

SUSSEX ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY

# The Sussex Bird Report

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No.62  

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2009



# SUSSEX ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY

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# SUSSEX ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY

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## The Sussex Bird Report

Number Sixty-two, 2009



Recorder: PN Paul

Editorial Team: MJ Bullen, I Barnard, Dr JA Cocks, J Curson, R Fairbank, JA Hobson, P James, P Jones, Dr JA Newnham, A Thomas and Dr BJ Yates

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## **Sussex Bird Report 2008 amendments and corrections**

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Very few errors in the 2008 report were brought to the Editor's attention; details of the more significant of these and of any additional records for previous years can be found under the relevant species in the Systematic List.

## **Photographs**

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Cover photograph: *Spotted Flycatcher, Beachy Head, September 2009 (Roger Charlwood)*

The Photographic Editor would like to thank those photographers who submitted photographs of Sussex birds taken in 2009, many of which appear in this report. Once again, the quality of the transparencies received was outstanding.

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



# Editorial

Mick Bullen

It has been a great pleasure to edit this, the 62nd Sussex Bird Report. As can be seen from the table below the number of records received, which form the basis of the Report, continues to be well up on the average of the past five years, although slightly down on 2008.

Thanks are due to all the contributors who submitted their records for inclusion in the Report. A full list of acknowledgements to them and to the many people who took part in surveys and counts is given on pages 221-226. Again, it is disappointing to find that descriptions have not been submitted for a number of rare or unusual species that are known to have been seen in the county during 2009. The species for which descriptions are required are listed on page 260. Observers are reminded that, unless descriptions are submitted and approved by the Society's Records Committee, the records will not be entered in to the Society's database and therefore will not appear in this Report. Observers are therefore strongly urged to complete the brief, but necessary, form for these species, as failure to do so reduces our knowledge of the true status of certain species in the county.

	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
<b>Submitting records</b>	590	796	632	1207	962	952
<b>Records received</b>	65,730	87,586	96,595	148,292	191,788	176,388
<b>Species recorded</b>	262	263	253	253	266	257
<b>Birds ringed</b>	57,544	58,746	54,661	51,372	54,330	73,191
<b>Species ringed</b>	120	125	109	116	108	112
<b>Species on county list</b>	389	389	388	388	389	390

The species accounts were written by a large team of authors, namely CJR Barfield, MJ Bullen, S Bayley, VP Bentley, C Brooks, DJ Brown, MJ Chattaway, WE Coleman, JR Cowser, J Curson, PJ Everitt, RJ Fairbank, D Green, AC Gutteridge, D Harper, WG Harvey, JA Hobson, A House, DH Howey, ME Kalaher, J Kirk, SH Linington, CW Melgar, JA Newnham, TW Parmenter, RT Pepper, PJ Plant, AH Podmore, JP Pryor, CJ Reay, NJ Rutter, MV Sennitt, S Simpson, A Thomas, LA Walther, AB Watson and JK Whitman. The initials at the end of each species account identify the writer to whom my sincere thanks are extended.

Thanks are also due to Sam Bayley, Dick Gilmore, John Hobson, Peter Hughes, Paul James, Phil Jones, Christian Melgar, John Newnham, Nick Paul and Barry Yates who have patiently read through the early versions of the accounts and suggested various useful amendments, additions and improvements. As a result, some of the draft accounts have been altered and edited to reflect the suggestions made and to attempt to produce a more uniform and consistent report 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, thanks go to Tony Cocks for editing the scientific papers, Jon Curson for writing the Review of the Year, Ian Barnard for selecting the photographs for inclusion in the Report, John Newnham for organising the computerisation of all the records, Helen Crabtree for typesetting the Report, and Robert Yarham for designing the cover.

October 2010



*Blue Tit, Weir Wood Reservoir, November 2009 (Derek Washington)*

# Review of 2009

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Jon Curson

As in previous years, this review of 2009 is a chronological summary, month by month, of the year's weather and significant birds, including high counts of various species, first and last arrival/departure dates and other interesting and unusual records. A total of 257 species was recorded in the county, which is nine fewer than last year; the totals recorded since 1997 still range between 250 and 269 (in 2000).

Highlights included a stunning (and totally unexpected) drake **King Eider** at Rye Harbour in January, which was a county first, a group of **Waxwings** in the early spring, and Sussex's second (and Britain's sixth) **Oriental Pratincole** at Pagham Harbour in May. The **Red-breasted Goose** returned to West Wittering in February for its third successive winter and there were also two **Black Kites**, a **Little Bunting** and an **Alpine Swift** in April, unprecedented numbers (several hundred) of **Manx Shearwaters** in mid-May, **Savi's Warblers** in July and August, two **Icterine Warblers** at Seaford Head (in August and September), a mini-influx of **Glossy Ibises** in autumn with three in September, another four in October and November, five **Penduline Tits** trapped and ringed at Pett Level in November, and the county's latest ever **Reed Warbler** which lingered into December.

## January

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*January started with one of the coldest winter periods in Sussex for many years with night-time temperatures well below freezing, smaller water bodies becoming permanently frozen and occasional snow flurries. A thaw set in from about the 10<sup>th</sup> and the remainder of the month was mostly unsettled and considerably warmer, with some deep depressions producing strong winds and heavy rain at times, before cold weather with strong easterly winds returned right at the end of the month.*

There were relatively few scarce and unusual birds lingering in the county from 2007, but these included the **Great Grey Shrike** at Glynde (until 2<sup>nd</sup>), the **Black Brant** which commuted between Pagham and Chichester Harbours (until 15 March), two **Whooper Swans** at Ivy Lake, a **Eurasian Bittern** at Burton Mill Pond, and three **Bearded Tits** at the Ouse Estuary Project (until 7<sup>th</sup>).

On the 1<sup>st</sup> a **Little Gull** turned up at Cuckmere Haven, a **Smew** was at Scotney Court GP and a **Long-tailed Duck** graced Hove Lagoon, while the next day a **Great Grey Shrike** was found on Peacehaven Cliffs and a redhead **Smew** at Rye Harbour stayed until 7 February at least. On the 3<sup>rd</sup> a **Great White Egret** was at Warnham LNR, and six **Rose-ringed Parakeets** at Gatwick Airport was the high count for what has always been a scarce species in the county. On the 4<sup>th</sup> the first of a number of sightings of **Waxwings** occurred, continuing to be seen on and off until May. On the 6<sup>th</sup> another **Great Grey Shrike** turned up at Pett Level (staying until 30 March) and on the 7<sup>th</sup> a **Pale-bellied Brent Goose** was found at Chichester Harbour (and was seen on and off until 14 February). The following day a **Pale-bellied Brent Goose** turned up at Pagham Harbour (being seen regularly until 25 February); it is not clear whether this was two birds or one bird commuting between the two harbours, but either way there were two of them at Pagham Harbour on the 11<sup>th</sup> so at least two birds were in the county. On the 10<sup>th</sup> there was a **Great White Egret** at Rodmell, a drake **Smew** at Northpoint Pit and a small influx of **Tundra Bean Geese** with 3



at Ivy Lake (until 23 February) and four at Pagham Harbour (until the 14<sup>th</sup>). The 11<sup>th</sup> was a red-letter day when a stunning drake **King Eider** was found in the Rye Bay area; it was a new bird for Sussex and undoubtedly the highlight of the year for many. It remained in the area until the 18<sup>th</sup>, when it drifted into Kent, doubtless to the pleasure (and relief) of Kentish birders! Also on the 11<sup>th</sup> there were two **Red-crested Pochard** at Shinewater Lake (Eastbourne). A **Great Grey Shrike** at Ringmer on the 14<sup>th</sup> was probably the same as the long-staying Glynde bird and also on this day there was a **Grey Phalarope** off Church Norton and eight **Bearded Tits** at Langney Lake. On the 15<sup>th</sup> a wintering **Lesser Whitethroat** was discovered at Hove (staying until at least the 17<sup>th</sup>) and five days later a different bird was seen at Hove Lagoon; this is the third winter this decade that this species has over-wintered (or at least attempted to do so) in Sussex. On the 21<sup>st</sup> a **Common (Mealy) Redpoll** was at Crouch Farm (Burton Pond) and a **Glaucous Gull** visited Newhaven Harbour from the 24<sup>th</sup> to the 28<sup>th</sup>. On the 27<sup>th</sup> a **Sandwich Tern** was seen Chichester Harbour (with presumably the same bird being seen on 15 February) and on the 30<sup>th</sup> there was a pair of **Red-crested Pochard** at Weir Wood Reservoir.

## February

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*February continued the cold snap; cold air from Russia was drawn in on easterly winds on the 1<sup>st</sup> and that night saw the heaviest snowfall in Sussex for nearly 20 years, with more snow on the 2<sup>nd</sup>. The first two weeks remained colder than average with further snow in some places, while very heavy rain on the 9<sup>th</sup> brought widespread flooding! The latter two weeks were, in complete contrast, mild and dry with quite warm sunshine at times.*

Despite the cold weather it seems to have been a very quiet month bird-wise. Up to 26 **Bewick's Swans** remained in the Arun Valley during most of the month. On the 4<sup>th</sup> there were two **Little Gulls** off Seaford, plus singles off Brighton, Shoreham and Worthing. On the 8<sup>th</sup> two **Long-tailed Ducks** appeared in the Emsworth Channel (Chichester Harbour), staying till at least the 14<sup>th</sup> and there was also one at Church Norton which remained in the area till at least 31 March. On the 12<sup>th</sup> the **Red-breasted Goose** returned to West Wittering for its third successive winter, remaining there until 8 March. On the 14<sup>th</sup> a **Spoonbill** was seen in Pagham Harbour and the following day a **Glaucous Gull** was at East Head. Things then went quiet for a week or so, though a **Goosander** at Weir Wood Reservoir on the 22<sup>nd</sup> was the last of nine recorded during the winter; this is quite a low number, despite the hard weather. On the 24<sup>th</sup> there were 24 **Snow Geese** at Scotney Court GP; this is a respectable-sized flock and although all **Snow Geese** in the county are credited as being of unknown origin, this is an abundant species in North America and they surely can't all be escapes (although many undoubtedly are). A count of 12 **Hawfinches** occurred at Arundel Park on the 25<sup>th</sup>. On the 27<sup>th</sup> and despite the hard weather, two **Sand Martins** were seen at Weir Wood Reservoir, the earliest ever recorded in Sussex (by five days). The month closed with another early migrant; the first **Northern Wheatear** at Glyne Gap.

## March

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*The first half of March was rather changeable, mostly fairly mild but with some chilly nights and occasional fronts bringing strong winds and heavy rain. The second half was dominated by high pressure with east or north-east winds but cooler weather returned from 26<sup>th</sup>-29<sup>th</sup>. Overall it was the driest March for several years with very little rainfall.*

The first week was very quiet, but on the 6<sup>th</sup> 27 **Snow Geese** were recorded at Rye Harbour; presumably these were the Scotney birds that had picked up three extra stragglers from somewhere. Two days later a female **Red-crested Pochard** was seen at Southwater CP and on the 11<sup>th</sup> the first

two **Garganey** of the year arrived at Arundel WWT. These were closely followed by the first **Barn Swallow** and first two **Little Ringed Plovers** at Pulborough Brooks, and the first **Osprey** at Brighton, all on the 16<sup>th</sup>. Two days later the first **House Martin** of the year graced Pulborough Brooks and on the 20<sup>th</sup> the first **Common Tern** passed by Selsey Bill. On the 23<sup>rd</sup> a **Golden Pheasant** at Hurst Green was an unusual find and a **Spoonbill** in the Cuckmere Valley on the 28<sup>th</sup> remained until the following day. Two **Common Whitethroats** at Ditchling Common were also the first of the year and a very quiet March closed with the first **Arctic Skua** past Splash Point and the first **Tree Pipit** at Ashdown Forest on the 31<sup>st</sup>.

## April

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*The first week of April saw high pressure still dominating the weather, but with low cloud and drizzle on the morning of the 4<sup>th</sup>. The second week was more unsettled, with strong winds and Atlantic lows, but relatively little rain in most places. The latter half of the month saw a day of persistent rain on the 17<sup>th</sup> but otherwise was dominated by high pressure and easterly winds, with low pressure and rain returning in the last few days.*

On the 2<sup>nd</sup> the first **Sedge Warbler** arrived at Rye Harbour and on the following day the first spring report of **Common Cuckoo** involved four birds at Ashdown Forest. Also on the 3<sup>rd</sup> the first **Common Redstart** was at Pulborough Brooks and a **Spoonbill** flew over Horsham. On the 4<sup>th</sup> the first **Grasshopper Warbler** was at Selsey and there were two **Spoonbills** at Castle Water. The next day saw the first **Garden Warbler** at Middleton-on-Sea and the first **Ring Ouzel** at Telscombe Cliffs. Summer migrants arrive thick and fast at this time of year of course and the 6<sup>th</sup> saw the first **Common Nightingale** at Pulborough Brooks and the first **Eurasian Reed Warbler** at Pagham Harbour. A **Spoonbill** flying over Warnham LNR two days later was probably the same bird that had been seen over Horsham five days earlier. On the 10<sup>th</sup> the first **Little Terns** arrived at Selsey Bill and the following day an **Alpine Swift** was at Pulborough Brooks and there were two **Common Cranes** nearby at Waltham Brooks. Notably rarer was a **Little Bunting** at Old Lodge (Ashdown Forest) which was also seen the following day. The first **Hobby** also arrived (at Ditchling Beacon) on the 12<sup>th</sup> along with the first **Pied Flycatcher** near Lewes and the first migrant **Lesser Whitethroat** at Winchelsea Beach. The next day the first **Common Swift** of the year was seen at Selsey Bill and on the 14<sup>th</sup> there was a **Black Kite** at Seaford Head and a **Hoopoe** at Patching, along with the first **Turtle Dove** at Pagham Harbour.

The following day there was another (or possibly the same?) **Black Kite** at Lancing and the first eight **Arctic Terns** of the year flew past Worthing. On the 16<sup>th</sup> the first two **Spotted Flycatchers** were at Upwaltham Hill and the last **Redwing** was at Billingshurst. Two days later a **Common Crane** was seen again at Waltham Brooks, a **Spoonbill** flew east at Beachy Head and a **Dotterel** at Climping was the second earliest county record. Also on the 18<sup>th</sup> the first **Pomarine Skua** was seen in a very poor year for this species (with only 51 birds seen, less than a third of the 22 year average). On the 19<sup>th</sup> a **Common Crane** at Warnham LNR was possibly the same as that at Waltham Brooks, while two days later the second **Hoopoe** of the year was at Pebsham and a **Pectoral Sandpiper** at Pagham Harbour (till the 22<sup>nd</sup>) was the earliest recorded in the county. On the 24<sup>th</sup> a third **Hoopoe** was seen at Abbot's Wood, the total of 16 **Black-throated Divers** that flew east past Splash Point was the high count in a god spring passage of this species, and the first **Black Terns** were seen at three coastal sites. On the 28<sup>th</sup> the last **Hen Harrier** of the spring was at Seaford and there were two **Snow Geese** (of unknown origin) at Pulborough Brooks, which remained there until 23 May. The only spring record of a **Wryneck** was on the 29<sup>th</sup>.

## May

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*The first week was unsettled with westerly winds, unseasonably strong at times, but relatively little rain. The second week saw high pressure build and was dominated by strong east and north-easterly winds. Unsettled weather returned on the weekend of 16<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> with strong south-westerlies and some sharp downpours. The rest of the month was mostly warm and sunny, but unsettled conditions during 26<sup>th</sup> – 28<sup>th</sup> produced some spectacular thunderstorms, particularly on the 26<sup>th</sup>.*

On the 3<sup>rd</sup> a **Kentish Plover** was found at Pagham Harbour and the last two **Purple Sandpipers** were at Pett Level. Two **Snow Geese** at Hurston Warren (Parham) the next day were very probably the Pulborough birds and on the 5<sup>th</sup> there were three **Dotterel** at Chantry Hill (until the 6<sup>th</sup>) and a **Spoonbill** at Pett Level (until the 13<sup>th</sup>). On the 7<sup>th</sup> a **Lady Amherst's Pheasant** was an unusual find at Anchor Bottom and two days later a **European Nightjar** at Ashdown Forest was the first of the year. On the 11<sup>th</sup> a **Balearic Shearwater** flew east past Selsey Bill, a **Common Crane** was seen over both Pett Level and Rye Harbour and a **Curlew Sandpiper** was seen at Bracklesham Bay; also on the 11<sup>th</sup> was a **Lady Amherst's Pheasant**, coming to seed at Steyning, which was quite possibly the Anchor Bottom bird (there can't be that many of them around). A **Roseate Tern** flew past Selsey Bill on the 13<sup>th</sup> and there was also a pair of **Kentish Plovers** at Pilsey Sands on this day. On the 14<sup>th</sup> a **Spoonbill** flew north-west over Ferring and on the 16<sup>th</sup> a **Puffin** past Splash Point was the first since 2004, and another **Balearic Shearwater** flew past Selsey Bill, along with an unprecedented 248 **Manx Shearwaters**; there were also 216 **Manx Shearwaters** past Worthing (in just 2 ¼ hours) and 79 past Brighton Marina in a phenomenal day for this species. On the 17<sup>th</sup> a **Balearic Shearwater** flew past Splash Point and a late **Fieldfare** at Billingshurst the following day was the last of the spring. On the 23<sup>rd</sup> the first **Common Quail** was near Shoreham and the next day a **Melodious Warbler** (rare in spring) was seen at Beachy Head. On the 25<sup>th</sup> the first **Honey-buzzard** of the year was recorded at Pevensey Levels, two **European Bee-eaters** were at Rye Harbour and a **Spoonbill** flew over Ford. On the 26<sup>th</sup> a **Temminck's Stint** was seen at Church Norton and two days later on the 28<sup>th</sup> a much rarer wader was recorded at Pagham Harbour in the form of an **Oriental Pratincole** – the second for the county and only the sixth British record. It was initially thought to have been a worn **Collared Pratincole** but it stayed until the next day and its identity (initially suspected by some of the first observers) was confirmed from photographs. Also on the 28<sup>th</sup> five **European Storm-petrels** were seen off Selsey Bill, with another seen in Bracklesham Bay, and a **Montagu's Harrier** graced Camp Hill (Ashdown Forest). A **Spoonbill** flew over Oving on the 29<sup>th</sup> and May closed with a female **Red-crested Pochard** at Pulborough Brooks.

## June

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*The first half of June was warm and dry with little rainfall, although there were heavy and thundery showers in some inland areas on the 15<sup>th</sup>. The second half was also dominated by high pressure and sunny weather, though breezy at times, with thunderstorms on the 26<sup>th</sup>. Red Kites were seen regularly through the month at scattered locations, and the first migrating waders were appearing towards the end of the month.*

On the 3<sup>rd</sup> a male **Montagu's Harrier** at Thorney Island had been wing-tagged in Holland two year earlier, and two days later another **Montagu's Harrier** (a ringtail) was seen north of Seaford. On the 8<sup>th</sup> a **Roseate Tern** was at Rye Harbour and on the 13<sup>th</sup> the third **Black Kite** of the year was seen at Steyning Roundhill, bringing the county total to 29. Also on the 13<sup>th</sup> a **Golden Pheasant**



was seen at Glyndebourne. On the 15<sup>th</sup> two **Common Cranes** were at Pulborough Brooks and two **Roseate Terns** at Rye Harbour were also seen the next day.

As is generally the case the county's breeding birds experienced mixed fortunes.

**Egyptian Geese** bred again at Petworth Park, with three adults and eight young seen this year, indicating better success than the three young raised last year. **Garganey** were confirmed breeding only at Rye Harbour, where up to nine birds were present during the summer and one female was observed with young. A pair also probably bred at Pulborough Brooks though this was not confirmed, and birds summered at a further two sites. **Grey Partridge** were confirmed breeding at nine sites (five more than last year), with most of these being on the Duke of Norfolk Estates where there were an estimated 56 pairs. As usual there was no evidence of breeding by the highly elusive **Common Quail**, but small numbers were heard (and occasionally seen) in suitable habitat in several places. At least 40 pairs of **Little Egret** bred at six main sites across the county. Seven pairs of **Honey-buzzard** reared two young each, making 2009 a rather more successful year for this species than the previous year had been. In West Sussex three pairs of **Red Kite** raised a total of five young, and a fourth pair was seen copulating but did not lay; surely they will colonise the east of the county soon. Four pairs of **Marsh Harrier** nested at three sites with two of these raising a total of three young, thus building on their success of last year.

At least 48 pairs of **Oystercatcher** bred, which is the highest number since 2000. Of these 25 pairs were at Rye Harbour with 15 at Pagham Harbour and a few pairs elsewhere on the coast (mostly in the Chichester Harbour area), plus a pair inland at Arundel. Breeding success was considered to have been generally good. **Avocets** fared less well with 29 pairs raising 19 young, representing a notable decline from the 43 pairs in 2008 and some 50 pairs in 2007. Two pairs of **Stone-curlew** raised three young in habitat that is being specifically managed for this species; further birds were present but did not breed. Two pairs also raised two young last year and birds have been present in potential breeding habitat for the past four years. This is welcome news and raises hopes that this species may soon become firmly established in the county again. A total of 12 pairs of **Little Ringed Plover** was confirmed breeding at six sites, with five of these at a single site; a further three pairs probably bred. At least 11 young were raised altogether, which is notably more than in recent years. There were eight pairs of **Common Snipe** recorded as breeding; six pairs at Amberley Wild Brooks, 1 pair at Pulborough Brooks and a pair at Northiam. They were present at one more site than last year, but numbers at Pulborough and Amberley were way down on last year (especially the former), though this may be because surveys were not as complete this year. **Common Redshank** were recorded breeding, or attempting breeding, at a minimum of twelve sites, which is nearly double the minimum number of sites last year and the best showing for several years. These included single pairs in the Cuckmere Valley (for the second year running), Pilsey and Southease, plus six pairs at Bracklesham Bay and five pairs at Lewes Brooks, in addition to the total of 19 pairs at Rye Harbour.

At least 73 (and probably 90) pairs of **Mediterranean Gull** bred at Rye Harbour, raising at least 64 young; this represents a welcome increase on last year and is possibly a county record. There were also one or two pairs at Pett Level, but with no confirmation of breeding. **Great Black-backed Gull** seems to be expanding slightly as a breeding bird in Sussex: four pairs at three sites raised at least eight young, and probable breeding occurred at a further five sites. There were **Kittiwake** colonies at the usual sites of Newhaven and Seaford, with the majority at the latter site as has been the case for the last decade or more. A total 50 nests were counted at Newhaven but the total number of occupied nests at Seaford this year is not known. More than 500 pairs of **Sandwich Tern** nested at Rye Harbour, with more than 600 young thought to have been raised. At South Stakes Island (Chichester Harbour) 30 pairs nested and seven of these

were successful, raising at least 12 young. Elsewhere a single pair at Pagham Harbour raised two young. **Common Terns** also did well this year; at Rye Harbour 232 pairs bred on Beach Reserve, with another 130 pairs at The Quarry, raising more than 200 young altogether. At Pett Level 30 pairs attempted to breed but were unsuccessful. At Chichester Harbour 18 pairs at South Stakes Island raised at least nine young. The 15 pairs at Pagham Harbour were unsuccessful. Nesting on rafts occurred at Chichester Gravel Pits, Arundel WWT, Warnham LNR, Ardingly Reservoir and Arlington Reservoir, but only four young were raised at these sites (three of them at Ardingly).

**Little Terns** had a mixed year; for the second year running, no birds bred at Rye Harbour, which may be a worrying trend. At Pagham Harbour though, 16 pairs raised at least six young. Large numbers were present in Chichester Harbour and at least six pairs nested on North Stokes Island, but were apparently unsuccessful.

**Barn Owl** populations continue to decline it seems, especially in the west of the county: 64 pairs bred in West Sussex (compared with 86 in 2008) and 34 pairs did so in East Sussex (compared with 36 in 2008); however success was quite good with a total of 339 young produced in all. There was more evidence of **Long-eared Owls** breeding this year (compared with three pairs breeding last year) but this may be at least partly due to less thorough surveying for this secretive species. There were an estimated 71 territories of **European Nightjar**, including 34 at Ashdown Forest (six more than last year) and 30 on the West Sussex heaths; this is also three more than last year, and there were scattered pairs elsewhere. **Lesser Spotted Woodpeckers** were confirmed breeding at three sites and probably bred at a further seven. **Yellow Wagtail** remains a very scarce breeding bird in the county. Five pairs bred at Rye Harbour, there were seven pairs on Horse Eye Level (Pevensey), plus a pair at Lewes Brooks (for the first time) and a record of a fledged young at Northiam. In Brighton Wild Park 89 pairs of **Wren** bred, six less than last year and still below the level of 2003 and 2004 (103 and 102 respectively). **Cetti's Warblers** continue to consolidate and spread out from their core areas; selected counts included nine males at Arundel, 11 at Thorney Island, 15 at Rye Harbour and 28 at Pagham Harbour. **Grasshopper Warblers** were heard reeling from 10 sites this year. One pair of **Savi's Warbler** bred at an undisclosed locality, apparently rearing two young (with an adult and two first year birds trapped and ringed there in late summer). **Marsh Warbler** also apparently bred this year, for the first time in many years. One bird was trapped during the spring at an undisclosed locality but it is not known whether this was a possible breeding bird; at another locality three birds (two adults and a young bird) were trapped in late summer, indicated probable breeding at least. **Dartford Warblers** appeared to have been hit by the harder than usual winter; 67 pairs were estimated, which is significantly fewer than the totals of 98 in 2008 and 93 in 2007. **Wood Warblers** were recorded from 18 tetrads during the breeding season but breeding was only confirmed in one. There were very few records of breeding **Firecrest** this year, with only two reported from West Dean Woods (where there had been from 38 to 70 pairs in the previous few years) but it is not known whether this was a real decline or due to a reduction in surveyor effort. **Willow Tits** were not recorded breeding anywhere from the second year running and records this year came from just eight sites (down from 14 last year); this is bad news for a species which is barely hanging on in the county. The situation for **Tree Sparrow** is not much better with records from only four sites during the summer and possible breeding reported in three tetrads. To finish on a more positive note though, **Common Crossbill** was confirmed breeding at one site (Black Down) where recently fledged young were seen, and pairs or singing birds were at five other localities – numbers generally were higher and the species more widespread than last year.

## July

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*Unlike June, July (after the first few days) was dominated by unsettled anticyclonic weather, with frequent strong winds and some very heavy downpours at times. There was definitely an autumnal feel and it seemed as though the Met Office's predicted 'barbecue summer' was well and truly over!*

July is often the quietest month of the year bird-wise and this year seemed to be no exception. On the 3<sup>rd</sup> a male **Red-backed Shrike** was a pleasant find at Rye Harbour and the following day a female **Red-crested Pochard** appeared for a two-day visit at Pagham Harbour. The best bird of the month was the **European Bee-eater** which graced Beachy Head on the 9<sup>th</sup> and also on this date there was a **Spoonbill** at Pagham Harbour (which was also seen on the 11<sup>th</sup>). A second male **Red-backed Shrike** turned up on the 14<sup>th</sup>; this one was at Cissbury Ring and stayed for four days. On the 24<sup>th</sup> an adult **Marsh Warbler** was trapped and ringed at an undisclosed locality, and a first-year **Savi's Warbler** was also ringed at an undisclosed locality two days later.

## August

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*The wet weather continued for much of August, with some areas recording twice the normal August rainfall.*

On the 2<sup>nd</sup> a first-year **Marsh Warbler** was ringed at an undisclosed locality and three days later there was a **Spoonbill** at Pett Level. Further **Savi's** and **Marsh Warblers** were ringed on the 6<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> respectively, both at undisclosed localities, and a **Spoonbill** at Pett Level on the 16<sup>th</sup> was probably the same bird as the one on the 5<sup>th</sup>. Also on the 16<sup>th</sup> at Pett Level an **Aquatic Warbler** was ringed; this was the only record of the year and it is obvious that this species is now considerably rarer in the county than it used to be, even 10 years ago. Pett Level scored again with a **Barred Warbler** ringed there on the 18<sup>th</sup> and, not to be outdone, observers at Seaford Head turned up an **Icterine Warbler** on the same day. On the 22<sup>nd</sup> a **Melodious Warbler** was ringed at Beachy Head and the next day a male **Red-crested Pochard** was found at Barcombe Reservoir (remaining there till the 28<sup>th</sup>). On the 25<sup>th</sup> a **Temminck's Stint** was found at Pett Level pools and the following day two **Balearic Shearwaters** flew past Selsey Bill, the last **Garganey** of the year flew past Worthing and the first **Purple Sandpiper** returned to Pett Level. The month closed with the last two **European Nightjars** of the year at Horsham.

## September

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*The remnants of Hurricane Danny brought wet and windy weather at the beginning of the month, but despite this, and in contrast to much of August, it was the driest September in England since 1997.*

Six **Balearic Shearwaters** past Birling Gap on the 2<sup>nd</sup> included a party of five, and two also flew past Worthing. On the 8<sup>th</sup> a **Dotterel** was seen at Balsdean and two **Common Quail** were ringed at Pett Level. On the 9<sup>th</sup> another **Savi's Warbler** was ringed, again at an undisclosed locality; this made three in total this year, the first records since 2002. On the 11<sup>th</sup> a juvenile **Rose-coloured Starling** was at Sheepcote Valley and the next day the last **Common Cuckoo** of the year was at Beachy Head. On the 13<sup>th</sup> a **Bluethroat** was ringed at Pett Level and the last **Honey-buzzard** was at Pagham Harbour. On the 15<sup>th</sup> a **Corn Crane** was, sadly, picked up dead in Brighton Marina – a lingering live one would be most welcome! On the 16<sup>th</sup> the last **Little Tern** was seen, at Pilsey Sands and the last two **Black Terns** were at Weir Wood Reservoir. Migrants



were departing thick and fast and the last **Common Nightingales** (3) and **Common Swifts** were seen at Beachy Head on the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> respectively. Also on the 19<sup>th</sup> another **Common Quail** was ringed at Pett Level. The following day a **Glossy Ibis** was at Pagham Harbour (till the 28<sup>th</sup>) and a male **Red-crested Pochard** was at Weir Wood Reservoir (until 13 October).

The 21<sup>st</sup> was quite a notable day with a **Melodious Warbler** at Beachy Head (which may have been the bird that had been ringed there the previous month), a second **Icterine Warbler** (plus a **Barred Warbler**) at Seaford Head, and a **Buff-breasted Sandpiper** at Scotney Court GP. The last-named site hosted two **Glossy Ibises** the following day and on the 23<sup>rd</sup> a **Yellow-browed Warbler** was ringed near Steyning and the last **Pied Flycatcher** was at Hove; this species was again only seen in very low numbers this year and numbers have been declining for several years. On the 24<sup>th</sup> the last **Little Ringed Plover** was at Rye Harbour, the first **Redwing** of the autumn was seen at Weir Wood Reservoir, a **Common Quail** was ringed at Pett Level and the last **Wrynecks** of the year were at Sheepcote Valley. On the 27<sup>th</sup> the last **Common Quail** of the year was at Fairlight Glen, while a **Glossy Ibis** south over Cuckmere Haven on the 28<sup>th</sup> was probably the same bird that had spent the previous eight days at Pagham Harbour. The month ended with the last **Grasshopper Warbler** and **Turtle Dove** at Pagham Harbour on the 29<sup>th</sup>.

## October

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*It was a largely uneventful month, with relatively low rainfall, and quite warm with temperatures generally around 5C above the seasonal average.*

October kicked off with the last **Lesser Whitethroat** at Climping on the 1<sup>st</sup>, followed a few days later by a **Yellow-browed Warbler** at Beacon Hill (Brighton) on the 5<sup>th</sup>. The following day two **Balearic Shearwaters** flew past Splash Point and there was also one past Birling Gap, along with a **Sooty Shearwater**. Also on the 6<sup>th</sup> a **Pomarine Skua** past Lancing was the only one of the autumn and a **Barred Warbler** found at the Newhaven Incinerator site stayed until the 10<sup>th</sup>. On the 7<sup>th</sup> the last **Sand Martins** were seen at Pett Level and the last **Common Tern** was at Worthing. The following day another **Yellow-browed Warbler** was seen at Birling Gap, and, on the 9<sup>th</sup> the last **Arctic Tern** was at Rye Harbour. On the 10<sup>th</sup> the first **Fieldfares** appeared at Ashdown Forest and the next two **Spoonbills** arrived at Pagham Harbour (with one staying until 8 November). On the 13<sup>th</sup> a **Pectoral Sandpiper** was seen at Pagham Harbour, while on the 14<sup>th</sup> the third **Yellow-browed Warbler** of the month was ringed at Whitbread Hollow and a **Pale-bellied Brent Goose** arrived at Chichester Harbour, remaining there until 5 December and being joined by a second bird on the 15<sup>th</sup>. Six **Pink-footed Geese** arrived for a two-day stay at Pulborough Brooks on the 16<sup>th</sup> (and were the only ones seen this year).

On the 17<sup>th</sup> a **Snow Bunting** was seen at Hastings CP and the first wintering **Hen Harrier** returned to Ashdown Forest. A **Black Brant** was at Chichester Harbour from 14<sup>th</sup> (until 5 Nov). The last **Tree Pipit** was seen at Pagham Harbour on the 18<sup>th</sup>, with the last **Garden Warbler** ringed at Pett Level the next day. Three days later a **Common (Mealy) Redpoll** was ringed, again at Pett Level, and on the 23<sup>rd</sup> the last **Hobby** was seen at Pagham Harbour. The next day a **Great Grey Shrike** arrived on Ashdown Forest, staying until 7 November, and a **Red-crested Pochard** graced Chichester GP (until the 27<sup>th</sup>). On the 26<sup>th</sup> a **Great White Egret** was at Pagham Harbour, the last **Common Whitethroat** of the year was seen at Climping, and a **Golden Pheasant** was seen on a garden lawn near Warnham. The 27<sup>th</sup> saw the last **Common Redstart** ringed at Pett Level and a **Sooty Shearwater** fly past Worthing and the next day the last **Osprey** was at Brede Levels and the last **Sedge Warbler** was ringed at Pett Level. The second **Great Grey Shrike** of the autumn was found at Pett Level on the 29<sup>th</sup> (remaining there till the end of the year) and on the

30<sup>th</sup> a very obliging **Lapland Bunting** was found on the North Wall at Pagham Harbour (staying till 4 November) and, in an excellent year for this species, two **Glossy Ibises** were also seen at Pagham Harbour (until 3 November), with another seen at Ferring Rife (until the 31<sup>st</sup>).

## November

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*The month began with a return to unsettled weather and a deep depression brought heavy rain on the 1<sup>st</sup>. It remained unsettled, with predominant westerly winds until a cold snap, with northerly winds, on 22-23<sup>rd</sup>. Westerly winds brought milder weather during the last week, with another cold snap right at the end of the month.*

On the 2<sup>nd</sup> the last two **Spotted Flycatchers** of the year were seen at Rose Green; this is a very late departure date - three weeks later than the 10-year average. Also on the 2<sup>nd</sup> there was a **Snow Bunting** at Rye Harbour. On the 5<sup>th</sup> the last **Northern Wheatear** was at Rye Harbour and three days later the last three **Ring Ouzels** were at Seaford Head; both more typical last dates. Also on the 5<sup>th</sup> the first returning **Goosander** was seen at Midhurst and there were a further five records of this species by the end of the year. Two **Red-rumped Swallows** at Pett Level on the 7<sup>th</sup> were the first county record for the month. Two days later a **Penduline Tit** was ringed. On the 10<sup>th</sup> a **Snow Bunting** turned up at East Head, remaining there until the 16<sup>th</sup>. On the 12<sup>th</sup> a remarkable four **Penduline Tits** were trapped together and ringed at Pett Level.

On the 17<sup>th</sup> a **Pallas's Leaf Warbler** was a good find at East Dean Woods on a timed winter Atlas tetrad count. On the 22<sup>nd</sup> a **Red-crested Pochard** appeared at Weir Wood Reservoir, staying until 28 December; and the same site hosted a **Grey Phalarope**; the former was possibly the same bird that had been there in September/October, while the latter was unusual that far inland. On the 26<sup>th</sup> two **Leach's Storm-petrels** were seen at Selsey Bill, along with a **Sooty Shearwater** that first flew east and then returned west, and the last **House Martin** was seen at Robertsbridge. Two days later there were **Grey Phalaropes** at Pagham Harbour and Amberley Wild Brooks (the latter staying until 6 December), another **Sooty Shearwater** was seen at Selsey Bill, a **Little Bunting** was ringed at Pett Level, a **Pale-bellied Brent Goose** was also at Pett Level and the first two **Bewick's Swans** returned to the Arun Valley. Further **Leach's Storm-petrels** were seen at Lancing (six) on the 29<sup>th</sup> and another was found dead at Telscombe Cliffs on the 30<sup>th</sup>.

## December

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*The cold snap with northerly winds lasted for the first few days (but we were spared the snow of further north). A brief milder interlude was followed by another cold spell with north or north-westerly winds and hard frosts during the second week. There was a milder spell up to the Christmas period but hard weather, with night time frosts and a biting easterly wind at times, returned at the end of the month.*

A **Red-necked Grebe** at Pulborough Brooks on the 1<sup>st</sup> was the only inland record of the year and the following day a very late **Eurasian Reed Warbler** was recorded at Pett Level; trapped on 25 Oct it remained in the area till this date, making it the latest one ever recorded in the county. Also on the 2<sup>nd</sup> another **Leach's Storm-petrel** was found dead, this one at Cowfold. On the 3<sup>rd</sup> the second **Pallas's Leaf Warbler** of the autumn was ringed at Pett Level and five days later a **Spoonbill** appeared at Pagham Harbour, being seen on and off into the New Year. On the 12<sup>th</sup> two drake **Smew** arrived at Rye Harbour (staying until the 28<sup>th</sup> at least) and the next day the last **Barn Swallow** of the year was at Wivelsfield (18 days later than the 10 year average). On the 14<sup>th</sup> a redhead **Smew** joined the two drakes at Rye Harbour (till the 19<sup>th</sup>) and there were two **Snow**

**Buntings** at the Midrips. On the 18<sup>th</sup> two Snow Buntings were seen at St Leonards and on the 26<sup>th</sup> a **Spoonbill** at Fishbourne Channel (Chichester Harbour) was probably the Pagham bird going walkabout. The 28<sup>th</sup> saw the high winter count of 21 **Bewick's Swans** in the Arun Valley, and the month (and year) closed with eight blue-morph **Snow Geese** (of the usual unknown origin) with Barnacle Geese at Scotney Court GP.

# Classified Records for 2009

This list covers all species in Categories A and C of the BOU checklist with records of Category D species listed separately. An index to all the Category A, C and D species included in the Systematic List is given on pages 264-267.

The Category A and C species are again listed in the new order announced by the BOU in October 2002 and include the further minor adjustments made by the BOU since that date. There have been no corresponding changes to Euring Numbers and, as in the 2008 Report, they are only shown against each species listed in the index.

## Status descriptions

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

## Seawatching records

Seawatching records were received from several sites although at only four were daily logs maintained. 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	Total
Selsey Bill	19	21	69	192	185	16	38	19	13	20	31	7	629
Worthing Beach	40	18	17	75	56	17	26	17	33	39	25	35	398
Telscombe Cliffs	27	27	12	25	19	10	9	9	8	26	14	11	195
Splash Point (Seaford)	20	22	43	109	52	2	0	0	1	5	0	0	254

## Wetland Bird Survey data

Many tables which are included in the accounts for wetland bird species refer to the monthly WeBS counts. Data were supplied by the Wetland Bird Survey (WeBS), a joint scheme of the British Trust for Ornithology, the Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust, the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds and the Joint Nature Conservation Committee (the last on behalf of the Countryside Council for Wales, the Environment and Heritage Service, English Nature and Scottish Natural Heritage). These counts are undertaken on a fixed date each month during the winter, and sometimes during the summer months as well. During 2009 the priority core count dates were: 18 Jan, 22 Feb, 15 Mar, 19 Apr, 10 May, 14 Jun, 12 Jul, 23 Aug, 20 Sep, 11 Oct, 22 Nov and 20 Dec.



In the WeBS tables, “nc” signifies that the site was not visited, while “–” indicates that the site was visited but none of that species was seen. It is important to note that figures quoted in the tables may appear to contradict those in the text. This is because counts made on set dates may not reveal higher or lower figures which feature throughout the remainder of each month. Prior to 1996 the sites displayed in these tables were randomly selected, invariably choosing sites with the highest counts. Between 1996 and 2003 the tables presented sites where any of the monthly counts held 5% or more of the county total for that month. However, the tables since the 2004 report show only sites where this figure is reached during the core (Sep–Mar) monthly counts.

### **Breeding Bird Survey data**

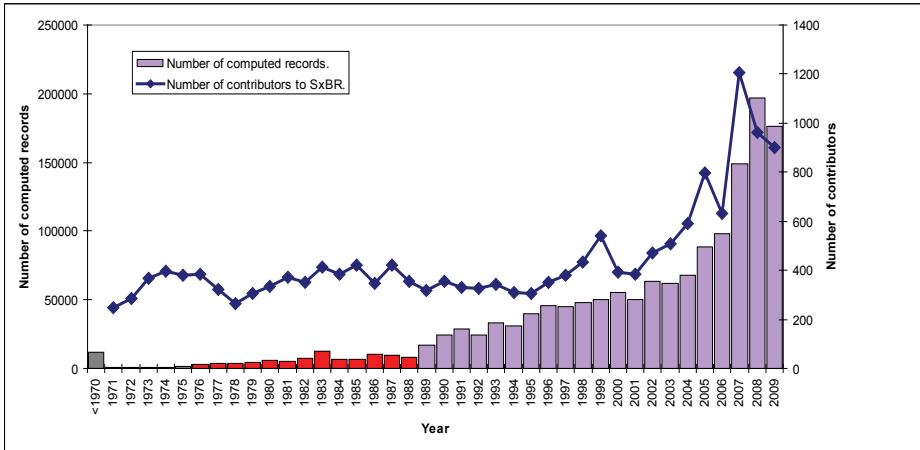
Results from the Breeding Bird Survey (BBS) are presented as the totals of the maximum counts recorded from each square surveyed during the year, and the numbers of 1-km squares in which each species was recorded at least once during the year. The maximum count is calculated for each species separately and is based on all birds seen and heard, including those in flight. These figures provide a useful indication of the relative abundance of different species although they do not take account of differences in detectability between species. They do not provide a measure of absolute abundance because BBS surveys do not detect all of the birds present in a particular square. While these figures may provide a general indication of major changes in abundance and distributions over time, they do not provide a statistically robust measure of such changes because they do not take account of the BBS sampling strategy or of temporal variation in the sample of squares surveyed. The BBS is organised by the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO), and jointly funded by the BTO, the Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC, the statutory adviser to Government on UK and international nature conservation, on behalf of the Council for Nature Conservation and the Countryside, the Countryside Council for Wales, Natural England and Scottish Natural Heritage) and the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds.

### **Database report**

Each species account in the systematic list is written by an individual using the records abstracted from the society’s database; some aspects of the 2009 dataset are described and compared with previous years below.

A total of 176,388 records were submitted for the year, this being an 8% reduction from the 191,788 received in 2008. The reasons for high numbers of records remain the same as those described in 2008 and, like 2008, there were no records from the Garden BirdWatch (GBW) which, in 2007, produced about 15,500 records. Figure 1 clearly shows the increase in records since the society started to compute observations in 1989 with a marked escalation occurring in 2007 at the onset of the current Atlas surveys. Interestingly no such peak occurred during the previous breeding tetrad atlas survey (1988-92). The red bars in Figure 1 represent the annual number of survey and selected species records captured during the early 1990s from historic paper records as part of a sponsored project whilst the almost invisible grey bars (prior to 1976) are records mainly from the wildfowl and wader counts.

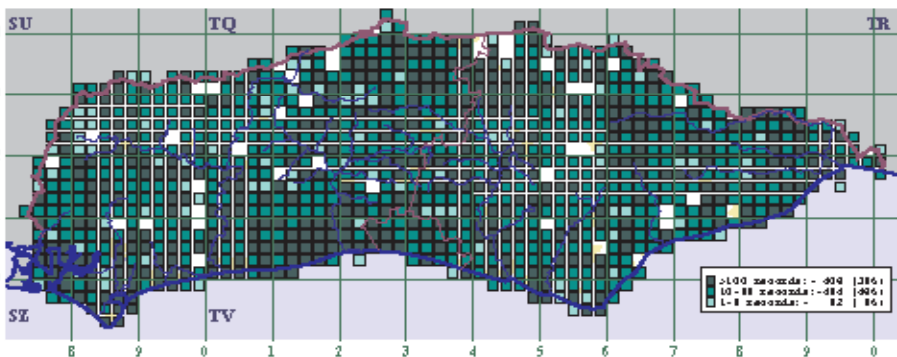
The number of records provided on paper recording forms in 2009 continued to decrease with about 1000 (about 0.5% of the total) being captured by volunteers. The ability of the society to handle large numbers of observations is in no small part related to the development of efficient on-line recording systems at the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) into which observers enter their own records. The table below emphasises the importance to the county records of on-line recording and the databases from recording groups and the county’s nature reserves.



**Figure 1.** The number of computed records and contributing observers in each year 1971-2009.

Records gathered from online surveys (BirdTrack, WeBS, BBS and Atlas)	116,847	66%
Records received directly from other databases or recording groups in Sussex	39,652	22%
Records gathered from other sources	1138	1%
Records received directly from observers	18,751	11%

Figure 1 also shows there was a very small reduction in the number of observers from 962 to 952. The graph clearly shows the number of observers was well above the steady band of contributors between the 1970s and 1990s. Maintenance of this high number of participants is particularly pleasing in the absence of the GBW records and a notable 40% reduction, from 505 to 302, in the number of people supplying records through the Atlas systems. As always the individual contributions varied considerably with 33 birders furnishing in excess of 1000 records and 138 being ascribed just a single record.



**Figure 2.** The number of records received for 2009 in each tetrad in Sussex. Dark green, >100 records; mid-green, 10-99 records; pale green, 1-9 records.

Figure 2, which includes only records with a suitable grid reference (91% of the entire), is drawn with the same scales as in 2008 and shows many similarities. The birdwatching hotspots at nature reserves, coastal and river valley locations and the Wealden and Ashdown heaths show clearly. Like 2008 only 45 (4.3%) of the 1039 tetrads containing part of Sussex had no records submitted in 2009 and only an additional 9% had fewer than 10 records. This widespread coverage is undoubtedly related to the Atlas work but allows more meaningful analysis and distribution plots. There were 24 tetrads for which there were more than 1000 records and in 2009 the tetrad TQ81X (Pett Level), with over 4500 records, was the most watched.

The following table shows the monthly spread of records for both 2008 and 2009. The patterns are broadly the same with the largest numbers of records being received in months when the Atlas work is at its greatest. Interestingly, in parallel with a decrease in the number of Atlas observers, the number of records, particularly in the winter, had decreased.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>2008</b>	18804	21570	12643	24860	26925	24566	10970	6457	9359	8124	13268	14263
<b>2009</b>	16187	16378	12027	24760	22508	23708	9773	8044	9823	9404	10430	12642

Also reflective of the Atlas work, the common and widespread species were the most recorded; indeed the top six species in 2009 were the same as in 2008, albeit in a slightly different order and slightly lower numbers. These were Blackbird (4218 records), Robin (3925), Chaffinch (3839), Wood Pigeon (3751), Carrion Crow (3716) and Blue Tit (3628). The BTO's Birdtrack also encourages the recording of common species as well as the unusual and scarce and, by so doing, brings the recording of birds much more in line with other natural history recording groups. Furthermore these records give the opportunity to provide more complete species lists for locations and to plot areas of high and low species diversity. The major drawback, however, is the huge volume of data and the difficulty in summarising these data into meaningful species accounts for this report.

Like 2008 about 13% of the records were of "presence" only with no numbers recorded. Also, like last year, just over 45% of the records were from the breeding season (April–July) and just over 22% (under 20% in 2008) of the records held one of the recognised breeding status codes. The table below shows these for the full year in detail and reveals which of these categories were the easiest to observe.

<b>Confirmed</b>		<b>Probable</b>		<b>Possible</b>		<b>Non-breeding</b>	
ON Occupied nest	903	N Nest site	794	H In habitat	9340	M Migrant	3355
DD Distraction display	23	P Pair	4401	S Singing male	10,113	F Flying over	4110
FF Carrying food	1108	A Agitation	464			U Summering	480
FL Fledged young	3990	D Display	921			W Wintering	1416
NY Nest with young	448	B Nest building	405			Unknown	129,474
UN Used nest	70	T Territory	4573				
Total	6542		11,558		19,453		138,835
Percentage	3.7		6.6		11.0		78.7

Initially these figures appear disappointing but consideration of the April–July records only shows 22% with a possible breeding code, 13% of records with a probable breeding code and 8% of records with a code indicating confirmed breeding. Throughout the breeding season there were regular postings on the society's website to encourage observers to record breeding activity to assist with the Atlas fieldwork. [John Newnham, Database Manager, October 2010]

## Distribution maps

The distribution maps for certain species include a range of symbols:

Large red circle	Confirmed breeding
Medium red circle	Probable breeding
Small red circle	Seen in suitable breeding habitat
Small open circle	All other records with a grid reference

## Abbreviations

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

<b>BBRC</b>	British Birds Records Committee	<b>RSPB</b>	Royal Society for the Protection of Birds
<b>BBS</b>	Breeding Bird Survey	<b>RBRG</b>	Rye Bay Ringing Group
<b>BTO</b>	British Trust for Ornithology	<b>PH</b>	Public House
<b>BOU</b>	British Ornithologists Union	<b>R</b>	River
<b>CBC</b>	Common Birds Census	<b>SF</b>	Sewage Farm or Works
<b>CP</b>	Country Park	<b>SP</b>	Sand Pit
<b>Fm</b>	Farm	<b>SSSI</b>	Site of Special Scientific Interest
<b>GP</b>	Gravel Pit	<b>TTV</b>	Timed Tetrad Visit
<b>GC</b>	Golf Course	<b>WeBS</b>	Wetland Bird Survey
<b>Hbr</b>	Harbour	<b>WBBS</b>	Waterways Breeding Bird Survey
<b>IUCN</b>	The World Conservation Union	<b>WinGS</b>	Winter Gull Roost Survey
<b>MP</b>	Mill Pond	<b>WWT</b>	Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust
<b>MO</b>	Many Observers	<b>ha</b>	Hectare(s)
<b>LNR</b>	Local Nature Reserve	<b>hr</b>	Hour(s)
<b>NR</b>	Nature Reserve	<b>km</b>	Kilometre(s)
<b>NNR</b>	National Nature Reserve	<b>m</b>	Metre(s)
<b>O/S</b>	Offshore	<b>nc</b>	No count
<b>Res</b>	Reservoir		
<b>N,E,S,W</b>	As cardinal compass points		



**Mute Swan***Cygnus olor*

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

Just over 2000 records were received for this species, underlining its common status, of which over half came from only 16 sites. 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>	713	543	464	482	327	421	518	420	590	545	472	671
<b>Chichester Hbr</b>	177	96	89	55	82	118	168	118	148	155	134	168
<b>Pagham Hbr</b>	5	15	34	29	17	19	13	15	10	17	7	3
<b>Chichester GP</b>	2	nc	4	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	24	21	17	58
<b>Climping</b>	36	nc	22	61	nc	nc	85	nc	82	nc	nc	35
<b>Arun Valley</b>	52	65	45	82	70	53	55	43	38	28	80	55
<b>Arun South of Arundel</b>	85	62	36	36	41	60	66	76	47	82	70	44
<b>Adur (Steyping-Henfield)</b>	5	5	6	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	15	25	27
<b>Henfield Brooks</b>	22	6	22	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	13	36	17	27
<b>Lewes Brooks</b>	33	30	45	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	7	18	2	10
<b>Ouse Levels</b>	33	30	45	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	7	18	2	10
<b>Eastbourne Lakes</b>	28	24	28	nc	nc	nc	nc	12	64	52	36	46
<b>Pevensy Levels</b>	29	44	32	46	55	34	2	24	26	19	35	39
<b>Rye Bay</b>	182	138	28	137	36	114	113	122	76	33	17	114

The WeBS counts show that, although the overall total was slightly less than the 10-year average total, monthly counts were comparable with the 10-year averages for all months except the last four.

Despite the relatively large numbers in the county, few were recorded at the principal seawatching sites, the highest counts being 4W and 5W in January and 3, 4, 1 and 3 all W in April, all but one record being from Worthing Beach.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Sep
<b>E</b>	-	-	-	3	1	-
<b>W</b>	9	-	4	11	-	1

Although January was the coldest since 1997 and was followed by cold and snow in February numbers held up well and were reasonably comparable with previous years. The heavy rains in April and the resulting flooding in the river valleys seems to have been beneficial to the species as the total for April was the highest since before 1999. Several sites hosted significant numbers additional to the WeBS table. In the Adur Valley particularly, these included, in January, 54 at Bines Bridge (Ashurst) and 77 at Upper Adur Levels on the 4<sup>th</sup>, 105 at Ford (Arun Valley) on the 15<sup>th</sup>, 54 at East Guldeford on the 18<sup>th</sup> and 80 at Chichester GPs on the 27<sup>th</sup>. In February, there were additional counts of 82 at Chichester GP on the 15<sup>th</sup> and 66 at East Guldeford on the 22<sup>nd</sup>. Other large non-WeBS count in March and April were 50 in Pagham Hbr on 17 Mar and 120 in Fishbourne Channel on the 28 Apr and 80 at Dell Quay on the 25<sup>th</sup>. The herd at Hove Lagoon peaked at 23 on 20 Mar.

During the breeding season, the first reports of nesting were at Widewater (Lancing) on 31 Mar with a nest on a house lawn. There was a nest with six eggs at Brighton Marina on 8 Apr,

nesting pairs at Sidlesham Ferry on 13 Apr, Brooklands (Worthing) on the 18<sup>th</sup> and Bewl Water on 1 May. Breeding was confirmed at 76 sites by at least 95 pairs. A brood of five cygnets, first seen at Widewater on 16 May, was regularly recorded there until 2 Dec. Further broods were recorded at Henfield Levels (five cygnets) on 2 Jun, Seftor Fm (Rose Green) (ten) on the 6<sup>th</sup>, Warnham LNR (four) on the 8<sup>th</sup>, Brooklands (five) on the 13<sup>th</sup> and Pett Level (seven) on 23 May, and breeding was confirmed at Barcombe Mills on 24 May when adults and young were present.

During the second winter period the species was seen at some 124 localities. The grazing herd at Fishbourne, which had peaked at 162 on 24 July, fell away to 95 by 14 Nov and 80 by 5 Dec. Elsewhere, 82 were counted on 11 Oct in the Arun Valley (Arundel to Littlehampton), reducing to 44 on 21 Dec, and 36 at Henfield Levels on 15 Oct had reduced to 27 by 20 Dec. The highest counts during this period were 129 roosting overnight at Rye Hbr LNR on 12 Dec and 96 at Brede Valley and 84 on Winchelsea Marsh on the 20<sup>th</sup>. [WEC]

## Bewick's Swan

## *Cygnus columbianus*

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

The monthly WeBS counts were, unfortunately, unrepresentative of this species this year. However, the records indicate that the main area for this species continues to be the Arun Valley, although the birds are quite mobile, as is demonstrated by the maximum counts shown in the following table:

	Jan	Feb	Mar		Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Arundel WWT	26	24	-		-	-	-	21
Offham/Burpham	24	24	-		-	-	-	15
Amberley Wild Brooks	16	5	-		-	-	-	4
Pulborough Brooks	22	25	-		2	-	2	21
Adur Valley	9	4	-		-	-	-	10
Scotney Court GP	40	-	-		-	-	-	-
Other sites	-	3	-		-	-	-	11

However, in view of the birds' mobility, it is probably reasonable to postulate that the county totals were as follows:

	Jan	Feb		Nov	Dec
<b>County total</b>	75	32		2	42
<b>Arun Valley area</b>	26	25		2	21
<b>Adur Valley area</b>	9	4		-	10
<b>Other sites</b>	40	3		-	11

In the first winter period there were regular reports of a herd of up to 26 during January and February in the Arun Valley area anywhere between Arundel and Pulborough Brooks. The first sighting was of 24 at Offham on 4 Jan and 26 roosted at Arundel WWT on the 11<sup>th</sup>. The last report of this herd was on 21 Feb when 25 birds were at Pulborough Brooks. However, a bird with a yellow leg ring 897 was seen at Pulborough Brooks on 16 Mar. In the Adur Valley, nine were recorded at Henfield levels on 21 Jan (five, probably from this herd, were seen at Bines Bridge (Ashurst) on 24 Jan), reducing to four by 1 Feb. In the east 40 seen at Scotney Court GP on 12 Jan may have been part of the herd of 72 seen at Denge Marsh (Kent) on the 8<sup>th</sup>.

In the autumn, two birds seen at Pulborough Brooks for one day on 13 Sep were presumably en route, possibly to Slimbridge. In the second winter period there were regular sightings of herds of varying sizes in the Arun Valley with the earliest sightings being of two on 28 Nov and a peak count of 21 at Pulborough Brooks on 28 Dec. The highest count in the Henfield Levels area during December was ten on the 27<sup>th</sup>. A group of eight was seen at Pagham Hbr on 19 Dec and three were at Laughton Level (Glynde) on the 27<sup>th</sup>. [WEC]

## Whooper Swan

*Cygnus cygnus*

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

There were reports from two sites. In the first winter period a pair was seen regularly at either New, Ivy or Runcton Lakes (Chichester GP) from 1-12 Jan (MO) having first been seen in 2008.

In the second winter period, three adults were seen flying west at Worthing on 6 Nov (JAN) and there were sightings of a pair at Chichester GP from 16 Nov until 9 Dec (MO). The final record of the year was four probable adults flying SE at Worthing on 28 Dec (DIS). [WEC]

## Tundra Bean Goose

*Anser fabalis fabalis*

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

The only substantiated records were of two small groups early in the New Year in the west of the county, both of which arrived on 10 Jan. At Ivy Lake (Chichester GP), a very obliging group of three birds was resident intermittently until 23 Feb and was seen by many observers (SK, OM et al.). The other group, of four birds, was only recorded again on 14 Jan; they were always elusive in fields behind the North Wall (Pagham Hbr) (THE, PNP et al.). There were reports of birds present in the east of the county during the first winter period, but no descriptions were received. [AH]

## Pink-footed Goose

*Anser brachyrhynchus*

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

The only record for the year of this scarce species was of a flock of six birds, including at least two juveniles, present at Pulborough Brooks on 16 and 17 Oct (PMH, KJ). [AH]

## White-fronted Goose

*Anser albifrons*

*Scarce winter visitor and passage migrant.*

Records were thinly spread across the county in the early part of the year, where only Pett Level, with a peak of 65 birds present on 4 Feb, and Scotney Court GP, with a peak of 53 on the 21<sup>st</sup>, provided regular double figure counts. Elsewhere, in January, seven were seen behind the North Wall (Pagham Hbr) on the 10<sup>th</sup>, one was at Cradle Hill (Seaford) on the 14<sup>th</sup>, six were on Glynde Levels on the 17<sup>th</sup> and four were at Pett Level on the 31<sup>st</sup>.

In January, a juvenile bird was seen in the Partridge Green area from the 24<sup>th</sup> until 4 Feb. A migrating flock of 78 roosted overnight at Rye Hbr on the 7<sup>th</sup>, there were groups of seven at Warningcamp (Arundel) on the 14<sup>th</sup>, three on the Midrips on the 19<sup>th</sup> and, finally, one at Pulborough Brooks on 28 Feb was probably the bird seen previously at Partridge Green. The only records from the second winter period were of a family group of two adults and two juveniles at Brighthams Fm (Partridge Green) on 5 and 6 Dec and nine at Pett Level on the 28<sup>th</sup>. [AH]

## 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>	234	414	273	157	159	385	227	786	788	812	605	776
<b>Arun Valley</b>	51	5	59	36	39	11	20	60	226	218	192	54
<b>Warnham LNR</b>	-	-	-	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	110	-	-	1
<b>Henfield Brooks</b>	43	-	-	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	-	4	-	1
<b>St George's Retreat</b>	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	74	160	47	
<b>Ardingly Res.</b>	-	-	6	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	150	8	130
<b>Weir Wood Res</b>	3	-	3	1	6	24	21	180	292	54	186	195
<b>Glynde Brooks</b>	-	3	38	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	9	nc
<b>Pevensey Levels</b>	-	-	2	8	1	-	-	-	-	-	40	40
<b>Bewl Water</b>	1	-	-	nc	nc	nc	nc	42	30	2	9	39
<b>Rye Bay</b>	129	393	138	105	88	243	185	471	1	195	111	87

Despite the WeBS counts being lower than last year during the first half of the year, this species continues to prosper, as evidenced by peak counts of 125 birds at Balcombe Res on 8 Jan, 150 at Warnham LNR on the 20<sup>th</sup>, 160 at Brighthams Fm (Partridge Green) on 4 Feb, 200 on Steyning Levels on the 9<sup>th</sup> and 150 at Amberley Wild Brooks on the 15<sup>th</sup>. The only seawatching records were of a single bird flying east past Brighton Marina on 13 Apr and two passing Splash Point (Seaford) on the 20<sup>th</sup>.

Rye Hbr appears to be the breeding stronghold within the county, with 19 pairs recorded in the area. Elsewhere, apparently occupied nests were reported from six sites (single pairs) and nests containing eggs were reported from six further sites. Fledged young were recorded during the period 29 Apr to 31 Jul at a further 22 sites, including ten sites producing a total of 43 goslings. During the BBS, birds were recorded in 14 of the 135 1-km squares surveyed, with a maximum count of 16.

By the end of July, a flock of 120 birds was back at Pulborough Brooks signalling the start of post-breeding gatherings at traditional sites. Peak counts included 444 birds at Scotney Court GP on 23 Aug, 400 at Warnham LNR on 4 Sep, 292 at Weir Wood Res on the 20<sup>th</sup> and 274 at Pulborough Brooks two days later. Good numbers continued to be seen throughout the county during the autumn, with the WeBS figures fairly representing the biggest counts, although Warnham LNR regularly hosted between 100 and 200 birds. During the second winter period, the species was seen at some 48 localities; the highest counts during the period were 186 at Weir Wood Res on 22 Nov and 155 at Amberley Wild Brooks on the 23<sup>rd</sup> and, in December, 200 at Warnham LNR on the 10<sup>th</sup> and 195 at Weir Wood Res on the 20<sup>th</sup>. [AH]



**Snow Goose***Anser caerulescens*

1999: The record of a bird at Scotney Court GP in Feb-Mar 1999 has been reviewed by SOSRC and is no longer considered acceptable. The record adjudication process and interpretation of the Committee members' decisions were reviewed by the SOSRC members who originally commented on the record and were found to be inconsistent with the procedures and processes of the Committee. The deletion of the record as a genuine wild bird and the removal of the species from the Sussex List have been ratified by the Society's Scientific Committee.

**Canada Goose***Branta canadensis*

*Common and increasing introduced resident and partial migrant.*

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

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>County total</b>	1677	901	772	290	309	421	420	2100	969	2119	2809	3346
<b>Chichester Hbr</b>	42	63	39	32	22	9	49	126	109	61	49	52
<b>Chichester GP</b>	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	71	39	43	8
<b>Petworth Park</b>	4	24	48	37	53	126	127	181	11	6	-	32
<b>Arun Valley</b>	584	111	193	77	77	15	27	29	55	1046	1535	1135
<b>Knepp MP</b>	-	47	51	12	22	55	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Ifield MP</b>	19	116	29	22	31	49	57	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc
<b>Weir Wood Res</b>	30	10	24	6	27	56	55	293	153	120	143	70
<b>Lewes Brooks</b>	20	25	25	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	50	-	-	120
<b>Ouse Levels</b>	20	25	25	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	50	-	-	120
<b>Barcombe Res</b>	-	10	15	-	1	20	19	122	255	22	-	15
<b>Glynde Brooks</b>	6	31	39	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	12	nc
<b>Cuckmere Haven</b>	318	71	41	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	20	50	nc	nc
<b>Eastbourne Lakes</b>	50	23	33	nc	nc	nc	nc	5	25	110	25	379
<b>Pevensay Levels</b>	41	37	32	30	22	nc	nc	nc	-	154	238	172
<b>Bowl Water</b>	250	186	62	nc	nc	nc	nc	835	135	200	448	887
<b>Rye Bay</b>	162	81	57	58	38	81	60	212	-	189	167	323

Numbers were down slightly on the previous year in the early months. The highest count, 634 at Pulborough Brooks on 26 Jan, was, unusually, from the west of the county where the species is not especially numerous, particularly in the winter. Away from the Arun Valley, the western harbours (where the majority of the county's Dark-Bellied Brent Geese winter) rarely hold more than a few dozen of this ubiquitous species.

Reports of breeding were received from throughout the county. Confirmed breeding was recorded from some 76 tetrads including 11 apparently occupied nests and three nests with eggs. Fledged young were recorded during the period 28 Apr to 19 Jul from a further 62 sites of which 16 sites produced at least 94 goslings. During the BBS, a total of 170 was recorded from 38 of the 135 1-km squares surveyed.

The usual post-breeding flocks began forming in early August; 600 birds on Arlington Res on the 13<sup>th</sup> and 835 on Bowl Water on the 23<sup>rd</sup> were the most notable counts. The tally of 1200 birds on 6 Sep at the former site was the highest count anywhere in the county during the year. At several other sites across the county (including Paghham Hbr, Warnham LNR and Henfield Levels) flocks

in excess of 200, additional to the WeBS counts above, were noted during September and on 17 Oct a notable count of 700 birds was recorded at Charleston Reed Bed. During the second winter period, the species was seen at some 81 localities; the highest counts during the period were 937 at Amberley Wild Brooks on 23 Nov and 448 at Bewl Water on the 22<sup>nd</sup> and, in December, 1072 at Bewl Water on the 25<sup>th</sup> and 826 at Pulborough Brooks on the 21<sup>st</sup>. [AH]

## Barnacle Goose

## *Branta leucopsis*

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

Although the species was seen regularly throughout the county during the year it is likely that most, if not all, sightings were of birds of feral origin. The two most significant feral flocks were to be seen at Scotney Court GP and Barcombe Res through the year. Numbers at the former site peaked at 82 birds on 11 Jan and 62 (including an apparent Barnacle Goose x Snow Goose hybrid) at the latter site on 1 Feb. Elsewhere, numbers were low and usually of ones or twos. There were two at Arundel WWT on 14 and 23 Feb, up to three at Pett Level between 12 and 21 Mar, two at Weir Wood Res the following day, three at Rye Hbr on 20 Apr and single birds at another nine locations through the year.

The only reports of possibly genuinely wild birds occurred in the second winter period: nine were seen in Chichester Hbr on 27 Nov and seven at Broadwater Lake (Eastbourne) on 19 Dec. [AH]

## Dark-bellied Brent Goose

## *Branta bernicla bernicla*

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

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>	9300	11283	5209	36	18	13	5	20	25	5051	5984	8252
<b>Chichester Hbr</b>	8356	8757	5032	36	18	13	5	20	25	4917	5077	5478
<b>Pagham Hbr</b>	792	2522	168	-	-	-	-	-	-	106	903	2634

In the first winter period, counts were lower than in 2008 although there were rather more records than usual for sites away from the western harbours. Thirteen birds were seen at Shoreham Hbr on 2 Jan, at Climping Gap a flock of 250 birds was recorded feeding on cereal fields on 15 Jan (with 147 still present three days later), at Pett Level between one and three birds were recorded regularly from the New Year until 6 Mar and, at Rye Hbr, similar numbers were recorded between 18 Jan and 22 Feb. The only inland records were of one bird on Pevensy Levels on 18 Jan, three birds seen at Pett Level on 3 Feb and one at Arlington Res five days later.

Spring migration started relatively early: 94E were noted past Splash Point (Seaford) on 30 Jan (cf. 3 Feb 2008) followed by 1650E past Worthing Beach and 580 past Shoreham Hbr the following day. Movements thereafter in February were very slow and protracted with few days of significant movement; the peak count was 719 past Splash Point on 4 Apr and recorded numbers were well down on the previous year. The last migrant, and one of only three seen in the month, headed east past Selsey Bill and then Worthing Beach on 15 May.

Monthly totals at the principal seawatching sites were as follows:

		Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr		Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>Selsey Bill</b>	E	2	170	635	602		5	6	5
	W	1	13	8	10		220	9	31
<b>Worthing Beach</b>	E	1669	303	260	235		77	2	13
	W	12	8	23	2		356	44	43
<b>Telscombe Cliffs</b>	E	189	601	254	40		14	13	28
	W	15	-	3	-		65	5	5
<b>Splash Point</b>	E	335	413	1501	1324		-	-	-
	W	9	0	1	-		-	-	-

The only records of summering birds came from Chichester Hbr where a relatively high count of 20 birds was noted on 31 Jul and 21 Aug.

The first signs of return migration occurred on the early date of 14 Sep, when four birds were seen in Pagham Hbr and, four days later, when four were seen heading west past Worthing Beach. By 1 Oct there were 100 birds back in Chichester Hbr and by the 14<sup>th</sup> a total of 2000 was recorded at Thorney Deeps.

As is usual, birds were seen on the move from a variety of coastal destinations in October and November. Few were seen inland, the exceptions being one with Canada Geese at Charleston Reed Bed on 17 Oct and two at Swanbourne Lake (Arundel) on 13 Nov. Away from the western harbours, the only places which held birds regularly were Climping Gap (an increasingly regular site), where a feeding flock of 25 on 16 Nov had risen to 270 by 15 Dec, and Rye Hbr, where small numbers were seen at various times during the autumn with a peak of 17 seen feeding on 17 Oct.

During the second winter period, the species was seen at some 55 localities. The highest numbers were, as usual, in the western harbours: in November, 2000 at East Head (West Wittering) on the 19<sup>th</sup> and 1700 at Pagham Hbr on the 30<sup>th</sup>; in December, 2062 at Pagham Hbr on the 20<sup>th</sup> and 2000 on two other dates in the month. [AH]

## **Pale-bellied Brent Goose**

*Branta bernicla hrota*

*Scarce winter visitor and passage migrant.*

There were regular sightings of this distinctive subspecies in both Chichester and Pagham Harbours. At the former site, one bird was reported from 7 Jan until 14 Feb and again between 14 Oct and 5 Dec. At the latter, one was seen from 8 Jan until 28 Feb (with two birds present on 11 Feb) and two were seen there on 5 Oct. The only other record came from Pett Level, where one was reported on 28 Nov. [AH]

## **Black Brant**

*Branta bernicla nigricans*

*Very scarce winter visitor and passage migrant*

As in previous years, there were numerous reports of this American vagrant, but few substantiated records. There were regular reports of a single adult bird which apparently commuted between Pagham and Chichester Harbours (probably with the Dark-bellied Brents) as it was not recorded in both places on the same date. It was at Pagham Hbr for four periods between the start

of the year and 15 Mar (BJF *et al.*), and in Chichester Hbr for three periods between 27 Jan and 12 Mar (BFF, DM, DIS *et al.*). It was last recorded on 15 Mar in Pagham Hbr.

