 25 sites, comprising at least 61 wintering birds. There were ten in the vicinity of Arundel WWT on 8 Jan, eight feeding around filter beds at Hermitage SF on the 9<sup>th</sup> and 12 at Coldwaltham SF on the 31<sup>st</sup>. On 7 Feb one was on a window box in Horsham, stirring up the compost.

The first singing males were three heard at Thorney Deeps on 23 Feb. Probably the first spring migrant arrived on 1 Mar at Combe Haven but most did not return until mid March. Ten were heard at Combe Haven by 10 Mar, the same number at Etchingham on the 12<sup>th</sup>, seven at Pulborough Brooks RSPB on the 17<sup>th</sup>, ten at Stansted Forest on the 19<sup>th</sup> and 12 at Ditchling Common in the early evening the same day. On 28 Mar 14 were singing at Thorney Deeps.

During the breeding season there were eight territories at Scobells Fm (Barcombe), ten at Goldballs Plantation (Heyshott) and at least 39 on Ashdown Forest. A pair was seen feeding young in a Storrington garden on 7 Jul. Counts of breeding birds in other defined areas can be found on pages 196 - 199.

Return passage was described as average at Beachy Head where 150 were noted on 21 Sep. Late autumn monthly maxima at Pett Level were 186 on 20 Sep and 123 on 8 Oct. Good numbers were reported at Pagham Hbr Information Centre and Brooklands (Worthing) this autumn and there was a minimum mid-morning count of 40 at the first site on 28 Sep and 80 at the latter on 7 Oct. Numbers dwindled towards the end of October, with 20 at Arundel WWT on the 20<sup>th</sup> being the last count in double figures.

Wintering birds were reported from 15 sites representing over 50 birds. Four were at Shoreham Sanctuary on 30 Nov feeding mainly in weeping willow and osier, five at Pagham Lagoon on 2 Dec, four at Hermitage SF and eight together at Ivy Lake (Chichester GP) on the 7<sup>th</sup>. Six wintered at Combe Haven, four at Coldwaltham SF and three at the Stanley Turner Sports Ground in Lewes. [VB]

## EASTERN/SIBERIAN CHIFFCHAFF

*P. c. abietinus/tristis*

Two individuals showing characteristics of one of the currently recognised 'eastern' races (*abietinus/tristis*) were recorded during late autumn/early winter. One was seen, and heard calling, at Filsham during 27 Nov-3 Dec (KMJ *et al*) and one was present at Coldwaltham SF from 13 Dec into 2004 (GB, DIS *et al*). A second individual at Filsham on 1 Dec (KMJ) showed similar plumage tones but, somewhat to the surprise of the observer, was heard to give a fairly typical *collybita* call and was thus most likely to be *abietinus*. The original Filsham bird was frequently heard calling, a "sad piping *Tsoo Tsoo*.", but the publication of the Association of European Records and Rarities Committee (AERC) taxonomic report for 2003 (see [www.aerc.be/aerc\\_tac.htm](http://www.aerc.be/aerc_tac.htm)) throws doubt over how diagnostic this call, and the apparently distinctive song, of *tristis* is. A recent (2002) study of vocalisations of birds from well within the eastern part of the range of *abietinus* leads them to conclude "that it is not clear whether '*tristis* call' is really confined to birds which sing like *tristis* and vice versa." Until the situation is clarified, and research is ongoing, the prudent course would be to reassign all records previously published in SxBRs as *tristis* or 'showing characteristics of' *tristis*. For now they should be referred to "as showing characteristics of one of the currently recognised 'eastern' races *abietinus* or *tristis*". [DC/RJF]

## 1312. WILLOW WARBLER

*Phylloscopus trochilus*

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

The first bird of the year was at Pulborough Brooks RSPB on 13 Mar (an average date) and the first East Sussex record was at Constantia Manor (Isfield) on the 19<sup>th</sup>. More arrived from 27 Mar onwards. The first reported songs of the year were heard at Bewl Water on the 28<sup>th</sup> and at Red House Common (Chailey) the same day. A male was singing on cliffs behind the Asda store in Brighton on the 30<sup>th</sup>.

Red House Common held ten singing males on 5 Apr and the estimate of breeding pairs on Ambersham and Heyshott Commons was nine. Detailed records from Ashdown Forest suggested a population there of 90-100 pairs. Counts of breeding birds in other

defined areas can be found on pages 196 - 199. An individual with an unusual song, that included elements from Chiffchaff song, was heard at Nep Town (Henfield) on 23 and 30 Apr. This is only 7 km due north of Upper Beeding Cement Works, where similar aberrant song was noted in both 2001 and 2002.

On return passage monthly maxima trapped at Pett Level were 55 on 30 Jul, 60 on 3 Aug and 13 on 2 Sep, while at Beachy Head numbers were even lower than the previous year, with 60 on 8 Aug, 43 on the 9<sup>th</sup> and 75 on the 10<sup>th</sup>. The last was the highest total there for the year and included four birds of the northern race *acredula*. *Birds of Sussex* noted that 1000 were counted at this site on 10 Aug 1977 and 7 Aug 1985 and, while these were exceptional figures, they highlight the dramatic decline in numbers of this species in the county.

Final sightings of the year were one on 29 Sep at Beachy Head, two on 14 Oct at Pett Level, one at Church Norton on the 18<sup>th</sup> and a very late individual in Sheepcote Valley (Brighton) on the 28<sup>th</sup>. [VB]

### 1314. **GOLDCREST**

*Regulus regulus*

**Very common breeding resident, common passage migrant and winter visitor. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern.**

A total of 350 records was received from 132 locations across the county (84 of the sites in the breeding season). There were counts in January of ten at Pulborough Brooks RSPB on the 3<sup>rd</sup>, 16 at Darwell Res on the 5<sup>th</sup>, 30 at Arundel WWT on the 13<sup>th</sup> and ten at both Tunstall Fm (Robertsbridge) on the 23<sup>rd</sup> and at Splaynes Green (Fletching) on the 28<sup>th</sup>. February records included counts of ten at Pulborough Brooks on the 7<sup>th</sup>, Darwell Res on the 16<sup>th</sup> and Powdermill Wood on the 19<sup>th</sup>. The only double figure count in March was of 20 singing at Arundel WWT on the 10<sup>th</sup>.

Counts of breeding birds in defined areas can be found on pages 196 - 199. In addition to these records there were 13 pairs at Wiggonholt Common, and a survey undertaken in 49 ha of mainly conifer plantation at Heyshott found 17 territorial males.

The autumn coastal passage started with 20 at Church Norton on 27 Sep. October maxima were 18 at Brighton Wild Park on the 3<sup>rd</sup>, 25 at Church Norton on the 16<sup>th</sup>, 40 at Beachy Head on the 24<sup>th</sup> and 20 at Sheepcote Valley (Brighton) on a number of days. Passage continued into the first week of November with 20 or more individuals recorded at four coastal sites. The largest inland count to the year-end was of six at Warnham LNR on 30 Nov. Eleven individuals were trapped and ringed at Shoreham Sanctuary, three at Weir Wood Reservoir but only 16 at Cissbury Ring (39 in 2001) where the reduction in late autumn ringing sessions was thought to be to blame. [DG]

### 1315. **FIRECREST**

*Regulus ignicapilla*

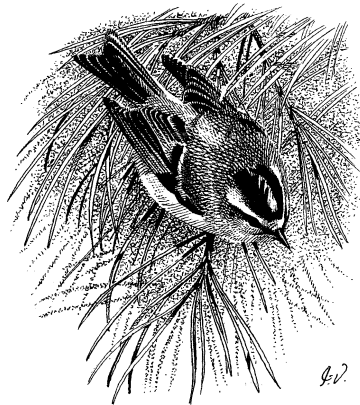
**Scarce breeder, passage migrant and winter visitor. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern.**

The total reported in the late winter and spring (64) was similar to the average for the previous ten years but the autumn and winter total (184) was well above the corresponding average. The approximate monthly totals were as follows:

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
9	7	20	21	7	5	-	4	15	74	59	32

In January there were three birds around Swanbourne Lake (Arundel) and single birds wintered at Rye Hbr and in St Anne’s Well Gardens (Hove). The corpse of one bird was extracted from the front grill of a car in Haywards Heath. In February two birds were seen at Arundel whilst singles were at Church Norton, Littlehampton and Pulborough Brooks RSPB. The total in March included two at Arundel, Bury and Sheepcote Valley (Brighton) and 14 singles including a migrant at Splash Point (Seaford) on the 20<sup>th</sup>. Passage continued during April with four at Beachy Head, two at Sheepcote Valley and one at Coombe Haven. A male took up a 3-month residence in Broadbridge Heath from the 13<sup>th</sup>.

All reports of singing or displaying males came from West Dean Woods (minimum 23) apart from the male at Broadbridge Heath and one at Horseshoe Plantation (Beachy Head) that was in song for two weeks during May.



The first records of the autumn were of one at Sompting on 11 Sep and another at Newhaven Fort on the 13<sup>th</sup>. The approximate totals recorded at the main sites during the autumn and early winter were as follows:

	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>Pagham Hbr</b>	1	11	23	6
<b>Beachy Head</b>	3	23	10	0
<b>Rye Hbr</b>	0	4	2	1
<b>Other Sites</b>	11	36	24	25

The 11 at ‘other sites’ in September included singles at Arundel WWT, Ashdown Forest and Rusper.

During October there was a small peak in passage with maximum counts of five at Church Norton on the 18<sup>th</sup>, four at Beachy Head on the 19<sup>th</sup>, 22<sup>nd</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> and four at Sheepcote Valley on the 23<sup>rd</sup> where a total of 16 was recorded during the month. In November, birds were recorded on every day at Sheepcote Valley with a peak count of ten on the 11<sup>th</sup> and there were ten at Church Norton on the 13<sup>th</sup>.

Wintering birds were recorded throughout the county with up to three at Arundel WWT and West Wittering and two were seen in a garden in central Hove. The last record of the year was of a single bird returning to St Anne’s Well Gardens (Hove) on 30 Dec. [DG]

1335. **SPOTTED FLYCATCHER***Muscicapa striata*

**Scarce summer visitor and fairly common passage migrant. Red listed species of high conservation concern.**

The first spring arrival was a single on 29 Apr (six days later than the 10-year average) at Church Norton followed the next day by one at Shoreham Sanctuary, the first spring record there for several years. The next records were on 2 May with three at Church Norton and two at Saddlescombe. Widespread daily records of ones or twos then followed until the 15<sup>th</sup> when 12 were present around Church Norton, and passage continued until the end of the month.

Probable breeding was reported from 28 sites but was only confirmed at nine of these, representing a further unwelcome reduction on the previous years' records. Two pairs were successful at Warnham LNR with one pair fledging three young. Pairs at Heyshott Down and Kings Standing (Ashdown Forest) also fledged three young but elsewhere all records were of only one or two. Counts of breeding birds in defined areas can be found on pages 196 - 199.

Post breeding groups began to appear at the beginning of August with five at Church Norton on the 7<sup>th</sup>, three at Beachy Head on the 9<sup>th</sup> with eight there on the 12<sup>th</sup>. Ten at Barpham Fm (Burpham) on the 19<sup>th</sup> marked the beginning of more concerted passage with 11 at Cissbury Ring on the 20<sup>th</sup>, eight at Beachy Head on the 23<sup>rd</sup> and 30 at Chanctonbury Ring on the 24<sup>th</sup>. Double figure counts of up to 15 were received from Church Norton, Pulborough Brooks RSPB and Findon to the month's end.

During September there were ten at Findon Valley on the 2<sup>nd</sup>, 12 at Beachy Head on the 3<sup>rd</sup>, 30 at Pulborough Brooks on the 4<sup>th</sup>, 15 at Sheepcote Valley (Brighton) on the 5<sup>th</sup> and 13 at Amberley Mount on the 6<sup>th</sup> when 25 were present around Church Norton. Passage continued with small groups of up to eight birds seen on the coast and Downs until the end of the month. The only October records were of singles at Ovingdean on the 2<sup>nd</sup>, Beachy Head on the 4<sup>th</sup> and the final bird of the year at Pulborough Brooks on the 14<sup>th</sup>, an average last departure date. [DG]

1343. **RED-BREASTED FLYCATCHER***Ficedula parva*

**Rare vagrant.**

One was seen in Horseshoe Plantation (Beachy Head) on 16 Nov (GWG, SHL *et al*). It is the latest county record, all others falling between 4 Sept and 9 Nov with one in April (in 1948). Twenty-nine have been recorded in the county but this is only the ninth since 1990. Ten of the last 11 have been at Beachy Head. Observers are asked to pay particular attention to this species, especially in late autumn, as there is a possibility that the recently split Taiga Flycatcher *F. albicilla* might occur (see *Birding World* 12:460-468). [RJF]

1349. **PIED FLYCATCHER***Ficedula hypoleuca*

**Scarce passage migrant, more numerous in autumn than spring. Has bred.**

The approximate monthly totals were as follows:

Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep
5	2	-	-	94	30

Although the spring passage was very light, autumn brought the heaviest passage in recent years with at least 124 birds, although the Beachy Head Ringing Group considered they had had a poor autumn.

The first spring arrival was at Pulborough Brooks RSPB on 8 Apr (an average date). The next was not until 21 Apr with a female at Belle Tout (Beachy Head) followed by singles at Ovingdean on the 26<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> and Pulborough Brooks on the 27<sup>th</sup>. The only May records were of a male at Lavington Common on the 6<sup>th</sup> and another single at Church Norton on the 11<sup>th</sup>.

Autumn passage commenced with one trapped at Charleston Reedbed on 2 Aug and a single bird at Worthing the next day. Single birds were recorded at Plumpton and Rye Hbr on the 4<sup>th</sup> and then two at Ovingdean on the 6<sup>th</sup>, increasing to six there on the 8<sup>th</sup> when there were also three at Beachy Head. Birds were then recorded daily to the end of the month with 23 being recorded during August at Beachy Head and 20 at Pagham Hbr, with five at Church Norton on the 26<sup>th</sup>. Many birds were recorded away from the coast with three at Ashdown Res on the 21<sup>st</sup>, five at Wolstonbury Hill (Pyecombe) on the 22<sup>nd</sup> and ones and twos recorded on the Downs around Chanctonbury, Cissbury and to the north of Brighton. Individuals were also seen on the Sussex Heaths at Stedham Common on the 15<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup>, Lords Piece (Coates) on the 27<sup>th</sup> and Wiggonholt Common on 9 Sep.

During the first ten days of September ones and twos continued to be widely recorded on the coast and the Downs. Numbers then dropped rapidly with the last reports of singles at Church Norton on the 19<sup>th</sup> and at Ovingdean on the 19<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup>, which is 11 days earlier than the average last departure date. [DG]

1364. **BEARDED TIT**

*Panurus biarmicus*

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

The approximate totals recorded outside the breeding season were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>Thorney Deeps</b>	18	6	10	40	40	50	12	6
<b>Piddinghoe Pond</b>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	5
<b>Filsham LNR</b>	1	-	8	-	2	2	2	2
<b>Pett Level</b>	-	-	-	-	1	5	12	-
<b>Rye Hbr</b>	-	-	-	-	-	8	6	10

Breeding was confirmed only at Thorney Deeps where three pairs fledged 34 young. Elsewhere, there were three pairs at Filsham on 12 May while a pair at Glyne Gap Marsh throughout April probably bred. There were no reports of breeding at Pett level where at least four broods were raised in 2002.

‘High flying’ of up to 22 birds was noted at Thorney Deeps on seven dates in September and October. A flock of 20 flew west after ‘high flying’ at Thorney Deeps on 11 Oct. [PJ]

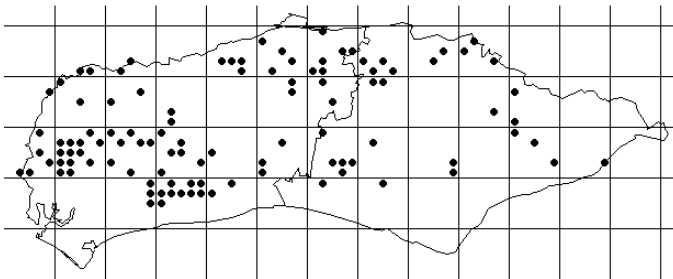
1437. **LONG-TAILED TIT***Aegithalos caudatus***Very common resident.**

The numbers reported in the first winter period were similar to those in 2002 with maximum counts of 30 at Darwell Res on 5 Jan, 20 at both Fletching on 28 Jan and Powdermill Res on 12 Feb, 24 at Arundel WWT on 18 Feb and 21 at Offham in the Arun Valley on 23 Mar. The winter census at Sefter Fm (Pagham) produced counts of eight in January and nine in February.

Counts of breeding pairs in defined areas are shown on pages 196 - 199. A post-breeding flock of 20 was noted at Lewes Race Course on 31 May but there were no further counts of this magnitude until mid October. Of ten counts of 20 or more up until the end of the year, the largest were of 23 at High Salvington (Worthing) on 14 Oct and Beachy Head on 26 Oct and 30 at Isfield on 14 Dec. Fifteen were recorded during the winter census at Sefter Fm in November and 20 in December.

At Shoreham Sanctuary 37 birds (36 new) were ringed in 27 sessions between 11 May and 26 Oct, compared with 31 in 2002 and 46 in 2001, while at Cissbury 28 new birds were ringed between 3 May and 11 Oct.

Birds were noted on peanut feeders at Isfield (2), Thorney Deepes (2), Warnham and Upper Beeding (1), all between January and April. [PJ]

1440. **MARSH TIT***Parus palustris***Fairly common resident. Red listed species of high conservation concern.**

The map shows the 103 tetrads in which the species was reported in 2003. Once again, most of the records were for the western Downs and adjacent wooded areas to the north, in the Horsham and Crawley area, on Ashdown Forest and in the woodlands north of Bexhill and Hastings.

In the early part of the year the largest concentrations reported were seven at Darwell Res on 16 Feb, six at Patching Hill on 22 Feb and East Lavington on 14 Mar and eight (4 pairs) at Brede High Wood on 23 Mar.

Counts of breeding pairs in defined areas are shown on pages 196 - 199. Additional counts included six pairs at Eridge Park and Pulborough Brooks RSPB, four pairs at

Linchmere/Stanley Commons and three pairs at Bayham and Camden Wood (Bells Yew Green). For the second year running, none bred in nest boxes at Ardingly Res.

The largest numbers reported in the latter part of the year were ten at Eartham Woods and Bewl Water on 16 and 25 Dec respectively.

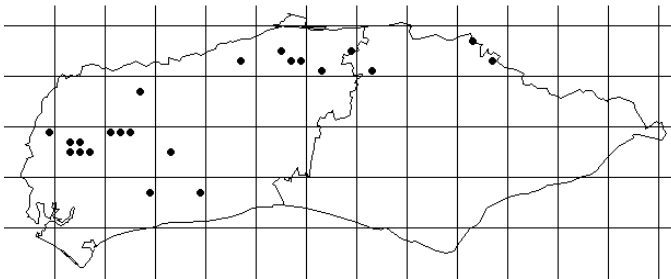
At Cissbury six new birds were ringed between 3 May and 11 Oct.

Birds were noted on feeders at Pulborough Brooks RSPB, Rackham and Weir Wood Res. A pair at Burpham on 19 Aug was observed collecting thistle down and flying back to dense cover with the seed heads. [PJ]

1442. **WILLOW TIT**

*Parus montanus*

**Scarce resident. Red listed species of high conservation concern.**



This declining species was recorded in 22 tetrads in 2003 compared with 15 in 2002 and 22 in 2001. As the map shows, these were on the Downs in West Sussex (at Harting Hill, five sites in the Westdean Woods complex, Binsted and Patching Hill), on the Greensand Ridges (Ambersham Common, Graffham Common and Rackham Woods) and in the north of the county between Petworth and Wadhurst (at Ebernoe Common, Warnham LNR, Buchan CP, Tilgate Forest, the Loder Valley reserve; Weir Wood Res, Ashdown Forest, Bayham and Bewl Water). The only confirmation of breeding was from Warnham LNR where a pair fledged two young.

Given the presence of Willow Tits at a number of downland sites, there seems every likelihood that well-wooded but under-watched areas such as Charlton Forest and Rewell Wood also hold this unobtrusive species. Observers of Willow Tits are again encouraged to record as much information as possible including choice of habitat and whether song or calls were heard. [PJ]

1461. **COAL TIT**

*Parus ater*

**Very common resident.**

No large concentrations were reported in either winter period though a monthly maximum of 13 was noted at the University of Sussex (Falmer) on 25 Apr.

Counts of breeding pairs in defined areas are shown on pages 196 - 199. Elsewhere there were 12 territories on 116 ha of mainly coniferous woodland at Goldballs Plantation (Heyshott) and four territories at Forest Mere (Liphook).



As usual, there was a handful of records for coastal areas including up to two in a Bexhill garden in January and February, two at Telscombe Tye on 22 Apr, singles at Climping on 11 Oct and 30 Dec, one in Horseshoe Plantation (Beachy Head) on 23 Oct and two at Church Norton on 22 Nov. One on the Downs at Blackcap (near Plumpton) was reported to be 'unusual' at this locality.

There was a small influx of birds showing characteristics of the continental race *ater* in late October. Three birds together, seemingly newly arrived and restless, were noted on the seafront at Brighton on the 18<sup>th</sup>, a single bird was briefly present at Sheepcote Valley (Brighton) on the 25<sup>th</sup> and there was another one at Ovingdean on the 30<sup>th</sup> (all ADW, IJW). Up to three birds were recorded in Horseshoe Plantation in the period 19-25 Oct (DC, JFC, RJF *et al*) and up to two were seen in the Pagham Hbr/Church Norton area in the period 21 Oct to 6 Nov (TJE). [PJ]

## 1462. BLUE TIT

*Parus caeruleus*

### Abundant resident.

The monthly maxima at regularly counted sites were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Sefter Fm, Pagham	21	13				19					11	19
Hotham Pk, Bognor	9	14	13	11	5	5	4	3	6	7	6	9
Marsh Fm, Yapton	6	9				11					3	3
Stopham Woods		15	22									
Parham Estate	15	8	10									
Warren Hill, Washington	21			18							8	
Tegdown Hill, Brighton			12	10		5						
Univ of Sussex, Falmer		31	31	30	34	29	25					
Newhaven Tide Mills	4	4	4	4	4	6	4	4	8	4	4	4
Isfield	5	6	8	6	2	6				6	8	4
Wilbees Fm, Arlington		26	30	14								
Darwell Res	17	23	39	33	24	14	14	8		23	13	8
Fairlight Cove	2	2	2	1	1	2	2	2	2	2	2	3

Other significant counts were of 25 at Patching Hill on 22 Mar, 26 at Preston Park (Brighton) on 5 May, 37 in the Arun Valley between Arundel and Offham on 25 May and, at Partridge Green, 23 on 25 Apr and 30 on 28 Aug.

Counts of breeding pairs in defined areas are shown on pages 196 - 199. At Thorney Island a pair nested in an old caravan, fledging four young. An exceptionally poor breeding season was reported at Hotham Park, Bognor) where no young were observed being fed in 26 nest boxes, although at Ardingly Res 139 young fledged from 17 boxes.

At Shoreham Sanctuary, 31 new birds were ringed and four retrapped from previous years in 27 sessions between 11 May and 26 Oct. A total of 41 new birds including 18 *pulli* was ringed at Cissbury between 3 May and 11 Oct. At Weir Wood Res 57 were ringed on 18 Aug, 32 on 24 Sep, 20 on 19 Oct, 11 on 2 Nov and 53 on 8 Dec. [PJ]

1464. **GREAT TIT***Parus major***Abundant resident.**

The monthly maxima at regularly counted sites were as follows:

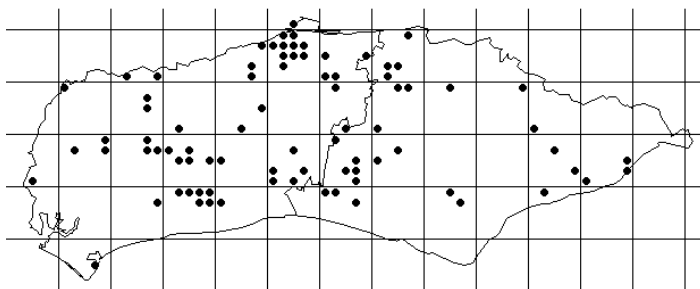
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Sefter Fm, Pagham	8	5				11					2	7
Hotham Pk, Bognor	4	5	5	7	1	0	0	3	3		2	6
Marsh Fm, Yapton	9	13				7					3	1
Stopham Woods		9	15									
Parham Estate	5	4	5									
Warren Hill, Washington	16			16								
Tegdown Hill, Brighton			10	16								
Univ of Sussex, Falmer		26	39	27	23	24						
Isfield	3	4	6	3	3	3				3	4	1
Wilbees Fm, Arlington			10	8	8							
Darwell Res	11	38	29	17	18	14	10	4		14	5	2
Fairlight Cove	2	1	1	2	1	1	1	1	1	2	2	2

Other counts included 15 at Patching Hill on 22 Mar, 19 at Preston Park (Brighton) on 5 May, 28 in the Arun Valley between Arundel and Offham on 25 May and ten at Partridge Green on 28 Aug.

Counts of breeding pairs in defined areas are shown on pages 196 - 199. At Ardingly Res 50 young fledged from seven nest boxes (one other failed).

At Shoreham Sanctuary, 29 new birds were ringed and two retrapped from previous years in 22 sessions between 11 May and 26 Oct. A total of 30 new birds including 13 *pulli* was ringed at Cissbury between 3 May and 11 Oct. At Weir Wood Res, 19 were trapped for ringing on 18 Aug, 25 on 24 Sep, five on 19 Oct, 11 on 2 Nov and 14 on 8 Dec.

A melanistic first-year female was trapped at East Grinstead on 18 Dec. [PJ]

1479. **NUTHATCH***Sitta europea***Common resident.**

The map shows the 83 tetrads in which the species was reported in 2003.

Early in the year, the largest concentrations reported were eight at Darwell Res on 5 Jan and six in Stansted Forest on 8 Jan, in Brede High Wood on 23 Mar, and at Stopham

on 28 Mar. Nine were noted in the Arun Valley between Arundel and South Stoke, also on 23 Mar.

Counts of breeding pairs in defined areas are shown on pages 196 - 199. At the Loder Valley Reserve (Ardingly) there were four broods in nest boxes comprising five, seven, eight and nine young while at nearby Ardingly Res three boxes held 21 young.

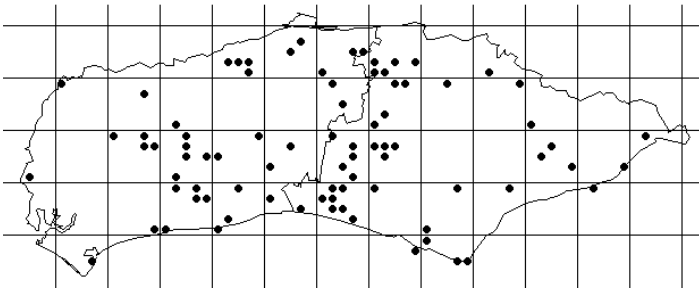
Once again there were a number of post-breeding records of birds at unusual localities comprising singles at Pett Level on 11 June, Hastings on 14 June, Patcham (Brighton) on 2 July and Church Norton on 16 Oct. At Climping there were two on 16 Aug and 31 Oct and singles on 4 Aug and 30 Dec while at Fairlight Cove 1-2 were seen regularly in October and November.

The largest counts in the latter part of the year were of five at Pulborough Brooks RSPB on 8 Nov and six at Rackham Woods on 31 Dec. [PJ]

## 1486. **TREECREEPER**

*Certhia familiaris*

**Common resident.**



The map shows the 83 tetrads from which the species was reported in 2003. As with Nuthatch, the map reflects the activities of observers rather than the species' true status in the county.

In the early part of the year the largest concentrations reported were four at Darwell Res on 5 Jan and five there on 16 Feb while in the latter part of the year there were five at Pulborough Brooks RSPB on 31 Oct.

Counts of breeding pairs in defined areas are shown on pages 196 - 199. On the coast, a pair was observed feeding young at Church Norton on 14 June.

There were a large number of coastal sightings in autumn including single birds at Church Norton on four dates in September and October, Atherington on 26 Sep, Beachy Head on 29-30 Sep, Seaford Head on 20 Oct and 9 Nov, Whitehawk Hill (Brighton) from 22 Oct to 11 Nov, East Hill (Hastings) on 29 Oct, Fairlight Cove on 8 Nov, Ovingdean on 10 Nov and St Anne's Well Gardens (Hove) on 8 Dec. Two were recorded at Goring Gap on 14 Oct, at Beachy Head from 18 Oct to 8 Nov and at Church Norton on 13 Nov and four at Atherington on 27 Oct, with three still there on 10 Nov. One at Sheepcote Valley (Brighton) for several days from 28 Oct was the first site record.

At Shoreham Sanctuary, five different birds were trapped in 27 ringing sessions between 3 Sep and 26 Oct. [PJ]

1508. **GOLDEN ORIOLE**

*Oriolus oriolus*

**Very scarce passage migrant and summer visitor; may have bred.**

An adult male was seen in Redgeland Wood (near Combe Haven) on 17 May (KMJ *et al*). Thirty-eight have been recorded since 1990, 26 in the month of May, although this year's single record follows a blank year in 2002. [RJF]

1515. **RED-BACKED SHRIKE**

*Lanius collurio*

**Very scarce passage migrant: formerly a breeding summer visitor. Red listed species of high conservation concern.**

A relatively poor showing with only two records, three less than last year. The first was a first-winter bird on 1 Sep at Pett Level, which remained in the area until 6 Sep (LA). The second was another first-winter bird which was first seen on 3 Sep in the vicinity of the Pagham Hbr Information Centre at Sidlesham and which was seen by many observers until 9 Sep (PB *et al*). [PNP]

1520. **GREAT GREY SHRIKE**

*Lanius excubitor*

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

As in recent years, records were few with four birds in the first winter period and four, possibly six, in the second winter period. The bird first located at Arundel in early November 2002 continued to frequent the area around the Arundel WWT, being seen on both sides of the R Arun ranging between the WWT and Warningcamp until 13 Mar (RAI *et al*). The bird first seen in Ashdown Forest in Oct 2002 also remained in the area and was seen at regular intervals between Wrens Warren and Millbrook until 30 Mar (JMB *et al*). On one occasion, the latter bird attacked a Blackbird which was caught in a mist net but which escaped uninjured.

Elsewhere in the first quarter, a bird first seen at Iping Common on 27 Jan remained until 26 Mar (BMR *et al*) while a migrant was located at Kithurst Farm (Storrington) on 22 and 23 Mar (RJB).

In the second winter period, a bird was seen at Iping Common on 19 Oct, 30 Nov and 9 Dec (BMR *et al*), while it or another was at Heyshott Common on 27 Dec (AD) and at Ambersham Common on 28 Dec (CF). A migrant was at Hastings North Seat on 21 Oct (ASG) and the first record of a bird returning to Ashdown Forest was on 25 Oct (SMP *et al*). The latter was seen by many observers but there is some evidence to suggest that there were two birds in Ashdown Forest from 16 Nov until the end of the year (RNS *et al*). Another bird was seen at Weir Wood Res on 17 and 18 Nov (SG, BMM) and, presumably the same, on 27 Dec (SMG). [PNP]

**GREY SHRIKE sp.**

A bird seen briefly at Rye Hbr LNR on 25 Jun has been accepted as being a Grey Shrike sp. (JAC). [PNP]

1523. **WOODCHAT SHRIKE**

*Lanius senator*

**Rare vagrant.**

A male in the Cuckmere Valley near Charleston Reedbed on 20-21 Jun (JCP *et al*) was the first record since 2000 and the 44<sup>th</sup> in total. It was widely appreciated, often perching prominently on bushes along the main river bank. There have been 12 records since 1990, although seven of these were during 1990-93. Four of these recent records have been in June. [RJF]

1539. **JAY**

*Garrulus glandarius*

**Very common resident.**

The only double figure count in the first quarter of the year was of ten at Darwell Res on 16 Feb, although there was a party of six at Coldwaltham Sewage Works on 30 Mar. Five at the University of Sussex on 1 Apr and seven at Darwell Res on 18 Apr were good spring records and there were several reports of urban sightings during the summer months. Counts of breeding birds in defined areas are shown on pages 196 - 199.

Maximum counts during the autumn and fourth quarter included five at Shoreham Sanctuary in September (of which four were trapped and ringed), seven at Darwell Res on 12 Oct, five at Withdean (Brighton) on 2 Nov and six still at Darwell Res on 16 Nov. [PNP]

1549. **MAGPIE**

*Pica pica*

**Very common resident.**

The highest roost count in the first quarter was an exceptional 290 in Brighton Wild Park on 21 Jan. The next highest was 20 at Hastings North Seat on 9 Jan but there were several double figure counts at locations throughout the county.

There were reports of confirmed or probable breeding from sites across the county with the highest count being 45 pairs in Brighton Wild Park, a similar number to 2002. Counts of breeding birds in defined areas are shown on pages 196 - 199.

Autumn and winter counts at the Wild Park included 257 on 15 Nov and 271 on 24 Dec. Elsewhere, numbers were much lower although 20 were noted at Thorney Deepes on 17 Sep and 18 at Sefter Farm (Pagham) on 4 Nov. [PNP]

1560. **JACKDAW**

*Corvus monedula*

**Very common resident.**

The highest count in the first quarter was an exceptional 1250 at South Stoke in the Arun Valley on 15 Feb. Elsewhere, there were 270 at Lavington Common on 11 Jan, 270 at Bewl Water on 25 Feb, 300 at Combe Haven on 1 Mar, 120 at Pease Pottage on 13 Mar and 200 at Forest Mere (Liphook) on 25 Mar. Counts of breeding birds in defined areas are shown on pages 196 - 199.

In the second half of the year, 500 were reported at Rye LNR on 14 Jul, 700 at Forest Mere on 23 Jul, 800 at Kingsfold on 28 Sep, 1500 at Lavington Common on 26 Oct and 360 at Bewl Water on 26 Dec. [PNP]

1563. **ROOK**

*Corvus frugilegus*

**Very common resident.**

The highest counts in the first quarter were lower than in 2002 with 70 at Marsh Farm (Yapton) on 7 Jan, 60 at Bewl Water on 25 Feb, 70 at Streat on 1 Mar, 60 at the University of Sussex on 13 Mar and 150 at Partridge Green on 22 Mar. However, 200 were recorded at Beachy Head on 6 Apr.

The highest rookery counts were of 142 nests in the Findon area, 50 at Wyckham Wood (near Henfield), 60 at Apuldram Manor Farm, 60 at the University of Sussex and 120 at Marsh Farm (Yapton).

The highest counts in the second half of the year included 99 at Thorney Island on 30 Jul, 400 at Pulborough Brooks RSPB on 29 Sep, 120 at Thorney Island on 14 Oct, 200 at Sefter Farm (Paghams) on 25 Nov and 450 at Rye SSSI on 14 Dec.

Interesting Rook behaviour reported during the year included the storage and subsequent retrieval of food scraps thrown out into a garden and the ability to hang on to a feeder, balance and take the seed. [PNP]

1567. **CARRION CROW**

*Corvus corone*

**Very common resident.**

The highest concentrations were 100 at Bewl Water and 90 at Rusper on 25 Feb, 70 at West Worthing on 12 Mar, 100 at Pevensy Bridge Level on 13 Apr, 100 at Forest Mere (Liphook) on 20 May with 85 there on 21 Jun and 150 on 23 Jul, and 500 at Bewl Water on 28 Dec. Counts of breeding birds in defined areas are shown on pages 196 - 199.

A bird showing considerable areas of grey which was found at Litlington Heath on 26 Jun has been accepted as a Carrion/Hooded Crow hybrid. [PNP]

1572. **RAVEN**

*Corvus corax*

**Scarce resident**

Following the successful breeding at Beachy Head for the last two years, four birds frequented the area for most of the year but there was no evidence that breeding took place. However, a pair bred at the same site near Shoreham as in 2002 hatching five chicks, of which three fledged after two had been shot in the nest.

Elsewhere, there were over 50 reports of birds being seen, predominantly in the southern half of the county and usually singles or pairs. [PNP]

## 1582. STARLING

*Sturnus vulgaris*

**Common resident, passage migrant and winter visitor. Red listed species of high conservation concern.**

The year opened with 200 at Galley Hill (Bexhill) on 1 Jan and on 3 Jan a part leucistic bird was seen in a Wisborough Green garden. The largest counts in the early part of the year were 2000 at Rodmell on 4 Jan, 3000 at Nook Meadows (Rye Hbr) on 2 Mar, 1000 feeding in marshy ground on the Pevensey Levels on 16 Mar and a pre-roost flock of 2000 at New Salts Fm (Lancing) on 21 Mar. Birds were recorded roosting on powerlines at Aldingbourne Rife and associating with Lapwings, Redwings and Fieldfares on the Glynde Levels.

Spring passage birds were few and far between. The largest group reported was 86 over Arlington Res on 28 Mar.

There must be more than 61 pairs nesting in the county! As there were only 16 sites reporting nesting, there must be a large number in towns and gardens going unrecorded. Brighton Wild Park again topped the list of sites with 29 pairs. Petworth was the only other place to note double figures with 11 pairs. Birds were present at Amberley/Rackham Plantation and Pulborough Brooks RSPB but no numbers were given. Counts of breeding birds in other defined areas can be found on pages 196 - 199.

Post-breeding flocks roosted in the reedbeds at Thorney Deeps in the late summer, with 1000 on 9 July and 3000 on 13 Aug, and on telephone lines at Birling Gap (Beachy Head) on 20 Aug.

Late autumn movement was most obvious in early November. One thousand two hundred flew west over Sheepcote Valley (Brighton) on the 1<sup>st</sup>, 3620 went west over Crowborough on the 4<sup>th</sup>, 500 were moving west with Woodpigeons over Middleton-on-Sea on the 6<sup>th</sup>, and 5500 flew west over Brighton on the 13<sup>th</sup>.

The largest winter roost counts came from the Pier at Eastbourne with 6000–8000 there on 20 Nov and 5000–7000 on 16 Dec. No counts were reported of the West Pier (Brighton) roost.

A leucistic bird was noted at Shooters Bottom (Beachy Head) on 8 Nov. A flock of 1150 was feeding in wheat stubbles at Lidsey on 19 Dec and there were 400 with Fieldfares in grass at Bewl Water on the last day of the year. [APC]

## 1591. HOUSE SPARROW

*Passer domesticus*

**Very common but possibly declining resident. Red listed species of high conservation concern.**

Small flocks were reported from all over the county in the first winter period. The largest group of 60 was around farm buildings at Lee Fm (Patching) on 8 Jan. In all, double figure counts were reported from 23 sites, including 42 counted during the RSPB's 'Big Garden Birdwatch' at Newick on 26 Jan and 25 at Newhaven Tide Mills on 31 Jan. Twenty-eight were at Tegdown Hill on 16 Feb and the latest flock in the spring was 41 at Selsey on 19 May.

Breeding was reported from only 31 locations, an indication possibly of both the decline and significant under-reporting of this formerly widespread species. Eight sites reported five or more breeding pairs. Sixteen pairs at Brighton Wild Park equalled the number counted in 2002. Fifteen pairs were at Burpham, 11 pairs at Hurst Green, six pairs at Isfield, and five pairs each at Millbrook (Ashdown Forest), Barnham, Earls Down,

Dallington, and Sefter Fm (Pagham). This was an increase in reporting on 2002, when seven sites held five or more pairs. In total, 112 pairs were reported. No birds bred on the nature reserve at Rye Hbr, but, at Pulborough Brooks RSPB, a pair was reported investigating a Pied Wagtail's nest that had been built in a nest cup designed for Swallows! A leucistic juvenile was fed by a male bird in a Hassocks garden. Counts of breeding birds in defined areas can be found on pages 196 - 199.

Post breeding flocks started to gather in June with 40 at Hangleton and 50 at Hastings on the 14<sup>th</sup>. July's largest group was 70 at Partridge Green on the 18<sup>th</sup>. Higher numbers were noted in August with 250 at Newhaven Tide Mills on the 1<sup>st</sup> and a peak count of 500 at Henfield on the 13<sup>th</sup>. Some large flocks were also recorded in September with 300 at Newhaven Tide Mills on the 6<sup>th</sup> and 400 at Rye Hbr on the 15<sup>th</sup>.

In the second winter period, only four flocks of over 20 were recorded. Tunstall Fm (Robertsbridge) had 50 on 1 Oct, 21 were at Isfield on 15 Nov, with 50 at Goring the following day, and 20 were at Lancing on 22 Dec. This was well down on 2002, when 14 flocks of over 20 were counted. [APC]

## 1598. TREE SPARROW

*Passer montanus*

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

In view of the serious decline of this species, reports of some good-sized flocks in the first winter period were most welcome. In January, there were 100 at Pett Level on the 4<sup>th</sup>, 26 at East Guldeford Level on the 11<sup>th</sup>, 50 with Yellowhammers and Reed Buntings at Pett Level on the 15<sup>th</sup>, and ten at Itchingfield on the 19<sup>th</sup>. Sixty were still at Pett Level on 5 Feb and 20 were at Westons Fm (Itchingfield) on the 8<sup>th</sup>. There were 12 at Alfriston on 1 Mar with subsequent sightings of up to 11 at Possession House Fm (Barns Green) on the 2<sup>nd</sup>, 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> and 69 at East Guldeford Level on the 27<sup>th</sup>. The last winter flock was of 73 at Playden on 15 Apr.

The only spring passage noted was a flock of 19 that flew off southeast from Peacehaven on 27 Mar.

Observers at three sites reported birds during the breeding season. There were four to five pairs at Possession House Fm, four pairs at Pevensy and two pairs at Playden. Total numbers were the same as last year with 10–11 pairs breeding, but in 2002, the three sites holding breeding birds were all on the Pevensy Levels. News of the birds at Barns Green and Playden is therefore very welcome but it would be interesting to know where the large winter numbers went to. Birds were absent from the Rye Hbr LNR this summer but bred in the nearby Brede Valley.

Passage records came from three sites in the autumn: three were at the Pagham Hbr Visitor Centre on 13 Sep, a single bird flew west at Sheepcote Valley (Brighton) on 14 Oct and one was at Church Norton two days later.