In the second winter period, a single bird was recorded at Thorney and Pilsley Islands from 14 Oct until 5 Nov (CBC). [AH]

## Red-breasted Goose

*Branta ruficollis*

*Very rare vagrant.*

An adult present with Brent Geese at West Wittering (Chichester Hbr) from 12 Feb-8 Mar (BFF *et al.*) was presumably that seen at this location and in Dorset and Hampshire during the previous two winters (*SxBR* 60:22 and 61:28). BBRC noted periods of inappropriate behaviour when in other counties - leaving the Brent flock to visit Abbotsbury Swannery and to spend periods with both Shelduck and feral Canada Geese - but to the relief of many gave it the benefit of being 'innocent until proved guilty' (*Brit. Birds* 102:532-533). When at West Wittering it could often be found feeding in the fields adjacent to the café and the East Head car park, particularly at high tide, or on the saltings between Snowhill and East Head. It often flew in from and departed towards Hayling Island (e.g. as per *Birding World* 21:49). The previous county records of presumed wild birds were at Amberley in Feb 1958 and Pagham Hbr from Jan-Mar 1986 and again in Jan 1987. [RJF]

## Egyptian Goose

*Alopochen aegyptiaca*

*Very scarce visitor from introduced populations elsewhere in Britain; bred for first time in 2000.*

There was another increase in the number of records, up to 88 (cf. 72 in 2008), while the number of sites held up at 17. During the first winter period, the stronghold for the species was in the area around Petworth Park and along the R Rother corridor east of there, with nine birds at Petworth Park Lake on 18 Jan. Elsewhere, there were two at Swanbourne Lake (Arundel) on 3 Feb and one at Southwater CP on 4 Feb.

Confirmed breeding came early and from their now regular location, with three adults and eight goslings seen on 15 Mar at Petworth Park Lake. It is likely that the two adults and five fledged young seen at Benbow Pond (Cowdray) on 26 Apr were part of the same group. Two at Pulborough Brooks on 26 Apr was the only record there during the spring, but the two at Rye Hbr and East Guldeford Level on 19 Apr started a run of records from that area through to 1 Jun. There was also a pair at Bewl Water Res from 1 May and then sporadically through the year, but with no evidence of breeding.

Eleven on 14 Jun in Petworth Park was the largest group ever seen in Sussex and numbers remained high there through July. The focus, in August, then shifted to Pulborough Brooks, where two adults and four juveniles were seen on occasions from 22 Aug to 22 Sep. It is possible that these were some of the Petworth birds but, interestingly, in September, there were nine at Petworth on the 20<sup>th</sup> and eight at Pulborough Brooks the next day; similarly, in October, ten at Petworth on the 11<sup>th</sup> and six at Pulborough Brooks the next day. While it is possible that these birds were being highly mobile and flying the relatively short distance (c.10 km) between these two sites it is equally possible that a population of at least 17 birds was in the west of the county in the autumn.

A singleton arrived at Mewsbrook (Littlehampton) after strong winds on 4 Oct. It then appeared that there was a drift eastwards of birds as winter progressed into December: numbers at Petworth reduced to six by on the 14<sup>th</sup>, stayed high at Pulborough Brooks, with nine on the 5<sup>th</sup>, and two adults and three juveniles were seen at Partridge Green on the 27<sup>th</sup>. A run of records at Weir Wood Res started with a single bird on 22 Nov, increasing to three by 31 Dec.

The most unusual record of the year was of a singleton which flew in off the sea at Splash Point (Seaford) on 14 Apr and circled over the observers' heads before heading towards the Cuckmere Valley. [AT]

## Common Shelduck

## *Tadorna tadorna*

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

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

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>County total</b>	936	968	908	389	284	298	129	50	84	183	354	958
<b>Chichester Hbr</b>	560	505	466	183	70	114	57	16	44	115	257	552
<b>Bracklesham Bay</b>	1	9	80	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	-	1	2
<b>Pagham Hbr</b>	257	275	170	108	84	111	36	14	38	33	71	317
<b>Arun Valley</b>	82	56	48	37	72	35	10	-	-	nc	15	34
<b>Rye Bay</b>	31	92	93	50	43	30	26	16	1	34	8	41

Numbers in January were a little higher than in 2008 and the highest since 2005, but barely rose into February, as was once the case and did not break the 1000 mark during the year. Away from the core areas, there were notable site maxima of 48 at the Midrips on 22 Feb and 40 at Scotney Court GP on 22 Feb. There was an unusual record of two feeding on the downs 1.5 km from water at Five Lords Burgh (Denton) on 20 Feb. Numbers held up relatively well in March, before dropping sharply, as is usual, in April.

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

	Jan		Feb		Mar		Apr		May	
	E	W	E	W	E	W	E	W	E	W
<b>Selsey Bill</b>	nc	nc	2	3	6	7	34	14	16	23
<b>Worthing Beach</b>	-	4	nc	nc	3	4	4	18	18	16
<b>Splash Point</b>	5	-	9	4	14	14	51	4	3	-

It is difficult to spot clear patterns of movement offshore for this species, apart from an expected peak and easterly bias at Splash Point (Seaford) in spring and general unpredictability otherwise! The year's peak was earlier than in some years, with 28 on 6 Apr at Splash Point, the highest day count, and then very low numbers there through May.

Breeding was confirmed in 21 1-km squares, another sizable increase over the previous year's excellent results. In part this may be due to Atlas surveying effort, but also to valuable records from the Midrips area. The first record of young was of five at Bracklesham Bay on 1 May.

In the west of the county maximum counts of ducklings were made as follows: up to eight at Thorney Deeps on 2 Jun; 28 in a crèche at Sidlesham Ferry on 15 Jul; 17 at Birdham on 24 Jul; up to 17 at Arundel WWT on 17 May; 2 at Widney Brooks on 17 Jun; and 13 at Pulborough

Brooks on 15 Jun. As usual, there were no breeding records from the Adur Valley. The five young at Bracklesham Bay turned out to be the only successful pair in a large-scale survey of 663 ha of farmland in that area, despite there being up to 30 non-breeders still there on 26 May. There were no breeding records from the Chingford or Burton MP area, despite up to seven birds being present into June. No breeding pairs were noted at Sefter Fm (Rose Green) but there were abnormal numbers there in May, peaking at 30 on the 15<sup>th</sup> and roosting in a newly sown arable field.

In the east, the maximum duckling counts were eight in the Cuckmere Valley on 10 May; seven at Horse Eye Level (Pevensey) on 3 Jun; five at Rye Hbr on 28 Jun; 26 at Rye saltings on 14 Jun; 12 at The Wicks (Camber) on 21 Jun; 14 at Union Canal (East Guldeford) on 14 Jun; and a very impressive 48 at the Midrips on 21 Jun. There were no breeding records from the Ouse Valley, despite a few summer records with a peak of four at Iford (Lewes) on 9 May.

During the autumn, numbers increased slowly, as usual, and included 2E and 22W past Worthing in October. During the second winter period, the species was seen at some 68 localities. In November, the highest counts were 150 at Pagham Hbr on the 28<sup>th</sup>. Numbers increased dramatically in December, achieving the highest count in that month for at least eight years, although the highest single count was 312 at Pagham Hbr on the 20<sup>th</sup>. There was an interesting record of 25 W past Worthing in snow on 18 Dec. [AT]



*Mandarin Duck, Weir Wood Reservoir, March 2009 (Derek Washington)*

## Mandarin Duck

*Aix galericulata*

*Scarce introduced resident; breeding in small numbers.*

**2008:** The reference in *SxBR 61:30* to a peak winter count of 59 at Stapleash Fm on 10 Jan has been deleted as the birds were in Surrey: the observer had used the incorrect grid reference.



**2009:** Birds were seen in 85 tetrads (cf. 91 in 2008), another good result thanks to Atlas recording efforts. Breeding was confirmed in 14 tetrads and was probable in a further 23.

The peak count in the first winter period was 55 at Weir Wood Res on 16 Feb. Other notable counts were 37 at Arundel WWT on 19 Jan, 31 at Warnham LNR on 16 Jan, and 20 at Ardingly Res on 18 Jan. It was notable that the highest count of the year, at Darwell Res, was only 14 on 15 Mar, as this site often holds the county maximum.

In the breeding season, the most successful site was Warnham LNR, where there were four broods of ten, seven, six and three ducklings; it also had the highest summer count of 34 birds on 1 Jun. At Weir Wood Res, two nests had 30 eggs on 10 May and 13 young birds were seen on 28 Jun.

Other sites with proven breeding were (with number of young where known): Burton MP; Ebernoe Common; Arundel WWT (3); Parham House Lake (6); Pulborough Brooks (11); Lower Beeding (4); Colgate (St Leonards Forest); Bolney; Pippingford Park (Ashdown Forest); Highfields (Blackham); Bells Yew Green; Wadhurst Park Estate; Southover (Burwash) (4); Bewl Water and Darwell Res (4). Away from their heartland in the wooded sections of the Weald and along the Arun Valley, Mandarins were, as usual, very scarce throughout the year. A male was at Church Norton on 31 Mar, two at Winchelsea on 24 May, two at Rye Hbr on 31 Oct.

During the second winter period, the species was seen at some 28 localities. The highest counts in November were 15 at Etchingham on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 14 at Slaugham MP on the 22<sup>nd</sup>. In December, there were 53 at Weir Wood Res on the 27<sup>th</sup> and 25 at Constantia Manor (Isfield) on the 7<sup>th</sup>. [AT]

## Eurasian Wigeon

*Anas penelope*

*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>	8784	7885	4252	21	4	3	4	11	1742	4046	4067	8209
<b>Chichester Hbr</b>	2435	1432	975	3	4	3	3	2	662	2928	402	938
<b>Pagham Hbr</b>	891	1436	771	3	-	-	-	8	623	362	633	1566
<b>Arun Valley</b>	2732	2891	1603	12	-	-	-	-	175	253	2008	2680
<b>Eastbourne Lakes</b>	82	113	28	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	134	-	14	188
<b>Rye Bay</b>	1441	889	367	3	-	-	1	-	102	256	585	1647

The counts in the first three months of the year were lower than the averages for the last ten years, and included the lowest January WeBS count since 2005 and the second lowest since 1995. The highest single site count was 1900 at Pulborough Brooks on 23 Feb. Other notable peaks were 1700 at North Fields (Pagham Hbr) on 20 Jan, 1651 at Amberley Wild Brooks on 19 Jan, 1045 at Scotney Court GP on 16 Jan, 600 at Cuckmere Haven on 1 Jan, 570 at Rye Hbr on 3 Feb, and 400 at Four Oaks (Beckley), on 5 Feb. The 250 at Horse Eye Level on 18 Jan was the disappointingly highest count of the year on Pevensy Levels.

The exodus of birds was well underway by early March, with the last three-figure flock in the county being 600 at Pulborough Brooks on the 18<sup>th</sup>. By 20 Apr, just 12 were left here, the last double figure count of the spring. Seawatching totals were, as usual, low in spring, with just a

scattering of birds seen moving east; the highest monthly total was 12 past Splash Point (Seaford) in April. Summering birds included three drakes and a female at Thorney Deeps plus a singleton at Pulborough Brooks.

One at Weir Wood Res from 9 Aug was possibly the first returning bird, but return migration was definitely underway by 23 August, with eight at Pagham Hbr. The singleton at Bewl Water the same day was possibly also a returning bird. A flock of 110 at Pett Level on 3 Sep was surprisingly large for that date; 42 at Pagham Hbr on 9 Sep, 48 at Rye Hbr on 10 Sep, 150 at Pagham Hbr on 14 Sep and then 600 at Thorney Island on 18 Sep were more typical of the autumn build-up.

There was a notable series of seawatching records from Worthing in the autumn, with 10E and 82W in September, 3E and 27W in October, 30E and 12W in November, but then an impressive 7E and 429W in December, of which 338W passed on the 2<sup>nd</sup>.

The WeBS count for September were the highest since 1996, followed by the second highest October count since 2002, which included 1328 at West Chidham on 17 Oct, the lowest November count since 2001, and then a very average December figure! During the second winter period, the species was seen at some 87 localities. The highest count in November was 1722 at Amberley Wild Brooks on 23 Nov. In December, the highest single site count was 1800 at North Fields (Pagham Hbr) on 24 Dec and there were 1095 at Scotney Court GP on 20 Dec. The highest count of the year at Bewl Water was 410 on 31 Dec. There was also some movement into the Adur Valley in December with 350 at Henfield Levels on the 8<sup>th</sup> and 300 at Partridge Green on 27 Dec. [AT]

## Gadwall

## *Anas strepera*

*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>	493	562	186	111	82	47	76	104	287	247	243	812
<b>Chichester Hbr</b>	30	63	18	2	-	-	-	-	3	12	21	27
<b>Bracklesham Bay</b>	21	15	15	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	-	-	-
<b>Chichester GP</b>	nc	nc	4	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	48	60	27	110
<b>Wicks Farm Res</b>	-	-	18	5	nc	nc	nc	nc	-	8	-	15
<b>Arun Valley</b>	71	55	34	34	23	26	58	51	53	4	21	50
<b>Eastbourne Lakes</b>	16	22	6	nc	nc	nc	nc	2	70	48	24	86
<b>Bewl Water</b>	183	161	17	nc	nc	nc	nc	4	10	28	50	131
<b>Darwell Res</b>	28	2	2	-	-	-	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc
<b>Powdermill Res</b>	12	42	2	-	nc	nc	nc	nc	-	2	-	30
<b>Rye Bay</b>	102	165	49	67	57	21	9	37	90	73	96	336

The January WeBS total was the lowest since 1999, but separate counts of 375 at Bewl Water on 9 Jan and 103 at Thorney Deeps on 13 Jan show just how variable numbers can be. The lack of counts from Chichester GP where there were 230 on 11 Jan should however be noted. Numbers rallied by the February WeBS count (but still with no Chichester GP count) and then were much as would be expected through March, April and into May.

Counts were very low during seawatches during the spring, with just 4 W at Selsey Bill, 2E at Worthing and 18E at Splash Point (Seaford) during April and 2 E in May at Splash Point.

During the breeding season, there were regular records from six key areas: Thorney Island, the Pagham Hbr/Selsey area, the Burton MP/Duncton area, the Arun Valley, Pett Level, and Rye Hbr. Peak counts included 12 at Pett Level on 8 Jun and 21 at Rye Hbr on the 14<sup>th</sup>. However, Arundel WWT proved to be the key location; four ducklings were seen on 14 May followed by a maximum of 12 juveniles there on 14 Aug and a peak count of 51 birds on 13 Jul. The only other proven breeding was a pair with seven young at Drayton GP (Chichester GP) on 20 Jul.

Clear evidence of returning birds included 30 at Pagham Hbr on 30 Aug and 64 at Castle Pit (Rye Hbr) on 12 Sep. WeBS counts were high in September. Unusually, numbers then dropped in November, but rallied to the best December count since 2001. During the second winter period, the species was recorded at some 55 localities. The highest counts in November were 82 at Rye Hbr and 50 at Bewl Water on the 22<sup>nd</sup>. In December, the difference between the WeBS count at Bewl Water and the separate count of 345 on 31 Dec (the month's highest) was notable. There were also 243 at Rye Hbr on the 20<sup>th</sup> and 220 at Ivy Lake (Chichester GP) on 22 Dec. The 5W in snow offshore at Worthing on 18 Dec and 6 W there on 20 Dec were good seawatching records. [AT]

## Eurasian Teal

*Anas crecca*

*Very scarce breeder and scarce summer non-breeder; 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>	5002	3859	1268	114	25	19	24	345	1900	2288	3130	5282
<b>Chichester Hbr</b>	1739	1042	503	2	-	1	-	18	175	569	405	434
<b>Pagham Hbr</b>	349	694	118	8	7	4	-	70	769	161	177	1240
<b>Arun Valley</b>	1656	1077	260	78	11	8	23	123	509	872	1678	1712
<b>Pevensey Levels</b>	124	235	115	5	nc	nc	nc	nc	-	6	110	76
<b>Rye Bay</b>	466	460	141	19	5	4	nc	105	145	411	588	920

Counts were below average for the first three months of the year. The highest single site count was 951 at Amberley Wild Brooks on 19 Jan, with 844 at Pulborough Brooks on 12 Jan, 600 at East Head (Chichester Hbr) on 10 Jan, 500 at Pagham North Wall on 10 Jan, and 420 at Henfield Levels on 17 Feb.

As usual, numbers dropped away sharply in March with the WeBS count the lowest for that month since at least 2001. The last three figure count was 150 in the Doleham Valley on 29<sup>th</sup>. There were still 57 at Pulborough Brooks on 20 Apr, but this was the last large count before the summer.

Only small numbers were seen at seawatching sites; observers at Splash Point (Seaford) recorded the biggest tallies, peaking at 31 E on 18 Mar but with just six E past here in April. Watchers at Worthing fared better during the latter month with 23 E.

During the summer, there were several double figure counts but without any ducklings or fledged youngsters being seen, further confirmation that a considerable number of non-breeding birds were choosing to summer in the county. A flock at the Breech Pool (Pagham Hbr) peaked

at 21 on 27 Jun; there were ten at Seftor Farm (Rose Green) on 30 Jun; 15 were at Pett Level on 8 Jul; and 18 were at Pulborough Brooks on 13 Jul. In addition, during June and July, smaller numbers were seen at Thorney Deeps, Bracklesham Bay, Burton MP, several sites in the Arun Valley, Warnham LNR, Arlington, Rye Hbr and Weir Wood Res. Four flying west past Worthing on 12 Jul were noteworthy.

A count of 33 birds at Pulborough Brooks on 7 Aug probably included at least some returning birds and 40 at fields west of Selsey on 15 Aug were more clearly so, but the first large count of the autumn was 250 at Pagham Hbr on 9 Sep. There were some good autumn seawatching totals from Worthing in September with 18 E and 28 W during the month.

During the second winter period, the species was seen at some 115 localities. Counts, however, were all about average for the last ten years. The highest counts in November were of just over 700 at Amberley Wild Brooks on the 23<sup>rd</sup> and at least 650 at nearby Pulborough Brooks on the 2<sup>nd</sup>. However, the highest single site count of the year was 1700 at Amberley Wild Brooks on 9 Dec while other notable counts in, or close to the Arun Valley, included 1300 at Pulborough Brooks on the 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1200 on the flooded Amberley Wild Brooks on the 11<sup>th</sup> and, elsewhere, 1150 at Pagham Hbr and 561 at Rye Hbr on the 20<sup>th</sup>. Seawatching counts at Worthing in December totalled 1 E and 73 W, which included 41 W on 18 Dec in 2½ hr during snow and NNE winds. [AT]

## Mallard

## *Anas platyrhynchos*

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

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

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>County total</b>	2985	2227	1730	1038	1095	1650	1372	2718	3146	2897	3273	4733
<b>Chichester Hbr</b>	431	291	236	10	68	87	68	76	309	271	405	378
<b>Pagham Hbr</b>	192	157	144	98	82	134	89	242	305	208	224	257
<b>Arun Valley</b>	704	513	477	428	540	809	516	620	612	472	831	638
<b>Eastbourne Lakes</b>	29	36	30	nc	nc	nc	nc	39	175	85	55	131
<b>Bewl Water</b>	155	157	97	nc	nc	nc	nc	608	227	199	120	758
<b>Rye Bay</b>	357	363	224	185	134	178	167	528	580	492	522	782

The peak county total of 4733 in December was well above the 5-year average of 3833 for 2005-2009 and coincided with a particularly cold spell of weather. This is the highest monthly total since November 1997. Despite this, the longer term trend shows declining numbers in the county, as it does nationally - to the extent that, since 2008, Mallard has been amber listed as a species of medium conservation concern because of the long-term decline in its wintering numbers in the UK.

With another full year of Atlas activity 3006 records of Mallard were received from 55 10-km squares, as well as from 74 of the 135 BBS 1-km squares, reflecting the usual widespread distribution of this species. Only nine other species had more records than Mallard. In addition to the WeBS records above, the largest concentration of the year was 895 at Bewl Water on 9 Jan.

Seawatching records were, as usual, low. A total of 40 birds on coastal movement were recorded across the year with 9W and 31E, with January and April being the peak months (11 and 14 birds, all moving east). No seawatching site recorded more than four birds on any one day.

Breeding was confirmed in 211 records and was probable in a further 208. The earliest breeding record was on 6 Jan at Arundel WWT (but breeding at the same site on 13 December 1983 remains the “earliest” winter breeding record in the county). The latest record of breeding was at Mewsbrook Park (Littlehampton) where nine ducklings seven to ten days old were recorded on 20 Sep. At Warnham LNR, several nests with up to 13 eggs were reported in April and a total of five pairs bred there hatching 37 young, whilst at Thorney Deepes 81 young were recorded from 11 broods.

During the second winter period, the species was seen at some 256 localities. The highest single day counts were 325 at Rye Hbr in November and 775 at Bewl Water in December. [JRC]



*Mallard, Weir Wood Reservoir, February 2009 (Derek Washington)*

## Pintail

*Anas acuta*

*Fairly common winter visitor and passage migrant; occasionally summers and has bred. 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>	895	531	192	5	1	2	1	-	268	178	177	478
<b>Chichester Hbr</b>	211	71	103	3	-	1	-	-	81	157	23	6
<b>Pagham Hbr</b>	447	263	77	-	-	-	-	-	185	20	-	337
<b>Arun Valley</b>	227	183	5	2	1	1	1	-	1	nc	142	115
<b>Rye Bay</b>	4	14	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	9	2

The peak WeBS monthly total of 895 in January was well below the 5-year average of 1062 for 2005-2009. The peak count in Pagham Hbr of 477 was below the international 1% threshold of 600, but this site should still retain its designation in 2008/09 as a site of international importance as its average maxima over the last five years will remain above 600. The peak of 227 in the Arun Valley (also in January) was below the national 1% threshold of 279, but it should also retain its designation as a site of national importance as its average maxima over the last five years will remain above 279.

Other significant numbers not in the WeBS totals above were 500 at North Wall (Pagham Hbr) on 10 Jan, 16 at Steyning Levels on 12 Feb and 140 on Henfield Levels on 17 Feb. Wintering birds departed in February and Mar and April records were limited to single numbers except at seawatching sites. A single male was recorded at Brick Kiln Ponds (Stansted) on 15 May.

One male summered at Pulborough Brooks and a second bird may have summered at Chichester Hbr, where one was recorded at West Chidham on 25 Jun and again at South Stakes Island on 16 Jul. A female was recorded at Pett Level on 12 Jul and another bird was there from 3-5 Aug. There was no suggestion of any breeding attempts.

As usual the first returning birds were recorded at Pagham Hbr, where 12 birds were recorded on 25 Aug; by 20 Sep numbers had increased to those shown in the WeBS table above. During the second winter period, the species was seen at some 32 localities. Numbers did not build up in the Arun Valley until November when 90 were recorded on the 2<sup>nd</sup> at Pulborough Brooks, (the main site for Pintail in the Arun Valley) and peaked at 100 on the 24<sup>th</sup>. Numbers there are largely determined by the depth of winter flood waters. In December, the month's peak count was 337 at Pagham Hbr on the 20<sup>th</sup>.

All the seawatching sites recorded small Pintail movements. These were recorded in all months except May to July inclusive and involved a minimum of 103E and 34W. The major movements were 20E at Telscombe Cliffs on 25 Jan, 40E at Splash Point (Seaford) on 13 Mar (and 28 at Beachy Head on the same day), 13E at Splash Point on 6 Apr and 12W at Worthing Beach on 2 Dec. [JRC]

## Garganey

## *Anas querquedula*

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

A pair at Arundel WWT on 11 Mar was the first seen on spring passage, five days later than the 10-year average arrival date. They were quickly followed by a male on the R Arun at Littlehampton on 14 Mar. No less than 70 other birds were recorded at seawatching or other coastal sites during the second half of March, including 26E past Splash Point (Seaford) on 18 Mar between 0630 and 1000 hr and another 20 flying east past Brighton Marina the same day, some of which may have been the same although seven were recorded later at 1040 hr. In April, a further 12 birds were recorded flying east at seawatching sites up to the 12<sup>th</sup> of the month, giving a total spring passage of possibly 83 birds, making this one of the heaviest spring passages recorded in many years.

Breeding was confirmed at Rye Hbr where up to nine birds were present between April and July, and a female with young was recorded on 4 June. At Pulborough Brooks, a pair was first recorded on 19 Mar, and again on 20/21 Apr and 24 Jun, with a male being recorded on its own on several intervening dates, and it was thought that breeding possibly occurred, although no young were seen. Summering birds were also regularly recorded at Pagham Hbr and Pett Level, whilst a singleton was recorded at Pevensy Levels on 22 May. On 8 Jul, two female or possibly



juvenile birds were recorded at Weir Wood Res and a juvenile was also recorded there on 16 Aug. However, there was no evidence that breeding occurred at any of these sites.

The last record of the year was of a bird flying west at Worthing Beach on 26 Aug, some seven weeks earlier than the 10-year average departure date. [JRC]

## Shoveler

*Anas clypeata*

*Very scarce breeder and scarce summer non-breeder; 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>	758	640	361	75	29	5	28	48	117	299	404	564
<b>Chichester Hbr</b>	8	27	21	4	-	-	-	-	-	5	-	-
<b>Bracklesham Bay</b>	14	45	50	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	1	9	15
<b>Chichester GP</b>	185	12	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	2	23	58	46
<b>Burton/Chingford Ponds</b>	2	-	nc	-	-	-	-	-	9	15	-	-
<b>Arun Valley</b>	126	87	56	4	1	-	12	8	12	20	87	91
<b>Barcombe Res</b>	-	-	-	2	-	-	11	-	5	16	9	13
<b>Arlington Res</b>	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	13	66	4
<b>Eastbourne Lakes</b>	16	69	6	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	14	58	18	65
<b>Pevensey Levels</b>	35	40	67	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	4	5
<b>Rye Bay</b>	326	299	118	62	28	5	5	39	72	132	148	285

The peak monthly WeBS count of 758 in January was higher than the 5-year average of 643 for 2005-2009. The international 1% threshold for Shoveler is 400 and now that Rye Bay is combined with Dungeness (Kent) for national reporting this combined site is recognised as one of international importance for this species. The national threshold for Shoveler is 148 and the Arun Valley and Chichester GP are both recognised as sites of national importance; they will remain so, despite Arun Valley's 2009 maxima being lower than this threshold (as its 5-year average will remain above the threshold).

During the year 716 records were received from 29 10-km squares across the county. Sizeable numbers, not included in the WeBS totals above, included 345 at Rye Hbr LNR on 3 Feb, 30 at Lewes Brooks on 29 Mar, 60 at Drayton Pit (Chichester GP) on 12 Sep, 65 at North Wall (Pagham) on 30 Nov and 150 at Ivy Lake (Chichester) on 22 Dec. The build-up of Shoveler returning for the second winter period started in late August, when 15 were recorded at Rye Hbr on the 20<sup>th</sup> and 20 were recorded at Drayton Pit on the 25<sup>th</sup>.

Movements were recorded from the seawatching sites as follows, with the peak daily movement being 40E at Splash Point on 18 Mar:

	Jan		Feb		Mar		Apr		May		Dec	
	W	E	W	E	W	E	W	E	W	E	W	E
<b>Selsey Bill</b>	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	17	1	2	-	-
<b>Worthing Beach</b>	-	-	15	-	-	14	-	8	-	-	25	2
<b>Telscombe Cliffs</b>	-	3	-	-	-	-	-	5	-	-	-	-
<b>Splash Point</b>	-	-	-	-	-	75	-	63	-	-	-	-

A record of a female and seven juveniles flying off Warnham MP on 22 Jul was the only record of breeding. The female was thought not to have bred at this well-watched site, but probably to have bred somewhere nearby. At Rye Hbr, up to four males were present from April to June, but no breeding was proven. At Pett Level, up to eight birds were present in June and July; at Barcombe Res 11 birds were present on 12 Jul; in the Arun Valley 12 birds were present on 13 Jul at Waltham Brooks and up to ten at Pulborough Brooks on several dates in late July; all these records lacked evidence of breeding. It is, therefore, not clear whether all these birds were summering non-breeders or whether some other breeding attempts were perhaps made.

During the second winter period, the species was seen at some 66 localities. The highest counts were 66 at Arlington Res on 21 Nov and 72 at Pett Level on the 22<sup>nd</sup>; in December, 200 were counted at Rye Hbr LNR on 20 Dec, 150 at Ivy Lake and 80 at Pulborough Brooks.

This is a species for which completion of breeding status on summer records would be particularly appreciated, especially as it is a species covered by the Rare Breeding Birds Panel, to whom records are supplied. [JRC]



*Red-crested Pochard, Weir Wood Reservoir, December 2009 (Derek Washington)*

## **Red-crested Pochard**

*Netta Rufina*

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

It was a good year for this species; 11 or 12 birds were recorded at seven sites during the year while, at Weir Wood Res, birds were recorded during five months of the year.

The first record was at Shinewater Lake (Eastbourne) where two (unsexed) were present on 11 Jan. A pair was present at Weir Wood Res on 30 Jan, and at Southwater CP a female was present

on 8 Mar. On 5 May a tame female was at Chichester GP and females were also present at Pulborough Brooks on 31 May and at Pagham Hbr on 4-5 Jul, whilst an eclipse male was present at Barcombe Res from 23 to 28 Aug. At Chichester GP, a female was present between 24 and 27 Oct. At Weir Wood Res an eclipse male was present between 20 Sep and 13 Oct, and a male (possibly the same bird) was also present there between 22 Nov and 28 Dec. None of the records indicated that any of these birds were suspected to be of truly wild origin and the records between May and September were almost certainly of escapes or feral birds.

At Cocking, two pairs, which were presumed to have clipped wings (i.e. to be part of a collection), were recorded on a farm pond on 20 Jan, and five birds were recorded at the same location on 14 Feb. [JRC]

## Common 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>	667	279	68	25	22	10	31	59	37	180	236	645
<b>Chichester GP</b>	86	19	10	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	9	21	45	29
<b>Forest Mere</b>	17	3	-	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	3	24	16	-
<b>Wicks Farm Res</b>	-	-	6	-	nc	nc	nc	nc	-	-	-	2
<b>Arun Valley</b>	122	103	38	24	22	7	13	13	3	1	22	29
<b>Weir Wood Res</b>	1	9	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	34
<b>Barcombe Res</b>	12	12	-	-	-	-	-	1	9	5	18	27
<b>Eastbourne Lakes</b>	10	31	8	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	2	12	16	30
<b>Rye Bay</b>	350	63	2	-	-	3	18	45	10	114	98	454

Although the maximum WeBS total of 667 birds in January was higher than last year's peak, the overall trend in wintering numbers remains sharply downwards, as it does nationally. The 5-year average maxima fell to 734 for 2005-2009, which is just over half the average of 1300 for 1999-2004.

In all, 407 records were received across 29 10-km squares and, as is typical, many records reflected small numbers on ponds across the county. Other significant records not reflected in the WeBS tables above included 118 at Swanbourne Lake (Arundel) on 9 Jan, 70 at Langney (Eastbourne) on 11 Jan, 32 at Weir Wood Res on 23 Jan and 180 at Ivy Lake (Chichester GP) on 10 Feb.

Summering birds were mostly concentrated at Arundel WWT (max 15) and Swanbourne Lake (max 11), Pett Level (max six) and Scotney Court GP (max 18). Successful breeding was confirmed at Arundel WWT where there were at least two broods, but there were no reports of attempted breeding elsewhere.

During the second winter period, the species was seen at some 46 localities. The highest counts were: in November, 64 at Rye Hbr on the 22<sup>nd</sup> and, in December, 322 at Scotney Court GP on the 20<sup>th</sup>. [JRC]

**Tufted Duck***Aythya fuligula*

*Fairly common resident and winter visitor; scarce breeder. 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>	1067	870	755	541	304	250	230	387	341	400	473	874
Chichester Hbr	36	10	28	6	4	5	11	7	20	10	-	83
Pagham Hbr	17	25	30	20	9	35	10	10	6	35	5	4
Chichester GP	158	42	31	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	12	28	127	117
Burton/Chingford Ponds	31	17	10	12	3	9	18	19	2	10	35	39
Wicks Farm Res	-	-	1	16	nc	nc	nc	nc	22	33	-	30
Arun Valley	165	101	93	121	87	75	64	68	48	42	50	91
Barcombe Res	41	34	28	50	43	42	72	56	79	48	22	50
Eastbourne Lakes	72	66	63	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	9	13	71	90
Bewl Water	62	81	62	nc	nc	nc	nc	92	27	20	5	24
Darwell Res	83	88	41	27	2	-	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc
Rye Bay	297	313	275	341	211	77	51	123	82	116	107	266

Declines in numbers in Northern Europe have resulted in the status of this species being changed in 2008 to amber-listed. However, although the trend in overall UK wintering numbers remains slightly upwards, in Sussex the trend is downwards. The peak WeBS total was 1067 in January, which was below the 5-year average maxima of 1148 for 2005-9. This shows a continuing downward trend from the average maxima of 1396 for 1999-2004. The absence of WeBS counts for Darwell in the second half of the year should be noted as it is a significant site in the county for this species. No site in the county comes close to meeting the 1% threshold of 901 birds for a site to be of national importance.

With the increases due to Atlas recording, 1175 records were received from 38 10-km squares, reflecting the usual widespread wintering distribution. Significant records not reflected in the WeBS tables above included 43 at Southwater CP on 12 and 18 Jan, and 34 in the quarry there on 5 Feb and 41 on 20 Dec. Other sites with significant records were Bewl Water (167 on 9 Jan and 93 on 20 Apr), Barcombe Res (50 on 20 Feb and 94 on 17 Nov).

As usual, summering birds numbered about a quarter of the wintering peak, with Barcombe Res and Rye Bay having the largest populations. Twenty-three records were received of confirmed and another 52 of probable breeding. The first record of confirmed breeding was a sighting of ducklings on 14 Jul at Frith Wood (Northchapel). Breeding was also confirmed at Forest Mere (Liphook), Pagham Hbr, Arundel (Swanbourne Lake and WWT), Warnham LNR (three pairs, four young), Barcombe Res, Bewl Water and Rye Hbr. As usual, there were records of quite large numbers of summering but few breeding birds. Thus at Barcombe Res there were 60 adults but only two broods of six ducklings each recorded on 12 Jul and at Rye Hbr up to 41 males were recorded on 10 May but only three broods.

During the second winter period, the species was seen at 77 localities. The highest counts (additional to the WeBS counts) were 94 in November at Barcombe Res and 183 in December at Rye Hbr. Records of passage movements were typically low with a total from the main sites of 5W and 23E. The main movements were 7E at Splash Point (Seaford) on 18 Mar and 6E at Selsey on 2 Apr. Singles were recorded from Worthing Beach in four months of the year. [JRC]

**Greater Scaup***Aythya marila*

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

The first records of the year were of an immature male at Weir Wood Res on 1 Jan and one on the sea at Church Norton on the same date. Other sightings from the first winter period included eight at Scotney Court GP in early January and small groups of six to eight at Rye Hbr and Glyne Gap (Bexhill).

Throughout most of March a male was recorded at Chichester GPs, sightings which included the final record for this period. A single male was seen again at Weir Wood Res on 11 July

At the end of October the first female of the second winter period was seen at Easton Fm (Earnley) on the 31<sup>st</sup>. Another was recorded at Rye Hbr in December on four occasions, while in the west of the county two females were seen on the sea at Church Norton on 20 Dec. [MJB]

**Common Eider***Somateria mollissima*

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

The approximate monthly totals of birds at the main seawatching sites were as follows:

		Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Selsey Bill	E	2	-	2	4	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	W	-	1	4	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	o/s	-	1	1	-	11	-	-	2	-	-	-	-
Worthing Beach	E	-	-	5	-	-	-	7	-	-	-	-	-
	W	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	o/s	-	-	1	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	-
Splash Point	E	-	1	28	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	W	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	o/s	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

In January a flock of 36 was seen off the Firehills (Hastings), three offshore at Rock-a-Nore (Hastings), and a singleton also offshore at Church Norton. Small numbers of up to eight birds were also reported at Climping Beach and Pett Level during the month. In the remainder of the first winter period records of up to seven birds were received from many coastal sites, with 20 birds recorded at Pett Level on 27 Feb, and 17 flying east at Splash Point (Seaford) on 13 Mar.

During the spring and summer up to seven birds continued to be seen at mainly seawatching sites including Ferring (seven birds on 7 Jul) and Pilsley Island.

In the autumn, only very small numbers of birds were seen at the coast, with singletons recorded at Rookwood (West Wittering) on 19 Sep, Paghham Hbr and Brighton Marina on 20 Sep and East Head (West Wittering) on the 23<sup>rd</sup>. Three females were recorded over a period of several days at Pilsley Island during October.

During the second winter period there continued to be small numbers of one or two birds reported at coastal sites, with the exception being eight at Cliff End (Pett) on 13 Dec. [MJB]





While highlighting the major concentration of wintering birds in the eastern part of the county, between Bexhill and Camber, the WeBS is not a very useful way of collating the totals of an offshore duck. Apart from the problem of finding and then counting a relatively small and frequently diving bird in often difficult surface and weather conditions, the flocks regularly move up and down the coast in search of the best feeding grounds. In contrast to the above figures, a survey of the sea from Cooden (Bexhill) east to the Hastings CP found 860 birds on 3 Jan while there were 150 in the Rye Hbr area on 7 Jan and 400 there on 13 Jan. Up to 400 were recorded here in February with a maximum of 320 off Glyne Gap on 20 Feb and 240 there on 24 Mar. Even allowing for interchanges it seems likely that up to 1000 were present in the first winter period. Much smaller numbers (groups of up to 20) were noted from Beachy Head westwards.

A strong easterly spring passage began in mid-March and continued until well into June with speeding strings of birds visible from any coastal watch point, especially in April and May. Sussex monthly seawatching totals, derived from the maximum recorded at either Selsey Bill, Worthing Beach, Telscombe or Splash Point (Seaford) on each day, with direction of flight, were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Totals
<b>East</b>	47	109	760	6224	1783	123	117	28	33	121	23	53	9421
<b>West</b>	26	83	15	51	15	19	65	28	3	33	40	159	537

Analysis of the daily counts from each of the principal seawatching locations (computed on the assumption that the highest number seen at any coastal site on any day was the minimum that day) suggest a minimum of 8127 birds flew east during the spring comprising 583 in March, 6141 in April and 1403 in May. Details of the easterly spring passage totals at these seawatching sites were as follows:

	Mar	Apr	May	No. per hr in Apr	Peak movement
<b>Selsey Bill</b>	235	2329	1532	12.1	397 on 24 Apr (12¼ hr)
<b>Worthing</b>	89	1335	493	17.8	453 on 10 Apr (6½ hr)
<b>Telscombe Cliffs</b>	16	570	142	22.8	167 on 24 Apr (2 hr)
<b>Splash Point</b>	655	5898	615	53.6	1971 on 6 Apr (13 hr)

The following table shows details of the ten days in April, the peak passage month, when more than 200 eastbound birds were recorded at any site (time to nearest hour watched in brackets):

	6 Apr	10 Apr	14 Apr	16 Apr	17 Apr	23 Apr	24 Apr	25 Apr	26Apr	30 Apr
<b>Selsey Bill</b>		274 (6)		218 (10)	236 (5)		397 (13)			
<b>Worthing Beach</b>		453 (7)					301 (8)			
<b>Brighton Marina</b>							830 (?)			
<b>Splash Point</b>	1971 (13)	585 (9)	275 (3)	282 (9)		217 (14)	1104 (13)	221 (4)		
<b>Birling Gap</b>	616 (?)		320 (?)				877 (?)		253 (?)	299 (?)

The only inland record was of two males at Weir Wood Res on 16 Apr.

Most movements in the winter and summer months were probably local feeding flocks rather than passage birds. These figures suggest up to 100 birds oversummered. Autumn passage, as shown above, was not very obvious with wintering flocks settling in by November. A count of 610 at Glyne Gap on 10 Dec was the highest, with 310 there on 18 Dec. No more than 40 were recorded from Rye Bay (on 23 Dec) with even smaller numbers west of Beachy Head. [WGH]

**Velvet Scoter***Melanitta fusca*

*Scarce passage migrant and winter visitor offshore; exceptional inland. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern. Schedule 1 species.*

On several dates in January there were up to seven off Church Norton and at least 12 in the Rye Bay area, often associated with Common Scoters. The presence of a King Eider at the latter site undoubtedly encouraged more intensive study so the marked reduction in reports for February and March may not be significant.

Easterly passage was first recorded at Selsey Bill on 29 Mar and continued for most of April, with a straggler recorded flying east off Selsey Bill and Worthing Beach on 20 May. Monthly seawatching totals recorded at the principal seawatching sites of Selsey Bill, Worthing Beach, Telscombe Cliffs and Splash Point (Seaford), computed on the assumption that the highest number seen at any coastal site on any day was the minimum in the county that day and that birds seen on subsequent days were different, were as follows:

	Mar	Apr	May		Nov	Dec	Totals
East	2	63	1		1	-	67
West	-	7	-		3	-	10

However, the monthly total of 125 recorded at Brighton Marina during April (presumably all flying eastwards), with a peak count of 34E on the 7<sup>th</sup> but no other details, was greater than the rest of the county's combined efforts.

In the second winter period, the only reports of passage were from Worthing Beach where there were 2W on 11 Nov, 1W on the 17<sup>th</sup> and 1E on the 24<sup>th</sup>. Elsewhere, there was a count of 11 off Glyne Gap (Bexhill) on 18 Dec, which was exceptional for the site, and 1W past Hastings on 26 Dec. [WGH]

**Common 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	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
County total	39	36	3	-	-	-	-	2	2	2	5	26
Chichester Hbr	25	26	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	16
Pagham Hbr	4	6	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3
Barcombe Res	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	2	2	-	-
Arlington Res	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	1
Darwell Res	3	2	-	-	-	-	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc
Rye Bay	6	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	6

As in 2008, these counts are reasonably close to the monthly maxima at most sites. The one exception is Pagham Hbr, perhaps because birds there will move offshore to feed and may be overlooked. Here, in addition to the WeBS records, there were a maximum of nine in January, up to four in mid-March, a singleton in October, up to three in November and a maximum of six on 31 Dec which included two drakes.

An analysis of those records where the sex of the birds was recorded as either drakes or brownheads (presumably a mix of adult females and 1<sup>st</sup> winters) shows that the minimum numbers of each category was as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar		Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>Drakes</b>	4	9	2		3	4	9
<b>Brownheads</b>	25	13	3		1	2	18

It is striking that the various parts of Chichester Hbr (including Chichester GP) are by far the most popular part of Sussex for this species. Here, 16 on 10 Jan and 19 at Fishbourne Channel (Chichester Hbr) exactly a month later were the largest groups reported. The only record from Weir Wood Res was a single bird on several dates between 28 Mar and 7 Apr, this last date being the latest of the first winter period. None were recorded in the spring movements offshore.

In the autumn, the first two appeared at Barcombe Res on the very early date of 23 Aug and remained there until 17 Oct. The first at Pagham Hbr was not noted until 18 Oct while they were not reported from the Chichester sites until 5 Nov. The only bird seen moving offshore flew west past Worthing on 31 Oct. During the second winter period, the species was noted at some 20 localities. During November, two were seen at Thorney Island and Deeps, Pagham Lagoon and Arlington Res. In December, the highest count was 11 at Fishbourne (Chichester Hbr). Two at Scotney Court GP on 20 Dec were the only reports from this well watched site all year. [WGH]

## Smew

## *Mergellus albellus*

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

The first report for the year was of a bird, of unspecified sex, at Scotney Court GP on New Year's Day, presumably one of the few in the Denge Marsh (Kent) or Rye Hbr area from December 2008. A redhead was seen at Rye Hbr from the 2<sup>nd</sup> to 7 Jan with further sightings on the 21<sup>st</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> and 7 Feb. Given that four were present at the end of 2008, this was a disappointing showing at what is normally the most favoured county site and certainly one of the most intensively covered. Some compensation came from a male on Northpoint GP (Rye) on 8 Jan. Inland, there were two redheads at Arlington Res on 15 Jan which were presumably the same as two at Barcombe Res on 18 and 19 Jan. The only sighting in the west of the county was of two redheads at Chichester GP on 24 Jan and 15 Feb. At Scotney Court GP a drake was noted on 31 Jan and again on 14 and 24 Feb, the last record for the first winter period.

The first bird recorded in the second winter period was a drake which arrived at Rye Hbr on 12 Dec and stayed to at least the 28<sup>th</sup>. It was joined by two redheads from the 14<sup>th</sup> to the 19<sup>th</sup>. [WGH]

**Red-breasted Merganser***Mergus serrator*

*Fairly common winter visitor and passage migrant along the coast; sometimes a few oversummer. Rare inland.*

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

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>County total</b>	121	177	180	13		3				22	125	212
<b>Chichester Hbr</b>	89	156	157	13		3				22	119	207
<b>Pagham Hbr</b>	30	21	23								6	5

The various locations comprising Chichester Hbr remain by far the most important wintering sites for this species and the WeBS totals are probably close to the maxima there. The Pagham Hbr figures are much less representative as the largest numbers are offshore from Church Norton and can be quite mobile. The largest numbers here were 40 offshore on 10 Jan and 48 on 14 Feb. The last spring bird reported was there on 30 May. The largest offshore flock was of 70 off Elmer Rocks near Middleton-on-Sea on New Year's Day while there were 48 off Ferring on 3 Jan. They were probably the same wintering flock that is normally a little further east off Worthing. Here there were reports of up to 60 in mid January, up to 34 in mid February and up to 12 in March. The seawatching totals in the winter months mainly involve feeding movements by these offshore flocks. While some offshore birds will have been overlooked it seems that the maximum wintering population was rather lower than in 2008, at up to 300 birds.

Sussex monthly seawatching totals, derived from the maximum recorded at either Selsey Bill, Worthing, Telscombe or Splash Point (Seaford), were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May		Oct	Nov	Dec	Totals
<b>East</b>	29	46	163	228	5		1	19	2	493
<b>West</b>	43	7	28	31	1		21	92	59	282

Additionally, numbers of this species were frequently seen offshore, presumably feeding or loafing, as shown below:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May		Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>Selsey Bill</b>	88	122	169	16	-		-	65	58
<b>Worthing</b>	414	161	11	15	-		-	21	300
<b>Splash Point</b>	2	-	-	-	-		-	-	

While it is not always possible to separate migrating birds from local feeding movements, especially as migrants often rest on the sea, the increase in numbers recorded suggests that the eastwards spring migration began in earnest in March. It was noted chiefly at Selsey Bill where 120 were recorded between the 1<sup>st</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> with maximum counts of 25 on the 9<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup>. In April, the minimum count was 139 comprising, at Splash Point, 31 on the 4<sup>th</sup> and 70 on the 6<sup>th</sup> followed by 38 past Selsey Bill on the 12<sup>th</sup>. Movements tailed off abruptly in early May and the last three were seen at Splash Point on the 24<sup>th</sup>.

In late June three birds were reported from Chichester Hbr and there was a remarkable single inland reported from Pulborough Brooks on 9 Aug. Also unusual were two off Pett on 13 Sep. Westerly passage was first recorded at Worthing on the 14<sup>th</sup> where the monthly total of 20 included

15 on the 31<sup>st</sup>. The total recorded at seawatching sites in November was 40 between the 1<sup>st</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> with a maximum of 18 past Selsey Bill on the 14<sup>th</sup> followed by 45 past Selsey Bill on 2 Dec and 22 at Worthing on the 3<sup>rd</sup>.

During the second winter period, wintering flocks began to build up at Chichester Hbr during November when the highest count was 38 at Thorney Island and Deeps. During December the offshore flock at Worthing Beach increased from 16 on 11 Nov to 61 on 18 Dec, the highest count in the county that month, and there were 57 at Birdham (Chichester Hbr) on the 5<sup>th</sup>. [WGH]

## Goosander

## *Mergus merganser*

*Scarce winter visitor and passage migrant.*

This year saw a reversion to the traditional status as primarily an inland freshwater species although still in very low numbers. There were no reports at all of birds offshore and no adult males were recorded. Furthermore, last year's most frequented site, Pagham Hbr, could only muster a single record of two redheads on 10 Jan. The first report was of a redhead flying south down the Adur Valley at Coombes on 4 Jan. There was a redhead at Barcombe Res from 10 to 18 Jan and another at Chichester GP on 10 Jan. At the end of the month and into Feb there was one in the Northiam area on 29 Jan and 18 Feb, one on Shinewater Lake (Eastbourne) on 3 Feb, one at Pulborough Brooks on 15 Feb and, the last for the first winter period, at Weir Wood Res on 22 Feb.

The first returning bird was seen near Midhurst on 7 Nov and the next was at Arundel WWT on 23 Nov (both unaged and unsexed). Presumably the same two individuals were reported from Widewater (Lancing) on 24 Nov and Brooklands (Worthing) on 8 Dec. A female and an immature male graced Weir Wood Res on 17 Dec and the last in a disappointing year flew south down the Ouse at Southeast on 20 Dec. [WGH]

## Ruddy Duck

## *Oxyura jamaicensis*

*Scarce and declining resident and winter visitor; subject to culling to reduce numbers*

It would seem that the national cull is having a marked effect on the Sussex population of this species with the county population of adults often well down into single figures. This year, there were only three regular sites and the monthly maxima there were as shown follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>County total</b>	9	4	6	7	2	2	10	3	4	3	1	3
<b>Chichester GP</b>	3	3	3	-	-	-	3	-	4	-	-	-
<b>Pett Level</b>	1	-	2	3	1	-	7	3	-	2	-	-
<b>Rye Hbr</b>	3	1	-	4	1	2	-	-	-	-	1	2
<b>Other sites</b>	2	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	1

At each of these sites the maximum adult population was probably only three to four. Of two pairs at Chichester GP one pair hatched young and, given the July maximum of seven, another probably did at Pett Level. They were not thought to have bred at Rye Hbr. As they get scarcer they are likely to be more easily overlooked and the low numbers in May and June probably reflect their secretiveness when nesting. The sustained drop in numbers after July may be a result of culling.

At the other sites, singles were recorded at Weir Wood Res on 4 Jan, at Scotney Court GP on 11 Jan, at Barcombe Res on 17 Oct and at Swanbourne Lake (Arundel) on 13 and 21 Dec. [WGH]



*Red-legged Partridge, Bishopstone, June 2009 (Peter Wilson)*

## Red-legged Partridge

## *Alectoris rufa*

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

In the first winter period the major counts were all recorded in January. At Forestside (West Marden) 38 were counted on the 4<sup>th</sup>, at Lodge Hill Fm (West Dean) there were 47 on the 6<sup>th</sup> and nearby in West Dean 87 were seen on the 10<sup>th</sup>. These must represent captive bred birds released for shooting. Other notable counts were 22 at Sidlesham Ferry on the 1<sup>st</sup>, 35 at Chantry Hill (Storrington) on the 24<sup>th</sup>, 29 at Washington on the 4<sup>th</sup> and 32 at Lower Standean on the 2<sup>nd</sup>. During this period 62 records came from the west of the county and 26 from the east.

One hundred and ninety eight records were received during April to June. Of these, nine were confirmed breeding, 41 were possible breeding and 50 were seen in suitable habitat. Confirmed breeding records included a pair with three young at Thorney Island on 30 Jun, an adult with five young at Durfold (Warnham) on 19 Jun, a further adult with five young at Stanbridge (Staplefield) on 27 Jun and a nest with eggs at Gallypot (Hartfield) on 20 May. Survey counts of pairs with fledged young in early July on the Norfolk Estate found nine at Wepham Down, six at Burpham, one at Offham (Arun Valley), ten at North Stoke (Arun Valley), one at Lee Fm (Patching), one at Springhead Hill (Rackham) and one at Rackham. At Rye Hbr three pairs were seen but only one brood with one chick was noted. Fledged young were also seen in the summer months; at Sefter Fm (Rose Green) on 5 Jul, at Palehouse Common (Uckfield) on 5 Aug and at High Cross Fm (Uckfield) on 8 Aug.



In the autumn period, following the release of captive bred birds, 215 were counted at Lower Standean on 5 Sep followed by 315 on 4 Oct. In the second winter period there were only a further 23 records. The maximum count in November was 50 at Selsey GC on the 11<sup>th</sup> and, in December, 40 at Brightling on the 31<sup>st</sup> and 31, again at Lower Standean, on the 4<sup>th</sup>. It must be assumed that most of the remainder were either shot or were keeping their heads very well down. [RTP]

## Grey Partridge

*Perdix perdix*

*Scarce and decreasing resident. Red listed species of high conservation concern.*

In the first winter period reports came from Earnley in the west to Rye Hbr in the east. Of these 46 records, the highest counts came from The Burgh (Burpham) where there were 61 in four separate coveys on 4 Jan. The only other double figure count came from Amberley SWT Reserve where ten were observed on 8 Feb. On 18 Mar one was observed flying over a garden in Lewes.

Confirmation of breeding came from Rye Hbr where four pairs were observed, but only one brood (of eight) was seen, and on 8 Jul a pair with two young was seen at Poole Place (Climping). On the Norfolk Estates, breeding was confirmed at the following locations (numbers of pairs in brackets); Wepham Down (20), Burpham (17), Offham (Arun Valley) (1), North Stoke (Arun Valley) (11), Lee Fm (Patching) (3), Springhead Hill (Rackham) (1) and at Rackham (3). During the breeding season a further 42 records of probable breeding were received. On 9 May a pair was seen in a garden at Cow Lane (Sidlesham). They have turned up at this time of year for the last five years.

In the autumn and winter, the highest counts again came from The Burgh starting with 24 on 27 Aug followed by 30 on 10 Nov and 35 on 18 Dec. Sixteen on Thorney Island on 26 Sep were considered to be released birds. Other double figure counts in the teens came from Pulborough Brooks, Cissbury Ring and Rye Hbr. [RTP]

## Common 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. Schedule 1 species.*

Records were received from only 13 sites (24 in 2008) involving a possible 18 birds (44 in 2008). The first was heard singing at Coombes (Shoreham) on 23 May, 28 days later than the previous year but within the normal range of arrival dates. It was followed by a bird flushed at Edburton on 30 May.

No evidence of breeding was submitted but most records were of singing birds in suitable habitat. There was a marked easterly bias to the records, the most westerly being singles at Steep Down (Lancing) on 5 Jul and the early record at Coombes above. At Edburton, apart from the early record above, one was singing on 15 Jul from a field adjacent to a garden and presumably the same bird from the same location on 1 Aug. One singing at Ditchling Beacon on 31 Jul was still singing on 2 Aug. The remaining observations came from the Downs east of Lewes. One was singing at Mount Caburn on 4 Jun, two were flushed at an unspecified site on downland at Seaford on the 21<sup>st</sup> and two were singing at Five Lord's Burgh (Seaford) on 2 Jul. In September, one was still singing in a crop of oil seed rape at Plumpton College on the 1<sup>st</sup>, at Pett Level, two birds were trapped and ringed on the 8<sup>th</sup> followed by singles on the 19<sup>th</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> and the final record of the year came from Fairlight Glen (Hastings CP) on 27 Sep. [RTP]

**Common Pheasant***Phasianus colchicus*

*Very common introduced resident; population augmented annually by captive-bred stock.*

This commonly released species was recorded from 697 sites in 576 tetrads and can be described as widespread. In the first winter period numbers were mainly low with few records of 30 or more; at North Marden there were 32 on 11 Feb, at Heyshott Green there were 44 on 16 Feb, at The Burgh (Burpham) there were 36 on 4 Mar, at Scaynes Hill there were 31 on 24 Jan and the highest count was 100 at Udiam Fm (Bodiam) on 24 Feb. At Hurst Green a very large cock bird, with silvery feathers on its shoulders and possibly weighing 6 – 7 lb, was seen on 18 Mar.

Breeding was confirmed at 24 sites between April and August, was probable at a further 174 sites and birds were reported in suitable habitat at 393 sites. These numbers were remarkably similar to those of the previous year. Fledged young were not noted until 16 Jul when seven were reported at Pagham Hbr. Subsequently a hen bird with two recently fledged chicks were seen at Wilbees Fm (Arlington) on 20 Jul, a family of five were at Old Canal Tip (Lidsey) on the same day and two were at Gallypot (Hartfield) on 26 Jul. Fledged young were also reported from Ashurst (Tunbridge Wells) on 30 Jul, Highfields (Blackham) on 2 Aug and Streat Hill on 10 Aug but no numbers were supplied. At Brede Levels five fledged young were seen on 16 Aug and 65 at Kemp House (Balcombe) on 20 Aug must have been recently released birds. At Rye Hbr breeding was confirmed as widespread but numbers were lower than the previous year. An egg found in a flower container in a garden at Angmering on 11 Apr had possibly been buried by a squirrel.

In the autumn, 40 were seen at West Harting on 9 Oct. During the second winter period there were few records of large gatherings, in contrast to 2008. The highest counts were 69 at Lurgashall on 12 Nov, 277 at Heyshott on 15 Dec and 150 were seen flying out of game cover at West Dean Woods on 20 Dec. During the winter months a few reports of birds foraging around garden bird feeders were received. [RTP]

**Red-throated Diver***Gavia stellata*

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

Estimates of monthly totals for this species and the next two have been made by combining the totals of birds recorded inland with those from coastal sites, after making allowance for duplication. In line with previous reports the estimates for birds recorded at coastal sites has been made as follows: the largest count of birds recorded moving each day has been totalled and added to the largest number of birds recorded as either 'offshore' or 'on the sea'. It is probable that most of the birds recorded as 'Diver sp' are Red-throated Divers and the two species' accounts should be read together.

The approximate monthly totals were as follows:

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
1562	454	67	112	9	-	1	-	1	8	38	337

The monthly totals of birds moving offshore at the four principal seawatching sites with the estimated totals for all seawatching records were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May		Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>Monthly total (*)</b>	575	168	47	110	9		7	25	172
<b>Selsey Bill</b>	192	80	15	61	9		-	9	28
<b>Worthing Beach</b>	480	58	10	43	2		7	19	160
<b>Telscombe Cliffs</b>	299	57	3	4	-		1	3	14
<b>Splash Point</b>	156	40	35	72	-		-	-	-

\* adjusted to compensate for duplication

The variation in numbers recorded at the various sites reflects not only the hours of seawatching undertaken but also the extent to which there were localized feeding movements.

The estimated annual total of 2589 was the highest for six years and well above the 10-year rolling average of 2199.

During the first winter period large numbers were recorded in January with an estimated total for the month of 1562 (over half of the estimated annual total). In January the largest numbers were recorded in the east of the county with a total of 349 counted between Cooden (Bexhill) and Hastings CP on the 3<sup>rd</sup>, 343 off Glyne Gap (Bexhill) on the 18<sup>th</sup> and three counts of over a hundred birds in Rye Bay (with a peak of 130 on the 13<sup>th</sup>). A remarkable 512 W in 1¼ hr at Rock-a-Nore (Hastings) on 18 Jan was, in all probability, a feeding movement involving many of the birds recorded offshore in the area during the month. Elsewhere during January the only notable count was of 110W at Telscombe Cliffs on the 10<sup>th</sup>. There were still 285 off Glyne Gap on 20 Feb but otherwise numbers during the remainder of the first winter period were remarkably low with 40 E at Selsey Bill on 1 Feb, the largest movement recorded at any of the four main seawatching sites. Although the total of birds recorded on spring passage was higher than in 2008, there were only four double-figure movements at the main seawatching sites with a maximum of 28E at Splash Point (Seaford) on 6 Apr. At Brighton Marina 172 were recorded during April but details of daily counts and direction of flight are not available. The last spring record was of 1E past both Selsey Bill and Worthing Beach on 16 May (10 days earlier than the 10-year average date).

A bird rescued on the shore at Rye Hbr on the unusual date of 4 Jul was taken to Mallydams Wood RSPCA centre. Unfortunately the diver, which was only half its normal weight and severely lice-infested, did not survive.

The first returning bird was recorded at East Head (Chichester Hbr) on 23 Sep (four days later than the 10-year average date) but numbers remained low with no double-figure movements at the main seawatching sites in either October or November. In December the largest movements were 27W at Selsey Bill on the 1<sup>st</sup>, 26W at Worthing Beach on the 21<sup>st</sup>, 62W at Rock-a-Nore on the 24<sup>th</sup> and 26E there on the 31<sup>st</sup>. In addition, 76 were off Glyne Gap (Bexhill) on 18 December.

There were five records of single birds away from the open sea or tidal waters: Widewater (Lancing) from 2 to 4 Jan (and again on 13 Feb), Arlington Res from 3 to 5 Jan, flying north over Streatham Bridge (Steyning) on 31 Jan and Pett Level Pools on 6 Mar. [DHH]

**Black-throated Diver***Gavia arctica*

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

The approximate monthly totals were as follows:

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May		Oct	Nov	Dec
28	9	6	97	5		1	6	9

The annual total of 161 was well above that for 2008 (102) and also above the 10-year rolling average of 150. The monthly totals of birds recorded moving offshore at the main seawatching sites were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May		Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>Monthly total (*)</b>	14	1	4	40	4		1	5	4
<b>Selsey Bill</b>	3	-	2	11	2		-	-	4
<b>Worthing Beach</b>	-	-	-	6	2		1	4	-
<b>Telscombe Cliffs</b>	8	1	-	4	-		-	1	-
<b>Splash Point</b>	3	-	2	31	1		-	-	-

\*adjusted to compensate for duplication

In the first winter period the only record of more than two birds moving offshore on any one day was of 4E and 2W at Telscombe Cliffs on 10 Jan. In this period, the maximum number of birds recorded on the sea came from Glyne Gap (Bexhill) where there were ten on 18 Jan and seven on 20 Feb. The only other counts of more than two birds were of five between Hastings CP and Cooden (Bexhill) on 3 Jan and three at Selsey Bill on 17 Jan.

Spring movements of departing birds were evident on 23-25 Apr. At Brighton Marina, 28 were recorded on 23 Apr and 15 on both the 24<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> with a monthly total of 97 for that site. At Splash Point (Seaford) 16 were logged on the 24<sup>th</sup>. The last spring record was of one offshore at Selsey Bill on 12 May, which is 13 days earlier than the ten-year average date.

The first autumn bird was one flying west at Worthing Beach on 13 Oct, a date which is 12 days earlier than the ten-year average. This was the only October record and numbers remained low throughout the remainder of the second winter period. The only records of more than two birds were three at Pilsey Island on 10<sup>th</sup> and 15 Dec and 3E at Selsey Bill on the 31<sup>st</sup>.

One on Pagham Lagoon on 20 Jan was the only record during the year of a bird away from the open sea or tidal waters. [DHH]

**Great Northern Diver***Gavia immer*

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

The approximate monthly totals were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May		Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>Monthly total (*)</b>	10	3	6	8	5		1	2	5
<b>Max. off Selsey Bill</b>	9	3	6	8	5		1	2	2

\* adjusted to compensate for duplication

The annual total of 45 was not only slightly higher than the 42 recorded in 2008 but also the highest since 1999. Selsey Bill was again the principal site for this species and it is assumed that birds recorded there moving offshore were on feeding flights as these movements were not recorded elsewhere. It is also assumed that the one to five birds recorded between Chichester and Pagham Harbours were the result of those feeding flights.

In the first winter period the birds were concentrated off Selsey itself with 90% of all records coming from that site. However, numbers varied a great deal from day to day with monthly peaks of nine on 27 Jan, three on 28 Feb and six on 31 Mar. In spring, the birds were again confined almost entirely to the Selsey Bill area with peak counts of eight on 11 Apr and five on 5 May. The last spring record was of one offshore at Selsey Bill on 20 May, which is the same date as the 10-year average.

The first returning bird was 1W at Selsey on 3 Oct, 18 days earlier than the 10-year average date. No more were recorded until November and numbers remained low until the end of the year with the only records of more than two birds being 3W at Selsey on 3 Nov and three at Pilsley on 4 Dec.

There were five records of this species away from the Selsey area. In January single birds were recorded off Pett on the 12<sup>th</sup>, Brighton Marina on the 15<sup>th</sup> and Splash Point (Seaford) on the 24<sup>th</sup>. There were three records of single birds moving east past Brighton Marina in April on the 23<sup>rd</sup>, the 24<sup>th</sup> and the 30<sup>th</sup>. In December, there was 1 W at Climping on the 1<sup>st</sup>, whilst a single bird off Worthing Beach on the 25<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> may have been responsible for others moving west there on the 27<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup>. There were no records of birds away from the open sea or tidal harbours. [DHH]

## Diver species

The difficulties involved in the specific identification of divers in flight are well documented. As a result, a quarter of all divers seen in flight were recorded as 'Diver spp'. The numbers of such birds can be significant as shown by counts of 18E and 166W at Worthing Beach on 13 Jan and a total 563 at Splash Point (Seaford) during the period January-May.

The numbers of all divers recorded at the main seawatching sites during the periods January-May and October-December are tabulated below.

	Diver spp.		R-t Diver		B-t Diver		Total (*)		No. per hour	
	J-M	O-D	J-M	O-D	J-M	O-D	J-M	O-D	J-M	O-D
<b>Selsey Bill</b>	142	13	370	14	21	5	533	32	1.1	0.6
<b>Worthing Beach</b>	233	16	629	198	9	6	871	224	4.2	0.4
<b>Telscombe Cliffs</b>	55	7	370	18	17	1	442	26	4.0	0.5
<b>Splash Point (Seaford)</b>	563	1	306	-	37	-	907	1	3.7	0.2

The totals for each site have been calculated by adding the monthly totals of birds flying east to those moving west plus the number of birds seen on the sea. No allowance has been made for duplication at sites or between sites. Neither has any allowance been made for birds which remained offshore for several days. This latter point is particularly relevant at Selsey Bill where three or more Great Northern Divers can linger offshore and be recorded almost daily from late March to early May. This tends to distort the true picture and for that reason the records of Great Northern Divers have not been included in the table but details are contained in the relevant species account. [DHH]

**Fulmar***Fulmarus glacialis*

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

During the first winter period there were no major movements, the largest being only 32E at Splash Point (Seaford) on 30 Jan, 31E also at Splash Point on 1 Feb and 66W at Telscombe Cliffs on 26 Mar.

The long sea outfall at Telscombe Cliffs once again proved a popular feeding area for this species and attracted concentrations of 120 on both 25 and 27 Mar and 400 on 19 Apr. The majority of these birds arrived from the east as shown when 295 left the feeding area heading eastwards in just ½ hr on the evening of 11 May.

During the spring small movements (possibly feeding movements) were recorded in the west of the county. At Selsey Bill, the monthly totals were 101E and 363W in April, 72E and 347W in May (including 102W on the 16<sup>th</sup>) but only 2E and 14W in June. Worthing Beach recorded slightly lower monthly totals with 103E and 121W in April, 40E and 93W in May dropping to just 7E and 6W in June. Thirty were off Hastings on 12 Apr and a flock of 47 was on the sea some 5 km off Beachy Head on 7 May.

The only count of birds at breeding cliffs was at Newhaven where six pairs were displaying at nesting ledges on 21 Feb. The species is also known to breed at Seaford Head and Beachy Head but the inaccessibility of these sites prevented counts from being made. The last birds left the breeding ledges at Telscombe Cliffs on 10 Sep, which is equal to the 10-year average date, and although single birds paid brief visits as early as 20 Oct, none returned permanently until 9 Nov (three days later than the 10-year average date).

There were few records during the autumn or second winter periods with no double-figure counts on any day.

There were seven records of birds away from the open sea: two flying west over Sheepcote Valley (Brighton) on 13 Apr, two well inland at Weir Wood Res on 5 May. The other records all involved single birds: over Seaford town on 15 and 18 May, flying northeast over Shoreham on 13 Jun, moving west over Firle Beacon on 26 Jul and one which crash landed in a field at Blackstone Bottom (Denton) before recovering and flying back towards the sea on 1 Sep.

A dark morph bird ('Blue' Fulmar) flew east past Brighton Marina on 21 Apr. [DHH]

**Sooty Shearwater***Puffinus griseus*

*Very scarce autumn visitor. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern.*

Just four records were accepted this year. Singles flew east past Birling Gap on 6 Oct (MRE); past Worthing Beach on 27 Oct (CEH); E and then west past Selsey Bill on 26 Nov (BFF, DIS) and west on 28 Nov (MCC, RJF, CRJ). Four records are double that recorded last year but well short of the 38 recorded in 2007. One hundred and sixty-nine have now been recorded in the county since 2000. [CWM]



**Manx Shearwater***Puffinus puffinus*

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

The minimum total for the year of 379 (301E, 78W) was seven above the total for last year and this slight increase continues the upward trend of the past seven years. The minimum figure given includes birds flying both east and west and it is possible that double counting could occur as birds moved along the English Channel on their way to and from their breeding colonies.

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

		Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct
<b>County totals</b>	E	37	31	5	2	-	1	2
	W	7	270	9	4	2	5	3
<b>Selsey Bill</b>	E	29	2	5	2	-	-	-
	W	3	265	1	4	1	5	2
<b>Worthing Beach</b>	E	1	-	-	-	-	-	2
	W	4	220	8	2	1	-	3
<b>Splash Point</b>	E	19	15	-	-	-	1	1
	W	1	2	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Other sites</b>	E	10	20	-	6	-	-	1
	W	-	84	-	-	-	-	-

Unusually, there were no records during January, February or March and the first record for the year was not until 10 Apr when there were 4W at Splash Point (Seaford). The total for April was low and the only double-figure counts were on the 15<sup>th</sup> when there were 10E at Selsey Bill and on the 24<sup>th</sup> when there 15E at Selsey Bill and 12E at Splash Point.

In May there was an unprecedented westerly movement on the 16<sup>th</sup> when 248 were recorded at Selsey Bill (in 10½ hrs), 216 at Worthing Beach (in 2¼ hrs) and 79 at Brighton Marina. The birds recorded in Sussex may have been part of the movements which resulted in daily counts of 300-500 at Portland Bill (Dorset) on 15, 16 and 17 May. This is the third consecutive year in which daily counts of over a hundred birds have been recorded in Sussex. These movements have been in May or June and in each case have been westerly and associated with strong southwesterly winds.

Following this movement numbers fell dramatically and were low during the remainder of the spring period and throughout the summer and autumn. In June the only counts of more than one bird were of 5E at Selsey Bill on the 6<sup>th</sup> and 8W at Worthing Beach on the 21<sup>st</sup>. A party of six moving east off Beachy Head on 8 Jul was the highest count during the summer with a county total of just two singletons in August. Five moving west off Selsey Bill on 2 Sep was the largest count before the last record of the year when there was 1W at Worthing Beach on 22 Oct. [DHH]

**Balearic Shearwater***Puffinus mauretanicus*

*Very scarce spring to autumn visitor. Red listed species of high conservation concern.*

The minimum total of just 17 birds recorded in the county during 2009 was a major drop from the 75 recorded in 2008. All the records came within the period May to October. In May, single

birds moved east at Selsey Bill on the 11<sup>th</sup> (JA/CRJ) and Brighton Marina on the 13<sup>th</sup> (IJW, PJW), a further singleton flew west at Selsey Bill on the 16<sup>th</sup> (JA) and a single bird moved east at Splash Point (Seaford) on the 17<sup>th</sup> (MRE, RJF, SHL). One flying west at Selsey Bill on 26 Aug (SH) was the only record for that month. A total of eight (including a party of five) was recorded at Birling Gap on 2 Sep (RHC) when there were 2W at Worthing Beach (DIS). The final records were on 6 Oct when there were 2W at Splash Point and 1W at Birling Gap (MRE). [DHH]

## European Storm Petrel

## *Hydrobates pelagicus*

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

On 28 May five were recorded feeding off Selsey Bill (LGRE, OM *et al.*) and one was seen from a fishing boat in nearby Bracklesham Bay (BB). These records are a considerable disappointment following as they do three really exceptional years for this species in the county. While there is inevitable duplication within and between sites totals recorded during 2006-08 were 426, 84 and 43 respectively, all during the period 8 May-23 July. Prior to this the six records in 2009 would have been a very respectable annual total when compared with decade totals from 1960s to 1990s of five, one, seven and 22 and up to 24 seen during 2000-05. [RJF]

## Leach's Storm-petrel

## *Oceanodroma leucorhoa*

*Rare vagrant. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern. Schedule 1 species.*

Persistent south-westerly winds in late November resulted in a large influx into the western part of the English Channel with 582 off Chesil Beach (Dorset) and 600 past Portland Bill (Dorset) on the 28<sup>th</sup>-29<sup>th</sup> (*British Birds* 103:76). The twenty-eight recorded in the county were the first since 2006 and were as follows: one off Selsey Bill on 26<sup>th</sup> Nov (BFF, RJS, DIS), a total of six off Lancing on 29<sup>th</sup> Nov (RJF, MC) and an impressive 19 past Brighton Marina the same day (IJW, ADW), one found dead at Telscombe Cliffs on 30<sup>th</sup> Nov (STM) and another found dead inland at Cowfold and taken to the Sussex Wildlife Trust on 2 Dec (RB). [DHH]

## 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.*

Movements at the principal seawatching sites 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>	40	176	1709	1576	249	117	178	735	5	312
<b>Worthing Beach</b>	366	189	475	484	168	188	903	1325	127	319
<b>Telscombe Cliffs</b>	326	178	349	54	273	126	733	2337	205	163
<b>Splash Point</b>	563	142	1780	105	-	-	152	10	-	-

During the first two months of the year recorded movements offshore were higher in January than they were last year but in February the figures for the two years were very similar. Notable counts during this period were 137E in 2¼ hr at Worthing Beach on 11 Jan, 136E in 1½ hr at Splash Point (Seaford) on 25 Jan and 183E in 3 hr also at Splash Point on 1 Feb. Feeding parties offshore were particularly noticeable off Worthing where concentrations of 100 or more birds were recorded on five dates in January with a peak of 400 on the 6<sup>th</sup> and 200 were in Rye Bay on 8 Feb.

In the spring there were ten dates on which counts of 100 or more were made compared with 16 in 2008, five in 2007 and ten in 2006. This year there were no three-figure counts in March but there were three in April and seven in May. Maxima during this period occurred in mid-May with 329W at Selsey Bill on the 16<sup>th</sup> and 328E at Splash Point the following day. The largest feeding parties recorded during this period were 60 in Rye Bay on 7 Apr and 80 off Worthing on 14 May.

During June and July there were only three dates on which more than 50 birds were recorded: 42E and 10W at Telscombe Cliffs on 15 Jul, 57E and 15W at Selsey Bill on the 17<sup>th</sup> and 45E and 58W at Worthing Beach on the 19<sup>th</sup>. The only notable feeding concentration was of 85 off Selsey Bill on 21 Jul.

Numbers in August and September were generally low with the exception of 178W at Selsey Bill on 26 Aug and 112W and 314E at Worthing Beach on 2 Sep and the 18<sup>th</sup> respectively. October started quietly but there were then four days with counts of over 100 birds between the 6<sup>th</sup> and the 12<sup>th</sup>. By far the largest movement was of 1432W in 2 hr (including 1142 in one hour) at Telscombe Cliffs on 11 Oct. Almost half the birds involved in this movement were immature birds with one in seven being a juvenile. Smaller numbers were recorded elsewhere on 11 Oct including 350W at Newhaven, 350W at Atherington and 147W at Selsey Bill. Offshore feeding parties became more prominent during the autumn period with 150 in Rye Bay on 2 Sep, 175 off Climping on the 18<sup>th</sup>, 150 at Splash Point (Seaford) on 9 Oct and 135 off Rottingdean on the 22<sup>nd</sup>.

In November and December numbers were lower than those for 2008 with the highest daily counts being 252W at Selsey Bill on 1 Nov with 186E and 57W at Telscombe Cliffs also on 1 Nov and 88W at Worthing Beach on 31 Dec. The only notable feeding concentrations in this period were 100 off Worthing on 23 Dec and 80 around a fishing boat off Rock-a-Nore (Hastings) on 31 Dec.

The only record of this species away from the open sea was of a singleton over East Dean (Eastbourne) on 1 Jun. A Gannet rescued at Rye Hbr on 16 May with a severely damaged wing and a fishing hook through its foot was taken to Mallydams Wood RSPCA centre but did not survive its injuries. [DHH]

## Great Cormorant

## *Phalacrocorax carbo*

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

The monthly WeBS counts at the principal sites were as shown in the table below. In the first winter period, the main concentrations were at Pagham Hbr and Chichester GPs and, to some extent, Rye Hbr. But consistently high counts were also recorded at Worthing Beach in January, as is illustrated in the table below. Numbers at this site were as follows: on 5 Jan, 160E and 101 offshore; on the 15<sup>th</sup>, 200E in 1¼ hr and 250 were feeding offshore; on the 18<sup>th</sup>, 253W in just 10 min; on the 19<sup>th</sup>, 220E and 261W in 1½ hr may have involved at least some of the same birds

back-tracking; on the 20<sup>th</sup>, 310E in 1 hr. Additionally, 220W were recorded at Climping on the 15<sup>th</sup> and 1000 were seen off Brighton Marina on the 14<sup>th</sup>. Inland, 152 were counted at Chichester GP on 22 Feb.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>County total</b>	359	426	461	328	400	478	481	534	633	447	528	544
<b>Chichester Hbr</b>	7	13	34	11	13	19	27	27	92	81	105	50
<b>Pagham Hbr</b>	130	112	122	49	47	60	49	144	254	57	60	194
<b>Chichester GP</b>	3	3	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	33	31	22	4
<b>Arun Valley</b>	6	14	1	-	1	14	5	3	21	12	28	4
<b>Arun South of Arundel</b>	5	2	4	1	3	1	3	3	17	23	3	7
<b>Adur (Steyning-Henfield)</b>	28	2	-	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	9	19	15
<b>Henfield Brooks</b>	-	1	-	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	-	-	1	33
<b>Weir Wood Res</b>	11	15	14	10	10	5	13	27	41	28	19	8
<b>Lewes Brooks</b>	-	25	15	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	1	4	6	-
<b>Ouse Levels</b>	-	25	15	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	1	4	6	-
<b>Arlington Res</b>	33	28	23	6	8	6	4	10	19	32	39	27
<b>Pevensey Levels</b>	24	21	18	20	9	9	13	5	5	2	9	16
<b>Bewl Water</b>	7	23	27	nc	nc	nc	nc	61	27	20	51	35
<b>Rye Bay</b>	39	106	146	205	297	348	357	206	37	70	63	70

Monthly totals recorded at two of the principal seawatching sites, reflecting mainly local movements and loitering or feeding groups were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>Selsey Bill</b>	E	2	24	33	6	2	-	-	-	-	2	-
	W	63	11	24	12	7	-	6	-	-	22	-
	o/s	189	22	96	68	15	-	15	-	-	-	-
<b>Worthing Beach</b>	E	1212	4	-	10	11	-	17	54	-	7	-
	W	940	8	-	4	33	-	4	7	-	3	11
	o/s	461	3	-	1	-	-	-	-	18	19	62

Breeding numbers were down at Rye Hbr, where two colonies totalled 119 nests (compared with 146 in 2008) in willows on islands at Castle Water. However, the colonies at Chichester GP, established in 2008, grew from 18 nests to 53 at New Lake and at least 30 at Runcton Lake. At Iford Brooks, 23 nests were recorded, compared with 14 in the previous year, and breeding by one pair was recorded for the first time at Knepp MP (Shipley). During the BBS, a total of 30 was recorded in 15 of the 135 1-km squares surveyed, with a maximum count of eight at Pevensey Bridge Level on 15 May.

Counts for the Chichester GP nocturnal roost established around New Lake (with some spill over to Runcton Lake) have not been so specifically recorded as they were in years up to 2007. However, by segregating high counts at Chichester GP from WeBS counts made on the priority monthly core counting dates the records suggest that roosts numbers were as follows:

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	July	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
144	152	116	76	nc	nc	nc	68	30	105	15	54

These data are, in the winter months at least, broadly comparable with those tabulated for years up to 2007. The only other roost in the west of the county for which a record was received was in the Adur Valley: at Wyckham Fm (Steyning,) the roost held 100 birds on 4 Jan. There were occasional reports of groups of birds flying to or from roosts in both the Arun and Adur valleys.

In the second half of the year, significant numbers, additional to the WeBS counts, involved 130 at Pagham Hbr on 10 Oct and 100 on 11 Nov and, at Rye Hbr, 85 on 10 Sep. At the inland reservoirs, 44 at Weir Wood Res on 23 Jul increased to 60 on 9 Aug, 89 on 20 Oct but only 42 on 8 Nov and, at Barcombe Res, 38 on 17 Nov. During the second winter period, the species was seen at some 161 localities with peak counts in November of 100 at Pagham Hbr on the 11<sup>th</sup> and, in December, 169 at Pagham Hbr on the 20<sup>th</sup>. [NJR]

## Shag

## *Phalacrocorax aristotelis*

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

Of the 90 separate sightings (i.e. records less duplicates) for this species, 62 were seen at either Selsey Bill or Splash Point (Seaford) while 25 of the remainder were recorded by observers at other coastal sites; the remaining three birds were recorded inland. All sightings at Selsey Bill and Splash Point, including those additional to the normal seawatching logs there, were as below:

		Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Selsey Bill	E	-	1	8	10	1	1	-	-	20	-	1	1
	W	-	3	-	-	2	-	-	-	2	-	-	-
	o/s	1	-	-	3	4	4	-	-	-	1	2	-
Splash Point	E	-	-	1	-	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
	W	-	-	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	o/s	-	-	3	6	1	1	-	-	2	-	-	-

Elsewhere, at Worthing Beach, only five Shags were seen in 398 hours of seawatching: 1E on 3 Sep, 1W on 21 Oct, two offshore on 25 Dec and 1W on the 28<sup>th</sup> while at Telscombe Cliffs, there was only one sighting in 195 hours: 1W on 28 Oct.

During the first winter period, two birds were noted at Brighton Marina on four dates, one was seen on a groyne near Bognor Regis on 2 Feb and two were offshore in Rye Bay on 17 Feb. Later in the year, a singleton was seen at Brighton Marina on 13 Apr, another was at Birling Gap on 16 and 26 Apr, and four were offshore in Rye Bay on 13 Jun. In December, there were reports of one at Hastings Hbr on the 15<sup>th</sup> and again on Christmas Day.

The only inland record was an unusual occurrence of two birds at Weir Wood Res on 14 Mar and again on 11 Jul and 6 Dec. This was only the second reported sighting of this species there since 1994, the previous report having been for December 2007. [JPP]

## Eurasian Bittern

## *Botaurus stellaris*

*Scarce winter visitor; rare outside winter months. Red listed species of high conservation concern. Schedule 1 species.*

This was a good year for Bittern records with an increase from 47 in 2008 to 126 this year. As in previous years, most of the records came from the Rye Hbr area where there were 42 reports

in the first winter period. Most of these were of singletons but three were seen on two days in January and one day in March. Elsewhere during the first winter period there were 15 records from Burton MP with a maximum of two birds, four from Weir Wood Res (maximum of two on one day), and five records from Eastbourne lakes. A more unexpected record was of a singleton at Glottenham (Mountfield) on 15 Feb.

At least one bird was at Castle Water (Rye Hbr) from April until late June and was heard booming on 13 days. A single bird was occasionally seen at nearby Pett Level during this period.

There were no reports from July until Oct when one was reported from Castle Water on the 10<sup>th</sup> and there were 22 further reports from here until the end of the year. Singletons were seen at Pett Level on 31 Oct and 2 Nov, Burton MP on 12 Dec and at Broadwater Lake (Eastbourne) on 19 Dec.

The increased number of reports may be a reflection of the conservation measures that have been targeted at this species but the the maximum reported on one day was only five birds. [JPP]

## Cattle Egret

## *Bulbulcus ibis*

*Rare but increasing vagrant.*

**2008:** Singles seen at Withyham (Crowborough) on 29 Jan (WGH) and Udimore on 20 Apr (PFB) have been accepted by BBRC and take the year's total to a minimum of 17.

**2009:** Four singles were recorded during the year: near Winchelsea on 19 Apr (PEJ, SJ); on Pevensey Levels on 24-25 May (CFB, PCS *et al.*); at Pett Level on 22-23 Jun (PEJ *et al.*), and at Pagham Hbr on 11 Sep (AH *et al.*). The first individual was photographed in a sheep field west of the A259 between Winchelsea and Rye while that at Pevensey was found on Horse Eye Level where it remained all day on the 24<sup>th</sup>, being seen briefly in flight south of the A259 the following afternoon. The Pagham individual was seen at the North Wall and is the first county record for September. This species was removed from the list of birds requiring consideration by the BBRC on 1 January 2009 and appears to have responded by becoming somewhat scarcer! At least 52 have been recorded in the county with 46 of them this decade, and 35 during 2006-08. There are records in all months apart from August and November while most new arrivals have been found in January (15), April (15) and May (nine). [RJF]

## 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 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>	44	61	85	64	44	71	105	123	282	220	82	54
<b>Chichester Hbr</b>	16	28	36	43	21	38	58	43	147	127	38	22
<b>Pagham Hbr</b>	2	1	14	11	9	16	26	66	78	43	16	10
<b>Widewater (Lancing)</b>	2	nc	nc	2	4	1	4	1	3	3	2	4
<b>Rye Bay</b>	14	4	1	1	1	6	6	9	19	12	13	10



This was not a particularly good year for numbers of this species in the county. In all months except April and June the county total was lower than the 4-year average, as is illustrated in the following table:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>County total</b>	44	61	85	63	44	71	105	123	282	220	82	54
<b>4-year average</b>	85	87	98	58	58	66	126	153	338	296	184	84

The number of nesting pairs was estimated to be at least 40, the same as in 2008, at five established sites, as shown below:

	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
<b>Minimum total</b>	3	1	4	18	19	25	36	40	40-43
<b>Old Park Wood (Bosham)</b>				12	8	10	12	15	c.14
<b>North Wall (Pagham Hbr)</b>				1	3	7	15	17	13-14
<b>Hoe Fm (Flansham)</b>			3	3	3	2	3-4	4+	c.6
<b>Wyckham Wood (Henfield)</b>				3-4	4-6	3	3	0	3+
<b>Southease (R Ouse)</b>					1?	-	-	4	-
<b>Southease (R Ouse)</b>					1	3	3	-	4-6
<b>Glynleigh (Decoy Wood)</b>	3	1	1	1	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Pebsham Wood</b>									

The roost at Rye Hbr was the only one regularly monitored and the fluctuation in the monthly maximum numbers there, and counts from all other roosting sites, was as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>Rye Hbr</b>	27	30	43	15	-	-	64	82	87	22	26	-
<b>Thorney Island</b>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	128	174	-	-	-
<b>All other sites</b>	-	-	-	-	-	-	53	58	53	40	-	9

The other sites above include North Wall (Pagham Hbr) (53 on 7 Sep), Ford (Arun Valley) (21 on 23 Aug), East Kingston (Ferring) (ten on 21 Oct), Lower Adur Valley (three on 1 Jul, 30 on 4 Oct and nine on 1 Dec) and Cuckmere Haven (at least 50 on 25 Jul and 37 on 16 Aug).

After the breeding season, numbers built up to their usual peak in September before declining as birds dispersed out-of-county. During the second winter period, the species was seen at some 99 localities with highest counts of 26 at Rye Hbr on 6 Nov and 18 on 12 Dec. The county total for December probably reflects the resident population. [JPP]

## Great White Egret

*Ardea alba*

*Rare vagrant.*

Three individuals were recorded this year, including two in January with birds observed flying north at Warnham on 3<sup>rd</sup> (SB) and at Rodmell on 10<sup>th</sup> (SLL). In the autumn a bird was seen at North Wall (Pagham Hbr) on 26 Oct (JM, SM). This brings the total number of individuals recorded within the county to 29 (only four recorded prior to 2000) and the species has been recorded in every month of the year. [CWM]

**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>	71	114	112	56	57	102	59	106	127	97	77	88
<b>Chichester Hbr</b>	9	11	14	2	1	14	5	15	29	17	12	16
<b>Pagham Hbr</b>	6	6	11	4	5	10	8	7	10	8	7	5
<b>Arun Valley</b>	7	16	14	12	7	21	7	13	7	5	6	3
<b>Ardingly Res</b>	2	2	2	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	3	4	6
<b>Weir Wood Res</b>	1	18	21	29	23	25	5	24	19	8	8	2
<b>Lewes Brooks</b>	2	14	13	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	1	-	-	-
<b>Ouse Levels</b>	2	14	13	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	1	-	-	-
<b>Glynde Brooks</b>	3	7	1	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	1	nc
<b>Eastbourne Lakes</b>	1	1	1	nc	nc	nc	nc	3	6	6	1	6
<b>Pevensey Levels</b>	6	5	5	1	5	4	nc	2	6	1	2	8
<b>Bewl Water</b>	4	-	2	nc	nc	nc	nc	15	8	5	1	2
<b>Rye Bay</b>	6	6	8	3	7	10	7	18	15	13	16	25

During the breeding season 260 nests were counted at 27 sites (290 nests in 2008). Counts for individual heronries, listed from west to east, were as follows:

Westbourne 1; Forest Mere 1; Fishbourne 10; Owl Copse (Pagham) 7; Church Norton 5; Flansham 13; Warningcamp 2; Parham 19; Angmering 1; Knepp 9; Warnham 16; Henfield 5; Ardingly 7; Weir Wood Res 21; Rodmell 4; Firle 11; Charleston 15; Hadlow Down 13; Eridge 15; Hampden Park (Eastbourne) 7; Glynleigh 22; Wadhurst Park 3; Horsebridge Road (Wartling) 7; Burwash 15; Pebsham 1; Winchelsea 3; Leasam 27.

Some sites are difficult to count, and here the “Best Estimate” for the annual BTO census was used. Nesting at Wadhurst Park was recorded for the first time this year.

During the rest of the year single birds and small groups of herons were seen feeding or loafing in suitable habitat throughout the county. During the second winter period, the species was seen at some 170 localities. The highest counts were, in November, 11 at East Guldeford Level on the 22<sup>nd</sup> and, in December, 13 at Rye Hbr on the 20<sup>th</sup>. [ABW]

**Glossy Ibis***Plegadis falcinellus*

*Rare vagrant.*

In what was the best year in modern times for this species a total of seven was recorded in the county during the autumn following an unprecedented influx into England and Wales in early September. One was present at Pagham Hbr from 20-28 Sept (CWM, JW *et al.*) with presumably the same at Cuckmere Haven later on 28<sup>th</sup> (JC, LC, NP) while two flew west over Scotney Court GP on 22 Sep (MRE, JE). One was present on Carter’s Flood (Pett) on 9-11 Oct (PJ, AK *et al.*) with two at Pagham Hbr from 30 Oct-3 Nov (THE, KMG, MAG *et al.*) and another at Ferring Rife on 30-31 Oct (MO). Those at Pagham were not always easy to find, often being hidden from view in ditches off the North Wall, while the Ferring bird was seen in the morning before flying off north east.

All these records have been accepted by BBRC who have concluded that the original influx consisted of seven immatures in Essex, 25 immatures in Wales and six immatures in Devon and that all subsequent records (including the seven in Sussex) emanated from one or other of the original groups.

Prior to these one was seen at Pagham and Pett in April-May 2007, one at Rye in Oct 1995 and four during 1986-88. Older records relate to one at Pagham in April 1965 and a number during 1902-09 which included a flock of 12 at Fishbourne in Sept 1908. Since 1980 arrivals have been during April (three), September (four) and October (six) with eight seen in the Pett/Rye/Scotney area and four at Pagham. [RJF]

## Spoonbill

## *Platalea leucorodia*

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

The monthly totals were as follows:

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
-	4	1	5	4	-	1	1	-	2	1	3

The first sighting in 2009 was of four birds at Pagham Hbr on 14 Feb which was followed by a singleton at Cuckmere Haven on 28-29 Mar.

In April, two birds were seen at Castle Water (Rye Hbr) on the 4<sup>th</sup>, a singleton flew over Chesworth Fm (Horsham) on the 3<sup>rd</sup>, the same bird flew over Warnham LNR on the 8<sup>th</sup> and an immature bird was seen flying east at Beachy Head on the 18<sup>th</sup>. At Pett Level in May, a single adult was seen daily from the 7<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup> and an immature bird was reported flying west on the 9<sup>th</sup>. Also in May, singletons were seen flying north-west at Ferring on the 14<sup>th</sup>, flying up the R Arun at Ford on the 25<sup>th</sup>, and a juvenile was seen heading east at Oving on the 29<sup>th</sup>.

An adult was seen in Pagham Hbr on 9 and 11 Jul and at Pett Level, an immature bird was seen on 5 Aug and another, un-aged, on the 16<sup>th</sup>. At Pagham Hbr, a juvenile bird was reported on numerous dates from the 11 Oct to 8 Nov with a second bird flying over on 11 Oct. A singleton was seen in Pagham Hbr on 8<sup>th</sup>, 21<sup>st</sup> and 28 Dec and one in Fishbourne Channel (Chichester Hbr) on the 26<sup>th</sup> may have been one of the former.

Although there were many sightings in the county during the year, there may have been fewer than the 22 birds shown in the above table due to their wandering nature. [JPP]

**Little Grebe***Tachybaptus ruficollis*

*Scarce resident, 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>	170	147	138	27	18	18	28	124	120	139	102	160
<b>Chichester Hbr</b>	41	60	40	9	6	6	6	8	31	32	46	54
<b>Pagham Hbr</b>	20	12	14	7	4	-	1	21	13	19	15	9
<b>Arun Valley</b>	3	-	7	-	-	-	1	-	5	2	-	-
<b>Brooklands Worthing</b>	5	-	-	-	-	3	3	2	8	9	2	2
<b>Widewater Lancing</b>	15	13	5	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	8	7
<b>Cuckmere Haven</b>	10	11	17	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	14	nc	nc
<b>Eastbourne Lakes</b>	2	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	13	12	-	-
<b>Bewl Water</b>	22	14	23	nc	nc	nc	nc	60	16	7	8	9
<b>Rye Bay</b>	32	15	16	6	7	5	9	21	20	28	15	46

The approximate monthly totals were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>No. of birds</b>	635	385	319	136	83	111	134	230	284	329	247	415
<b>No. of sites</b>	77	72	75	50	32	42	29	39	50	48	45	49

High counts in the first winter period were 48 at Cuckmere Haven on 1 Jan, 51 at Bewl Water on the 9<sup>th</sup>, 18 at Scotney Court GP on the 26<sup>th</sup> and 21 at Thorney Island on 12 Feb.

There were fewer reports of breeding compared with 2008. Breeding was actually confirmed at only four sites (one carrying food, one occupied nest and two nests with young) but at 16 further sites fledged young were noted, in all involving a minimum of 43 pairs. Breeding was probable at a further 17 sites. Nest building was recorded at Arundel WWT on 11 Jul, with juveniles there on 18 Aug. A breeding survey at Bewl Water recorded 17 pairs present in the area with nine young and five broods. During the BBS, five birds were recorded in two of the 135 1-km squares surveyed with a maximum of three at the Wiston Estate (Steyning) on 22 Apr.

The largest counts from summer and autumn were 60 at Bewl Water on 23 Aug, 17 at Cuckmere Haven on 1 Oct, 17 at Pagham Lagoon on 11 Oct and 15 at Rye Hbr on 11 Oct. During the second winter period, the species was seen at some 69 localities. The numbers at Thorney Island increased from 24 on 11 Nov to peak at 25 on 5 Dec and there were 22 at East Guldeford Level on 20 Dec. [JK]

**Great Crested Grebe***Podiceps cristatus*

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

The monthly WeBS counts at the principal sites are shown in the table below. During the first winter period, numbers were higher than in the previous two years. There were counts of large numbers of birds on the sea, apparently resting, particularly in the east of the county. A survey of the coastline between Glyne Gap (Bexhill) and Hastings on 3 Jan recorded 763 birds. In Rye Bay, there were 650 offshore at Pett on 4 Jan, 500 opposite Gatehurst Fm (Pett) on 18 Jan and, further

west at Glyne Gap, 288 on 18 Jan and 515 on 20 Feb. In the west of the county, the most favoured similar area was offshore at Worthing Beach where there was a peak count of 354 on 14 Jan and a monthly total of 746, as shown in the following table. Inland, the highest count for the period was at Bewl Water where there were peak counts of 84 on 15 Mar and 144 on 20 Apr.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>County total</b>	511	1007	278	142	113	147	163	387	418	347	280	369
<b>Chichester Hbr</b>	5	18	22	6	3	2	2	-	16	12	10	26
<b>Pagham Hbr</b>	14	12	16	9	3	8	9	11	31	16	6	12
<b>Chichester GP</b>	8	3	11	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	24	23	23	12
<b>Weir Wood Res</b>	8	26	27	37	38	60	102	72	91	59	57	nc
<b>Arlington Res</b>	2	23	15	25	18	16	20	58	79	80	52	18
<b>Eastbourne Lakes</b>	6	8	9	nc	nc	nc	nc	5	15	15	15	6
<b>Bewl Water</b>	41	74	84	nc	nc	nc	nc	195	90	61	57	40
<b>Glyne Gap</b>	288	515	2	nc	nc	nc	nc	-	2	9	-	214
<b>Rye Bay</b>	132	293	49	30	14	14	17	37	49	38	35	30

Monthly totals from the principal seawatching sites were as follows:

		Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May		Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>Selsey Bill</b>	E	4	7	5	7	10		-	1	-
	W	4	3	12	1	3		-	12	3
	o/s	9	10	10	5	-		-	-	-
<b>Worthing Beach</b>	E	-	-	-	7	6		5	1	15
	W	94	-	7	4	-		1	13	7
	o/s	746	208	34	24	4		17	81	456
<b>Telscombe Cliffs</b>	E	-	1	-	1	-		-	-	-
	W	6	2	-	-	-		-	-	-
	o/s	40	28	29	4	5		-	-	3
<b>Splash Point</b>	E	7	9	12	20	4		-	-	-
	W	1	2	4	4	1		-	-	-
	o/s	8	10	46	20	-		-	-	-

The above table illustrates that of these sites, the area off-shore at Worthing is a favoured resting site for this species. It also shows that only small numbers are counted on the move during daylight hours at these sites which poses questions about the mobility of this species between the favoured resting sites mentioned above and the unknown total that was in county waters during the first winter period.

Breeding was confirmed at some 26 sites in the county: there were three records of birds on nests, two of food carrying, two of nests with young and 19 records of fledged young. Breeding was probable at a further 22 sites. During the BBS, the species was recorded in only one of the 135 1-km squares surveyed (seven at Weir Wood Res on 14 May). Peak counts during the summer were of 89 at Weir Wood Res on 28 Jun and 102 there on 12 Jul while 60 at Arlington Res on 13 Aug were all adult birds. At Bewl Water the peak count was of 195 on 23 Aug.

During the autumn, there were peak counts on 20 Sep of 91 at Weir Wood Res, 79 at Arlington Res and 90 at Bewl Water. During the second winter period, the species was seen at some 77 localities. In November, Weir Wood Res held 110 on the 3<sup>rd</sup> and the number at Worthing rose from

65 on 11 Nov to a minimum of 250 on 31 Dec when they were visible from the Marine Gardens in rafts, despite the swell, with a further 60 at Goring Gap. There were 214 at Glyne Gap (Bexhill) on 18 Dec and 105 were counted at Rock-a-Nore (Hastings) on the 29<sup>th</sup>. [JK]

## Red-necked Grebe

## *Podiceps grisegena*

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

There were 22 records for the year from some ten localities. The monthly totals were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr		Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
No. of birds	9	2	1	-		1	1	1	3
No. of sites	6	1	1	-		1	1	1	2

During the first quarter of the year, a survey of coastal waters between Bexhill and Hastings on 3 Jan located one bird off Galley Hill (Bexhill) and three off St. Leonards; there were two off Church Norton on the 7<sup>th</sup> and singletons at Pilsey Island on the 13<sup>th</sup>, Brighton Marina on the 15<sup>th</sup> and 1 E at Splash Point (Seaford) on the 24<sup>th</sup>. In February, there were two off Glyne Gap (Bexhill) on the 20<sup>th</sup>, which might have been two of those recorded during the January survey. In March, one was recorded at Church Norton on the 17<sup>th</sup>, 21<sup>st</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup>.

In the autumn, 1 W was recorded at Worthing on 14 Sep and another was noted offshore at Church Norton on 17 Oct. During the second winter period, one was recorded at Rye Hbr on 20 Nov and 1 W at Worthing on the 27<sup>th</sup>. Inland, one was noted at Pulborough Brooks on 1 Dec. [JK]

## Slavonian Grebe

## *Podiceps auritus*

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

The maximum monthly counts at various sites were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr		Oct	Nov	Dec
Chichester Hbr	12	2	-	-		-	-	2
Selsey Bill – Church Norton	54	52	20	4		1	4	7
Bexhill – Hastings	15	13	-	-		-	1	3
Rye Bay	-	3	-	-		-	-	1
Other sites	1	1	2	3		-	2	3

The count in Chichester Hbr occurred on 27 Jan when there were 12 birds at East Head and six at Pilsey Island which may have been part of the same 12. Numbers in the species' main area, Selsey Bill to Church Norton, where they can be highly mobile, started at 12 on 1 Jan, peaked at 54 on the 7<sup>th</sup>, fluctuated during the month to as low as two but with 20 remaining on the 28<sup>th</sup>. Observers at Worthing noted 2 W on the 11<sup>th</sup> and, at Selsey Bill, 1E on the 18<sup>th</sup> and 3W on the 24<sup>th</sup>. So the count of only seven at Church Norton on 27 Jan might imply that the Chichester Hbr birds that day could be part of the whole number in the general area. In the east, a survey of the offshore area between the Firehills (Hastings) and Cooden (Bexhill) located 15 birds on 3 Jan. Inland, a single bird was seen at Arlington Res from the 18<sup>th</sup> to 24<sup>th</sup>.



In February, numbers in the west fluctuated from one to a peak of 52 on the 14<sup>th</sup>; there were 13 at Glyne Gap (Bexhill) on the 20<sup>th</sup>, two in Rye Bay on the 8<sup>th</sup> and one on the 28<sup>th</sup> and, inland at Arlington Res, one on the 1<sup>st</sup>. In March, birds were recorded on most days at the main area, peaking at 20 on the 5<sup>th</sup> and 19 on the 17<sup>th</sup>, there was one at Worthing on the 19<sup>th</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup>, one off the cliffs at Seaford on the 8<sup>th</sup> and 2 E past Splash Point (Seaford) on the 31<sup>st</sup>. Most birds had left the main area by 13 Apr when the final spring record at Selsey Bill was of only three. Migratory movements were recorded further east with 2E at Splash Point on the 6<sup>th</sup> and 1E at Brighton Marina on the 6<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup>, the final record for spring.

The first autumn birds were singletons at Selsey Bill on 4 and 18 Oct. Single birds were noted at four coastal sites during November and there were four at Church Norton on 15 Nov. In December, wintering birds were noted back at the main area from the 1<sup>st</sup> through to the 31<sup>st</sup> with a peak count of seven on the 16<sup>th</sup>. Elsewhere, single birds were noted in Chichester Hbr on the 5<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> and off Worthing on four dates while, in the east, there was one in Rye Bay on the 3<sup>rd</sup> and three at Glyne Gap on the 18<sup>th</sup>. [JAH]

## Black-necked Grebe

*Podiceps nigricollis*

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

The approximate minimum monthly totals, ignoring birds seen 'on passage', were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May		Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
No. of birds	2	4	1	5	3		2	1	1	2	3
No. of sites	1	2	1	2	1		2	1	1	1	3

This year, while three of the sites were in the west of the county and five were in the east, there were only some nine birds seen in the west as against 15 in the east. In the first winter period, two birds seen at Ovingdean at c.1100 hr on 6 Jan swimming west were seen again, 4 hr later, at Brighton Marina, still swimming west. The next sightings were not until 22 Feb when three birds were at Pagham Hbr and one was at Northpoint GP (Rye) from the 22<sup>nd</sup> to the 28<sup>th</sup>. In March, another bird was seen briefly at Rye Hbr on the 15<sup>th</sup>. In April, one was seen at Church Norton on the 2<sup>nd</sup>, observers at Splash Point (Seaford) recorded 3 E on the 6<sup>th</sup> and, at Brighton Marina on the 14<sup>th</sup>, four birds in breeding plumage drifted slowly eastwards. The only inland records for this period were of a pair displaying at Weir Wood Res on 5 May and another one there on the 17<sup>th</sup>.

The first record in late summer was of one in the west at Easton Fm (Earnley) on 9 Aug. Other records for the west were: a juvenile at Drayton GP (Chichester) from the 28 to 31 Aug and again on 6 Sep; one at Ivy Lake (Chichester GP) from the 25 to 26 Oct; and one at Pagham Hbr on 5 Dec. In the east, two were seen at Rye Hbr on 22 Nov, another was seen on West Langney Lake (Eastbourne) on 24 Dec and one was in the moat of Bodiam Castle from the 27 Dec into 2010. [JAH]

**Honey-buzzard*****Pernis apivorus***

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

The group who monitor Honey-buzzards in the southeast provided information on all known breeding pairs. There were seven successful pairs, all of which raised two young. Fourteen fledged young is a county record. At another well-watched locality there was a displaying male in late May and a female was also reported but no pair activity was witnessed. Later on in the season the occasional single bird was seen at this location but there were no birds carrying food back to a nest. Either the male failed to attract a mate or there was a nesting failure. The Honey-buzzard fieldworkers have little doubt that there are many more pairs to be found in Sussex.

In the spring and early summer there were four records. There was a coastal migrant at Pevensey levels on 25 May (MRE). This female was seen at tree-top height and it would seem that the bird was forced to land nearby having flown into bad weather conditions that morning. There were two further coastal migrants in June and on both occasions alarm-calling Herring Gulls alerted the observers to the presence of a migrant raptor. There was an adult male at Hollingdean (Brighton) on 7 Jun (IJW, PJW) and another male over Brighton city centre on 15 Jun (IJW, ADW). Both were seen heading NNE. In Sussex, few migrants are recorded inland but at Firle on 14 Jun (PCS) an adult male flew directly over the observer's head affording good views of the plumage. Although most Honey-buzzards arrive in the UK in the third and fourth weeks of May, some migrants are seen on passage several weeks later. It is purely speculative but these late arrivals are likely to be third year birds on their first spring migration.

On 10 Jul a male was seen at Knepp Castle (SB) and a few weeks later there were singles on the Steyning Downs on 1 and 8 Aug (ARK). In the autumn there were just two records for the Beachy Head area with an adult flying out to sea on 6 Sep (RHC and PN) and another adult doing likewise on 9 Sep (RHC). At Sheepcote Valley (Brighton) on 12 Sep an adult male was seen heading NE, flying into a strong wind and as a consequence 'looking like a giant Sparrowhawk' (IJW). The final records for the year were at Pagham Hbr when an unsexed, unaged bird was seen briefly on 13 Sep (DIS, RAI) and one was seen near Warnham on 19 Sep (SB). [MEK]

**Black Kite*****Milvus migrans***

*Rare vagrant.*

It proved to be an exceptional year with three records. The first sighting was at Seaford Head on 14 Apr, at 0845 hr. It afforded close views for approximately seven minutes before drifting off to the north-east (MRE, RS). On 15 Apr at Lancing, persistent alarm calling by the local gulls alerted the observer to the likely presence of a raptor (BFF). Once again, very close views at just 2-300 feet were obtained and the bird was in view for approximately two minutes. There were rather more distant but more prolonged views of a bird at Steyning Round Hill on 13 Jun (ARK).

These records bring the county total up to 29. They include the first sightings in West Sussex since 1998 and bring the total for East Sussex since 2000 up to nine. Monthly totals also move forward to April (eight), May (14), June (three), July (two), August and November (one each). [MEK]

**Red Kite***Milvus milvus*

*Very scarce breeding resident and scarce visitor. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern.*

In the study area in the west of the county, the regular pair bred for the sixth consecutive year, raising three young. Sussex B2 and Sussex B3 continued as a pair and in 2009 successfully raised two young. The larger of the two chicks was fitted with a radio tag and also wing tags, labelled 'R'. There was quite a disparity in size between the two youngsters and the second chick was too small to be radio-tagged but wing tags were fitted, labelled 'S'. The colour coding for 2009 was yellow on the left wing and pink on the right wing. Sussex 'Y' had previously been paired with an untagged adult but this year was paired with Sussex 'D'. Unfortunately this pairing failed at the egg stage. A fourth pair of two untagged adults were seen copulating but for some reason this pair moved on and was not re-located. They had settled in a copse, which was very close to one of the other nests, and it was apparent that the Sussex B2/B3 pair was not very keen on their presence with several altercations witnessed. It was interesting that there was yet another sibling pairing, suggesting that recruitment to the study area remains a problem.

Red Kites may be seen anywhere in the county and away from the study area there were records of approximately 150 birds with a 60/40 split between the west and the east. With such a freely mobile raptor there is always the problem of double counting but as the comparative figures for 2007 and 2008 were 70+ and 101, it is clear that the numbers are increasing rapidly year on year. The majority of these records will relate to young birds that have yet to pair and settle down, for established breeding pairs in southern England are unlikely to wander far from their breeding woods.

The monthly totals were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>Study area</b>	15	16	17	12	11	7	12	8	10	-	-	-
<b>Elsewhere</b>	2	4	13	37	56	25	6	5	4	1	2	1

As well as a marked increase in the number of records it is apparent that multiple sightings have become a lot more common. The following records relate to Red Kites seen away from the study area. There were 10 recorded at Stoughton on 21 Feb, three at Hollingdean (Brighton) on 22 Mar, two at Worthing on 24 Mar, two at Splash Point (Seaford) on 6 Apr, two at Brighton Marina also on 6 Apr, two at Arundel on 15 and 23 Apr and two at Iping Common on 21 Apr. In late May and early June there was a flurry of fine weather movement with two at Pulborough Brooks on 22 May, three at Lancing and Goring and two at Southwick on 24 May, two at Ardingly on 28 May and three at Hollingdean on 30 May. On 31 May there were three at Beeding Hill, five at Bognor Regis, four seen during the course of the day at Warnham and seven during the day at Edburton. On 1 Jun there was a report of five at Southwater CP and two more at Pulborough Brooks on 3 June.

The second half of the year was very quiet with just 19 singletons recorded. [CBC, MEK]

**Marsh Harrier***Circus aeruginosus*

*Scarce spring and autumn passage migrant and very scarce winter visitor; bred for the first time in 2004. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern. Schedule 1 species.*

There were about 158 individuals seen during the year at 26 broad locations. The estimated monthly counts of birds at each such site were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>Monthly total</b>	14	13	12	12	12	18	10	21	32	10	16	19
Chichester Hbr	1	1	-	1	1	-	-	-	1	2	1	-
Pagham Hbr	-	1	2	1	4	2	-	1	3	-	1	-
Arun Valley	-	-	-	-	1	1	1	2	2	1	-	-
Beachy Head	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	4	-	-	-
Pevensey Levels	-	1	1	-	-	3	3	-	-	1	-	-
Pett Level	4	4	3	3	2	4	2	2	4	3	9	7
Brede Levels	1	3	2	-	-	2	-	-	1	-	-	-
Rye Hbr	3	2	3	3	3	6	3	2	3	3	3	3
Scotney GP area	3	1	1	-	-	-	1	2	5	-	1	9
Other	2	-	-	4	1	-	-	11	9	-	1	-

Spring migrants at the coast included one flying west well offshore from Splash Point (Seaford) on 24 Apr and one in off the sea there on the 26<sup>th</sup>. Breeding took place at three sites and involved four pairs. At one site, two young were raised to the flying stage. At another site, one young was fledged, while at the third site, two pairs nested but both unsuccessfully.

Autumn migrants included two heading south over Brighton on 12 Aug. A total of four was seen at Selsey Bill and five at Beachy Head during Aug and Sep. Interestingly, one flew in off the sea at Hastings on 25 Sep while one headed south there on 9 Nov. During the second winter period, the species was seen at some 16 localities. The maximum daily count in November was nine at Pett Level on the 22<sup>nd</sup> and, in December, nine at the Midrips on the 20<sup>th</sup>. [SHL]

**Hen Harrier***Circus cyaneus*

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

Compared with last year, the number of records (164) was down to more usual levels but, as before, referred to a smallish number of general areas. Conversely, however, the minimum monthly total for this year was slightly higher, 78 over ten months compared with 64 and 46 in the two preceding years. As usual, the highest monthly total for the first half of the year occurred in January but was followed closely by February's total, both being higher than for 2008. Most records were of single birds with ringtails/females predominating. The minimum monthly totals were as shown in the table below.

During the first half of the year, although a ringtail was seen regularly at Pagham Hbr (but not in Chichester Hbr) during the first half of January and a male was recorded there on the 24<sup>th</sup>, most records were from only three areas. On the Downs in the west of the county, two birds (unsexed/aged) were recorded on 27 Jan, five (including two males) were widely dispersed from Stoughton

to Steyning in February, a male flew north at West Marden on 1 Mar, another flew north at Pickers Hill (Balsdean) on 11 Apr, one was seen in Findon Valley on the 21<sup>st</sup> and another at Steyning Round Hill on 23 Apr. In the Arun Valley a male was recorded in both January and March. In Ashdown Forest, single birds, including one male, were seen regularly throughout January with a maximum of two females on the 30<sup>th</sup>, all both hunting and using the traditional roosting site; there appeared to be two males there in both February and March with a maximum count of three birds on the 9<sup>th</sup>. The last spring record, as birds dispersed to breeding grounds, was a probable migrant seen at Seaford on 28 Apr before flying off towards the Cuckmere Valley.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>County total</b>	16	15	9	8	-	2	1	3	-	4	9	10
<b>Chichester/Pagham Hbrs</b>	2	1	1	1	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>W Sussex Downs</b>	3	5	1	3	-	-	1	1	-	-	1	1
<b>W Sussex Commons</b>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
<b>Arun Valley</b>	2	1	2	-	-	-	-	1	-	2	2	1
<b>E Sussex Downs</b>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Ouse Valley</b>	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	1
<b>Ashdown Forest</b>	4	3	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	3	3
<b>Pevensey Levels</b>	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Rye Bay</b>	1	1	1	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
<b>Other sites</b>	2	3	1	2	-	1	-	-	-	-	3	2

The next sighting was in June when an adult male was seen at Thorney Island on the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup>, presumably a migrant. The only sighting in July was of a ringtail feeding over barley at Steyning Bowl on the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup>. Two birds were seen on 16 Aug, a ringtail at Wepham Down and Amberley and a female at Ringmer.

The first autumn bird was not recorded until 17 Oct when a male was seen at the traditional roost in Ashdown Forest. This was followed the next day by one at Pulborough Brooks, another male flying purposefully at the Old Airstrip (Ashdown Forest) on the 19<sup>th</sup>, and another male at Amberley Wild Brooks on the 26<sup>th</sup>.

During the second winter period, in November, an adult and a sub-adult male were seen in Ashdown Forest on the 1<sup>st</sup> and a female on the 14<sup>th</sup>; a ringtail flew east over the Adur Valley on the 2<sup>nd</sup>; a male flew west over Hastings CP on the 7<sup>th</sup>; a first winter male was seen in the Arun Valley on the 12<sup>th</sup> and an adult male flew south over Pulborough Brooks on the 18<sup>th</sup>. There were almost twice as many sightings in December: at Stoughton on the 2<sup>nd</sup> a male was seen flying east; the only record for the year from the commons in the west of the county was of a male at Ambersham Common on the 13<sup>th</sup>; a ringtail was recorded in the Arun Valley on two dates; there were at least two males and a female using the Ashdown Forest roost; and there were single birds at the Midrips and Uckfield on the 20<sup>th</sup>, the last date recorded. [JAH]

## Montagu's Harrier

## *Circus pygargus*

*Very scarce spring and autumn visitor; last bred successfully in 1962. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern. Schedule 1 species.*

There were just three birds this year, the first being an adult male which had been ringed and wing-tagged as a chick on 30 July 2007 at Reiderland, The Netherlands, 610 km distant. It was

first seen quartering the fields at Thorney Island (Chichester Hbr) at 2005 hr on 3 Jun and went to roost there at 2050 hr; it was still present the following morning but at 0815 hr flew high and went south at c.2000 ft and disappeared (CBC). The second bird, a ringtail (also unsexed) was seen on 5 Jun at Seaford GC (LC). The third and last of the year was a juvenile bird seen at Selsey West Fields on 10<sup>th</sup> Sep (AH et al.). [JAH]

## Goshawk

*Accipiter gentilis*

*Probably now a rare resident. Schedule 1 species.*

For the first time for many years a pair bred successfully in the county, fledging four young. SOSRC received details of six records which were unconnected to the successful breeding pair; two of these were deemed to be “not proven”, while the other four are still in circulation with the committee. [PJE]



*Goshawk, May 2009 (Paul Marten)*

## Sparrowhawk

*Accipiter nisus*

*Common resident and passage migrant.*

As in previous years, records (964) were received from across the entire county with the majority of the records relating to single birds. High counts in the first half of the year were five at Danegate (Mark Cross) on 26 Apr, five at Pollardsland Woods (Danehill) on 2 May and four at Upper Beeding on 4 May. There were no spring records of likely migrants coming in off the sea.

The earliest report of probable breeding was a pair in a display flight at Knowlands Wood (Barcombe) on 21 Feb and another pair at Houghton (Amberley) on 27 Feb. Confirmed breeding



was recorded at 17 sites, the earliest at Groombridge on 15 Apr. Probable breeding was recorded at a further 28 sites. During the BBS, a total of 17 individuals was counted in 12 of the 135 1-km squares surveyed, with a maximum count of three at a site in Ashdown Forest.

In the latter half of the year, six birds were seen at Pett Level on 9 Jul, four at Ham Manor GC (Angmering) on 3 Aug and four at Ladywells (Coombes) on 14 Sep. During the second winter period the species was seen in at least 150 localities with maximum counts of three at the Parham Estate on 11 Dec, Warnham LNR on the 21<sup>st</sup> and Pett Level on the 31<sup>st</sup>. There were no reports of birds seen flying out to sea.

Prey species reported were: Moorhen, Lapwing, Wood Pigeon, Swallow, House Martin, Meadow Pipit, Blackbird, Song Thrush, Blue Tit, Great Tit, Magpie, Starling, House Sparrow, Chaffinch, Greenfinch and Goldfinch. [MJC]

## Common Buzzard

*Buteo buteo*

*Fairly common and increasing resident and passage migrant.*

There was a small increase in the number of records submitted this year of which just over half related to sightings of single birds. The minimum monthly totals of birds were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
No. of birds	229	360	409	504	376	417	180	272	310	199	68	81

During the first winter period there were seven records of ten or more birds. In January, these included ten at Lodge Hill Fm (West Dean) on the 17<sup>th</sup>. In February, ten were seen at North Fields (Pagham Hbr) on the 15<sup>th</sup> and, in March, 12 were recorded at both West Dean Woods on the 4<sup>th</sup> and Levin Down (Charlton) on the 19<sup>th</sup>.

There was another increase in recorded breeding activity this year with 39 confirmed breeding records (26 in 2008) and 136 probable (124 in 2008) and a further 121 possible breeding records (133 in 2008). Again, there was very little reporting of breeding success but two fledged young were seen near their nest with two adults at Thorney Deeps in July and two adults were attending two noisy young at Lychpole Hill (Sompting) in August.

During the spring and early summer period, a possible migrant was recorded flying north over Selsey on 13 Apr, ten were seen at Thorney Deeps on the 14<sup>th</sup>, the highest count was 12 at Steyning Round Hill on 9 May and, on the 14<sup>th</sup>, ten were recorded at West Dean Woods. On 14 Jun ten were recorded again at West Dean Woods and also at Glynde Level.

In the late summer and autumn, there were ten records of ten or more birds. In August the highest counts was of 15 above No Man's Land (Findon) on 31 Aug. In September, a single flock of 13 at Worth Forest on the 5<sup>th</sup> was a presumed mix of adults with juveniles while 17 soaring over Thorney Deeps on the 19<sup>th</sup> may have included some migrants. In October, there were two counts of 20; at West Dean Woods on the 4<sup>th</sup> and at Laughton Level on the 18<sup>th</sup>.

In the second winter period the species was seen at some 177 localities. The highest counts in November were sevens on the 2<sup>nd</sup> at Pulborough Brooks and Earls Down (Dallington). Numbers dropped in December with the highest counts being fives at Muddles Wood (Chiddingly) on the 4<sup>th</sup> and West Dean Woods on the 20<sup>th</sup>.

Records of birds mobbing Buzzards included Red Kite, Kestrel, Magpies, Jackdaw, Rook, Carrion Crow, and Raven while an interesting record was of a Buzzard mobbing an Osprey over Southwater CP on 5 Sep. [LAW]

**Osprey***Pandion haliaetus*

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

An approximate total of 58 was seen during the year at 31 locations across the county. This compares to 74 recorded in 2008. Sightings at the localities where the species is usually recorded are summarised as follows:

	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct
<b>Monthly total</b>	6	10	5	1	2	17	18	1
<b>Chichester Hbr</b>	1	1	-	1	-	1	2	-
<b>Pagham Hbr &amp; Selsey Bill</b>	-	1	-	-	-	2	1	-
<b>Arun Valley</b>	-	1	2	-	-	2	1	-
<b>Ardingly Res area</b>	-	2	1	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Brighton &amp; Hove</b>	2	1	-	-	-	-	1	-
<b>Weir Wood Res</b>	-	-	1	-	1	2	-	-
<b>Other</b>	3	5	1	-	1	10	13	1

The first arrivals (all single birds) in March were at Brighton on the 16<sup>th</sup>, both Hove and Selsey Bill on the 27<sup>th</sup>, Warnham LNR on the 28<sup>th</sup> and both Thorney Island and Lancing on the 31<sup>st</sup>. The average first arrival date during the previous ten years has been 25 Mar. Later spring arrivals along the coast included one flying north-west over Brighton mobbed by Common Buzzards on 5 Apr, one that flew in off the sea at Climping Gap on 6 Apr and one that flew north-west over Worthing on 17 Apr. Apart from the localities listed in the above table, birds were seen at six 'Other' sites widely spread across the county.

During the summer, there were singles at Pilsey Sands on 10 Jun, Weir Wood Res on 5 Jul and Edburton on 25 Jul. As usual, there were regular sightings from Chichester Hbr during August and September. Departing birds were seen flying south out to sea at Newhaven on 13 Aug and west along Brighton Seafront on 6 Sep. The last for the year was one at Brede Levels on 28 Oct, three days later than the 10-year average departure date. As was the case in spring, birds were seen in the autumn at 17 'other' sites widely spread across the county. [SHL]

**Common Kestrel***Falco tinnunculus*

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

The species was noted in 314 1-km squares during the year (i.e. 7.8% of the 1-km squares in the county) which suggests that it is still fairly common and widespread. Even though records of confirmed breeding have increased since last year the total number of birds seen has decreased considerably in comparison to 2008, as is illustrated by the minimum monthly totals of birds in both years as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>No. of birds 2009</b>	166	152	96	214	154	260	101	85	108	87	59	64
<b>No. of birds 2008</b>	257	353	173	404	361	389	159	89	192	134	107	97



*Common Kestrel, Bishopstone, June 2009 (Peter Wilson)*

There was only one record indicative of possible spring migration; 1E in 12 ½ hr on 24 Apr at Splash Point (Seaford). The highest count of the year was seven at The Burgh (Burpham) on 20 Aug.

Breeding was confirmed for 54 pairs at 41 sites (23 pairs at 21 sites in 2008), probable at 61 sites (13 in 2008) with another 173 possible sites. Only three nests were examined; they contained a total of 11 young. Nest sites included nest boxes on poles, trees, mobile phone masts and Barn Owl boxes. During the BBS, a total of 38 birds was recorded in 33 of the 135 1-km squares surveyed (49 of 136 in 2008) with a maximum of three. During the second winter period, the species was seen at some 178 localities. The highest numbers recorded were, in November, five at Wepham Down on the 29<sup>th</sup> and, in December, threes at Kirdford, Applesham and Alciston during the month.

Prey items that were recorded included Blue Tit, Greenfinch, earthworms, and lizard species and birds were also noted mobbing Barn Owls for food on occasions. One observer reported a female Kestrel sleeping on the windowsill of a house on two occasions between 3 Jan and the 17<sup>th</sup>. [LAW]

## **Merlin**

*Falco columbarius*

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

Approximately 92 birds, including 14 definite males, were recorded from 30 broad locations during the year. This compares with about 103 seen in 2008. The monthly data are summarised as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr		Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
<i>Monthly total</i>	13	16	8	7		2	15	15	11	12
Chichester Hbr	2	1	-	-		-	1	2	2	1
Pagham Hbr	2	2	1	1		-	2	1	2	2
Arun Valley	2	1	-	-		-	1	1	1	1
Pett Level	1	-	1	2		-	1	1	1	1
Rye Hbr	1	1	2	2		-	1	2	1	2
Other	5	11	4	2		2	9	8	4	5

Spring migrants included one that flew in off the sea at Selsey Bill on 23 Mar and singles that arrived from over the sea at Brighton Marina on both 6 and 15 Apr, on the latter date flying off high over the city. The last for the first part of the year was one at Rye Hbr on 24 Apr. The first returning bird was on 1 Aug at Telscombe Cliffs.

Nearly all of the daily sightings during the year were of single birds. However, there were two at both Chichester Hbr and Rye Hbr on 10 Jan, Pagham Hbr on 2 Feb, Lewes Brooks on 24 Feb, Heighton Hill (Newhaven) on 27 Sep and Bracklesham on 2 Oct. On the latter date, a female was seen to chase off a male. [SHL]

## Hobby

## *Falco subbuteo*

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

This species was seen in 75 broad sites during the year. This compares with 99 sites in 2008. Monthly site totals were as follows:

	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct
<b>No. of sites</b>	15	40	41	37	22	28	7

The first bird was seen at Ditchling Beacon on 12 Apr, followed by one at Pagham Hbr next day. The 10-year average arrival date has been 7 Apr. The main arrivals are summarised below:

Week	15-22 Apr	23-30 Apr	1-8 May	9-15 May
<b>No. of sites</b>	8	13	19	19
<b>Daily maximum</b>	4	8	12	12

Individuals were noted arriving at several sites along the coast in spring: at Selsey Bill on nine dates between 21 Apr and 26 May (two on the latter date) with one offshore there on 17 May; at Worthing Beach on 19 and 26 Apr, and 24 May; at both Brighton Marina and Splash Point (Seaford) on 11 May. The latter bird arrived at the early time of 0555 BST into a northerly breeze and was seen to interact with a passing Arctic Skua on the way in. Other interesting spring records include one seen in the garden of a farm near Pease Pottage for three days to 20 Apr and one hunting small birds at the very early time of 0500 at Rye Hbr on 24 Apr.

Breeding was confirmed at only four locations with fledged young noted. At one of these locations, a young bird fell from its nest in a Scots Pine but after being rested in a shed was able to fly off. Breeding was considered probable at a further 11 locations (including one where an adult was seen feeding a young bird on 6 Aug) and possible at 41 additional sites. The breeding numbers are broadly in line with those for 2008.

There were widespread records during the autumn passage and the last for the year was one on 23 Oct at Pagham Hbr, exactly in line with the 10-year average departure date. There were no exceptional gatherings during the year with five being the maximum daily count at any site. [SHL]

## Peregrine Falcon

*Falco peregrinus*

*Scarce breeding resident. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern. Schedule 1 species.*

There was a considerable increase this year in the number of observations of prey species that birds were seen hunting or taking. At Pulborough Brooks a large number of prey items were recorded over the year by many different observers. They provide an interesting insight to the diet of the pair of Peregrines that are seen on most days at the reserve: 50% of the prey taken/hunted was Moorhen. Lapwing and Teal were the next most frequently recorded, followed by Wigeon and Wood Pigeon. Elsewhere, in addition to those species already listed, Black-tailed Godwit, Curlew, Golden Plover, Starling, Blackbird and Black-headed Gull were also recorded.

Sussex Peregrine Study (SPS) has again obtained detailed data on all known breeding pairs. At least 27 pairs held territories in the county and there were 22 breeding attempts of which 16 were successful, producing a minimum of 35 fledged young compared with 2008 when 22 pairs held territories, with 21 breeding attempts of which 15 were successful resulting in a minimum of 39 fledged young.

Successful fledging was recorded at only five coastal cliff eyries. This was a decrease of four eyries compared with 2008 and the lower productivity noted last year occurred again with a total of ten young fledged. One pair fledged one young, three pairs fledged two and one pair fledged three. At Beachy Head two eggs were laid but they failed to hatch; the female who has resided there for many years failed to complete her moult for a second successive year and her plumage is now very bleached and uneven. The likelihood of her breeding successfully again is low.

There were twelve breeding attempts made at ten inland sites. Three pairs fledged one young, three pairs fledged two and two pairs fledged three, making a total of 15 chicks fledged, an increase of four compared with last year. A notable event took place at Shoreham where for the first time two pairs bred in the same pit and successfully fledged young. The first attempt by both pairs failed due to disturbance. But each pair then moved to a new ledge and with their second attempt they both fledged one young; a second chick was observed at one of the eyries but it did not survive.

Tree nesting, which is very rare, was recorded in the county for the first time. The birds were found to be occupying a Carrion Crow nest in an oak tree. Two chicks were hatched but the nest collapsed when they were about four weeks old; they fell to the ground and were almost certainly predated by a fox with just their wings and legs being found under the tree. There are other UK records of tree nesting attempts that failed in a similar way and it is likely that the 'scraping' behaviour that Peregrines engage in leads to the base of the nest being destroyed.

Having successfully fledged a single chick in 2008 the roof-nesting pair in east Brighton appeared to be incubating beyond hatching but on inspection no eggs or chicks were found. At the inland eyrie which is very close to a Raven nest, attacks by the Peregrines on the Ravens were even more frequent and intense than in previous years. Their productivity returned to the level they usually achieved prior to the arrival of the Ravens, fledging three young compared with two in 2008 and one in 2007, and the Ravens only fledged two compared with four in 2008 and five

in 2007; it is also suspected that the Peregrines may have killed the young Ravens shortly after they fledged.

The three nest box sites produced 10 young. Webcams were operating at both Chichester Cathedral and Sussex Heights (Brighton) this year. At Chichester Cathedral, the first egg was laid on 18 Mar and the clutch was completed with a fourth on the 23<sup>rd</sup>. Hatching started on 23 Apr and all four chicks had emerged by the 25<sup>th</sup>. Three females and a male were ringed on 13 May. Fledging began on 5 Jun and all were flying by the 9<sup>th</sup>.



*Peregrine Falcon, Beachy Head, June 2009 (Roger Charlwood)*

A male Peregrine found badly injured in Brighton on 17 Feb was taken by a member of the public to the RSPCA Centre at Patcham. Its injuries suggested that it had been in a fight with another bird. It was given initial first-aid and transferred to RSPCA Mallydams Wildlife Centre (Hastings) on 18 Feb. Thanks to RSPCA staff the bird made an excellent recovery and on 18 Mar it was ringed, including with a green colour ring (34). It was then taken to Ditchling Beacon and released at about 1345 hr. It flew off very strongly into the wind, calling twice, and made a large circuit of the immediate area before heading off south-east. When the webcam was switched on at Sussex Heights at the end of February a new pair of birds was found to be occupying the nest box and it quickly became apparent that the male had a black colour ring (15) on its left leg indicating it was from a clutch of three males and a female hatched at Chichester Cathedral in 2005. As suspected the injured bird was the previous Sussex Heights male and within half an hour of being released he returned to the nest box. The female soon appeared and tried to usher him out of the box: this succeeded initially, but he kept returning until eventually a violent fight took place between them (see the Regency Square 2009 webcam diary at <http://www.regencybrighton.com/birds/webcam/>). In the end they both flew from the box seemingly unharmed, but the 'old' male has never been seen since. The first egg was laid on 2 Apr and the clutch was completed with



a fourth on the 10<sup>th</sup>. The first chick hatched on 13 May, and the rest emerged by the 20<sup>th</sup> although the fourth died on the 22<sup>nd</sup>. When ringed on 4 Jun the chicks were confirmed as being two females and a male. Fledging started on 24 Jun and all were flying by the 26<sup>th</sup>.

On 15 Jun, at Shoreham Power Station, three young were seen on the nest box ledge. However, the problem of the chicks fledging before they are strong enough to fly properly occurred yet again. On 17 Jun a female chick was reported to be on the ground and unable to fly up to even the lowest perching areas and, later, a second female was on the ground and it too was unable to take off. The birds were ringed, then removed from the site, and taken to Mallydams. On 25 Jun the third bird, a male, was found on the ground, and again it was incapable of flying off successfully. It too was taken to Mallydams and ringed by staff there. Later all three were transferred to a rehabilitation centre in Somerset; the male died whilst there, but the females were successfully released into the wild in October.

An adult male and an immature female were present during the breeding season at Hove Engineerium but did not breed. The female had a green colour ring (26) indicating that she was the single chick hatched at the east Brighton roof-top eyrie in 2008. In Arundel a pair was present during the breeding season but again did not breed; the female had a black colour ring (24) indicating she was hatched at a pit in the west of the county in 2007. Three further pairs were present at other inland locations throughout the breeding season but did not breed. There were also wintering pairs in Bognor and Eastbourne and a single bird in Burgess Hill.

SPS are acutely aware that it is becoming ever more difficult to track the increasing spread of the species in the county and they would be very grateful to know of any new sites that observers believe they may have found so that the re-colonisation can continue to be recorded accurately. Accordingly, all records should be sent, in the first instance, to the Recorder ([recorder@sos.org.uk](mailto:recorder@sos.org.uk)) or the Database Manager ([data@sos.org.uk](mailto:data@sos.org.uk)), with the appropriate confidentiality advice, for forwarding to the SPS. [PJE]

## Water Rail

## *Rallus aquaticus*

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

Approximately 360 records were received this year, similar to 2008, distributed across some 64 sites. The minimum number of birds present each month were approximately as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>County total</b>	61	32	21	12	6	6	3	7	17	30	41	60
<b>Chichester Hbr</b>	6	7	2	1	-	-	-	-	4	6	7	6
<b>Pagham Hbr</b>	4	1	2	1	-	-	-	1	5	3	3	3
<b>Arundel WWT</b>	1	2	4	1	1	1	1	-	1	4	1	3
<b>Pulborough Brooks</b>	4	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	3	3
<b>Warnham LNR</b>	6	2	2	-	1	1	-	-	-	6	9	1
<b>Pett Level</b>	5	5	2	2	2	1	2	4	5	6	8	10
<b>Rye Hbr</b>	4	2	-	2	2	1	-	-	1	2	1	3
<b>Other sites</b>	31	11	9	5	-	2	-	2	1	2	9	31

In the first winter period, when numbers were highest in January, almost 65% of reports were of singletons. The most notable exceptions were sixes at Warnham LNR on 2 Jan, East Head (West Wittering) on the 10<sup>th</sup> and Thorney Deeps on the 20<sup>th</sup> and five at Pett Level on the 14<sup>th</sup>. In

February, the highest counts were seven at Thorney Island on the 13<sup>th</sup> and five at Doleham Valley on the 11<sup>th</sup>.

This species is notoriously difficult to survey during the breeding season so very few birds were noted then and there was no definite evidence of breeding although birds were seen, or heard, in suitable habitat at at least six sites. Numbers began to pick up at Pett Level during August, either as the result of local breeding or the arrival of migrants, but remained low elsewhere until later when five were seen at the North Wall (Pagham Hbr) on 29 Sep and six at Thorney Deeps on 27 Oct.

During the second winter period, the species was seen at some 57 localities. Just over half of the records for this period were of singletons but the highest counts were of nine at Warnham LNR on 22 Nov and ten at Pett Level on 22 Dec. [JPP]

## Corn Crane

*Crex crex*

*Rare passage migrant; formerly bred.*

The only record for the year was of a single bird found dead at Brighton Marina on 15 Sep (LH). This is the first record of this species since 2006 and only the 10<sup>th</sup> in the past ten years, as illustrated below:

	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
No. of birds	-	1	3	1	1	1	1	1	-	-

No breeding has been recorded in the county since 1945 and in the period between 1962 and 1994, 49 of the 69 records were in September or October, as have been most of the 12 subsequent records. The exception was a bird trapped at Pett Level on 5 Nov 2004. It is of interest that three of these 12 reports were of trapped birds, another was injured, and two more were dead. [JPP].

## Moorhen

*Gallinula chloropus*

*Very common resident and winter visitor.*

There were 2538 records for 2009 (2869 in 2008), reported from 429 tetrads. 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>	610	531	481	183	161	182	257	419	596	532	540	647
<b>Chichester Hbr</b>	67	106	66	14	8	6	8	9	23	40	36	75
<b>Pagham Hbr</b>	55	53	52	18	18	17	11	22	24	29	38	47
<b>Burton/Chingford Ponds</b>	4	8	7	6	-	3	3	15	23	29	4	11
<b>Arun Valley</b>	164	129	132	68	70	93	138	108	190	82	129	125
<b>Brooklands Worthing</b>	40	27	17	9	6	9	6	2	9	9	27	32
<b>Weir Wood Res</b>	4	4	6	4	8	5	16	41	26	40	15	2
<b>Bewl Water</b>	43	13	14	nc	nc	nc	nc	87	56	22	11	27
<b>Alexandra Park</b>	21	23	21	nc	nc	nc	nc	33	nc	7	77	64
<b>Rye Bay</b>	102	61	45	28	30	29	51	78	69	71	58	74

As the mix of 'principal sites' has changed, an overall comparison with previous years is not realistic. However, site by site comparisons between 2008 and 2009 suggest considerable changes. At Alexandra Park (Hastings), counts for the end of the year were higher than in 2008; the observer suggested that management work there was having a positive impact. Counts from other waters and locations included the following:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Forest Mere (Liphook)	19	8	7	7	6	8	10	13	8	9	9	14
Fishbourne (Chichester Hbr)	13	37	6	2	nc	nc	nc	nc	6	14	8	8
Pagham Lagoon	5	8	7	2	nc	6	7	5	7	8	4	6
Burton MP	5	7	2	2	nc	1	nc	11	16	20	2	5
Swanbourne Lake (Arundel)	9	9	4	2	6	5	8	8	11	nc	16	12
Arundel WWT	100	78	85	31	41	49	66	49	87	45	67	98
Southwater CP	20	16	16	32	8	52	35	32	24	19	21	19
East Guldeford/Camber	18	10	10	4	5	4	5	11	17	25	23	18

During the first winter period, counts of ten or more, additional to the above tables, were received for some 60 additional sites with maxima of 55 at Rye Hbr and 43 at Bewl Water on 18 Jan and 40 at Brooklands (Worthing) on the 14<sup>th</sup>.

Breeding was confirmed in some 170 tetrads and probable in a further 50. During the BBS, a total of 115 birds was recorded in 57 of the 135 1-km squares surveyed with a maximum count of nine at Rustington on 30 May; in 47 squares the count was of only a single bird.

Birds were displaying at Pulborough Brooks on 16 Feb. On 8 Apr, six juveniles were on a garden pond at Washington. Reports of fledged juveniles were widespread after 20 Apr and second broods were noted from early July. Two pairs at Ladywells (Coombes) were accompanied by ten recently fledged birds on 13 Aug; at Pulborough Brooks two pairs produced young at the start of September, and there was a very small chick at Brooklands (Worthing) on 17 Sept. At Rye Hbr, 29 nests and broods were found in June, a considerable decrease from the 42 of 2008 (but cf. 30 pairs in 1990). A pair fledged five juveniles in an Angmering garden in mid-May only for one of the adults to be killed by a cat. The birds then disappeared for several weeks before the remaining adult, with three juveniles, returned on 15 June.

During the second winter period, the species was seen at some 244 localities. The highest counts were, in November, 77 at Alexandra Park and 67 at Arundel WWT on the 23<sup>rd</sup> and, in December when these sites reversed roles, 98 at Alexandra Park on the 21<sup>st</sup> and 64 at Arundel on the 20<sup>th</sup>.

A bird with a yellow bill and shield was found at Wakehurst Place on 4 Mar. [CB]

## Common Coot

*Fulica atra*

*Fairly common resident and common winter visitor.*

The monthly WeBS counts at the principal sites were as shown in the table below. This year, the WeBS counts were 23% lower during the first seven months of the year than in 2008 but increased by 17% in August/September and were similar for October-December. In excess of 1900 records were received, a small increase on the 1829 in 2008.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>County total</b>	2871	1776	1318	442	285	550	732	1416	2457	2555	2498	3216
<b>Chichester Hbr</b>	93	88	114	15	14	15	12	32	61	33	43	127
<b>Pagham Hbr</b>	51	56	66	50	27	59	29	59	88	79	51	93
<b>Chichester GP</b>	415	189	92	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	859	540	700	649
<b>Arun Valley</b>	258	140	110	107	85	100	115	118	169	44	129	143
<b>Barcombe Res</b>	43	23	24	9	-	30	19	32	118	175	46	56
<b>Eastbourne Lakes</b>	239	92	66	nc	nc	nc	nc	17	477	538	248	426
<b>Bewl Water</b>	336	244	209	nc	nc	nc	nc	227	157	81	101	82
<b>Rye Bay</b>	1161	700	411	161	100	258	458	845	380	898	1032	1478

The first breeding record was again at Sefter Fm (Rose Green) when two nests were reported on 30 Mar, one with five eggs and the other with two eggs. Chicks were first reported at Southwater CP on 24 Apr and at Pagham Hbr on 25 Apr. Breeding was confirmed in approximately 80 tetrads and was probable in a further 27. At Rye Hbr there were at least 32 breeding pairs and there were 12 nests at New Lake (Chichester GP) but there was little detail of success at any of the other major wetland sites.