Post-breeding flocks of 30 and 15 were recorded at Possession House Fm in August. Westons Fm recorded 20 on 4 Oct. Birds returned to Pett Level on 21 Oct when three were counted, and had reached 50 by the end of the year. Other winter flocks were 12 at Scotney Court GP on 30 Nov, 12 at Rye Hbr on 1 Dec and 40 at Locketts Fm (Itchingfield) on 28 Dec. Birds were reported from Possession House Fm in every month of the year, except November. [APC]



**Abundant resident, passage migrant and winter visitor.**

During the first winter period, flocks in three figures were recorded at only four sites. In January, 100 at Pease Pottage on the 9<sup>th</sup> were feeding in a grass field, 100 at The Burgh (near Burpham) on the 12<sup>th</sup> were in a kale strip (probably game cover) and 300 at Burton MP on the 31<sup>st</sup> was the highest number recorded during the month, rather lower than in 2002. In February, 150 on the 2<sup>nd</sup> was the highest count at Pulborough Brooks RSPB, with 100 there on the 14<sup>th</sup>. In March another 300 were counted at Pease Pottage feeding in stubble on the 9<sup>th</sup>. The regular winter census in 67 ha of mixed farmland at Marsh Fm (Yapton) produced January and February counts of 40 and 48 respectively while those in 95 ha at Sefter Fm (Pagham) were 9 and 15 respectively.

The only significant movements noted during the first winter period were of 100 N in small flocks over Parham Park on 9 Feb, 114 NE on 2 Mar was the best count at Combe Haven and there was a passage of 66 E from 10.00-10.39 hr past Hastings on 19 Mar.

Breeding was confirmed at 17 sites by at least 150 pairs. Counts of breeding birds from defined areas can be found on pages 196 - 199. Breeding was reported as probable at a further 11 sites by at least 61 pairs with 26 at Darwell Res and 18 in Goldballs Plantation (Heyshott). In all only *ca.*216 breeding pairs were reported, a fraction of the estimated county population of 115,000 pairs (*Birds of Sussex*) demonstrating that this species is significantly under-reported.

There were no significant movements noted in the second winter period. The only records were of 77 W past Hastings on 8 Oct from 07.40-08.25 hr, 65 E on 16 Oct at Church Norton and 103 E past Fairlight Warren Glen from 07.00-10.30 hr on 6 Nov.

Several counts in three figures were made at inland sites. In November there were 100 on the 6<sup>th</sup> at Constantia Manor (Isfield) in woodland and feeding, unusually, on sloes, and 100 at Church Norton on the 11<sup>th</sup> followed by 200 there on the 13<sup>th</sup>. A flock of 200 at Lee Fm (Patching) on the 20<sup>th</sup> and 200 on Wepham Down on 27 Nov, with large numbers of Bramblings and Greenfinches, increased to 400 from 4 Dec to the end of the year. There were 200 at Theale Fm (Slinfold) on the last day of the year. In all, only *ca.*2500 birds were reported during the last three months from 34 1-km squares. Numbers were much lower than in 2002 due most probably to under reporting. [JAH]

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

The approximate monthly totals were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr		Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>Number of birds</b>	91	129	73	51		311	183	437
<b>Number of sites</b>	2	3	11	2		21	16	6

The BTO Migration Watch contributed five records and one new site to the above data.

During the first winter period, birds were generally concentrated in the Ashdown Forest area particularly during January, February and April, but scarce elsewhere. The largest number recorded was 100 in Pippingford Park (Ashdown Forest) on 9 Feb where numbers of 50 or more were counted on several dates into April. Numbers in the area fluctuated down to 25. Numbers elsewhere were generally between one and four except for 20 at Pulborough Brooks RSPB on 2 Feb. The last record for the period was of three, including a singing male, at Millbrook (Ashdown Forest) on 22 Apr.

The first autumn records were of one at The Severals (Church Norton) on 1 Oct and further singletons at Isfield and Arundel WWT on the 6<sup>th</sup>. These were followed from the 11<sup>th</sup> by a steady build up of small numbers with 30 at Arundel WWT on the 19<sup>th</sup> and a peak movement of 120 over Sheepcote Valley (Brighton) on the 20<sup>th</sup> where 220 were counted during the month. Other notable counts to the end of the year included 40 at The Severals on 13 Nov, 50 at The Burgh (near Burpham) on 30 Nov, 100 at Lodge Hill Fm (West Dean) on 24 Dec and 150 in West Dean Woods on 30 Dec. The largest numbers, however, built up during December in the area between Kithurst Hill, Storrington and Wepham Down from 70 on the 4<sup>th</sup> to an exceptional 250 on the 26<sup>th</sup> associating with up to 400 Chaffinches and 200 Greenfinches. [JAH]

1640. **SERIN**

*Serinus serinus*

**Very scarce passage migrant, has bred.**

A female was seen at Newhaven Tide Mills intermittently between 16 Feb and at least 9 Mar (MFA *et al*). In April, a female flew west at Birling Gap on the 12<sup>th</sup> (DC, JFC) and singles flew north over Selsey Bill on the 15<sup>th</sup> (BJC *et al*), 17<sup>th</sup> (RP *et al*) and 23<sup>rd</sup> (OM *et al*). Another was seen at Selsey Bill infrequently during 8-10 Jun (DIS *et al*). In the autumn, a female was again recorded at Newhaven Tide Mills on 16 Nov (MA).

Although a welcome improvement on the four recorded in 2002, this is still a below average showing. Thirty-eight have been recorded since 2000, of which 11 have been in April and 14 in May. The November record is the latest since 1968, although there was one on 13 November 1996. [RJF]

1649 **GREENFINCH**

*Carduelis chloris*

**Very common resident, scarce passage migrant and winter visitor.**

During the first three months of the year there were only seven records of numbers in excess of 20. In January there were 70 birds roosting in the trees in the Old Steine area of Brighton on the 1<sup>st</sup> with 55 there on the 13<sup>th</sup> and 50 at Beachy Head on the 9<sup>th</sup>. In March there were 60 in Rackham Woods on the 12<sup>th</sup>, up to 25 on several dates at Wilbees Fm (Arlington), 23 on the 17<sup>th</sup> at the University of Sussex and a monthly maximum of 22 of Middleton-on-Sea on the 2<sup>nd</sup>. During the first winter period, 13 birds were ringed at East Grinstead compared with 31 in 1999 and 284 in 1991.

Compared with last year, there were many fewer reports of breeding. Breeding was confirmed at only 12 sites by at least 48 pairs and probable at eight other sites by 12 more pairs, a minimum of 60 (2003: 175). Counts of breeding birds from defined areas can be found on pages 196 - 199. In addition, there were 13 pairs at Isfield, seven at Brooklands (Worthing) but only singles elsewhere. This represents a fraction of the total county population which was estimated at 17,000 – 26,000 pairs (*Birds of Sussex*) suggesting that this species is significantly under recorded. Birds began to flock from about the end of July. The first sizeable counts were of 60 at Newhaven Tide Mills on 15 Aug and 80 at Durrington on the 17<sup>th</sup>. In September there was a flock of 40 at Thorney Island on the 6<sup>th</sup>, on the 13<sup>th</sup> there were 60 at Pease Pottage feeding on newly sown crops and 80 at Pagham Hbr (and 50 there on the 28<sup>th</sup>) while at Newhaven Tide Mills the monthly maximum of 60 was counted on the 15<sup>th</sup>. Flock sizes increased in October with 200 feeding on vegetated shingle at Shoreham Hbr on the 2<sup>nd</sup> with 100 seen at the nearby Fort on the 11<sup>th</sup> and 180 feeding on the shingle spit at Pagham Hbr on the 5<sup>th</sup>. The only significant movements

were noted at Church Norton in October. There were 80 E on the 12<sup>th</sup> followed by 260 E on the 15<sup>th</sup> and 350 E on both the 16<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup>. Counts in three figures came from Rye Hbr LNR with 160 on 24 Oct, a monthly maximum for Newhaven Tide Mills of 170 in November and up to 200 in the area of Wepham Down and Kithurst Hill between 4 and 28 Dec with large numbers of Bramblings and Chaffinches. There were several other counts of between 50 and 80 from mainly coastal sites in the last three months. [JAH]

## 1653. GOLDFINCH

*Carduelis carduelis*

### Common summer visitor and passage migrant and fairly common winter visitor.

The following table shows, conservatively, the pattern of recorded occurrence during the year. The data have been divided between records received in the normal way and those from the BTO Migration Watch event. Sites are 1-km squares. Sites for Migration Watch are additional to those covered otherwise.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>Number of birds</b>	749	245	126	815	106	103	173	661	1459	14256	424	214
<b>Number of sites</b>	18	26	36	44	32	37	15	19	24	41	16	10
<b>BTO Migration Watch</b>												
<b>Number of birds</b>		84	60	172	82	40						
<b>Number of new sites</b>		13	20	19	19	18						
<b>Non-BTO Migration Watch</b>												
<b>Number of birds</b>		161	66	643	24	63						
<b>Number of other sites</b>		13	16	25	13	19						

Some of the Migration Watch sites were monitored on a regular basis and the numbers of birds are the monthly maxima.

The largest counts were all in January with 200 feeding on teasels at Houghton (near Amberley) on the 7<sup>th</sup>, 100 at Stansted Forest on the 8<sup>th</sup>, 100 at Pulborough Brooks RSPB on the 10<sup>th</sup> and a sudden influx of *ca.*100 at Deanlane End on the 26<sup>th</sup>. Counts of 40 or more were made at only five sites: 40 at Burton MP on 8 Jan, 60 at Lewes Brooks on 22 Jan, a maximum of 50 at Newhaven Tide Mills on 8 Feb, a maximum of 65 at Selsey Bill on 16 Apr and 40 at Duncton Common on 19 Apr.

Spring passage was very poor, as in 2001 and 2002. The only counts were in April. The month's total at Selsey Bill was only 168 from 138¾ hr of watching on eight dates from the 9<sup>th</sup> to 24<sup>th</sup>. At Worthing Beach 74¾ hr of watching on ten dates from the 15<sup>th</sup> to 26<sup>th</sup> produced 96 E and 1 W with a maximum of 30 E on the 25<sup>th</sup>.

Relatively few records were received of breeding compared with previous years and an estimated total county population of *ca.*6000 pairs (*Birds of Sussex*). Breeding was confirmed at only nine sites by no more than 14 pairs and was probable at ten further sites by 18 pairs. Counts of breeding birds from defined areas can be found on pages 196 - 199. In addition, there were two pairs at Waterhall (Brighton) but singles elsewhere. This is more likely to reflect under recording rather than a true drop in numbers. However, at East Grinstead 307 birds were ringed up to 30 Jun compared with 174 in 2002 and only 53 from 1979 to 1995.

Goldfinches began to congregate in significant numbers in August, many of them in preparation for migration as up to 80% of the British breeding population winters overseas in mainly western France and Spain (*Migration Atlas* 2002). The largest numbers noted were 60 at Thorney Deeps on the 13<sup>th</sup>, 50 at Pulborough Brooks on the 19<sup>th</sup>, 70 at Pagham Hbr on the 29<sup>th</sup> and 60 was a maximum count late in the month at Warnham LNR. In

September there were nine counts of between 40 and 70 birds but 200 were noted throughout the month at Constantia Manor (Isfield) and 400 were at Pulborough Brooks on the 23<sup>rd</sup> in two flocks of 220 and 180.

Peak movements were in October, as in previous years. A conservative estimate suggests that over 14,200 birds were involved, even more than in 2002. Passage began from the 7<sup>th</sup> when 250 were counted at Selsey Bill. On the 8<sup>th</sup> counts involved 150 E at nearby Church Norton and 270 E at Beachy Head but the main movements were between the 12<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup>. As shown in the table below, these were predominantly eastwards, consistent with a traditional migration south-eastwards into the Low Countries (where some may stay) via a short sea crossing before turning south or southwest (*Migration Atlas* 2002). Details of movements noted during the autumn at regularly monitored coastal sites were as follows:

	Sep	Oct	Nov	Max Movements	
<b>Selsey Bill</b>	-	400	-	250	7 Oct
<b>Church Norton</b>	-	3180	-	700E 1550E 620E	12 Oct 15 Oct 16 Oct
<b>Goring</b>	26	-	-	26N	17 Sep
<b>Worthing Beach</b>		1402	-	495E 533E	16 Oct 17 Oct
<b>Lancing Widewater</b>	-	1064	-	1000E	12 Oct
<b>Beachy Head</b>	-	2200	-	500E 530E	15 Oct 19 Oct
<b>Hastings area</b>	-	1805	199	668E 687E 199E	16 Oct 17 Oct 4 Nov

Other high counts during October were of 700 at Sheepcote Valley (Brighton) on the 16<sup>th</sup>, 650 E at Clipping on the 20<sup>th</sup>, 126 E on the 13<sup>th</sup> at Whitehawk (Brighton) and 100 E at Thorney SF on the 19<sup>th</sup>. Numbers in excess of 40 were noted at six other mainly coastal sites. Numbers were much reduced for the remainder of the year; the only counts in excess of 30 were 50 at Pett Level on 12 Dec and 60 at Bewl Water the same day. [JAH]

## 1654. **SISKIN**

*Carduelis spinus*

### **Common winter visitor and passage migrant. A very scarce breeder.**

The following table of approximate monthly totals shows that, during the first three months, numbers were rather higher than in the three previous years with the usual marked reduction in April as birds departed, presumably northwards to their breeding grounds.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>Number of birds</b>	646	560	828	20	12	3	4	1	98	1709	147	77
<b>Number of sites</b>	19	29	38	9	5	3	2	1	6	36	16	7

The largest flocks in the first winter period were at Stansted Forest where 200 were noted on 8 Jan and 300 on 11 Mar with others elsewhere in the area. Numbers in the Pippingford Park/Millbrook areas of Ashdown Forest increased from 50 on 14 Jan to 100 on 20 Feb and 1 Mar. At Burton MP 70 birds on 5 Jan had reduced to 50 by the 31<sup>st</sup>. Elsewhere, 60 were at West Hill (Balcombe) on 15 Mar and there were counts of 50 from five other sites between 3 Jan and 19 Mar.

Breeding was confirmed at only three sites: single pairs bred at both Lavington and Hesworth Commons and a pair were seen with one recently fledged youngster at Rushy

Bottom Copse (Ashdown Forest) on 10 Jul. A female trapped there the following day showed a brood patch and was carrying an egg. She may have been either the same female of the 10<sup>th</sup> producing a second clutch or from an additional pair. Elsewhere, probable breeding was suspected by single pairs at two other sites (one for the fourth year running) and birds were seen in suitable habitat (coniferous and birch forests) at three other sites.

The autumn influx was again marked in October with the second highest total seen since before 2000 but lower than the exceptional 4000 of 2001. These were presumably birds from Fennoscandia and eastern Europe arriving via the Low Countries and France as well as birds from northern Britain reflecting a relatively poor cone crop in the originating areas. The largest count reported was a peak movement of 250 at Sheepcote Valley (Brighton) on 16 Oct. Movements in East Sussex involved 120 E at All Saints Wood (Hastings) on 16 Oct and 224 E past Fairlight Warren Glen (Hastings) on the 17<sup>th</sup>. In West Sussex, over 500 birds moved east during October including 130 E at Church Norton on the 16<sup>th</sup> following 105 E there on the 15<sup>th</sup>, 80 at Poole Place (Climping) on the 20<sup>th</sup> and 60 at Widewater (Lancing) on the 12<sup>th</sup>. Numbers in November and December were then the lowest since before 2000. [JAH]

1660. **LINNET**

*Carduelis cannabina*

**Decreasing resident and partial migrant. Red listed species of high conservation concern.**

The following table presents a conservative estimate of the numbers recorded during the first six months of the year. It illustrates both the pattern of occurrence and the added value obtained from the BTO Migration Watch. Sites are 1-km squares.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun
<b>Number of birds</b>	2367	773	899	1914	331	323
<b>Number of sites</b>	19	21	51	70	59	54
<b>BTO Migration Watch</b>						
<b>Number of birds</b>		215	414	505	67	42
<b>Number of new sites</b>		12	26	23	22	16
<b>Non-BTO Migration Watch</b>						
<b>Number of birds</b>		558	485	1409	264	281
<b>Number of other sites</b>		10	25	47	37	38

Numbers in January were significantly higher than the 760 recorded in December 2002 and largely involved birds at inland sites. Following a fall in the next two months a resurgence in April, largely at coastal sites, was presumably due to migrants returning, mainly between the 15<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup>.

Locally, Linnets tend to congregate in large flocks in seed-rich habitats. Significant numbers at inland sites during January involved 600 at Rodmell on the 4<sup>th</sup> feeding in a field of rape seed, 500 at nearby Lewes Brooks on the 7<sup>th</sup> which fell to ca.200 by the 12<sup>th</sup>, 200 at West End (Henfield) on the 17<sup>th</sup>, 180 at North Cocking on 5 Feb and 220 at Westmeston (near Ditchling) on 6 Apr. At Lewes Brooks there were 150 on 11 Jan and there were 130 at Pulborough Brooks RSPB on 2 Feb. Counts of 100 were also made at Steep Down (Lancing) on 11 Jan, at Ifield (near Crawley) on the 26<sup>th</sup> and at Church Norton on 15 Apr.

Movements in April at coastal sites were not particularly significant despite a coastal total of at least 1100. They involved 40 N at Goring Gap on 4 Apr and, at Worthing

Beach, a month's total of 373 (351 E, 17 W and 5 N) was counted between the 7<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> during 75 hr with a maximum of 54 on the 16<sup>th</sup>. At Selsey Bill the month's total of 219 was counted on five dates over 138¾ hr between the 7<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> included a maximum of 80 on the 16<sup>th</sup> and 100 were noted at Church Norton on the 15<sup>th</sup>. At Splash Point (Seaford), only 55 were counted in 105 hr between the 16<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> with a maximum of 24 on the 18<sup>th</sup>.

Away from Ashdown Forest, breeding was confirmed at 19 sites by 53 pairs and was probable at ten other sites by an additional 25 pairs. Counts of breeding birds from defined areas can be found on pages 196 - 199. In addition within Ashdown Forest, 17 pairs were confirmed as breeding and a further 27 were probable. At a further 44 sites, birds were seen in suitable breeding habitat. These figures suggest a conservative total of only 78 confirmed and 48 probable pairs, which is a marked reduction on the previous two years and suggests an under-recording of this species at potential breeding sites.

Linnets are classic partial migrants, notable for the size of coastal movements, particularly in the autumn. While some of the British breeding population remains in winter, others migrate from mid-August onwards, typically via the short sea crossing before swinging southwards to wintering grounds in southwest Europe (*Migration Atlas 2002*). The following table separates observations at coastal or near coastal sites from those inland.

	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>Number of birds</b>	981	3613	6909	1253	917
<b>Number of sites</b>	32	36	38	22	15
<b>Inland sites:</b>					
<b>Number of birds</b>	504	939	558	717	579
<b>Number of sites</b>	21	22	13	15	10
<b>Coastal sites:</b>					
<b>Number of birds</b>	477	2674	6351	536	338
<b>Number of sites</b>	11	14	25	7	5

Significant numbers were recorded at coastal sites from about 23 Aug through to the end of October, but few observers gave any indication of movement direction. The only records indicating movement were all in October: at Beachy Head 330E on the 1<sup>st</sup>, at Church Norton 150 N on the 4<sup>th</sup>, 300 E on the 8<sup>th</sup> and 150 E on the 12<sup>th</sup> and 11 E at Whitehawk (Brighton) on the 14<sup>th</sup>. In the Hastings area there were 20 E at East Hill on the 16<sup>th</sup>, 26 E at Warren Glen (Fairlight) on the 17<sup>th</sup> and 70 W at Hastings CP also on the 17<sup>th</sup>.

In August, 150 at Selsey West Fields on the 1<sup>st</sup> was followed by 100 on Pagham Hbr Shingle Spit on the 9<sup>th</sup> and 150 at Church Norton on the 23<sup>rd</sup> increased to 200 on the 28<sup>th</sup>. In September a flock of 120 at Thorney Island on the 6<sup>th</sup> was still present on the 26<sup>th</sup> and the flock at Selsey West Fields had increased to 200 by the 28<sup>th</sup>. There were 170 at Newhaven Tide Mills on the 7<sup>th</sup> but at Rye Hbr 800 on the 15<sup>th</sup> and 700 on the 25<sup>th</sup> increased to 2000 on the 27<sup>th</sup>. In October the flock of 200 in the Pilsey Sands/Thorney Island area was still present up to the 9<sup>th</sup>, feeding either in stubble, around the sand dunes or along the shoreline. At Church Norton there were 300 on the 4<sup>th</sup> and at Selsey Bill the month's count totalled 350 with a maximum of 200 on the 14<sup>th</sup>. A similar number was in the West Fields on the 24<sup>th</sup>. Further east at Shoreham Hbr, 200 were feeding on vegetated shingle on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 300 were counted at Newhaven Tide Mills on the 3<sup>rd</sup>. At Beachy Head 200 on the 4<sup>th</sup> increased to 300 on the 12<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> while at Rye Hbr an exceptional flock estimated at 3000 birds was present on both the 5<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup>.