Numbers increased noticeably following the breeding season although there were only six counts of over 100 in August with the highest being 621 at Rye Hbr on the 23<sup>rd</sup>. In September, the number of counts over 100 increased to ten and the highest of the month was 351 at Drayton Pit (Chichester GP) on the 13<sup>th</sup>. In October, the honour for the highest of some ten counts over 100 returned to Rye Hbr with 632 on the 11<sup>th</sup> followed by 420 at West Langney (Eastbourne) on the 12<sup>th</sup> and 520 at Chichester GP on the 25<sup>th</sup>.

During the second winter period, the species was seen at some 109 localities. In November, there were nine counts in excess of 100, the highest being 626 at Rye Hbr and 350 at Castle Pit (Rye Hbr) on the 22<sup>nd</sup>. In December, there were 12 counts in excess of 100, the highest being at the same sites as in November with 760 and 580 respectively on the 20<sup>th</sup> when there were also 398 at Scotney Court GP. [JPP]

## Common Crane

## *Grus grus*

### *Rare visitor.*

Four records comprising five birds were accepted this year. Singles were seen at Waltham Brooks on 18 Apr (MDMH, ARK) with possibly the same bird at Warnham LNR on 19 Apr (MPH); flying east at Castle Water (Rye Hbr) on 11 May (SH) (having previously flown over Pett Level); and two were at Pulborough Brooks on 14 and 15 Jun (PH, MDS *et al.*). This is the third year running that a pair has been seen at Pulborough Brooks and these four records bring the county total to 33 since the start of 2000. [CWM]

**Oystercatcher***Haematopus ostralegus*

*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>	1790	2113	1329	741	437	479	821	1562	1194	1613	1927	1621
<b>Chichester Hbr</b>	1155	1433	868	486	219	312	637	1090	804	1322	1340	1125
<b>Pagham Hbr</b>	177	377	166	151	56	82	82	140	192	97	124	166
<b>Climping</b>	99	nc	-	8	nc	nc	5	nc	-	nc	nc	49
<b>Rye Bay</b>	350	259	267	92	157	71	92	278	190	147	443	243

The largest winter roosts were as usual in the western harbours and in the Rye Hbr area. Counts of these provide interesting supplementary data to the WeBS counts, and are shown in the following table:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>Pilsey Island</b>	450	621	500	320	170	186	543	1000	1200	1100	1000	718
<b>Rye Hbr</b>	850	400	330	70	141	59	79	278	178	220	441	350

In the first winter period, the only other sites holding significant numbers were Cuckmere Haven, with a maximum of 50 on 7 Feb, Telscombe Cliffs, with 170 on 11 Jan, and the Midrips, where regular counts showed a maximum of 234 on 15 Feb.

Seawatching logs showed the usual small numbers moving east, the highest monthly totals being 31 for April and 34 for May, both at Splash Point (Seaford).

A minimum of 48 pairs bred the highest number since 2000. At Rye Hbr, there were 25 pairs, with success reported as high, and 15 pairs bred at Pagham Hbr. In the Chichester Hbr area, three pairs at Pilsey Island raised two young, single pairs at both South Stakes and North Stakes Islands raised one each, but a pair at Bracklesham Bay failed. A pair at Arundel WWT was rather more successful, raising a total of three young. Pairs which may have been breeding were also found at Thorney Deeps and Chidham (both Chichester Hbr) (two pairs), Iford Brooks, Piddinghoe, Cuckmere Haven, the Midrips (two pairs) and the Wicks (Camber). A pair near Rye was nesting on the roof of a tennis club.

There were only two reports from inland sites other than breeding birds, both of single birds at Pulborough Brooks on 1 Jul and Weir Wood Res on the 31st.

In October, 70 were counted at Climping on the 3<sup>rd</sup> (but no count was made on the WeBS core counting date of 11 Oct). During the second winter period, the species was recorded in 47 localities with maxima on 14 Nov of 1000 at Pilsey Island, 151 at Thorney Island and 150 at Birdham (all Chichester Hbr) and, on the 22<sup>nd</sup>, 441 at Rye Hbr. In December, 350 were recorded at Rye Hbr on the 4<sup>th</sup>, 158 were counted at Thorney Deeps on the 4<sup>th</sup>, 157 at Birdham and 718 at Pilsey Island on the 5<sup>th</sup> and 200 were seen in Pagham Hbr on the 20<sup>th</sup>. [CJRB]

**Avocet***Recurvirostra avosetta*

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

The minimum monthly totals were as follows:

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
26	28	64	122	77	108	106	26	13	12	21	40

In Pagham Hbr, seven wintering birds on 2 Jan increased to a maximum of 15 on 1 Feb, much the same as in recent years. In Chichester Hbr, the maximum count was ten on 14 Jan, continuing the sharp decrease over the last four years. Elsewhere in January, there were three at Pett Level on the 29<sup>th</sup>, one at Rye Hbr on the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> and one at Jury's Gap on the 3<sup>rd</sup>. In February, one was on the Lower Adur on the 16<sup>th</sup>, two were at Scotney Court GP on the 22<sup>nd</sup> and there were three again at Pett Level on the 23<sup>rd</sup>.

Birds began to appear at breeding sites in the second week of March, and offshore passage was observed from the 13<sup>th</sup>. A minimum total of 56 passed seawatching points (all but five in the eastern half of the county) and the largest counts were 12 on 18 Mar and 13 on 16 Apr at Splash Point (Seaford). The only movement observed from Selsey Bill was 3W on 7 Apr and 2E on 9 May.

Approximately 33 pairs bred, a further decrease from about 43 in 2008 and a peak of about 50 in 2007. The birds were spread over a slightly wider area this year with three sites in the east of the county. Two of these held about 11 pairs each (raising a total of about 11 young altogether) and the third about seven pairs. In the west, presumably the same pair at last year's site failed for unknown reasons. A pair summered again at the Ferry Pool (Sidlesham), being recorded from 15 Mar to 3 Jul.

Birds dispersed quickly from breeding sites. During July there were several large counts from coastal areas clearly involving birds passing through. The largest of these was 85 at Pett Level Pools on the 4<sup>th</sup> and 38 at the Midrips on the 31<sup>st</sup>.

The first apparent wintering bird was one in Chichester Hbr on 19 Sep, and numbers built up to 15 on 1 Dec, again a sharp decrease on recent years. At Pagham Hbr there were two on 18 Oct which increased to a maximum of 21 on 28 Dec. Two at Rye Hbr on 13 Dec and one at Hastings on the 19<sup>th</sup> were the only records elsewhere.

The only inland sightings were one at Barcombe Res on 19 Apr (and presumably the same at Plashett Park the next day), one at Pulborough Brooks on 5 June, and a group of six at Weir Wood Res on 26 Aug. [CJRB]

**Stone-curlew***Burhinus oedicnemus*

*A very scarce passage migrant and very scarce breeder. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern.*

With the gradual increase of the Wessex Stone-curlew population thanks to conservation measures, and with passage birds being seen occasionally in recent years in suitable habitat in Sussex, there has been a better chance than ever of the species naturally re-colonising the county, after 30 years absence. Licensed volunteers started to survey for birds in 2006 in an attempt to ascertain the species' status in Sussex, and as a result of positive outcomes, an RSPB Sussex



Stone-curlew Project was set up in 2008 working in collaboration with a small team of licensed volunteers. From 2009 onwards the SOS actively supported the project. The aims were to survey as much suitable habitat as possible, and to work intensively with local landowners to create the conditions needed to encourage passage birds in spring to stay and breed.

It is well known that the species is extremely vulnerable to disturbance. Successful re-colonisation also usually requires several years of successful breeding and for young birds bred at a site to return and breed. There is also still a sizeable risk of birds being targeted by egg collectors. Therefore it was decided that it was in the best interests of the birds not to publicise the project until either a population was established, or events made it necessary to do so.

During 2009, the RSPB Sussex project team located single pairs in areas where habitat management and regular monitoring were possible. Through working closely with landowners, management of the breeding site and surrounding area was adjusted to best suit the species' needs. A detailed programme of monitoring established that one pair successfully fledged two young. The second pair lost their first clutch, but successfully re-laid and managed to fledge one young. Monitoring and habitat management was not possible at a site where birds were present during the summer, and whether this pair attempted to nest is unknown. With the support of the Wessex Stone-curlew team, at nest sites where access is possible, the project attempts to colour-ring the chicks to help monitor future populations.

A third, un-paired, adult was present throughout the summer, and at least two migrant birds were recorded elsewhere in the spring in suitable nesting habitat.

The decision to publish the details now has been prompted by the fact that the birds at one site suffered significant disturbance from a small number of birdwatchers, including trespass on private land. Such activity directly jeopardises breeding success and the project's relationship with farmers and gamekeepers. There is a long way to go before the re-colonisation of Sussex is assured, and the RSPB and SOS urge everyone to place the welfare of the birds first. Stone-curlews are specially protected under Schedule 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) and the EU Birds Directive, making it an offence to disturb them in the breeding season (mid-March to October) or tape-lure them without a licence. It is also recommended at this stage that birdwatchers do not go out purposely attempting to find Stone-curlews in Sussex.

The Sussex Stone-curlew Project is indebted to the support of the landowners and farmers whose efforts have allowed the breeding success we have seen so far.

**2008:** Two breeding pairs fledged two chicks.

**2007:** One pair fledged one chick and one individual was located once during the breeding season.

**2006:** A bird was located once during the breeding season.

## Oriental Pratincole

## *Glareola maldivarum*

*Very rare vagrant.*

One at Pagham Hbr on 28-29 May (THE, CWM, MW *et al.*) has been accepted by BBRC and is the second county record. Although it generally gave good flight views from the North Wall it presented a trickier identification problem than perhaps it should have and most of those seeing it will have been disappointed to have gone away thinking it was probably a Collared Pratincole (*G. pratincola*), due in particular to worn plumage. It was widely identified after the event from superbly detailed photographs (e.g. *Birding World* 22:182 and *Brit. Birds* 103:plate 273) and careful examination of recent literature (Driessens and Svensson 2005) although full credit should

go to the first named observer who at the time was resolute in his belief of it being this species. It was the sixth British record and was later seen at Dungeness (Kent). The first county record was on Pevensey Levels on 29-30 August 1993. [RJF]

Driessens, G. and Svensson, L. 2005. Identification of Collared Pratincole and Oriental Pratincole: a critical review of characters. *Dutch Birding* 27:1-35.



*Oriental Pratincole, Pagham North Wall, May 2009 (Dave Sadler)*

## Little Ringed Plover

*Charadrius dubius*

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

The minimum monthly totals were as follows:

	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep
No. of sites	6	10	6	7	8	9	3
No. of birds	16	35	17	28	41	23	10

For the third year running the first arrivals were noted at Pulborough Brooks, where there were at least two on 16 Mar, two days earlier than the 10-year average. There were up to five birds at this site for the remainder of March (and in fact continuously until September) and up to three at another five sites. Arrivals continued into April, when birds were regularly seen at Pagham Hbr, including an influx of eight there on the 18<sup>th</sup>.

A minimum possible total of 19 pairs was confirmed breeding at 11 sites, with the highest concentration being five pairs at one coastal site. Records suggest that a further three pairs probably also bred. Though the total number of pairs found was very similar to recent years, the number proved breeding was considerably more than usual. All the pairs were at traditional sites,

eight of them in coastal habitats. The highest success was at an inland quarry site where a pair fledged three young and at two other sites pairs raised two each. At the site with five pairs, about four young were raised.

Dispersal was as usual indicated by higher numbers in July, particularly in the second week, but almost all the sightings came from the breeding areas. There were counts of more than six at four sites during this time, with a maximum of nine at two of these. There were 16 records for September, the last record being four at Rye Hbr on the 24<sup>th</sup>, just a day later than the 10-year average. [CJRB]

## Ringed Plover

## *Charadrius hiaticula*

*Fairly common breeder, 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>	493	328	96	164	51	62	60	632	148	73	187	245
<b>Chichester Hbr</b>	165	128	37	126	13	13	20	422	13	23	106	213
<b>Pagham Hbr</b>	134	149	23	18	2	25	16	76	60	6	46	9
<b>Climping</b>	43	nc	20	3	nc	nc	8	nc	-	nc	nc	-
<b>Arun South of Arundel</b>	70	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Newhaven</b>	-	-	-	1	1	nc	-	-	-	1	20	-
<b>Arlington Res</b>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	4	-	-
<b>Langney</b>	55	25	2	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc
<b>Rye Bay</b>	24	24	11	16	35	24	16	134	71	39	14	22

Between January and March, the only count exceeding those in the WeBS table was 45 at Rye Hbr on 12 Feb. Most of the birds within Chichester Hbr were counted at South Hayling but, on the Sussex side, the highest count came from East Head (West Wittering) with 60 on 27 Jan. Away from the WeBS sites, the highest numbers were 40 at Brighton Marina on 15 Feb, 35 on the beach at Brooklands (Worthing) on the 14<sup>th</sup>, and the same number at Goring Gap on 25 Jan.

The only significant seawatching record was 11W and 58E from Worthing Beach in 6¼ hr on 13 May.

At least 57 pairs bred, slightly less than in the previous two years. At Rye Hbr, 28 pairs bred with poor success but at the Midrips two pairs raised a minimum of three young. There were 17 pairs in Pagham Hbr and, in Chichester Hbr, there were five pairs at Pilesey Sands, two pairs at N Stakes Island (raising two and three young) and a pair at Thorney Island (raising two). At Bracklesham Bay, two pairs were successful and at Littlehampton Beach a pair raised two. At Rustington Beach, a brood of four chicks was reported in the local press, although sadly none survived on this well-used beach, and a brood at Cuckmere Haven suffered the same fate. Two pairs at Southwick Beach were more successful, raising three between them. Pairs were also present at Climping, Brooklands Beach and Newhaven Tide Mills. During the BBS, two were recorded in one of the 135 1-km squares surveyed.

In August, migrants were widespread at coastal sites with peak numbers at Rye Hbr of 134 on the 24<sup>th</sup> and 340 at Pilesey Island on the 21<sup>st</sup>. High counts in September included 102 roosting at Goring Gap on the 4<sup>th</sup>, 115 at Rye Hbr on the 11<sup>th</sup>, 92 at Pilesey Island on the 18<sup>th</sup>, 80 at Brighton

Marina on the 20<sup>th</sup> and 82 at Camber on the 22<sup>nd</sup>. In October, there were 150 at Pilsey Sands on the 6<sup>th</sup>, 100 at Pagham Hbr on the 10<sup>th</sup> and a monthly maximum of 402 at Pilsey Sands on the 30<sup>th</sup>.

During the second winter period, this species was seen at at least 33 localities. The highest count was of 173 at Brooklands (Worthing) on the 6 Nov while at East Head there were 94 on the 14<sup>th</sup> but 155 there on 5 Dec. Elsewhere in Chichester Hbr there were 52 at Pilsey Sands on 25 Nov and 58 on 5 Dec. Similarly, on the R Adur at Shoreham there was a consistent 61-64 on 21 Nov and 28 Dec respectively while at Goring Gap 55-56 were counted on both 24 Nov and 6 Dec. There were 60 counted in Pagham Hbr on both 24 Nov and 2 Dec.

Inland, there were up to two at Pulborough Brooks on a total of 26 days from 10 Mar to 25 Sep, up to three at Weir Wood Res from 11 Jul to 11 Sep, a maximum of five at Arlington Res from 9 Aug to 18 Oct, and two at Bewl Water on 12 Jul, with one there on 28 Aug. [CJRB]



*Ringed Plover, Southwick, July 2009 (Richard Fairbank)*

## **Kentish Plover**

## *Charadrius alexandrinus*

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

One was photographed at Church Norton on 3 May (CR *et al.*) while a male and female were found in the wader roost at the Pilsey Sands on 13 May (CBC). The female at Pilsey flew off high to the north with 21 Ringed Plovers while the male remained for at least another hour and a quarter. Twenty-three have been recorded in the county this decade. Records during this period have been in April (ten), May (ten), August (two) and September, six of which have been at Pagham and ten at Pilsey. Decade totals from the 1960s to 1990s are 16, 19, 24 and 44 respectively highlighting a recent sharp reverse in fortune for this species. [RJF]

**Dotterel***Charadrius morinellus*

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

One was found at Atherington (Climping) on 18 Apr (RG *et al.*) with three at Chantry Hill (Storrington) from 5-6 May (THE, CWM *et al.*) while in autumn, one was present at Balsdean on 8 Sep (ADW, IJW). The Atherington individual is the earliest to be seen in spring since an exceptionally early individual on 3 Apr 2000 while those at Chantry Hill frequented a field about a mile to the west and adjacent to the South Downs Way. Sixty have been recorded in the county since the beginning of 2000 being first seen in April (3), May (31), August (15), September (six) and October (two). This is well down on the 145 recorded in the county during the 1990s. [RJF]

**European Golden Plover***Pluvialis apricaria*

*Common winter visitor and passage migrant, rare in summer. 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>	2378	2035	347	-	-	-	-	173	633	1825	3665	976
<b>Chichester Hbr</b>	258	584	5	-	-	-	-	-	77	431	1115	792
<b>Pagham Hbr</b>	507	866	5	-	-	-	-	-	35	200	300	7
<b>Rye Bay</b>	1606	557	329	-	-	-	-	173	519	1194	2250	140

In the first winter period, numbers at the main sites rose steadily to a peak in mid-February. There were several counts additional to the WeBS counts; at Thorney Island there were 750 on 13 Jan and 1000 on 10 Feb while at Pagham Hbr there were 1700 on 14 Feb. In the east, the maximum was 2000 at East Guldeford on 20 Jan and 1600 at Rye Hbr on 16 Feb. The largest flocks away from the main concentrations were 67 at Pulborough Brooks on 3 Feb and 60 at Glynde Reach on 4 Jan. There were still 164 at Rye Hbr on 14 Apr and four there on the 13th. The only May records were of a single bird in summer plumage at Rye Hbr on the 8<sup>th</sup> and one at Sidlesham Tramway on the 26<sup>th</sup>.

There were only two records in June, both somewhat unusual; three very recent Peregrine kills of this species were found early in the month on top of a building in Brighton and one was seen sitting on a Henfield roof on the 17<sup>th</sup>. There were no July records.

The first birds back on wintering grounds were 18 at Rye Hbr on 6 Aug and autumn movements were marked by several sightings in unusual places. There were 50 at Cuckmere Haven on 29 Aug and, on 1 Sep, a flock of 70 flew south over Seaford and out to sea before turning east. Twenty-two called in at Weir Wood Res on 7 Aug and there were up to two at Arlington Res at the end of September. Single overflying birds were seen in October at Crowlink and Cissbury Ring, two were noted at Beachy Head and nine at Brighton Wild Park.

In the second winter period the species was seen in some 55 localities. Significant counts, additional to the WeBS counts, included 1000 roosting on the airfield on Thorney Island on 15 Nov, 3000 there on the 20<sup>th</sup> (the only count this year to exceed the 1% national threshold level of 2,500) and, at Pagham Hbr, 800 on 21 Nov, 800 on 2 Dec and 960 on 24 Dec. The highest numbers at other sites were all in late December when there were 35 at Pevensey Levels on the 20<sup>th</sup>, the same number at Henfield the following day, 60 at Rodmell Brooks on the 25<sup>th</sup>, 50 at The Burgh on the 28<sup>th</sup> and 145 at Rye Hbr on the 28<sup>th</sup>. [CJRB]





*European Golden Plover, Arlington Reservoir, October 2009 (Les Bird)*

## Grey Plover

*Pluvialis squatarola*

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

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>	1330	2000	1151	189	67	63	40	536	472	1191	1287	963
<b>Chichester Hbr</b>	648	1336	867	144	24	20	40	253	129	821	875	396
<b>Pagham Hbr</b>	640	644	278	45	43	43	-	283	341	370	412	511

The county totals were generally low this year and those for the months of January, March, November and December were the lowest recorded during the past ten years. Unusually, no monthly total exceeded 2000 and, with the exception of February, they were significantly lower than the averages for the six principal months (October to March) over the past five years, as shown below:

	Jan	Feb	Mar		Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>5-yr average</b>	2038	2039	1788		1648	1877	2007

No counts in the first two months of the year exceeded those from the WeBS, although numbers at both Chichester and Pagham Hbrs exceeded, as usual, the national 1% threshold of 530 in several months. Only small numbers were found away from the western harbours. The highest counts were 23 on the Lower Adur on 3 Jan, 40 at Ferring on the 10<sup>th</sup> and 46 at Rye Hbr on 12 Feb. Only small numbers were logged at seawatching sites from March onwards, as shown below.



		Mar	Apr	May	Total	Hrs watched
Splash Point	E	5	-	3	8	204
	W	-	-	-	-	
Selsey Bill	E	48	9	36	93	446
	W	-	-	11	11	
Worthing Beach	E	-	6	1	7	148
	W	-	-	-	-	

During May the species was noted at some ten localities, mostly in the west. There were four double figure non-WeBS counts during the month of which the highest was 36 in Pagham Hbr on the 10<sup>th</sup>. In June, the number of localities reduced to six and the highest count, additional to the WeBS counts, was 40 at North Stakes Island on the 12<sup>th</sup>. Although the last bird at the winter roost at Pilsey Island was recorded on the 8<sup>th</sup> there were still 20 at Church Norton on the 23<sup>rd</sup>. Up to three remained at Rye Hbr through May into June, the last one being noted on 19 Jun.

The first returning bird at Pilsey was noted on 7 Jul. During the second winter period the species was noted at some 34 localities, mostly in the west. High counts additional to the WeBS counts included a monthly maximum of 250 at Pilsey Island on 17 Nov and 500 at Pagham Hbr on 2 Dec. The maxima found outside Pagham and Chichester Harbours were 80 at Kingston Gorse on 18 Dec and 80 at Worthing Beach on the 31<sup>st</sup>. The flock at Rye Hbr peaked at 29 on 5 Dec. The only inland record was of two at Pulborough Brooks on 15 May. [CJRB]

## Northern Lapwing

## *Vanellus vanellus*

*Scarce resident and very common winter visitor. Red listed species of high conservation concern.*

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

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>County total</b>	9618	7874	419	225	241	555	718	1522	929	4126	8383	4541
<b>Chichester Hbr</b>	485	1597	23	18	18	73	85	100	386	588	1524	1283
<b>Pagham Hbr</b>	1642	2775	60	22	17	28	2	177	166	415	655	156
<b>Arun Valley</b>	2587	1145	115	71	75	64	72	125	52	355	817	352
<b>Lower Adur Estuary</b>	488	650	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	109	nc	nc	138
<b>Weir Wood Res</b>	40	-	-	-	-	14	47	-	75	77	51	1
<b>Pevensey Levels</b>	746	279	74	49	89	15	nc	12	1	3	18	994
<b>Rye Bay</b>	2119	1015	64	63	40	361	512	998	117	2499	4280	755

Records for the first winter period included 23 counts (ten of which were from Pagham Hbr) of 1000 birds or more. Of these, the highest were 3400 at Pagham Hbr on 20 Jan (but only 1500 there on 17 Feb), 1153 at Widney Brooks (Arun Valley) on 19 Jan, 1112 at Pulborough Brooks on 16 Feb and 1000 at Rye Hbr from 15 Jan until 17 Feb.

Breeding was confirmed at a minimum of 39 sites (which included 24 with fledglings) and was probable at a further 79 sites across the county. In the first winter period, 20 birds were seen at Selsey Broad Rife on 17 Apr, 17 at Northlands (Warnham) on 22 Feb, 15 at Southeast on 23 Mar, 18 at Pevensey Levels on 20 Apr and 12 at Brede Levels on 29 Mar. Distraction displays were seen with 17 birds at Sharpthorne on 5 Mar and 21 at Pevensey levels on 1 June. At Bracklesham

Bay, six pairs fledged six young, and there were 15 pairs at Selsey Broad Rife. At Pulborough Brooks a breeding survey counted 17 pairs but the monthly maxima were 26 birds on 15 May and 70 on 18 June. There were 16 pairs at the Norfolk Estate on 1 Jun and six pairs raised six young at Lewes Brooks.

The first returning birds were noted on 14 Jun when some 265 were counted at Rye Hbr. Thereafter, numbers built up at this favoured site through 500 on the 27<sup>th</sup> to a peak 1200 on 6 Aug. At Pulborough Brooks, another favoured site, numbers built up more slowly from 33 on 6 Jul through 125 on the 25<sup>th</sup> to 250 on 14 Aug while at Scotney Court GP 440 had arrived by the 23<sup>rd</sup>. It was not, however, until late autumn that numbers in general began to build up.

In the second winter period the species was seen at some 155 localities and there were 40 records of 500 or more and 16 of a thousand or more. The first count of 500 was made at Pagham Hbr on 10 Oct but that month's largest gathering was 1000 at Scotney Court GP on the 13<sup>th</sup>. The highest count in this period was 2200 at Pagham Hbr on 21 Nov. Other high totals included 1250 at East Guldeford and 1200 at Rye Hbr LNR on the 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1000 at both Partridge Green on 27 Dec and Rockhouse Bank (Pevensey) on the 29<sup>th</sup>. [WEC]

## Red Knot

## *Calidris canutus*

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

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

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>County total</b>	972	1753	692	234	-	1	5	8	49	28	783	1016
<b>Chichester Hbr</b>	561	881	398	208	-	1	5	6	12	28	417	620
<b>Pagham Hbr</b>	187	692	260	24	-	-	-	-	36	-	366	395
<b>Rye Bay</b>	223	180	34	2	-	-	-	2	1	-	-	-

A total of 277 records was received, all from coastal locations and for every month of the year. Good numbers were recorded during the first winter period with notable numbers, additional to the WeBS counts, of 905 at Pagham Hbr on 8 Jan, 600 at Pilsley Sands on the 14<sup>th</sup> and 500 at Rye Hbr on 12 Feb. The first records of passage were 5W past Selsey Bill on 8 Mar and 5E there on the 20<sup>th</sup>, but spring passage was poor by comparison with recent years, as is illustrated by the monthly totals for eastwards passage from the principal seawatching sites, as follows:

	Mar	Apr	May	Total
<b>Total</b>	6	61	65	132
<b>Selsey Bill</b>	6	54	2	62
<b>Worthing Beach</b>	-	-	4	4
<b>Telscombe Cliffs</b>	-	-	59	59
<b>Splash Point</b>	-	7	-	7

Birds already in summer plumage were seen in Pagham Hbr on 25 Apr and at Pilsley Sands on 15 May and, during the summer months, a few birds were noted at various sites in the west of the county. The first returning birds were singletons recorded at Church Norton on 23 Jun and Pilsley Island on the 25<sup>th</sup> but few were seen until 29 Aug when there were 40 at Pagham Hbr. However, it was late September before numbers really began to increase, heralded by a count of 50 at East

Head (West Wittering) on the 23<sup>rd</sup> followed by 102 at Pilsley Sands on 7 Oct. During the second winter period the species was seen at some 17 localities (principally in the west) and the highest counts were 400 at Pilsley Island on 14 Nov and 600 there on 5 Dec and at least 550 at Pagham Hbr on the 13th. [WEC]



*Red Knot, Cuckmere, September 2009 (Peter Wilson)*

## Sanderling

*Calidris alba*

*Fairly common winter visitor and passage migrant.*

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

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>County total</b>	409	140	115	217	20	-	7	15	-	23	144	48
<b>Chichester Hbr</b>	12	136	61	154	20	-	7	14	-	22	28	46
<b>Climping</b>	211	nc	-	39	nc	nc	-	nc	-	nc	nc	-
<b>Rye Bay</b>	170	-	50	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	113	1

In the first winter period the most notable counts were of 211 at Climping Gap on 18 Jan, 260 at Elmer (Middleton) on 2 Feb and 240 at Rye Hbr on the 12<sup>th</sup>.

Offshore movements were first recorded at Selsey Bill in late February (1W on 28<sup>th</sup>) and early March (3E on the 1<sup>st</sup>) but these were probably only local movements. Migration proper appeared to commence with 4W at Selsey Bill on 28 Mar followed by 1E on both the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> followed by a steady but unremarkable flow through the month. The approximate monthly totals for eastwards passage at the principal seawatching sites were as follows:

	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Total
<b>Total</b>	5	190	282*	12	489*
<b>Selsey Bill</b>	3	159	163	-	325
<b>Worthing Beach</b>	-	26	173	12	211
<b>Splash Point</b>	2	5	26	-	33

\*computed on the assumption that the highest number seen at any site on any day was the minimum that day.

Peak movement was recorded at both Selsey Bill and Worthing Beach on 13 May when 66E and 139E were logged respectively while, on the same day, 168 were recorded at Pilsey Sands. In addition, birds were occasionally seen flying westwards; the monthly totals for May were 29W at Selsey Bill and 12W at Worthing Beach. The last spring record at Pilsey Sands was of six birds on 22 Jun.

Only two weeks later, on 7 Jul, the first two returning birds were logged at Pilsey Sands where, during the summer months the maximum counts were 140 on 27 Jul, 200 on 15 Aug and 120 on 29 Sep. In October, the monthly maximum here (and in the county) was 329 on the 30<sup>th</sup>. The only inland record was of a singleton seen at Pulborough Brooks from 23-25 Aug.

In the second winter period the species was seen at some 24 localities, mainly in the west. Counts in excess of 100 included 130 on Climping Beach on 17 Nov, 113 at Rye Hbr on 22 Nov, 127 at Camber Shore on 6 Dec and 103 at Kingston Gorse from 11 to 18 Dec. [WEC]

## Little Stint

## *Calidris minuta*

*Scarce passage migrant. A few winter in most years.*

The approximate minimum monthly totals were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>County total</b>	3	2	1	2	7	-	2	17	1	2	2	1
<b>5-yr average</b>	3	2	3	1	1	1	1	9	23	13	2	3
<b>10-yr average</b>	6	5	6	3	3	1	2	13	38	17	6	5

Once again, numbers were low. While they were comparable with the 5-year average in most months, except September and October, they were much poorer than the 10-year average, as the above table demonstrates. The only month where the total was anything like respectable was August. These numbers demonstrate how even Arctic breeders, like this species, appear to be declining, which is a shame for such a lovely little bird.

The wintering individual from 2008 was noted at Fishbourne Channel on dates between 6 Jan and 12 Mar. Another singleton was noted at Pulborough Brooks from 15 Jan to 20 Jan where there were further sightings of either this or, more probably, another individual from 11 Apr to 9 May. Two were recorded at Pagham Hbr from 13 May to 26 May. Most records during the summer months were of ones or twos but eight were seen at Weir Wood Res on 24 Aug.

After August's flush of migrants, numbers in the second winter period were of singletons at only four sites with most records coming from Pulborough Brooks. One was at Arlington Res on 25 Oct and 9 Nov and another was at Pulborough Brooks on 11 Oct and again (or another) from the 26<sup>th</sup> until 17 Nov. At Fishbourne Channel, what may have been the first winter bird returning, arrived on 5 Dec and was still there in early 2010. [WEC]

**Temminck's Stint***Calidris temminckii**Scarce passage migrant.*

One was seen briefly at Church Norton on 26 May (BFF, DIS) while another was photographed at Pett Level Pools on 25 Aug (OL, RL, NR). The former was on a fairly typical date but perhaps not location, being seen in a Dunlin flock along the edge of Tern Island. Twenty-seven have been recorded in the county since the beginning of 2000 of which 19 arrived in May and two in each of July, August and September. [RJF]

**Pectoral Sandpiper***Calidris melanotos**Rare vagrant, mainly in autumn.*

One was present at Pagham Hbr from 21-22 Apr (TJE, BFF, DIS *et al.*) while another was seen at Pulborough Brooks on 13 Oct (MDS). The Pagham individual frequented the Breech Pool at the North Wall and is the earliest county record by over two weeks, surpassing one at Pett Pools on 7 May 2004, and only the fifth ever in spring. Pulborough is currently the best location in the county for this species, although they are rarely seen well here! It has hosted birds in each of the last three years, and six in total this decade. Eighteen have been recorded this decade while the county total moves on to 75. Records have now been in April, May (four), July (seven), August (seven), September (40), October (15) and early November. [RJF]

**Curlew Sandpiper***Calidris ferruginea**Passage migrant, scarce in autumn and very scarce in spring; rare in winter.*

There were two records of spring passage birds with singletons at The Midrips on 19 Apr and at Bracklesham Bay on 11 May.

There were no summering birds but the first four returning migrants were seen at East Head (West Wittering), Exceat Bridge (Cuckmere Valley), Scotney Court GP on 31 Jul and the Midrips on 31 Jul and 1 Aug. One bird was at Rye Hbr on 8 Aug and, inland, one was at Pulborough Brooks on the 13<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup>. All other records from 26 Aug to 1 Oct were from the Sidlesham Ferry Pool/Pagham Hbr/Church Norton area and were probably all juveniles. There were two at Sidlesham Ferry Pool on 26 Aug, and probably a different two at Church Norton from the 29<sup>th</sup> and possibly a different two on the mudflats at the western side of the harbour on the 30<sup>th</sup>. There was then a single bird reported from Church Norton on 3 Sep followed by a report of four (the highest count of the autumn) at the North Wall (Pagham Hbr) from the 4<sup>th</sup> where numbers fluctuated until the last reports of four on the 24<sup>th</sup> and two on the 15<sup>th</sup>. At the Ferry Pool, one was noted on the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> and two on the 16<sup>th</sup>. The final record of the year was of two on the mid-harbour mudflats on 1 Oct. [AHP]

**Purple Sandpiper***Calidris maritima*

*Scarce winter visitor and passage migrant, very rare in summer. 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>	18	17	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	12	1
<b>Pagham Hbr</b>	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
<b>Lower Adur Estuary</b>	2	3	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	-	nc	nc	-
<b>Newhaven</b>	14	12	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	12	-
<b>Glyne Gap</b>	2	2	-	nc	nc	nc	nc	-	-	-	-	-

However, the above counts do not provide a complete picture of the presence of this species. The highest monthly counts at all sites where the species was recorded were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>Total</b>	39	31	39	8	2	-	-	1	6	-	30	29
<b>Selsey Bill</b>	3	1	1	1	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	-
<b>Pagham Hbr/Church Norton</b>	1	-	2	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
<b>Shoreham Hbr/Lower Adur</b>	8	9	8	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	5	3
<b>Brighton Marina</b>	10	5	15	4	-	-	-	-	-	-	12	16
<b>Newhaven</b>	15	12	12	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	13	9
<b>Glyne Gap</b>	2	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Hastings</b>	-	2	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Pett Level</b>	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	1	4	-	-	-

During the first part of the year, birds were present from 2008 at Pagham and Shoreham Harbours and Brighton Marina. The highest counts at each site were as shown above. The last sighting of the spring was of two at Pett Level on 3 May, slightly earlier than the 10-year average of 14 May.

The first returning bird was seen at Pett Level on 26 Aug, nearly five weeks later than the 10-year average date (21 Jul), followed by four in that area on 3 Sep and two at Selsey Bill on the 6<sup>th</sup>. These birds seem to have passed through the county because the next sighting was not until 2 Nov when two were noted at Brighton Marina which were joined by ten more by the 5<sup>th</sup>. The first sighting at Newhaven was of seven on the 11<sup>th</sup> and at Shoreham Hbr, five on the 13<sup>th</sup>. Numbers then built up at the three main sites but fluctuated somewhat through the second winter period. Peak counts at the three main sites were five at Shoreham Hbr on 17 Nov, 13 at Newhaven on the 24<sup>th</sup> and, at Brighton Marina, 16 on 17 Dec. [AHP]

**Dunlin***Calidris alpina*

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

The monthly WeBS counts for the principal sites were as shown in the table below. Numbers recorded in the WeBS counts in each of the three months of the first winter period were, on average, one third lower than those of last year. All of the most notable counts in this period came



from the Chichester Hbr complex. At Pilsey Sands there were 2000 on 13 Jan and 6000 on 14 Feb. The peak count at Pagham Hbr was 1104 on 15 Feb. In the east of the county the largest counts came from Rye Hbr with 450 on 29 Jan and 400 on 11 Feb. Elsewhere during this period there were 233 at Pett Level Pools on 18 Jan, 350 at a roost at Worthing Beach on the 20<sup>th</sup> and 171 in the lower Adur Valley on the 29<sup>th</sup>.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>County total</b>	7816	14262	5004	234	80	34	69	1153	358	6189	10249	11840
<b>Chichester Hbr</b>	6510	12955	4876	152	13	1	45	834	174	5775	9852	10665
<b>Pagham Hbr</b>	560	1104	119	57	38	33	10	193	155	401	387	1011
<b>Rye Bay</b>	534	201	3	23	28	-	-	125	20	7	-	139

Easterly passage in spring was very poor as shown by the monthly totals from the principal seawatching sites, which were as follows:

	Apr	May
<b>Total</b>	64	125
<b>Selsey Bill</b>	14	85
<b>Worthing Beach</b>	27	27
<b>Splash Point (Seaford)</b>	23	13



*Dunlin, Cuckmere, September 2009 (Peter Wilson)*

Although no significant movements were noted during the autumn period, numbers in August were higher than those for last year, with peak counts of 650 at Pilsey Sands on the 21<sup>st</sup> and 193 at Pagham Hbr on the 23<sup>rd</sup>. In the second winter period numbers were again one third lower than

those for last year. Once more the highest counts were from the Chichester Hbr area, particularly at Pilsey Sands, where 8000 were recorded on both 15<sup>th</sup> Nov and 17<sup>th</sup> Dec, but also at East Head (West Wittering) where 3610 were counted on the 5<sup>th</sup>. The peak count at Pagham Hbr was 1011 on 20 Dec.

Small numbers were recorded at various inland sites throughout the year but these were generally of no more than four birds, although higher counts were recorded with nine at Pulborough Brooks on 1 Mar, seven at Arlington Res on 13 Aug and eleven at the same site on 9 Sep. [DHH]

## Buff-breasted Sandpiper

## *Tryngites subruficollis*

*Very rare vagrant.*

A juvenile was seen and videoed at Scotney Court GP on 21 Sep (KGH, JMH *et al.*). It is the eleventh county record and the first since 2006 when one was at Rye in October. Totals for the four decades from the 1970s have been three, one, one and three with three old records (1955 or earlier). All records have been in autumn, the dated ones between 21 August and 14 October. Six have been in the Rye/Camber/Scotney area, four on the Selsey peninsular and one old record from the 'coast'. [RJF]

## Ruff

## *Philomachus pugnax*

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

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

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>County total</b>	26	17	3	1	-	-	-	2	-	1	5	9
<b>Chichester Hbr</b>	2	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Arun Valley</b>	2	2	3	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	1
<b>Rye Bay</b>	22	15	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	5	8

Although not always present on the day of the monthly WeBS counts, birds were recorded in all months of the year except June. Peak counts in the first winter period included 22 at Rye Hbr on 18 Jan with 15 remaining until 22 Feb. This flock was extremely mobile resulting in 15-18 at Pett Level Pools, Winchelsea Beach and East Guldeford Levels on various dates in January and February. Two at Pulborough Brooks on 19 Jan remained in the area until 16 Mar with a singleton still present on the 29<sup>th</sup>.

Spring records included two in fields to the west of Selsey on 13 and 14 Apr and four at Pagham Hbr on the 25<sup>th</sup>. The last spring record was of a singleton at Bracklesham Bay on 15 May.

The first returning bird was a singleton at Pulborough Brooks on 2 Jul with 15 at Rye Hbr the following day. Rye Hbr continued to provide the peak counts in the second winter period with a maximum of 16 on 20 Dec. [DHH]

**Jack Snipe***Lymnocyptes minimus*

*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>	7	9	5	-	-	-	-	-	-	5	2	12
<b>Chichester Hbr</b>	1	7	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	1	10
<b>Henfield Brooks</b>	5	2	2	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	-	-	1	-
<b>Bewl Water</b>	1	-	-	nc	nc	nc	nc	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Rye Bay</b>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	2

The minimum monthly totals were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr		Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>No of birds</b>	17	14	13	1		1	9	19	19
<b>No of sites</b>	10	7	8	1		1	7	5	5

In the first winter period, the low numbers at Thorney Island continued from 2008 with a maximum of only five on 13 Feb. However, above average numbers were found elsewhere with a maximum count of five at Henfield Levels on 18 Jan, three at Ferring Rife on 10<sup>th</sup> and the same number at Arundel WWT on 4 Mar. One or two were also regularly found at sites in Chichester Hbr, Pagham Hbr, Lewes Brooks, Pett Level and Rye Hbr. The last record was one at Church Norton on 12 Apr.

The first returning bird was seen at Pett Level on 17 Sep. Numbers at Thorney Island were at more usual levels in the second winter period with 12 on 12 Nov and 10 on 4 Dec. Elsewhere, the maximum count at Pulborough Brooks was four on 13 Nov, there were three at Waltham Brooks on 20 Dec, and one or two were regularly seen in Chichester Hbr, Arundel WWT, Pett Level and Rye Hbr. [CJRB]

**Common Snipe***Gallinago gallinago*

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

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

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>County total</b>	334	566	308	16	2	1	-	40	132	228	258	836
<b>Chichester Hbr</b>	18	135	47	4	-	-	-	-	15	20	5	145
<b>Arun Valley</b>	117	136	122	4	2	-	-	33	85	119	100	315
<b>Lower Adur Estuary</b>	30	155	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	-	nc	nc	8
<b>Henfield Brooks</b>	16	29	29	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	-	-	15	50
<b>Weir Wood Res</b>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	1	1	39	2
<b>Pevensy Levels</b>	4	4	2	5	nc	nc	nc	nc	12	10	12	114
<b>Rye Bay</b>	64	64	20	2	-	-	-	5	8	19	1	32

No other counts exceeded the WeBS counts during January to March but there were some good numbers at other sites. Once again, there were consistently high counts at Lewes Brooks, with 118 on 2 Jan and 115 on 4 Feb and, at Pagham Hbr, 110 on 14 Feb. Within Chichester Hbr, Thorney Island held most of the birds, with a maximum of 96 on 13 Feb, and there were 38 at the Ouse Estuary Project on 21 Jan and 37 in the Brede Valley on 22 Feb. Atlas fieldwork revealed pockets of birds in other areas too, with 22 at Creep Wood (Battle) and 18 at Broad Oak.

The breeding population remained at the very low point it has been at for the past ten years. Surveys by the RSPB in May found six displaying birds at Amberley Wild Brooks and one at Pulborough Brooks but there was no further proof of breeding. A pair was at Northiam on 2 May, and single birds seen at Pagham Hbr, Ashdown Forest, Guestling and Rye Hbr during the month were not considered to be breeding. In June, only three birds were recorded in the entire county. During the BBS only one bird was recorded in the 135 1-km squares surveyed.

During the second winter period this species was seen in some 91 localities. Hard weather produced some high counts in late December, bringing the county total for the month to the highest for 15 years. During the month, the largest counts during the WeBS were 165 at Amberley Wild Brooks, 129 at Pulborough Brooks and 80 at both Thorney Island and Lewes Brooks while, in addition to the WeBS counts, there were 128 at Snowhill Marsh (West Wittering) and 60 at Beeding Brooks. [CJRB]

## Woodcock

## *Scolopax rusticola*

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

From January to March, a minimum of 119 birds was reported from 66 locations spread widely throughout the county. Even allowing for a total of approximately 34 birds at 28 sites recorded during Atlas fieldwork, this was a high total for the second year running. The highest count was 15 at Ticehurst on 24 Jan and there were seven at Pannel Woods on 2 Feb, six at Flimwell on 3 Jan and five at Newhaven on 28 Feb, with a further 19 sightings of between two and four.

Although only three birds were recorded in April, at least 59 territorial birds were found in May and June, significantly more than the 41-44 of recent years. The Wealden Heaths Breeding Survey found six pairs on commons in the west, and there were 38 roding males in Ashdown Forest and 15 at other widely scattered sites.

Eleven birds were noted in July but only three in August, one in September, and four in October (which were all from the coast and included one trapped at Beachy Head). During the second winter period the species was seen in some 39 localities involving some 78 birds with a highest count of five at a downland site near Brighton on 11 Dec. There was a noticeable influx in the middle of December in response to the onset of cold weather, when there were seven in the Brighton area, four at Pulborough Brooks, Warnham and Pett Level, three at Thorney Island and, finally, four at Four Oaks (Beckley) on the 27th. [CJRB]

**Black-tailed Godwit***Limosa limosa*

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

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

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>County total</b>	879	1217	392	466	67	28	24	162	652	539	937	225
<b>Chichester Hbr</b>	613	149	310	372	54	6	22	54	603	486	301	-
<b>Pagham Hbr</b>	102	951	62	83	13	18	-	62	38	49	462	183
<b>Arun Valley</b>	162	117	20	-	-	4	1	9	-	-	174	42
<b>Pulborough Brooks</b>	132	117	20	-	-	-	1	9	-	-	104	-

The national 1% threshold of 150 was exceeded at Chichester Hbr in six months (seven in 2008), three months at Pagham Hbr (four in 2008) and two months at the Arun Valley (one in 2008). The international threshold of 470 was surpassed in three months at Chichester Hbr but only in one month at Pagham Hbr, a situation which is the reverse of last year. In the first winter period notable counts in addition to the WeBS data were two records of over a thousand birds at Pagham in February. In the east there were few sightings in this period, with only singletons reported in January.

In March, numbers did not exceed eight in at Pett Level and Rye Hbr and the largest totals from this period were 407 birds at Fishbourne Channel on the 10th, with flocks as large as 60 being regularly seen at Pulborough Brooks and Pagham Hbr. Numbers in the east of the county were limited generally to single figures, the exception being when 15 birds were seen at Rye Hbr on 15 Apr. The only spring passage reported was of a bird flying east at Selsey Bill on 13 May.

There was a reported monthly maximum of 102 first summer birds at Thorney Deepes for May, which reduced slightly to 90 birds for June. Peak counts for this period from the east of the county were 29 birds at Pett Level on 23 Aug. Also notable during the summer were regular sightings of up to six birds at Weir Wood Res during July and August. Another interesting sighting was on 4 Aug when a flock of c.100 birds flew south over Pulborough Brooks.

On 4 Aug a flock of c.100 birds flew south over Pulborough Brooks indicating autumn passage, and numbers gradually increased during this period. During the second winter period, the species was seen at some 31 localities; maximum counts were 1100 at Honer Fm (Pagham Hbr) on 30 Nov and 800 at Church Norton on 12 Dec. High numbers were reported from Amberley Wild Brooks in December, with 345 seen on the 1st. Flocks of up to 150 were also seen at Pulborough Brooks during this time. Counts in the Arun Valley were the highest inland Sussex counts of this species ever, the number climbing for the fourth winter in a row. Numbers in the east for this period were limited to sightings of single birds. [MJB]

**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 sites for this species were as shown in the table below. The first report of birds in significant numbers was 300 at Pilsey Sands on 10 Jan, which increased during February to 500. The monthly maximum of 800 birds in January at Pilsey Sands

was the only record in the first winter period in excess of the national 1% threshold level of 620. On 14 Feb two birds in summer plumage were recorded at Pilsey Island. There were few sightings in the east of the county, with just one single figure record from Pett Level at the end of March, and further single figures recorded at Rye Hbr and Beachy Head in mid-April.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>County total</b>	356	802	90	76	10	7	1	100	186	287	68	481
<b>Chichester Hbr</b>	356	802	90	58	7	7	1	100	184	278	63	480
<b>Pagham Hbr</b>	-	-	-	18	1	-	-	-	1	6	5	-

Counts from the main seawatching sites during spring migration were as follows:

		Apr	May	Total	Peak movement		Hrs watched peak days
<b>Selsey Bill</b>	E	104	65	169	31	23 Apr	9½
	W	-	1	1			
<b>Worthing Beach</b>	E	149	44	196	47	24 Apr	8
	W	-	3	3			
<b>Telscombe Cliffs</b>	E	1	3	4	-	-	-
	W	1	-	1			
<b>Splash Point</b>	E	926	119	1045	514	23 Apr	14
	W	-	-	-			

An interesting record was on 17 May when four birds were seen flying north east with a flock of Canada Geese at Arlington Res. In June, small numbers not exceeding eight birds were reported at traditional sites, with slightly larger numbers in July but without any marked arrival of migrants. The largest summer count was 33 birds at Pilsey Island on 7 Aug. The only report of birds flying west in the autumn period was of two at Worthing Beach on 15 Sep. The largest record for this period was a monthly maximum for October of 400 birds at Pilsey Sands. The winter period saw relatively small numbers of birds reported and in many cases sightings were of individual birds such as that seen at Climping Gap on 11 Nov feeding with Curlews in a field. Again, the highest count was from Pilsey Island, where the monthly maximum for November was 500 birds. Sightings of this species continued to be predominantly from the west of the county, the only exception being a singleton at Glyne Gap (Bexhill) on 18 Dec, and four birds at Cuckmere Haven on 19 Dec. [MJB]

## Whimbrel

## *Numenius phaeopus*

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

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

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>County total</b>	4	4	4	51	24	14	136	24	14	20	3	4
<b>Chichester Hbr</b>	4	3	3	10	9	14	132	17	12	7	3	4
<b>Pagham Hbr</b>	-	-	1	21	9	-	2	4	1	4	-	-
<b>Newhaven</b>	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	9	-	-
<b>Cuckmere Haven</b>	-	-	-	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	1	-	nc	nc
<b>Rye Bay</b>	-	1	-	25	5	-	1	3	-	-	-	-





*Whimbrel, Shoreham, August 2009 (Dave Sadler)*

The overwintering bird from 2008 remained in Pagham Hbr throughout January and February and three were regularly seen in Chichester Hbr. The only sighting anywhere else in the first winter period was of one at Rye Hbr on 22 Feb. Counts at the principal seawatching sites were as follows:

		Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Total	Peak movement		Hrs watched peak days
Selsey Bill	E	155	76	-	-	-	231	19	3 May	7¼
	W	44	14	-	21	-	79			
Worthing Beach	E	165	55	-	-	-	220	44	24 Apr	8
	W	23	8	1	7	3	42			
Brighton Marina	E	539	6	-	-	-	545	-	-	-
	W	-	-	-	-	-	-			
Telscombe Cliffs	E	64	-	1	-	-	65	17	18 Apr	1
	W	-	-	-	-	-	-			
Splash Point	E	251	47	-	-	-	298	83	23 Apr	14
	W	-	-	-	-	-	-			
Beachy Head	E	59	1	-	-	1	61	34	24 Apr	-
	W	-	-	-	-	-	-			
Hastings	E	22	-	-	-	-	22	12	19 Apr	1½
	W	-	-	-	-	-	-			

One overhead at Pett Level on 17 Mar was the first probable migrant. Migration was light, however, with a minimum total of 642 passing offshore as shown below. A very high proportion

of these were observed from Brighton Marina, though no daily records were available. Most of the movement took place between 16 and 30 April, and the nocturnal roost at Rye Hbr peaked at only 100 on the 28<sup>th</sup>. There were several reports of birds passing over downland in the Brighton area at this time, including eight over Woodingdean on 24 April, and there were five at Pulborough Brooks the same day, with one there between 6 and 11 May.

During June, only ones and twos were seen until an influx at the end of the month brought up to 11 to Chichester Hbr and up to seven to Pagham Hbr. In July, there was one at Pett Level from the 8<sup>th</sup> to the 27<sup>th</sup>, a maximum count at Pilsey of 33 on the 24<sup>th</sup> and 85 at mid-Hayling on the same day. Maximum counts in August were 18 at Pilsey Island on the 5<sup>th</sup>, 20 at Pagham Hbr on the 9<sup>th</sup> and one at Weir Wood Res on the 8<sup>th</sup>.

For the remainder of the year there were only single-figure counts. During October, there were up to three at Newhaven from the 7<sup>th</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup>, rising to nine on the 11<sup>th</sup>; single birds were seen at Pulborough Brooks on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and Shoreham on the 31<sup>st</sup>. In November and December there were up to three in Chichester Hbr until the end of the year and at Pagham Hbr up to four until 21 Nov but none were reported thereafter. [CJRB]

## Eurasian Curlew

## *Numenius arquata*

*Common passage migrant and winter visitor; formerly a very scarce breeder. 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>	1909	1985	1986	508	111	857	1770	1411	1580	1535	1077	1485
<b>Chichester Hbr</b>	1413	1324	1213	412	68	806	1461	863	1264	1262	714	1002
<b>Pagham Hbr</b>	236	487	633	94	41	43	279	433	268	151	167	348
<b>Rye Bay</b>	191	132	124	2	-	8	30	115	8	84	175	106

Unusually and for the second year running, no counts exceeded the national 1% threshold of 1500. However, most of the maximum counts at Rye Hbr (at dawn and dusk) were considerably more than the WeBS totals for Rye Bay (usually at midday) and, to give a better picture, were as follows:

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
483	420	110	2	13	54	126	235	322	280	386	500

As usual, very few birds were seen outside the areas around Chichester and Pagham Harbours and Rye Bay throughout the year. In the first winter period, the regular flock at Newhaven Tide Mills held a maximum of 58 on 24 Jan, and the maximum at Scotney Court GP was 21 on 13 Mar. Single birds turned up at the Lower Adur, Lewes Brooks and Pevensey Levels and also, further inland, at Pulborough Brooks and Salehurst. An albino or leucistic bird was noted in Pagham Hbr between 1 Mar and 7 Apr.

Only small numbers were logged at the principal seawatching points in the early part of the year, but there was a sizeable passage at Splash Point (Seaford) in March including 26E on the 18<sup>th</sup>. Return passage was even lighter and mainly observed at Worthing Beach, with a maximum of 10 on 21 Jun. Counts at the principal seawatching sites were as follows:

		Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Selsey Bill	E	-	-	2	13	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	W	-	-	1	-	-	4	-	-	-	2	-	-
Worthing Beach	E	2	-	-	6	2	2	2	-	1	2	-	2
	W	-	-	-	-	4	18	34	-	1	3	2	1
Telscombe Cliffs	E	1	-	-	5	4	-	-	-	-	-	3	-
	W	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Splash Point	E	3	4	47	7	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	W	7	1	7	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

In April, single birds on one date only were seen inland at Singleton and Arlington Res and in June at Pulborough Brooks and Ashdown Forest (a former breeding site). During the BBS only two birds were recorded in two of the 135 1-km squares surveyed.

Significant counts additional to the above WeBS and Rye Bay tables included, in August, a monthly maximum count at Thorney Deeps of 500 on the 9th and, in September, 430 there on the 21<sup>st</sup> and a monthly maximum of 300 at nearby Pilsey Island on the 20<sup>th</sup>. In October, the monthly maxima at these latter sites were 400 at Thorney Deeps on the 6<sup>th</sup> and 100 at Pilsey Island on the 4<sup>th</sup>. Elsewhere, four flew over Pulborough Brooks on the 12 Sep and 40 on the 24<sup>th</sup> at Cuckmere Haven was the maximum there for the year. During the autumn migration, the highest individual site count within Chichester Hbr was 650 at Mid-Hayling, on 24 Jul with 597 at West Chidham on 19 Sep being the highest count within Sussex. During the second winter period the species was seen at some 63 localities but the only counts which exceeded the WeBS counts were those for Rye Hbr tabulated above. The small flock at Newhaven peaked at 54 on 27 Oct, and there were three wandering birds at Southease on 15 Dec. [CJRB]

## Common Sandpiper

## *Actitis hypoleucos*

*Fairly common passage migrant; a few regularly winter; has bred at least once.*

The monthly WeBS counts at principal sites were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>County total</b>	1	1	-	2	6	-	48	66	11	4	3	4
Chichester Hbr	-	1	-	-	-	-	7	2	1	-	-	-
Pagham Hbr	-	-	-	-	1	-	1	3	1	-	-	-
Arun South of Arundel	-	-	-	2	-	-	5	1	1	-	2	1
Ardingly Res	-	-	-	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	-	1	-
Newhaven	1	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	-	-	-	-
Lewes Brooks	-	-	-	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	3	-	-	-
Ouse Levels	-	-	-	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	3	-	-	-
Bowl Water	-	-	-	nc	nc	nc	nc	12	3	1	-	-
Rye Bay	-	-	-	-	1	-	25	30	2	2	-	1

The approximate minimum monthly totals at 1-km sites were as follows:

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
20	4	4	29	63	13	126	173	55	8	9	12

During the first winter period, up to nine birds were seen on the R Adur north of the A27 with a singleton on 1 Jan, two on the 3<sup>rd</sup>, six on the 16<sup>th</sup> and an exceptional nine on the 26<sup>th</sup>. Singletons were present at the Ouse-Glynde Confluence on 6 Jan, at Newhaven Hbr on the 18<sup>th</sup>, at Bewl Water on the 10<sup>th</sup>, on the shore between Bexhill and Hastings and also at Covehurst Bay (Hastings) on the 3<sup>rd</sup>. Two birds were seen at Ford (Arun Valley) on 21 Jan and at Lewes Brooks on the 18<sup>th</sup> and also on 24 Feb. Also in February, there were two at Rye Hbr on the 28<sup>th</sup> and again on 21 Mar during which month there were singletons at Chichester GPs on the 19<sup>th</sup> and at Pagham Hbr on the 21<sup>st</sup>.

During the spring birds were seen at some 17 sites in April, 32 in May and eight in June. These were mainly ones or twos except for seven remaining on the R Adur at Coombes (Shoreham) on 26 Apr, four at Pulborough Brooks on 13 May, four at Southwater CP 11 May, 4 E past Splash Point (Seaford) and 11 at Weir Wood Res, both on the 13<sup>th</sup>.

Numbers increased significantly in July as failed breeders or early returning migrants arrived. Double figure counts included ten at East Guldeford Level on the 12 Jul (but 21 on 23 Aug), 14 at Rye Hbr also on the 12 Jul (and on 6 Aug), 11 at Weir Wood Res on the 21 Jul (but 17 on 7 Aug), 12 at Bewl Water on 23 Aug and 12 more at Church Norton on the 25<sup>th</sup>.

Numbers decreased significantly in September. Highest counts were fives at Sefter Fm (Rose Green) on the 4<sup>th</sup>, Arlington Res and Bewl Water on the 6<sup>th</sup> and eight on the Lower Adur on the 29<sup>th</sup>. In October, the highest count was two at Union Canal (East Guldeford) on the 18<sup>th</sup>. In the second winter period, the highest counts were fours at Pagham Hbr on 12 Nov and at Coombes on 22 Dec. [WEC]

## Green Sandpiper

## *Tringa ochropus*

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

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

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>County total</b>	7	8	2	-	1	7	11	58	12	6	3	6
<b>Chichester Hbr</b>	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	3	-	1	-	-
<b>Pagham Hbr</b>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	8	-	-	-	1
<b>Chichester GP</b>	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	-	-	-	1
<b>Arun Valley</b>	-	-	-	-	-	3	4	19	3	-	-	-
<b>Weir Wood Res</b>	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	6	-	-	2	-
<b>Barcombe Res</b>	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	1
<b>Glynde Brooks</b>	1	2	-	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	-	nc
<b>Arlington Res</b>	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	-	1	-	-
<b>Eastbourne Lakes</b>	-	-	-	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	1	-	-	-
<b>Pevensy Levels</b>	4	2	1	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-
<b>Bewl Water</b>	-	-	-	nc	nc	nc	nc	2	1	1	-	-
<b>Darwell Res</b>	1	1	1	-	-	-	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc
<b>Powdermill Res</b>	-	-	-	-	nc	nc	nc	nc	4	2	-	-
<b>Rye Bay</b>	1	1	-	-	-	3	4	13	2	1	1	3

The approximate minimum monthly totals were as follows, showing an increase in excess of 21% for June, July and August, and over 13% for the year when compared with the 10-year average.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>10-yr average</b>	20	15	16	25	5	22	76	116	56	21	18	18
<b>No. of birds</b>	23	22	17	19	6	34	84	142	52	27	14	24

The majority of sightings in the first half of the year were of single birds, although three were seen at Down Level (Pevensey) on 18 Jan and at Brede Levels on 11 Feb. Numbers started to increase in June: there were four at Pett Level on 13<sup>th</sup>, the first returning bird was recorded at Thorney Deeps on the 24<sup>th</sup> and three were at Pulborough Brooks on the 30<sup>th</sup>. There was an influx on 2 Jul: eight were noted at Pulborough Brooks, where numbers remained high to the 30<sup>th</sup> when eight were counted again; five were seen at Pett Level, where numbers rose to 11 by the 30<sup>th</sup>. At Rye Hbr, numbers rose through the month to a peak of eight at Castle Water on the 23<sup>rd</sup>.

August was, as usual, the best month for the species: maximum counts were 26 at Pulborough Brooks on 7<sup>th</sup>, 13 at Pett Level on the 14<sup>th</sup>, 12 at Weir Wood Res on the 4<sup>th</sup> and nine at Rye Hbr on the 23<sup>rd</sup>. Numbers tailed off at the end of the month but eight at Weir Wood Res on the 30<sup>th</sup> were still there on 2–3 Sep, and were the peak count for that month. Thereafter, the majority of sightings reverted to ones or twos. During the second winter period the species was seen at some 28 localities with a maximum count of three at Pett Level on 20 Dec and Pulborough Brooks on the 28<sup>th</sup>. [NJR]

## 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>	4	3	6	-	-	2	-	2	3	4	1	4
<b>Chichester Hbr</b>	3	3	5	-	-	1	-	-	2	2	1	4
<b>Pagham Hbr</b>	1	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	1	2	-	-

The approximate minimum monthly totals were as follows:

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
13	8	7	2	0	5	0	22	13	6	6	10

In the first winter period, the majority of the wintering birds were in the Chichester and Pagham Harbour areas; numbers were very similar to last year, with up to eight at the former and four at the latter site, a slight increase on last year. Elsewhere, single birds were seen at Rye Hbr on 19 Jan and the Midrips on 19 Feb.

The presence of wintering birds always makes the start of spring passage difficult to ascertain, though with only two birds reported during the whole of April (at Pagham Hbr on the 5<sup>th</sup> and Rye Hbr on the 14<sup>th</sup>) it was not very evident. The Pagham bird may have been one of the wintering birds (as at least one was seen there through most of March) but the Rye Hbr bird was very likely a true migrant, possibly the only one of the spring, as there were none reported in May! This is

the poorest spring showing for several years and compares with 12 records in April the previous year, though there were none seen in May last year either.

Again assuming June records relate to returning birds (which seems reasonable considering the lack of April and May records), the first returning bird was seen at Pulborough Brooks on 15 Jun. There were four others seen during the last week of June, at Sidlesham Ferry, Thorney Deeps, Pett Level and Weir Wood Res, but none in July. Numbers in August were considerably better with at least 22 birds seen, mostly at the usual coastal locations but inland, up to three juvenile birds were seen at Waltham Brooks on 20 Aug and, presumably the same, at Pulborough Brooks on the 21<sup>st</sup>, and a single bird at Weir Wood Res on the 24<sup>th</sup>. In September there were more records than last year with a minimum of 13 seen, including the autumn's highest count of four at Pagham Hbr on the 24<sup>th</sup>; again most were on the coast but one was inland at Bewl Water on the 1<sup>st</sup>.

Numbers dropped off after the end of September, with totals of six in October and November, and ten in December, being about average for the second winter period. As usual, most were at the regular winter haunts in Chichester and Pagham Harbours, with up to three birds at Thorney Deeps, West Wittering and Pagham Hbr during this time. Away from these sites just a single bird was seen, at Pett level on 28 Dec. [JC]

## 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>	20	19	23	20	4	2	23	125	98	43	22	19
<b>Chichester Hbr</b>	20	19	23	19	-	1	19	84	88	42	22	19
<b>Pagham Hbr</b>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	4	7	-	-	-
<b>Rye Bay</b>	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	15	1	1	-	-

During the first winter period most records were from Chichester Hbr. The greatest concentrations were at Thorney Island, with a peak of 18 on 13 Mar, but smaller numbers were seen elsewhere in Chichester Hbr, including five at West Chidham on 10 Jan. Away from Chichester Hbr, two were seen at the Midrips on 21 Feb and a single bird was at Pagham Hbr on 7 Feb.

Wintering birds lingered at the usual sites in Chichester Hbr into April making it difficult to determine exactly when spring passage started there. The first migrants away from Chichester Hbr were a single bird at Rye Hbr on 12 Apr, and three there five days later. Birds were recorded widely along the coast throughout April and May, with the highest count being 11 at Thorney Deeps on 6 May. Inland, birds were seen regularly at Pulborough Brooks, with the highest count there of four on 22 May, and there were ones and twos at scattered locations elsewhere. Very few were recorded at the seawatching sites; a singleton passed east at Splash Point (Seaford) on 24 Apr and there were 3 E past Selsey Bill on 2 Jun. The last spring bird was a single at Rye Hbr on 8 Jun. A single bird was also seen at this locality on 14 and 22 Jun, but it is not known whether this was the bird of the 8<sup>th</sup> lingering or the first returning bird.

The first definite returning birds were singles at Pulborough Brooks and Pett Level on 24 Jun. Numbers at Pulborough Brooks built through the remainder of the month to reach an autumn peak of eight there on 1 Jul. Numbers at Thorney Deeps also built typically, reaching 19 on 22 Jul, 64 on 5 Aug and a highest count of 81 on 19 Aug, before dropping to 70 on 18 Sep. The autumn peak of 81 is similar to the high count of 76 made last year, but is still lower than in recent years.



Elsewhere, double figures were recorded at Pagham Hbr (20 on 22 Aug), Weir Wood Res (15 on 24 Aug and 11 on 8 Sep), Amberley Wild Brooks (ten on 24 Aug), Snowhill Marsh (12 on 19 Sep) and Fishbourne Channel (12 on 29 Sep). Small numbers were seen along much of the coast and at scattered locations inland. This represented a greater passage than last year (when the only double figure count away from Chichester Hbr was 11 at Pagham Hbr in late August) and is representative of a good autumn passage for this wader.

During the second winter period, numbers at Thorney Deepes decreased from 36 on 15 Oct to 31 on 4 Nov, 22 on 20 Nov and 14 by mid-December. Away from Thorney Deepes, wintering birds were recorded at various other sites in Chichester Hbr (including five at Fishbourne Channel and four at Snowhill Marsh), but the only bird reported away from Chichester Hbr was a single bird seen on two dates in November at nearby Pagham Hbr. [JC]

## Wood Sandpiper

## *Tringa glareola*

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

The minimum monthly totals were as follows:

May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct
1	2	5	34	1	1

Sightings in May were confined to Rye Hbr where a bird was seen at Harbour Fm on the 13<sup>th</sup> and, presumably the same one, at Nook Meadows Pits on the 14<sup>th</sup> and Ternery Pool the next day. In late June, single birds were seen at Pulborough Brooks on the 28<sup>th</sup> and Breech Pool (Pagham Hbr) the same day. Observers at Weir Wood Res recorded one on 3 Jul and four juveniles there for the first two weeks of August, with a maximum of six birds on the 15<sup>th</sup>. Regular sightings in August were also recorded at Pulborough Brooks, with a maximum of eight on 14<sup>th</sup> but numbers were low throughout the month at Rye Hbr, with a maximum of two recorded. Five were recorded at Barcombe Res on 23 Aug and two returned to Drayton Pit (Chichester) on 28 Aug. In September, one was seen at Pulborough Brooks between the 13<sup>th</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup>. The last record for the year was a singleton at Weir Wood Res on 1 Oct. [NJR]

## Common Redshank

## *Tringa totanus*

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

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

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>County total</b>	1369	2006	1481	474	63	278	932	1172	2519	2445	1636	1955
<b>Chichester Hbr</b>	1076	1609	1092	345	24	215	736	975	2026	2028	1451	1550
<b>Pagham Hbr</b>	97	181	191	67	6	36	40	163	259	267	52	271
<b>Lower Adur Estuary</b>	90	65	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	63	nc	nc	9
<b>Rye Bay</b>	58	90	139	24	16	18	149	31	167	137	91	64

As usual, the highest numbers by far were in Chichester Hbr, where the national 1% threshold number of 1200 was exceeded during five of the autumn and winter months, reconfirming the importance of the area as a wintering site for this species.

In the first winter period, significant counts not included in the WeBS table included 90 on the Lower Adur on 29 Jan, 551 at Thorney Deeps on 11 Feb, 165 at Pagham Hbr on 15 Feb and 109 on East Guldeford Levels on 15 Mar. At Newhaven Tide Mills, the highest count was just 27 on 11 Jan, little more than half the number recorded there in most winters. At Pulborough Brooks the highest count was 12 on 23 Mar.

Spring passage was not particularly noticeable and was generally indicated by the departure of wintering birds. An indication of the timing of this was seen at Thorney Deeps, where numbers decreased from 458 on 15 Mar to 231 on 8 Apr and just 22 by 16 May. Birds were seen at widely spread inland locations during the spring, with the highest number being 11 at Amberley Wild Brooks on 20 Apr.

Breeding, or attempted breeding, was recorded at a minimum of twelve sites, which is nearly double the minimum number of sites last year and the best showing for several years. This raises the exciting possibility that it is slowly re-colonising former haunts. At Rye Hbr, there were a total of 19 pairs (six on the Beach Reserve, 11 at Harbour Fm and two at Castle Water); this is similar to the 18 pairs breeding last year, but productivity was low. In the Arun Valley, at least three young were raised by five pairs at Pulborough Brooks, there were at least two pairs at Amberley Wild Brooks and three pairs at Widney Brooks (Greatham), though breeding success at those sites is not known. At Bracklesham Bay and Lewes Brooks there were six and five pairs respectively, though only one pair was successful at each location. Elsewhere, there were three pairs at Pagham Hbr, two pairs at Horse Eye Level (Pevensey) and single pairs at Pilsey Island, Southease and Cuckmere Haven.

The first non-breeding birds started returning in late June with 153 at Thorney Deeps by the 24<sup>th</sup>. Numbers at this site built to 400 by 7 Jul, 524 by 22 Jul and an autumn/ late winter peak of 670 on 18 Sep. Though high, this is considerably less than the high count of 1000 recorded there last August. Other notable autumn/ late winter counts (excluding the WeBS counts above) included 160 in the eastern Rother Estuary on 20 Sep, 50 at Piddinghoe on 5 Nov, 53 at Newhaven Tide Mills on 15 Nov, 41 at Newhaven on 22 Nov and 44 at the Ouse Estuary Project on 20 Dec. During the second winter period, the species was seen at some 70 localities with the highest counts at Thorney Deeps where the monthly maxima were 600 on 4 Nov and 516 on 4 Dec. [JC]

## Turnstone

## *Arenaria interpres*

*Fairly common winter visitor and passage migrant, scarce in summer. 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>	871	945	597	224	39	57	16	285	329	248	308	379
<b>Chichester Hbr</b>	321	277	226	156	8	41	16	39	108	97	94	108
<b>Pagham Hbr</b>	349	420	107	40	8	16	-	227	38	127	176	154
<b>Climping</b>	98	nc	92	10	nc	nc	-	nc	56	nc	nc	42
<b>Arun South of Arundel</b>	-	-	80	16	-	-	-	-	-	-	4	-
<b>Lower Adur Estuary</b>	27	45	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	30	nc	nc	5
<b>Glyne Gap</b>	27	133	42	nc	nc	nc	nc	3	83	-	13	60
<b>Rye Bay</b>	17	62	48	2	23	-	-	16	14	24	21	10

Notable three-figure counts in the first winter period additional to the WeBS table above were 300 at Church Norton on 28 Jan, 120 at Climping on 15 Jan, 200 at Shoreham Beach on 25 Jan and 160 along the shore between Bexhill and Hastings on 3 Jan. At Worthing Beach 161 E in three flocks were noted on 28 Feb and, on 25 Mar, there were 60 at Pagham Lagoon.