Inland, the highest count in August was of 150 at Rounden Wood (Brighton) on the 12<sup>th</sup>. In September 150 were found at Stump Bottom (Steyning) on the 18<sup>th</sup>, 100 at Pulborough Brooks on the 23<sup>rd</sup> and 115 at Broadbridge Heath on the 28<sup>th</sup>. Numbers in October were similar: 120 at Cissbury Ring and 150 at Rodmell Brooks both on the 8<sup>th</sup>. November saw a peak count for the year at Ovingdean of 385 on the 5<sup>th</sup> and on the 30<sup>th</sup> there were 150 at The Burgh (near Burpham) and 200 at Upper Beeding. The highest counts in December were of 100 at Apuldrum on the 10<sup>th</sup>, 100 at St. Dunstons Fm (Warbleton) on the 19<sup>th</sup> and 200 at Wepham Down on the 28<sup>th</sup> associating with similar numbers of Bramblings, Chaffinches and Greenfinches. [JAH]

1663. **LESSER REDPOLL**

*Carduelis cabaret*

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

The following table, which gives the approximate monthly totals, shows the pattern of occurrence throughout the year. Sites are 1-km squares. Very few were noted during the BTO Migration Watch period.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>Number of birds</b>	97	59	431	383	92	59	33	10	7	465	209	53
<b>Number of sites</b>	13	9	32	27	27	24	11	6	2	40	26	8

Numbers at the start of the year showed a reduction on those for the previous December (143). However, numbers picked up significantly during March and April but fell during the summer months as, presumably, a combination of birds returning to their northern breeding grounds as well as the seasonal reduction in birdwatching activity. Unlike the previous two years, numbers did not pick up as significantly during the autumn, suggesting that there were adequate tree seed resources further north.

During the first four months to the end of April there were eight counts of 40 or more. The largest count was of 150 at Broadwater Forest on 12 Apr, 80 were estimated at Oldhouse Warren (Worth Forest) on 29 Mar, there were 60 at Vert Wood (near Laughton) on the 23<sup>rd</sup> and four counts of *c.*50 were made in the Ashdown Forest area between 20 Mar and 6 Apr.

Breeding was confirmed at eight sites by ten pairs: Ashdown Forest (5), Woolbeding Common (3), Ambersham Common (1) and Lavington Common (1). There were no reports from Footland Wood (Vinehall Street). An estimated 21 pairs probably bred on Ashdown Forest, and there was probable breeding at a further three sites in the county.

The autumn passage was very light with no more than 160 birds seen moving during October. The first migrants were noted at Hastings when 4 W on the 8<sup>th</sup> were followed by parties of 18 E on the 11<sup>th</sup> and 15 E on the 16<sup>th</sup> at The Severals (Church Norton) and 30 at Atherington on the 20<sup>th</sup>. The highest count was of 75 N at The Severals on the 27<sup>th</sup>. The highest counts of non-migratory birds during the second winter period were of a maximum of 70 at Pett Level on 24 Oct, 50 there on 8 Nov and 40 at Arundel WWT on 27 Oct. [JAH]

1666. **COMMON CROSSBILL**

*Loxia curvirostra*

**Scarce visitor occurring in large numbers in irruption years. Breeds occasionally.**

The irruption numbers recorded during the second half of 2002 remained into 2003 with an apparent major increase from December to January. However, numbers decreased significantly after May, in typical fashion for this species, and remained low for the rest of the year as the following table of approximate numbers shows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Number of birds	542	427	567	418	270	19	18	38	5	18	51	28
Number of sites	23	26	34	25	7	4	4	8	3	4	8	3

Data from the BTO Migration Watch contributed only four records from four sites to the above table.

Birds were recorded at *ca.*90 sites during the year, of which *ca.*60% were associated with mature conifer forest, as at Ashdown Forest and on the West Sussex Commons. Of the 330 records received, 80% were from such areas suggesting that, this year, the birds were concentrated more in their preferred habitat.

During the first winter period there were 23 reports of parties of 40 or more from mainly the established wintering areas. The largest number seen was of 103 in three parties of 50, 46 and seven at Stansted Forest on 8 Jan. Other counts above 50 were of 75 at Lords Piece (Coates Common) on 5 Jan, 60 there on 19 Jan, 60 at Ambersham Common on 27 Jan, 14 Feb and 6 Apr, and another 60 in West Dean Woods on 6 Apr. A party of 40 was seen at Preston Park (Brighton) on 14 Mar.

Breeding was confirmed by at least six pairs. There were two pairs on Lavington Common, three in Ashdown Forest (where two recently fledged young were seen on 21 Mar, another four on 11 Apr and another four on 11 May) and one on Iping Common. There were seven juveniles in a flock of at least 40 birds at Broadwater Forest on 11 May suggestive of breeding there. There were no reports of breeding at either Ambersham Common or Footland Wood (Vinehall Street). Breeding was probable at a further seven sites in Ashdown Forest and two elsewhere involving at least nine pairs.

Following the departure by the middle of May of the irrupted winter visitors from 2002, the second half of the year produced only small numbers. The largest parties in the second winter period were of 15 N over Hollingdean (Brighton) on 3 Aug, 15 at Ambersham Common on 27 Nov and another 15 at Lords Piece on 5 Dec. [JAH]

## 1710. BULLFINCH

*Pyrrhula pyrrhula*

**Fairly common resident. Red listed species of high conservation concern.**

The following table shows, conservatively, the pattern of recorded occurrence during the year. The data have been divided between records received in the normal way and those from the BTO Migration Watch event. Sites are 1-km squares. Sites for Migration Watch are additional to those covered otherwise.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Number of birds	155	126	91	46	60	84	53	35	14	68	55	117
Number of sites	33	30	26	30	33	28	21	13	6	12	10	24
<b>BTO Migration Watch</b>												
Number of birds		7	13	13	14	4						
Number of new sites		3	6	7	7	3						
<b>Non-BTO Migration Watch</b>												
Number of birds		119	78	33	46	80						
Number of other sites		27	20	23	26	25						



Some of the Migration Watch sites were monitored on a regular basis and the numbers of birds are the monthly maxima.

Breeding records were noticeably down on 2002: only 16 pairs (*cf*:37) were confirmed as breeding in eight different 1-km squares and only a further 15 pairs (*cf*:25) were probably breeding in 12 others. Single birds or pairs were present during the breeding season in a further 40 1-km squares of suitable habitat (an increase of 60% on 2002). Counts of breeding birds from defined areas can be found on pages 196 - 199. These overall numbers show an 18% reduction on similar figures for 2002. There were only *ca.* 10 pairs in the Ashdown Forest area, six pairs at Pulborough Brooks RSPB, three pairs in 6.6 ha at Cissbury Ring, three territories at Troutbeck (near Eridge) but elsewhere usually only single birds or pairs. There were no records from Footland Wood (Vinehall Street), Weir Wood Res or Marline Wood (Hastings).

Outside the breeding season double figures counts were of ten at St Dunstan's Fm (Warbleton) on 6 Jan, 15 at Pulborough Brooks on the 26<sup>th</sup>, 24 at Ashdown Forest on 15 Feb including 16 males and six females in one tree, 13 at Etchingham on the 16<sup>th</sup> feeding on sycamore seeds and 25 at Old Idsworth (near Finchdean) on 18 Mar. Later in the year ten was the highest count at Arundel WWT on 7 Oct surpassed by 16 at Pulborough Brooks on 31 Dec.

At Cissbury Ring only 18 new birds were ringed compared with 31 in 2002, 28 in 2001 and 35 in 2000.

This red listed species is in decline nationally and is of high conservation concern. It is important, therefore, that all records, particularly of potential breeding, should be submitted. [JAH]

## 1717. HAWFINCH

*Coccothraustes coccothraustes*

### **Scarce breeding resident and very scarce passage migrant. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern.**

The Hawfinch is one of Britain's least numerous breeding species being numbered at only 3000-6500 pairs (*BTO Breeding Atlas 1988-91*) concentrated mainly in southeast England. It is normally restricted to mature forests where it is typically shy and wary and, therefore, difficult to see. The county population may be no more than 50 pairs (*Birds of Sussex*). Consequently, all sightings are valued.

The 24 records received compared favourably with the 18, 25 and 21 for the three previous years respectively. Similarly, the number of sites, ten, was comparable (10, 11 and 10 respectively). However, of these only two were from East Sussex as no records were received for three eastern sites which have appeared in the three previous years, namely Sedlescombe Woods, Footland Wood (Vinehall Street), and Marline Wood (Hastings). However, in West Sussex, West Dean Woods has now featured in three of the past four years and birds were recorded at five new sites, namely Eartham Woods, Hog Wood (Plaistow), Ifold, Pulborough Brooks RSPB and Cowdray Forest (Worth).

There were no reports of even suspected breeding. The largest numbers recorded were in West Sussex with ten at Stapleash Fm (Chilgrove) on 24 Dec and seven at Eartham Woods on 1 Dec. In the east, one was seen at Sheepcote Valley (Brighton) on 14 Oct and at Darwell Res there was one on 16 Nov and two on 14 Dec. Elsewhere, in the west, numbers were between one and four. This species remains scarce and probably under-recorded, particularly in the east of the county. [JAH]

## 1850. SNOW BUNTING

*Plectophenas nivalis*

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

There were eighteen reports up to 10 Feb and a further 14 from 29 Oct. Many of these reports were of long-staying birds.

The two birds first noted at Norman's Bay on 14 Dec 2002 remained until 8 Feb. By contrast, three birds were reported on a single day in January: at Selsey West Fields on the 1<sup>st</sup>, at Hill Barn GC (Worthing) on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and at Widewater (Lancing) on the 12<sup>th</sup>. In February there was a male, remarkably in a Billingshurst garden, on the 8<sup>th</sup> (KAL). A male was at Seaford Head from 10 to 22 Feb.

At the end of the year, the Rye Bay area was particularly favoured. The first bird appeared on 29 Oct and on 27 Nov an unusually-large flock of 19 was found at the western end of the Rye Hbr Beach reserve. On 30 Nov, eight were in the dunes at Camber. These birds moved on quickly, with Rye's last birds being noted on 9 Dec. There was then a gap of a week before a first-year female turned up on the sea wall at Pett Level on 16 Dec, being joined by two further birds by Christmas Eve. These popular birds stayed into 2004. Elsewhere a bird flew west over Beachy Head on 16 Nov and one was on Southwick Beach on 7 Dec. The only record from the far west of the county was of a single at East Head on 27 Nov.

This was an excellent year for the Snow Bunting: records of substantial groups have been very unusual since the 1960s (*Birds of Sussex*). The record at Billingshurst, like that on Bignor Hill in 2002, reminds us that while the Snow Bunting is 'almost entirely confined to coastal sites' (*Birds of Sussex*), there remains plenty of scope for surprise encounters. [CB]

## 1857. YELLOWHAMMER

*Emberiza citrinella*

### **Fairly common resident. Red listed species of high conservation concern.**

The first double figure count of the year came from Steyning Round Hill where 15 were present on 3 Jan. This was followed by 12 at Colworth Fm (Chilgrove) on 5 Jan, 26 in weedy barley stubbles at Gaston Fm (Slindon) on 17 Jan and 30 with Corn Buntings in barley stubbles at Seaford on 26 Jan. At Pulborough Brooks RSPB 60 were counted on 4 Feb, and then 15 were at Southerham Fm (Lewes) on 13 Feb, 32 at Tegdown Hill on 16 Feb, 58 at Newmarket Hill on 18 Feb, 47 at Pickers Hill (Balsdean) on 19 Feb and 31 at Ditchling Beacon on 22 Feb. At Three Bridges there were 30 on 1 Mar, with 12 at Henfield on the same day. There were 28 at Telscombe on 5 Mar, 59 were at Plumpton Plain on 8 Mar, 16 at New Erringham Fm on 9 Mar with ten at Albourne the same day and 44 were at Burnt House Bostal (Keymer) on 28 Mar. At Saldean 12 were reported on 4 Apr, then 11 were at Greenlease Fm (Church Norton) on 10 Apr and 19 at Westmeston on 23 Apr.

Some possible evidence of spring passage came when singles were logged at Selsey Bill on 22 and 30 Mar.

The first report of singing came from Lambston Stone (Ashdown Forest) with two singing males on 5 Mar (later than 2002 when they first sang on 22 Feb). A total of 251 pairs/territorial males was recorded from 71 sites across the county. Sixty-five pairs on Ashdown Forest was much higher than the 40 pairs recorded in 2002. Other sites holding double figures were Brighton Wild Park with ten pairs (up one pair on 2002), Goldballs

Estate (Heyshott) also held ten pairs, and 15 pairs were recorded at Pulborough Brooks RSPB (down on 2002's peak of 23 pairs but still greater than 2001). Last singing was reported from Millbrook (Ashdown Forest) on 30 Jul. Counts of breeding birds from defined areas can be found on pages 196 - 199.

Evidence of passage came in the autumn when two flew west past Hastings on 8 Oct.

The second winter period started with a flock of 25 at Stump Bottom (Steyning) on 18 Sep. Twenty were at Chantry Hill on 5 Oct, with numbers there rising to 38 by 15 Dec, and 14 were at Stakers Fm (Yapton) on 7 Oct. Other counts from that month came from Cedar Fm (Hurst Green) with 40 on 16 Oct, ten along the Arun Valley on 24 Oct and 30 at Mount Harry on 26 Oct. Observers at Pulborough Brooks recorded 65 on 3 Nov. Thirty were in a mixed finch flock at Constantia Manor (Isfield) on 6 Nov, with 13 in the lower Adur Valley the same day and 20 at Ashcombe Bottom (Lewes) on 17 Nov. Sixty-five in three fields at Pulborough Brooks on 3 Dec repeated the previous month's total. Fifty were counted at Coates Common on 28 Dec and 20 were at Theale Fm (Slinfold) on the last day of the year. [APC]

#### 1866. **ORTOLAN BUNTING**

*Emberiza hortulana*

**Very scarce, mainly autumn, visitor.**

Three first winter birds were seen in the autumn: at Combe Haven on 10 Aug (KMJ), Shooter's Bottom (Beachy Head) on 7 Sep (NJNP) and in fields near Anchor Bottom west of Beeding Hill on 13 Sep (ARK, CW). Only in 1961 were more recorded (five), although three have been recorded in five previous years including 1973, 1983 and 1993! Fifteen of the 19 seen in the county since 1990 have been in the autumn. That at Combe Haven is the earliest autumn record (previous to this it was 14 Aug 1987, also at this site). [RJF]

#### 1874. **LITTLE BUNTING**

*Emberiza pusilla*

**Very rare vagrant.**

One was seen briefly at Sheepcote Valley (Brighton) on 1 Oct (IJW) before departing east. This is the ninth county record and the first since 1998 when one was at Birling Gap on 20 Sep. Records fall between 11 Jan to 5 Apr and 20 Sep to 3 Nov with one in the 'autumn'. They include the first British record which was caught near the old naphtha works at Brighton (close to where Roedean School now stands) on 2 Nov 1864 and is now in the Booth Museum (BoMNH 207569). [RJF]

#### 1877. **REED BUNTING**

*Emberiza schoeniclus*

**Fairly common resident, passage migrant and winter visitor. Red listed species of high conservation concern.**

During the first winter period, double figure counts were made at 19 different locations. The largest was 140 at the Old Airstrip (Ashdown Forest) on 6 Jan with 50 there on 21 Feb and 50 again on 21 Mar. Other notable counts included 60 at Pett Level on 4 and 12 Jan, 60 at Lewes Brooks on 7 Jan, 40 at Wrens Warren (Ashdown Forest) on 9 Jan, 30 at Rodmell on 11 Jan, 30 at Cuckmere Haven on 5 Feb, 38 at Edburton on 22 Feb, and 65 at Chelwood Vachery (Ashdown Forest) on 23 Mar. Birds were reported in barley

stubbles at Hardham, game cover crops at Spithurst, in gardens at Steyning and on the bird feeders at Pulborough Brooks RSPB.

Evidence of spring passage came when one was found at Widewater (Lancing) on 20 Mar. Other probable passage birds were a single on Cooden Beach GC on 12 Apr and two at Worthing on 30 Apr.

The first singing bird of the year was heard at Arundel WWT on 9 Feb. Up to 233 singing males were reported at 54 sites across the county. The 64 pairs recorded at Rye Hbr was a welcome return to form for this site and was the highest count there for at least six years. A high count also came from Combe Haven with 40 pairs. Ashdown Forest held 28 pairs, continuing the increase noticed there in recent years (20 pairs were recorded in 2002). The upward trend was not in evidence at Pulborough Brooks RSPB; the 16 pairs recorded there was down from the peak of 34 pairs counted in 2002. Another site with lower numbers was Thorney Island, where they dropped from 12 to nine pairs. The last reported singing was along the River Mole at Gatwick, with one on 21 Jun. Counts of breeding birds from defined areas can be found on pages 196 - 199.

Autumn passage occurred in late September and through October. Observers at Brighton Wild Park counted 15 between 27 Sep and 8 Oct and, at Beachy Head, 40 between 17 Sep and 16 Oct with a peak of nine on 1 Oct. Two flew west past Hastings on 8 Oct. Up to 30 flew east at Sheepcote Valley (Brighton) on 11 Oct, with 16 at Hastings CP the same day. Forty-two flew east at The Severals (Church Norton) on 16 Oct and one flew over the Pagham Hbr Visitor Centre on 30 Oct.

Only 11 sites held double figure counts in the second winter period. There were 70 at the Old Airstrip (Ashdown Forest) on 22 Oct with 15 at Five Ways (Ashdown Forest) on 28 Oct. Twenty were at Pagham North Fields on 1 Nov, 30 were along the west side of Pagham Hbr on 23 Nov and, at Coates Common, 20 on the 27<sup>th</sup> rose to 30 by 28 Dec. On 28 Nov, ten were flushed by a Barn Owl at Castle Water (Rye Hbr). In December, 25 were at Pulborough Brooks on the 3<sup>rd</sup>. Other large counts at the end of the year included 12 at the Long Pool (Pagham Hbr) on the 10<sup>th</sup>, 15 at Chantry Hill on the 15<sup>th</sup>, and on 30 Dec 30 were in sunflowers at Pett Level. The largest flock of the year, 150, was at Scotney Court GP and came on 31 Dec. [APC]

## 1881. **BLACK-HEADED BUNTING**

*Emberiza melanocephala*

### **Very rare vagrant**

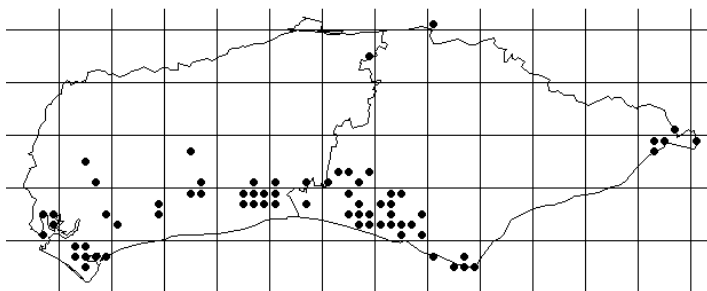
An adult male at Sidlesham Common from at least 13 to 26 Jul (MRB, RP *et al*) has been accepted by BBRC and is the fourth county record. It regularly sang from exposed perches (particularly power lines and pylons) generally giving good views and allowing high-quality photographs to be taken. Close examination of some photographs (e.g. *Birding World* 16:275) indicated some apparent minor damage to one of its feet. Previous county records were in November 1868 (an adult female shot on Brighton racecourse - the first British record), September 1971 (an adult male at Rye Hbr) and mid-June 1994 (an adult female at Birling Gap). [RJF]

## 1882. **CORN BUNTING**

*Emberiza calandra*

**Fairly common but decreasing resident. Red listed species of high conservation concern.**

The map shows the locations of all records during the year. In the first winter period, 21 sites held counts in double figure numbers. The first reported large flock was 20 at Steyning Round Hill on 3 Jan and 22 flew over Harbour Fm (Rye Hbr) on 26 Jan. At Scotney Court GP there was a flock of 40 on 6 Feb, at East Guldeford Level 42 on 14 Feb, with 33 still present on 27 Mar, and at Piddinghoe 30 on 26 Feb. Thirty-two were counted at Newmarket Hill on 1 Mar, 27 were at Plumpton Plain on 8 Mar, New Erringham Fm (Shoreham) held 45 on 9 Mar, and 30 were at Beeding Cement Works on 15 Mar. The last big flock of the first winter period was at Tegdown (near Brighton) where 24 were counted on 3 Apr. Four were recorded at Selsey Bill on 15 Apr, indicating the possibility of a small passage.



The first report of spring songsters was of four heard at Birling Gap on 19 Mar. Seventy-two singing males were reported from 31 sites across the county. Up to seven pairs were reported from various farms in the Sidlesham area and another seven pairs were at Wepham Down. Other sites with multiple pairs included six pairs at Langford Fm (Lavant Down), four pairs at Birling Gap and four pairs at Ovingdean. This year also saw the return of breeding birds to Thorney Island. The total represents a huge improvement in the fortunes of Corn Buntings in the county. Farmers, under government-funded agri-environment schemes, are creating better habitats, the milder winters have assisted survival rates and coverage of downland areas has increased.

An unusual record, both in terms of location and time of year, was a single at Pulborough Brooks RSPB on 27 Jul.

Post-breeding flocks gathered in August and September. The largest were at Mill Hill (Shoreham) with 30 on 6 Aug and 30 at Newhaven Tide Mills on 15 Sep.