Monthly totals recorded at two of the principal seawatching sites were as follows:

		Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Selsey Bill	E	-	3	4	50	18	-	-	-	-	-	12	-
	W	11	7	6	58	6	-	-	1	-	-	44	-
	o/b	18	7	12	16	1	-	10	43	-	-	14	2
Worthing Beach	E	-	161	-	-	20	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	W	-	-	-	-	3	-	7	-	-	-	-	-
	o/b	-	-	-	19	13	-	-	28	-	2	5	3

In April, the highest counts were 74 at Pett Level Pools on the 10<sup>th</sup> and 56 at Rye Hbr on the 11<sup>th</sup> while, as demonstrated above, migration was in full swing as WeBS counts dropped and seawatching counts rose. Counts during the summer months, when non-breeding birds were present at a number of favoured sites principally in the western harbours, were generally low until migrants or non-breeders returned in late July when the peak count was 87 at Elmer (Middleton) on the 28<sup>th</sup>. Numbers gradually increased through August: 100 were counted at Church Norton on the 5<sup>th</sup>, 40 were on the beach at Selsey Bill on the 13<sup>th</sup> and, in a field at Goring Gap, 42 roosted on the 31<sup>st</sup>, increased to 65 on 4 Sep and still totalled 45 on the 22<sup>nd</sup>.

In the autumn, counts additional to those in the WeBS table were 65 at Goring Gap on 4 Sep and 50 at East Head (West Witering) on the 23<sup>rd</sup> while, in October, the monthly maximum at Pilsey Sands was 54 on the 7<sup>th</sup>. During the second winter period the species was seen at some 48 coastal localities with peak counts of 160 on the beach at Climping on 5 Nov, 60 at both Church Norton on the 2 Dec and Glynne Gap (Bexhill) on the 18<sup>th</sup>. However, total numbers were generally lower than in previous years: for November they were 308 (2009), 679 (2008) and 556 (2007); for December they were 379 (2009), 577 (2008) and 866 (2007). [WEC]

## Grey Phalarope

## *Phalaropus fulicarius*

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

At the start of the year a first-winter was seen on the sea off Church Norton spit on 14 Jan (PNP et al.). In November one was present, usually quite distantly, at Weir Wood Res from 22-24<sup>th</sup> (MO) while on 28<sup>th</sup>, during a westerly gale, first-winters were seen at Pagham Hbr (MCC, RJF) and on Amberley Wild Brooks (TH et al.), the latter remaining to 6 Dec. The Amberley individual was often very approachable feeding in flooded fields beside the main track. Its prolonged stay, to a weekend, was greatly appreciated and it was seen, and photographed, by many. The November Pagham bird flew into the mouth of the harbour where it settled for a few minutes before continuing on its way. These four take the total since the start of 2000 to 39, with arrival dates in January (three), August (21<sup>st</sup>, 2008), September (10), October (four), November (15) and December (six). Decade totals from 1960s to 1990s are a rather erratic 72, 31, 84 and 25 respectively. [RJF]

**Pomarine Skua***Stercorarius pomarinus*

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

There has not been a worse year for sightings of this species during the past 22 years. The year's total of 51 compares unfavourably with the 22-year average of 180 and the previous lowest count of 73 in 2003, as shown in the following table.

Year	88	89	90	91	92	93	94	95	96	97	98
Total	94	390	165	178	119	236	223	196	104	175	180

Year	99	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09
Total	117	175	194	73	138	240	186	137	98	369	51

For the seawatchers at Selsey Bill it must surely have been a very dispiriting spring passage. During April and May the Selsey log recorded only 18 eastward flying birds on only 17 of the 39 days between the first sighting on 18 Apr and the last on 26 May. This was despite logging no less than 265 hr of seawatching at an average of 6¾ hr/day between the first and last sightings.

The picture was much the same at Splash Point (Seaford) where the month's total was only 16 in 161 hr of seawatching during April and May, i.e. an average of one bird every 10 hr. Even longer periods of seawatching were recorded here: 14 hr on 23 Apr (four birds), 12½ hr on the 24<sup>th</sup> (three birds) and 14¾ hr on 10 May (two birds). The last spring bird was recorded here on 3 Jun.

The monthly totals for eastwards passage recorded at the major seawatching sites were as follows:

	Apr	May	Jun	Total
<i>Monthly minima</i>	21	29	1	51
Selsey Bill	12	6	-	18
Worthing	4	3	-	7
Brighton Marina	21	29	-	50
Telscombe Cliffs	2	1	-	3
Splash Point	10	6	1	17

In addition to the above, two birds were noted flying west at Selsey Bill on 17 May. The highest counts recorded were six at Brighton Marina on 24 Apr and 14 there on 13 May. The total of 29 for May assumes that the observer at Brighton Marina saw all the birds seen elsewhere but the lack of daily detail here makes comparison impossible with the other seawatching sites.

The only autumn record was of 1W past Widewater (Lancing) on 6 Oct. [JAH]

**Arctic Skua***Stercorarius parasiticus*

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

The total number of birds shown in the following two tables was computed on the assumption that the highest number recorded at any coastal site on any day was the minimum in the county that day and that birds seen on subsequent days were different. Only those birds for which a flight direction was recorded were included.



The first returning migrant (1W) was noted at Selsey Bill on 12 Jul, followed by another on the 14<sup>th</sup> and then three more singletons on the 26<sup>th</sup>, 27<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup>. There was the usual dribble of birds westwards during the following months to 22 Oct, with the occasional loafers offshore or flying up-channel. The only records in the last two months of the year were both from Worthing Beach: 1W on 12 Nov and a juvenile flying east on 6 Dec, the final record for the year. [JAH]

## Great Skua

## *Stercorarius skua*

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

After the record totals of the two previous years, numbers this year were the lowest since 1999, as shown below.

	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
<b>Annual total</b>	97	157	227	147	211	192	185	135	229	295	132

The minimum monthly totals of passage birds are shown below, ignoring birds lingering offshore and those with no direction recorded.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>Monthly total</b>	2	-	1	81	14	2	3	-	2	13	9	1
<b>No. of days</b>	1	-	1	21	9	2	3	-	1	9	3	1

The first record of the year was of one offshore at Church Norton on 2 Jan. Later, two flew east past Splash Point (Seaford) on the 25<sup>th</sup> but no more were seen until one was logged moving west at Selsey Bill on 27 Mar. One which wandered inland to Exceat Bridge on the R Cuckmere on 2 Apr was an unusual start to spring passage and numbers then gradually built up through the month to a peak on the 23<sup>rd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup>. In May most records were of single birds. The April and May records included frequent reports of birds lingering off Selsey Bill (maximum three on 19 Apr) and Worthing Beach (maximum four on 16 and 17 May) but not elsewhere.

Monthly totals at the principal seawatching points were as follows:

		Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Sep	Oct	Nov	Peak movement		Hrs watched peak days
<b>Selsey Bill</b>	E	-	64	8	-	-	-	-	-	13 E	24 Apr	12¾
	W	1	-	1	-	3	-	2	1			
<b>Worthing Beach</b>	E	-	24	-	-	-	-	3	6	11 E	24 Apr	8
	W	-	3	2	2	-	-	4	2			
<b>Telscombe Cliffs</b>	E	-	3	1	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-
	W	-	-	-	-	-	-	4	-			
<b>Splash Point</b>	E	-	48	2	-	-	2	2	-	11 E	23 Apr	14
	W	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-			

In June and July only five birds (all singletons) were recorded, all moving west. There were no records for August and only two for September, but sightings picked up in October and November, with about equal numbers of birds moving east and west, and including one approachable exhausted bird on the beach at Brighton Marina on 24 Nov. The final record of the year, and the only one in December, was 1E at Selsey Bill on the 13<sup>th</sup>. [CJRB]



**Kittiwake***Rissa tridactyla*

*Common but localised breeding species: common winter visitor and passage migrant. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern.*

Although birds were recorded along the coast in every month of the year most records were, as usual, of coastal movements. However, the close proximity of the breeding sites in the east of the county to some of the seawatching sites, particularly Splash Point (Seaford), makes the collating of movements very difficult. Monthly totals from the principal seawatching locations were as follows:

		Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Selsey Bill	E	12	-	6	27	148	1	1	-	2	-	1	-
	W	181	3	-	25	130	6	4	21	4	78	306	4
Worthing Beach	E	32	32	-	11	17	-	-	-	-	13	-	3
	W	214	8	19	5	7	-	-	-	-	6	51	13
Telscombe Cliffs	E	34	105	20	-	73	-	208	-	-	8	-	-
	W	19	16	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Splash Point	E	136	77	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-
	W	2	11	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	3	-	-

In the first winter period, there was a high count of 137 on 3 Jan off Bexhill and Hastings; the observer commented that this was due to the presence of the fishing fleet fairly close inshore. Other high counts in January included 100 feeding offshore at the Marine Gardens (Worthing) on the 15<sup>th</sup> and 118E past Hastings in one hour on the 25<sup>th</sup>. At Telscombe Cliffs, 53E were logged in 2 hr on 13 Feb and 20E in ½ hr on 27 Mar.

During the spring and summer, large numbers were recorded at Splash Point; 400 on 14 Apr and the 23<sup>rd</sup>, 300 on 13 Jul and 100 on 8 Aug. Other notable counts included 75 at Brighton Marina on 13 May, 90 during an Atlas survey at Newhaven Cliffs on 23 Jun and, in September, 178 off Glyne Gap (Bexhill) on the 18<sup>th</sup>.

Breeding was reported from the Newhaven-Seaford colonies. Counts in the area included 300 on 3 Apr, 400 on the 14<sup>th</sup> and 300 again on 13 Jul, with fledged young evident. A survey on 7 Jul recorded at least 50 nests and, on the 13<sup>th</sup>, 300 recently fledged or downy young. Three birds were reported sitting on nests at Pett Level on 21 Mar and one pair was actively courting, but no further details are available.

During the second winter period, 142 were recorded on a WeBS count at Glyne Gap on 11 Oct. Observers at Selsey Bill counted 284W in 7 ½ hr during a SSW 9 gale with showers on 29 Nov. In December, 30 were spotted offshore of Worthing on the 23<sup>rd</sup>. [LAW]

**Black-headed Gull***Chroicocephalus ridibundus*

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

The maximum monthly counts at the most regular roost sites are shown in the table below. In addition to these, there were 13 four-figure counts in January and February, the highest of these being 3500 at Pagham Hbr on 22 Jan, 1710 at East Chidham on the 10<sup>th</sup> and 1200 at Small Dole on the 30<sup>th</sup>. There were 21 counts of over 500, the most notable being 920 at Climping Gap on 18

Jan, 600 at Henfield Levels on the 1 Feb, 650 at Barcombe Res on the 15<sup>th</sup>, and 520 at Newhaven on the 22<sup>nd</sup>. Numbers increased in the second half of March as birds relocated to breeding grounds, with 1529 at Pett Level on the 25<sup>th</sup> and 1400 at Southwick Beach on the 11<sup>th</sup>.

	Jan	Feb	Mar		Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>Bewl Water</b>	35,340	5840	6480		203	17,870	36,400
<b>Glyne Gap</b>	1000	1500	4500		600	340	3500
<b>Weir Wood Res</b>	2000	70	59		33	205	1400

Passage recorded at the principal seawatching sites is tabulated below. The total at Selsey Bill for September included a movement of 5000W on the 27<sup>th</sup> in only three hours.

		Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Peak counts (spring)
<b>Selsey Bill</b>	<b>E</b>	282	16	-	-	-	-	101 on 13 Apr
	<b>W</b>	1	29	-	-	5	5007	
<b>Worthing Beach</b>	<b>E</b>	172	24	2	-	-	-	76 on 16 Apr
	<b>W</b>	16	19	16	23	-	-	
<b>Brighton Marina</b>	<b>E</b>	1901	-	-	-	-	-	350 on 13 Apr
	<b>W</b>	-	-	-	-	-	-	

From April to June, nearly all counts were in single figures, apart from on the breeding grounds, but there were 300 at Pilsey Island on 3 Jun, and maxima of 200 at Thorney Island on 9 Apr and 100 in Pagham Hbr on the 26<sup>th</sup>.

Breeding was confirmed at six sites. At least 1516 nests were recorded but nests were not counted at all sites. At Rye Hbr there were 1246 nests at Ternery Pool and 155 on the Flat Beach; at New Lake (Chichester GP) 98 nests were counted and in Chichester Hbr there were 14 on S Stakes and two on North Stakes Islands. At Pett Level there were 125 birds present on 11 Jun and 35 young were ringed. At Arundel WWT 10 birds were present on 10 Jun suggesting possible breeding there. A single pair also nested at Sidlesham Ferry Field.

Numbers began to pick up in late July, with 1500 at Climping on the 28<sup>th</sup>, 1500 at Rye Hbr on 6 Aug and 2000 at Pagham Hbr on the 26<sup>th</sup>. Numbers declined in September, with maxima of 800 at both Fishbourne and West Wittering on the 19<sup>th</sup>. A leucistic bird was at Fishbourne on 23 Jul.

During the autumn and second winter period the species was seen at some 246 localities. The roost counts shown above were the only 4- or 5-figure counts during the period and there were only seven of over 500. At Warnham LNR, 400 on 19 Oct rose to 500 on 5 Nov and 800 on 7 Dec. The next highest counts were 667 at Southwater CP on 21 Dec, 630 at Henfield Levels on 25 Nov, 577 at East Chidham on 5 Dec and 500 on Bognor GC on the 8<sup>th</sup>. [CJRB]

## Little Gull

## *Hydrocoloeus minutus*

*Fairly common passage migrant, most numerous in spring. Scarce in summer and winter. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern. Schedule 1 species.*

The total for the year of approximately 489 was not much more than half the 10-year average of 924 and, excluding the exceptionally low year of 2006 (when only 286), was the lowest total since 1998 (when 430). The minimum monthly totals were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>Monthly total</b>	10	4	4	370	39	3	5	3	1	16	24	10
<b>No. of days</b>	7	3	8	18	3	3	1	1	1	6	7	5

The first sighting was of one on 1 Jan at Cuckmere Haven (and presumably a different bird in the area on 25<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup>) followed by 1W past Selsey Bill and a singleton at Glyne Gap (Bexhill) on the 18<sup>th</sup> and one at Newhaven on the 25<sup>th</sup>. Other reports of single birds involved 1E past Worthing Beach on the 28<sup>th</sup> and Climping, Shoreham (1E) and Brighton Marina on the 29<sup>th</sup> and another at Shoreham on the 31<sup>st</sup>, all possibly the same bird. In February, possibly different birds were seen offshore on the 4<sup>th</sup> at Worthing Beach, Shoreham (1E) and Brighton (1W) and 2E were seen at Splash Point (Seaford). In March, there was one at Pett on 6<sup>th</sup> and at Pagham Hbr the next day, and an adult which arrived at Ivy Lake (Chichester GP) on the 24<sup>th</sup> remained until 4 Apr.

Passage was noted mostly in the east of the county; the peak day was 6 Apr, when 128 were recorded at Splash Point and 70 at Brighton Marina. In the west, the peak occurred on the 10<sup>th</sup>, when 86 were seen at Worthing Beach and 12 at Selsey Bill. The low total seen from the latter site was despite almost twice the number of hours watched as at Splash Point. Monthly totals at the principal seawatching sites were as follows:

		Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May		Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>Selsey Bill</b>	<b>E</b>	-	-	1	31	-		-	-	1	-
	<b>W</b>	1	-	-	-	-		-	-	-	1
<b>Worthing Beach</b>	<b>E</b>	-	-	-	90	-		-	-	1	2
	<b>W</b>	-	-	-	-	-		1	3	-	1
<b>Brighton Marina</b>	<b>E</b>	-	-	-	289	36		-	6	-	-
	<b>W</b>	-	-	-	-	-		-	-	13	-
<b>Splash Point</b>	<b>E</b>	-	2	-	226	-		-	-	-	-
	<b>W</b>	-	-	-	-	-		-	-	-	-

A first winter bird first noted at Ivy Lake on 3 Apr was last recorded on the 23<sup>rd</sup>. On 4 Apr one was seen flying out to sea from the Lower Cuckmere Valley. In May, a total of 36 was counted at Brighton Marina on the 13<sup>th</sup> and two summer plumaged adults were seen in the Cuckmere Valley on the river north of Exceat Bridge on 27 May. The last two records for May were 1E past Shoreham on the 30<sup>th</sup> and 1E past Brighton Marina on the 31<sup>st</sup>. In June there were single birds at Pagham Hbr on the 1<sup>st</sup>, at the Midrips on the 3<sup>rd</sup> and at Rye Hbr on the 17<sup>th</sup>. The only record for July was of five at Pagham Spit on the 23<sup>rd</sup>, possibly early returning birds.

For the remainder of the year, offshore movements only were recorded, except for one at Bewl Water on 22 Nov. The largest number seen was 10 W past Brighton Marina on 29 Nov, with five roosting there at dusk the following day. The last birds of the year were four at Glyne Gap on 18 Dec. [CJRB]



Breeding was confirmed only at Rye Hbr, where at least 73 pairs bred, although the real total was estimated to be at least 90 and, therefore, exceeded the 75 recorded in 2006. Breeding success was considered good with, for example, 64 fledged young in view on 21 Jun. Approximately 22 pairs attempted to breed at Pett Level, but with no confirmation of success, and three adults at New Lake (Chichester GP) did not stay to breed.

The largest autumn counts came very early, with 312 at Funtington on 12 Jul (with 79 still there on the 27<sup>th</sup>) and 211 at Bracklesham Bay on 13 Aug; both these flocks comprised mostly adults. The highest autumn counts elsewhere were 123 at Pagham Lagoon on 21 Sep and 49 at Climping on 30 Aug. During the second winter period, the species was seen at some 29 localities. The highest count was 103 at Pagham Hbr on 28 Nov.

Away from the usual locations, mostly single birds were found in the Lancing, Shoreham and Southwick areas, on the Downs and at inland reservoirs but mainly during the winter. The most notable of these sightings were 28 at West Dean Woods on 6 Jun, three individuals at Warnham LNR in January and February, a total of eight during the year at Weir Wood Res (including three on Christmas Day), and four at Arundel WWT on 20 Mar. [CJRB]

## Common Gull

*Larus canus*

*Common winter visitor and passage migrant; small numbers summer; bred until 1963 and attempted to breed in 2006. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern.*

The highest numbers during the first winter period were found inland at Bewl Water, with 15,200 on 18 Jan rising to 28,550 on 25 Jan and 34,200 on 3 Mar. One thousand were observed at Amberley Mount on 24 Jan and 450 recorded in an Atlas search on 28 Feb. All remaining noteworthy records were at coastal locations. Four hundred were recorded on Pilsey Sands on 4 Jan, 4785 at East Chidham (Chichester Hbr) on 10 Jan, 500 at Ferring on 8 Jan, 550 in Goring Gap on 30 Jan and 500 at Steep Down (Lancing) on 4 Feb. In the Adur Estuary 1300 were seen on 14 Mar, 600 at Cuckoo Corner (Coombes) on 14 Mar, 2500 at Shoreham Sanctuary on 24 Feb, 3000 feeding in fields at Mill Hill (Shoreham) on 24 Feb and 1600 in a low tide roost at Southwick Beach on 25 Feb.

Indications of passage were slight, but as with previous years may suggest some easterly movement in spring and some westerly movement in autumn. Seawatching records from Selsey, Worthing, Telscombe and Splash Point (Seaford) were highest in spring and autumn and show 5 W and 40 E in March and 1 W and 113 E in April. During November 154W were recorded.

There were few records during the breeding season, though 21 were counted on Swanbourne Lake on 19 Apr and 40 on Pilsey Sands on 30 Jun. A pair was present at Rye Hbr throughout the summer, with an adult sitting on a nest for many days from 13th May, though the nesting attempt failed. A second pair was present for a few days, but did not nest.

Numbers began to rise again during the summer and autumn periods. At Thorney Island 100 were seen roosting on the airfield on 6 Aug, 310 were recorded at East Chidham on 19 Sep, 100 were following the plough at West Harting on 21 Aug and 37 were at Castle Meadows (Rye Hbr) on 6 Aug with 300 at Castle Water (Rye Hbr) on 19 Oct.

During the second winter period, the species was seen at some 123 localities. At Cuckoo Corner, 1150 were recorded on 21 Nov; at Bewl Water, 700 were on 17 Nov and 1500 on 6 Dec; at Pilsey Sands, 400 on 20 Dec and, at East Chidham, 430 on 5 Dec. [MVS]

**Lesser Black-backed Gull***Larus fuscus*

*Fairly common passage migrant and winter visitor; small numbers (mainly immature) summer and a few pairs breed. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern.*

During the first winter period, all the larger gatherings of this species were from coastal locations. Fifty were present at Shoreham-by-Sea on 2 Jan, 27 at Hove Lagoon on 23 Jan, 25 at Pagham Hbr on 8 Feb and 20 at Scotney Court GP on 22 Feb. The presence of 560 at Glyne Levels on 30 Mar may be an indication of spring movement, but little evidence was found in the seawatching records, 30 E during April being the maximum recorded from Selsey, Worthing, Telscombe and Splash Point (Seaford).

Coastal counts during the breeding season included six at Brooklands (Worthing) on 9 May, nine at Adur Toll Bridge on 10 Apr, 41 on Pevensey Levels on 10 May, 108 at Rye Hbr on 17 Jun and 25 at Scotney Court GP on 10 Apr. Inland, counts were smaller with the highest being five at West Harting on 4 May, four at Pulborough Brooks on 13 May, five at Warnham LNR, five at Weir Wood Res and four at Furners Green (Danehill).

Few records of breeding birds were received: a pair with young on a factory roof was noted on 30 Jun at Brooklands (Worthing); two pairs with young were recorded in Brighton on 23 Jun; a pair were nesting on a factory roof in Rustington on 30 May; 11 pairs nested at Rye Hbr. Fledged young were seen in Chichester Hbr on 23 Jul, West Worthing on 23 Jul, R Adur (Shoreham) on 11 Aug and Brighton Marina on 18 Jul.

Summer and autumn records included 14 on Ivy Lake (Chichester GP) on 21 Sep, 12 at Pagham Hbr on 4 Jul with 16 there on 16 Aug and 12 on 22 Sep, 15 at Petsalls Copse (Kirdford) on 15 Aug, 12 at Warnham LNR on 27 Jul, 50 at Glyne Gap (Bexhill) on 10 Oct and 40 on Scotney Court GP on 23 Aug with 95 there on 23 Aug.

During the second winter period, the species was seen at some 40 localities. The only significant records during this period were of 70 on Ivy Lake (Chichester GP) on 21 Dec, 189 on the R Adur at Shoreham on 21 Dec and 22 on Castle Meadows (Rye Hbr) on 22 Nov.

A second-year bird at Brighton Marina on 30 Sep was ringed with a colour ring from Belgium. A black-mantled adult showing characteristics of the Scandinavian race (*Larus fuscus graellsii*) was found at Colemans Hatch (Ashdown) on 26 Nov. A similar bird was seen at Weir Wood Res on 1 Sep. [MVS]

**Herring Gull***Larus argentatus*

*Common breeding resident, passage migrant and winter visitor. Red listed species of high conservation concern.*

During the first winter period, the highest counts were at Glyne Gap (Bexhill) with 11,000 on 3 Jan, 10,500 on 13 Feb and 11,500 on 24 Mar. Other coastal sites with large numbers were 230 offshore at Selsey Bill on 7 Jan, 500 in Pagham Hbr on 22 Jan, 542 at Goring Gap on 25 Jan, 450 on the R Adur at Shoreham on 2 Feb and 400 at Southwick on 15 Jan with 300 noted on Southwick Beach on 2 Feb. At Castle Meadows (Rye Hbr) there were 1100 on 13 Jan and 1000 at Scotney Court GP on 21 Feb. A count of 1680 was made along the Bexhill to Hastings shoreline on 3 Jan. The largest gathering inland was at Bewl Water with 2120 recorded there on 19 Jan, 1630 on 9 Feb and 3209 on 3 Mar. An additional 49 three figure counts were made during this period.



Breeding behaviour occurred from April to July and was confirmed along the whole coastal strip, from Sidlesham, Bognor Regis, Littlehampton, Rustington, Worthing, Lancing, Shoreham-by-sea, Portslade, Hove, Brighton, Telscombe Cliffs, Newhaven, Eastbourne, St Leonards, Hastings, and the Midrips. Thirty pairs nested at Rye Hbr. Away from the coast, occupied nests were noted at Steyning on 18 Jul, while nests with young were recorded at Caldbec Hill (Battle) on 4 Jul and downy young at Battle Abbey on 6 Aug. In the inland conurbations, occupied nests were observed at Manor Royal (Crawley) on 6 Apr, with a nest with young recorded there on 10 Jun, and nests with young were recorded at Horsham on 26 Jun and Haywards Heath on 29 Jun.

During the summer months, 900 were seen at Telscombe Cliffs on 16 Jul, 1000 at Five Lords Burgh (Denton) on 30 Aug, 900 at Barcombe Res on 28 Aug and 2800 at Glyne Gap on 25 Aug. Nine hundred were present on the R Adur (Shoreham) on 24 Oct.

During the second winter period, the species was seen at some 220 localities. The highest counts in November included 3800 at Glyne Gap on the 21<sup>st</sup> and, inland, 2347 at Bewl Water on the 25<sup>th</sup>. In December, 3000 were counted at Shoreham Hbr on 2 Dec and 6000 at Glyne Gap on 10 Dec while, inland, 2218 were present at Bewl Water on the 6<sup>th</sup> and 1100 at Warnham LNR on the 7<sup>th</sup>.

A leucistic individual was seen at Brighton Marina on 21 Jul. Single adults showing the characteristics of the (northern) Scandinavian Herring Gull (*L. a. argentatus*) were recorded at Rock-A-Nore (Hastings) on 7 Mar and Pett Level Pools on 12 Jan. [MVS]

## Yellow-legged Gull

*Larus michahellis*

*Fairly common but localised visitor; mainly in late summer and autumn.*

The table shows the highest counts for all recorded sites and minimum monthly totals and demonstrates the summer peak.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>Monthly total</b>	19	10	10	0	1	2	47	72	69	16	1	5
<b>Selsey Peninsular</b>	3	1	1	-	-	2	38	63	56	14	1	1
<b>Shoreham area</b>	-	1	6	-	-	-	-	1	1	1	-	2
<b>Glyne Gap</b>	12	7	-	-	-	-	-	8	9	-	-	-
<b>Other coastal sites</b>	3	1	2	-	-	-	7	-	-	-	-	2
<b>Inland sites</b>	1	-	1	-	1	-	2	-	3	1	-	-

Most records for the first winter period were from coastal localities with three in Pagham Hbr on 17 Jan, six at Shoreham-by-Sea on 9 Mar, five at Brighton Marina on 2 Feb and 12 at Glyne Gap on 18 Jan.

A 2<sup>nd</sup> calendar year bird was seen at Warnham LNR on 21 May and two adults at Pagham Hbr on the 27 and 28 Jun.

The usual summer influx to the Selsey Peninsula included counts of ten in Pagham Hbr on 14 Jul, 41 in fields west of Selsey on 11 Aug, and 12 at Bracklesham Bay, where 40 were seen on 8 Sep. Ten were recorded in Pagham Hbr on 24 Sep with 13 there on 10 Oct. Nine were in Glyne Gap (Bexhill) on 9 Oct. [MVS]



*Iceland Gull, Southwick, February 2009 (Dave Sadler)*

## **Iceland Gull**

*Larus glaucooides*

*Scarce passage migrant and winter visitor.*

An adult was seen at Splash Point (Seaford) on 24 Jan where it remained for about 20 minutes before departing (SD, MRE). A first-winter found at Hove Lagoon a few days later was much more obliging remaining in the area between there and Shoreham Power Station from 26 Jan-31 Mar (DN, IJW *et al.*) although it was mainly seen up to mid February. First-winters, considered to be different, were seen on the R Adur opposite Shoreham Airport at dusk on 29 Mar (MCC, RJF) and at Brighton Marina on 11 Apr (ADW, IJW, PJW *et al.*). Assuming that all records related to different individuals then the county total since the start of 2000 becomes 29. This compares favourably with decade totals from 1960s to 1990s of seven, two, 23 and 34 respectively. Occurrences since 2000 have fallen between 7 Nov and 20 May, a situation unchanged by these records. [RJF]

## **Glaucous Gull**

*Larus hyperboreus*

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

Two birds were recorded this year. The first, which was possibly the bird seen at this site in Mar 2008, was in Newhaven Hbr from 24–28 Jan (MFA *et al.*) before becoming entangled in fishing line and which subsequently is thought to have drowned. The second was an individual which was seen at East Head (West Wittering) on 15 Feb (CBC, RAI, DIS *et al.*). This was a fairly typical showing for recent years, there having been six or seven in 2008, two in 2007, none in 2006, three in 2005 and two in 2004. [CWM]



*Glaucous Gull, Newhaven West Beach, January 2009 (Les Bird)*

## Great Black-backed Gull

*Larus marinus*

*A common winter visitor and passage migrant; small numbers summer. Bred for the first time in 2000. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern.*

Throughout the year the species was counted regularly at Chichester, Pagham and Rye Harbours as well as at Selsey Bill. The maximum counts at these four sites were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>Chichester Hbr</b>	8	72	10	14	30	63	30	1	20	51	12	80
<b>Selsey Bill</b>	65	200	93	90	140	200	1	-	3	10	3	-
<b>Pagham Hbr</b>	400	70	50	100	100	71	100	100	136	296	60	300
<b>Rye Hbr</b>	115	1	19	44	18	60	15	1	198	160	280	1

In the first winter period, the highest numbers, additional to the above table, were 1000 recorded during WeBS counts at Glyne Gap (Bexhill) on both 9 Jan and 13 Feb. The mudflats at Pagham Hbr held 400 on 22 Jan and another 200 were present at Cuckmere Haven on the 15 Feb. Inland, birds were reported frequently at Warnham LNR, where the maximum was three on 11 Jan and 8 Feb, and at Pulborough Brooks, where three were seen on 16 Feb. At Weir Wood Res, observers saw one fly over on 9 Mar and birds were also seen up the Arun Valley with one at The Burgh on 14 Jan. In January, observers at Bewl Water recorded four birds on the 18<sup>th</sup>, eight on the 19<sup>th</sup>, two on the 25<sup>th</sup> and in February, three on the 9<sup>th</sup>.

During the first winter/spring period, monthly counts at two of the principal seawatching sites were as follows:

		Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May
Selsey Bill	E	22	200	-	26	-
	W	55	15	-	7	-
	o/s	110	336	221	207	170
Splash Point	E	124	52	2	5	5
	W	17	5	2	-	-
	o/s	23	3	3	10	1

In addition, counts of offshore birds at Selsey Bill included 140 on 9 May and 200 on 13 Jun. There was virtually no movement recorded in later months. In the spring, the highest count of the year was 1100 at Glyne Gap on 24 Mar.

Breeding was reported from the regular warehouse rooftop at Rye Wharf, but no details were received. The roof of Brent Wildlife Hospital (Chichester) had a nest with four young fledged on 31 Jul and what were presumably the same birds were seen at fields west of Selsey on 13 Aug with two of the juveniles seen begging for food from an adult. In Brighton, two pairs raised four young (25 Jul). Birds probably breeding included two pairs displaying on a roof in Newhaven Port, a pair in Hove, mating observed at Climping Gap and birds seen in suitable nesting habitat near Belle Tout (Beachy Head).

Inland records during the summer included three at North Stoke on 17 Jun, six there on 26 Jul, one at Weir Wood Res on 24 Jun, one over West Dean on the 25<sup>th</sup> and, at Southwater CP, a singleton on 6 Sep. During late summer/autumn numbers slowly built up such that, in September, there were 350 at Glyne Gap on the 10<sup>th</sup>, 100 at Pagham Hbr on the 13<sup>th</sup> and 200 at Cuckmere Haven on the 18<sup>th</sup>. These locations also featured in October when 850 were counted at Glyne Gap on 10 Oct, at Pagham Hbr the month's high count was 296 on the 14<sup>th</sup> and, at Cuckmere Haven, 300 were reported for the 25<sup>th</sup>. Forty-five roosting in fields at Climping Gap on 16 Oct were considered by the observer to be an unusual number there. In October a colour ringed bird from France was observed on the 6<sup>th</sup> at Ovingdean, while the Jersey ringed adult orange C, first reported in 1997, was recorded in a flock of 38 birds on 21 Nov near its usual haunt around the R Adur (Shoreham).

During the second winter period the species was seen at some 50 sites across the county, virtually all coastal. Although numbers did not match those of the first winter period there were, nevertheless, some significant counts. In November, there were 320 at Glyne Gap on the 21<sup>st</sup> and 300 at Cuckmere Haven on the 17<sup>th</sup> and, in December, 750 at Glyne Gap on the 10<sup>th</sup> and 300 at Pagham Hbr on the 20<sup>th</sup>. Most of the inland records for this period were from the larger water bodies: singles were seen sporadically at Weir Wood Res, Bewl Water and Warnham LNR where a maximum of five was recorded on 7 Dec. Other inland records included one over Owlbeech Woods (Horsham) on 29 Oct and one over Ladywells (Coombes) on 12 Dec. [LAW]

## Little Tern

## *Sternula albifrons*

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

The first birds arrived on 10 Apr when there were 2E at Selsey Bill, 1E at Worthing and 6E at Splash Point (Seaford); this date being the precise ten-year average arrival date. Thereafter birds were recorded on all except six days throughout the spring. Analysis of the daily counts from each of the seawatching locations suggests a minimum of 601 birds flew east during the spring

comprising 264 in April and 337 in May. After a good spring in 2008 the figures for 2009 are close to the average of 637 recorded for the springs 1985-2008. As usual this passage was mostly recorded at Selsey Bill as shown in the following table of totals of eastbound birds at the principal seawatching sites.

	Apr	May	Total	No. per hr watched	Peak movement.
<b>Selsey Bill</b>	260	337	597	1.6	128 E on 13 May (13¼ hr)
<b>Worthing Beach</b>	70	10	80	0.6	56 E on 24 Apr (8 hr)
<b>Brighton Marina</b>	121	101	222		88 E on 13 May
<b>Splash Point (Seaford)</b>	55	15	70	0.4	38 E on 24 Apr (12½ hr)

Despite regular watching from Telscombe Cliffs this species was not recorded during these months. Other notable counts not shown in the table were 114E at Selsey Bill (12¾ hr) and 83E at Brighton Marina on 24 Apr.

Typically most spring records were from the coast but there were regular counts of up to 35 birds in Pagham Hbr during April and May; the peak count of 35 at Pilsey Sands occurred on 10 May whilst at Rye Hbr the maximum count of just ten was on 21 May. More unusual, and the only record from an inland location, was one by the dam at Arlington Res during the afternoon on 23 Apr (via Birdguides).

Despite the use of decoys and sound recordings to tempt birds in there was again no breeding attempted at Rye Hbr. This was only the third year with no nesting at Rye Hbr since 1970. In the west higher numbers were recorded and the annual breeding survey in Pagham Hbr revealed 16 pairs nesting on the shingle with at least six birds fledging. On North Stakes Island (Chichester Hbr) there were six apparently occupied nests on 23 Jun with 10-12 chicks seen on 8 Jul. However, despite 75 birds being present at this location on 16 Jul, there were no chicks seen and the sad conclusion that none fledged in 2009 from Chichester Hbr was drawn.

Regular counts at Pilsey Sands during the summer revealed maxima of 80 on 27 Jul, 22 on 1 Aug and 18 on 8 Aug. Elsewhere very few birds were recorded in August and the only September, and therefore last, record was of one at Pilsey Sands on the 16<sup>th</sup>, 12 days earlier than the 10-year average departure date. [JAN]

## **Black Tern**

## *Chlidonias niger*

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

The approximate monthly totals were as follows:

Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep
5	78	2	2	16	6

The tables show this was a poor year for this species. The first were seen at three coastal sites on 24 Apr, eight days later than the 10-year average arrival date. The paucity of the coastal movements can be seen from the table below which shows that only on 13 May was there any significant numbers recorded and these were mostly seen from Brighton Marina.

On 13 May there were also birds at Weir Wood Res (one), Pett Level (three), Rye Hbr (five) and 16 at Scotney Court GP. Whether some of these birds included those seen passing Brighton is unclear. Between 5 Jul and 16 Sep one or two were recorded on 20 different dates. Chichester

GP was the most reliable site where birds were seen between 25 Aug and 9 Sep. At Weir Wood Res a juvenile was present between 26 and 29 Aug and two were recorded on both 6 and 16 Sep; this last date being 24 days earlier than the 10-year average departure date. [JAN]

	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Peak movement.
<b>Selsey Bill</b>	1	13	0	1	4	1	13 E on 13 May (13¼ hr)
<b>Worthing Beach</b>	0	0	0	0	1	0	1 W on 23 Aug (3¼ hr)
<b>Brighton Marina</b>	5	72					71 E on 13 May
<b>Telscombe Cliffs</b>	0	0	2	0	0	0	2 E on 7 Jun (1¼hr)
<b>Splash Point (Seaford)</b>	0	2	0	nc	nc	0	1 E on 13 (4¼ hr)

## Sandwich Tern

## *Sterna sandvicensis*

*Scarce breeding summer visitor and common passage migrant; rarely recorded in winter. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern.*

For the sixth successive winter birds were recorded in Chichester Hbr with singles at East Head on 27 Jan and 15 Feb. Additionally one flew west at Selsey Bill on 11 Feb. One flew over the tern island at Pagham Hbr before departing back out to sea on 4 Mar and seven were seen at Rye Hbr on 12 Mar. Thereafter the species was recorded daily throughout the spring. At Rye Hbr there were several double figure counts in mid-March but numbers increased towards the end of the month with high counts of 185 on the 23<sup>rd</sup>, 280 on the 24<sup>th</sup>, 300 on the 26<sup>th</sup>, 370 on the 27<sup>th</sup> and 250 on the 30<sup>th</sup>. Elsewhere the numbers in March were considerably smaller but there were counts up to 300 at Rye Hbr during April and on 1 May a minimum of 1000 were present. Analysis of the daily counts from each of the seawatch locations tabulated below suggest a minimum of 3725 birds flew east during the spring comprising 44 in March, 2912 in April and 769 in May. Although a slightly higher number than in 2008 this total is below the average of 4321 for the springs 1985-2008. Details of the easterly spring passage totals at the principal seawatching sites were as follows:

	Mar	Apr	May	Total	No. per hr in Apr/May	Peak movement
<b>Selsey Bill</b>	34	2239	726	2999	7.9	566 on 24 Apr (12¾ hr)
<b>Worthing Beach</b>	16	1155	229	1400	10.6	299 on 24 Apr (8 hr)
<b>Telscombe Cliffs</b>	0	199	52	251	5.7	41 on 24 Apr (2 hr)
<b>Splash Point (Seaford)</b>	15	1935	254	2204	13.6	430 on 6 Apr (12½ hr)

All the peak counts of coastal passage occurred in April with fewer birds than usual recorded in May. The table below shows details of the five days when more than 150 eastbound birds were recorded at any site (time to nearest hour watched in brackets).

	6 Apr	10 Apr	14 Apr	16 Apr	24 Apr
<b>Selsey Bill</b>	110 (6)	252 (6)	194 (9)	129 (10)	526 (13)
<b>Worthing Beach</b>	152 (3)	193 (7)	36 (2)	95 (5)	296 (8)
<b>Brighton Marina</b>	30 (?)	nc	nc	134 (?)	461 (?)
<b>Telscombe Cliffs</b>	39 (2)	6 (1)	4 (1)	7 (1)	41 (2)
<b>Splash Point (Seaford)</b>	430(13)	373 (9)	54 (3)	179(9)	276 (13)
<b>Beachy Head</b>	428 (?)	14 (?)	15 (?)	22 (?)	201 (?)



Breeding was again successful at Rye Hbr where a count at Ternery Pool on 28 Apr estimated 450 nests and, taking into account the amount of vegetation cover, the total was probably in excess of 500 pairs. Fledgling counts on 28 Jun and 5 Jul recorded 242 and 136 respectively; with total fledging probably in excess of 600. On South Stakes Island (Chichester Hbr) there were 30 apparently occupied nests on 23 Jun and on 8 Jul seven nests remained and a minimum of 12 young were hiding amongst the vegetation on the shingle island. One pair was recorded during the annual breeding survey in Pagham Hbr and two young fledged.

With the exception of 200 on 25 Jul and 500 on 7 Aug the counts at Rye Hbr were smaller after breeding had completed. However, at Pagham Hbr a count of 250, comprising about 10% juveniles, on 21 and 24 Jul prompted the regular observers to note this as an unusually high number for this location. Indeed counts of 250 in July 2002 and 300 in September 1999 are the only recent comparable records. From early August until 5 Oct a small roost occurred on the fields at Goring Gap and reached a peak of 55 on the 31 Aug.

Unlike 2007 and 2008 there was no notable late summer or autumn passage and numbers moving offshore were low. The monthly totals and peak movements from sites regularly recorded in autumn are shown in the following table:

	Jun		Jul		Aug		Sep		Oct		Peak movement
	E	W	E	W	E	W	E	W	E	W	
<b>Selsey Bill</b>	33	7	2	156	9	152	12	34	1	4	65 W on 23 Jul (2 hr)
<b>Worthing Beach</b>	132	47	61	96	56	50	58	109	14	3	44 W on 3 Sep (5 hr)
<b>Telscombe Cliffs</b>	37	1	13	6	5	16	-	2	-	-	17 E on 7 Jun (1¼ hr)

One flew west at Worthing on 21 Nov but all the other sightings at the end of the year were from various locations in Chichester Hbr. Between 30 Oct and December the species was recorded on 11 dates with the highest counts being four on 30 Oct, five on 27 Nov and three, two adults and a first winter, on 31 Dec.

One, perched on a buoy, at Ardingly Res on 11 Apr and three at Chichester GP on 23 Apr were the only records from inland locations. [JAN]

## Common Tern

## *Sterna hirundo*

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

Singles, flying east at Selsey Bill on 20 and 22 Mar, were the first arrivals and a few days earlier than the 10-year average arrival date of 27 Mar. Another five were recorded before 41E at Splash Point (Seaford) on 6 Apr. Thereafter the species was recorded on all except three days until the end of May.

The detailed seawatching logs suggest a minimum of 415 flew east during spring comprising two in March, 234 in April and 179 in May. The largest movement was 112 E at Selsey Bill on 30 Apr (7¼hr). The coastal passage, however, is better described under the account for Common/Arctic Tern. A party of 100 and 150 were feeding offshore at Selsey Bill on 10 and 12 May respectively but otherwise spring numbers, away from the breeding locations, were low.

At Rye Hbr about 232 pairs nested on the Beach Reserve while at least 130 pairs nested on the Quarry producing an estimated 200+ chicks fledged. At Pett Level about 30 pairs attempted to breed but no young were raised. At Arlington Res a raft nesting pair raised one young and at Weir



Wood Res two pairs were regularly seen on the rafts but no chicks were seen. The largest colonies in the west of the county were on shingle islands in the harbours. Eighteen apparently occupied nests were counted on South Stakes Island (Chichester Hbr) on 23 Jun; by 8 Jul there were only six nests but a minimum of eight chicks hiding in the spartina. However, on 16 Jul no young terns were seen but nine recently fledged young were seen at Ellanore (Chichester Hbr) on 24 Jul. The annual breeding survey in Pagham Hbr counted 15 pairs but no young fledged. Raft nesting occurred at four other sites in the west. At New Lake (Chichester GP) early nesting was thwarted by Black-headed Gulls but in late August there were three chicks of two different ages on the raft and one fledged bird. Although two pairs nested at Arundel WWT no young were produced and a similar outcome occurred at Warnham LNR where pairs each had two clutches on both the rafts but were predated. Finally at Ardingly Res a pair probably raised three young.

Regular counts at Pilsey Island produced maxima of 50 on 25 Jun, 150 on 27 Jul, 83 on 7 Aug and 30 on 19 Sep. Elsewhere the most notable counts in August were 70 in Pagham Hbr on the 4<sup>th</sup>, 300 at Rye Hbr on the 7<sup>th</sup> and 264, counted as part of the WeBS, at Glyne Gap (Bexhill) on the 25<sup>th</sup>. Apart from 22 at Weir Wood Res on 21 Jul and 35 at the same location on 23 Aug the records from inland locations involved small numbers of birds.

The autumn coastal movements were, as usual, only recorded regularly from the west of the county and also involved very small numbers as shown in the following table.

	Jul		Aug		Sep		Oct		Total		Peak movement
	E	W	E	W	E	W	E	W	E	W	
<b>Selsey Bill</b>	-	11	-	28	-	16	-	-	-	55	28 W on 26 Aug (5¾ hr)
<b>Worthing Beach</b>	4	6	3	29	23	27	1	1	31	63	23 W on 8 Aug (1 hr)

Just four birds were recorded in October with the last being singles at Pilsey Sands and flying east at Worthing on the 7<sup>th</sup>; this being 20 days earlier than the 10-year average departure date. [JAN].

## **Roseate Tern**

## *Sterna dougallii*

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

Just four, possibly five birds, were recorded; on 13 May an adult was feeding offshore at Selsey Bill for 1½ hr before departing east (JA, CRJ), and one (possibly the same) was seen at Brighton Marina on the same day (IJW). On 8 Jun an adult was at Rye Hbr (BJY) where two adults were also present on the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> (BJY, SS). All these records have been accepted by SOSRC. [JAN].

## **Arctic Tern**

## *Sterna paradisaea*

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

Records for this species are relatively few as the majority are counted as “Commic Terns” at the main seawatching localities. Eight flying east at Worthing on 15 Apr were the first and five days later than the 10-year average arrival date. Thereafter small numbers were recorded on 16 different days during April and May.

The approximate monthly totals were as follows:

Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct
71	81	5	3	5	14	1

As in 2008 most were recorded during spring seawatches but fewer were seen with peaks of only 26E at Brighton Marina on 24 Apr and 62E at Splash Point (Seaford) on 10 May (14¾ hr). Inland there were two at Weir Wood Res on both 17 Apr and 4 May.

The mid-summer records involved 4W and 1W at Selsey Bill on 13 Jun and 7 Jul respectively and one at Rye Hbr on 21 Jun. The above table shows the paucity of records in the autumn when no more than four birds were recorded on just 15 dates between 31 Jul and 9 Oct. On this last date, over 3 weeks earlier than the 10-year average departure date, the species was recorded as present at Rye Hbr. [JAN]

## Common/Arctic Tern

## *Sterna hirundo/paradisaea*

Most birds passing seawatching sites remain unidentified as “Commic” Terns. This summary does not include birds specifically identified as Common or Arctic Terns and therefore this needs to be read in conjunction with the counts for these species.

Analysis of the counts from each of four locations where detailed, daily logs are maintained suggests that a minimum of 7784 birds flew east during spring comprising none in March, 1065 in April, 6456 in May and 263 in June. However, the spring total from observations at Brighton Marina, shown in the table below, was higher. These figures, when compared with the average of 8054 for the springs 1985-2008, suggest 2009 was a fairly typical spring. Like 2008, the early arriving birds were identified as Common Terns and the first “commics” were 1E at Selsey Bill and 3E at Splash Point (Seaford) on 4 Apr but it was not until mid month that larger numbers were seen. The easterly spring passage totals at the principal seawatching sites were as follows:

	Mar	Apr	May	Total	No. per hr in Apr/May	Peak movement
<b>Selsey Bill</b>	0	925	1869	2794	7.4	897 on 13 May (13¾hr)
<b>Worthing Beach</b>	0	137	545	682	5.2	516 on 13 May (6¾hr)
<b>Brighton Marina</b>	0	1152	7255	8407		3519 on 10 May.
<b>Telscombe Cliffs</b>	0	61	146	207	4.7	135 on 10 May (2 hr)
<b>Splash Point (Seaford)</b>	0	581	5789	6370	39.5	4665 on 10 May (14¾hr)

The table shows that large numbers were only seen at two sites in the east. Furthermore only on three days were there more than 300 eastbound birds recorded and details of these days are shown below (with hours watched, where known, in brackets).

	24 Apr	10 May	13 May
<b>Selsey Bill</b>	310 (12¾)	215 (12½)	897 (13¾)
<b>Worthing Beach</b>	32 (8)	25 (4½)	516 (6¾)
<b>Brighton Marina</b>	nc	3519 (?)	1855 (?)
<b>Telscombe Cliffs</b>	43 (2)	135 (2)	2 (½)
<b>Splash Point (Seaford)</b>	267 (12½)	4665 (14¾)	924 (4¼)
<b>Beachy Head</b>	89 (?)	23 (?)	nc

The count at Seaford on 10 May was the highest day total since 23 Apr 1994 when 5155 and 5100 were recorded flying east at Worthing and Seaford respectively. The only other higher day total recorded was 5306E at Beachy Head on 8 May 1981. A presumably late spring movement of 230E at Telscombe Cliffs in just over an hour on 7 Jun was the highest number recorded after mid-May. The autumn passage, between July and 12 Oct, was very poor; only recorded regularly at two sites and summarised in the following table.

	Jul		Aug		Sep		Oct		Total		Peak movement
	E	W	E	W	E	W	E	W	E	W	
<b>Selsey Bill</b>	-	296	-	255	-	43	-	1	-	595	180 W on 7 Aug (2 hr)
<b>Worthing Beach</b>	-	4	2	28	4	46	-	-	6	78	22 W on 1 Sep (1¼ hr)

The only records from inland sites were five at Arlington Res on 7 Jul and single birds flying over Wakehurst Place on 14 and 20 Jul. [JAN]

## Common Guillemot

## *Uria aalge*

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

The minimum monthly totals were as follows:

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
1011	234	2	5	15	-	1	-	4	15	1	3

The totals recorded at the principal seawatching sites are shown in the table below. Some duplication of records will have occurred with birds being seen at more than one site or noted offshore at a single site on more than one day so no attempt should be made to add the columns or rows.

	Jan-Feb			Mar-May			Jun-Jul			Aug-Oct			Nov-Dec		
	E	o/s	W	E	o/s	W	E	o/s	W	E	o/s	W	E	o/s	W
<b>Selsey Bill</b>	-	4	28	3	1	12	-	-	-	-	4	2	-	-	1
<b>Worthing Beach</b>	1	7	7	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	2	1	-	1	2
<b>Telscombe Cliffs</b>	8	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	-
<b>Splash Point</b>	172	21	-	2	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

The annual total of 1291 was nearly five times that for 2008 (266) and the highest since 2005. It was also above the 10-year rolling average of 1074.

In the first winter period the total of 1011 recorded in January was the highest ever for that month. Three quarters of the January records came from the east of the county with 602W at Rock-a-Nore (Hastings) on the 17<sup>th</sup> and 125W at Rye Bay on the 21<sup>st</sup>. Elsewhere in January the largest movement was of 80E at Splash Point (Seaford) on the 31<sup>st</sup>. Despite these large movements the largest feeding parties recorded on the sea were 30 in Rye Bay on 16 Jan, 23 off Glyne Gap (Bexhill) on 18 Jan and 15 off Shoreham on 15 Jan. The February total of 234 is rather misleading as it is made up almost entirely of a count of 220 offshore at Glyne Gap on the 13<sup>th</sup>.

Numbers were low during the period March to May and the only record of more than a single bird was of 6W at Selsey Bill on 16 May. There were no records in June, just one in July (a singleton offshore at Worthing on the 24<sup>th</sup>) and none in August. Numbers remained low

throughout the autumn and second winter periods with no double-figure counts of birds either moving offshore or on the sea.

The five records of birds away from the open sea involved singletons in Chichester Hbr, Pagham Hbr and Brighton Marina. [DHH]

## Razorbill

*Alca torda*

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

The minimum monthly totals during the year were as follows:

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
227	1219	3	16	22	-	1	1	-	19	7	5

The annual total of 1520 is approaching double that of the 2008 total of 829 but is still only just over half of the 10-year rolling average of 2944. The totals recorded at the principal seawatching sites are shown below but no attempt should be made to add the columns or rows due to the duplication of sightings between locations.

	Jan-Feb			Mar-May			Jun-Jul			Aug-Oct			Nov-Dec		
	E	o/s	W	E	o/s	W	E	o/s	W	E	o/s	W	E	o/s	W
<b>Selsey Bill</b>	-	-	15	9	-	15	-	-	1	-	4	6	1	2	3
<b>Worthing Beach</b>	12	15	37	3	2	3	-	-	-	5	2	-	1	1	1
<b>Telscombe Cliffs</b>	62	24	19		-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Splash Point</b>	187	7	38	13	5	-	-	-	-	3	-	-	-	-	-

During the first winter period numbers in January were lower than those in 2008 but in February they were over six times higher than those for last year. In January there were just three days on which double-figure counts were recorded: 24 W at Worthing Beach on the 18<sup>th</sup> and at Splash Point (Seaford) 49 E and 80 E on the 29<sup>th</sup> and the 31<sup>st</sup> respectively. The total of 1219 recorded in February was due very largely to the numbers off Lancing on the 13<sup>th</sup> when 500 moved east in 1½ hr with a further 600 on the sea.

There was little evidence of any spring movement in the period March to May with no double-figure counts. Numbers remained low for the rest of the year with no double-figure and no records at all in either June or September.

There were just two records of birds away from the open sea involving singletons at Brighton Marina and in the Lower Adur Valley. [DHH]

## Puffin

*Fratercula arctica*

*Rare spring and winter migrant.*

One seen flying east at Splash Point (Seaford) on 16 May (MRE) was the only record of the year and is the first accepted record in the county since 2004. [CWM]

## Auk species

The annual total of 23,974 reported was double the figure for 2007 (11,739) but still just half of the 10-year rolling average. This total includes Common Guillemots, Razorbills and auks which were not specifically identified but should not be taken as an accurate assessment of the true number due to the inevitable duplication in sightings.

The approximate totals recorded at the main seawatching sites were as follows:

	Jan-Feb			Mar-May			Jun-Jul			Aug-Oct			Nov-Dec		
	E	o/s	W	E	o/s	W	E	o/s	W	E	o/s	W	E	o/s	W
<b>Selsey Bill</b>	19	13	270	114	2	145	2	-	1	3	8	25	1	2	410
<b>Worthing Beach</b>	6891	522	3092	23	2	21	-	1	2	19	4	17	46	2	809
<b>Telscombe Cliffs</b>	2594	145	985	1	-	7	-	-	-	1	-	5	3	3	30
<b>Splash Point</b>	4262	28	1022	297	9	11	-	-	-	12	-	-	-	-	-

During the first winter period there were five dates on which over 1000 auks were recorded at one of the principal seawatching sites as follows: 3460E and 653W in 2½ hr at Worthing Beach on 9 Jan, 2330E and 126W in 2¼ hr at Worthing Beach on 11 Jan, 1020E in 1½ hr at Splash Point (Seaford) on 30 Jan, 48E and 1020W in 1½ hr at Worthing Beach on 13 Feb and 1021E and 18W in 1¾ hr at Telscombe Cliffs the following day. In addition there were a further sixteen dates in this period when three-figure counts were recorded. Away from the Seaford to Worthing stretch of coast the largest movement was of 150W at Rye Bay on 16 Jan.

Numbers declined rapidly after mid-February and the only real sign of any spring movement was 56E at Splash Point on 19 Mar. There were then no significant counts until December when there were 123W at Worthing Beach on the 12<sup>th</sup> and 400W at Selsey Bill and 450W at Worthing Beach on the 31<sup>st</sup>.

The difficulties involved in separating Guillemots and Razorbills in flight are well documented and as a result only 13% of all the auks reported were assigned to a specific species. Where birds were specifically identified the overall ratio of Common Guillemots to Razorbills was 1:1.3 as compared to an average of 1:3.2 over the last three years. It should be noted, however, that there was a significant difference in the relative abundance of the two species between the east and west of the county. Along the coast between Rye and Bexhill Common Guillemots outnumbered Razorbills by a ratio of 8.8:1 but in the area from Beachy Head to Selsey Common Guillemots were less numerous than Razorbills and the ratio was 1:4.6. [DHH]

## Feral Rock Dove

*Columba livia*

*Common resident.*

As usual, records generally came from the coastal towns with noteworthy counts in the early part of the year including 230 at Mile Oak (Portslade) on 11 Jan, 86 at Arundel WWT on 3 Feb, 150 at Hastings on 2 Apr and 200 birds at Hastings Beach on both 3 May and 14 Jun.

During the BBS, a total of 505 was recorded from 34 of the 135 1-km squares surveyed, with a maximum count of 121 at Hove on 14 Jun.

In the latter part of the year, there were counts of 220 at Lower Standean on 5 Sep and 165 at Mile Oak on 15 Sep. During the second winter period, the species was seen at some 93 localities. The highest counts were 96 at Crawley on 4 Nov and 130 at Coombes (Shoreham) on 25 Dec. [AHP]

**Stock Dove***Columba oenas*

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

The species was recorded at 465 sites in the county throughout the year. In the first winter period, the largest counts were found at coastal locations in the east of the county. At Pett Level 40 were seen on 18 Jan. At Rye Hbr a flock of 74 was seen in flight on 4 Feb and 90 were recorded at Seaford GC on the 22<sup>nd</sup>. In March, 58 were seen on roofs in East Grinstead on the 16<sup>th</sup> and 100 were noted at Pett Level on the 19<sup>th</sup>. At Pett Level, the monthly maxima were 60 for February and 45 for March.

Unlike the previous year, no large concentrations were recorded during the breeding season. The first record of a calling male was on 3 Jan at West Itchenor and the next record was on 27 Feb at Houghton (Amberley). Display behaviour was first noted at Southerham Fm (Lewes) on 23 Feb. On 4 Mar a pair was seen prospecting a nest box at the bottom of Hollybush Hill (Pulborough Brooks) and the first record of nest building was from 8 Mar when two pairs were found to be making nests in owl boxes at Byworth (Petworth).

Birds were present at a total of 313 sites widely dispersed throughout the county during the breeding season. Breeding was confirmed in 51 tetrads by at least 75 pairs, and records were received of probable breeding in 94 tetrads by at least 144 pairs. Twenty-nine nests in owl boxes were reported and one pair nested in a kestrel box. Out of 33 nests for which breeding detail was recorded, one contained three eggs, 27 contained two eggs or chicks, and five just one. A late record was received for 20 Oct of a large chick in an owl box at Sakeham Fm (Shermanbury). During the BBS, 83 individuals were recorded in 36 of the 135 1-km squares surveyed, with a maximum count of ten at Cowfold on 4 May.

The first indication of the build up of flocks after the breeding season was a flock of 40 at Thorney Island on 25 Sep. The largest October flock was 30 at Chichester GP. During the second winter period the species was seen at some 61 localities. The only sizeable movements reported during this period were 220 moving west on 5 Nov at Hastings and 87 moving south west on 2 Nov at the Firehills (Hastings). On 13 Dec a count of 170 was recorded at Coombes (Shoreham), and on the same day 45 were recorded nearby at Applesham. At Pett Level the monthly maximum was 80 for November and 60 for December. At Thorney Island the monthly maximum was 60 for November and 30 for December. [CJR]

**Wood Pigeon***Columba palumbus*

*Abundant resident and winter visitor.*

In the first winter period, appreciable counts included 2500 birds at Cissbury Ring on 11 Jan and 1000 at Lewes Brooks on the 18<sup>th</sup>. There were 3000 feeding on brassicas at Steyning Bowl on 4 Feb, 1000 at Rodmell Brooks on the 15<sup>th</sup> and 2000 at Lewes Brooks on the same date.

During the BBS, a total of 4414 was recorded in every one of the 135 1-km squares surveyed, with a maximum count of 246 at Peacehaven on 7 Apr. Breeding evidence included a juvenile at Henfield on 10 Feb along with 87 pairs at Brighton Wild Park (highest ever), 77 pairs at Bewl Water, 36 pairs at Pagham Hbr (17 in 2008) and 33 territories at Sefter Fm (Rose Green). Two newly fledged birds were seen at South Malling on 2 Oct with another two fledged youngsters at West Tarring (Worthing) on the 25<sup>th</sup>.



The beginning of autumn migration was marked by a flock of 1000 at Goring on 2 Nov with 1040 at Firehills (Hastings) and 1000 at Littlehampton on the same day. On the 4<sup>th</sup>, 3500 flew west at North Wall (Pagham) with 3460 west at Hastings CP. The next day, 7750 flew west at Hastings CP while 3000 were seen flying east at Ferring Rife. On the 6<sup>th</sup>, 20,000 were observed heading west at Hastings with 7200 at Whitbread Hollow (Beachy Head). Observers at Brighton recorded the peak autumn count of another remarkable passage with 26,000 flying west on the 7<sup>th</sup>.

The only other sizeable counts for the remainder of the year were 900 at North Wall Fields (Pagham Hbr) on the 2 Dec and 1500 at Coombes (Shoreham) on the 13<sup>th</sup> feeding on stubble. [AHP]

## Collared Dove

## *Streptopelia decaocto*

*Very common resident.*

Typically, flocks averaged a dozen birds with the only notable counts in the first winter period being 50 at Mile Oak (Portslade) on 14 Jan with the same number at Glynde Level on 20 Feb. A flock of 40 was seen at Wannock (Eastbourne) on 2 May with the same number at Middleton-on-Sea on 1 Jun.

Breeding records included 28 pairs at Brighton Wild Park (38 in 2008) with three pairs at Bewl Water and one territory at Sefter Fm (Rose Green). During the BBS, a total of 520 was recorded from 88 of the 135 1-km squares surveyed, with a maximum count of 21 at Furnace Green (Crawley) on 24 May.

In the latter part of the year, the only significant flocks were 39 by the grain silos at Shoreham on 1 Oct, 30 at Thorney Deeps on the 18<sup>th</sup>, 22 on phone wires at Henfield on 8 Nov, 32 perched in one tree at Mewsbrook (Littlehampton) on 3 Dec and, finally, 100 at Eastbourne on 22 Dec. [AHP]

## Turtle Dove

## *Streptopelia turtur*

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

The first arrival of the year was one at Pagham Hbr on 14 Apr, six days later than the 10-year average date. This was followed by a gap of ten days to the 24<sup>th</sup>, when two were at Rye Hbr. Sightings of one or two birds then followed on an almost daily basis through to the end of June, including a sighting of one bird flying in off the sea and landing exhausted on the breakwater at Brighton Marina on 13 May. Higher numbers occurred at the usual favoured sites with four at Thorney Deeps on 5 May, six at Rye Hbr on the 10<sup>th</sup>, eight at Fairwarp (Ashdown Forest) on the 17<sup>th</sup> and four at Pett Level on the 23<sup>rd</sup>.

There were no confirmed breeding records but a possible 21 probable breeding pairs at some 15 sites in the county altogether (22 in 2008). There were at least three pairs at Rye Hbr (five in 2008) and two pairs at both Edburton and Thorney Deeps. During the BBS, only ten birds were recorded from ten of the 135 1-km squares surveyed.

The autumn period was, once again, poor with only 14 records in August, although five were seen at Arlington Res on the 2<sup>nd</sup>. In September there were just ten records, all of singletons. The last bird of the year was reported at North Wall (Pagham Hbr) on the 29 Sep, eight days earlier than the 10-year average. [AHP]

**Rose-ringed Parakeet***Psittacula krameri**Very scarce introduced breeding resident.*

The usual handful of records was received commencing with six at Gatwick on 1 Jan, followed by single birds at Seaford on the 9<sup>th</sup> and Brighton Marina on the 15<sup>th</sup>. Two were at Gatwick on 1 Mar with probably just one bird at Newhaven from 20 May until 14 Jun. There were also individuals at Brighton on 21 Jun and Thorney Deeps on 14 Aug, with two at Worthing on 28 Sep, a singleton at Pett Level on 10 Oct and a final sighting of seven at Bonwycks Place (Ifield) on 24 Oct. [AHP]

**Common Cuckoo***Cuculus canorus**Fairly common summer visitor. Red listed species of high conservation concern.*

The first recorded arrivals were on 3 Apr, the 10-year average date, at South Chase (Ashdown Forest), where one observer found at least four vocal and active birds. On the following day a bird was recorded at Dial Post Capite and birds were reported arriving daily from the 8<sup>th</sup> until the end of the month. By the end of April, 214 reports had been received relating to a total of 253 birds at 157 widespread sites (although it is likely that some duplication was involved). Peak counts were 23 birds on 26 Apr and 21 on the 29<sup>th</sup>. One particularly late arrival was recorded on 12 Jun at Telscombe Cliffs when a bird was seen flying in from the sea.

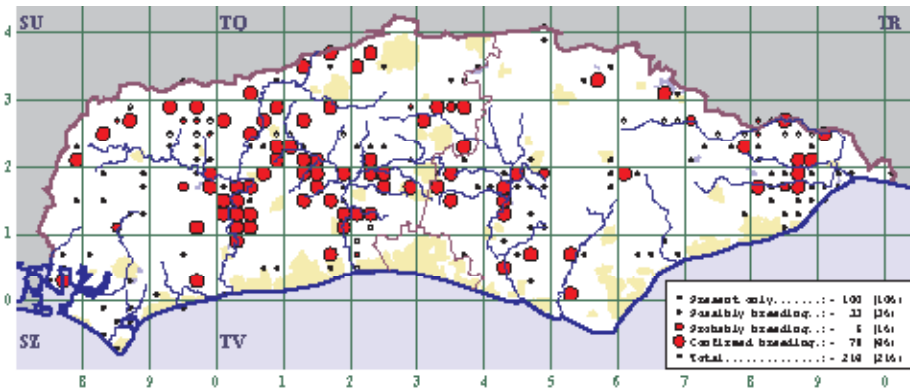
Breeding was confirmed by seven pairs, and was probable by an estimated 59 pairs at 46 sites (37% of which were in the Ashdown Forest area). There were 50 reports of birds in suitable breeding habitat and 233 reports of singing males at sites widely dispersed throughout the county. Four of the confirmed breeding reports were from Chelwood Gate and Isle of Thorns (both Ashdown Forest) and Arundel WWT. At the latter site, at least two and possibly three fledged chicks were observed, and one of these was seen being fed by a Reed Warbler. At Burpham on 10 May, a bird was seen visiting reeds occupied by Reed Warblers and, at Camp Hill (Ashdown Forest), a male and female birds were calling on separate dates in May in the vicinity of a heather-covered hillside with Meadow Pipits present. At Friends (Ashdown Forest) on 25 Jun an adult was seen being mobbed by a passerine, probably a Meadow Pipit. Juveniles were sighted at seven mostly inland locations. During the BBS a total of 65 birds was recorded in 47 of the 135 1-km squares surveyed, with a maximum count of four at Chailey.

As in 2008, the records suggest that this species departed early this year. Nine birds were reported in July and seven in August. The last bird, a juvenile, was seen on 12 Sep at Cow Gap (Beachy Head), which is a fortnight earlier than the 10-year average date of 27 Sep. [CJR]

**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 of casual sightings, excluding visits for ringing, were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>Monthly total</b>	86	79	41	36	33	38	16	14	19	16	15	18



Not all known breeding sites in the county were monitored. In the west, 64 breeding attempts were reported, of which six failed at the egg stage. Twenty four nests were in nest boxes on trees, 39 in boxes in barns and one in a purpose built owl loft in a barn conversion. These resulted in 265 nestlings which were mostly about half grown when reported. In the east, 34 breeding attempts were reported, of which three failed at the egg stage. Twenty nests were in boxes on trees, seven in barn boxes, six in pole boxes and one in the roof space of a building. Nestlings reported numbered 74. Across the county as a whole there was one brood of six, two of five and 13 of four young, the remainder being ones, twos and threes.

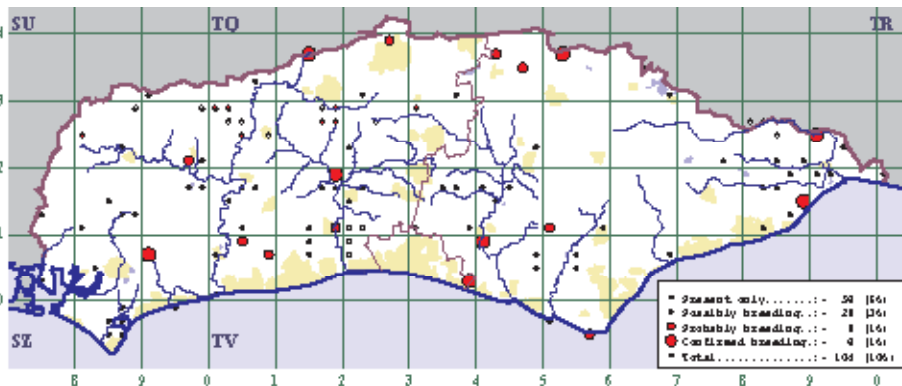
At one site the known adult female was found dead on 9 Feb but by June a new female was brooding two young. In November, a Buzzard was seen to attack a hunting Barn Owl but was disturbed by the observer. [ABW]

## Little Owl

*Athene noctua*

*Fairly common resident.*

This introduced and sedentary resident was recorded from 105 sites during the year, as shown in the map below, although many records are of birds heard rather than seen.



The stronghold in the county appears to be open farmland in the river valleys and on the Downs, and territories are often consistently occupied for many years. During the first winter period records came from a variety of sites throughout the county including a few locations in the north.

As in 2008, ten pairs were confirmed as breeding which is above average for recent years; birds were also noted as present in suitable breeding habitat, or suspected of breeding, at a further 41 sites. During the BBS, three birds were recorded from three of the 135 1-km squares surveyed. The only nesting site noted was at Iden (Rye) where four eggs were noted in a pole box nest. A juvenile bird was found dead at Partridge Green in early July.