In the second winter period, there were seven at Harbour Fm on 4 Nov rising to 74 by 2 Dec. Elsewhere, 35 were at Lychpole Hill (Cissbury) on 8 - 9 Nov, 15 were at Rye Hbr Wader Pool on 13 Nov, and 30 were reported from Ashcombe Bottom on 17 Nov. Eleven were seen at East Guldeford Level on 17 Dec and 36 roosted in reeds at Thorney Deeps on 21 Dec. Big flocks at the end of the year were 50 at Lea Farm (Patching) on 28 Dec, 21 at Tarring Neville on 30 Dec and 70 at Scotney Court GP on the last day of the year. [APC]

## ESCAPES and FERAL BIRDS

All records of BOU Category D species, of apparently feral individuals of other species and of probable or certain escapes from captivity, 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 2003 (unless stated otherwise). It should be noted that the identity of these birds is largely unchecked. ***In order to track records, particularly those involving wildfowl which are prone to wander between sites, observers are requested to include the sex and age of individuals when submitting records.*** Birds that can not be ascribed to species or group of species are excluded. Systematic order, nomenclature and taxonomy follows Dickinson (2003). Useful references are Madge & Burn (1988) (wildfowl), Juniper & Parr (1998) (parrots), Clement *et al* (1993) (finches) and Vriends (1988) (cage birds). List compiled by Richard Fairbank unless indicated otherwise.

Clement P, Harris A & Davis J 1993. *Finches & Sparrows: an identification guide.* Helm.

Dickinson, E C (Ed) 2003. *The Howard Moore Complete Checklist of the Birds of the World* (3rd Edition). Christopher Helm.

Juniper, T & Parr, M 1998. *Parrots: A Guide to the Parrots of the World.* Pica Press.

Madge S & Burn H 1988. *Wildfowl: an identification guide to the ducks, geese and swans of the world.* Helm.

Ogilvie, M A *et al* 2003. Non-native birds breeding in the United Kingdom in 2001. *Brit. Birds* 96:620-625.

Vriends, M M 1988. *The MacDonaldd Encyclopaedia of Cage and Aviary Birds.* MacDonaldd Orbis.

### SILVER PHEASANT

*Lophura nycthemera*

**Resident in montane forests of China and SE Asia.** Fifteen variable races occur, the most stunning are understandably popular in captivity.

A male was seen at West Dean Woods on 26-27 Feb.

### SWAN GOOSE

*Anser cygnoides*

**Rare in E Asia.** The ancestor of the domestic 'Chinese' goose.

One was seen at Greatham Bridge on 13 Dec.

### LESSER WHITE-FRONTED GOOSE

*Anser erythropus*

**Breeds across the arctic taiga, wintering from SE Europe.** Winter vagrants are not quite annual in the UK but this species has yet to be recorded as a wild bird in the county, although it has been in Kent.

**2002:** An adult consorting with Canada Geese on Lewes Brooks on 21-22 Jan has been accepted by BBRC as most likely being an escape from captivity.

**2003.** An adult on the Lewes Brooks on 22 Jan was assumed to be an escape. It was presumably the bird reported there on 21-22 Jan 2002. [RJF]

## **BAR-HEADED GOOSE**

*Anser indicus*

**Breeds central Asia, migrates south to northern India for winter.** A favourite bird at wildfowl collections, individuals or even small groups can wander on occasions. Only one escaped pair bred in UK in 2001 (Ogilvie *et al* (2003)), *cf.* three in 2000).

Young birds were seen in the west of the county during the year suggesting that breeding occurred nearby. In Chichester Hbr two were seen at Thorney Deepes on 20 Apr with two adults and a juvenile there on 30 Jul while on 8 Sep nine were seen at East Chidham and six at Cobnor Farm, with six adults and three 'well-grown' young in Bosham Channel on 9<sup>th</sup>. Seven were seen at Thorney Deepes during 27 Sep-10 Oct with three in Fishbourne Channel on 13 Oct. Away from Chichester Hbr one was present in the Lower Cuckmere Valley from 5 Feb-5 Mar while four at Ivy Lake (Chichester GPs) on 10 Apr may have been the four seen flying west over Pagham Hbr on the 29<sup>th</sup>. Two were seen at Pulborough Brooks RSPB from 11 May, with one on Pett Levels on 2 Jun perhaps being that seen at Scotney Court GP on 17 Aug and Rye Hbr LNR on 13-14 Sep. It or another was at Scotney Court GP on 13 Oct and 14 Dec with one in the lower Cuckmere Valley on 28 Dec.

## **EMPEROR GOOSE**

*Anser canagicus*

**Breeding mainly confined to Alaska, winters Aleutian Islands.** Present in many wildfowl collections.

One was seen at Arlington Res on 12 Oct.

## **SNOW GOOSE**

*Anser caerulescens*

**Breeds arctic North America, winters southern USA and Mexico.** Presumed vagrants in UK most winters but greatly outnumbered by escapes. One paired with a Greylag Goose *A. anser* in Hampshire in 2001 (Ogilvie *et al* (2003)).

Two of the three white morph individuals present at Scotney Court GP in Dec 2002 (SxBR 55:174) remained to at least 16 Feb with a blue morph individual there on 13 Jan. Two were again seen at Scotney Court GP on 21 Jul and 17 Aug with one at Thorney Deepes on 30 Jul, at nearby East Chidham on 8 Sep and back at Thorney between 27 Sep-10 Oct. Two at Rye Hbr LNR on 13-14 Sep may have been those returning to Scotney Court GP on 13 Oct although only one was seen there subsequently, from mid December. All records most likely relate to escapes from captivity.

## **BLACK SWAN**

*Cygnus atratus*

**Common resident throughout much of Australia and New Zealand.** Commonly kept in wildfowl collections, full-winged birds are liable to wander. Escaped pairs bred at nine locations in UK in 2001 (Ogilvie *et al* (2003)).

Breeding was recorded in the county for the third year running with a pair seen at West Ashling with two downy young on 2 Jan and an adult with two small downy cygnets at Benbow Pond (Cowdray) on 25 Oct, neither dates suggesting complete adjustment to life

in the Northern Hemisphere! Long-staying individuals seen in previous years were present in the Cuckmere Valley and on Lewes Brooks between February and June and on Henfield Levels in January and April, with presumably the same individual in the lower R Adur in June and July. In the far east of the county at least three were seen with one or two present at Scotney Court GP from late May to the end of the year, one at Rye Hbr LNR on 8 Oct and three at Jury's Gap on 30 Dec. One was recorded at Sovereign Harbour Marina and in Princes Park (Eastbourne) during September-November, one was on Petworth Park Lake on 16 Nov and one was in the Bury/Amberley area in mid December.

## **BLUE-WINGED GOOSE**

*Cyanochen cyanoptera*

**Endemic and locally common in the Ethiopian highlands.**

One was seen at Pulborough Brooks RSPB on 5 Jan and at Greatham Bridge on 8 Feb. This species is not entirely dissimilar to the Cape Barren Goose *Cereopsis novaehollandiae* seen in this area in Feb 2002 (SxBR 55:174).

## **PARADISE SHELDUCK**

*Tadorna variegata*

**Common resident in New Zealand.**

A male seen at Pond Lye (near Goddards Green) on 20 and 26 Mar had been seen in November 2002 (SxBR 55:174) while it, or another male, was present at Arlington Res on 18 Jun and on 8 and 23 Oct.

## **MANED DUCK**

*Chenonetta jubata*

**Widespread and common resident in Australia.** Also known as Maned Goose or Australian Wood Duck. Present in many wildfowl collections (e.g. Arundel WWT).

One was present on Lewes Brooks between 12 Jan and 26 Feb and one was at Petworth Park Lake on 23 Mar, while one on Pett Pannel Sewer on 4 and 19 Apr was most likely the male seen there on 5 Jul.

## **RINGED TEAL**

*Callonetta leucophrys*

**Restricted to forested pools and marshes in central South America.** An attractive duck, often in wildfowl collections (e.g. Arundel WWT).

A female was seen at Weir Wood Res on 16 Feb with presumably the same individual there between 11 Aug and 6 Sep. These records most likely relate to the female seen intermittently at this site towards the end of 2002 (see SxBR 55:175) and are thought to originate from a feral pair present in the Crawley area for some years (per B Johnson).

## **SPECKLED TEAL**

*Anas flavirostris*

**Common in Andes and southern South America.**

One considered to be of the central Andean race *oxyptera*, known as Sharp-billed Teal, was seen on Steyning Levels on 25-26 Jan.



## ROSYBILL

*Netta peposaca*

**Widespread in the lowlands of southern South America.** Commonly kept in wildfowl collections.

Two, sex not noted, were present on Sidlesham Ferry Pool on 15 Apr.

## WHITE STORK

*Ciconia ciconia*

**Rare vagrant from continental Europe, mainly in the spring.** In most years several escapes are at large in the UK, often wandering widely.

One was seen at Beddingham (near Lewes) on 13-15 Mar and, presumably the same, at Pulborough Brooks RSPB on 19-20 Mar. It, or another, was at Pulborough Brooks on 20 Apr while one over Rye Hbr LNR on 31 Aug may have been that seen at Filsham LNR on 2 Sep and at Scotney Court GP on 13 Sep. Comparison with established patterns of occurrence suggest the March individual to be the least likely of these to have been a wild bird.

## BLACK KITE

*Milvus migrans*

**Rare vagrant.**

A juvenile wearing jesses, was seen at Beachy Head on 28 Sep (DC, TJW *et al*).

## LANNER FALCON

*Falco biarmicus*

**Mainly resident in southeast Europe, Africa and west Asia.**

One was seen at Beachy Head on 12 Apr and 4 Oct, a male was present at Offham Chalk Pit (near Lewes) on 22 May and a probable adult female was at Paghham Hbr on 28 Sep and 4 Oct. The bird at Beachy Head was considered to be of the race *erlangeri* while that at Offham was possibly *feldeggi*.

## SAKER FALCON

*Falco cherrug*

**Mainly scarce resident from central Europe to N India, common on the Tibetan plateau.** Popular with falconers.

Singles were seen at Ambersham Common on 1 Feb, Amberley Wild Brooks on 17 Feb and Weir Wood Res on 10 Aug and 7 Dec. Those at Ambersham and Weir Wood Res were considered to be juveniles. There were no reports of the individual seen very irregularly in western harbours since 1999 (*SxBR* 52:159, 53:167, 54:165 & 55:175).

## HARRIS'S HAWK

*Parabuteo unicinctus*

**Widespread but patchily distributed from the southern USA to Patagonia.** Popular with falconers and often flown at public displays.

One was seen in Worthing GC-Cissbury area in March.

## RED-TAILED HAWK

*Buteo jamaicensis*

**Commonly breeds throughout much of N America and the Caribbean, some move S in winter as far as Central America.** Perhaps the most commonly kept *Buteo* in captivity.

One was seen over Old Idsworth (near Finchdean) on 5 Jan, one at Arlington Res on 15 Mar, one in Worthing on 30 Apr, a juvenile at Harting Down on 4 May and one at Combe Haven on 6 May. The individual in Worthing had apparently started nesting when it was 'retrieved' by a falconer.

## COCKATIEL

*Nymphicus hollandicus*

**Common Australian nomad.** One of the commonest aviary birds.

Single individuals were seen at Brighton Marina on 26 Jan, Thorney Island on 15 Apr and 18 Sep, Worthing Beach on 20-21 Apr, Cooden Beach GC on 1 Jun and flying north over Shoreham-by-Sea on 20 Aug. The bird seen at Worthing roosted on a window ledge.

## RED-RUMPED PARROT

*Psephotus haematonotus*

**Common in the drier parts of SE Australia.** Said to make excellent foster parents in captivity.

One was seen in a garden in Worthing on 20 Jul.

## BUDGERIGAR

*Melopsittacus undulatus*

**Common Australian nomad.** One of the commonest of all cage birds. Wild birds are invariably green or yellow.

The corpse of a green individual was found on Pilsey Sands on 31 Mar while a blue individual was seen at Pagham Lagoon on 4-5 Oct. Surprisingly these are the first records since 2000.

## ALEXANDRINE PARAKEET

*Psittacula eupatria*

**Resident in Indian sub-continent (where generally common) and southeast Asia.**

Captive birds can survive outside in winter provided they have good shelter.

A bird reported as a Ring-necked Parakeet seen at the Pells (Lewes) in January, March and September was considered to be most likely the Alexandrine Parakeet which was present in the area throughout 2002 (SxBR 55:176). This species is very similar to the smaller Ring-necked Parakeet but has prominent maroon shoulder patches.

## MONK PARAKEET

*Myiopsitta monachus*

**Common in the lowlands of southern South America.** Feral populations are well established in parts of Europe (e.g Belgium, Spain) while in 2001 at least 32 birds were present in Borehamwood (Hertfordshire) and seven pairs nested with unknown success (Ogilvie *et al* (2003)). Common in captivity, but can be noisy!

One was photographed in a garden in Bishopstone (Newhaven) on 21 Jul. This is the first to be recorded in Sussex since 1998 (SxBR 51:150).

### **YELLOW-CROWNED PARROT**

*Amazona ochrocep*

**Generally common in northern South America.** This is one of the most widespread members of the *Amazona* genus.

One was seen in Brighton Wild Park on 15 Nov.

### **VILLAGE WEAVER**

*Ploceus cucullatus*

**Widespread and common near habitation across much of sub-Saharan Africa.** The most frequently recorded escaped weaver, it is sometimes known as Black-headed Weaver.

A male was seen in garden in Newhaven on 21 Sep.

### **YELLOW-FRONTED CANARY**

*Serinus mozambicus*

**Common and widespread across much of sub-Saharan Africa.** A popular cage bird, it apparently has much to recommend it – longevity, hardiness and a pleasant song.

One was seen in a garden at West Wittering on 1 Feb, one visited a feeder on Langhurst Estate (Warnham) during 5-7 May and a singing male was seen (and recorded) near Beachy Head Hotel on 24 Aug.

### **BLACK-HEADED SISKIN**

*Carduelis notata*

**Common in montane forests of Central America.** Apparently more males than females are imported as they can be used to hybridise with Canaries!

A bird considered to be this species was seen in a garden in Bexhill on 6 Feb 2002. This and the South American Hooded and Olivaceous Siskins *C. magellanica* and *C. olivacea* are very similar although *C. notata* would appear to be the more commonly kept in captivity.

### **YELLOW-HEADED BLACKBIRD**

*Xanthocephalus xanthocephalus*

**Common in marshland in western North America, it winters as far south as Mexico.**

This species is superficially similar to the smaller Yellow-hooded Blackbird *Agelaius icterocephalus* of northern South America and would seem an unlikely cage bird.

One was reported from a garden in Brighton on 26 Aug.

## Arrival and departure dates of summer visitors, 2003

	First recorded date			Last recorded date		
	2003	Prior to 2003	10yr average ( $\pm$ SD in days)	2003	Prior to 2003	10yr average ( $\pm$ SD in days)
<b>Garganey</b>	22 Feb	02 Feb	27 Feb ( $\pm$ 15)	10 Oct	13 Dec	03 Oct ( $\pm$ 15)
<b>Osprey</b>	12 Mar	07 Mar	23 Mar ( $\pm$ 10)	06 Nov	09 Dec	25 Oct ( $\pm$ 22)
<b>Hobby</b>	06 Apr	03 Apr	13 Apr ( $\pm$ 6)	31 Oct	06 Nov	26 Oct ( $\pm$ 7)
<b>Quail</b>	01 Jun	08 Feb	13 May ( $\pm$ 23)	03 Oct <sup>2</sup>	31 Oct	22 Sep ( $\pm$ 28)
<b>Little Ringed Plover</b>	11 Mar	06 Mar	19 Mar ( $\pm$ 5)	11 Sep	08 Oct	19 Sep ( $\pm$ 9)
<b>Wood Sandpiper</b>	18 Apr	10 Apr	26 Apr ( $\pm$ 12)	07 Sep	16 Nov	10 Oct ( $\pm$ 23)
<b>Pomarine Skua</b>	14 Apr	10 Mar	23 Apr ( $\pm$ 1 8)	29 May	31 Dec	06 Oct ( $\pm$ 81)
<b>Roseate Tern</b>	25 Apr	17 Apr	28 Apr ( $\pm$ 8)	01 Jul	30 Sep	01 Aug ( $\pm$ 26)
<b>Common Tern</b>	25 Mar	21 Mar	29 Mar ( $\pm$ 7)	12 Oct	26 Nov	31 Oct ( $\pm$ 14)
<b>Arctic Tern</b>	08 Apr	05 Apr	12 Apr ( $\pm$ 5)	14 Oct	23 Nov	26 Oct ( $\pm$ 21)
<b>Common/Arctic Tern</b>	26 Apr	10 Mar	30 Mar ( $\pm$ 12)	30 Nov	31 Dec	29 Oct ( $\pm$ 19)
<b>Little Tern</b>	12 Apr	02 Apr	10 Apr ( $\pm$ 5)	15 Sep	04 Nov	25 Sep ( $\pm$ 11)
<b>Black Tern</b>	15 Apr	04 Apr	15 Apr ( $\pm$ 5)	30 Sep	21 Nov	07 Oct ( $\pm$ 11)
<b>Turtle Dove</b>	05 Apr	22 Mar	13 Apr ( $\pm$ 10)	03 Oct	18 Dec	11 Oct ( $\pm$ 8)
<b>Cuckoo</b>	31 Mar	15 Mar	02 Apr ( $\pm$ 6)	14 Sep	11 Nov	26 Sep ( $\pm$ 16)
<b>Nightjar</b>	14 Apr	08 Apr	28 Apr ( $\pm$ 10)	05 Sep	05 Nov	18 Sep ( $\pm$ 24)
<b>Swift</b>	14 Apr	07 Apr	15 Apr ( $\pm$ 5)	23 Sep	22 Nov	20 Oct ( $\pm$ 23)
<b>Wryneck</b>	18 Apr	09 Mar	12 Apr ( $\pm$ 16)	20 Sep	02 Nov	30 Oct ( $\pm$ 11)
<b>Sand Martin</b>	07 Mar	04 Mar	09 Mar ( $\pm$ 5)	21 Oct	05 Dec	23 Oct ( $\pm$ 9)
<b>Swallow</b>	02 Mar	04 Feb	09 Mar ( $\pm$ 13)	25 Nov	28 Dec	01 Dec ( $\pm$ 9)
<b>House Martin</b>	23 Mar	01 Feb	19 Mar ( $\pm$ 11)	24 Oct	18 Dec	17 Nov ( $\pm$ 14)
<b>Tree pipit</b>	29 Mar	17 Mar	29 Mar ( $\pm$ 5)	11 Oct	09 Nov	21 Oct ( $\pm$ 10)
<b>Yellow Wagtail</b>	24 Mar	10 Mar	21 Mar ( $\pm$ 7)	17 Oct	03 Nov	05 Nov ( $\pm$ 15)
<b>Nightingale</b>	05 Apr	21 Mar	05 Apr ( $\pm$ 4)	19 Sep	19 Oct	15 Sep ( $\pm$ 9)
<b>Redstart</b>	25 Mar	13 Mar	26 Mar ( $\pm$ 7)	30 Oct	11 Dec	27 Oct ( $\pm$ 18)
<b>Whinchat</b>	2 Mar	18 Feb	27 Mar ( $\pm$ 23)	05 Nov	02 Dec	07 Nov ( $\pm$ 8)
<b>Wheatear</b>	04 Mar	13 Feb	02 Mar ( $\pm$ 7)	31 Oct	19 Dec	15 Nov ( $\pm$ 15)
<b>Ring Ouzel</b>	22 Mar	02 Feb	16 Mar ( $\pm$ 17)	14 Nov	26 Dec	17 Nov ( $\pm$ 10)
<b>Grasshopper Warbler</b>	04 Apr <sup>3</sup>	04 Apr	10 Apr ( $\pm$ 6)	18 Oct	01 Nov	15 Oct ( $\pm$ 9)
<b>Sedge Warbler</b>	24 Mar	27 Mar	01 Apr ( $\pm$ 5)	12 Sep	29 Oct	13 Oct ( $\pm$ 13)
<b>Reed Warbler</b>	07 Apr	07 Apr	09 Apr ( $\pm$ 4)	19 Oct	13 Nov	01 Nov ( $\pm$ 10)
<b>Lesser Whitethroat</b>	05 Apr	04 Apr	12 Apr ( $\pm$ 7)	04 Oct	21 Nov	15 Oct ( $\pm$ 13)
<b>Whitethroat</b>	27 Mar	19 Mar	02 Apr ( $\pm$ 5)	10 Oct	17 Dec	18 Oct ( $\pm$ 15)
<b>Garden Warbler</b>	30 Mar <sup>4</sup>	01 Apr	06 Apr ( $\pm$ 7)	03 Oct	16 Nov	20 Oct ( $\pm$ 13)
<b>Wood Warbler</b>	15 Apr	07 Apr	19 Apr ( $\pm$ 7)	06 Sep	01 Oct	04 Sep ( $\pm$ 10)
<b>Willow Warbler</b>	13 Mar	04 Mar	15 Mar ( $\pm$ 7)	28 Oct	26 Dec	24 Oct ( $\pm$ 12)
<b>Spotted Flycatcher</b>	29 Apr	08 Apr	23 Apr ( $\pm$ 10)	14 Oct	18 Nov	15 Oct ( $\pm$ 10)
<b>Pied Flycatcher</b>	08 Apr	01 Apr	07 Apr ( $\pm$ 6)	21 Sep	01 Nov	02 Oct ( $\pm$ 7)

## Departure and arrival dates of winter visitors, 2003

	Last recorded date			First recorded date		
	2003	Prior to 2003	10 yr average ( $\pm$ SD) in days	2003	Prior to 2003	10 yr average ( $\pm$ SD) in days
Black-throated Diver	29 May	19 Jun	30 May ( $\pm$ 12)	21 Oct	03 Aug	14 Oct ( $\pm$ 28)
Great Northern Diver	1 Jun	21 Jun	09 May ( $\pm$ 24)	28 Oct	09 Oct	01 Nov ( $\pm$ 25)
Red-necked Grebe	04 May	19 Jun	05 May ( $\pm$ 13)	24 Sep	18 Aug	08 Sep ( $\pm$ 11)
Bewick's Swan	14 Mar	26 Apr	10 Mar ( $\pm$ 8)	06 Dec	15 Oct	05 Nov ( $\pm$ 13)
White-fronted Goose	24 Mar	17 Apr	19 Mar ( $\pm$ 20)	01 Nov	12 Sep	11 Oct ( $\pm$ 48)
Long-tailed Duck	29 Apr	11 Jun	02 May ( $\pm$ 31)	12 Oct	23 Aug	19 Oct ( $\pm$ 26)
Velvet Scoter	05 May	15 Jun	18 May ( $\pm$ 14)	23 Oct	12 Aug	16 Oct ( $\pm$ 22)
Goldeneye	23 Mar	23 May	20 Apr ( $\pm$ 19)	14 Oct <sup>1</sup>	06 Aug	09 Oct ( $\pm$ 19)
Smew	09 Mar	24 Apr	05 Mar ( $\pm$ 29)	12 Nov	03 Nov	03 Dec ( $\pm$ 12)
Goosander	15 Mar	22 May	04 Apr ( $\pm$ 36)	06 Dec	12 Sep	03 Nov ( $\pm$ 25)
Hen Harrier	02 May	19 Jun	18 May ( $\pm$ 18)	01 Sep	04 Aug	06 Sep ( $\pm$ 21)
Purple Sandpiper	12 May	26 May	12 May ( $\pm$ 7)	14 Jul	01 Jul	05 Aug ( $\pm$ 43)
Jack Snipe	23 Apr	19 May	02 May ( $\pm$ 10)	09 Oct	29 Aug	21 Sep ( $\pm$ 15)
Water Pipit	29 Apr	28 May	07 Apr ( $\pm$ 22)	13 Oct	01 Sep	24 Oct ( $\pm$ 11)
Fieldfare	29 Apr	05 Jun	26 Apr ( $\pm$ 12)	24 Sep	13 Aug	26 Sep ( $\pm$ 15)
Redwing	17 Apr	26 May	15 Apr ( $\pm$ 17)	24 Sep	06 Aug	19 Sep ( $\pm$ 1)
Great Grey Shrike	23 Mar	14 May	30 Mar ( $\pm$ 19)	19 Oct	26 Sep	18 Oct ( $\pm$ 6)
Brambling	22 Apr	12 May	21 Apr ( $\pm$ 7)	01 Oct	13 Sep	30 Sep ( $\pm$ 7)

### Arrival and Departure Dates

To make a clear cut-off between arrival and departure dates all January records have been omitted from the table of summer visitors and from the calculation of mean dates and all July dates from the table of winter visitors with the exception of Purple Sandpiper, which have returned to their winter grounds in July for the last five years. The January and July dates are to be found as footnotes. The large numbers of terns seen at seawatches to which a specific identification could not be ascribed have been included as Common/Arctic Tern. The early dates are most likely to refer to Common Tern and the later ones could be either Common or Arctic.

The ten year average is included to indicate if the date for 2003 is unusual. The standard deviation gives an indication of the reliability of the average (64% of values fall within one standard deviation). For example, a standard deviation of  $\pm 7$  means that 64% of the dates fall within 7 days of that average.

1. Excluding one at Pagham on 2 Aug and one at Barcombe Res from 27 Aug.
2. One on 30 Nov on Ashdown Forest was considered to be wintering.
3. Equals earliest county record.
4. Earliest county record.

## SUMMARY OF SOME COMMON BREEDING BIRD COUNTS.

The following table includes some new sites but some, previously reported, were not surveyed in 2003.

Figures relate to pairs or territories. The use of a small hyphen (-) does not necessarily mean that the species was absent. nc = breeding confirmed but no count made. ® = present during the breeding season but no territories identified. np = confirmed as not present. + indicates a minimum count. p = probable breeding.

Species	AL	AN	AY	BC	BP	DR	HC	HO	HP	MF	PB	PC	RH	SF	SP	WP
Mute Swan	2									1	3		6		2	
Mallard	6			1		nc	1		1	12	nc	®	33+		17	
Sparrowhawk							1		1		1					1
Kestrel				®						1	1	®	1		®	2
Grey Partridge										1			5		2	
Pheasant				1			®			5	nc	®			9	2
Moorhen	7			1		1	2			10	15+	1	53		16	
Coot	®					®				1	nc		42+		5	
Woodcock											1-2					
Redshank											10-16					
Stock Dove				®			3		2	1	nc	®	®			2
Woodpigeon				7		®	®		nc	6	nc	4	nc	nc	14	71
Collared Dove				®			1		nc	®	np	np	nc	p	4	38
Turtle Dove							1				np	4	7+	p		
Cuckoo										1	2+	®	nc	p	1	
Tawny Owl											2+	np		p	1	
Green Woodpecker				1		4	1		1	1	3	®	1+		2	3
Great Spotted Woodpecker				1		3	3		1	1	3	np	®	1	1	2
Sky Lark										4	10+	np	21+	1	5	10
Swallow							1			2	1+	np	®		1	
Meadow Pipit										®	20+	np	16		®	2
Tree Pipit											np	np				
Pied Wagtail	®					®	®			1	4	np	®	p	1	1
Wren				14		25	16		nc	39	nc	34	36	14	32	103
Dunnock				2	3	5	3		nc	17	nc	7	39	5	15	59
Robin				24		35	23	3	nc	33	nc	43	9	9	11	152
Nightingale						2					5+					
Blackbird				7	19	nc	8	17	nc	22	nc	10	36	6	29	116
Song Thrush				2	10	®	3	8	1	1	11+	8	5	3	1	15
Mistle Thrush							®				3+	®	®		®	
Sedge Warbler	4									4	12		81		4	
Reed Warbler	53					®				24	2+		120+		43	
Lesser Whitethroat	1					nc	®			1	3+		6	p	1	2
Whitethroat	2			1			®			8	14+	2	62	p	5	23

Species	AL	AN	AY	BC	BP	DR	HC	HO	HP	MF	PB	PC	RH	SF	SP	WP
Garden Warbler						8					2+	®	np	p		1
Blackcap				2		4	3		1	4	5+	1		3	3	13
Chiffchaff				2		11	11		1	4	8	10	nc	8	3	14
Willow Warbler				®							1	10	np		®	
Goldcrest				1			3			®	12+	1		p	®	
Spotted Flycatcher							1				np					
Long-tailed Tit				1			2			1	nc	®	2	p	®	5
Marsh Tit			®	1		nc	2				3+	np				
Coal Tit			1	1			1				nc	np		p		
Blue Tit		4	22	14		nc	15	4	nc	11	nc	nc	®	6	19	61
Great Tit		2	8	8		nc	11	1	1	7	nc	15	®	9	11	49
Nuthatch			4	1		nc	1				3+					
Treecreeper							2				nc	np	®	p		
Jay				®			1			®	nc	2		p	®	3
Magpie				1		nc	®		1	4	6	®	®	p	9	45
Jackdaw							®			3	nc	®	nc		®	1
Carrion Crow				1			®		®	4	7	®		1	6	18
Starling							1		®	1	nc	®	2	nc	1	29
House Sparrow							®		®	2	®	®	®	nc	5	16
Chaffinch				13	4	26	7			30	nc	19	7+	13	22	43
Greenfinch				®	17		2			8	5	®	8+	3	14	38
Goldfinch						nc	1			5	8	®	nc	nc	®	7
Linnet										5	12	3	nc		1	10
Bullfinch							2		1	1	3+	1		p	®	2
Yellow-hammer				1					1	4	8+	9		1	3	10
Reed Bunting	7									2	16	np	64		6	

### Key to Sites:

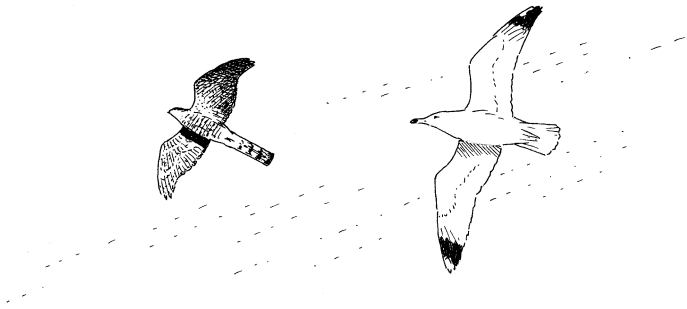
- AL Aldingbourne & Lidsey Rife. 4 km of Waterway Bird Survey.
- AN Arlington Reservoir.
- AY Ardingly Reservoir.
- BC Barns Copse, Binstead. 16.1 ha mixed deciduous woodland.
- BP Brooklands Park, Lancing.
- DR Darwell Reservoir.
- HC High Chimneys Estate, Battle. 24 ha of deciduous woodland with some grassland.
- HO Hove, Three Corner Copse & Hove Park.
- HP Hotham Park, Bognor.
- MF Marsh Farm, Binstead. 67 ha mixed farmland.
- PB Pulborough Brooks RSPB Reserve.
- PC Pound Common, Chailey.
- RH Rye Harbour LNR & SSSI recording area.
- SF Scobell's Farm, Barcombe. 10.4 ha grass farm with some woodland.

- SP Sefter Farm, Rose Green. 95 ha mixed farm.  
WP Wild Park, Moulsecomb, Brighton including Hollingbury Camp and Golf Course and parts of nature reserve. Downland scrub, farmland and setaside.

The following sites, surveyed in previous years, were not surveyed in 2003.

- BW Bewl Water.  
CH Cocking Hill Farm.  
GF Grantley's Farm, Maynards Green.  
HF Home Farm, Barlavington.  
PW Paddock Wood, Cocking.  
VB Barnes Wood, Vinehall Street.  
VF Footlands Wood, Vinehall Street.

*Details of breeding bird surveys were from: PR Belchamber, RG Harris, JC & CA Holt, P Hughes, R Knight, RT Pepper, JF Smitherman, PJ Whitcomb, and Dr. B Yates.*





## CONTRIBUTORS AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS, 2003

We are grateful to the following observers for records for the 2003 *Sussex Bird Report*.

M. Abbott	LR Bird	J. Clausen	A. de Potier
J. Adams	JM Birdsey	BR Clay	CH Dean
E. Akam	S. Blackman	S&J Clements	A. Deleiros
R. Allan	D. Boddington	EA Clifford	MN Denness
SR Allen	RM Bond (Bob)	C. Cockburn	RH Dexter
M. Allison	A. Borrows	GA Cockburn	J. Dickerson
J. Andersson	JF Boulcott	JA Cocks	B. Dickson
J. Andrews	W. Bowers	CB Collins	J. Dickson
J. Apps	N. Bowie	CF Collins	S. Diserens
AC Armitage	AL Bowley	M. Collins	J. Dixon
B. Atfield	J. Bozic	MA Collins	K. Downer
MF Austin	RC Bradbury	M. Constantine	RJ Downes
	CLG Brand	AS Cook	RK Dray
JA Baber	M. Bransden	DC Cooke	NA Driver
JWP Bacon	MN Brayshaw	C. Cooper	DP Dunk
M. Baggs (MBa)	PM Brayshaw	D. Cooper	JAG Dunlop
JTA Bagley	D. Bridges	DR Cooper	S. Dunsmore-Rouse
GR Bagnell	H. Brocklebank	I. Cooper	
O. Baillie	C. Brooks	JF Cooper	M. Eade
JL Baker	D. Brothwell	K. Cooper	R. Eade
G. Balcikonis (GB)	P. Brown	N. Cooper	B. Easlea
CF Ball	MR Buchanan	DEG Copeland	RD Eaton
PC Bance	D. Buckingham (DBu)	DJ Corley	DJM Edgar
DG Barber	PW Bulfield	DFJ Cornall	PJ Edmonds
CJR Barfield	KR Burch	C. Corrigan	R. Edwards
GK Barker	N. Burt	AP Cotton	TJ Edwards
IT Bamard	TN Buttle	J. Coughlan	RD Evans
A. Bashford		D. Cousins	S. Evans
RJ Bassett	IK Callister	M. Cowlard	M. Eveleigh
S. Bateman	G Carrington	R. Cowser	
PH Bateup	A. Carter	B. Cox	IJJ Faichnie
G. Bawcutt	BJ Carter	BR Cox	RJ Fairbank
R. Baxter	P. Carter	N. Cranfield	JA Feest
S. Bayley (SB)	R. Carver	DE Crawley	BJ Fellows
N. Bayly (NB)	E. Catlett	D. Crespin	N. Fletcher
R. Beal	GL Champion	S. Cross	B. Fogden
PA Beckett	B. Chapman	PR Cullen	BF Forbes
S. Bedford	C. Chapman	J. Curson (JC)	T. Forbes
J. Beeken	M. Charlton	SPM Curson	A. Ford
JSS Beesley	ME Charlwood	T. Cuthbert	R. Ford
PR Belchamber	RH Charlwood		TJ Forward
P. Bennett	SA Charlwood	T. Dalrymple	CJ Fox
VP Bentley	J. Chawner	J. Davies	L. Frankland
AJ Benton	A. Cheeseman	C. Davis	MG Freeman
PJ Biggs	K. Chinn	E. Davis	DC Fry
D. Billings	I. Chuter	R. Davison	C. Furlepa
G. Binns	F. Clarke	S. Dawson	
N. Galloway	JRT Harris	RA Jackson	DR Livett
SM Gamble	N. Harris	B. James	AH Lloyd

A. Gardiner	RG Harris	BD James	KA Lloyd
S. Gardiner	PR Harrison	P. James	S. Loosley
R. Gasson	M. Harvey	R. James	RE Lowe
G. Geoghegan	JR Havers	CR Janman	CD Lowmass
S. Gilbert	MJ Hawkins	K. Jarvis	JC Luck
J. Gill	KC Hearne	NI Jennings	PJ Luffingham
PMA Gill	MJ Helps	DJ Jode	
R. Gill	R. Henning (RHe)	PJ Johnson	J. MacCallum-Stewart
M. Gillingham	PKW Herbert	RJ Johnson	D. Madgin (DM)
BR Gilmore	J. Herridge	A. Johnston	S. Madgin
CW Glanfield	M. Hibbard	KM Johnston	L. Manns
DJ Goldsmith	AI Hillman	PE Jones	C. Marrable
H. Gordon	JA Hobson		PF Marten
E. Gorsuch	P. Hodge	G. Kennett	JM Maskell
JS Gowers	J. Hodson	R. Kent	SP Maskell
GW Gowlett	AJ Holcombe	DE Killick	MJ Mason
AS Grace	BJ Holcombe	D. King	R. Mason
V. Grant	AM Holden	JW King	PH Massini
B. Gravett	R. Hollins	M. King	DW Mawford
N. Gray	LG Holloway	RM& Kirk	K. May
D. Green	RG Holmes	AR Kitson	P. Maynard
P. Green	CA Holt	L. Knight	A. MAYO
NM Greenaway	JC Holt	R. Knight (Rex)	D. McNiven
RR Greenhalf	CA Holter		CW Melgar
W. Greenwood	C. Hooker	M. Lambert	B. Metcalfe
I. Griffiths	CE Hope	MP Lanaway	K. Mewett (KM)
J. Grover	P Hopecroft (PHo)	RJ Lanaway	A. Michell
AJ Guest	A. Horton	D. Land	O. Mitchell
AC Gutteridge	A. House (AH)	DC Lang	N. Montegriffo
TJ Guy	M. Howard	O. Laugharne	P. Morgan
	T. Howard-Jones	PF Le Brocq	D. Morrison
K. Hackett	DG Hughes	HJA Lee	A. Morriss
PRJ Hadland	P. Hughes (PHu)	N. Lees	BM Mortlock
RK Haggar	J. Hunt	M. Leggatt	R. Moynihan
MP Hall	AM Hutson	J. Lewin	I. Muldoon
R. Hamblett		TJ Lincoln	MF Mullen
CH Hamilton	R. Ingram	DJ Ling	MJ Mullis
M. Hampton	RA Ives	SH Linington	B. Murray
R. Harman		D. Livett	
JA Newnham	B. Rackstraw	MJ Silk	ST Underdown
K. Noble	T. Rawlings	J. Simons	MC Upstone
R. Norman	PN Ray	P. Simons	C. Upton
	PJ Raynor	IM Simpson	ED Urquhart
RA Oswald	N. Redman	RN Simpson	
LM Owen	B. Reeve	A. Simpson MBE	D. Walker
RA Owen	JP Reeves	M. Sinden	S. Walters
RC Owen	JE Richardson	N. Skinner	N. Ward
	SC Richardson	B. Slyfield	B. Watkins
MI Page	G. Roberts	C. Smart	P. Watkins
AJ Palmer	GCM Roberts	DI Smith	C. Watkins
JC Parish	D. Robinson	DJ Smith	AB Watson
D. Parker	R. Robinson	PA Smith	AE Watson
J. Parker	S. Robinson	RF Smith (Dr)	M. Watson

S. Parmenter	SJ Robinson	RF Smith (Mr)	P. Watson
TW Parmenter	BM Rogers	S. Smith (SS)	RF Watson
B. Pask	DP Rogers	JF Smitherman	P. Webster
PT Patton	G. Rooney	I. Standivan	I. Wells
SJ Patton	PP Roper	JC Steedman	AJ Wende
PN Paul	MK Rossor	JM Steedman	DR West
M. Payne	P. Rowe	V. Stevens	JD Weston
D. Penfold	C. Rowney	PJ Strangeman	P&S Whitby
B. Pennock	R. Rownsby	C. Sutton	IJ Whitcomb
RT Pepper		GA Sutton	PJ Whitcomb (PJWh)
A. Perry	MG Russell	S. Sutton (SSu)	GC White
DM Perry	MJ Russell		RV White
CB Peverett	Rye Bay RG	B. Taylor	T. White
AP Phillips	SJR Rumsey	BJ Taylor	D. Whitehouse
MJ Phillips	W. Salmon	SR Taylor	AM Whitman
SM Phillips	RF Sanderson	CR Tazzyman	JH Whitman
R. Pike	RJ Sandison	B. Teale	DC Williams
A. Podmore	D. Santer	A. Thomas	J. Willsher
D. Pomeroy	G. Saunders	D. Thompson	HMV Wilsdon
NJN Pope	RJ Saunders	P. Thompson	PJ Wilson (PJWi)
DA Potter	B. Savage	RJ Thorne	TJ Wilson
M. Potter	J. Scammell	D. Thurgood	N. Woods
RA Powell	M. Scampion	PC Tinning	S. Woolley
HDV Prendergast	M. Scott-ham	R. Toffs	C. Wright
MG Prince	CM Seaton	G. Tomsett	CMV Wright
RW Prior	RJ Senior	PM Troake	
D. Pritty	MV Sennitt	JE Trowell	BJ Yates
H. Pugh	M. Shaft	WH Truckle	
RN Pulley	M. Shaw	M. Tucker	
	CR Shawyer	M. Turner (MTu)	
T. Quittenden	A. Shepherd		

## **SURVEYS:**

Society members again gave a great deal of their time during the year to a wide range of national, county and local surveys. Their invaluable support and contributions are acknowledged with grateful thanks. Details of the surveys and the Sussex organisers follow.

***Heronry Census:*** This long-standing census is organised in Sussex by Dr AB Watson, 83 Buckingham Road, Shoreham-by-sea, West Sussex. Counts of known heronries are given in the systematic list, contributors in 2002 were: M Baggs, CJR Barfield, S. Bayley, W Bowers, D Buckingham, CH Dean, Ms H. Gordon, R Henning, RG Holmes, R Knight, DC Lang, PJ Luffingham, Mrs BM Mortlock, Dr JA Newnham, M Scott-ham, I Standivan, S Sutton, M Turner, Dr AB Watson.

***Wetland Bird Survey (WeBS):*** Monthly counts were carried out for this BTO/WWT/RSPB/JNCC survey and organised by CD Lowmass, 33 Barn Close, Seaford, East Sussex. Counts 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: P. Atkey, Mrs B. Atkey, J Badley, D Ball, PC Bance, C Barfield, J Barnard, P Bennett, G. Bentley, Mrs J. Bentley, K Benyon-Tinker, G Binns, Dr C Brooks, T Callaway, D Carey, R Carver, Dr J Chapman, T Clements, GA Cockburn, Mrs S Cocker, CB Collins, C Cook, I Cooper, T Dalrymple, R Davison, Ms A de Potier, G Durey, AR Eales, P Edwards, S Evans, Dr B Fellows, M Freeman, R French, D Fry, R Gardner, S. Gilbert, J Glover, DJ Golds, J Gowen, NM Greenaway, RR Greenhalf, G Griffin, RG Harris, JL Herring, R Hill, DA & Mrs SR Hilton, M. Holmes, J Houlden, P Hughes, Mrs B James, P Jones, R Kent, A Kirkwood, R Knight, DC Lang, HJA Lee, P Lees, M Love, CD Lowmass, N Mitchell, R Morris, Mrs BM Mortlock, Dr JA Newnham, Ms A Parfitt, Ms S Patton, RT Pepper, J Phillips, M Phillips, B Puttock, T Quittenden, Mrs P Ramsey, S Richardson, H Roberts, R Robinson, S Robinson, M Rosser, R. Satchell, P Selby, J Sharpe, A and Mrs IM Simpson, Ms C Skinner, DI Smith, M Smith, P Smith, S Smith, Miss CA Taylor, S Taylor, JE Trowell, P Twine, S Underdown, ED Urquhart, Ms C Vince, D Walker, M Welcome, J Weston, B Williams, RLC Williamson, J Willsher, PJ Wilson, R Wingfield, H Wingfield-Hayes, K and Mrs J Wright, Dr BJ Yates and S Younger.