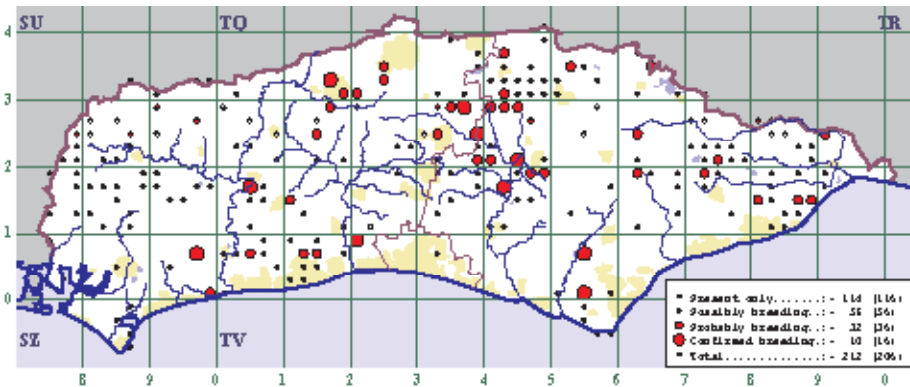
Post breeding dispersal is usually evident in Sussex, and in 2009 six Downland, four coastal and a single inland site had their first records of this species for the year from September onwards. Only five records were received in December, significantly fewer than average. [DG]

## Tawny Owl

*Strix Aluco*

*Fairly common resident.*

Birds were recorded from approximately 215 sites during the year with many records of this vocal nocturnal species being of individuals heard rather than being seen. This sedentary species appears to be present in the county virtually wherever there is suitable nesting habitat, including what would otherwise seem unlikely locations such as open downland and cliff tops.



Breeding was confirmed at ten sites during the year which is just below the average for the last five years. At an additional 97 locations breeding was considered probable or possible. Recorded nest sites included two purpose built nest boxes and a cavity in a poplar tree. Five pairs were present in the area around Bewl Water, with a similar number estimated to be present at Darwell Hole (Netherfield), and three young fledged from a nest in an ash tree at one downland locality. During the BBS, single birds were recorded in three of the 135 1-km squares surveyed. During the second winter period, the species was seen at some 62 localities. The highest counts were four at Pett Level on 11 Nov and at Terwick Common (Rogate) on 2 Dec.

This species becomes more vocal in the autumn when the majority of records received relate to calling birds and, as would be expected, many of these reports come from suburban gardens and substantial woodlands. However, owls were also recorded calling from small copses and

shaws throughout the county. Reported roost sites included sycamore, beech and hawthorn trees and many birds were seen perched beside roads at night; there were, unfortunately, two reports of road casualties during the year. [DG]

## Long-eared Owl

*Asio otus*

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

Forty-four records were received during the year from 13 sites compared to 77 records from 16 sites in 2008. During the first winter period, two communal roosts were found. Roosting birds were present at Rye Hbr until 14 Feb with a maximum of four present on this date and, as in previous years, the birds utilised two separate roosting areas. A winter roost at site A in the west of the county appeared to hold no more than two birds and was occupied until 1 Mar and, at a site used in previous years, a single bird was found roosting in a hawthorn where it remained for a few days during April. One further roost was recorded on downland where a single Long-eared Owl roosted in a patch of gorse with at least two Short-eared Owls and, later, was observed hunting with them late in the afternoon; this was after a sustained period of bad weather. Six further birds were recorded in the county up to the end of April including two individuals pole hunting beside roads.

Only one bird was noted during the summer with no evidence of breeding. Site details for this species are strictly confidential because of this species' sensitivity to disturbance.

No autumn migrants were observed and no birds were seen at Rye Hbr in the second winter period for the first time in four years. The only birds recorded in this period were two present at site A; they were first noted on 22 Nov and the last record was on 14 Dec. The number of records received of this species away from known roost sites, particularly in the breeding season, undoubtedly reflects observer effort to a great extent. The Long-eared Owl Study Group carried out very little fieldwork in 2009, but the substantial drop in records during the summer and second winter period does appear to reflect a genuine decrease in this species' abundance during the year rather than purely a drop in observer effort. [DG]

## Short-eared Owl

*Asio flammeus*

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

The approximate monthly totals, taking account of possible duplication at well watched sites, were as follows:

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
9	5	5	5	1	1	5	3	4

The below-average number of birds recorded at the end of 2008 continued into 2009. During the first five months of the year, roughly 14 separate birds were recorded from nine areas of the county. The only areas holding multiple birds were Beeding Brooks, with three in mid-January, the Castle Hill area (Falmer), with two wide ranging birds during February, and Pagham Hbr, where two birds were present in mid-April. A bird that had probably been present at Thorney Deeps since 2008 was unfortunately found dead in a reedbed there on 11 Mar. During April, one was seen being mobbed by gulls over the offshore shingle bar at Selsey Bill before heading inland and the last records of wintering birds were on the 22<sup>nd</sup>. During April, a migrant was present at

Beachy Head on the 20<sup>th</sup> and a presumed migrant was at Pagham Hbr on 5 May, the last sighting for the first half of the year.

The first autumn migrant was seen at Sheepcote Valley (Brighton) on 13 Sep, although it did not linger. Other presumed migrants that were not seen on multiple dates included individuals at Lewes Brooks on 11 Oct, at Rye Hbr on the 21<sup>st</sup>, Amberley on the 26<sup>th</sup>, flying west over Lancing on 2 Nov and at Atherington (Climping) on 1 Dec. The only sighting of multiple birds during the second winter period was at the Ouse Estuary Project (Newhaven) where two were present on 10 Dec.

Only two birds were recorded on multiple dates in the autumn/second winter period, suggestive of wintering rather than migration. One was present in the Pagham Hbr area from 17 Oct to 8 Nov, with possibly the same individual recorded in the Thorney Deeps area on 12 Nov and 1 Dec. Unusually, no birds were recorded during the last three weeks of the year, possibly as a result of the adverse weather. Two roost sites were recorded during 2009, with one bird roosting in elder and two birds apparently sharing a roost in gorse with a Long-eared Owl. [DG]

## European Nightjar

## *Caprimulgus europaeus*

*Fairly common summer visitor rarely seen on migration. Red listed species of high conservation concern.*

The first sighting of the year was a female at Greenwood Gate (Ashdown Forest) on 9 May, nine days later than the 10-year average but still earlier than the first sighting of 2008. The next sightings at Ashdown Forest were at South Chase on 15 May, Ashdown Res on 18 May and Old Airstrip on 20 May. Elsewhere, a pair was seen at Darwell Hole on 16 May and, in the west of the county, two birds were seen at Woolbeding Common on the 20<sup>th</sup>. A single bird on migration was seen at Selsey Bill on 21 May.

The Wealden Heath Breeding Bird Survey (WHBBS) identified 30 territories, slightly higher than the 27 in 2008, including six at Iping Common and five at each of Lavington Common and Chapel Common (Liphook). Elsewhere in the west of the county, there were churring males at Angmering Park Estate on 4 Jun and 11 Jun, Wepham Woods (Angmering Park) and Burpham. Birds reported from Wiggonholt Common (Pulborough Brooks) in May and June included two churring males on 10 Jun. A churring male was recorded at Chiseldown (East Down) on four occasions between 23 May and 26 Jun.

In the east of the county, most of the records were from Ashdown Forest where there were around 34 territories mainly identified from churring males (an increase over the possible 28 in 2008). There were also sightings at Broadwater Forest and records from Flimwell (Ticehurst) on three dates and Seacox Heath (Flimwell) on 3 Jun and 1 Jul. There was a churring male at Red House Common (Chailey) on 28 May and 20 Jun.

Breeding was confirmed in two tetrads by the presence of adults with young at Owlbeech Woods (Horsham) and from two different 1-km squares at Pippingford Park (Ashdown Forest) on 13 Jul and 22 Jul. Overall in the county probable breeding was recorded in 27 tetrads with possible breeding from a further 11. Although the number of potential territories in Ashdown Forest and the WHBBS area appeared to increase, there were fewer records from outside these areas than in 2008. Therefore, even though there were records from approximately the same number of tetrads in both years, the number of breeding territories appeared to be around 88 in 2009 against 107 in 2008 and 105-106 in 2007. This may represent either an actual decrease or, alternatively, a lack of records from outside the two main areas.

A migrant was at Pagham Hbr on 9 Aug and one, probably on migration, was churring at High Cross Fm (Uckfield) on 16 Aug. The final sightings from Ashdown Forest were at Greenwood Gate on 13 Aug. One was at Iping Common on 19 Aug and the final record of the year was of two birds at Owlbeech Woods on 31 Aug, approximately three weeks before the 10-year average departure date. [SPS]

## Common Swift

*Apus apus*

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

**2008:** The high counts of Swifts on 8, 9 and 17 Sep at Rye Hbr and Brighton Wild Park respectively were erroneous and the records have been deleted.

**2009:** The first bird of the year was recorded at Selsey Bill on 13 Apr followed closely by twos at Langney Point on the 14<sup>th</sup> and Rye Hbr on the 16<sup>th</sup>. From the 19<sup>th</sup> there was a steady stream of arrivals; the first double-figures counts were of 12 at Chichester GP on the 26<sup>th</sup>, 25 at Rye Hbr on the 27<sup>th</sup>, 20 at both Thorney SF and Chichester GP on the 28<sup>th</sup> and 50 at Lewes on the 30<sup>th</sup>, by which date at least 180 had been recorded.

During May, there were six counts of 100 or more, including the largest count of over 500 (which was to be the highest count of the year) at Rye Hbr on the 26<sup>th</sup> while, in June, there were similar numbers there on the 5<sup>th</sup>. Other large counts in June included 350 heading east over West Dean Woods on the 6<sup>th</sup>, 250 at Findon early that day and a similar number at Greatham. Later in the month, 200 were seen high over Edburton on the 21<sup>st</sup>.

Breeding was confirmed at 11 sites, including four in central Chichester, which may have been the source of the two birds fed to the Peregrine chicks on the cathedral there on 27 May. Three pairs were observed mating over Warnham LNR in June and were thought to be breeding nearby. Birds were recorded as behaving as probable breeders at some 90 other sites and screaming parties were noted at a further 85. During the BBS, 321 were recorded in 47 of the 135 1-km squares surveyed, with a maximum count of 62 at Pett Level on 18 Jun.

In July, 400 were recorded at Weir Wood Res on the 15<sup>th</sup>, 150 were noted over Selsey Bill on the 21<sup>st</sup> and feeding flocks were noted over Findon, 150 on the 4<sup>th</sup>, and Horsham, 100 on the 31<sup>st</sup>.

Birds departed early in August. A single flock of 360 was seen flying south over Pagham Hbr on the 6<sup>th</sup> and a further 110 headed out to sea over Seaford Head on the same date. Very few remained: 30 were seen going south over Warnham LNR on the 8<sup>th</sup> but thereafter only 65 birds in total were recorded in the whole of the county. The last was a singleton at Beachy Head on 19 Sep, almost a month earlier than the 10-yr average date of 17 Oct. [NJR]

## Alpine Swift

*Apus melba*

*Rare vagrant.*

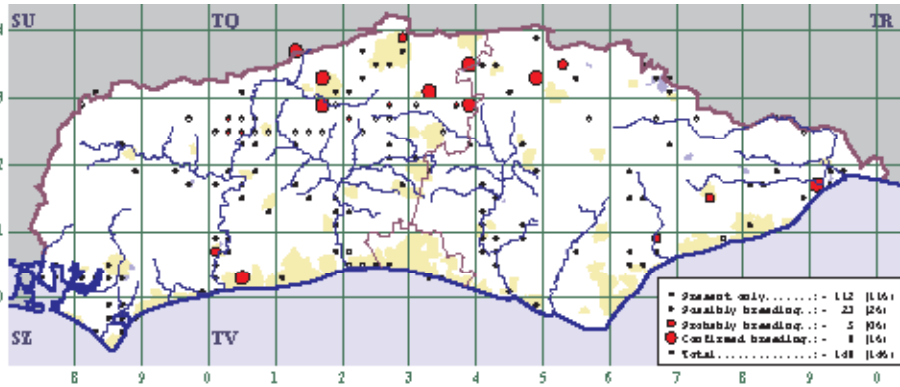
One was seen and photographed at Pulborough Brooks on 11 Apr (GB, RK, GJ, YS et al.). It was found from the Hanger and was on view for over two hours giving particularly good views over the nearby picnic area. It is only the fourth record this decade, a significant decline compared to the seven in the 1970s, 12 in the 1980s and ten during the 1990s. Thirty-nine have been recorded in the county in total, in March (three from 25<sup>th</sup>), April (six), May (15), June (three), July, August (six), September (three) and October (two, last 30<sup>th</sup>). [RJF]



**Common Kingfisher***Alcedo atthis*

*Fairly common resident and occasional winter visitor. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern. Schedule 1 species.*

A total of 555 records was received of Kingfisher sightings in 2009. This was fewer than in 2008 as was the number of sites at which the species was recorded. Records were distributed as shown on the following map:



Observations during the winter months were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Nov	Dec
<b>No. of birds</b>	76	36	30	49
<b>No. of inland sites</b>	39	21	16	22
<b>No. of coastal sites</b>	27	10	9	15

The January records were broadly comparable with those for the previous January, showing slight increases in the numbers of birds and sites. The largest January concentrations were three at both Arundel WWT and Glynde. But little more than half the number of birds was seen in February as in February 2008, and there was a sharp decline in the number of coastal sites at which the species was recorded, down from 22 to 10.

Breeding was confirmed at nine mostly inland locations. At one site, five juveniles were seen on a branch with an adult. Reports of probable breeders were received from at least a further six sites. Reports were received of possible breeding at another 26 sites throughout the county where birds were observed in suitable habitat, and birds were seen at 59 different locations during the breeding season. At Ladywells (Coombes), between 23 Jun and 24 Dec, four new juveniles were ringed and at Strivens Reed Bed (Steyning) three new birds were ringed of which one was a juvenile.

In August and September, reports showed increasing numbers of birds at coastal locations with a count of seven on 23 Aug at Alexandra Park (Hastings). During the second winter period, the species was seen at some 64 localities. Reports for this period indicated that both the numbers of birds and also the number of coastal and inland locations were down compared with 2008. In November only 30 birds were recorded, compared with 70 in the same month in the previous year. The largest concentrations in the second winter period were three at Warnham LNR on 6 Nov and five at Southease on 20 Dec. [CJR]

**European Bee-eater***Merops apiaster**Rare vagrant; has bred.*

Two were seen at Rye Hbr on 25 May (AP) with one at Beachy Head on 9 Jul (MEC, RHC). They quickly moved on, those at Rye being photographed on telephone wires by the approach road to Watch Cottage while the Beachy individual was seen in the garden at Hodcombe for 30 minutes before flying off west. Twenty-four have been recorded in the county since the beginning of 2000, making this the best decade for the species to date. These individuals arrived in May (seven, from 1<sup>st</sup>), June (seven), July (six), August (three) and September (one on 13<sup>th</sup>). Decade totals from 1960s to 1990s are one, nought, 19 and 12 respectively. [RJF]

**Hoopoe***Upupa epops**Very scarce spring and even scarcer autumn passage migrant; has bred.*

Three birds were reported all in April. The first to be found was at Patching on the 14<sup>th</sup> (DL, RL); the next was at Pebsham on the 21<sup>st</sup> (ASG) and the third was at Abbot's Wood (Hailsham) on the 24<sup>th</sup>. These bring the county total for this century up to 41 at an average of four per year. Compared with the decade totals quoted previously (*SxBR 61:139*) the decline in numbers per year continues. [JAH]

**Wryneck***Jynx torquilla**Very scarce passage migrant: last bred in 1944. Red listed species of high conservation concern.*

**2008:** Additional records were of two at Sheepcote Valley (Brighton) on 30 Aug and single birds at Hangleton on 30 Aug, Pulborough Brooks on 3 and 4 Sep, Sheepcote Valley on 7 Sep, Walberton on 11 Sep (found almost dead having flown into a farm vehicle) and Atherington on 13 Sep. At Pagham Hbr it appears that probably four different birds were recorded comprising singles at the Long Pool from 9 to 11 Sep, the North Wall on 13 and 14 Sep, Church Norton from 13 to 20 Sep and on 8 Oct. Given that the autumn of 2008 was a good one for Wrynecks, it seems reasonable to assume that the birds recorded at Sheepcote Valley and Brighton Wild Park on 13 and 14 Sep respectively and at Seven Sisters CP and Birling Gap on 18 and 20 Sep respectively (*SxBR 61:140*) were all different. This equates to a total of 21 for the year of which two were in spring and 19 in autumn. [PJ]

**2009:** The records received suggested a minimum of nine birds during the year, well down on 2008. The only spring record was of a single bird at Glynde on 29 Apr.

In the autumn, single birds were present at Muntham Court (Findon) on 9 Aug, Horsham on 1 Sep, Rodmell on 8 Sep, Hastings CP on 18 Sep and Southwater CP on the 22<sup>nd</sup>. The several sightings at Sheepcote Valley were interpreted as one bird on 10 Sep and two birds between 24 and 25 Sep, the only birds which appear to have stayed more than one day. [PJP]

**Green Woodpecker***Picus viridis**Fairly common resident. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern.*

There were over 2750 records for the year, demonstrating the widely distributed status of the species across the county. During the first winter period, the highest count was of seven at

Adversane on 9 Jan but there were five counts of six and six counts of five birds elsewhere.

Breeding was confirmed at 48 sites, in 83% of cases by observation of juvenile birds. Probable breeding was recorded at a further 104 sites. During the BBS, a total of 170 birds was recorded in 86 of the 135 1-km squares surveyed (compared with 186 birds in 102 of 136 squares in 2008 and 163 in 81 of 123 squares in 2007).

A total of 39 sessions of ringing at Strivens Reed Bed (Steinying) between 22 Jun and 12 Dec handled five new birds (three young and two adults). Ringers at Ladywells (Coombes) in 35 sessions between 2 Mar and 9 Nov handled nine birds, six of which were new.

During the second winter period, the species was seen in some 236 localities with maximum counts, in November, of five at Pulborough Brooks on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and at Newtimber Hill (Poynings) on the 4<sup>th</sup> and, in December, of seven at Paddockhurst Place (Worth) on the 11<sup>th</sup> and six at two other sites.

One bird was reported being taken by Peregrines on Pagham Spit on 7 Aug. [PJP]

## **Great Spotted Woodpecker**

*Dendrocopus major*

*Common resident.*

In all, over 2750 records were received for this species, underlining its status in the county. During the first winter period, the highest count was of 12 at Brickhurst Wood (Hurst Green) on 23 Feb and there were 14 other counts in excess of five.

Breeding was confirmed at 106 sites and was probable at a further 125. During the BBS, a total of 235 birds was recorded from 82 of the 135 1-km squares surveyed (60%), compared with 221 birds recorded in 91 of the 136 squares surveyed in 2008 (67%).

During the second winter period, the species was seen at some 233 localities with maximum counts in November of six at Blachington (Hove) on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and, in December, of seven at Stonelands Fm (Cowbeech) on the 11<sup>th</sup> and eight at Warnham LNR on the 22<sup>nd</sup>. [PJP]

## **Lesser Spotted Woodpecker**

*Dendrocopus minor*

*Scarce and declining resident. Red listed species of high conservation concern.*

There were 74 records for this species from 44 sites. Given the secretive nature of this species, over two thirds of sightings were recorded in the first half of the year, coinciding with the main drumming and breeding period. Multiple sightings were recorded at five sites, three in the west of the county and two in the east, most often in the period between 12 Feb and 31 May although individual sightings at these sites were also made in August.

Drumming was first heard at one site on 4 Jan, calling at another on the 8<sup>th</sup> and drumming at a third site from 17 Feb into March. Breeding was confirmed at three sites: at one site in the west adults were observed entering a nest hole and feeding young and fledged young were recorded at two other sites in the east. Breeding was thought probable at seven further sites.

During the second half of the year there were some 23 records of singletons through to 28 Dec and one of two birds on the 27<sup>th</sup>. As this is a red-listed species, all sightings should be reported with, if possible, six figure grid references, especially if territorial behaviour or evidence of breeding is observed. [DJB]

**Red-backed Shrike***Lanius collurio*

*Very scarce passage migrant, formerly a breeding visitor. Red listed species of high conservation concern.*

There were only two records, both in July. The first, a male, was at Rye Hbr on 3 Jul for only one day (MO). The second, also a male, was at Cissbury Ring from the 14<sup>th</sup> to 16<sup>th</sup> (MO). These bring the number of birds recorded in the ten years since 2000 (when there was none) to 29; they have arrived in May (two, from 28<sup>th</sup>), June (four), July (two, from 3<sup>rd</sup>), August (three, from 6<sup>th</sup>), September (16), October (one) and November (one, to 8<sup>th</sup>). [JAH]

**Great Grey Shrike***Lanius excubitor*

*Very scarce winter visitor and passage migrant.*

After last year's high number of birds this was a return to normal, with five (possibly six) birds recorded throughout the year, on a par with the 5-yr average (five), one less than the 10-yr average (six). All records were from East Sussex.

During the first winter period there were three (possibly four) birds reported: last year's individual at Glynde was recorded again there until 2 Jan; on the same day, another individual, possibly a new one, was reported briefly at Peacehaven Cliffs; what may have been the Glynde bird was reported on the 14<sup>th</sup> as being 'behind Ringmer', only some 3-4 km away. A long staying individual, possibly from the second winter period of 2008, was recorded at Pett Level on 6 Jan and was observed by many in the vicinity until 30 Mar.

In the second winter period, the first bird reported was seen at Ashdown Forest on 24 Oct until 7 Nov. At Pett Level, one (presumably the bird from the previous winter) was found on 29 Oct and was seen sporadically into the New Year. [LAW]

**Magpie***Pica pica*

*Very common resident.*

In all, over 3900 records were received for this species, underlining its common status. During the first winter period there were 12 counts of more than 20 birds, the highest was of 50 gathering to roost at Woodingdean on 22 Feb. Other high counts were 37 at Duncans Fm (Billingshurst) on 29 Jan, 29 at Mile Oak (Portslade) on 11 Jan and 25 at Southerham Fm (Lewes) on 23 Feb. One was seen attacking a Sparrowhawk with prey at Warnham LNR on 30 Mar.

Breeding was confirmed at 102 sites, the earliest being at Hailsham on 7 Apr, and breeding was probable at a further 199 sites. During the BBS, a total of 1549 birds were recorded from 126 of the 135 1-km squares surveyed, the highest count being 16 at Hurstpierpoint on 18 Apr. The highest counts during the breeding and summer periods were 40 at Mile Oak on 15 Sep and 39 at North Fm (Crawley Manor) on 10 Apr.

During the autumn and second winter periods the species was seen in at least 321 locations, both inland and coastal. The highest count was 50 going to roost at Fairlight (Hastings) on 18 Dec. Forty-one were seen at Fairlight Glen on 23 Oct, 40 at Applesham (Coombes) on 13 Dec and 40 at Mile Oak on 15 Sep. Twenty-eight were seen at both Hangleton (Hove) on 19 Sept and Southwater CP on 9 Dec. [MJC]



*Magpie, Hodcombe, April 2009 (Roger Charlwood)*

## Jay

*Garrulus glandaris*

*Very common resident.*

In all, over 1900 records were received for this species, underlining its common status. Records from the first winter period were mostly of one or two birds with the highest counts being 16 at Ashurstwood on 20 Jan and 11 at Motts Mill (Groombridge) on 29 Jan. Nine were seen at Wardley (Milland) on 24 Jan and eight at Tentworth (Iping) on 19 Jan. Counts of five or more birds were seen at a further 42 sites. One was seen attacking a Sparrowhawk with a large prey at Warnham LNR on 31 March.

Breeding was confirmed at 18 sites, a reduction on 2008 (25), and was probable at a further 86 sites, an increase on 2008. During the breeding and summer periods, high counts included ten at Brighton Wild Park on 15 Apr and nine at Carters Fm (Pett) on 23 Jun. During the BBS, 107 individuals were recorded from 56 of the 135 1-km squares surveyed, the highest count being six at Mill Place (Weir Wood) on 15 Apr. One was reported mimicking a Buzzard call at Pulborough Brooks on 25 Mar and another mimicking a Sparrowhawk atop a Cormorant roost at Warnham LNR on 10 Apr.

During the autumn sightings were again mainly of individual birds. During August and September there were eight counts of six to eight birds but in October there were ten at Warnham LNR between the 8<sup>th</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup> and ten at Ladywells (Coombes) on the 19<sup>th</sup>. Nine were reported from Pulborough Brooks on 26 Oct.

During the second winter period the species was seen in some 249 localities with a maximum count of 11 at Sunnyside (East Grinstead) on 25 Nov and Marley Common on 25 Dec. Other high counts included ten at Bolney on 9 Dec and nine at Walberton (Arundel) on 13 Dec. [MJC]

**Jackdaw***Corvus monedula*

*Very common resident.*

In all, just over 3000 records were received, underlining its common status. During the first winter period there were only 25 counts of 100 or more individuals, considerably fewer than the 133 counts reported throughout the county in 2008. The highest counts, dwarfing all others, were 2000 at Warnham Tip (Horsham) on 11 Jan and 2000 at Northlands (Warnham) flying to roost on 24 and 25 Mar. Other high counts were 316 at Washington on 4 Jan, 300 at Wisborough Green on 10 Jan, 450 at Warnham LNR between 17-31 Jan and 300 at Steyning Round Hill on 13 Mar.

The earliest report of probable breeding came from Ford (Arun Valley) on 26 Jan. Breeding was confirmed at 149 locations and reported as probable at a further 163. Twelve owl boxes were reported to have been used by nesting Jackdaws. Twenty pairs nested on Winchelsea Castle. Amusingly, at Beeding Hill on 19 Apr and Mountfield on 23 Apr Jackdaws were seen perched on the backs of cattle pulling out hairs and flying off with them, presumably to line their nests. During the BBS, a total of 1288 were recorded from 107 of the 135 1-km squares surveyed, the highest count being 183 at East Ashling on 18 Jun. During the summer period high counts were 380 at Langley (Rake) on 23 Jun and 20 Jul, 220 at Rackham on 2 Aug, 520 at Pulborough Brooks on 14 Aug and 220 at Knowlands Fm (Barcombe) on 23 Aug. There were 10 other counts of 100 or more during this period.

During the autumn and second winter period this species was seen at no less than 265 localities. The first large gathering was 150 at Rye Hbr on 10 Sep. Other high counts were 650 at Lavington Common on 17 Oct, 2000 at Northlands (Warnham) flying east at dusk on 6 Dec, 305 at Weir Wood Res on 7 Dec, 503 at Coombes (Shoreham) on 13 Dec and 505 at Northlands (Bodiam) on 27 Dec. There were 18 further counts of between 100 and 300 individuals during this period. [MJC]

**Rook***Corvus frugilegus*

*Very common resident.*

The highest counts for the first winter period were 381 at Ladyholt Park (Compton) and 254 at Chantry Hill (Storrington) on 24 Jan and 230 at Blackcap Hill (Firle) on 28 Feb. There were eight further counts of 200 or more.

The first records of nest building were at Ladywells (Coombes) on 30 Jan. Breeding was confirmed at 213 sites throughout the county with at least 1486 nests. There were eight rookeries with 30 or more nests including records of 105 at Myrtle Grove Fm (Clapham), 67 at Wilmington, 62 at Angmering Park, 55 at Iford (Lewes) and 48 at Lodge Fm (Cuckfield). During the BBS, 2070 birds were recorded from 68 of the 135 1-km squares surveyed, the highest count being 303 at East Ashling on 18 Jun. The largest summer counts were 1000 at Littleworth (Partridge Green) on 19 Jul, 598 at Rustington on 14 Jun and 520 at Pulborough Brooks on 14 Aug.

In the autumn and second winter period the species was seen in at least 189 localities but only four records of 200 or more were received. At Littleworth on 4 Dec 2000 were seen flying east to roost, dwarfing all other counts. At Heyshott on 15 Dec 375 were counted in two hours, at High Cross Fm (Uckfield) 253 were counted flying south to roost on 20 Dec and 200 were counted at Halseys Fm (Sidlesham) on 21 Sep and at Pagham Hbr on 10 Oct. [MJC]



**Carrion Crow***Corvus corone**Very common resident.*

During the first winter period there were only four counts of 100 or more. These were 124 on 13 Jan at Goring Beach and 100 on the 14<sup>th</sup> at Cradle Hill (Seaford), 102 at Eartham Folly on 26 Feb and 150 at Bulverhythe (St Leonards) on 11 Mar.

During the spring and early summer the four highest counts were 140 at Rake on 21 Apr, 108 at Birdham on 1 Jun, 105 at Bognor Regis on the 11<sup>th</sup> and 125 at East Ashling on the 18<sup>th</sup>.

During the BBS, a total of 1716 birds was recorded in 131 of the 135 1-km squares surveyed, demonstrating the species' widespread distribution throughout Sussex. However, the number of breeding records was lower than in 2008 with 136 confirmed (226 in 2008) and 140 probable (271 in 2008). There were 19 pairs (18 in 2008) at Brighton Wild Park and seven territories (eight in 2008) at Sefton Fm (Rose Green) in 95 ha. Breeding success was only recorded from two nests, both in June; one nest in Lewes had two fledglings present and one at Southwater CP fledged three juveniles.

During the late summer and autumn the highest counts were in July with 300 on the 26<sup>th</sup> at N Stoke, 216 at Ifield Wood on the 30<sup>th</sup> and 100 in the Lower Adur Valley on the 15<sup>th</sup>. In August, 100 were recorded at Pagham Hbr on the 23<sup>rd</sup> and, on 29 Sep, 50 were recorded on a stubble field in Broadbridge Heath. In October, counts of 100 occurred at Pagham Hbr on the 14<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup>.

During the second winter period, the species was seen at some 360 localities. In November, counts of 100 were received from Dell Quay on 2 Nov, Mile Oak (Portslade) on the 7<sup>th</sup> and East Head (Chichester Hbr) on the 11<sup>th</sup>. In December, the highest counts were 226 at Heyshott on the 15<sup>th</sup>, 145 at White Dyke (Hailsham) on the 10<sup>th</sup> and 100 at Rye GC on the 28<sup>th</sup>.

Behavioural records included a bird that was seen with a small bird in its beak at Hurst Green on 1 May and one eating a Wood Pigeon's egg at Pulborough Brooks on 1 Jun. [LAW]

**Raven***Corvus corax**Scarce breeding resident.*

The evidence this year suggests that there are at least 11 active breeding pairs and possibly 16 or more. There were just two references made to diet in the records received, the first was on 21 Mar at Pilsey Island (CBC) with two birds feeding on a rabbit and the second was on 2 May near Seaford Head (RDME) with two birds feeding on a dead lamb; it would be useful if observers see birds with food items/prey that they include the details in their record submission so that gradually a better understanding might be gained of the diet of the birds in our county.

The pair in the Beachy Head area (Site A) successfully fledged at least one young and the Shoreham birds (Site B) raised two. At the other coastal sites birds bred at Site D, at least 4 young were seen at Site E and at Site F at least one young fledged. The birds here relocated to a new ledge a considerable distance from their previous one and much closer to a pair of Peregrines that had successfully fledged young in the past; however this year the two attempts made by them both failed. A pair was seen regularly but no breeding took place, in the Site H area, where they were ousted from a nest by Fulmars in 2008. Breeding had been suspected at another new coastal location (Site I) in 2008 and was confirmed this year with four young being observed in the nest.

Nest building began on 25 Jan at the inland Site C where the pair bred for the first time in 2006 sharing the cliff with a long established pair of Peregrines and again they nested just 6 metres



from their eyrie. Building stopped for some days, possibly because of severe weather, but the nest was completed on 5 Feb. Incubation began on 14 Feb and hatching started on 5 Mar. Attacks by the Peregrines on the Ravens were even more frequent and intense than in previous years and their productivity returned to the level they usually achieved prior to the arrival of the Ravens, fledging three young, compared with two in 2008 and one in 2007. However, the Ravens only fledged two compared with four in 2008 and five in 2007; it is also suspected that the Peregrines may have killed the young Ravens shortly after they fledged.

Five young were fledged at inland Site J, where they bred for the first time in 2008, fledging two young. Records of confirmed breeding were received at three new inland sites and breeding was suspected at three others. Also pairs of birds were again observed regularly throughout the breeding season in a number of other inland areas where breeding has been suspected for several years but has still not been proven.

Realistically, the number of breeding pairs reported above is probably much lower than the number actually breeding in the county. If observers suspect breeding might be taking place it would be extremely valuable if they could visit the area again later in the season to try and confirm whether it has or not and, best of all, determine if possible a minimum number of fledged young. [PJE]

## **Goldcrest**

## *Regulus regulus*

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

A total of almost 1200 records was received of this very common resident, from 227 1-km squares within the county, including records from 342 sites during the breeding season.

During the first winter period, individuals and small parties of wintering birds were recorded throughout the county, although numbers appeared lower than in recent years. Many records came from deciduous and coniferous woodlands inland but there was a notable increase in the number of birds seen near to the coast compared to recent years. Fifteen or more birds were recorded from eight sites, including coastal locations such as Thorney Island SF, Emsworth Marina (Chichester Hbr) and Shoreham-by-Sea. The highest counts during this period came from Owlbeech Woods (Horsham) with 30 present on 19 Jan. There were no records of definite spring passage migrants.

Breeding season records were significantly down on 2008 in what was a disappointing year for this species. During the BBS, a total of 80 birds was recorded from 36 of the 135 1-km squares surveyed (1998: 163 birds from 55 of the 136 1-km squares surveyed). Breeding was confirmed in 20 tetrads and was thought probable in a further 72 (2008: 37 and 102). Seventeen birds were recorded during an Atlas survey visit at Cowdray Forest (Worth) but a number of observers remarked on a decline in breeding numbers this year.

In average years autumn passage involves numerous birds being seen along the coast with groups of up to 40 being regularly recorded from late September. However, in 2009, autumn passage was barely discernable. From September, ones and twos started to be seen at sites along the coast such as Seaford and Pett Level but the first double figure count was not recorded until 26 Oct when 12 were present at Pett Level. The only other double figure count from a coastal site was of 11 possible migrants at Hastings CP on 11 Nov. Throughout the autumn and second winter period only four birds were recorded at Beachy Head. One observer at this site commented that the species was almost entirely absent all year and observers from other sites commented that it was a particularly poor autumn for this species. During the second winter period, the species

was seen at some 150 localities. The most significant counts of wintering flocks came from well inland, with 40 at Warnham LNR on 29 Nov and 20 at Owlbeech Woods on 17 Dec. [DG]

## Firecrest

*Regulus ignicapilla*

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

**2008:** The record of a possible pair at Horse Eye Level (*SxBR08 61:182*) has been reported as a keyboard error by the observer: it should have referred to two Ravens pulling the tail of a standing lamb!

**2009:** Two-thirds of sightings from the early winter period came from the coast or coastal plain with just 43 records up to the end of March (cf. 117 in 2008, 73 in 2007 and 53 in 2006). These came mainly from the west of the county and involved counts of only ones and twos, although the only regular sightings were from Apuldrum, Arundel WWT, Coldwaltham SF, Leechpool and Owlbeech Woods (Horsham) and Pett Level. This trend continued in April with the exception of a count of three at West Dean Woods, a favoured location, on the 1<sup>st</sup>.

The approximate minimum monthly totals were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>Monthly total</b>	16	13	12	15	15	5	4	1	26	98	40	27

During the breeding season, the first record of singing was of a male in yew trees at Arundel Park on 7 Apr. Elsewhere, singing birds included four at Stanley Common on 4 May, two at West Dean Woods on the 12<sup>th</sup> and two in dense conifers at Angmering Park on the 21<sup>st</sup>. The count at West Dean Woods compares unfavourably with records from previous years (38 in 2008, 70 in 2007 and 49 in 2006) and was the lowest for several years. A survey on the 28<sup>th</sup> of the Black Down area (Fernhurst), where birds had been recorded in previous years, found none singing at all. This apparent drop in numbers in previously favoured areas may be due more to a drop in surveyor effort rather than an actual reduction in population. The only record of confirmed breeding was from Apuldrum where a male was seen with a juvenile in the churchyard on 30 Jul. Breeding was recorded as probable at four other sites, two in the west and two in the east of the county. Breeding was possible at four sites, all in the west, additional to those above where actual singing was noted. During the BBS, only one bird was recorded from the 135 1-km squares surveyed, at Southleigh Forest (Emsworth) on 2 Jun.

During the last four months of the year, there was a marked increase in sightings across the county as migrants arrived from, presumably, the continent. The approximate minimum monthly totals were as follows:

	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>Seaford Head/Hope Gap</b>	-	11	2	-
<b>Beachy Head</b>	10	26	5	-
<b>Hastings</b>	2	13	2	-
<b>Pett Level</b>	2	9	1	1
<b>Other sites</b>	12	39	30	26
<b>Totals</b>	26	98	40	27

The first potential autumn migrant was one noted at Hodcombe (Beachy Head) on 25 Aug. This was followed two weeks later by singletons at Duncton Common and Sheepcote Valley (Brighton) on 11 Sep and at Findon and Weir Wood Res on the 12<sup>th</sup>. There was then another gap of 11 days until, on the 23<sup>rd</sup>, a count of ten at Whitbread Hollow (Beachy Head) was followed by almost daily sightings to the end of the month. The species was recorded on 26 days in October; the highest counts included, at Beachy Head, 12 on the 21<sup>st</sup>, six at Atherington (Climping), five at Hastings and seven at Rottingdean on the 22<sup>nd</sup>, six at Seaford on the 24<sup>th</sup> and six more at Pett Level on the 26<sup>th</sup>.



*Firecrest, West Dean, July 2009 (Dorian Mason)*

During the second winter period, the species was recorded in some 42 localities both coastal and inland, usually as either ones or twos. The highest counts during the period were: in November, fours at Whitbread Hollow on the 6<sup>th</sup> and Climping on the 9<sup>th</sup>; in December, threes at Climping and Leechpool Woods on the 1<sup>st</sup> and West Dean Woods on the 20<sup>th</sup>.

The Steyning RG reported that four new young birds were ringed at Cissbury North Scarp during the season and one new young bird at Ladywells (Coombes). Ringers at Owlbeech Woods ringed two young birds and several were ringed at Pett Level. [SB]

## **Penduline Tit**

*Remiz pendulinus*

*Rare vagrant.*

Five juveniles were trapped at Pett Level in November, a male on 9<sup>th</sup> and three males and a female together on 12<sup>th</sup> (RBRG). All have been accepted by BBRC. They were all photographed, those on 12<sup>th</sup> taking three ringers to get a group shot! Fifteen have been recorded in the county since the beginning of 2000 and 30 in total. They have arrived in April (three together on 9<sup>th</sup>),

September (three, from 23<sup>rd</sup>), October (16) and November (eight, to 14<sup>th</sup>) and were seen at Pett (18), Filsham (seven), Pagham (four) and Beachy Head. A widely seen long stayer has yet to appear in the county, despite several at Dungeness, and would seem long overdue. [RJF]

## Blue Tit

*Cyanistes caeruleus*

*Abundant resident.*

In the first winter period, the five largest counts during Atlas surveys were 98 at Felbridge on 11 Jan, 95 at Brooks Green on 8 Feb, 90 at Buxted Park (Uckfield) on 17 Feb, 82 at Uckfield on 20 Jan, and 65 at Manor Royal (Crawley) on 14 Jan. Nectar is of great importance to this species as an energy-rich food before breeding: this is probably why 11 birds were feeding on willow catkins at Streat on 7 Mar.

During the BBS, a total of 1550 birds was recorded from 130 of the 135 1-km squares surveyed, with a highest count of 43. Breeding was confirmed in 335 tetrads, and probable in a further 78. Nest-building was mentioned in 20 records between 21 Mar and 12 May, nests with eggs in four records between 13 Apr and 26 May and nestlings in 31 records between 14 Apr and 28 May. As usual, fledged young was the commonest way of confirming breeding for this hole-nesting species with 364 records between 25 May and 21 Aug.

During the breeding season, the five largest Atlas survey counts were 72 at Felbridge on 3 Jun, 70 at Buxted Park on 14 Apr, 64 at Bosham on 5 Jun, 60 at Holmbush Fm (Faygate), and 56 at Graffham on 15 Jun. High counts of territories included 64 at Brighton Wild Park, 59 at Bewl Water and 47 at Pagham Hbr. In 95 ha of mixed farmland at Sefter Fm (Rose Green) there were 13 territories. On the Norfolk Estate (Arundel), there were two territories at Burpham and at Rackham Fm, and single territories at each of Wepham Down, North Stoke and Lee Fm (Patching). Few reports were received from nest box studies, but fledging success seemed high. In 7 ha of Hotham Park (Bognor) broods fledged from 20 nest boxes. At Arlington Res, 54 young fledged from six nest boxes and at Thorney Deeps, 14 fledged from two nest boxes. At Ladywells (Coombes) three out of eleven nest boxes were occupied; there were two broods of six and ten chicks were ringed.

The largest post-breeding counts were 39 at Owlbeech Woods (Horsham) and 35 at Leechpool Wood (Horsham) on 9 Aug (these two sites also held other counts of above 32 on other dates), 34 at Patcham (Brighton) on 2 Aug, 33 at Pett Level during Sep and 32 at Isfield Wood on 30 Jul. One taken by a Sparrowhawk at Warnham LNR on 24 Sep illustrated a major cause of mortality which is rarely witnessed.

In the autumn (with a fair beech-mast crop), the largest counts were 70 at Southwater CP on 26 Oct and 60 at Owlbeech Woods on 29 Oct. During the second winter period, the species was seen at some 347 localities. The highest counts in this period were 60 at Chesworth Fm (Horsham) on 17 Nov (and three other counts of 50 or more) and 60 at Earnley on 28 Dec (and two other counts of 50). [DH]

## Great Tit

*Parus major*

*Abundant resident.*

In the first winter period, the largest counts were 51 at Buxted Park (Uckfield) on 17 Feb, 43 at Chelwood Common (Danehill) on 5 Feb, 41 at Bowford Fm (Goose Green) on 21 Feb, 40 at Broxmead (Bolney) on 8 Feb, 39 at both Bolney on 7 Feb and Guestling Wood on 17 Mar.

During the BBS, a total of 928 birds was recorded from 125 of the 135 1-km squares surveyed, with a highest count of 24 at Mill Place (Weir Wood Res) on 15 Apr. Breeding was confirmed in 269 tetrads and probable in a further 94. The commonest evidence for confirmed breeding was the presence of fledged young for which there were 277 records between 25 May and 31 Jul.

During the breeding season, the three largest counts were 39 at Buxted Park on 17 Apr, 34 at Funtington on 14 Apr and 31 at Linchmere (Fernhurst) on 5 Jun. There were 59 territories at Bewl Water, 45 at Pagham Hbr and 44 at Brighton Wild Park (the lowest count there for seven years). In 95 ha of mixed farmland at Sefter Fm (Rose Green) there were 12 territories. On the Norfolk Estate (Arundel), there were four territories at Burpham and at North Stoke, two at Wepham Down and at Lee Fm (Patching) and single territories at three other sites. At Hotham Park (Bognor) two nest boxes were occupied in seven ha. The few nest box studies reported included, at Arlington Res, 25 young fledged from three nest boxes, while at Thorney Deepes, a pair nested in an old caravan and fledged five young. Other unusual nest sites were a hole in a cattle trough at Maddoms Wood (Whatlington), and in a drain pipe at Coldean (Brighton).

After breeding, the only counts exceeding 20 birds were 47 during a survey at Ifield Wood on 30 Jul and 40 at Sandgate Park (Storrington) on 14 Aug. In the second winter period, when the beech-mast crop was fair, there were only eight concentrations of more than 30 birds. The highest were, 43 at Dial Post on 2 Nov, 42 at Ringles Cross (Uckfield) on the 4<sup>th</sup>, 50 at Owlbeech Woods (Horsham) and 45 at Itchingfield on 15 Dec and 44 at The Mens (Kirdford) on the 5<sup>th</sup>. [DH]

## Coal Tit

## *Periparus ater*

*Very common resident.*

In the first winter period, the largest counts of 20 were both at Owlbeech Woods (Horsham) on 18 Jan and 22 Mar. Other high counts were 16 at Udiam Fm (Bodiam) on 24 Feb and 15 at Hargate Forest (Frant) on 27 Feb. At Lewes on 3 Feb, a bird briefly visited a nyger seed feeder before moving to other feeders; nyger seeds are very popular with this species elsewhere in the UK and it would be interesting to know how frequently they are used in Sussex.

During the BBS, a total of 140 birds was recorded from 48 of the 135 1-km squares surveyed, with a highest count of 23. The highest breeding season count of 30 in St Leonards Forest on 26 Jun included recently fledged young. Breeding surveys in defined areas included three territories at Warnham LNR and two at Bewl Water. Two birds landed on the ground directly in front of an observer at Duddleswell on 5 Apr and continued to spar with each other. Breeding was confirmed in 59 tetrads, and probable in a further 57. Nest building was first recorded at Robertsbridge on 15 Mar; the latest suggestion of building was a bird carrying a feather at Chanctonbury Ring on 6 May. The most common evidence for breeding was observation of recently fledged young with 68 records from 25 May to 26 Jul. The five largest breeding season counts were all in mid-to-late June, after most young would have fledged: 21 at Creep Wood (Battle) on the 25<sup>th</sup>, 20 at Hastings Beach on the 14<sup>th</sup>, 19 at Hollycombe (Linchmere) on the 14<sup>th</sup>, 17 at Jews Wood (Bells Yew Green) on the 28<sup>th</sup>, and 16 at Chelwood Gate on the 29<sup>th</sup>.

The largest post-breeding counts were 17 at Owlbeech Woods on 9 Aug and 15 at Chelwood Gate on 24 Aug. Coal Tits are scarce on the Selsey peninsula (*Birds of Sussex*), so one at North Wall (Pagham Hbr) on 2 Jul suggests dispersal. The closest other sightings in 2009 were singletons at Bognor Regis on 4 Jan and at West Wittering on 1 Mar.

The largest concentration in the autumn was 20 at South Chase (Ashdown Forest) on 21 Oct. During the second winter period, the species was seen at some 157 localities. The highest count in November was 16 at Chelwood Gate on the 9<sup>th</sup> and, in December, 18 at Marley Common on

the 25<sup>th</sup>. Coal Tits are inveterate hoarders of food: a pair at Hurst Green on 8 Nov were watched burying sunflower hearts in a lawn; it was as if they had divided the lawn area in two and each bird hid its seeds in its own half.

Reports of birds showing characteristics of the continental race *ater* should be submitted to the Recorder with a full description for consideration by SOSRC. [DH]

## **Willow Tit**

*Poecile montanus*

*Scarce and declining resident. Red listed species of high conservation concern.*

With only 12 records from just eight sites, and no evidence of breeding success for the second year running, this species may be doomed as a county bird. The only counts of more than one bird were a pair in a wood in the far west of the county on 8 Apr and three in unspecified habitat on downland in mid-Sussex on 10 Sep.

Sightings came from eight tetrads (down from 14 in 2008). As usual, most were either in the area around West Dean Woods or on the High Weald running east to Hurst Green. Interestingly, Marsh Tits were recorded at six of the eight sites. Although only two sites were definitely occupied during the breeding season, this is such a sedentary species that most sightings throughout the year were probably from potential breeding sites. Unsurprisingly, none was recorded during the BBS in the 135 1-km squares surveyed.

This species can be hard to separate from Marsh Tit (*British Birds 102:604-616*) and, with further evidence of a decline in numbers, this species has now been added to those for which a description is required by SOSRC (preferably with a six figure OS map reference).

It also raises the hope that some Willow Tits are being overlooked. [DH]

## **Marsh Tit**

*Poecile palustris*

*Scarce resident. Red listed species of high conservation concern.*

This is much the commoner of our two scarce 'brown tits' with 612 records from 261 sites involving at least 218 tetrads (cf. figures for Willow Tit).

Most counts were of only one or two birds. The largest concentrations in the first winter period were found during Atlas surveys: eight at Hareholt Fm (Mayfield) on 15 Jan and seven at Motts Mill (Groombridge) on 29 Jan.

There were records from 141 sites during the breeding season, but this is such a sedentary species that most sightings were probably from potential breeding sites regardless of date. Breeding was confirmed in 26 tetrads and probable in 35 more. As expected for a hole-nesting species, the commonest method of confirming breeding was seeing recently fledged young; there were 25 such records from 22 May to 11 Aug.

During the BBS, a total of 28 birds was recorded from 14 of the 135 1-km squares surveyed, with a highest count of four. Four pairs bred at Bewl Water and Pulborough Brooks, three at West Dean Woods and at least one pair in each of Leechpool and Owlbeech Woods (Horsham); the nest in Leechpool Woods was preyed upon by a Grey Squirrel at the egg stage. Six birds at Plashett Park on 22 Apr included three singing males. Counts of seven birds at Danegate on 14 Jun and six at Browns Oak Fm (Brightling) on 13 Jun included fledglings.

Post-breeding concentrations were small, the largest being nine at Linch Down (Bepton) on 25 Jul, eight at Owlbeech Woods on 23 Aug and six at Monkton (Chilgrove) on 26 Jul. One near



Firle Beacon on 6 Sep was the observer's first record for four years in an area where the species is scarce (*SxBR 61:190*); it was followed by two birds at a nearby site on 30 Sep. These were the only hints of autumn dispersal this year.

During the second winter period, the species was seen at some 98 localities. The largest concentrations in this period were of eight at Ringles Cross (Uckfield) on 4 Nov, five at Weir Wood Res on the 10<sup>th</sup>, seven at Paddockhurst Place (Worth) on 11 Dec and five at Parham Estate also on the 11<sup>th</sup> and Dallington Forest on the 5<sup>th</sup>. [DH]

## Bearded Tit

## *Panurus biarmarcus*

*Scarce breeding resident, and very scarce passage migrant and winter visitor. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern. Schedule 1 species.*

Most records came from two coastal areas at opposite ends of the county: between Chichester Hbr and Pagham Hbr, and between Pett Level and Rye Hbr. During the first winter period there were only a few records of birds seen in the gap between these regular areas. Two males and a female that had appeared at the Ouse Estuary Project (Newhaven) on 14 Nov 2008 remained until at least 7 Jan, when a third male was recorded (four was also the peak count in Dec 2008). One bird was recorded there on 24 Jan, while two were reported at three sites on the Lewes Brooks around the Glynde-Ouse Confluence between 15 Feb and 15 Mar. Eight birds were near Langney Lake (Eastbourne) on 14 Jan.

The peak counts outside the breeding season for ten sites where the species was recorded were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar		Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Thorney Island	-	-	-		2	-	1	-	-
Thorney Deepes	8	-	8		43	40	20	22	20
Emsworth Marina	7	-	-		2	-	-	-	-
Fishbourne Channel	-	-	-		-	-	1	-	-
Pagham Hbr	1	-	1		-	2	1	-	7
Lewes Brooks	-	2	2		-	-	-	-	-
Ouse Estuary Project	4	-	-		-	-	-	-	-
Langney (Eastbourne)	8	-	-		-	-	-	-	-
Pett Level	2	5	-		3	10	8	6	8
Rye Hbr	3	2	7		10	15	5	7	3

During the BBS, one bird was recorded from one of the 135 1-km squares surveyed. Breeding was confirmed at four sites by seeing adults carrying food and subsequently recording recently fledged young. Males seen at Thorney Deepes carrying food on 8 Apr were exceptionally early (eggs rarely hatch in Sussex before late April). The first fledged young were seen on 13 May at Thorney Deepes, at Rye Hbr on 2 Jun and Pett Level on the 10<sup>th</sup>. Breeding success was hard to evaluate, but at Thorney Deepes it was better than in 2008 with four pairs fledging at least 35 young between May and August.

Distinctive 'high flying' behaviour, which is associated with dispersal, was noted at Thorney Deepes on six dates between 19 Sep and 6 Nov involving eight flocks of two to 22 birds. Departures were observed on 26 Sep (two headed south-west and, ten minutes later, ten headed west) and 13 Oct (eight headed east). Although famed for its agility in reeds, this species often forages low down and freely uses the ground, hopping and running rapidly after insects in the breeding



season. Two birds, unusually feeding on the ground under reeds at Rye Hbr on 15 Sep, had probably already switched to their winter diet of seeds. [DH]

## Wood Lark

*Lullula arborea*

*Scarce resident and passage migrant. Red listed species of high conservation concern. Schedule 1 species.*

In the first winter period, the first record of the year was of ten birds seen at Pett Level on 3 Jan. The largest flock was 13 birds at Markwells Wood (West Marsden) on the 24<sup>th</sup>, a flock of ten was at Dial Post Capite on the 31<sup>st</sup> and six were at Pett Level on the 8<sup>th</sup>. In February, males in song flight were observed at Iping Common on the 11<sup>th</sup> and five birds were noted at Black Down (Fernhurst) on the 16<sup>th</sup>.

The Wealden Heaths Breeding Bird Survey identified 30 territories in the west of the county including five at Chapel Common (Liphook), five at Iping Common, four at Black Down and four at Coates Common.

Breeding was confirmed in seven tetrads. Birds were seen carrying food at Iping Common on 20 May. In Ashdown Forest, breeding was confirmed in the Hindleap Warren area on 24 May, at Ashdown Ridge on the 23<sup>rd</sup> (fledged young were recorded) and at Misbourne on 8 Jun. Elsewhere, adults were seen carrying food to fledged young at Owlbeech Woods (Horsham) on 18 Jun, breeding was confirmed at Hurston Warren (Parham) on 11<sup>th</sup> and at Shillinglee Park North on 23<sup>rd</sup>. Breeding was probable in a further 27 tetrads and possible in another 14. Most of these records were from Ashdown Forest or the area covered by the WHBBS but there were also sightings of singing birds at Goffsland Fm (Dragons Green) on 30 Apr, West Dean Woods on 20 May and 6 Jun, Ladyholt Park on 17 Jun, Ebernoe Common on 8 Jun, two birds in song at Stopham (Fittleworth) on 27 Jun, a pair at Pulborough Brooks and a pair at Broxmead (Bolney) on 11 Jun. During the BBS, a total of six birds was counted in two of the 135 1-km squares surveyed.

In the second winter period there were four birds at Iping Common on 17 Nov, including singing males, and three birds again at the same site on 10 Dec, again with singing males. The last singing bird of the year was at Lavington Common on 12 Dec. Six birds were seen at Lord's Piece (Coates Common) on 18 Nov and the final sighting of the year was a small flock of four at the same site on 14 Dec. [SPS]

## Sky Lark

*Alauda arvensis*

*Fairly common but declining resident, passage migrant and winter visitor. Red listed species of high conservation concern.*

During the first winter period, 726 Sky Larks were counted in 83 tetrads, an average of 8.75 per occupied tetrad. Although the largest flocks were on the coast and in the river valleys, there were also sizeable flocks on the Downs and in the Weald. Around the western harbours on 7 Jan, 56 were feeding in sand dunes at Pilsey Island with another 75 nearby on stubble on the south of Thorney Island and, on 10 Jan, 90 were at East Head (West Wittering). At Atherington (Climping) a flock of 200 was present on the same date. In the valley of the R Ouse between Rodmell and Beddingham a flock of 140 was recorded on 6 Jan rising to 200 four days later with 100 still present on 1 Feb and 34 on 20 Feb. Elsewhere, there were flocks of over 30 at c.20 sites, including 70 at Compton on the first day of the year, 85 at Manor Fm (West Dean) on 6

Jan, a regular flock at Northlands (Warnham) reaching 70 on 31 Jan and 76 in fields at Newick after heavy snow on 2 Feb. The only major movement noted was on the same date when over 250 flew west at Worthing, but small numbers were reported as migrants from April to July at Pagham Hbr.

The earliest song reported was at Cobnor (Chichester Hbr) on 7 Jan and, by 14 Feb, five were singing at Camp Hill (Ashdown Forest). Breeding was confirmed in 24 tetrads and probable in 130. The largest number found in a breeding season TTV was 39 at Clapham. An estimated 397 pairs bred in nine tetrads on the Norfolk Estate, on the eastern side of the R Arun between Amberley and Arundel, with 188 and 122 in the tetrads centred respectively on The Burgh and immediately to the south on Home Fm (Wepham). Other counts of breeding pairs in defined areas (2008's figures in brackets) include 31 at Pagham Hbr, 91 in 665 ha in the western Selsey Peninsula, 12 (11) in 95ha at Sefter Fm (Rose Green), 30 (19) at Brighton Wild Park and 33 (40) at Rye Hbr. Breeding was reported throughout Ashdown Forest with up to ten heard singing together at Camp Hill. During the BBS, a total of 348 was counted in 68 of the 135 1-km squares surveyed, close to the figures for 2008, with a highest count of 22 at Pevensey Bridge Level.

As usual, there were many records of small numbers flying over, particularly in October, although several observers remarked on lower numbers than usual and of larger flocks which might be migrants or local. Clearer indications of movement were a flock of at least 24 in a weedy field on Newhaven Cliffs on 18 Oct, which included two which flew in off the sea, and 59 which flew west at Hastings CP on 23 Oct. At the Wild Park, the peak daily number passing over was 45 on 14 Oct and, at Seaford, a total of 26 were seen to fly over between 29 Sep and 27 Oct.

In October larger flocks were mainly in the east of the county. During the second winter period, numbers built up again in the western harbours, but the highest numbers were 40 at Hooe Level (Pevensey) on 5 Nov, 100 at Rodmell Brooks on 29 Dec and a flock of 400 at Steyning on 20 Dec feeding on oilseed rape. [ACG]

## Sand Martin

## *Riparia riparia*

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

The first sighting of the year involved two birds at Weir Wood Res on the exceptionally early date of 27 Feb (NAD), a new county record, five days earlier than the previous record and, coincidentally, at the same site as the previous record of 4 Mar 2008. This was followed in March by two at Pulborough Brooks on the 10<sup>th</sup> (two days earlier than the ten-year average date), three at Pagham Hbr on the 13<sup>th</sup> and then by a further 32 records of single figures during 16 of the next 19 days to the month's end.

Spring migration continued through April and was recorded on 19 days from both ends of the county with a peak period from the 15<sup>th</sup> to the 19<sup>th</sup>. Only 15 of the 52 records received were in double figures; the highest counts were at least 250 at Chichester GP and 80 at North Mundham on the 17<sup>th</sup> while other records did not exceed 30 birds.

There was a steady stream of arrivals during the first half of May but in smaller numbers. Breeding was positively confirmed at just Stedham Common (29 occupied nests) but was highly probable at both Duncton (c.50 nest holes) and West Heath Common. This is one of the least well recorded breeding species in the county and any records would be most welcome.

The first indications of return migration were of 28 flying south over the beach west of Selsey on 21 Jun and 50 over Pagham Hbr on the 27<sup>th</sup>. During the first ten days of July, further small

parties were seen moving south or west. However, from the 12<sup>th</sup>, when 50 S passed Arlington Res and also Exceat Bridge (Cuckmere), there was a large increase in numbers with several sightings in treble figures: 200 at Rye Hbr on both the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup>, 100 on the 16<sup>th</sup>, 100 at Weir Wood Res on the 15<sup>th</sup> and, at Pulborough Brooks 100 on the 17<sup>th</sup> and 200 on the 27<sup>th</sup>. Observers at Pett Level recorded 800 on the 16<sup>th</sup>, 150 on the 30<sup>th</sup> and at least 1100 on the 31<sup>st</sup> when 300 were counted at nearby Rye Hbr (possibly some of the same). In the west, over 900 had been counted at Pagham Hbr on the 28<sup>th</sup>.

This trend continued through August with 16 counts in three figures at mainly coastal sites, the most notable being 1500 on the 8<sup>th</sup> over the North Fields (Pagham Hbr) and, on the 31<sup>st</sup>, 5000 at Pett Level.

In September, numbers declined, particularly towards the end of the month, but there were still 12 counts in treble figures with highs of at least 5000 at Pett Level on the 5<sup>th</sup> and 1000 at Newhaven on the 20<sup>th</sup>, the last such count of the year. There were only five records for October: at least 12 at Pulborough Brooks on the 1<sup>st</sup>, singles at Pett Level on the 2<sup>nd</sup>, Chesworth Fm (Horsham) on the 3<sup>rd</sup> and Beachy Head on the 6<sup>th</sup>. The final sighting was of three at Pett Level on the 7<sup>th</sup>, 16 days earlier than the 10-year average date. [SB]

## Barn Swallow

## *Hirundo rustica*

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

The first sighting of the year was of one at Pulborough Brooks on the relatively late date of 16 Mar (cf. the 10-year average date of 10 Mar) with further records of one there each day to the 19<sup>th</sup> when another bird was noted at Pagham Hbr. The species was then recorded somewhere in the county on all days except nine to 31 Oct. Ones and twos were then seen at various sites in the west of the county until the 27<sup>th</sup>, when the first sighting from the east of the county was a singleton at Rye Hbr. Thereafter, there was a large increase in sightings and numbers across the county included double figures on the 29<sup>th</sup> of 20 at Pulborough Brooks, 22 at Barcombe Res and ten at Weir Wood Res.

During April, there was a continuous flow of arrivals: the highest counts were 90 at Weir Wood Res on the 17<sup>th</sup> and 60 at Pulborough Brooks on the 27<sup>th</sup>. At Selsey Bill, 102 flew over on the 18<sup>th</sup>, 60 on the 20<sup>th</sup> and 300 on the 21<sup>st</sup>. Significant counts in May, while migration continued, came mainly from coastal sites: at Selsey Bill there were 88 over on the 1<sup>st</sup>, 97 on the 4<sup>th</sup> and 132 on the 10<sup>th</sup>; at Worthing Beach, 58 flew over on the 4<sup>th</sup>; at Rye Hbr, 100 on the 18<sup>th</sup>.

The first birds to be recorded back at breeding sites were one at a barn at Byworth (Petworth) on 1<sup>st</sup> Apr, two days earlier than in 2008, and a pair at Chiddingly on the 6<sup>th</sup>. Breeding was confirmed (by sightings of adults carrying food, using nests or young being seen) in 64 tetrads and fledged young (which may not have bred locally) were recorded in another 46, giving a possible total of 110 (cf. 119 in 2008), almost exclusively from BTO Atlas records. Breeding was probable at a further 118 sites. The latest record of breeding was a pair still feeding young on a nest on 13 Sep at Byworth.

The first sighting of pre-migratory flocking involved 100 going into a reedbed roost at Thorney Deeps on 30 Jun. Similar counts of post-breeding flocks in July included high counts of 80 at Steyning Bowl on the 8<sup>th</sup>, 1000 at Pett Level on the 16<sup>th</sup>, 167 at Pagham Hbr on the 28<sup>th</sup> and 500 into the Thorney Deeps roost on the 31<sup>st</sup>. In the first half of August, three figure counts came from Pagham Hbr (100 on the 6<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup>), the Thorney Deeps roost (100 on the 18<sup>th</sup>) and Pett Level

(562 on the 19<sup>th</sup>). Later in the month, similar counts occurred on the 23<sup>rd</sup> at Warningcamp (100), Pagham Hbr (200) and Sidlesham Ferry (700), on the 24<sup>th</sup> at Weir Wood Res (200) and, on the 29<sup>th</sup>, at Pagham Hbr (100).

Autumn migration peaked in September. There were 12 counts in four figures and a further 45 in three figures. On the 8<sup>th</sup>, 1500 were recorded at Pagham Hbr while 1087 E were counted in ½ hr (14.30 to 15.00) over Goring Gap. Other four figure counts involved 1000 over Littlehampton on the 11<sup>th</sup>, 1600 E over Beachy Head on the 12<sup>th</sup>, 1100 the following day, 3000 on the 19<sup>th</sup> and 2300 on the 20<sup>th</sup>, 1000 over Worthing Beach on the 16<sup>th</sup> and 6000 on 20<sup>th</sup>, 5000 at Pett Level on the 20<sup>th</sup> as well as 1580 at Newhaven Cliffs and, finally, 2000 over Whitbread Hollow (Beachy Head) on the 30<sup>th</sup>.

Numbers in October dropped quite rapidly but still included two four figure counts. Significant numbers included, on the 6<sup>th</sup>, 200 at Birling Gap on the 9<sup>th</sup>, 220 at Splash Point (Seaford), 291 at Worthing Beach, 200 at Rye Hbr LNR and 1120 E over Hastings and, the following day, 1313 at Pett Level. Numbers then declined noticeably, a trend which continued into November with just nine records in single figures up to the 18<sup>th</sup>. The last two sightings for the year were in December: singletons at Upper Beeding on the 11<sup>th</sup> and at Wivelsfield on the 13<sup>th</sup>, 18 days later than the 10-year average. [SB]

## House Martin

## *Delichon urbica*

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

The first record of the year came from the inland site of Pulborough Brooks, where one bird was recorded on 18 Mar, two days later than the 10-year average; it was quickly followed by 1 N over Hailsham on the 22<sup>nd</sup>. There were then single birds seen at the former site on the 28<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup>, three at Weir Wood Res on the 29<sup>th</sup> and three at Lewes on the 31<sup>st</sup>.

Migration continued through April on an almost daily basis. There were a good number of wide-ranging records during April but with only 28 in double figures, including five of 50 or more: the largest counts were 200 at Chichester GP and North Mundham on the 4<sup>th</sup>, 50 at Barcombe Res on the 19<sup>th</sup>, 60 at Pulborough Brooks on the 27<sup>th</sup> and 50 there the following day. In May, although there was a 40% increase in the number of records, there were only 35 in double figures (including only one over 50): the highs were 40 at Warnham LNR on 4<sup>th</sup> and 70 at Rye Hbr on the 8<sup>th</sup>.

The first sign of birds visiting probable nest site were at Sheffield Park Station on 13 Apr and at Hartfield on the 15<sup>th</sup>, where seven birds were showing interest in an apparently suitable older building. Breeding was confirmed (by sightings of adults carrying food, using nests or of young being seen) in 47 tetrads and fledged young (which may not have bred locally) were recorded in another four, giving a positive total of 52 (cf. 108 in 2008), almost exclusively from Atlas records. Breeding was probable at, approximately, a further 41 sites.

The only sizeable flock noted in June was of 36 at Markwells Wood (West Marden) on 15<sup>th</sup> and there were only 11 other records of 20 or more. The first post-breeding flocks were seen in July; the only one in three figures was 155 at Weir Wood Res on the 15<sup>th</sup> and there were two counts of 50 elsewhere. In August, there was an increase in the number of three figure counts (six) with the largest being 500 at Halseys Fm (Sidlesham) on the 26<sup>th</sup>. But in September, very large movements were recorded, mainly during the second half of the month; there were no less than 20 four figure counts and one of five figures. The minimum number of birds on the move during the peak passage period (10<sup>th</sup> to 30<sup>th</sup>), assuming that the highest number at any site on any

day was the minimum moving that day and that birds seen on subsequent days were different, was as follows:

Date	No. of birds	Direction	Location
10 Sep	1000	E	Climping Atherington
12 Sep	1800	E	Beachy Head
13 Sep	2700	E	Beachy Head
16 Sep	1000	E	Beachy Head
19 Sep	2400	n/a	Pett Level
20 Sep	12,700	E	Newhaven Cliffs
23 Sep	1400	n/a	Weir Wood Res
24 Sep	1100	W	Hastings
26 Sep	1500	E	Beachy Head
27 Sep	2000	E	Seaford
27 Sep	4000	S	Selsey Bill
28 Sep	1000	n/a	Southwater CP
30 Sep	3000	n/a	Whitbread Hollow (Beachy Head)
<b>Total</b>	<b>35,600</b>		

At least 35,600 birds passed through the county during this period, mostly moving eastwards, presumably to cross the English Channel at its narrowest point. Migration continued during the first half of October but at a much slower rate; there were only ten three figure counts including 300 E at Church Norton on the 1<sup>st</sup>, 400 E near Lancing College on the 2<sup>nd</sup>, 576 at Pett Level on the 3<sup>rd</sup>, 750 at Beachy Head on the 10<sup>th</sup> and 760 at Hastings CP on the 12<sup>th</sup>. The month's total at Pett Level was 1127, of which 570 were trapped and ringed. There were only six more records from 18 Oct to the 31<sup>st</sup>. In November, the last three records were of singletons on the 7<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup> and, finally, at Robertsbridge on the 26<sup>th</sup>, 15 days later than the 10-year average date. [SB]

## Red-rumped Swallow

*Cecropis daurica*

*Rare vagrant.*

Two were seen at Pett Level on 7 Nov (RBRG) and take the county total to 26. They were feeding along the back of the level with a single Barn Swallow and are the first to be recorded in the county in November. Previous records include two birds together on two occasions, the other instances being at Arlington Res from 30 Apr - 5 May 2003 and at Pett on 28 Apr 2008. The first county record was in 1967 and subsequent decade totals are two, five, ten and now nine. Previous records have been in April (nine from 17<sup>th</sup>), May (14 to 29<sup>th</sup>) and September (2<sup>nd</sup>, 1997). [RJF]

## Cetti's Warbler

*Cettia cetti*

*Scarce but increasing resident, passage migrant and winter visitor.*

During January and February there were reports from 20 different locations. The main concentrations were at Rye Hbr, Pett Level and Thorney Island where there were maxima of five, seven and six respectively. Other sites where birds were recorded were at Greatham on 15 Jan, Kings Barn Lane (Steyning) on 8 Feb, Winchelsea Marsh on the 15<sup>th</sup>, Lewes Brooks on the 20<sup>th</sup>, South Bersted on the 20<sup>th</sup> and Nyetimber (Bognor) on the 26<sup>th</sup>. A single bird was also present at Warnham LNR during this period, but was not recorded there later in the year.

Breeding season counts showed a slight increase over those of 2008 with nine males at Arundel WWT, 11 males holding territory at Thorney Island, where the first young were noted on 20 May, and 15 singing males at Rye Hbr. Twenty eight pairs at Pagham Hbr were notably more than the previous year's estimate of 22. The species is continuing to spread out from the main sites, and records in May and June came from Middleton-on-Sea, Beeding Brooks, New Salts Fm (Lancing), R Ouse (Southeast), Lewes Brooks, White Dyke (Hailsham), and Bulverhythe (St Leonards), where seven were found on a tetrad survey on 3 Jun. . A broad analysis of records from April to July suggests a minimum of 173 birds at 56 localities.

Autumn and winter records were restricted to the regular sites. In October, the monthly maximum at Pett Level was 21 on the 18<sup>th</sup>. At Thorney Deeps, there were ten on 13 Oct while in the following month 12 were heard singing there with another three giving alarm calls. [VPB]

## Long-tailed Tit

## *Aegithalos caudatus*

*Very common resident.*

In the first winter period, the largest counts were of 30 birds at Shoreham on 24 Jan, Northlands (Warnham) on 10 Jan, Ladywells (Coombes) on 30 Jan and 20 Feb, and Chesworth Fm (Horsham) on 20 Feb. Since Long-tailed Tits winter in 'clans' that rarely exceed 20 birds, these presumably involved more than one group. The largest five counts during Atlas surveys were 28 at Manor Royal (Crawley) on 14 Jan and at Brinkwells (Fittleworth) on 1 Feb, 22 at Battle Abbey 16 Feb, 21 at Upper Beeding on 2 Jan, and 20 at Glyndebourne on 4 Jan. In all five cases birds were recorded in both hours of the survey strengthening the inference that multiple clans were involved.

In gardens this species takes a variety of foods. At Crowhurst on 1 Jan, eight feeding together on a fat-ball feeder resembled a mass of feathers. Fat balls were also noted being used in a South Malling (Lewes) garden on 30 Jan; this species was a regular visitor to these food items by 6 Feb.