***Breeding Bird Survey:*** This BTO annual national breeding survey, based on selected one km squares, is organised in Sussex by Dr AB Watson.

***Thames Basin and Wealden Heaths Breeding Bird Survey:*** This continuing survey of heaths and heath woodlands is undertaken in collaboration with the RSPB and the bird clubs of Berkshire, Hampshire and Surrey. The Sussex organiser is A Perry, Edgehill Barn, Byworth near Petworth West Sussex. Thanks are due to the following observers, JTA Bagley, TPR Crane, P James, HJA Lee, JL Nobbs, A Perry, Dr. BM Rogers, T Williams.

***Cliff-nesting birds:*** The annual monitoring of these species was completed by TN Buttle and DR West.

***Woodcock survey:*** This national survey was co-ordinated in Sussex by the RSPB and MV Sennitt who thank the following for their participation: Mrs VP Bentley, CLG Brand, D Bridges, D Buckingham, P Bullen-Smith, R Burrow, Dr PL Callaway, MN Denness, S Denny, Mrs S Dunsmore-Rouse, RDM Edgar, S Evans, J Evans, DT Gasson, J Goodspeed, AJ Guest, AC Gutteridge, JR Havers, R Hollins, P Hughes, MJH Johnston, Mrs S Jones, A Jones, JA Joyce, M King, R Knight, PJ Luffingham, L Manns, Dr JA Newnham, JL Nobbs, Ms A Parfitt, J Parry, D Peduzzi, RF Penticost, A Perry, D Pomeroy, W Potter, R Pulley, JE Richardson, G Rudman, MJ Russell, M Scott-Ham, K Simpson, PA Smith, I

Standivan, Miss CA Taylor, P Temple, C Temple, Dr N Ward, Dr M Wright, Dr CMV Wright, Dr B Yates.

**Co-ordination of *Spring Sea-watching records*:** The annual co-ordination of these records for the Society is carried out by Dr JA Newnham, 61 Grand Avenue, Worthing, West Sussex.

**Cormorant roost counts:** Counts were carried out monthly from September to March at Chichester Gravel Pits and South Stoke, West Sussex, by R Knight for the Cormorant Research Group.

We are grateful for summaries of detailed observations at Chichester Harbour from Ms A de Potier; Thorney and Pilsey Islands from CB and Mrs MA Collins; Selsey Bill from BJ Carter and O Mitchell; Pagham Harbour from P. Bennett, BE Williams and Mrs S Patton; Pulborough Brooks from P Hughes; Worthing from Dr JA Newnham; Weir Wood Reservoir from Mrs BM Mortlock; Brighton Marina from IJ Whitcomb; Ashdown Forest from D King; Bewl Water from PC Bance; Beachy Head from RDM Edgar; Splash Point, Seaford, from BR Gilmore; Filsham & Combe Haven from KM Johnston, Pett Level from P Jones, Rye Harbour from Dr BJ Yates, Sussex Wildlife Trust reserves from members of staff and at Arundel WWT from T. Dalrymple.

Thanks are due to RDM Edgar for maintaining detailed records of ringing in the county and to all ringers who contributed data.

The Recorder is especially grateful to Dr JA Newnham and the following team of helpers for coding and inputting the records onto the computer: Ms VA Barnes, C Barfield, IT Barnard, PJ Bennett, LR Bird, RM Bond, PM Brayshaw, D. Brothwell, T Callaway, BR Clay, C Cockburn, CB Collins, DE Crawley, J Curson, Ms A de Potier, CH Dean, RDM Edgar, RJ Fairbank, BR Gilmore, DJ Goldsmith, JS Gowers, D Green, AC Gutteridge, AM Holden, CE Hope, A House, T Howard-Jones, P Hughes, RA Ives, P James, A Johnstone, P Jones, D King, R Knight, O. Laugharne, J. Lewin S Linington, L Manns, O Mitchell, Mrs BM Mortlock, G Osborne, Mrs S Patton, RT Pepper, A Perry, AP Phillips, RW Prior, GCM Roberts, M Scott-ham, MV Sennitt, Mrs IM Simpson, DI Smith, JC Steedman, Dr AB Watson, AJ Wende, IJ Whitcomb, PJ Whitcomb, JH Whitman, BE Williams, J Willsher, and Dr BJ Yates.

# THE SUSSEX RINGING REPORT FOR 2003

*By Robert Edgar and Sarah McKenzie*

## Introduction

Figures from the British Trust for Ornithology (pers. comm.) show that 848,532 birds were ringed in Britain and Ireland in 2003 by approximately 1900 ringers. This total comprised 673,889 (79%) adults and 174,643 (21%) nestlings of 268 species.

The total number of birds ringed in Sussex was 52,449, 6% of the total for Britain and Ireland. This was an increase of 6,799 (15%) on the 45,650 ringed in 2002 and was the highest since 1996 when 63,676 birds were ringed. Reports were received from 13 individual active ringers or groups (Table 1). The Rye Bay Ringing Group (RBRG) ringed 35,335 birds, which was 67% of the Sussex total. One hundred and thirteen species were ringed in the County in 2003 compared to 104 in 2002. The ringing activity for 2003 is summarised in Table 1.

Ringing Source	Number Ringed		
	Adults	Nestlings	Totals
<b>Individuals</b>			
K. Arthur	0	413	413
A.M. Davis	469	29	498
J.A.G. Dunlop	4020	12	4032
R.D.M. Edgar	3	29	32
R. Lanaway	1317	741	2058
J.A. Newnham	801	11	821
G.C.M. Roberts	3	34	37
R. Sanderson	1690	2	1692
A.B. Watson	235	599	834
<b>Groups</b>			
Beachy Head Ringing Station	2204	73	2277
Cuckmere Ringing Group	1207	0	1207
Rye Bay Ringing Group	34898	437	35335
Steyning Ringing Group	3004	209	3213
<b>County Total</b>	<b>49860</b>	<b>2589</b>	<b>52449</b>

**Table 1.** *A summary of Ringing Activity in Sussex. Individuals named are those responsible for the rings issued and may not be those who actually ringed the birds. A Ringing Group may comprise a number of individuals.*

County rarities ringed were one Corncrake at Filsham Reedbed, one Wryneck at Weir Wood Reservoir and five Aquatic, one Paddyfield, one Marsh, one Icterine, one Barred, two Yellow-Browed and one Radde's for a fine run of rare warblers at Icklesham. By comparison 63 Corncrakes, 10 Wrynecks, 16 Aquatic, three Paddyfield, 16 Marsh, 12

Icterine, 23 Barred, 77 Yellow-Browed and two Radde's Warblers were ringed in Britain and Ireland in 2003.

New species ringed in the County were Avocet and Black-tailed Godwit, bringing our species total to 199 since 1979. Particularly interesting captures, not mentioned above, include our fifth Great Crested Grebe, ninth Garganey, eight Water Pipits (only three had been ringed in Sussex before) and four Crossbills (only four had been ringed previously in the County). No less than 64 Cetti's Warblers were ringed (previous total 92) and nine Dartford Warblers (previously 20 had been ringed in Sussex).

### Ringling Totals

Table 2 lists the 20 most regularly trapped species during 2003 in descending order of magnitude compared with similar data from 2002 and including the totals for RBRG to demonstrate the considerable contribution this group makes to Sussex ringing.

	2002	2003			2002	2003	
	Total	Total	RBRG		Total	Total	RBRG
Sedge Warbler	6836	6664	6167	Greenfinch	852	909	172
Blackcap	3864	5476	3773	Robin	739	874	315
Reed Warbler	4907	5028	4237	Blackbird	544	856	292
Swallow *	3917	4986	4613	Whitethroat	1298	825	487
Chiffchaff	2444	4266	2683	Meadow Pipit*	685	692	511
Sand Martin *	2126	4136	4129	Wren	561	667	310
Blue Tit	2653	3030	515	House Sparrow **	90	578	22
Willow Warbler *	1843	2022	1124	Reed Bunting**	463	576	462
House Martin*	5135	1823	1823	Goldfinch	425	572	95
Great Tit	968	1369	168	Grasshopper Warbler**	559	548	525

**Table 2.** *Sussex Ringing Totals for the 20 most ringed species in 2003.*

*Birds of Conservation Concern (Gregory et al, 2002), \*\* Red listed, \* Amber listed.*

The 20 species listed in Table 2 account for 88% of all birds ringed in Sussex during 2003 comparable to a similar but not identical list of 20 species that accounted for 91% of birds ringed in 2002. House Sparrow and Reed Bunting replaced Garden Warbler and Dunnock. Seven species of warbler, three species of hirundine and two species of tit accounted for 77% of all birds ringed. RBRG ringed 67% of the County total and a high proportion of 11 of the species in Table 2. Their highest proportions were 100% of the House Martins, nearly 100% of the Sand Martins, 96% of the Grasshopper Warblers and 92% of the Sedge Warblers and Swallows.

As mentioned in previous reports interpretation of year on year changes have to be treated with caution. Weather, opportunity and ringing effort may be as much responsible for a difference in numbers ringed, as a genuine population change. However notable increases occurred in the numbers of Blackcaps, Chiffchaffs, Sand Martins, Blackbirds and House Sparrows ringed.

In last year's Report we noted a 45% increase in the number of Whitethroats ringed. This has now been largely reversed with a 36% decline. The increase in House Sparrow numbers ringed represents greater effort directed to this 'Red List' species. The increase in Great tits represents a 33% increase in adults and a 56% increase in nestlings ringed and is likely to reflect a more healthy breeding population and survival rate.

This year, 73 Tree Sparrows were ringed compared to six last year, a notable increase. Willow Tits again fared badly with only five ringed, four at Weir Wood Reservoir and one at Ashdown Forest.

The 10 most commonly ringed species nationally in descending order of magnitude compared to the 10 most commonly ringed species in Sussex are shown in Table 3.

National	Sussex
1. Blue Tit	Sedge Warbler
2. Greenfinch	Blackcap
3. Great Tit	Reed Warbler
4. Swallow	Swallow
5. Chaffinch	Chiffchaff
6. Blackbird	Sand Martin
7. Blackcap	Blue Tit
8. Reed Warbler	Willow Warbler
9. Chiffchaff	House Martin
10. Robin	Great Tit

**Table 3.** Comparison of the ten most commonly ringed species nationally and in Sussex

### Nestlings

The number of nestlings ringed (2589) is a welcome increase of 51% on the 1715 ringed in 2002 and was 5% of the birds ringed during the year.

	Total Ringed	Total nestlings	% Nestlings		Total Ringed	Total Nestlings	% Nestlings
Black-headed Gull*	30	30	100	Common Tern	95	94	99
Tawny Owl	10	10	100	Barn Owl*	140	119	85
Lapwing*	9	9	100	Ruddy Duck	10	7	70
Peregrine*	8	8	100	Mallard	28	15	54
Little Owl	5	5	100	Nuthatch	93	44	47
Avocet*	4	4	100	Linnet**	57	26	46
Oystercatcher*	1	1	100	Redstart*	38	17	45

**Table 4.** Nestlings ringed in Sussex during 2003, where they number more than 40% of the total ringed. Birds of Conservation Concern (Gregory *et al*, 2002), \*\* Red listed, \* Amber listed.

Fourteen species had over 40% of their total ringed as nestlings (Table 4) compared with 12 in 2002, and eight of these species were of Conservation Concern (Gregory *et al*, 2002). The number of Barn Owl nestlings ringed was slightly down on last year, 119 compared with 139. There is a continued increase in ringed Peregrine chicks, from two in 2001, five in 2002 to eight in 2003. The number of Common Tern chicks ringed increased from 66 nestlings in 2002 to 94 this year.

Particularly notable individual efforts include the 121 nestling Swallows, 67 nestling Chiffchaffs, and 383 Blue and Great Tit nestlings ringed by R. Lanaway and the 373 Blue and Great tit nestlings ringed by K. Arthur.



## Recoveries

A wide range of recoveries were reported and a selection of the more interesting are presented below.

It may seem surprising to commence a Sussex Ringing recoveries section with a **Great White Egret** but the bird reported at Scotney Gravel Pits between 12-18 July 2003 had been ringed as a nestling at Lac de Grand-Lieu, Loire-Atlantique in northwestern France on 30 April of that year. It had been seen in Cambridgeshire a week earlier, before travelling to the Sussex/Kent border, so was perhaps on its return journey.

Western **Shelducks** have a well-defined moult migration to the Helgoland Bight of the Wadden Sea off northwestern Germany (Wernham *et al*, 2002). One ringed at Icklesham on 18 January 2001 was found dead on the German island of Wangerooge on 26 November 2003 while on this migration.

A nestling **Kestrel** ringed on 6 June 2003 at Denton Moor, North Yorkshire was found injured in Rustington on 14 November 2003, presumably having moved south to winter.

The **Coot** does not feature often, if at all, in the Ringing report but a movement of a bird ringed at Icklesham on 28 August 2000 to Les Veys, Manche in northern France on 10 January 2003 is worthy of note.

Multiple sightings of colour-ringed waders are not uncommon. A **Black-tailed Godwit** was ringed as a juvenile at Farlington Marshes, Hampshire on 20 September 2002. It was seen there until October of that year when it moved to the Fishbourne area of Chichester Harbour. In April 2003 it moved between Thorney Island and Farlington Marshes and then in May to Pagham Harbour. In August 2003 it was seen at Trimley, Felixstowe, Suffolk before returning to Chichester Harbour in October 2003 and then in November 2003 moving to Church Norton, Pagham Harbour.

The **Redshanks** that breed in this country (race *totanus*) are joined in winter by large numbers of the Icelandic race *robusta*. A bird ringed on 29 September 2001 at Thorney Island and seen in northeast Iceland just south of the Arctic Circle on 21 June 2003 must have been of that race.

A **Greenshank** ringed in October 1991 at Farlington Marshes, Hampshire is clearly faithful to the Solent area, as it has been seen in Chichester Harbour in August and November 2002 and from January to March 2003 on the River Hamble, Hampshire. At 13 years old this is a very good age for this species. Another Greenshank, ringed on 24 August 2002 at Thorney Island was seen on 16 April 2003 in Caceres, Spain.

Auks are regularly seen off the Sussex coast. But where do they come from? An indication is given by a **Razorbill** that was found dead oiled at Brooklands, Worthing in March 2003. It had been ringed as a nestling on Sanda Island, Kintyre, Scotland on 25 June 2002.

Amongst the colour-ringed gulls reported this year was a **Mediterranean Gull** ringed in 2002 at a colony in Antwerp Harbour, Belgium and seen on Thorney Island on 28 April 2003. Another from the same area of origin, also ringed in 2002, and subsequently seen in northern France, was seen at Selsey on 8 January 2003. Less usually a **Yellow-legged Gull** ringed on 23 May 2001 at Lagune des Impériaux in the Camargue was seen on Thorney Island on 6 August 2003. There have only been a handful of recoveries in Britain of gulls ringed as nestlings in Mediterranean colonies.

Everyone knows that Swallows winter in southern Africa but it is nice to have confirmation of exactly where. A **Swallow** ringed at Icklesham on 19 September 2002 was

controlled (caught by another ringer and released) on 7 February 2003 in Pietermaritzburg in Natal, South Africa.

In the last Report we referred to a **Dunnoek** that had been ringed in Northumberland and controlled at Icklesham and speculated that this was likely to be a Scandinavian bird moving to winter in southern Iberia. Another Dunnoek ringed at Icklesham on 28 October 2002 was found on 25 April 2003 at Drammen (near Oslo), southern Norway, demonstrating that Scandinavian Dunnoeks do, indeed, move through Britain.

Many thrushes come to Britain to winter so a **Blackbird** ringed on 31 March 2001 in Oland, Sweden and controlled at Lower Dicker on 26 December 2002 is not too surprising. Rather more remarkable is a **Fieldfare** ringed on 20 November 2001 at Icklesham and found on 20 April 2003 at Kirovo-Chepetsk, Kirov, in Russia, a distance of 3267 km. (For the uninitiated this is northeast of Moscow and near the Ural Mountains).

As a large number of **Sedge Warblers** are ringed in Sussex, it is not surprising that we get many recoveries. Just how early in the autumn birds migrate is shown by a nestling ringed in Hertfordshire on 1 June 2003 that was controlled at the Mumbles, Steyning on 19 July 2003. In last year's Report we mentioned a Sedge Warbler ringed at Thorney Island on 28 August 1996 and controlled at St. Abbs Head, Borders, Scotland in 2002. It was caught there again, on 1 June 2003, so was six years and ten months old at recapture (but still short of the British record of nearly eight years old).

The majority of our autumn migrant **Reed Warblers** are British, but not all. One ringed as a juvenile on 31 July 2003 at Haademeeste, Parnu, Estonia was controlled at Icklesham on 15 September 2003. This would seem to be from as far northeast as any Reed Warbler recovered in this country (Wernham *et al*, 2002).

Our **Lesser Whitethroats** migrate on a south-east/north-west route between Britain and Africa and this is nicely demonstrated by one ringed at Icklesham on 30 August 2003 and found dead, 13 days later, at Zurich in Switzerland.

Rapid recoveries of birds are always of interest. Quite what one makes of a **Blackcap** ringed at Beachy Head on 13 September 2003 and controlled the following day at Chew Valley Lake, Avon, a distance of 212 km is a matter for speculation. This seems very early for a continental bird coming to winter in the West Country and may just be a case of the bird going in the 'wrong' direction. One can only react with incredulity at a Blackcap ringed (as an adult male) at Icklesham on 20 September 2003 and found sick (perhaps not surprisingly) on 19 October 2003 at Sandur, Sandoy, Faeroes, 1297 km to the north. These apparently inexplicable events are what make ringing so fascinating.

Two **Siskin** recoveries in Norway were reported this year. One was ringed at Footlands Wood, near John's Cross and controlled on both 27 April and 2 May 2003 at Sangvik, a distance of 922 km. The other, ringed on 14 April 2002 at Headmark, in eastern Norway had traveled 1300 km to East Grinstead where it was controlled on 3 December 2003.

Although British **Reed Buntings** are largely sedentary (Wernham *et al*, 2002) they do undertake short distance movements in winter. One ringed at Filsham on 2 August 2003 moved to Farlington Marshes, Hampshire by 30 December 2003, a distance of 109 km. Another ringed on 4 October 2003 at Charleston Reedbed, Litlington moved 115 km to Brimpton Gravel Pit in Berkshire by 17 December 2003.

This year produced a number of extremely interesting recoveries, of which only a selection have been chosen for publication. It will be difficult however, to find one more remarkable than the Blackcap in the Faeroes.

## **Acknowledgements**

Our grateful thanks to the Secretaries of the Groups and the individual ringers named in Table 1 for submitting information and to the observers who reported colour ringed birds which enabled this Report to be compiled. Additionally we thank the Ringing Office of the British Trust for Ornithology for kindly allowing us to use national ringing figures prior to publication.

## **References**

Gregory, R.D., Wilkinson, N.I., Noble, D.G., Robinson, J.A., Brown, A.F., Hughes, J., Procter, D.A., Gibbons, D.W. and Galbraith, C.A. 2002. The population status of birds in the United Kingdom, Channel Islands and Isle of Man: an analysis of conservation concern 2002-2007. *British Birds* 95: 410-450.

Wernham, C.V., Toms, M.P., Marchant, J.H., Clark, J.A., Siriwardena, G.M. and Baillie, S.R. (eds). 2002. The Migration Atlas: movements of the birds of Britain and Ireland. T. & A.D. Poyser, London.

# Breeding Waders of Wet Meadows Survey 2002.

*By Dr Barry Yates*

## Introduction

In Sussex, wet grasslands are some of our favourite areas for birdwatching. At the same time most of us are aware of the local and national decline in the quality and quantity of this habitat during the last century. To gauge the impact of this decline on the breeding wader populations the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) organised a national survey, the Breeding Waders of Wet Meadows Survey 2002 (BWWMS), which was a repeat of a similar survey in 1982.

## Survey Methods

Most of the sites surveyed in 2002 were also surveyed in the previous national survey in 1982, but additionally, many newly created sites were covered for the first time. The 40 sites in Sussex covering 9879 ha (19 sites covering 4612 ha in 1982) were visited by SOS fieldworkers on three occasions between mid-April and mid-June 2002, and the location of all waders plotted on large-scale maps.

## Results

The following tables were produced from the BTO web site, [www.bto.org/survey/complete/bwwm.htm](http://www.bto.org/survey/complete/bwwm.htm)

**Table 1.** Summary of Breeding Waders of Wet Meadows Survey 2002 in Sussex and adjacent counties.

County	2002		Number of Pairs				
	Number of sites	Area (ha)	Oystercatcher	Lapwing	Snipe	Curlew	Redshank
Hampshire	56	5785	16	148	3	6	68
Isle of Wight	1	190	0	9	0	0	1
Kent	39	8810	196	868	3	0	685
Surrey	24	2139	0	41	0	0	7
Sussex	40	9879	20	208	4	0	81

**Table 2.** Percentage changes in the number of breeding pairs of waders between 1982 and 2002 by county, (+ increase from 0 in 1982, nc = no change, 0 = nil in 1982 or 2002).

County	1982		Percentage population change between 1982 and 2002				
	Number of sites	Area (ha)	Oystercatcher	Lapwing	Snipe	Curlew	Redshank
Hampshire	28	2719	+	-81	-96	-75	-71
Isle of Wight	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Kent	37	8166	175	29	-67	0	45

<b>Surrey</b>	23	2072		-51	-100	0	nc
<b>Sussex</b>	19	4612	100	-58	-71	0	-63

It is difficult to interpret these results because;

- Breeding waders are very difficult to survey.
- The number and area of survey sites in Sussex have more than doubled between the 1982 and 2002 surveys.
- The survey results are not comparable with those recorded in the classified records in the SxBR 2002, because some pairs nested away from the survey sites or observations were made by different observers.

The figures in the following species accounts are expressed as % change between 1982 and 2002 (Table 2), the summary of BWWMS 2002 (Table 1) and the number of pairs recorded in the SxBR 2002.

**Oystercatcher (*Haematopus ostralegus*), 100% increase, 20 and 35 pairs**

Eighteen of the survey pairs were at Rye Harbour with an uncounted number at the Midrips and in West Sussex. Birds of Sussex (1996) records a population at the extreme east and west of the county, each of about 25 pairs. In the east population there is a slow expansion from the strictly coastal shingle stronghold to inland wet meadows and two pairs have taken to nesting on roof tops.

Nationally, Oystercatchers have been expanding their range inland over recent decades, with a population increase of 52%. However, most of this increase has occurred in Northwest and Eastern England and grassland Oystercatchers remain scarce in Wales and the southwest. One reason for the increases in Oystercatcher numbers is that they are adaptable birds and are able to feed on a wide range of farmland habitats.

**Lapwing (*Vanellus vanellus*), 58% decrease, 208 and 220 pairs.**

There has been a rapid decline at some sites which has been linked with a corresponding increase in the populations of Fox *Vulpes vulpes* and Badger *Meles meles*. At some sites now the Lapwing only breeds successfully on islands or within enclosures designed to reduce the impact of ground predators. The sites supporting more than ten pairs were Pevensy Levels, Glynde Levels and Rye Harbour.

Nationally, Lapwings are still the most widespread wader on lowland wet grassland, but are now scarce in Wales and Southwest England. Although still found on almost half of the sites surveyed, there was a large decrease in numbers between 1982 and 2002. In England the decline was 35% while in Wales, 69% of Lapwings were lost between 1982 and 2002.

**Snipe (*Gallinago gallinago*), 71% decrease, four and seven pairs.**

This is a very secretive breeding bird and there was no confirmed breeding in Sussex in 2002. However, the survey found evidence of pairs at the Adur Levels and Pevensy levels in mid-May and additional birds in the Arun Valley in mid April.

The Birds of Sussex (1996) describes the county trends as follows,

1938		minimum of 500 pairs
1967		under 100 pairs
1980-81	estimated 86 pairs	
1993		tentative estimate 130-250 pairs

This recent reported increase, mainly in the Arun Valley, was not reflected in this survey or in SxBR 2002.

Nationally, Snipe decreased faster than any other species of wader between 1982 and 2002 with a loss of 61% of the population in lowland England and Wales. Declines were particularly steep (more than 90%) in the East Midlands, West Midlands and Southeast England.

***Curlew (Numenius arquatus), no change, zero and zero pairs.***

The small county breeding population at Ashdown Forest of one to six pairs has not been present since 1991, although a male was noted singing there on 13 June 2002. Table 1 shows that this species has an extremely low breeding population in and around Sussex, so re-colonisation is going to be unlikely.

Nationally, Curlew is principally a breeding bird of the uplands, but in some lowland areas of Britain it is a typical bird of lowland wet grassland, although it is never common.

***Redshank (Tringa tetanus), 63% decrease, 81 and 24? pairs.***

This is the classic breeding wader of wet meadows and with the decline in suitable habitat the species is just maintaining a viable population in the county. Some breed on saltmarsh and will not have been included in this survey. The main centres are Chichester and Pagham Harbours, Arun Valley, Pevensy Levels and Rye Bay.

The Birds of Sussex (1996) describes the county decline as follows,

1938		well over 300
1967		about 250 pairs
1980-81	212 pairs	

and this survey shows the continued decline.

Nationally, Redshank was the second most numerous breeding wader species in the 2002 survey, after Lapwing. However, the bulk of the population was found in East and Southeast England, away from where, there were strong declines between 1982 and 2002. As with Lapwing, the largest declines were in the southwest, West Midlands and Wales, where only 19 pairs were found, all in Gwent.

Strongholds remain on some important reserves, such as in the North Kent Marshes, where an estimated population of almost 700 pairs represents a substantial increase since 1982. Careful grassland management and reversion of arable land to grazing land in that area show that it is possible to reverse declines with the help of incentives available through the Environmentally Sensitive Areas scheme.

## Discussion

Wet meadows were once extensive habitat of the river valleys and coastal plain of Sussex. Now, very little high quality wet meadow habitat remains and most of it is in designated sites and nature reserves. For populations to remain viable there must be adequate production of chicks and in some apparently suitable sites the species are absent because of pressure from predators and people.

This survey could make us despondent with the general decline, but in Sussex we are fortunate to have a good network of core sites that are managed sympathetically for breeding waders. There is cause for some optimism since we appear to be past the period of “agricultural improvement” with the grants and subsidies that encouraged so much land drainage, leading to the widespread and extensive loss of wet meadows and their breeding waders. Now there are many positive efforts being taken by conservation bodies and individuals to create more wetland and some of this has been encouraged by the Countryside Stewardship Scheme due to be replaced by Entry Level and Higher Level Schemes.

Waders can respond quickly to habitat creation and improvement, providing there is a remnant of the population. It is therefore likely that Redshank and Oystercatcher should do well in the large schemes proposed for the Cuckmere Estuary and Rye Harbour. Lapwing, Redshank and Oystercatcher should benefit from the new range of suitably targeted agri-environment schemes being introduced. However, for Curlew and Snipe any recovery may be a very slow process.



## Olive-Backed Pipit at Seaford Head

by Jon Curson

On the morning of 30 October 2003 I visited Belle Tout in the early morning to look for the Pallas' Warbler that had been there the previous day, instead of doing my usual jaunt round the local patch (Seaford Head). There was no sign of the Pallas' but there were several Goldcrests, at least three Firecrests and a Treecreeper there. Encouraged by this I decided to call in at Seaford Head on my way home. I was standing on the edge of the small sycamore copse known as Harry's Bush searching through the Goldcrests and Chiffchaffs, when a small bird flew in from the south-east and landed in the top of a sycamore at the back of the copse. Looking through my 8 X 40 bins I could see a pipit which, although fairly distant and half silhouetted, obviously had a very prominent supercilium, what looked like a pale patch on the rear of the ear-coverts and blackish, almost spot-like streaks on very white looking underparts. I immediately suspected it was an Olive-backed Pipit but knew I was going to have to see it better to make sure. After a couple of minutes it flew out of the sycamore. My apprehension turned to delight when I realized it was flying down towards me. It landed on a horizontal bough and I was able to watch it for about three more minutes at a distance of about 15 m as it perched and then walked slowly along the bough in full view, 'pumping' its tail slowly up and down in characteristic Olive-backed Pipit fashion as it went.

After this it dropped down and disappeared into the copse. This put me in a bit of a quandary as Harry's Bush is a private, fenced copse that is viewable only from the public footpath that runs close by its south-western edge, from Cuckmere Haven up to Seaford Head. However, I phoned in the news to Birdline South-East and alerted local birders, mentioning that the copse was private and should not be entered. Several people came and searched from the footpath but unfortunately the bird was not seen again. The following description is based on notes taken at the time.

A smallish pipit, about Tree Pipit sized and with a call that was very similar to Tree Pipit, but perhaps marginally less buzzing. The crown, nape and mantle were an olive-green colour; the mantle was faintly streaked darker but this was noticeable only at close range and the upperparts appeared plain at a distance. The supercilium was very obvious, long, broad and pure white behind the eye, and slightly narrower with a buff tinge in front of the eye. It was bordered above and below by narrow dark strips which further emphasised it. The ear-coverts were olive-green, with a white spot at the rear, separated from the rear of the supercilium by the dark eye-stripe. Below this was a blackish spot. This, plus the supercilium, amounted to a very obvious and distinctive head pattern. There was also a broad whitish submoustachial stripe that extended slightly round the back of the ear-coverts, separated from the white throat by a narrow blackish malar stripe. The underparts were noticeably white-looking (but with a faint buffy wash on the flanks) and there were distinct rounded blackish streaks on the breast and flanks (looking almost like spots). The bill appeared dark, perhaps with some flesh at the base of the lower mandible, and the legs were a conspicuous pinkish-flesh colour and quite strong-looking. The most obvious features were the head pattern, the spot-like streaks on whitish underparts, and the noticeable habit of slowly 'pumping' its tail up and down as it walked.

This is the second Olive-backed Pipit to have occurred in Sussex, the previous one being seen at Hodcombe, Beachy Head on 11 October 1987. It is however, a regular, though still rare, vagrant elsewhere in Britain with most records being in October. There had been several in Britain in the two weeks prior to this record.



## **THE SUSSEX ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY**

### **Who are we and what do we do?**

The Society was formed in 1962 to promote the recording, study, conservation and enjoyment of birds in Sussex.

We encourage our members to keep records of birds seen in Sussex, and to submit these to our County Recorder.

We carry out bird surveys, often as part of our partnerships with the BTO, RSPB and WWT. The county is divided into 10 Km squares, each of which has a steward. If you are good at bird identification help is always needed with surveys.

### **What do members get?**

A quarterly Newsletter, with articles by members, and news of recent sightings and forthcoming events.

The annual Sussex Bird Report (which is free to members). This contains a number of well-researched papers and a full systematic list of birds seen in our county. These records are assessed by the Recorder and a Records Committee, to ensure that each entry portrays the true current status of the birds in Sussex.

A year round diary of field outings led by expert bird watchers, with visits to all parts of East and West Sussex.

An annual conference, which gives members an opportunity to get together, hear details of the Society's current work, and enjoy talks by local and national experts.

**Visit our website for the very latest details of bird sightings in Sussex, and to find out lots more about the Society.**

**[www.sos.org.uk](http://www.sos.org.uk)**

## UNUSUAL RECORDS

All records of the unusual species in the list below are considered by the Records Committee and it may be assumed that those published have been fully authenticated. Such reports should be submitted on, or in the same format as, special forms available from the Recorder. Reports of national rarities as defined by *British Birds Rarities Committee* should be submitted to the Recorder (not direct to BBRC) either in the same format as above, or should be submitted on forms available from the Secretary of the BBRC.

The following list is of those unusual species in Sussex for which descriptions are required:

All shearwaters (except Manx)	Pectoral Sandpiper	Marsh Warbler
All petrels (except Fulmar)	Buff-breasted Sandpiper	Icterine Warbler
Purple Heron	Grey Phalarope	Melodious Warbler
White Stork	Red-necked Phalarope	Barred Warbler
Whooper Swan	Pomarine Skua (except in spring)	Pallas's Leaf Warbler
Bean Goose	Long-tailed Skua	Yellow-browed Warbler
Pink-footed Goose	Sabine's Gull	Red-breasted Flycatcher
Green-winged Teal	Ring-billed Gull	Crested Tit
Ring-necked Duck	Iceland Gull	Golden Oriole
Surf Scoter	Glaucous Gull	Red-backed Shrike
Honey Buzzard	Roseate Tern	Woodchat Shrike
White-tailed Eagle	Black Guillemot	Chough
Montagu's Harrier	Little Auk	Hooded Crow
Goshawk	Puffin	Serín
Rough-legged Buzzard	Bee-eater	Twite
Lady Amhurst's Pheasant	Short-toed Lark	Common (ex-Mealy) Redpoll
Spotted Crake	Shore Lark	Common Rosefinch
Corn Crake	Richard's Pipit	Lapland Bunting
Crane	Tawny Pipit	Girl Bunting
Stone-curlew	Water Pipit	Ortolan Bunting
Kentish Plover	Dipper	Little Bunting
Dotterel	Bluethroat	
Temminck's Stint	Aquatic Warbler	

In addition, **all** races other than the normally occurring one, except for Pale-bellied Brent Goose, *intermedius* Lesser Black-backed Gull, *michahellis* Yellow-legged (Herring) Gull, White Wagtail and Greenland Wheatear, and any species seen on an unusual date outside the accepted range of first and last dates for migrants [See pages 194 - 195].

It should be noted, however, that the following species, or any other species seen in unusual circumstances or on an unusual date, may, at the discretion of the Recorder, require a description:

Inland divers, Great Northern Diver, Red-necked Grebe (inland records), Manx Shearwater, Shag (inland records), Bittern, Spoonbill, Egyptian Goose, Ruddy Shelduck, Red-crested Pochard, Hoopoe, Wryneck, Waxwing, Cetti's Warbler, Great Grey Shrike and Raven.

**GET YOUR NEXT BIRD REPORT FREE!**

As a member of the Sussex Ornithological Society you would receive the annual Sussex Bird Report free. You would also receive the quarterly newsletters and have the opportunity of taking part in a range of activities including the popular field outings. To join, please complete and return the form below. We look forward to welcoming you as a member - and you will look forward to receiving your next Bird Report free!

Ordinary Membership	£14
Joint Ordinary Membership	£17
Student Membership (age 18-20)	£4.50
Under 18 Membership (age 13-17)	£4.50
Life Membership	£200
Joint Life Membership	£250

SUBSCRIPTIONS fall due on 1st January each year. The subscriptions of those joining on or after 1st November in any year will run until 31st December the following year. Except as explained below, all members receive a free copy of the Sussex Bird Report. For JOINT ORDINARY and JOINT LIFE Membership both members must live at the same address but will only receive one copy of each of the Society's publications.

.....  
**THE SUSSEX ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY**

**Application for Membership**

To: The Hon. Membership Secretary, Lorrimer, Main Road, Icklesham, Winchelsea, E. Sussex TN36 4BS

I wish to apply for:.....membership

Name: Mr./Mrs./Miss (BLOCK CAPITALS).....

Address.....

I enclose herewith Banker's Order/Cheque/Postal Order for £ :  
Cheques and Postal Orders should be made payable to The Sussex Ornithological Society. Banker's Order is below.

Date of birth if under 21.....

Studentship (if applicable).....

**BANKER'S ORDER**

Please complete and return to the Hon. Membership Secretary (NOT TO THE BANK).

To.....Bank Limited, .....Branch

Branch Address.....

Date.....20.....

Please pay to the account of The Sussex Ornithological Society at Barclays Bank Limited, North Street, Brighton, Sussex, the sum of £ : now and on 1st January in each year until further notice from me in writing.

Signed.....

Name (block letters please).....

Address.....

Account title..... Account number.....

**Receiving Account Details**

Bank: Barclays Branch: North Street, Brighton

Code: 20-12-75

Account Title: Sussex Ornithological Society

Account No: 50660663

## GAZETTEER:

Alexandra Park, Hastings	TQ8010	Charleston Reedbed	TQ5100	Henfield Levels	TQ1914	Northpoint Pit, Rye	TQ9319	Sidlesham Ferry & Fields	SZ8596
Amberley Wild Brooks	TQ0314	Chelwood Vachery	TQ4330	Hollies, Ashdown	TQ4528	Old Airstrip, Ashdown	TQ4231	Sompting Brooks	TQ1604
Ambersham Common	SU9119	Chichester Gravel Pits	SU8703	Hollingbury Camp	TQ3207	Old Lodge Reserve	TQ4630	South Stoke	TQ0210
Angmering Park Estate	TQ0506	Chichester Harbour	SU7600	Horse Eye Level	TQ6208	Pagham Harbour	SZ8596	Sovereign Hbr Marina	TQ6403
Apuldram Manor Farm	SU8301	Church Norton	SZ8795	Horseshoe Plantation	TV5695	Pagham Lagoon	SZ8896	Splash Point, Seaford	TV4898
Ardingly Reservoir	TQ3229	Cissbury Ring	TQ1408	Hotham Park, Bognor	SZ9399	Pannel Sewer	TQ8715	St Leonards Forest	TQ2231
Arlington Reservoir	TQ5307	Climping	TQ0001	Hurstpierpoint	TQ2716	Parham Estate	TQ0614	Stakes Island	SU7801
Arundel Park	TQ0108	Cobnor Point & Farm	SU7902	Ifield Mill Pond	TQ2436	Partridge Green	TQ1919	Stansted Forest	SU7511
Arundel W.W.T.	TQ0208	Combe Haven	TQ7609	Iping Common	SU8421	Pett Level Pools	TQ9014	Stedham Common	SU8521
Ashdown Forest	TQ4332	Crows Nest, Ashdown	TQ4728	Ivy Lake, Chichester	SU8703	Petworth Park	SU9721	Streele Farm Billingshurst	TQ0624
Atherington	TQ0000	Cuckmere Haven	TV5197	Kingley Vale NNR	SU8110	Pevensey Bay	TQ6503	Swanbourne Lake	TQ0107
Balsdean	TQ3704	Darwell Reservoir	TQ7121	Kneppmill Pond	TQ1521	Pevensey Bridge Level	TQ6504	The Goat, Ashdown	TQ4032
Barcombe Reservoir	TQ4314	East Guldeford Level	TQ9421	Lancing Clump	TQ1806	Pevensey Levels	TQ6605	The Mens	TQ0223
Beachy Head	TV5895	East Head	SZ7698	Langney Point	TQ6401	Pilsey Island & Sands	SU7600	The Severals	SZ8794
Belle Tout	TV5695	Ebernoe Common	SU9726	Lavington Common	SU9418	Pippingford Park	TQ4430	Thorney Deeps	SU7503
Bewl Water	TQ6733	Elms Farm, Icklesham	TQ8815	Lewes Brooks	TQ4207	Portfield Gravel Pit	SU8805	Thorney Island	SU7602
Billingshurst	TQ0825	Eridge Park	TQ5635	Littlehampton G.C.	TQ0101	Powdermill Reservoir	TQ7919	Tilgate Park	TQ2734
Birling Gap	TV5596	Fairlight	TQ8611	Long/Narrow Pits, Rye	TQ9217	Pulborough Brooks	TQ0516	Union Canal, E.Guldeford	TQ9322
Bluebell Railway	TQ4023	Fishbourne Channel	SU8303	Lullington Heath	TQ5401	Rackham Woods	TQ0414	Upper Adur Levels	TQ1914
Brede Levels	TQ8417	Fore Wood, Crowhurst	TQ7513	Lurgashall Mill Pond	SU9325	Roman Road, Ashdown	TQ4729	Wakehurst Place	TQ3331
Bremere Rife	SZ8798	Forest Mere	SU8129	Manxey Levels	TQ6306	Rye Bay Wood	TQ9217	Walland Marsh	TQ92
Brighton Marina	TQ3302	Four Counties, Ashdown	TQ4631	Marline Wood	TQ7812	Rye Harbour LNR	TQ9216	Waltham Brooks	TQ0215
Brighton Wild Park	TQ3207	Friston Forest	TV 5499	Marsh Farm, Yapton	SU9804	Scotney Court Gravel Pits	TR0119	Warnham L.N.R. & M.P.	TQ1732
Broadwater, Worthing	TQ1404	Gills Lap, Ashdown	TQ4632	Maynards Green	TQ5818	Seaford Head	TV4997	Weir Wood Reservoir	TQ3834
Brooklands, Worthing	TQ1703	Glynde Levels	TQ4609	Mill Hill, Shoreham	TQ2107	Selsey Bill	SZ8592	West Beach Littleh'mpton	TQ0201
Broomhill Level	TQ9818	Glyne Gap, Bexhill	TQ7607	Millbrook, Ashdown	TQ4428	Selsey West Fields	SZ8394	Westdean Woods	SU8515
Buchan Park	TQ2434	Goring Gap	TQ1001	New Salts Farm	TQ2004	Seven Sisters Country Pk	TV5197	Whitbread Hollow	TV5996
Burton Mill Pond	SU9617	Gossops Green	TQ2535	Newhaven Harbour	TV4499	Sheepcote Valley	TQ3404	Widewater, Lancing	TQ2004
Camp Hill, Ashdown	TQ4629	Gravetye Lakes	TQ3634	Newhaven Tide Mills	TQ4500	Shillinglee Lake	SU9631	Willington	TQ5802
Castle Water & Farm	TQ9118	Greenwood Clump	TQ4731	Nook Meadows, Rye	TQ9217	Shooters Bottom	TV5795	Woods Mill	TQ2113
Cattlestone Farm	TQ1020	Halsey's Farm	SZ8697	Normans Bay	TQ6805	Shoreham Airport	TQ2005	Woolbeding Common	SU8625
Chailey Common	TQ3821	Harbour Farm, Rye	TQ9317	North Wall Pagham Hbr	SZ8797	Shoreham Harbour	TQ2304	Worth Forest	TQ3034

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