In early spring, flocks disband and attempt to breed in pairs; a pair was collecting cobwebs from under a roof at Barcombe on 22 Feb. Many nests are at low heights: one in bramble was noted at Furnace Meadow (Ebernoe) on 4 Apr. The earliest evidence for hatching was a pair carrying food at Plashett Park on 22 Apr. Fledged young were first seen at Ladywells on 6 May. Most nests are destroyed by predators; the failed breeders usually re-nest early in the season, but by late April switch to helping to feed nestlings at relatives' nests. The last record of nest building was on 24 Apr at Duncans Fm (Billingshurst), but adults were seen carrying food until 1 Jul (at Walberton, near Arundel), by which date it was probably destined for fledglings.

During the BBS, a total of 247 birds was recorded from 77 of the 135 1-km squares surveyed, with a highest count of 13. Breeding was confirmed in 125 tetrads and probable in a further 102. The highest breeding season counts were 26 at Danegate (Mark Cross) on 14 Jun and 25 at Pett Level on 12 Jun. Counts of breeding pairs included 11 at Pagham Hbr, nine at Bewl Water and six at Brighton Wild Park. At least four pairs bred at Warnham LNR. In 95 ha of mixed farmland at Sefter Fm (Rose Green) there were three pairs and there was a pair at Scobells Fm (Barcombe) in 10 ha. On the Norfolk Estate (Arundel) there were two pairs at Wepham Down and at Burpham and a single pair at Blakehurst.

The five highest post-breeding counts were 35 at Crowlink on 30 Sep, 30 at Pagham Hbr Information Centre on 22 Jul and at Warnham LNR on 17 Aug and 24 Sep, and 29 at the North Fields (Pagham Hbr) on 8 Sep. During the second winter period the species was seen at some 240 localities. The five largest counts were 100 at Sidlesham on 11 Nov, 58 at Pett Level on 26 Oct, 50

at Warnham LNR on 23 Nov, 35 at Ferring Rife on 21 Nov and 30 at Owlbeech Woods (Horsham) on 29 Oct. Intriguingly, 20 birds descended from high in the sky and landed in bushes behind the beach at Climping Gap on 14 Oct. [DH]

### **Pallas's Leaf Warbler**

*Phylloscopus proregulus*

*Very scarce visitor, mostly in late autumn.*

Two late individuals were recorded, at East Dean Woods on 17 Nov (MDS) and trapped at Pett Level on 3 Dec (RBRG). The former was an excellent find at the end of a timed winter Atlas tetrad visit at SU91C in beech trees west of Pond Fm (Singleton). Twenty have been recorded since the start of 2000 reversing the almost exponential growth experienced in previous decades; totals for the 1960s to the 1990s are three (all in 1968), seven, 11 and 37. Most are recorded from mid October to mid/late November although five have now been seen in December. [RJF]

### **Yellow-browed Warbler**

*Phylloscopus inornatus*

*Very scarce visitor, mostly in late autumn.*

One was trapped at the Mumbles (Steyning) on 23 Sep (MA/PC) while in October singles were seen at Beacon Hill (Brighton) on 5<sup>th</sup> (IJW), Birling Gap on 8<sup>th</sup> (MRE et al) and trapped at Whitbread Hollow (Beachy Head) on 14<sup>th</sup> (JAGD/RDME). The Whitbread Hollow individual was a first-winter male while that at Steyning is the second earliest in autumn, only surpassed by one at Birling Gap on 18 Sep 1988. These four individuals take the total since the beginning of 2000 to 56, having arrived in January (two), April, September (two), October (43), November (six) and December (two). The increase in records continues, as evidenced by decade totals since the 1960s, when the first individuals were recorded in the county, to 1990s of six, nine, 33 and 37 respectively. Records of this delightful species are currently outnumbering those of the even better Pallas's Leaf Warbler (see above) by about 3:1. [RJF]

### **Wood Warbler**

*Phylloscopus sibilatrix*

*Very scarce and declining summer resident and passage migrant. Red listed species of high conservation concern.*

There was an improvement in records with 33 received (nine more than in 2008) relating to some 27 individuals, an increase over the 22 reported last year. The first record was of a single bird at Footland Wood (Robertsbridge) on 22 Apr, two days later than the 10-year average. There was then a small influx. Single birds were noted at Friston Forest on 1 May, at Seaford Head on the 2<sup>nd</sup>, two at Sidlesham Ferry on the 3<sup>rd</sup>, singletons at Brighton Wild Park on the 4<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> and another at Arlington Res on the 6<sup>th</sup>. Single birds were also noted at Black Down (Fernhurst) on the 12<sup>th</sup>, Preston Park (Brighton) on the 14<sup>th</sup> and Horsted Keynes on the 22<sup>nd</sup>.

In June singletons were noted at Etchingham on the 13<sup>th</sup>, at Heyshott Green on the 14<sup>th</sup> and Pett Level on the 28<sup>th</sup>. In total, birds were recorded from 18 tetrads but, again, breeding was confirmed in only one.

Single returning birds were recorded on 28 Jul at Horseshoe Plantation (Beachy Head) and at Pett Level and Warnham LNR on the 31<sup>st</sup>. In August, further records of single birds came from Whitbread Hollow (Beachy Head) on the 5<sup>th</sup>, Rottingdean on the 16<sup>th</sup>, Pett Level on the 19<sup>th</sup> (but



two at Tangmere the same day), Pulborough Brooks on the 23<sup>rd</sup> and two at Hurst Green on the 28<sup>th</sup>. In September, there was one at Sidlesham Ferry Pool on the 13<sup>th</sup> and the final record was of one at Pett Level on the 26<sup>th</sup>, 20 days later than the 10-year average. [TWP]



*Wood Warbler; Hodcombe, August 2009 (Roger Charlwood)*

## Common Chiffchaff

## *Phylloscopus collybita*

*Very common summer visitor and passage migrant; small numbers winter.*

As has been the case in recent years, birds were recorded from 1 Jan but in better numbers early on than in 2008. There were eight at Waltham Brooks on the 1<sup>st</sup>, six at Coldwaltham SF on the 4<sup>th</sup> and 21 at Thorney SF on the 6<sup>th</sup> which reduced to 14 by 17 Feb. Also in February there was one singing on Brighton seafront on the 13<sup>th</sup>. During March, the only significant numbers were ten at Arundel WWT on the 16<sup>th</sup>, ten at Pagham Hbr on the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20 at Warnham LNR on the 24<sup>th</sup> but many lower numbers were recorded all over the county. At the beginning of April, 23 were counted at Seaford Head and 20 at Pagham Hbr on the 4<sup>th</sup>, 15 were singing at Arlington Res on the 5<sup>th</sup>, 24 at Five Lords Burgh (Denton) on the 11<sup>th</sup> and 20 at Lewes Race Course on the 18<sup>th</sup>. On the 20<sup>th</sup>, one was seen to fly in off the sea and land on the groyne at Selsey Bill.

Although recorded in 633 tetrads, breeding was only confirmed in 53 with probable breeding in a further 160. During breeding surveys, 66 pairs were counted at Bewl Water, 11 pairs at Pulborough Brooks, 24 pairs (the most in recent years) at Brighton Wild Park and 40 pairs at Pagham Hbr. During the BBS, a total of 485 was recorded in 114 of the 135 1-km squares surveyed with a highest count of 21 at Mill Place (Weir Wood) on 17 Jun.

A bird seen at Seaford Head on 26 Jul and two there on the 28<sup>th</sup> may have been returning migrants. In early August more movements were noted with 20 at Whitbread Hollow (Beachy

Head) on the 5<sup>th</sup>, ten at Shooters Bottom (Beachy Head) on the 11<sup>th</sup> and, at the end of the month, 24 at Pett Level on the 30<sup>th</sup> and 20 at Cissbury Ring on the 31<sup>st</sup>. In September, high counts included 400 at Whitbread Hollow on the 6<sup>th</sup>, which was probably a minimum estimate, 75 there on the 8<sup>th</sup>, 50 at Sheepcote Valley (Brighton) on the 11<sup>th</sup>, 77 at Seaford Head on the 12<sup>th</sup>, another 200 at Whitbread Hollow on the 13<sup>th</sup>, 98 at Seaford Head on the 19<sup>th</sup>, 239 at Pett Level and 250 at Whitbread Hollow on the 21<sup>st</sup>, with another 150 there on the 23<sup>rd</sup> and 100 on the 24<sup>th</sup>. At Hastings C P 138 were recorded on the 27<sup>th</sup>.

High numbers continued into October. On the 1<sup>st</sup> 189 were trapped at Pett Level and 125 were recorded in Whitbread Hollow and on the 2<sup>nd</sup> 70 were noted at Cissbury Ring. A late afternoon fall produced at least 50 at Rottingdean on the 5<sup>th</sup>, 40 were at Cissbury Ring on the 10<sup>th</sup> and, at Whitbread Hollow, there were 100 on the 11<sup>th</sup>, the last of the big numbers. During the second winter period, the species was seen at some 55 localities. The highest count in November was six at Brooklands (Worthing) on 2 Nov. In December, some 61 birds were noted with a highest count of eight at Thorney SF on the 22<sup>nd</sup> and seven at Ladywells (Coombes) on the 1<sup>st</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup>. [TWP]

## Willow Warbler

## *Phylloscopus trochilus*

*Common but declining summer visitor and passage migrant. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern.*

The first record was of one at Warnham LNR on 21 Mar, five days later than in 2008 and the 10-year county average. Six more birds were recorded from three sites during the rest of the month although there was probably some duplication in the figures. April started well with ten at Piddinghoe Pond and 25 at Seaford Head on the 4<sup>th</sup>, but after this date very few records in double figures were received and the majority of these were birds in territories.

In the breeding season birds were recorded across the county in a total of 301 tetrads but, astonishingly, breeding was confirmed in only nine and was probable in a further 51 tetrads. Hopefully, Atlas work will improve on this. As usual, Ashdown Forest held the bulk of the population but 13 pairs were counted during a breeding survey of Bewl Water. During the BBS, a total of 85 was recorded from 29 squares of the 135 1-km squares surveyed with a maximum count of 13 at a site in Ashdown Forest on 2 May.

Return passage commenced on 23 Jul when one was seen at Cuckmere Haven. This was followed by two at Worthing Beach on the 25<sup>th</sup> and, at Seaford Head, three on the 26<sup>th</sup> and five there on the 28<sup>th</sup>. The monthly maximum at Pett Level was 87 on the 31<sup>st</sup>. Passage accelerated in August. There were 30 at Whitbread Hollow (Beachy Head) on the 2<sup>nd</sup>, 40 there on the 3<sup>rd</sup>, 206 at Pett Level the same day, another 40 at the former site on the 11<sup>th</sup> and 20 at Cissbury Ring on the 12<sup>th</sup>. Things then slowed down a bit with the most notable numbers during the rest of the month being 28 at Beachy Head on the 22<sup>nd</sup> and 29 there on the 30<sup>th</sup>. September started with 20 ringed at Pett Level on the 1<sup>st</sup> and, on the 5<sup>th</sup>, 16 at Beachy Head, 26 at Seaford Head, 49 at Pett Level and 20 at Hastings CP. Other high counts included 22 at Belle Tout (Beachy Head) on the 9<sup>th</sup> and 20 at Brighton Wild Park on the 11<sup>th</sup>. In October, there were records from nine sites, the latest being two at Pett Level on the 27<sup>th</sup>, three days earlier than the 10-year county average. A Willow Warbler of the northern *acredula* race was trapped at Whitbread Hollow on 30 Aug. [TWP]

**Blackcap***Sylvia atricapilla*

*Very common summer visitor and passage migrant; small numbers winter.*

Although not reaching the high numbers of 2007, the first two months of 2009 saw an increase in wintering birds over the same period of the previous year with a minimum of 41 different individuals from 36 sites. Most were records of single birds, but two were seen together at Portslade, Haywards Heath and Hastings and two males and a female were seen at the same time at Goring on 21 Feb. Long-staying birds were one seen regularly in a Steyning garden from 1 Jan through to March and another which was seen feeding on halved apples at Keymer from 22 Feb to 15 Mar. The first song reported was in a garden at South Malling on 5 Mar, though this was likely to have been a wintering individual, and the first migrant was possibly a male which was heard singing at University of Sussex (Falmer) on the 16<sup>th</sup>. The first arrival at Pett Level was noted on 22 Mar and at Pagham Hbr on the 24<sup>th</sup>.

During the BBS, a total of 376 was recorded in 95 of the 135 1-km squares surveyed, over 80 more than the previous year's figure, with 12 at Mayfield on 20 Apr being the maximum in any one square. Early season Atlas surveys produced ten at Ashurst on 13 Apr and at Warningcamp on the 20<sup>th</sup>, 11 at Ladyholt Park on the 22<sup>nd</sup>, 13 at Burton Park on the 21<sup>st</sup> and at West Marden the following day, 14 at both Little Horsted on the 22<sup>nd</sup> and Battle Abbey on the 23<sup>rd</sup>. However, the maximum count was 17 at Shillinglee Park North on the 23<sup>rd</sup>, Fore Wood (Crowhurst) on the 29<sup>th</sup> and Bells Yew Green on 3 May. In addition, ten were recorded at Ifield MP on 10 Apr, 11 at Darwell Res on the 19<sup>th</sup>, 25 at Weir Wood Res on the 26<sup>th</sup> and 15 at Steyning Round Hill on 9 May. Breeding surveys at Pagham Hbr, Pulborough Brooks and Bewl Water produced totals of 24, eight and 49 pairs respectively. There were 10 pairs at Thorney Island, the same as the previous year, and 23 pairs bred at Brighton Wild Park, the most in recent years and an increase of four over 2008. A survey on the Norfolk Estate from late May to early July found 47 pairs. Fourteen were counted in just the second hour of a late season Atlas visit at Fittleworth on 6 Jun.

This species' breeding success can be judged by the combined ringing summary from Steyning RG at Strivens Reed Bed (Steyning) and Cissbury where, of 750 different individuals handled, 700 were identified as first year birds. Beachy Head RG noted an early and exceptional movement with thousands passing through the site, of which 1600 were ringed, the most of any single species in one autumn, except for House Martin. At Pett Level, 7264 new birds were ringed during the main passage from mid August to early October. A few summer migrants possibly lingered on until November, but three ringed at Pett Level on 27 Nov were more likely to be arriving winter visitors.

During the second winter period, the species was seen at some 36 localities. Records in December came from just 14 sites, comprising 18 individuals, including one bird ringed at Pett Level on the 11<sup>th</sup>, and two males in a Ferring garden on the 20<sup>th</sup>. Food items taken included apples, crab apples and *Callicarpa* berries. [VPB]

**Garden Warbler***Sylvia borin*

*Very common summer visitor and passage migrant.*

The first record of the year was from an early Atlas survey at Middleton-on-Sea on 5 Apr, just one day later than the 10-year average date. The next report was not until the 14<sup>th</sup>, when one was seen at Pagham Hbr. The first arrival in the east of the county was a singing male at Darwell Res on 19 Apr.

During the BBS, a total of 40 was recorded in 29 of the 135 1-km squares surveyed with a maximum count of three in a single 1-km square. Ten birds were found in a visit to Park Fm (Wivelsfield) on 28 Apr, seven different individuals were counted at Goldballs Plantation (Heyshott) on 1 May and there were four singing birds at Friston Forest on the 3<sup>rd</sup>. In Atlas surveys during May, there were five at Birchetts Green on the 6<sup>th</sup> and six at Brooks Green on the 3<sup>rd</sup>. Twenty five pairs were breeding at Bawl Water and three at Pulborough Brooks, where an adult bird with three young was seen on 9 Jul.

Only seven different individuals were trapped at Cissbury, one of which had been ringed as an adult female in May 2007 (*Steyning RG data*), but at Strivens Reed Bed (Steyning) 29 different birds were handled of which 27 were young birds, compared with totals of 18 and 12 respectively in 2008. Over 500 new birds were ringed at Pett Level during August with a maximum of 47 on the 6<sup>th</sup>, dropping to 128 during September. Beachy Head RG reported the best autumn passage since 2002.

The final report from the west of the county was of a single bird at Warnham LNR on 24 Sep, while in the east 11 were ringed at Pett Level in October, the last being a single individual on the 19<sup>th</sup>, six days later than the 10-year average date. [VPB]

## **Barred Warbler**

*Sylvia nisoria*

*Very scarce autumn visitor.*

Juveniles were trapped at Pett Level on 18 Aug (RBRG) and seen at Hope Gap (Seaford Head) from 21-25 Sep (MRE *et al.*) and Newhaven Incinerator from 6-10 Oct (MFA). Observers at Seaford must have felt as if they were on the east coast on 21 Sep with an Icterine Warbler (see below) found alongside the Barred. The Pett individual is the second earliest arrival, not quite matching one at Beachy Head from 17-23 Aug 1997, and is the eighth to have been trapped at this site. There is one previous record from Newhaven, in 2005, but perhaps surprisingly this year's is the first for Seaford. Eleven Barred Warblers have been recorded in the county since the start of 2000, a fairly consistent decade total compared with those from 1960s to 1990s of 8, 9, 13 and 13 respectively. There were two earlier records, both in 1959, making 56 in total of which Beachy Head accounts for 31. All records have been in autumn, in August (nine from 17<sup>th</sup>), September (36) and October (11 to 31<sup>st</sup>). [RJF]

## **Lesser Whitethroat**

*Sylvia curruca*

*Common summer visitor and passage migrant.*

A report of one at Hove on 15 to 17 Jan (RR) and another, probably different, at Hove Lagoon on 20 Feb (RJF) were likely to be of wintering birds which had remained undetected until then. Over-wintering individuals were also recorded in 2002/03 and 2005/06. The first returning migrant was heard at Winchelsea Beach on 12 Apr, three days later than in 2008 but on the 10-year average date. Two were seen at Sheepcote Valley (Brighton) on 13 Apr and the first arrival in the west of the county was at Pagham Hbr on the same day. Three were at Brighton Wild Park on 26 Apr, four were singing around the nature trail at Pulborough Brooks on the 18<sup>th</sup> and a total of seven males were heard at Thorney Island on the 22<sup>nd</sup>. Four were seen at Newhaven Tide Mills on 24 May.

During the BBS, a total of 19 were recorded in 15 of 135 1-km squares surveyed, slightly fewer than in the previous two years, compared with 316 from 77 for Common Whitethroat. Two pairs

bred at the Wild Park, six at Thorney Island, eight at Pagham Hbr and there were 20 territories at Rye Hbr, eight of which were at Castle Water. Family groups were seen at Fishbourne on 23 Jul, at Church Norton on the 25<sup>th</sup> and again on 5 Aug. Sixteen different individuals were trapped at Cissbury, of which five were adults and 11 first year birds, more encouraging with respect to breeding success than the 8:5 ratio of 2008; one returning adult had originally been ringed as a second-year bird in April 2006 (*Steyning RG data*). Only 18 were ringed at Pett Level in July, but this increased to over 200 in August, with a maximum of 14 new birds on the 30<sup>th</sup>. In September, 103 new birds were ringed at the site, the last on the 28<sup>th</sup>.

Very few were noted towards the end of September; there was one at Shooters Bottom (Beachy Head) on the 28<sup>th</sup>, while one at Cissbury Ring and another at Climping on 1 Oct were the final records, 14 days earlier than the 10-year average date. [VPB]



*Lesser Whitethroat, Pulborough, May 2009 (Dave Sadler)*

## Common Whitethroat

*Sylvia communis*

*Very common summer visitor and passage migrant.*

The first report received was of two singing birds at Ditchling Common on 29 Mar, four days earlier than the previous year, and a day earlier than the 10-year average date. During the BBS, a total of 316 was found in 77 of the 135 1-km squares surveyed, an increase over the 2008 total of 247, though from the same number of squares.

In early season Atlas surveys, six were found at Madehurst on 12 Apr, nine at Broad Rife (Selsey) on the 17<sup>th</sup>, eight at Pilsey Island on the 20<sup>th</sup>, ten at Treyford on the 21<sup>st</sup>, 11 at both Little Horsted (Uckfield) on the 22<sup>nd</sup> and Balsdean on the 26<sup>th</sup> and 15 at Plumpton Green on the 28<sup>th</sup>. Twelve pairs bred at Pulborough Brooks, 76 at Pagham Hbr and 134 on the Norfolk Estate. However, a total of 19 at Brighton Wild Park was three fewer than in 2008 and seven fewer than



2007 and 45 pairs at Thorney Island was eight fewer than the previous year. A BBS-type survey of 663 ha of the western Manhood Peninsula, including the RSPB Bracklesham Bay reserve, recorded 60 singing males in May. In late breeding season Atlas surveys, 14 were recorded at Pilsley Island on 2 Jun, 17 at both Bostal Hill (Berwick) on the same day, at Little Horsted on the 6<sup>th</sup> and 21 at Treyford on the 16<sup>th</sup>. In a late BBS survey at Pipers Copse (Northchapel), 22 were counted on 16 Jun and on the 29<sup>th</sup> nine males were singing from gorse at Chelwood Gate (Ashdown Forest).

Fifty-seven different birds were caught at Cissbury, 26 more than in 2007, with an adult:juvenile ratio of 1:6. On return passage there were 150 on 9 Aug and 70 on 6 Sep at Whitbread Hollow (Beachy Head), where the ringing group reported the best autumn for this species since an exceptional year in 2002. At the Wild Park, however, a poor autumn was reported with a peak count in August of only 12 on the 22<sup>nd</sup>. Monthly maxima at Pett Level were 37 on 31 Jul, 145 on 14 Aug and 52 on 6 Sep. Eighty-two passed through Seaford Head on 5 Aug, and another 37 the following day.

There were just five records in October, of single birds at Thorney Island on the 4<sup>th</sup>, Rottingdean on the 5<sup>th</sup>, Beachy Head on the 10<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup>, and the final bird of the year at Climping Gap on the 26<sup>th</sup>, six days later than the 10-year average date. [VPB]

## Dartford Warbler

*Sylvia undata*

*Fairly common but localised resident. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern. Schedule 1 species.*

The first sightings of the year were on 2 Jan: singletons were noted, near the coast, at Nook Meadows (Rye Hbr) and Birling Gap and, inland at Ashdown Forest at the Old Lodge LNR and Old Airstrip. The following day, there were further records of singletons from Rye Hbr, Ashdown Forest but also from Black Down (Fernhurst).

In the first winter period, the highest counts were six at Lavington Common on 22 Feb and 8 Mar, 12 at Ambersham Common on the 21<sup>st</sup> and six (including five singing males) at Camp Hill (Ashdown Forest) on the 31<sup>st</sup>. In the spring, a single bird was recorded from Church Norton on 28 Apr and two birds were at Owlbeech Woods (Horsham) on 4 May.

Breeding was confirmed in four tetrads. A pair was seen taking food to a nest at Iping Common on 14 May and a pair with three juveniles were seen together there on 12 Jul. Breeding was also confirmed from this area at Stedham Common on 11 Aug. In Ashdown Forest breeding was confirmed at Roman Road Area on 25 May, Pippingford Park on 13 Jul and Stonehill on 5 Aug. Probable breeding was recorded in a further 11 tetrads with possible breeding in another two. The Wealden Heaths Breeding Bird Survey (WHBBS) identified 29 territories, mostly at Iping Common (13 pairs) and Ambersham Common (12 pairs). This represents a decline of over half from the previously consistent assessments of 61 territories in 2008, 63 from 2007 and 62 in 2006. All other breeding season records were from a number of sites in Ashdown Forest, viz.: Gills Lap (three singing males on 2 May), Camp Hill (five males singing from gorse bushes during May), Old Airstrip (five singing males on 15 Jun), Crows Nest (four singing males on 24 Jun) and Chelwood Gate (two pairs on 29 Jun). Sightings of numbers of simultaneous singing males and other records might indicate an increase in territories from the possible 27 in 2008 to a possible 38, but estimating the number of territories in Ashdown Forest is fraught with difficulties. However, assuming 38 territories is a realistic estimate, then the maximum total for the county would be around 67 pairs, a significant decrease on previous estimates of 98 (2008) and 93 (2007) due, in all probability, to the effects of the previous winter.

From July onwards the pattern of records continued with most coming from Ashdown Forest. Away from there and the Wealden Heaths there were three sightings at Hastings CP in October, including three birds on the 24<sup>th</sup>. During the second winter, the species was seen at some 26 localities. At Iping Common, nine were seen on 17 Nov and six on 10 Dec. At the end of the year there were records at Pagham Hbr on 14 Dec and sites in Ashdown Forest on the 15<sup>th</sup> and, finally, the 28<sup>th</sup>. [SPS]

### **Grasshopper Warbler**

### *Locustella naevia*

*Very scarce and declining summer visitor and fairly common passage migrant. Red listed species of high conservation concern.*

The first arrival was a male singing in the garden at Bill House (Selsey) on 4 Apr, four days earlier than in 2008, and a week earlier than the 10-year average date. However, the next record was not until 13 Apr when a single bird was heard at Rye Hbr. On the 29<sup>th</sup>, two birds were reeling in low scrub near Harbour Fm Barns (Rye Hbr) and were heard there until early May, though breeding was not confirmed. Records from late April and May only gave a maximum total of ten males at seven sites, including Halsey's Fm (Sidlesham), Amberley Wild Brooks, Waltham Brooks, the Rother Levels, and Rye Hbr, three sites fewer than in 2008. Atlas tetrad surveys located one at Bodle Street Green on 7 May and another at Gate Court (Northiam) on 28<sup>th</sup>.

The first returning migrant was recorded on 13 Jul at Pett Level where returning migrant numbers were good. During the month, 162 birds were ringed there with a peak count of 43 on the 23<sup>rd</sup>; in August, 410 new birds were ringed and the peak count was 45 on the 25<sup>th</sup>; in September, the ringing total was 261 and the peak count was 31 on the 5<sup>th</sup>. Unsurprisingly, the ringing tally in October was only ten and the peak count only four on the 8<sup>th</sup>. In contrast, at Beachy Head, only 10 birds were recorded during the autumn and ringers there, who ringed only five birds, commented that it had been a below average season while ringers at Steyning handled only new one bird, in August. Passage birds were also seen elsewhere, usually as ones: but three were at Greatham Bridge on 15 Jul; at Seaford Head and Cuckmere Haven ones on 26 Jul but threes on 4 Aug; at Steyning Round Hill on 5 Aug; at Pagham Hbr on 29 Aug; in the Brighton area on 10, 12 and 19 Sep; at Weir Wood Res on 12 Sep; at Edburton on 13 Sep; at Shoreham on 21 Sep. The last bird of the year was one at Pagham Hbr on 29 Sep, 12 days later than the 10-year average date. [VPB]

### **Savi's Warbler**

### *Locustella luscinioides*

*Rare visitor, has bred. Red listed species of high conservation concern.*

Three birds were trapped and ringed at an undisclosed locality where the species was heard singing on various dates from 26 Apr into July. There were two breeding attempts of which one was successful and there may have been, later, a second attempt. One on 26 Jul was a bird of the year, another on 6 Aug was an adult and a third on 9 Sep was another bird of the year. These were the first accepted records since 2002 and bring the number of published records up to 21. [JAH]

### **Icterine Warbler**

### *Hippolais icterina*

*Very scarce visitor.*

Two were found at Hope Gap (Seaford Head) during the autumn, on 18 Aug (MRE et al) and 21 Sep (MRE/MR et al), and demonstrate the rewards of regularly watching at a coastal headland,



more so as a Barred Warbler was found at the same location on the second date (see above). Thirty-eight have been recorded in the county but occurrences have dropped off very significantly in recent years. They are the first records since 2006 and only the third and fourth this decade. This compares very unfavourably with totals of 11 in the 1970s and ten during both the 1980s and 1990s. There are two previous records for Seaford Head (in 1992 and 1993) while nearby Beachy Head, which has recorded 20 and was the premier location in the county for this species, can only boast three records since 1990. Records have been in May (four, from 21<sup>st</sup>), June (one on 4<sup>th</sup>), July (one on 21<sup>st</sup>), August (22) and September (ten, to 30<sup>th</sup>). [RJF]

### Melodious Warbler

*Hippolais polyglotta*

*Very scarce visitor.*

One was present and singing at Shooters Bottom (Beachy Head) on 24 May (MCC, RJF), the first record since 2005, the first spring bird since 2002 and only the fifth May record since 1990. A first year bird at Whitbread Hollow (Beachy Head) on 22 Aug was seen, ringed and photographed (MB, RDME). Another individual, which may possibly have been the same bird as that of 22 Aug, was seen at Shooters Bottom on 21 Sep (RHC, PJN). There have now been a maximum of 26 in the county since 1990, of which 50% have been at Beachy Head, and 61 in total. [VPB]

### Aquatic Warbler

*Acrocephalus paludicola*

*Very scarce autumn visitor to selected sites, rare elsewhere. Considered vulnerable by IUCN.*

A juvenile was trapped at Pett Level on 16 Aug (RBRG). Twenty-seven have been recorded in the county since the start of 2000, a significant decline on the 97 recorded during the 1990s. Decade totals from the 1960s to 1980s are nine, 23 and 17 respectively with just six earlier records. Twenty-two of those recorded this decade have been at Pett Level (all trapped) with the others, all before 2005, at Combe Haven (two), Cuckmere Haven and Thorney (two). They have all been in August (20, from 3<sup>rd</sup>) or September (six, to 18<sup>th</sup>) while all 184 county records have also been in autumn, between 30 July (1994) and 19 October (1853). [RJF]

### Sedge Warbler

*Acrocephalus schoenobaenus*

*Fairly common summer visitor and common passage migrant.*

The first record for the year was of one at Rye Hbr on 2 Apr, four days later than the 10-year county average and six days later than in 2008. There was then a trickle of ones or twos at various sites until the 10<sup>th</sup> when eight were counted at the Ouse Estuary Project (Newhaven) and a minimum of ten at Rye Hbr. Records of singing males included 16 at Thorney Deeps on the 17<sup>th</sup>, 15 at Waltham Brooks on the 21<sup>st</sup>, 16 at Amberley Wild Brooks on the 23<sup>rd</sup> and 16 at Emsworth Marina (Chichester) on the 26<sup>th</sup>.

In May, 24 were counted at the Ouse Estuary Project (Newhaven) on the 4<sup>th</sup> and Thorney Deeps held 26 pairs on the 6<sup>th</sup> with a further seven pairs counted elsewhere on Thorney Island on the 7<sup>th</sup>. Nine were counted at Pevensy Bridge Level on the 15<sup>th</sup>, eight at Sidlesham Ferry on the 17<sup>th</sup> and five at Arundel WWT on the 19<sup>th</sup> with possibly ten there on the 29<sup>th</sup>.

In June, 12 were counted at Emsworth Marina on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 12 at the Ouse Estuary Project on the 14<sup>th</sup>. At Pagham Hbr, 36 pairs were counted in an annual breeding survey. It was another

disappointing year for confirmation of breeding with records from 106 tetrads but confirmed in only nine with a further 12 with probable breeding, a reduction on 2008. During the BBS, a total of 32 was recorded in nine of the 135 1-km squares surveyed with a maximum count of nine at Pevensey Bridge Level on 15 May.

Two birds recorded at Seaford Head on 26 Jul must surely have been returning migrants. At Pett Level the monthly maxima was 404 trapped on 31 Jul, 443 on 8 Aug and 189 on 5 Sep. The only October records were from Pett Level where the peak count was eight on the 8<sup>th</sup> and 14 were ringed on seven dates with the last on the 28<sup>th</sup>, 15 days later than the 10-year average date. The decline of this species seems to be continuing. [TWP]

## **Marsh Warbler**

## *Acrocephalus palustris*

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

Four birds were recorded during the year. The first one was trapped and ringed on a date in the spring in circumstances undisclosed at the request of the observer. Three other migrants were trapped and ringed at an undisclosed locality: an adult on 24 Jul, a bird of the year on 2 Aug and another adult on 10 Aug. [JAH]

## **Eurasian Reed Warbler**

## *Acrocephalus scirpaceus*

*Common summer visitor and very common passage migrant.*

The first record for the year was of a singleton at Breech Pool (Pagham Hbr) on 6 Apr, one day earlier than the 10-year county average and two days later than in 2008. There were a few more singles at various sites until, on the 11<sup>th</sup>, three at The Severals (Church Norton) and two at Rye Hbr Bittern Excavation followed by a steady trickle. The largest of the monthly counts were 12 at Wicks Farm (Yapton) on the 19<sup>th</sup>, ten at Thorney Deeps on the 21<sup>st</sup> and 32 at Honer Fm (Pagham Hbr) on the 22<sup>nd</sup>.

May started with 18 at Sefter Fm (Rose Green) and 21 at Guestling on the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 15 at the Ouse Estuary Project (Newhaven) on the 4<sup>th</sup> where numbers rose to 21 by the 13<sup>th</sup>. At North Wall Fields (Pagham Hbr) there were 40 on the 7<sup>th</sup> and, on the 14<sup>th</sup>, monthly maximum figures were 26 at Pett Level and 20 at Warnham LNR.

Breeding summaries in May and June included: 56 pairs on Thorney Deeps; 146 pairs/territories mapped at Rye Hbr (a number which, as in 2008, was a further decrease although the total was thought to be in excess of 250); 138 pairs at Pagham Hbr and 60 territories at Sefter Fm. Three juveniles were seen on 29 May at Arundel WWT. Despite being recorded in 154 tetrads, breeding was only confirmed in 24 with probable breeding in a further 29 squares, a reduction on the 2008 figures. During the BBS, a total of only 48 was recorded in ten of the 135 1-km squares surveyed with a maximum count of 15 at Thorney Island on 1 Jun.

With large numbers at coastal sites it is difficult to judge the date of the first returning migrants but one at Seaford Head on 28 Jul surely qualifies as was a single at Sheepcote Valley (Brighton) on 1 Aug. Some of the 122 trapped at Pett Level on this date must also have been migrants. At Whitbread Hollow (Beachy Head), five were recorded on 2 Aug, 11 on the 9<sup>th</sup> and 25 on the 11<sup>th</sup>. At Pett Level the monthly maximum trapped was 311 on the 17<sup>th</sup> while, in September, the monthly maximum there was 162 on the 10<sup>th</sup> and, at Whitbread Hollow, 30 on the 6<sup>th</sup>. The species was recorded at six sites in October with the monthly maximum of 23 at Pett Level on the 2<sup>nd</sup>.

Quite remarkably, a juvenile ringed at this site on the 25<sup>th</sup> remained to at least 1 Dec, the latest date by far for the county, the previous latest date being 18 Nov. [TWP]

## Waxwing

## *Bombycilla garrulous*

*Rare winter visitor.*

Although heard in Hastings on 1 Jan the first sightings were eight in a garden at Icklesham on the 4<sup>th</sup>. Birds were then reported in the county on 46 dates to 30 Mar. In January, two flew northwards over Seaford on the 9<sup>th</sup> when three were near Blakers Park (Brighton) and a further two were seen in Robertsbridge on the 11<sup>th</sup>. Twenty which showed briefly in Bexhill on the 15<sup>th</sup> may have been the flock which turned up at Windmill Hill (Hertsmonceux), where up to 21 were seen daily, near the Horseshoe Inn, from 20 - 31 Jan. One, possibly from this flock, was seen at Hailsham on the 22<sup>nd</sup> and perhaps the flock dispersed westwards as one was by Burgess Hill railway station on the 30<sup>th</sup> and one at Plumpton Green on 3 Feb.

At least fifteen were at Cross-in-Hand (Heathfield) on 6 Feb but most of this group reappeared at Uckfield from the 10<sup>th</sup> to the 15<sup>th</sup> and then on the 25<sup>th</sup>, sixteen were found at the bus station where they remained until 5 Mar. Also in February, three birds were in Hollingdean (Brighton) from the 17<sup>th</sup> to the 26<sup>th</sup>. A group of ten birds turned up near Goring station on 11 Feb and remained in the area until the 25<sup>th</sup>. They were very mobile and flew off east at 15.15 hr on the 25<sup>th</sup> and were probably the ten seen in Durrington on the 25<sup>th</sup> (there were nine the next day) and may account for the eight found north of Ferring on 2 Mar. Two which flew east at High Salvington (Worthing) on 13 Mar may have been stragglers from the Ferring/Highdown/ Durrington group. Finally, there was a report of five at Goring station on 31 Mar, the last report for the year.

The minimum weekly totals by area were as follows:

	January					February				March				
Week No.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
Dates	1-3	4-10	11-17	18-24	25-31	1-7	8-14	15-21	22-28	1-7	8-14	15-21	22-28	29-31
County total	1	13	22	20	25	16	26	32	27	27	2	0	19	5
Ferring/Highdown	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	(9)	8	-	-	-	-
Goring/Durrington	-	-	-	-	-	-	10	10	10	-	2	-	-	5
Brighton	-	3	-	-	4	-	-	6	3	3	-	-	3	-
Burgess Hill	-	-	-	-	1	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Plumpton	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Uckfield	-	-	-	-	-	-	14	16	16	16	-	-	16	-
Seaford	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Heathfield	-	-	-	-	-	15	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Hertsmonceux	-	-	-	20	20	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Bexhill	-	-	20	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Robertsbridge	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Hastings	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Pett Level	-	8	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

From this analysis it would appear that the peak number in the county was at least 32 during week 8. [CB]



*Waxwing, Goring-by-Sea, February 2009 (Dorian Mason)*

## Nuthatch

*Sitta europaea*

*Common resident.*

This species is scarce on the eastern South Downs and the coastal plain (*Birds of Sussex; SxBR* 58: 168). The only 2009 records from the Selsey Peninsula were singletons at Church Norton on 30 Jan and 3 Nov.

In the first winter period, the largest concentrations were 13 at Lower Beeding on 24 Feb, 12 at Bolney on 7 Feb, and 11 at Flexham Park (Fittleworth) on 16 Feb. A bird at Hotham Park (Bognor) on 12 and 19 Mar was considered unusual for the site. This species can be very bold: a bird at Vinehall (Mountfield) landed on a driveway within two metres of the observer.

During the BBS, a total of 140 birds was recorded from 56 of the 135 1-km squares surveyed, with a highest count of six at Burwash Weald on 19 Apr. Breeding was confirmed in 81 tetrads and probable in a further 79. At Horsham one prospected a Lesser Spotted Woodpecker nest hole on 23 Feb and a pair was doing so on 9 Mar. Nest-building was only recorded twice, at Warren Hill (Washington) on 19 Mar and Myrtle Grove Fm (Clapham) on 29 Apr. The usual evidence of breeding was sighting fledged young (earliest were at Pulborough Brooks on 18 May). The largest concentration during the breeding season was 29 birds at Danegate (Mark Cross) on 14 Jun. This might well have included fledged young; this was certainly true for the next highest count, of 17 at Flexham Park on 27 Jun. There were 10 territories at Bewl Water and four at Pulborough Brooks.

The highest post-breeding counts were 12 at Leechpool Woods (Horsham) and nine at nearby Owlbeech Woods, both on 9 Aug. As noted above, this species is scarce along the Sussex coast, suggesting that one at Atherington (Climping) on 30 Aug was probably dispersing. Similarly, one at Cissbury Ring on 15 Oct was at an unusual location.

In the autumn, the largest concentration was 26 birds at Warnham LNR on 6 Oct. In the second winter period, the species was seen at some 190 localities. The largest counts were ten at Woodman Green (Sedlescombe) on 4 Nov and also at Five Ashes village on the 27<sup>th</sup> and, in December, 14 at Hammonds Wood (Bedham) on the 4<sup>th</sup> and at Itchingfield on the 15<sup>th</sup>. [DH]



*Nuthatch, Weirwood Reservoir, March 2009 (Derek Washington)*

## Eurasian Treecreeper

*Certhia familiaris*

*Common resident.*

With large territories for their body size, most counts of this quiet unobtrusive species throughout the year were low. In the first winter period the largest concentrations were six birds at Rackham Woods on 28 Feb, fives at Battle Abbey on 16 Feb, High Wood (Brede) on 6 Mar, and Guestling Wood on 17 Mar. Although pairs share a home range throughout the year, birds usually forage alone. Finding four within a very small area at Burton MP on 1 Feb was thus rather unusual. One visiting a bird table at Wellbrook (Mayfield) on 11 Jan was chased off by a Robin.

During the BBS, a total of 49 birds was recorded from 24 of the 135 1-km squares surveyed, with a highest count of six at Five Ashes (Butchers Cross) on 5 Apr. Although Treecreepers were recorded in 289 tetrads over the year, breeding was confirmed in just 29 and probable in 35. The first record of nest building was at Warnham LNR on 3 Apr. Like Nuthatch and the true titmice (*Paridae*), male Treecreepers courtship-feed their mates from nest-building until hatching. Thus a bird seen carrying food at Birdham (Chichester) on 2 Apr was probably feeding its mate rather than young. Fledged young were reported on 20 occasions from 5 May to 20 July.

The highest breeding season counts were ten birds during a survey at Woolbridge (Mayfield) on 13 June and seven at Danegate (Mark Cross) on 14 Jun. Few estimates were made of breeding pairs within defined areas: there were five at Bewl Water and four at Pulborough Brooks.



The largest post-breeding count was five at Buckholt (Crowhurst) on 22 Jul. During the second winter period the highest counts were four birds at Crawley on 4 Nov, six at Warnham LNR on 2 Dec and four at Pulborough Brooks on the 9<sup>th</sup>. [DH]

## Wren

## *Troglodytes troglodytes*

*Abundant resident.*

In all, just over 3700 consolidated records were processed for this species. The minimum monthly numbers of birds (excluding those recorded as 'present' only) and of records were approximately as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>No. of birds</b>	524	787	550	3092	2649	4901	568	273	318	486	713	795
<b>No. of records</b>	260	317	212	596	541	632	247	117	139	155	219	281

The above figures demonstrate the effect on numbers of Atlas recording effort, similar to that for some other common species. During the first winter, February was the peak month as surveyors completed winter surveys; during the breeding season, April and June numbers were significantly high as breeding season tetrad surveys were done; thereafter, numbers declined as surveying effort declined until the next winter season's Atlas work began in November. The overall effect of this seasonality was that just over 68% of records came from the first half of the year.

During the first winter period, there were 19 counts in double figures, the highest being 20 at Udiam Fm (Bodiam) on 20 Feb. A number of sites provided counts throughout the year, as shown below:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>Sefter Fm (Rose Green)</b>	6	6	18	17	28	16	14	3	3	8	7	7
<b>Hotham Pk (Bognor)</b>	nc	5	3	3	4	8	5	5	4	1	2	nc
<b>Lidsey SF</b>	4	2	9	20	nc	21	2	nc	3	3	nc	4
<b>Chesworth Fm (Horsham)</b>	1	11	6	12	6	4	nc	1	nc	4	7	3
<b>Lower Standean</b>	7	2	nc	8	19	18	16	nc	11	11	3	5
<b>Lewes Race Course</b>	2	4	3	9	10	9	2	7	3	3	nc	4
<b>Kings Standing (Ashdown)</b>	7	4	6	7	10	7	10	4	4	8	9	7
<b>Darwell Res</b>	15	17	17	22	9	22	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc

The April and June counts at Lidsey SF were far in excess of those for 2008 (two and seven respectively) and the counts for the last three months of the year at King's Standing were also considerably above those for 2008. By contrast, the April-May counts at Hotham Park fell some way short of those for 2008. The counts at Lewes Race Course were very similar to those for 2008; those for the first six months of the year at the Darwell Res closely paralleled those for 2008, with the exception of that in May when the survey took place on a day of high winds.

During the breeding season Atlas TTVs, 58 tetrads held 20 and five held 40 or more Wrens in at least one of the two visits, with a highest count of 56 at Cowdray Forest (Worth) on 16 Apr. During the BBS, a total of 1156 was recorded from 126 of the 135 1-km squares surveyed, with a maximum count of 29 at Hartfield on 14 June. In 52 1-km squares there were counts of ten or more from either the first or second survey. There were counts of 20 or more from six 1-km



squares: Southleigh Forest (Emsworth), Tilgate Forest, Balcombe, Lewes, Hartfield and Five Hundred Acres (Ashdown Forest).

Breeding was confirmed in 96 tetrads and was probable in a further 166. The first song to be noted was at Darwell Res on 19 Jan. An observer at Warnham LNR on 6 Mar found pairs 'flirting'. The first report of a bird carrying food to a nest came from Owlbeech Woods (Horsham) on 2 Apr and a nest with young was found at Playden on 19 Apr; but fledglings were not reported until 20 May (at Hartfield). In the area of Pagham Hbr/Sidlesham Ferry, Church Norton a combined total of some 61 pairs bred; the Norfolk Estate held 33 pairs; there were 46 territories at Sefter Fm (Rose Green) in 95 ha (cf. 34 in 2006; 45 in 2007; 33 in 2008); at Brighton Wild Park, 89 pairs bred (a slight reduction from 2008); 90 pairs around Bewl Water and 46 at Rye Hbr (cf. 49 in 2008; 47 in 2008).

Ringling summaries provided were as follows: at Ladywells (Coombes), 39 different birds were handled, 31 were new, 26 were young and 13 adults; at Strivens Reed Bed (Steyning), 59 different birds were handled, 49 were new, 42 were young and 13 adults; at Cissbury Ring, 29 different birds were handled, all were new, 25 were young and three adults. There was no similar summary from the Rye Bay RG.

During the second winter period, the species was seen at some 317 localities. The maximum counts were, in November, 26 at West Blatchington (Hove) on the 2<sup>nd</sup> (and three other counts over 20) and, in December, 19 at Gills Lap (Ashdown Forest) on the 4<sup>th</sup>.

The only observation of plumage or behavioural interest was of a bird with a black belly which was seen at West Tarring (Worthing) on a number of occasions from February to 6 Apr. [CB]

## Common Starling

## *Sturnus vulgaris*

*Common resident, passage migrant and winter visitor. Red listed species of high conservation concern.*

In the first winter period, the roosts at Brighton Pier and the West Pier held 31,500 and 3500 Starlings respectively on 10 Jan and, at a new 'splinter' roost in Regency Square, there were 1000 the same day but 2500 on 16 Feb. Other significant roosts in the first winter period were 300 on 9 Jan rising to 1500 on 21 Jan in a reed bed at Arundel WWT, 275 on 4 Feb and 250 on 14 Mar at Pett Level, and 100 roosting in heather at Byworth (Petworth) on 8 Mar. Feeding flocks in this period include 1000 at the confluence of the R Ouse and R Glynde on 6 Jan, 1000 in a ploughed field at Steyning Bowl on 4 Feb and 1200 at Funtington on 15 Feb. The last two observations were made during TTV surveys. A total of 10,285 Starlings were recorded in 219 2-hr TTV counts making an average of 47 per occupied tetrad. Probable passage is indicated by 1500 which flew west at Shoreham Fort on 8 Feb, although these may have been departing from the Brighton roosts.

The earliest signs of breeding were of one sitting in a woodpecker's hole at Cuckfield on 2 Apr and adults bringing food for young three days later at Middleton-on-Sea. Breeding was confirmed in 208 tetrads and probable in a further 48. During the BBS, a total of 1292 adults was counted in 94 of the 135 1-km squares surveyed, an average of 9.6 per square overall and 13.7 per occupied square, a considerable improvement on the previous year; the highest numbers were 116 at Patcham (Brighton) on 30 May and 114 at Bridge Level (Pevensey) on 26 Jun. Estimates of breeding pairs include 416 in three tetrads north of Burpham on the Norfolk Estate.

On 15 Jul, 70 flew east at Southwater CP (Horsham), possibly to roost. During the summer almost all larger gatherings were on the coast, particularly in the western harbours and at Rye Hbr.

The highest counts were 1000 at Rye Hbr on 6 Aug and 2000 at Sidlesham SF on 26 Aug. Possible signs of an autumn influx were 75 at Littlehampton on 9 Sep. Thereafter, small movements were reported until late November, mainly flying west. On 15 Oct, 200 passed at Hastings CP; many were seen to come in from the sea and most were flying west and on 9 Nov over 300 were counted there.

A roost in reed beds at Thorney Deeps held 1000 on 19 Aug which increased to 3000 on 21 Oct. During the second winter period, the species was seen at some 275 localities with peak counts of 1000 at Barnham on 9 Nov and, on 1 Dec, a roost of 5000. This roost, reported to be 'growing every day', was in a garden in a clump of bamboo measuring c.20 m x 20 m and c.4 m high. The birds arrived 'in about ten waves at six minutes precisely before official sunset'. Other large flocks included 1000 at Ringmer on 9 Nov, 550 feeding at Lewes Brooks on the 16<sup>th</sup> and 600 on newly emerged winter wheat at Goring Gap the same day. At Steep Down (Lancing), a flock of c.1000 was noted on the 13<sup>th</sup> and, on Christmas Day, some 2000 gathered at Rodmell before roosting. The two piers at Brighton held roosts 10,500 on 17 Oct, 18,700 on 28 Nov and 33,100 on 19 Dec. The colder winter weather no doubt boosted numbers in Sussex but the breeding season data also seem slightly more encouraging than in recent years. [ACG]

## Rose-coloured Starling

*Sturnus roseus*

*Rare vagrant.*

A juvenile was found and photographed at Sheepcote Valley (Brighton) on 11 Sep (MCC, ADW, IJW) and stayed until the following day. At times it joined a flock of Common Starlings. This is the 34<sup>th</sup> record for the county and the eighth in the last ten years, the others being three adult males and one presumed female in June and three immatures in October. [ACG]

## Ring Ouzel

*Turdus torquatus*

*Passage migrant, scarce in spring, often fairly common but local in autumn. Red listed species of high conservation concern.*

It was an average spring for this species, followed by another poor autumn passage. An estimate of the numbers of bird-days, which probably involves some double-counting if birds stayed more than one day, was as follows:

Apr	May		Sep	Oct	Nov
36	-		2	53	3

Spring migration was late and short, starting with a male at Telscombe Cliffs on 5 Apr, ten days later than the 10-year average, followed by another male on the 15<sup>th</sup> in a garden at Mount Pleasant (Newhaven). During the weekend starting 18 Apr at least seven birds were present near Birling Gap (Beachy Head), three at Old Lodge LNR (Ashdown Forest) and singletons were found at Sheepcote Valley (Brighton) and at Findon Valley (Worthing), the only bird west of the Ouse. A single bird at Staplefield on the Ouse on 21 Apr and another near Hartfield on the 22<sup>nd</sup> completed the spring sightings which ended 17 days earlier than the 10-year average. The minimum of 16 sightings for spring was marginally lower than the 10-year average of 18.

Autumn migration commenced with one at Sheepcote Valley on 11 Sep, the 10-year average date, followed by one at Rye Hbr on the 24<sup>th</sup>. Main passage, however, commenced a fortnight later on 10 Oct with six birds at Beachy Head, a male at Cissbury Ring and seven at Hastings CP.

On the 11<sup>th</sup> there were 12 at Hastings CP (which might have included the previous day's seven), three at Beachy Head (including one at Whitbread Hollow) and one at Climping while, on the 13<sup>th</sup> there were still six at Hastings CP, two at Cissbury Ring, two at Beachy Head and one at Nutley. Sightings on the 15<sup>th</sup> involved two at Hastings, one at Beachy Head and another heard but not seen at Cissbury Ring. Single birds were then seen at Beachy Head on the 18<sup>th</sup>, 22<sup>nd</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup>. A final three birds at Seaford on 7 Nov completed the year, one week earlier than the 10-year average. The autumn total of 56 birds was just 42% of the 10-year average of 132. [JHW]

## Blackbird

*Turdus merula*

*Abundant breeding resident and winter visitor; perhaps a passage migrant.*

The number of records exceeded 5500, but was lower than in 2008. During the first winter period, numbers were actually lower than the previous year by some 25%, despite contributions from the Atlas surveys, but increased counts during August to October of 67% only involved one fifth the number of birds of the earlier months. Peak counts in the first winter period included 51 at Barnham (7 Feb), 48 at both Upper Beeding (2 Jan) and Ringmer (4 Jan), 42 at Manor Royal (Crawley) (14 Jan) and 40s at Angmering (14 Jan) and Hurst Green (23 Feb).

During the BBS, a total of 1840 birds was recorded in 134 of the 135 1-km squares surveyed, a similar result to 2008. Only four squares held 30 or more birds, compared to seven squares last year, the highest being 37 at Warnham on 24 May. For comparison, the highest count for the Atlas was 64 birds at Angmering on 24 Apr, down from 76 birds at Stanfield (Staplefield) last year, and 11 tetrads out of the 359 (a similar fraction to the four in the BBS) yielded 42 or more birds. Other high Atlas counts were 62 at West Marden, 60 at Bosham and more than 50 from each of Barnham, East Preston, Portslade and Upper Horsebridge.

The first suggestions of nesting came from Barcombe Cross on 26 Feb and Summersdale (Chichester) on the 28<sup>th</sup> and nestlings were suspected at Warnham on 25 Mar and confirmed at Northiam on 1 Apr. A fledgling was seen at Cuckfield Park on 5 Apr and at Newick on the 12<sup>th</sup> and four juveniles fledged at Wivelsfield Green on the 15<sup>th</sup>. While only 34 juveniles were explicitly claimed, 668 pairs of adults were recorded including 113 at Brighton Wild Park (eight fewer than last year), 105 at Bewl Water, 65 at Pagham Hbr, 26 at Rye Harbour, three fewer than last year, and 20 at Sefton Fm (Rose Green), an increase of three. The Norfolk Estate encompassed 162 pairs including 48 at Wepham Down, 42 at North Stoke and 34 at Burpham.

An exceptional migration count of 220 birds at Pett Level on 16 Nov complemented the ringing report from the same site. Other second winter counts included 39 at Streat and 40 at Warnham LNR late in October (and another 30 at Warnham in Dec) and 34 at Hove in November and counts of 30 came from Patcham (Brighton) in October and Church Norton and Pulborough in November. The usual high counts from Beachy Head were absent.

The Steyning RG ringed 70 new birds (including 48 young) and controlled 13 others at Strivens Reed Bed and ringed another 42 new birds (29 young) and controlled nine others at Cissbury. The Rye Bay RG ringed 297 new birds, including 19 pulli, in May and retrapped 214 in the Pett Level area where the peak of 135 ringed in October highlights migration. Another 62 new birds (including 35 young) were ringed at Ladywells (Coombes) and six others were controlled. The total of 471 new birds ringed is seven times more than last year and the number of young ringed tripled.

During the second winter period, the species was seen at some 376 localities with peak counts of 220 at Pett Level on 16 Nov and, in December, 49 at Itchingfield on the 15<sup>th</sup>. [JHW]

**Fieldfare***Turdus pilaris*

*Common, occasionally very common, passage migrant and winter visitor. Red listed species of high conservation concern.*

The number of records and birds seen were similar to 2008 though the first-winter total was lower at 44% above the 10-year average (cf. 74% in 2008) but the second winter total improved to 62% of the 7-year average.

The approximate monthly totals in the three E-W bands of the county are shown in the table (only the easting grid numbers are given).

Eastings	Jan	Feb	Mar	April	May	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>County total</b>	3496	6372	1115	223	1	-	639	2770	1295
<b>SU/SZ70-99</b>	835	1619	426	8		-	1	212	64
<b>TQ/TV00-49</b>	1709	3527	492	213	1	-	604	1921	710
<b>TQ/TV50+</b>	952	1226	197	2		-	34	637	521

The propensity of this species to flock is reflected in the average number of birds per record exceeding 25. There were no more than eight first winter period flocks of 200 or more birds this year but they were evenly spread across the county. Pett Level and its surrounds supported a flock of 300 in January and the snow in early February provoked a gathering of 600 at Ferring on the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 650 at Buxted four days later while, at Petworth, there were flocks of 250 in both February and March. The last flock of 100 was seen at Pulborough Brooks in early April and a late singleton flew over there on the 14<sup>th</sup> with only another singleton at Billingshurst on 14 and 18 May being later, over three weeks after the 10-year average last date but comfortably inside the county record of 5 Jun.

The first bird of the second winter period was recorded at Ashdown Forest on 10 Oct, two weeks later than the 10-year average date, and by the 19<sup>th</sup> there were 50 at Pulborough Brooks and sightings encompassed Pagham Hbr and Pett Level. Most of the movements recorded were westward though the extreme west of the county was not reached until mid-November. A flock of 300 birds roosted in Ashwood Forest at the end of October while Pulborough Brooks hosted 200 and Pett Level another 300 in mid-November.

During the second winter period the species was seen at some 210 localities and peak counts in November included 301 at Pett Level on the 11<sup>th</sup> and 200 at Pulborough Brooks the next day. Although flocks in December seemed to be reducing to fewer than one hundred birds, exceptions included 200 at Henfield Levels on the 11<sup>th</sup>, 185 at Weir Wood Res on the 16<sup>th</sup> and the autumn's peak of 380 at Pett Level on the 22<sup>nd</sup> where 16 new birds were ringed during the autumn. [JHW]

**Song Thrush***Turdus philomelos*

*Decreasing resident and partial migrant; common passage migrant and winter visitor. Red listed species of high conservation concern.*

The approximate numbers of birds and records for the year were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>No. of birds</b>	902	1004	240	1363	1382	1935	260	69	115	456	133	254
<b>No. of records</b>	272	312	134	436	477	534	130	40	42	68	64	102

An analysis of all the records received suggests that the population appears to have stabilised in the last three years. During the first winter period, there were only five counts of 20 or more but these included 37 at West Dean on 6 Jan, 25 at Sandgate Park (Storrington) on the 11<sup>th</sup>, 20 at Bookers Fm (Bolney) on 14 Feb and 21 at Battle Abbey on the 16<sup>th</sup>.

During the breeding season there were 53 pairs at Bawl Water in 100 ha, 46 pairs in the Norfolk Estate (including 16 at North Stoke and 11 at Wepham Down), 21 at Pagham Hbr, 14 at Brighton Wild Park and 11 at Pulborough Brooks. Another 65 pairs were reported, making a total of 236, while 48 records noted fledging and 70 food or faecal transport. Only eight juvenile birds were registered explicitly. During the BBS, 543 birds were recorded in 119 of the 135 1-km squares surveyed.

All high autumnal counts were in October. At Hastings CP 100 birds were counted on the 10<sup>th</sup> and 20 or 25 on four other dates. There were also 20 birds at Cissbury Ring on the 15<sup>th</sup> and a peak count of 43 at Brighton Wild Park on the 17<sup>th</sup>, where a total of 63 birds was reported flying west during the month, while at Pett Level daily records peaked above 20 birds near the end of October. During the second winter period, the species was seen at some 259 localities. In November the peak count was ten at Copsale on the 26<sup>th</sup>; in December, peak counts were 15 at Weir Wood Res on the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17 at Pett Level on the 22<sup>nd</sup>.

Twenty three new birds were ringed at Ladywells (Coombes), of which nine were young, and three more were retrapped. The Steyning RG ringed 24 new birds, of which 17 were young, and retrapped three at Cissbury North Scarp and ringed another 29 birds, 26 of them young, at Strivens Reed Bed, and retrapped two. The Rye Bay RG ringed 240 new birds and retrapped another 86; migration was illustrated by 29 birds ringed in September, 106 in October and 34 in November while fewer than 20 were trapped in any other month and a total of only 15 before June. The Beachy Head RG ringed ten, including eight in October. [JHW]



*Song Thrush, Bishopstone, June 2009 (Peter Wilson)*

**Redwing***Turdus iliacus*

*Common, occasionally very common, passage migrant and winter visitor. Red listed species of high conservation concern.*

First-winter records were maintained at last year's increased level but the number of autumn sightings was disappointing. The approximate monthly totals in the three E-W bands of the county are shown below (easting grid numbers only).

Eastings	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr		Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>County total</b>	4121	4182	552	25		4	1864	767	1032
<b>SU/SZ70-99</b>	963	1450	51	8		-	62	42	44
<b>TQ/TV00-49</b>	2277	1901	387	13		3	1712	679	832
<b>TQ/TV50-99</b>	881	831	114	4		1	90	46	156

Unlike last year, a significant number (16) of sizeable flocks (of 100 or more) were observed in the first-winter period. An early observation of 120 at Black Down (Fernhurst) in the north-west on 3 Jan was followed by 240 birds at Pett Level in the east, 200 at Hunger Hill (Coolham) on the 30<sup>th</sup> and 180 at Iping on the 31<sup>st</sup>. In February, 200 were at both Ferring on the 3<sup>rd</sup> and Danegate (Mark Cross) on the 5<sup>th</sup>. In mid-February, a westward movement brought 300 birds to Petworth Park on the 11<sup>th</sup> and 240 to Shillinglee Park on the 13<sup>th</sup> and, later, 190 to Linchmere (Fernhurst) on the 23<sup>rd</sup>. Early in March 100 birds at Wakehurst Place was the only notable count amid a decline in numbers across the whole county as migrants departed; the last bird observed being an adult male at Billingshurst on 15 Apr, just three days later than the 10-year average last date.

The return of birds was marked by a singleton at Weir Wood Res on 24 Sep, three days earlier than the 10-year average date, followed by two birds at Chelwood Gate (Ashdown) on the 26<sup>th</sup> and a singleton at Pett Level on the 30<sup>th</sup>. From 10 Oct numbers began to build up when two flocks totalling 70 birds passed over Millbrook (Ashdown), another two totalling 135 flew west over the Old Airstrip (Ashdown) on the 13<sup>th</sup> and 217 birds were counted at Warnham LNR on the 14<sup>th</sup>. Peak counts of 410 birds were made at Brighton Wild Park on the 17<sup>th</sup> and 350 W at Owlbeech Woods (Horsham) on the 29<sup>th</sup>. During the second winter period, the species was seen at some 247 localities. The highest count in November was only 56 at Pulborough Brooks on the 16<sup>th</sup>. In December, there were only three counts of 100 or more, the highest being 129 at White Dyke (Hailsham) on the 10<sup>th</sup>. [JHW]

**Mistle Thrush***Turdus viscivorus*

*Common resident and partial migrant. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern.*

The number of records and birds reported both fell by 18% from their 2008 figures and the high proportion of first half-year records continued. It is estimated from the data that there are 1190 birds in the county compared to last year's estimate of 1425 but this reduction reflects exactly the fall in the number of records. The approximate numbers of birds and records received were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>No. of birds</b>	233	288	92	277	205	278	89	72	63	66	68	82
<b>No. of records</b>	120	144	68	188	132	159	27	17	29	42	34	39



As before, this species was reported throughout the county but sizeable gatherings in the first winter period were confined to 31 Jan when 15 birds were seen at Badgers Wood Fm (Poynings) and 11 at Iping. A flock of ten birds seemed to be moving around the extreme east of the county in late April and were probably non-breeding birds.

A possible nesting site in Hastings on 3 Feb was, perhaps, speculative but reliable breeding activity was reported at Tunstall Fm (Robertsbridge) on 4 Apr and there were fledged young at Arlington Res on 18 Apr and a second brood at Troutbridge on 21 Jun. Breeding was confirmed at 53 sites and probable in another 45 sites, while behaviour suggested possible breeding in a further 130 sites. During the BBS, 77 birds were recorded in 42 of the 135 1-km squares surveyed with a maximum count of six at East Ashling on 18 Jun.

During the summer there were few sizeable counts apart from 15 counted in an Atlas survey on 6 Jul at Horsham, 32 at Lavington Plantation on 14 Aug and 14 at Pett Level on the 18th. During the second winter period, the species was seen at some 147 localities with highest counts of 12 at Wakehurst Place on 21 Nov and 15 at Warnham LNR on 31 Dec. [JHW]

## Spotted Flycatcher

## *Muscicapa striata*

*Scarce and declining summer visitor and fairly common passage migrant. Red listed species of high conservation concern.*

Spring passage was first noted on 16 Apr when two were recorded at Upwaltham Hill (ten days earlier than the 10-year average date). There was then a gap until 1 May before the next birds were recorded, with three at Pulborough Brooks and a singleton at Bewl Water. Passage continued until the end of May but was very light, with the only count of more than three birds being six seen at North Fields (Pagham Hbr) on the 21<sup>st</sup>.

During the BBS, birds were recorded from five of the 135 1-km squares surveyed with a maximum of two; this was a small improvement on 2008's records (singletons in each of two of the 136 1-km squares surveyed). Records of confirmed breeding were received from 21 sites from mid-May which was an improvement on the 5-year average of 15 confirmed breeding sites. Breeding was thought probable at a further 18 sites (21 in 2008) and birds were also recorded from a further 35 areas of suitable breeding habitat during the summer (42 in 2008).

Following five years of below average numbers in the late summer/autumn, birds were again in low numbers; roughly 263 individuals were recorded during the period. Migrants started to be seen inland from the first week of August and, by the middle of the month, ones and twos began to appear along the coast at a variety of widely spread locations. On 31 Aug, five birds were reported from Birling Gap with six present there on 9 Sep, Beachy Head's highest count for the autumn. During September, Church Norton hosted up to nine birds on the 7<sup>th</sup> with six also there on the 20<sup>th</sup>. However, the largest site total for the autumn was of only ten birds at Sheepcote Valley (Brighton) on the 11<sup>th</sup>. During the last ten days of the month numbers dropped rapidly with only ones and twos being recorded along the coast until the 29<sup>th</sup>, when one was seen well inland at West Harting and four were present at Clayton.

The only October records were of singletons, at Washington and West Hill (Hastings) on the 2<sup>nd</sup>. These were then followed by the last two birds of the year which were watched at close range hawking insects from the top of a hawthorn at Rose Green on 2 Nov, 21 days later than the ten-year average date. [DG]

**Robin***Erithacus rubecula*

*Abundant resident, passage migrant and winter visitor*

Some 4170 consolidated records were received for this species underlining its abundant status. Some 70% of these records came from the first half of the year.

The minimum monthly numbers of birds (excluding those recorded as 'present' only) and records were approximately as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>No. of birds</b>	2582	3076	746	4139	3153	4121	305	310	965	1076	1342	1578
<b>No. of records</b>	357	470	286	651	590	563	162	129	204	197	253	313

The above figures demonstrate the effect on numbers of Atlas recording effort, similar to that for some other common species. During the first winter, February was the peak month as surveyors completed winter surveys; during the breeding season, April and June numbers were significantly high as breeding season tetrad surveys were done; thereafter, numbers declined as surveying effort declined until the next winter season's Atlas work began in November. The overall effect of this seasonality was that almost 70% of records were for the first half of the year.

During the first winter period, there were 108 counts of 20 or more birds, with maxima of 63 at Lower Beeding on 24 Feb and 59 at Bookers Fm (Bolney) on the 14<sup>th</sup>.

Monthly counts from sites which were regularly surveyed included the following:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>Hotham Pk (Bognor)</b>	nc	6	7	3	5	2	2	4	6	8	3	2
<b>Lower Standean</b>	6	6	nc	7	7	14	3	nc	28	31	13	9
<b>Lewes Race Course</b>	9	5	7	12	4	3	2	3	11	12	nc	4
<b>Newhaven Tide Mills</b>	2	2	3	4	1	nc	nc	12	25	5	10	2
<b>Kings Standing (Ashdown)</b>	nc	10	9	12	12	14	3	5	14	7	14	2
<b>Darwell Res</b>	9	20	36	19	12	10	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc

During the breeding season, Atlas TTVs in 318 tetrads surveyed recorded 20 or more birds in 122 tetrads but counts of only one bird in 26 tetrads; the highest count was 44 at Southleigh Fm (Emsworth) on 21 May. Breeding was confirmed in 217 tetrads and was probable in a further 122. During the BBS, a total of 1310 Robins was recorded in 132 of the 135 1-km squares surveyed, with a maximum of 38 at Southleigh Forest (Emsworth) on 20 May (where the maximum count in 2008 had been 47). Double figure counts were recorded in 55 squares; there were 19 counts of only one bird but in only five squares was there only one bird on either visit. Birds were seen at a nest box in Pound Hill Park (Crawley) by mid-February and courtship feeding was watched in Lewes on the 28<sup>th</sup>. Birds were carrying food to the nest in Streat on 5 Apr and in Hailsham on the 7<sup>th</sup>. The first fledged young were noted at Chesworth Fm (Horsham) on the 16<sup>th</sup>. There were 87 territories around Bewl Water but 103 breeding pairs in Brighton Wild Park was judged to represent a 'massive downturn' following 142 in 2007 and 143 in 2008. There were 43 pairs on the Norfolk Estate and, at Sefter Fm (Rose Green), 25 territories in 95 ha (cf. 23 in 2007 and 21 in 2008).

Ringling summaries provided by the Steyning RG were as follows: at Ladywells (Coombes), 54 birds were handled comprising 44 new and ten controls of which 17 adults and 35 young; at Strivens Reed Bed (Steyning), 76 birds were handled comprising 76 new and nine controls of

which 13 adults and 72 young; at Cissbury Ring, 60 birds were handled comprising 54 new and six controls of which 15 were adults and 44 young.

The first autumn song was heard at Ladywells (Coombes) on 29 Aug but the first report of autumn movement was detected at Whitbread Hollow (Beachy Head) on 30 Aug when 20 birds were recorded while there were 30 there on 6 Sep. The next record of movement was on 19 Sep, when there were 70 at Seaford Head and 15 at West Hill (Hastings). On the 20<sup>th</sup>, 18 between Peacehaven and Newhaven included a number in exposed positions on the cliff top. In October, observers at West Hill recorded further small movements, with 15 to 25 noted on various dates through the month, 40 were noted at Seaford Head on the 4<sup>th</sup>, a total of 58 was recorded from various locations around Hastings on the 16<sup>th</sup>, and on 23<sup>rd</sup> 79 were at Hastings CP. On 28 Oct, an observer at Robertsbridge watched a 'song battle' between two birds on the frontier between their territories.

During the second winter period the species was seen at some 350 localities. The highest counts were: in November, 52 at Three Bridges and 50 at West Blatchington (Hove) on the 2<sup>nd</sup>; in December, 48 at Bolney on the 9<sup>th</sup> and 40 at Collington (Bexhill) on the 10<sup>th</sup>. [CB]



*Robin, Hodcombe, January 2009 (Roger Charlwood)*

## Common Nightingale

*Luscinia megarhynchos*

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

The first bird was heard at Pulborough Brooks on 6 Apr (10-year average date 3 Apr) and probably the same bird again the next day. At Wisborough Green, one was noted on the 8<sup>th</sup> but, on the 9<sup>th</sup>, three were singing from the same bush! One was singing from the garden of the Bill House at Selsey on 18 Apr and another, presumably different, was at Church Norton the next day. One

was singing at Rye Hbr on 12 Apr and it, or another was heard there on the 20<sup>th</sup>, but there were no further reports from that area. Birds were recorded from 6 Apr to 9 Jun on all days except seven.

A co-ordinated survey of the Henfield area by Henfield Birdwatch on 3 May found 29 singing males, the highest total in the 11 years of the survey. A high density of singing birds was also reported at Shortland Copse (Plaistow), where 16 were singing on 4 May and ten on 3 Jun. Three pairs were found during a survey around Bewl Water in May and, on the 4<sup>th</sup>, five were singing at Hurston Warren (Parham) and there were six pairs at Pulborough Brooks. One at Shipley sang every night from at least 14 Apr to 28 May.

Successful breeding was reported from Brinkwells (Fittleworth) and Harsfold (Wisborough Green) where fledged birds were reported on 6 and 19 Jun respectively. The holding of territory for over a week was recorded during Atlas fieldwork from 16 localities, six of which came from the west and ten from the east. During the BBS, a total of 11 was recorded from five of the 135 1-km squares surveyed, with a maximum of five at Bearhurst Fm (Stonegate) on 14 May.

After 16 Jun, when the last singing bird was heard at Darwell Res (cf. 21 June in 2008), reports were, predictably, few. There were only seven for the remainder of the month, only three in July, fourteen in August and two in September. The first autumn migrant to be trapped was at Pett Level on 26 Jun and a young bird was ringed at Strivens Reed Bed (Steyning) the following day. Three were noted in scrub at Pulborough Brooks on 24 Jul, two birds were at Pett Level in the last days of the month and a further 19 during August. Observers at Whitbread Hollow (Beachy Head) estimated eight 'autumn' birds there. After 24 Aug, when the last inland bird was recorded at Weir Wood Res, there was a gap until 6 Sep when one was ringed at Pett Level and then the final record for the year was of a trio at Beachy Head on 18 Sep (as in 2008), six days later than the 10-year average date. [CB]

## Bluethroat

## *Luscinia svecica*

*Very scarce spring and autumn visitor. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern.*

One bird, a male, was trapped and ringed near Rye on 13 Sep (RBRG) and takes to eight the total recorded in the county since the beginning of 2000 and the total for September since 1990 to 12. [JAH]

## Black Redstart

## *Phoenicurus ochruros*

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

The minimum monthly totals and 6-year monthly averages were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
No. of birds	13	8	9	13	5	2	-	1	8	38	29	23
6-yr average	7	9	30	11	3	2	1	2	2	29	23	12

Monthly totals for 2009 compared with the 6-years monthly averages were lower significantly in March but were somewhat higher in the last three months of the year. The 199 records received covered roughly 83 1km sites of which 82% were coastal or near-coastal. Records for January and February suggested that approximately 19 birds had wintered. A further eight birds in March, not

previously recorded, suggested that spring movement was underway. Whereas in 2008 there had been a very long-staying bird at Shoreham Power Station, this year's bird stayed only a short time from 1 Jan to the 17<sup>th</sup>. The accolade for the longest stayer went to one at Widewater (Lancing) where a female, first noted on 2 Jan, was recorded regularly until 23 Feb and then irregularly to 17 Mar. All records bar two were of single birds; the exceptions were two at Lancing Beach on 4 Feb and no less than five at Langney Point on 16 Jan.

Records for the spring months, April to May, came from some 15 sites where birds had not been recorded during the previous months indicating, as in March, accelerating dispersal or migration. These were mostly of single birds except for twos at Whitbread Hollow (Beachy Head) on 24 Mar, at Atherington (Climping) on the 30<sup>th</sup> and of three at Seaford Head on 4 Apr. The earliest inland spring migrant was one at Lychpole Hill (Cissbury) on 20 Apr. The latest spring records were of a single bird inland in a garden at Wivelsfield on 2 May, two at Hastings Beach on the 3<sup>rd</sup> and another two inland at Billingshurst CP on the 5<sup>th</sup>.

There were no confirmed or even probable breeding records. The only possible breeding record was of a singing male at Hastings CP on 13 Apr and 3 Jun.

In the autumn the earliest record of possible migration or dispersal was of one at Clayton windmills on the exceptionally early date of 16 Aug. The next sightings, also on very early dates, were of one at Newhaven Tide Mills on 5 Sep, one at Whitbread Hollow on the 9<sup>th</sup> and a male inland at Billingshurst CP the same day. Other records for September were of singletons at Hastings on the 19<sup>th</sup>, Pagham Hbr on the 26<sup>th</sup> and Belle Tout (Beachy Head) on the 30<sup>th</sup>.

The usual upsurge in records of autumn migrants was noted from 13 Oct at Birling Gap where five were noted on the 27<sup>th</sup>. Most records were of singletons at mostly coastal sites while inland there were only six records in October, two in November and two in December. In December, one of the birds was noted in a Goring garden from the 7<sup>th</sup> to the 21<sup>st</sup>.

During the second winter period, the species was seen at some 45 mainly coastal localities where most records were of single birds. The exceptions were of three at Lancing Beach and Hastings in November and twos at three sites in December. [JAH]

## Common Redstart

## *Phoenicurus phoenicurus*

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

The first sighting of the year was on 3 Apr at Pulborough Brooks. On the following day there were records from the coast at Selsey Bill, Seaford, Seven Sisters CP, Horseshoe Plantation (Beachy Head) and Rye Hbr. On 6 Apr a weak male, which had sat on the sea, was brought in to land at Worthing Beach in the beak of a Lesser Black-backed Gull. The latest coastal record was on 5 May at Church Norton by which time there were inland records on most days.

The first three singing males were all recorded on 10 Apr in Ashdown Forest. Elsewhere, singing birds were noted at Eridge Park on 13 Apr, Iping Common on the 15<sup>th</sup>, Cowdray Forest (Worth) and Plashett Park (Isfield) on the 22<sup>nd</sup>, at Wiggonholt Common on several dates in April and May and, in May, at Ambersham Common on the 22<sup>nd</sup> while two males were singing at Stanley Common (Liphook) on the 4<sup>th</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup>.

Breeding was confirmed in three tetrads in Ashdown Forest: on 29 May a male was carrying food, and on 20 Jun and on the 23<sup>rd</sup> fledged young were noted. Breeding was probable in a further six tetrads in the Ashdown Forest. Males were noted holding territory at Pease Pottage and

Plashett Lakes and the Wealden Heaths Breeding Bird Survey (WHBBS) identified two territories at Weavers Down (Liss). Possible breeding was recorded from a further 11 tetrads.

Return migration appeared to commence from 16 Aug with an increase in records from coastal migration watch points, but in small numbers, the exceptions being five birds at Beachy Head on the 22<sup>nd</sup>, six at Cissbury Ring on the 27<sup>th</sup> and eight at Beachy Head on the 31<sup>st</sup>. The final sightings in the Ashdown Forest were on 25 Aug. Autumn migration in September generally involved very small numbers from mainly coastal or near coastal sites. The higher counts were of six at Beachy Head on the 5<sup>th</sup>, fives at Cissbury Ring on the 5<sup>th</sup> and Findon on the 19<sup>th</sup> and an autumn maximum of 12 at Sheepcote Valley (Brighton) on the 15<sup>th</sup>.

During October single birds were seen at Church Norton, Brighton Wild Park, Lewes Race Course and Belle Tout (Beachy Head) on the 10<sup>th</sup> and ringed at Pett Level on the 25<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup>, the final records of the year. [SPS]

## Whinchat

## *Saxicola rubetra*

*Rare summer visitor and fairly common passage migrant. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern.*

The monthly minimum numbers of birds and days on which they were recorded were as shown below:

	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct
No. of birds	5	20	-	1	97	272	15
4-yr average	19	11	1	3	179	301	28
No. of days	4	9	-	2	19	28	4

The first record for the year was one at Worthing Pier on 12 Apr, a fairly typical date, followed by other singletons at Sidlesham Ferry Pool on the 15<sup>th</sup>, Church Norton on the 22<sup>nd</sup> and two at Sidlesham Ferry Pool again on the 27<sup>th</sup>. The 15 records for May were mostly of singletons, with only four counts of twos and, at Ferring Rife on the 9<sup>th</sup>, one of three. The final spring bird was seen at Cuckmere Haven on the 31<sup>st</sup>.

The next record was of one at Pulborough Brooks on 29 and 31 Jul, presumably an early returning migrant or failed breeder. Numbers then built up rapidly from 6 Aug although the month's minimum total was well below the 4-year average, consistent with the national picture of a decline in numbers overall. Again, daily counts did not exceed four except for five noted at Pett Level on the 25<sup>th</sup> and eight were counted at Beachy Head on the 29<sup>th</sup> when there was also a significant fall of Wheatears.

In September the bulk of the autumn's migrants passed through with total numbers slightly below the 4-years average. There were only 15 counts (out of 123) in excess of five: a count of 13 occurred at Pett Level on the 5<sup>th</sup> and there were ten at Thorney Deepes on the 6<sup>th</sup>; on the 19<sup>th</sup> there were 12 at No Mans Land (Findon), many of which were flycatching from game cover of alfalfa and chicory. Observers at Sheepcote Valley (Brighton) earned the accolade for the largest counts, where ten or more were counted on four dates from the 10<sup>th</sup> to the 19<sup>th</sup> eclipsed by 30 on the 24<sup>th</sup>. There were only three records for October, of singletons at Pagham Hbr on the 1<sup>st</sup>, at Pett Level on the 8<sup>th</sup> and the last bird of the year at Newhaven Tide Mills on the 25<sup>th</sup>, a fairly typical date. [JAH]



**Stonechat***Saxicola torquatus*

*Fairly common resident and partial migrant.*

**2004:** A bird showing characteristics of the eastern form, *Saxicola t. maura*, otherwise known as Siberian Stonechat, seen at Hastings CP on 22 October (ASG), has been accepted by the BBRC (British Birds Rarities Committee).

**2009:** The minimum monthly totals were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>No. of birds</b>	181	96	101	121	160	211	108	198	253	227	108	106
<b>4-yr average</b>	153	159	135	127	177	160	120	127	254	427	200	140

Birds were recorded on 299 days of the year (322 last year), confirming that this species is still fairly common in suitable habitats, such as heaths, commons and some coastal sites and that there is also a sizeable wintering population. Over 80% of records were of ones or twos as is shown in the following table of the frequencies of counts of various sizes:

Count size	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10+	Total
<b>Frequency</b>	769	336	88	64	23	21	13	7	1	15	1337
<b>Percentage</b>	57.5	25.1	6.6	4.8	1.7	1.6	1.0	0.5	-	1.1	100

The highest counts in the first winter period were of only six on 4 Jan at both Bines Green (Ashurst) and Middle Bridge (Pevensey). During the spring months, the highest count in March was of seven at Iping Common on the 20<sup>th</sup>; in April, there were counts of six at the Old Airstrip (Ashdown) on the 5<sup>th</sup>, seven at Belle Tout (Beachy Head) in two hours on the 9<sup>th</sup> and eight at Newhaven Tide Mills on the 23<sup>rd</sup>. The highest count overall, and the only double figures count during the first half of the year, was of ten at Iping Common on 20 May, all busy breeding, carrying nesting materials and food.

Estimating the numbers of breeding pairs in the county is an exercise fraught with difficulty due to the large number of records from Ashdown Forest (712 of 1337, i.e. 53%) and the frequent repetition of recordings. However, by assuming that no more than one pair bred or probably bred in a 1-km square (admittedly a likely under-estimate in an area of the size and type of habitat of Ashdown Forest) then breeding was confirmed or probable for a county total of at least 100 pairs at 77 sites divided between Ashdown Forest and other sites as shown below:

Breeding	Confirmed		Probable		Totals	
	Pairs	1-km sites	Pairs	1-km sites	Pairs	1-km sites
<b>County totals</b>	44	38	56	39	100	77
<b>Ashdown Forest</b>	20	19	14	12	34	31
<b>Other sites</b>	24	19	42	27	66	46

Of the other sites, 30 were in the west of the county and 26 in the east. During the BBS, two birds were seen in only one of the 135 1-km squares surveyed.

Suggestions of possible dispersal or migration in July involved a sighting on the 4<sup>th</sup> of a male at Rye Hbr where there was no record of breeding. The first significant post-breeding counts from Beachy Head were of 17 on 9 Aug, 16 on the 23<sup>rd</sup>, 13 on the 30<sup>th</sup> and 15 on the 31<sup>st</sup> which could be congregations of locally bred birds, dispersers and migrants. During September, double figure counts were recorded at only two sites; at Beachy Head counts were of 17 on the 5<sup>th</sup>, 11 on the

12<sup>th</sup> and 17 on the 26<sup>th</sup>; at Chelwood Gate (Ashdown Forest) there were 11 on the 28<sup>th</sup>. Counts in October were, as at other times, widespread but mostly in low numbers; the only double figure counts were of 19 at Pett Level on the 4<sup>th</sup>, ten at Cuckmere Haven on the 11<sup>th</sup>, ten at Thorney Island on the 12<sup>th</sup> and 16 at Beachy Head on the 17<sup>th</sup>. During the second winter period the species was seen at some 107 localities; the highest counts were, in November, seven at Cuckmere Haven on the 9<sup>th</sup> and, in December, ten on the R Ouse at Southease on the 20<sup>th</sup>. [JAH]

## Northern Wheatear

## *Oenanthe oenanthe*

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

The minimum monthly totals, numbers of days on which birds were recorded and the approximate numbers of records were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>No. of birds</b>	-	1	155	243	110	28	27	469	636	109	4	-
<b>No. of days</b>	-	1	15	25	19	10	12	28	27	17	3	-
<b>No. of records</b>	-	1	62	95	46	13	14	114	156	64	4	-

The first record was of a male on the cliff top east of Glyne Gap (Bexhill) on 28 Feb, the third earliest record compared with 13 Feb 2007 and 26 Feb 2000. The next arrivals were not until 12 Mar, when two were recorded at Rye Hbr. A further six birds were noted at five coastal sites from Rye Hbr to Selsey Bill the following day and at least 26 on the 14<sup>th</sup> with counts of six at Widewater (Lancing) and eight at both Selsey Bill (in 3¼ hr) and Worthing. Thereafter birds were noted daily throughout March, April and May, generally in small numbers but with double figure counts of 12 on 19 Mar around Pagham Beach, 11 at Atherington (Climping) on the 30<sup>th</sup>, ten at Widewater on 2 Apr, 13 at Selsey Bill on the 18<sup>th</sup> and 14 at Rye Hbr on 1 May. During March and April arriving migrants were noted at three times as many coastal sites as inland sites. Such coastal sites were spread right along the coast from Selsey Bill to Rye Hbr. Most of the birds were recorded at sites other than the principal seawatching sites, as shown by the relatively small numbers counted there despite the hours watched, as shown below.

	March		April		May	
<b>Selsey Bill</b>	15	68½ hr	28	192¼ hr	5	184½ hr
<b>Worthing Beach</b>	8	17¼ hr	10	74¾ hr	3	56 hr
<b>Splash Point</b>	1	42½ hr	5	109 hr	-	

Breeding was confirmed at six sites, all in the east of the county. At Newhaven Tide Mills one pair bred; a bird was seen carrying either a faecal sac or food on 12 Jun and fledged young were seen from the 14<sup>th</sup> with four there on the 26<sup>th</sup>. At Rye Hbr 12 pairs nested at the Beach Reserve (with six of these at the Flat Beach) of which at least seven pairs used pipes provided as artificial nesting sites. Overall success was high with many of these pairs successfully rearing second broods. At Telscombe Cliffs one pair successfully reared one young. At Cuckmere Haven a pair was seen at the scrape with two chicks on 28 Jun. At Crowlink an adult was seen with a fledged juvenile on 16 Jun. At the Midrips, a fledged juvenile was seen on 4 Jul and there were two with an adult female on the 28<sup>th</sup>. Breeding was thought probable at Firle Beacon where a pair were seen on 17 May behaving in an agitated manner in suitable nesting habitat. During the BBS birds were recorded in five 1-km squares of the 135 surveyed, of which only one was in the east, with a maximum count of four on Worthing GC on 17 Apr.

The first bird recorded as a returning migrant was one on Henfield Levels on 3 Jul, a very early date. The first returning migrant at Thorney Island was noted on the more typical date of the 26<sup>th</sup> (average for 11 years, 22<sup>nd</sup>) when another two were seen on Seaford Head and one was on the shingle spit at Church Norton on the 29<sup>th</sup>, all of unspecified gender or age. Thereafter, birds were recorded almost daily during August (28/31) generally in small numbers, but with several double-figure counts, at twice as many coastal compared with inland sites. The first such were ten at Pagham Hbr on the 9<sup>th</sup>, then 11 at Clayton windmills on the 11<sup>th</sup>, 14 at Rye Hbr LNR on the 17<sup>th</sup> and, eclipsing all others, a major fall on the 29<sup>th</sup> in the Beachy Head area where at least 40 were counted when there were also 29 at Atherington (Climping). Passage continued on an almost daily basis in September (27 days of 30) with 13 double-figure counts on eight days. There was another major fall at the south coast headlands of Beachy Head and Seaford on the 5<sup>th</sup> with counts of at least 49 and 16 respectively and ten also at Pett. There were counts of ten at Newhaven Tide Mills on the 14<sup>th</sup> and at Worthing Beach on the 18<sup>th</sup>. On the 19<sup>th</sup> a small fall on the headlands produced 13 at Beachy Head and 11 at Seaford Head but the highest day count in the west was 40 at Church Norton on the 20<sup>th</sup>. A melanistic bird was seen at Newhaven Tide Mills on 1 Sep.

Peak counts and dates during August and September were as shown in the following table:

Date	29/08	31/08	5/09	14/09	17/09	20/09	21/09	27/09
No. of birds	155	41	99	35	46	73	33	65
No. of records	15	14	12	8	9	14	10	9

Migration continued during October but at a slower rate until the 18<sup>th</sup> and with most migrants having departed the highest counts were only ten on the 1<sup>st</sup> at Widewater and six in Chichester Hbr on the 7<sup>th</sup> after which birds were noted on only five days between 24 Oct and 5 Nov. The latest records were of singletons in November at Rye Hbr on the 2<sup>nd</sup>, at Thorney Island on the 4<sup>th</sup> and at both Atherington and Rye Hbr on the 5<sup>th</sup>. [JAH]

## Greenland Wheatear

## *Oenanthe oenanthe leucorhoa*

*Passage migrant; true status unclear.*

Wheatears showing the characteristics of the larger and brighter Greenland form were represented by only two records: one was seen on 10 May at Rye Hbr and another at Seaford Head on the 14<sup>th</sup>.

There have now been 37 spring records of this sub-species during the past 21 years but still only 15 autumn records. [JAH]

## 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
3	1	1	-	14	10

Numbers during both spring and autumn passage were low, with a minimum of 30 birds recorded during the year. This compares unfavourably with both the 10-year and 5-year averages of 59 and 46 respectively and is the sixth year in a row when annual numbers have declined.

The first spring migrant was found at Housedean Fm (Lewes) on 12 Apr, two days later than the 10-year average arrival date. No further birds were seen until the 22<sup>nd</sup> when males were present at Horseshoe Plantation (Beachy Head) and Littlehampton. Only two further birds were seen in the spring with a female at Seaford Head from 6 to 8 May, and, the final bird, at Rockhouse Bank (Pevensey) on 4 Jun. No birds were recorded in the county during July for the first time in six years.

Autumn passage started on 10 Aug with a bird at Pett Level and another at Billingshurst from the 14<sup>th</sup> to the 18<sup>th</sup>. In the period 16 Aug to 11 Sep at least 19 further individuals were recorded from 12 coastal sites, including the well watched locations of Beachy Head and Pagham Hbr, with passage peaking between 6 and 11 Sep. A bird was present in St. Anne's Well Gardens (Hove) on 17 and 18 Sep and an elusive bird was at Cissbury Ring on the 19<sup>th</sup>. The last bird of the year was in St. Anne's Well Gardens on the 23<sup>rd</sup>, eight days earlier than the 10-year average departure date. [DG]

## Dunnock

## *Prunella modularis*

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

The minimum monthly numbers of birds and of records were approximately as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>No. of birds</b>	665	938	437	1487	1178	1985	265	102	300	401	473	615
<b>No. of records</b>	230	323	175	475	394	500	109	55	89	110	148	210

During the first winter, February was the peak month as surveyors completed winter surveys; during the breeding season, April and June were the peak months due to first and second tetrad surveys; thereafter, numbers declined as surveying effort declined such that the overall effect was for almost 75% of records to come from the first half of the year. During the first winter period, there were 30 records of double figure counts with the highest being 36 at Patcham (Brighton) on 26 Jan followed by 30 at Hangleton (Hove) on the 24<sup>th</sup> and then 19 at Mile Oak (Portslade) on 25 Feb. There were 63 double figure counts during TTVs for the Atlas. The max counts were of 30 and 32 at Hangleton, on 24 Jan and 4 Apr, and 26 at nearby Mile Oak on 5 Apr. Twenty were noted at East Preston on 14 June (a date by which Dunnocks have generally become very secretive). By contrast, 126 TTVs found only single Dunnocks and 132 recorded only two.

Maximum counts at regularly surveyed sites were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>Summersdale</b>	2	2	2	4	2	4	3	2	2	2	2	3
<b>Flansham</b>	nc	6	9	6	7	3	nc	1	1	3	nc	1
<b>Pulborough Brooks</b>	3	6	5	8	8	7	5	4	5	6	1	10
<b>Warnham LNR</b>	7	11	8	8	6	3	6	3	6	8	4	2
<b>Patcham</b>	36	nc	nc	21	12	12	11	4	7	25	12	11
<b>Ashdown Forest (Kings Standing)</b>	1	3	5	2	6	2	2	nc	1	2	3	1
<b>Lewes Race Course</b>	4	7	8	4	5	3	1	1	nc	1	nc	1
<b>Newhaven Tide Mills</b>	3	nc	5	11	10	2	10	10	10	4	8	3

During breeding season surveys, 43 pairs bred in Brighton Wild Park (44 in 2008), 39 pairs were counted at Pagham Hbr, there were 32 territories at Bewl Water, 33 territories at Rye Hbr (37 in 2008), 28 pairs in 663 ha of the western Manhood peninsula, 16 territories at Sefter Fm (Rose

Green) (a small increase on previous years) and at least five at Warnham LNR. Breeding was confirmed in at least 71 tetrads and 15 additional monads and was probable in at least 122 tetrads and an additional 17 monads. An occupied nest was found in Uckfield on 7 Apr and young were in nests at Emsworth Marina on the 12<sup>th</sup> and at Warnham LNR on the 14<sup>th</sup>. The first fledged bird reported was at Midhurst on the 21<sup>st</sup> (cf. 23 Apr in 2008 and 2 May in 2007). The last dependent juvenile noted was at Plumpton Green on 4 Aug (cf. 8 Aug in 2008). On 18 Mar, five Dunnocks were discovered taking nesting material into a single bush at Hurst Green; this area provided the only evidence of this species attempting a second brood. During the BBS, a total of 420 was recorded from 109 of the 135 1-km squares surveyed with a maximum counts of 16 at Peacehaven on 7 Apr, 12 at West Worthing on 23 May and tens at East Preston on 2 May and Hickstead on 19 Jun. Interestingly, the maximum count in 2008 (18) had also been at Peacehaven and 16 had been noted at Hickstead last year.

During ringing sessions by the Steyning RG, 50 different birds (33 new, 17 controlled, 28 adult, 21 young) were handled at Ladywells (Coombes), while at Strivens Reed Bed (Steyning), 134 different birds were handled (82 new, 12 controlled, 22 adult, 58 young) and at Cissbury North Scarp, 52 different birds were handled (39 new, 13 controlled, 15 adult, 36 young). At Ladywells, one on 4 Aug was suffering from extensive avian pox around its bill and was not ringed.

During the autumn, the only evidence of migration was noted at Seaford Head where 70 on 19 Sep and 40 on 4 Oct were recorded as ‘continental movements’. During the second winter period, the species was seen in some 265 localities. The highest counts in November were 20 at Round Hill (Devil’s Dyke) on the 6<sup>th</sup>, 18 at Saddlescombe (Poynings) on the 12<sup>th</sup> and 16 at Hangleton (Hove) on the 21<sup>st</sup>. In December, the highest counts were 20 at Woods Place (Whatlington) on the 1<sup>st</sup> and 17 at Stanbridge (Staplefield) on the 5<sup>th</sup>. [CB]

## House Sparrow

## *Passer domesticus*

*Very common but possibly declining resident. Red listed species of high conservation concern.*

In the first winter period, in 213 2-hr Atlas TTV surveys, 2864 House Sparrows were counted, an average of 13.4 per occupied tetrad. The highest numbers were 75 at Mile Oak (Portslade), 65 at Buckholt (Crowhurst) and 61 at Upper Beeding. The only large flock in this period was at Rye Hbr village where up to 60 were recorded in March. One observer at Keymer reported only four where ‘there used to be 50’.

Nesting was widely reported from mid-March although as early as 30 Jan they were reported entering probable nest sites at Danehill. The first fledglings reported were at Hurst Green on 1 May. At Warnham LNR, a pair raised two broods in a Swift nest box and at Robertsbridge an old House Martin nest was used. At Ferring Rife, on 24 May, several House Sparrows were observed unsuccessfully attempting to catch a Beautiful Demoiselle damselfly. During the BBS, a total of 1413 adults was counted in 101 of the 135 1-km squares surveyed, an average of 10.5 per square overall and 14 per occupied square, an improvement on 2008’s figures. The highest counts were 68 at Northbrook Fm (Worthing), 64 at Burwash and 63 at Portslade. In 2-hr breeding season Atlas TTV counts, the highest numbers were 132 at Upper Horsebridge, 102 at Plumpton Green and 95 at Mile Oak. The largest summer flocks were 180 on 10 Aug at Woolfly Fm (Henfield) and 120 at Southwick Beach on 18 Aug while later, in October, there were 90 at Nook Meadows (Rye Hbr) on the 10<sup>th</sup>.

In the second winter period, the species was seen at some 229 localities; the largest counts in November were of 65 at Rye Hbr village on the 14<sup>th</sup> and 60 at Hangleton (Hove) on the 21<sup>st</sup>; in

December, there were 90 at Collington (Bexhill) on the 10<sup>th</sup> and 103 at Earnley on the 28<sup>th</sup>. An observer who reported signs of disease in two of a flock of 32 at Hurst Green on 14 Oct stated ‘The House Sparrow flock seems set at 30-40. Five years ago it was about five birds.’ [ACG]

## Tree Sparrow

*Passer montanus*

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

Approximately 84 records were received from some 22 tetrads. Many of these records derived from observations by the RBRG at Pett Level (12 of 84, 14%) during the first and last quarters and by the RSPB (14 of 84, 16.7%) during the first quarter at Beeding Hill and on the East Rother at Wet Level (Beckley) where grain was provided near nest boxes.

On the Downs behind Shoreham, small numbers of Tree Sparrows were reported throughout the first winter period. The first and highest count was of five at Beeding Hill on 9 Jan after which up to three were reported on many dates to 31 Mar. Three were at Slinfold Manor on 28 Feb and one at Patcham (Brighton) on the first day of the year. On 15 Mar, four were at Manxey Levels (Pevensy), an area where small numbers have occurred regularly. Four were reported at Robertsbridge on 12 Mar. A small flock was present throughout this period at Pett Level with a maximum of 12 on 2 Feb but the last report was of five on 31 Mar. Also at the eastern end of the county, sightings at Wet Level peaked at eight on 23 Feb while eight were also seen at nearby Four Oaks (Beckley) on 8 Feb. A single bird was reported from East Guldeford on 24 Feb and two there the following day.

No Tree Sparrows were reported in April or May and there were only three records for June, with three at Paghham Hbr on the 14<sup>th</sup>, one at Manxey Levels on the 3<sup>rd</sup> and one at East Guldeford Level on the 15<sup>th</sup>. Possible breeding was recorded in three tetrads.

The first post-breeding report from the Pett Level area was of three on 18 Aug. One was reported from Robertsbridge on 31 Aug. Four seen at Seaford Head in the early morning of 11 Sep may indicate passage. Individuals were recorded by Hastings Migration Watch Group on five dates between 12 Sep and 26 Oct at Hastings CP and West Hill (Hastings).

In the second winter period, apart from two flying east at Beacon Hill LNR (Rottingdean) on 14 Oct, all records were from Pett Level with a maximum of three on 10 Sep and 28 Oct. The last report was of a single bird on 12 Dec.

Numbers of Tree Sparrows continue to decline despite efforts made to locate and support them. However, it is encouraging that a few new small populations may have been discovered. [ACG]

## Yellow Wagtail

*Motacilla flava*

*Scarce and localised summer visitor and fairly common autumn passage migrant. Red listed species of high conservation concern.*

The first record was of two at Pett Level on the relatively late date of 5 Apr, compared with the 10-year average arrival date of 24 Mar. In all, there were 25 records of 118 birds during the month, a high total which was due to a remarkable flock of 65 roosting overnight at Pett Level on the 20 Apr. Records of migration included monthly totals of seven over Worthing Beach and six at Selsey Bill. In May, there were 25 records (18 in 2008), 16 of which were in the first half of the month. A large majority of spring birds was recorded at or near the coast but one was found



at Coolham, another at Denton, and one stopped off at Warnham LNR on 21 Apr. Breeding was confirmed at five sites. Two birds at Lewes Brooks on 1 May, welcomed as the 'first breeding pair', were carrying food, but there were no further records from this site. Seven pairs were feeding young on Horse Eye Level (Pevensey) on 3 Jun. At Rye Hbr at least four pairs were holding territories at Harbour Fm in June and there was an additional pair at Rye Hbr North carrying food on 23 Jun; at Gate Court (Northiam) there was a record of fledged young on 23 Jun but with no further details. During the BBS, the species was recorded in only one of the 135 1-km squares surveyed, with a maximum count of five at Gate Court on 6 May.

The first autumn migrant flew over Seaford Head on 26 Jul and another singleton was noted at Pett Level on the 30<sup>th</sup> but migration only built up slowly until mid-August when, from the 15<sup>th</sup>, records were almost daily and with some sizeable numbers involved. In August, some 60 records were received involving 16 double figure counts from 13 coastal sites with a maximum of 150 at Rye Hbr on the 29<sup>th</sup>. In September, some 120 were received over 26 days, there were 40 counts in double figures (of which, six of 50 or more) and the highest counts were 90 at Botolphs (Bramber) on the 1<sup>st</sup> and 100 at Halseys Fm (Sidlesham) on the 12<sup>th</sup>. However, observers at Climping and Brighton Wild Park described the numbers seen there during this period as poor.

There were only five records in October (cf. seven in 2007 and 21 in 2008) of singletons, except for seven at North Fields (Pagham Hbr) on the 4<sup>th</sup>. The final records were of one at Weir Wood Res on the 27<sup>th</sup> and probably the same bird there on 3 Nov, four days later than the 10-year average date of 30 Oct. Despite 2009 appearing to be another poor year for the species in Sussex, 298 birds, a county annual record, were ringed at Pett Level in the autumn. [CB]

## Grey Wagtail

## *Motacilla cinerea*

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

In all, just over 600 records were received from 231 tetrads. In the first winter period, of 113 records, 70% were of single birds and 22% of twos. The highest counts were of six at Alexandra Park (Hastings) on 17 Jan and five at Barcombe Res on 22 Feb. Birds were recorded in almost 100 localities spread widely across the county. Two birds, unusually present in an urban garden in Shoreham on 2 Feb, were probably brought in by the hard, snowy, weather. Sewage farms and filter beds were favoured throughout the period and several birds were found at coastal sites between Shoreham and Brighton. Spring passage was barely discernible.

During the breeding season, breeding was confirmed at some 35 sites and was probable at a further 23. A pair was checking out a sluice pipe at Warnham LNR on 2 Mar. Nest building was reported from Kents Fm (Burgess Hill) on 15 Mar. Successful breeding was noted at Sheffield Green on 1 May and from Warnham LNR, Hareholt Fm, Mayfield, and Dallington Forest, on the 2<sup>nd</sup>. On 4 May, three young were in a nest at the boathouse at Firlie Park Lake. At Warnham LNR, a pair successfully raised two broods of four and five young. During the BBS, a total of only six was recorded from only four of the 135 1-km squares surveyed with maxima of twos at Earls Down (Dallington) and Mills Place (Weir Wood). During breeding season Atlas TTVs of 40 tetrads: single birds were recorded in half of them; the highest count was of six at Groombridge on 22 May; there were seven counts of threes; and the next highest count was of five at Tilgate (Crawley) on 26 Jun.

Although ten birds were noted at Barcombe Res on 28 Aug and between that date and 9 Oct a total of 13 was recorded at or over Brighton Wild Park, post-breeding movement was not particularly evident until 6 Sep when 6E were noted at Climping Gap. However, the only other

movements for the month were 4E at Bullock Down (Beachy Head) on 19 Sep and 5E at Selsey Bill on the 27<sup>th</sup>. During the second winter period, the species was seen at some 86 localities. The largest groups were at Alexandra Park with 14 on 23 Nov and 11 on 20 Dec. [CB]

## White Wagtail

## *Motacilla alba alba*

*Probably a scarce spring and autumn passage migrant; both pure and mixed pairs have bred.*

There were ten spring records totaling 16 birds. The first birds were noted on 14 Mar, when singles were at both Selsey Bill and Widewater (Lancing). On the 17<sup>th</sup> there was a singleton at Weir Wood and four birds were at the Winpenny Field (Pulborough Brooks) from the 19<sup>th</sup> to the 24<sup>th</sup>. In April, one was at West Mead (Pulborough Brooks) on the 4<sup>th</sup> which was probably a new bird. Other April records involved one at Telscombe Cliffs on the 1<sup>st</sup>, one at Pagham Hbr on the 4<sup>th</sup>, a male and two females together at Worthing Beach on the 6<sup>th</sup>, one in fields west of Selsey on the 7<sup>th</sup> and, finally, two at Bracklesham Bay on the 17<sup>th</sup>.

There were 12 autumn records totaling 16 birds between 2 Aug and 7 Nov. At Weir Wood Res, birds were recorded on seven dates between 2 Aug and 4 Oct with two on 13 Aug and three on 23 Sep while, at Bewl Water, there was one on 20 Sep. The next record was not until 17 Oct when one was at Blatchington Pond (Seaford) followed by a male at Warnham on the 27<sup>th</sup>. There were two at North Wall (Pagham Hbr) on 3 Nov and the last of the year was one at Church Norton on the 7<sup>th</sup>. This was an above average year for White Wagtails in the county. [CB]

## Pied Wagtail

## *Motacilla alba yarrelli*

*Common resident, passage migrant and winter visitor.*

Some 1860 consolidated records were received for 2009, a reduction of c.10% on 2008 for reasons which are unclear but might be due to a reduction in Atlas effort following completion of TTVs during the previous years. The minimum monthly numbers of birds (excluding those recorded as 'present' only) and of records were approximately as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>No. of birds</b>	734	688	156	421	237	494	158	207	440	1383	667	639
<b>No. of records</b>	186	182	92	217	214	261	78	52	79	146	163	199

The above figures demonstrate the effect on numbers of Atlas recording effort: during the first winter period, January and February were peak months as surveyors completed winter surveys; during the breeding season, April and June numbers increased again as breeding season tetrad surveys were done; thereafter, numbers declined as surveying effort declined until the next winter season's Atlas work began. The overall effect of this seasonality was that just over 60% of records came from the first half of the year. Across the year, only 26 days did not produce a report, seven in the first half of the year and 19 in the second.

During the first winter period, there were only six reports of counts over 50 including only one of a roost: 80 were feeding on Thorney SF on 6 Jan, 120 on 3 Feb but then only 90 on the 17<sup>th</sup>; 81 were at Emsworth Marina during an Atlas count on 6 Jan; the only reported roost involved c.100 in South Street (Worthing) on 10 Jan. In the spring, a late roost was found at an Esso service station at Hickstead, where there were at least 80 on 1 Apr; unusual counts included 25 birds at Five Ashes (Mayfield) on 1 Apr and 28 there on the 25<sup>th</sup>.

Breeding was confirmed at 113 sites and was probable in a further 57. During the BBS, a total of 110 was recorded from 66 of the 135 1-km squares surveyed, with a highest count of five near Hartfield on 22 Apr. The first reference to a breeding pair came from Pippingford Park (Ashdown) on 4 Apr. An occupied nest was found at Groombridge on the 16<sup>th</sup>. Young birds were being fed at Warnham LNR on 1 May, at Hawksden Park Wood (Mayfield), Browns Fm (Robertsbridge) and Brightling on 2 May; the first newly fledged birds were seen at Pulborough Brooks also on the 2<sup>nd</sup>. A nest was found in a greenhouse at Littleworth (Partridge Green) on 24 May. A female was on her third clutch at King's Barn (Steyning) on 12 Jun. The last nest to be reported was found at Tilton (Arlington) on 2 Aug and the last dependent young were at Lychpole Hill (Cissbury) on the 3<sup>rd</sup>. A leucistic bird was at Pulborough Brooks throughout July.

In the post-breeding period, the first high counts were recorded at Weir Wood Res; 50 were estimated on 17 Jul, and 60 on 8 Aug and 150 on the 13<sup>th</sup>. It was not until October that other counts in excess of 50 were noted. These included 68 at Upper Beeding on the 4<sup>th</sup>, which increased to an unusual 170 on the 19<sup>th</sup>, and 61 at the Old Airstrip (Ashdown) the same day; on the 13<sup>th</sup> 161 were noted at Southwater CP and, on the 19<sup>th</sup>, 170 at Upper Beeding.

During October, some significant eastwards movement was noted by observers at both Climping Gap and Worthing Beach between the 8<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup>; at the former site counts of 70 on the 8<sup>th</sup>, 55 on the 9<sup>th</sup> and 77 on the 14<sup>th</sup> contributed to a monthly total of 247; at the latter site, a peak count of 146 on the 8<sup>th</sup> contributed to a monthly total of 224. On the same dates and probably involving the same passage (although no flight direction was recorded), 63 were noted at Hastings CP on the 8<sup>th</sup> and 84 there next day. During the second winter period, the species was seen at some 257 localities. The highest counts were; in November, 70 at Southwater CP on the 6<sup>th</sup>, 62 at Seftor Fm (Rose Green) on the 28<sup>th</sup> and 50 going to roost at Henfield on the 3<sup>rd</sup>; in December, 80 roosted at Steyning on the 24<sup>th</sup> and 50 feeding at Thorney SF on the 22<sup>nd</sup>. [CB]

## Tree Pipit

## *Anthus trivialis*

*Fairly common but local summer visitor and passage migrant. Red listed species of medium conservation concern.*

The first record of the year was of a single bird at Old Lodge Reserve (Ashdown Forest) on 31 Mar, one day later than the 10-year average date. Although birds were already on territory by the beginning of April, visible migration was noted on only five occasions with singles over Worthing Beach and Brighton Marina on the 13<sup>th</sup>, Pett Level on the 16<sup>th</sup> and, in May, singles at Brighton Marina on the 13<sup>th</sup> and Sidlesham on the 28<sup>th</sup>.

This species is well recorded across the county, with breeding territories surveyed by Wealden Heaths Breeding Bird Survey and Ashdown Forest Bird Group (with added help from the Atlas project). The four areas in the county from which breeding records were received were Ashdown Forest (125 territories), Wealden Heaths (47 territories), Horsham/Crawley area (just one territory) and the Robertsbridge/Eridge area (six territories). This total of 179 compares well with the 5-year average of 162 and is the second highest figure during that period.

There were interesting records in June: singles at Findon on the 6<sup>th</sup>, Rackham Hill on the 12<sup>th</sup>, and Brantridge Forest (Balcombe) on the 27<sup>th</sup>. The first two could have been late spring migrants and the last two could have been early autumn migrants, but equally they could have been attempting to set up territory, especially the one at Brantridge Forest that was in song.

Observers in August saw the first signs of autumn movement with a large count of 125 at Pett Level between the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup> (of which 45 were trapped and ringed with a peak handling of 23

on the 18<sup>th</sup>). Sightings elsewhere were generally of ones and twos: the exceptions were at Beachy Head, where four were noted on 9 Aug and three on the 31<sup>st</sup>; Cissbury Ring, with three on 18<sup>th</sup> and four on 27<sup>th</sup>; Brighton Wild Park, with three on the 29<sup>th</sup>; and Pett Level, where there were 16 on the 30<sup>th</sup>. In September, migration peaked with 60 sightings, almost 50% more than in 2008, all in single figures and mainly from coastal sites. The highest count was nine over Pett Level during the month while counts of five or more were also reported from Beachy Head (six) on the 5<sup>th</sup>, Fairlight Glen (five) and Hastings CP (five) on the 6<sup>th</sup> and Seaford Head (five) on the 19<sup>th</sup>.

Late migrants were noted during October; there were two at Cissbury Ring on the 2<sup>nd</sup>, one at Church Norton on the 3<sup>rd</sup>, one at Rottingdean on the 5<sup>th</sup>, one at Chichester Hbr on the 7<sup>th</sup>, one at Pett Level on the 8<sup>th</sup> and, finally, one at Pagham Hbr on the 14<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup>. [SB]

## Meadow Pipit

## *Anthus pratensis*

*Locally abundant resident, very common passage migrant and winter visitor. Red listed species of high conservation concern.*

The early part of 2009 continued as 2008 finished, with mainly single figure counts widely distributed across the county. However, high counts in January included 66 at Beech Mill (Battle) on the 8<sup>th</sup>, 50 at Chesworth Fm (Horsham) on the 15<sup>th</sup>, 70 roosting at Lavington Common on the 18<sup>th</sup>, 50 at Duncans Fm (Billingshurst) on the 29<sup>th</sup> and 55 at Burton Park (Duncton) on the 30<sup>th</sup>. In February, slightly larger flock sizes were noted with 60 at Ferring Rife on the 3<sup>rd</sup>, 49 at Lewes Brooks on the 4<sup>th</sup>, 95 at Iping Common on the 15<sup>th</sup> and 50 at Chesworth Fm on the 17<sup>th</sup>.

Seven birds at Warninglid on 26 Feb were thought to have been resting migrants, the first sign of spring passage; they were followed by a flock of 80W past Worthing Beach on the 28<sup>th</sup>. The next records of migrants were 1N over Guestling Wood on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and then 23N over Brighton Wild Park on the 11<sup>th</sup> and 52 there on the 14<sup>th</sup>. The first high count of migrants over Selsey Bill involved 96N on the 14<sup>th</sup> followed by 24N on the 17<sup>th</sup>, 25N on the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup>, 48N on the 23<sup>rd</sup>, and no less than 268N on the 27<sup>th</sup>, all contributing to a monthly total of 536. Elsewhere, there was a count of 100 at Thorney Island on the 17<sup>th</sup>, 38 flew in off the sea at Brighton Marina on the 19<sup>th</sup> and there was a count of 26N over Worthing Beach on the 23<sup>rd</sup>. Inland in March there were only two notable flocks: 50 at Arundel Park and 68 at Iping Common, both on the 15<sup>th</sup>. The only notable records in April were of 62N over Selsey Bill on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup>.

Potential breeding was first noted with a pair on territory on the Old Lodge Estate (Ashdown Forest) on 16 Feb, one day later than 2008, but the next record was not until 6 Mar when four singing birds were noted at East Dean (Eastbourne). Breeding records came from 115 sites (110 in 2008, 41 in 2007) but the only sizable territory counts were 82 in Ashdown Forest, 30 at Selsey Broad Rife, 18 at Bracklesham Bay, 14 at Steep Down (Lancing) and 12 at Rye Hbr. There were no counts from Amberley Wild Brooks or Pulborough Brooks both of which have hosted good numbers in the past. The first notable post-breeding groups were 45 at Cockroost Hill (Mile Oak) on 12 Jul and 50 on fields west of Selsey on 11 Aug.

A single bird over Pett Level on 2 Sep signalled the start of autumn migration. Later in the month, high counts included 250E over Beachy Head on the 16<sup>th</sup>, 610E over Hastings CP on the 17<sup>th</sup>, 175E over Worthing Beach on the 18<sup>th</sup>, 1180E over Beachy Head and 300 over Seaford Head on the 19<sup>th</sup>, 315E over Beachy Head, 190 over the Wild Park and 625E over Hastings CP on the 20<sup>th</sup>, 219 over Pett Level on the 23<sup>rd</sup> and, finally, 300 at Climping Gap on the 29<sup>th</sup>. The largest inland counts during September were, by comparison, relatively small with 50 at Camp Hill (Ashdown Forest) on the 13<sup>th</sup> and at Cissbury Ring on the 17<sup>th</sup> and 135 between Henfield and Hassocks on the 27<sup>th</sup>.

October began with a count of 200 in off the sea at Church Norton on the 1<sup>st</sup>, 300 at Easton Fm (Earnley) on the 2<sup>nd</sup>, 200 between Seaford Head and Hope Gap (Seaford) on the 4<sup>th</sup>, 232E over Worthing Beach and 185 at Pett Level on the 8<sup>th</sup> and another 253E over Worthing Beach on the 9<sup>th</sup>. The only notable inland counts came from Ashdown Forest with 52 roosting at Crows Nest on the 8<sup>th</sup>, 51 at Millbrook on the 10<sup>th</sup>, 85SW over the Old Airstrip on the 12<sup>th</sup>, 65 roosting at Crow's Nest on the 17<sup>th</sup>, 100 at the Old Airstrip on the 19<sup>th</sup>, a roost of 81 at Poundgate on the 24<sup>th</sup>, 160 at Marl pits on the 26<sup>th</sup> and 82 at Forest Hollies on the 27<sup>th</sup>.

During the second winter period, peak counts inland in November involved 155 at Weir Wood Res on the 3<sup>rd</sup>, 100 at the Old Airstrip on the 8<sup>th</sup>, 87 going to roost at Iping Common the 15<sup>th</sup> and 58 at Poundgate on the 17<sup>th</sup>. Counts in December were far smaller: they included 30 at Crow's Nest on the 4<sup>th</sup>; 31 at Sefton Fm (Rose Green), 100 at Southease and 95 at Iping Common on the 20<sup>th</sup>; and 45 at Weir Wood Res on the 28<sup>th</sup>. [SB]

## Rock Pipit

*Anthus petrosus*

*Scarce resident and scarce winter visitor; very rare away from the coast.*

Only 147 records were received compared with 227 last year which prompts the question whether this reduction is a quirk of recording or represents an actual drop in occurrence. As in previous years the majority of records, 127 (86.4%), were from west of Beachy Head, from 54 sites (1-km squares) spread fairly uniformly along the coast from Chichester Hbr to Cuckmere Haven. Twenty records (13.6%) were from east of Beachy Head, from eight sites all but two of which were in Rye Bay. All records were from coastal sites; there were no inland sightings.

The minimum monthly totals, the numbers of days and the number of sites (1-km squares) at which birds were recorded were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>No. of birds</b>	52	45	26	7	24	8	3	1	16	50	37	26
<b>No. of days</b>	19	15	10	7	5	1	2	1	4	15	19	13
<b>No. of sites</b>	22	22	7	5	6	1	2	1	4	18	13	14

The numbers of birds, days and sites recorded in both the first and autumn/second winter periods were noticeably higher than during the spring and summer months suggesting that there is a significant wintering population in the county. The majority (90%) of the counts of birds were of five or fewer (and almost 50% were of singletons). Counts of six occurred at Cuckmere Haven on both 1 Jan and 11 Oct and at Newhaven Cliffs on 1 Dec. Sevens were noted at Fishbourne (Chichester Hbr) on 2 Mar and Pagham Hbr North Wall on 31 Oct where there were eight on 4 Nov. Another eight were recorded at Telscombe Cliffs on 21 Jun where they bred (q.v.) followed by ten on 20 Sep which presumably included this year's young. Ten at Fishbourne Channel on 19 Nov were concentrated on the eastern edge at high water. There was a roost of 12 at Pett Level on 7 Mar and the highest count at Fishbourne Channel was 15 on 27 Jan. The highest count overall was 18 at Telscombe Cliffs on 1 May.

Breeding was confirmed by sightings of birds carrying food or faecal sacs (two) at Peacehaven on 24 May and (eight) at Telscombe Cliffs on 21 Jun. Breeding was probable at Splash Point (Seaford), where a pair of birds was displaying on 23 Apr, and at Emsworth Marina, where a pair was seen in suitable nesting habitat on 11 Aug. Breeding was possible where birds were seen elsewhere in suitable nesting habitat at Newhaven Cliffs and Seaford Head on 29 Apr and 10 May respectively. This was a much poorer situation than the 11 sites reported last year.

In the autumn, the first returning birds were noted at Pilsey Sands on 29 Sep following which numbers built up steadily from 4 Oct. During the second winter period, the species was seen at some 27 coastal localities. The highest numbers were ten at Fishbourne Channel (Chichester Hbr) on 19 Nov and six at Newhaven Cliffs on 1 Dec.

There were no records of the Scandinavian form. [JAH]

## Water Pipit

## *Anthus spinoletta*

*Scarce winter visitor and passage migrant.*

**2008:** A bird seen at Barcombe Res on 9 Mar (JBG *et al.*) has been accepted by SOSRC.

**2009:** The minimum monthly numbers of accepted records were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar		Oct	Nov	Dec
No. of birds	4	2	4		1	1	4

During the first three months of the year, ten records were accepted, involving a conservative estimate of six different individuals. The first record referred to one at Coldwaltham SF on 1 Jan (CWM) where another was noted on the 4<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> (RJJ), possibly the same bird. Another one was at Pett Level on the 3<sup>rd</sup> (DW), there was one at Lewes on the 18<sup>th</sup> (ARK) and another at Barcombe Res also on the 18<sup>th</sup> was suspected as one which had been wintering there since 2005. In Chichester Hbr, one was at Fishbourne Creek on 20 Jan (BFF, DIS), one was at Thorney Deeps on 17 Feb (CBC) and, in March, there were records of one in Fishbourne Creek on the 2<sup>nd</sup> (BFF, DIS) and one at Thorney Deeps on the 13<sup>th</sup>, all of which might have referred to the same individual. Finally, one was seen at Barcombe Res on 15 Mar (SHL) and another, or the same one, on the 29<sup>th</sup> (ARK).

In the second half of the year there was a conservative minimum of three individuals. The first returning bird was one ringed at Pett Level on 30 Oct (RBRG). One was noted at Thorney Deeps from 11 Nov to 4 Dec (CBC) while another at East Head (West Wittering) on 11 Dec (FC) might have been the same individual. The final bird of the year was one at Barcombe Res on 28 Dec (SHL).

Surprisingly there were no records for this species from Combe Haven, usually the premier wintering site for the species in the county. [JAH]

## Chaffinch

## *Fringilla coelebs*

*Abundant resident, passage migrant and winter visitor.*

In the first winter period there were eight counts of 100 or more. The largest concentrations were at Nep Town (Henfield) where there were 700 on 1 Jan and 500 on 2 Feb. Elsewhere, there were 250 at Up Marden on 10 Jan (on winter cereal during hard frost), 230 at Binderton (West Dean) on 6 Jan (feeding with corvids on cattle farm waste), 125 at Burton MP on 7 Feb, 119 at Ladyholt Park (South Harting) on 24 Jan, 101 at Pett Level on 26 Feb and 100 at Chantry Hill (Storrington) on 21 Jan.

During the BBS, a total of 1412 birds was recorded from 130 of the 135 1-km squares surveyed, with a highest count of 35 at Cocking on 1 May. Breeding was confirmed in 100 tetrads and probable in 189 more. The first nest-building was seen at Horsted Keynes on 30 Mar and the last



at Church Hill (Ashdown) on 31 May. Records of fledged young ranged from 22 May at Horsted Keynes to 26 Jul at both Gallypot (Hartfield) and Broadbridge Heath; 58 of the 78 records of fledglings were in June.

During the breeding season, the five largest counts were of 47 at Bolney on 6 May, 43 at Warninglid on 7 May, 42 at Markwells Wood (West Marden) on 22 Apr and 15 Jun, and 41 at Rogate Common on 26 April. There were 99 territories at Bewl Water, 68 at Pagham Hbr, 54 at Brighton Wild Park (highest for 10 years), 20 in 95 ha at Sefter Fm (Pagham) and 18 at Rye Hbr. On the Norfolk Estate (Arundel), there were 41 territories at Wepham Down, 29 at Burpham, 17 at North Stoke, 13 at Rackham, 11 at Springhead Hill (Rackham), seven at Lee Fm (Patching), three at Warningcamp, two at Blakehurst and one at Offham.



*Chaffinch, Hodcombe, April 2009 (Roger Charlwood)*

Few large counts were made during the post-breeding period. The largest five were 36 at Fairlight Glen on 27 Sep, 34 at Willards Hill (Robertsbridge) on 5 Jul, 30 at both Chesworth Fm (Horsham) on 30 Aug and Warnham LNR on 5 Sep and 28 at Chelwood Gate (Ashdown) on 26 Sep.

During the autumn, the largest counts were of 84 flying west at the Wild Park on 10 Oct, 70 flying east at Hastings CP also on the 10<sup>th</sup> and 64 at Pett Level on the 26<sup>th</sup>. In the second winter period, when the beech-mast crop was fair, the species was seen at some 320 localities. The largest counts were, in November, 60 at both Pulborough Brooks on the 13<sup>th</sup> and Rushlake Green on the 22<sup>nd</sup> and, in December, 200 at Monkton (Chilgrove) and 115 at Brightling on the 31<sup>st</sup>. [DH]

**Brambling***Fringilla montifringilla*

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

The approximate monthly totals were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>No. of birds</b>	227	104	13	56	1	28	37	7
<b>No. of sites</b>	22	25	11	7	1	13	8	4
<b>No. of counts</b>	26	18	12	6	1	17	14	4

In the first winter period, Bramblings were recorded from 36 sites with the usual concentration in the west, especially the West Dean/Chilgrove area. Only five of these sites were east of Brighton. Eleven counts were of singletons; the largest concentrations were 50 at Chantry Hill (Storrington) on 11 Jan and 40 at Stapleash Fm (Chilgrove) on 1 Jan. No other sites held more than 20 birds. At Chantry Hill on 18 Jan, 20 birds were feeding on a dung heap. As usual there was no evidence of spring passage. The last bird was a male at Climping on 19 Apr, 11 days earlier than 2008 and three days earlier than the 10-year average departure date.

The first returning bird was a singleton at Warnham LNR on 20 Sep, nine days earlier than the 10-year average arrival date. The next arrivals were three birds that flew west over the same site on 1 Oct within two days of the 10-year average. Westward passage was also reported from three sites near the coast: Brighton Wild Park (one on 15 Oct, two on 17 Oct); Carters Fm (Pett) (one on 25 Oct); Firehills (Hastings) (two on 2 Nov). In the second winter period (with a fair beechmast crop), Bramblings were seen at just 22 sites, over half of which were in the east. Over half of counts were of singletons. The largest counts were 14 in a discrete flock near Chaffinches on beech and kale at West Marden on 25 Nov and six at Hastings CP on 5 Nov. [DH]



*Brambling, Hodcombe, April 2009 (Roger Charlwood)*

**Greenfinch***Carduelis chloris*

*Very common resident, scarce passage migrant and winter visitor.*

In the first winter period counts were low, the largest being 47 at Hangleton (Hove) on 1 Mar, 45 at Newhaven Tide Mills on 4 Jan, 39 at Mile Oak (Portslade) on 14 Jan, 34 at Broadwater (Worthing), and 30 at both Lavington Common on 18 Jan and Chesworth Fm (Horsham) on 17 Feb.

During the BBS, a total of 598 birds was recorded from 105 of the 135 1-km squares surveyed, with a highest count of 24. Breeding was confirmed in 67 tetrads and probable in 176 more. In Sussex, most clutches are laid between early April and early July: nest building at Firle Park on 13 Mar was thus pleasingly early. There were 59 records of recently fledged young, between an unusually early record at West Heath Common on 19 Apr (the next record was at Warnham LNR on 1 May) and the last at Birchgrove (Horsted Keynes) on 31 Jul. The largest breeding season counts were 33 at Patcham (Brighton) on 9 Apr and 30 at both Bosham on 2 Apr and Telscombe Cliffs on 3 May. It is very hard to apply mapping methods to this loosely colonial, dispersive species, as some females move several km between nesting attempts. Bearing this in mind, there were estimated to be 34 territories at Brighton Wild Park and 18 in 95 ha at Sefton Fm (Rose Green). On the Norfolk Estate (Arundel), there were 13 territories at Wepham Down, four at Rackham, three at North Stoke, two at Offham and one at Burpham.

The five largest post-breeding counts were 100 at the North Wall (Pagham Hbr) on 23 Sep, 90 at Nutbourne (Chichester) on 23 Aug, 80 at Warnham LNR on 28 Sep, 70 at Northlands (Warnham) on 15 Aug and 60 at Newhaven Tide Mills on 6 Sep.

The expected influx in late September and October (*Birds of Sussex*) may account for some large counts early during the autumn. The largest were nearly all on the Selsey peninsula: 350 at Pagham Spit on 31 Oct, 300 at Church Norton on 11 Oct, 100 there on 17 Oct and 200 again at Church Norton on 16 Oct. During the second winter period, the species was seen at some 200 localities. The highest counts occurred in November: there were 150 at Church Norton on the 15<sup>th</sup>, 100 at West Beach (Littlehampton) on the 28<sup>th</sup> and 70 at Shoreham Hbr on the 13<sup>th</sup>. Numbers were lower in December with 60 at Church Norton on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and also at Chilgrove on the 3<sup>rd</sup>. [DH]

**Goldfinch***Carduelis carduelis*

*Common summer visitor and passage migrant and fairly common winter visitor.*

In the first winter period there were ten counts of 30 or more, particularly during Atlas surveys. The largest concentrations were 80 at Weir Wood Res on 10 Feb, 52 at Nep Town (Henfield) on 2 Feb and 50 at Breech Pool (Pagham) on 8 Feb. During April, seawatchers at Selsey Bill recorded only 29N and 3E (max 11 on 18 Apr) and at Worthing only 3E, despite many hours of watching.

During the BBS, a total of 335 birds was recorded from 79 of the 135 1-km squares surveyed, with a highest count of 11. Breeding was confirmed in 62 tetrads and probable in 148 more. Most females in Sussex make several nesting attempts, laying between late April and August. Nest building was first recorded at High Cross Fm (Uckfield) on 11 Apr. Recently fledged young were mentioned in 68 reports between 2 May at Warnham LNR and 8 Sep at High Cross Fm. On the Norfolk Estate (Arundel), during surveys between late May and early July, there were 50 birds at Wepham Down and 49 at North Stoke. Other breeding surveys included 17 pairs at Pagham Hbr, 11 at Bewl Water and two in 95 ha at Sefton Fm (Rose Green). There were 30 birds at Chesworth Fm (Horsham) on 22 Jun.

The largest post-breeding 'charms' were 150 at New Drayton GP (Chichester) on 28 Aug, 170 at Ditchling Beacon on 26 Sep in two flocks of 135 and 35. During this autumn period there were 43 counts of 30 or more. Other counts of 100 or more were: 130 at Bewl Water on 18 Sep, 120 at both Weir Wood Res on 24 Aug and Pulborough Brooks on 30 Aug, 110 at Beachy Head on both 5 Sep and 19 Sep, and 101 at Pett Level on 20 Sep. Evidence for autumn passage to the east (*Birds of Sussex*) was hard to evaluate in September as many coastal sites attract good numbers of this species even if it is not a partial migrant.

However, during October, eastwards passage became obvious. The largest monthly totals were 7190E at Climping Gap (11 days, max 2360E on the 14<sup>th</sup>), 2698E with just 12W at Worthing Beach (max 1232E on the 14<sup>th</sup>), 2055E at Hastings CP (three days; max 1045E on the 11<sup>th</sup>) and 588E at Fairlight Glen on the 15<sup>th</sup>. In November, numbers fell, with totals of 175W at Selsey Bill (max 103W on the 14<sup>th</sup>), and 32E and 31W at Worthing (max 30E and 20W on the 21<sup>st</sup>).

Elsewhere, movements of 100 or more birds on the same day included 100E at Brooklands (Worthing) on 8 Oct, 102S at Seaford on 26 Oct, 120E at both Atherington (Climping) on 11 Oct and Newhaven Cliffs on 18 Oct, 151E at Pett Level on 12 Oct, 435E at Beachy Head on 11 Oct, and 742E at West Hill (Hastings) on 14 Oct. Many reports were simply of birds flying in unspecified direction: e.g. counts of 170-360 at Rye Hbr between 9 and 16 Oct. Sometimes moderate numbers were observed on the ground while passage took place, e.g. 120 at Fairlight Glen on 13 Oct while 70 flew east. Similarly, some large counts at sites where passage was reported did not specify whether birds were passing or not, e.g. daily totals at Brighton Wild Park of 84 on 9 Oct, 586 at Pett Level the same day and 750 on the 10<sup>th</sup>.

In the second winter period, the species was seen at some 260 localities. There were 26 counts of 30 birds or more at sites where passage was not reported. The largest were 100 at Chesworth Fm on 21 Dec, 80 at Weir Wood Res on 13 Dec, and 63 at Southwater CP on 18 Nov. At Scobells Fm (Barcombe) on 12 Nov, one was found that had been plucked by a Sparrowhawk. A garden at South Malling (Lewes) was visited by an individual with a pure white head, but otherwise normal body plumage, on 12 Nov and 6 Dec.

Records rarely mentioned feeding behaviour but suggested that the most popular foods are the seeds of thistle, teasel, and nyger. At feeders in Hurst Green, this species has changed from eating nyger seeds to taking sunflower hearts. [DH]

## Siskin

## *Carduelis spinus*

*Common winter visitor and passage migrant; very scarce breeder.*

In the first winter period, Siskins were recorded from 152 tetrads. The largest counts were 150 at Frith Wood (Northchapel) on 13 Jan, 100 at both Chesworth Fm (Horsham) on 15 Jan and Southwater CP on 22 Jan, and 70 at Weir Wood Res on 10 Feb.

During the BBS, only four were recorded from four of the 135 1-km squares surveyed during the early counts but none during the late counts. Breeding was confirmed in four tetrads and probable in 13 more. These tetrads represent about a quarter of the 67 tetrads in which this species was recorded during the breeding season. Most confirmed and probable breeding sites were in extensive coniferous woodland, where nests of this species are extraordinarily hard to find and they are not so vulnerable to egg collectors. Nest building was first recorded at Worth Forest on 10 Apr. Recently fledged young were mentioned in only seven reports, between 25 May at Ashdown Forest and 23 Jul at St Leonards Forest. The largest breeding season counts were all in early April: 50 at Ashdown Forest on the 7<sup>th</sup> and 30 at both Owlbeech Woods (Horsham) on the 3<sup>rd</sup> and Northlands (Warnham) on the 4<sup>th</sup>.

During the post-breeding season, this species was only recorded in 12 tetrads. The largest counts were in July: 44 at St Leonards Forest on the 23<sup>rd</sup> and 40 at Owlbeech Woods on the 31<sup>st</sup>.

Autumn passage seemed later and smaller than in 2008. The first obvious migrants were 20 birds over Church Norton on 10 Sep. During October, a total of 562E was recorded at Climping Gap (max 185E on 14<sup>th</sup>). Other counts of over 100 birds that were probably on passage were 296E at West Hill (Hastings) on 14 Oct, 137 at Pett Level on 9 Oct and 150 there on the 11<sup>th</sup> and 120E at Hastings CP on 16 and 17 Oct.

In the second winter period, the species was recorded from some 63 tetrads. Ignoring counts potentially involving passage, the largest numbers were 50 at Arlington Res on 9 Nov, Chesworth Fm on 12 Nov and Southwater CP on 29 Dec. [DH]

## Linnet

## *Carduelis cannabina*

*Common but decreasing resident and partial migrant. Red listed species of high conservation concern.*

In the first winter period there were 14 counts of 100 birds or more, mainly in the west of the county. The largest concentration was 750 foraging on set-aside at Whitehall (Shipleigh) on 4 Jan. Other substantial counts were 350 at Slipe Field (Pagham) on 10 Jan (200 on 26 Feb), 300 at Nep Town (Henfield) on 1 Jan and 2 Feb (250 on the 25<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup>, 200 on the 5<sup>th</sup>), 200 at Cuckoo Corner (Coombes) on 13 Feb, 150 at both Pagham Spit on 10 Jan and Myrtle Grove Fm (Clapham) on 14 Jan. There was some evidence for the expected spring passage (*Birds of Sussex*). At Worthing there were 8W on 20 Feb, 77E in April (max 20E on the 15<sup>th</sup>), and 1E on 15 May. At Selsey Bill in April, there were 32N (max 10N on the 6<sup>th</sup>). In March, 17 flew in an unspecified direction past Splash Point (Seaford) on the 15<sup>th</sup>.

During the BBS, a total of 295 birds was recorded from 49 of the 135 1-km squares surveyed, with a highest count of 38 at Oving on 16 Jun. Breeding was confirmed in 23 tetrads and probable in 88 more. Most females in Sussex make several nesting attempts, laying between early April and August. Nest building was first recorded at Newhaven Tide Mills on 5 Apr. Recently fledged young were mentioned in only 33 reports between 23 May at Linch Down (Bepton) and 23 Aug at the Ouse Estuary Project (Newhaven). During the breeding season only one count reached 100 birds. This was a loose and very mobile flock at Chantry Hill (Storrington) on 23 May. The three other largest day counts were 70 at Pett Level on 9 Apr, 66 at Five Lords Burgh (Denton) on 11 Apr and 60 at Amberley Wild Brooks on 14 Apr. Like other *Carduelis* finches, this species is more difficult to survey than most birds as they can forage far from their nest, and females can move up to several km between nesting attempts. On the Norfolk Estate (Arundel), during surveys between late May and early Jul, there were 70 birds at Wepham Down, 53 at Burpham, 24 at North Stoke, 16 at Rackham and two at Offham. During the Wealden Heaths Breeding Bird Survey, 38 pairs were found in 17 occupied 1-km squares from Weavers Down (Liss) east to Lavington Common. Other breeding surveys included 28 pairs at Pagham Hbr, 16 pairs at Brighton Wild Park, 13 at Bewl Water and one in 95 ha at Sefton Fm (Rose Green). The species was considered to be a widespread and common breeder at Rye Hbr.

Only five post-breeding counts were of 100 birds or more. The largest were 300 on cut rape at West End (Henfield) on 2 Sep and 120 at fields west of Selsey on 15 Aug. As in previous years, there was limited evidence for the expected autumn passage (*Birds of Sussex*). At Worthing, there were 285E between the 8<sup>th</sup> and 16 Oct (max 267 on the 9<sup>th</sup>), at Hastings CP, 334W on 11 Oct and 215W on the 27<sup>th</sup> and, at Selsey Bill, 48W on the 11<sup>th</sup>.



During the autumn, sizeable counts included the largest flock of 700 at Findon on 10 Oct, 500 at the Ferry Field (Sidlesham) on the 7<sup>th</sup> (250 on the 12<sup>th</sup>), 300 at Bewl Water on the 27<sup>th</sup>, 250 in fields west of Selsey on the 18<sup>th</sup> and 200 at Steep Down (Lancing) on the 25<sup>th</sup>. During the second winter period, the species was seen at some 87 localities. There were 16 counts of 100 or more birds, excluding some passage movements noted above, but the highest were 250 at Pangdean (Brighton) on 5 Nov and 200 at North Wall (Pagham Hbr) on 20 Dec. [DH]

## Lesser Redpoll

*Carduelis cabaret*

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

Birds were noted in 127 tetrads during 2009. Sightings were made throughout the year, with a notable dip in records during the summer and autumn, particularly in September. The approximate numbers recorded each month and the numbers of sites (tetrads and 1-km squares) was as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
No. of birds	419	499	665	620	107	83	139	74	55	1441	830	469
No. of sites	49	51	42	56	31	27	24	18	6	43	54	53

The highest counts during the first winter period were 100 at Owlbeech Woods (Horsham) on 19 Jan and again on 18 Feb. In March, 160 were counted at a site in Ashdown Forest on the 21<sup>st</sup>.

At only four sites was breeding confirmed; at one by a bird sitting on a nest and at three by the presence of fledged young with one or more parents. At a further 17 sites breeding was probable. During the BBS, eight birds were recorded from four of the 135 1-km squares surveyed, with a maximum count of four at Hempstead (Uckfield) on 7 Apr. Ashdown Forest remained the county hotspot for this species, with nearly 300 individual sightings of the species during the year and a count, in October, of 104 at the Marlpits. A monthly maximum of 252 was recorded at Pett Level on 31 Oct when there were also 100 at Hastings CP. During the second winter period, the species was seen at some 87 localities. The highest counts were 120 at Fairlight (Hastings) and 100 at Pett Level on 2 Nov, 82 in the Ashdown Forest on the 28<sup>th</sup>, and 50 at Owlbeech Woods on 4 Dec.

As a species recently upgraded to the red list, it is important that all records should be submitted, with six figure grid references if possible, especially if territorial behaviour or evidence of breeding is observed. [DJB]

## Common (Mealy) Redpoll

*Carduelis flammea*

*Rare winter visitor.*

Only two fully substantiated records were received and accepted by the SOSRC this year. The first was of an individual at Crouch Fm (Burton MP) on 21 Jan (MRE *et al.*) and the second was a bird trapped and ringed at Pett Level on 22 Oct (RBRG). These are the nineteenth and twentieth county records since 1960 respectively. Up to three individuals were reported from Crouch Fm during the first winter period; however no details were received which conclusively confirmed these further individuals. Although the species' identification features can be distinctive in some individuals there are others which can be hard to identify for certain and therefore detailed and precise descriptions (and/or photographs) are likely to be required for definitive confirmation in many cases. All records have been between mid-October and mid-April. [CWM]



**Common Crossbill***Loxia curvirostra**Scarce visitor occurring in large numbers in irruptive years. Breeds occasionally.*

Numbers reported for this early breeding species during the first four months of the year were significantly higher than in the previous two years. During the first winter period the minimum total was possibly over 200 different individuals from a number of sites across the county. Some of the more notable sightings were 21 birds at Coates Common, 22 at Black Down (Fernhurst), and 30 at St Leonard's Forest (Colgate), all on 24 Feb. In the spring, notable counts included 16 at Lavington Common on 8 Mar and 30 at Ashdown Res on 11 Apr.

Breeding was confirmed at only one site, Black Down, by a report of recently fledged young on 12 May. However, pairs were seen in suitable habitats on Lavington Common (19 Mar), Churlwood (Ashdown) (24 Mar), Worthlodge Forest (Worth) (10 Apr), and Stanley Common (23 May). Singing males were reported from five sites in the Ashdown Forest area.

There was evidence of movement of this irruptive species during the late summer with 57 birds flying east along the Downs at Ditchling Beacon on 9 Jul and flocks of up to 46 birds at Hastings during October. The more notable sightings during the second half of the year included 257 birds over two hours at St Leonard's Forest on 23 Jul, 45 at Wiggonholt Common (Pulborough Brooks) on 19 Oct and 50 at Owlbeech Woods (Horsham) on 27 Oct.

During the second winter period the species was seen at some 34 localities across the county with maximum counts, in November, of 30 at Wiggonholt Common on the 4<sup>th</sup>, 25 at Broadwater Forest on the 12<sup>th</sup> and 20 at Stansted Forest on the 21<sup>st</sup>. In December, peak counts were 30 at Woods Place (Whatlington) on the 1<sup>st</sup>, 22 at Wiggonholt Common on the 4<sup>th</sup> and 20 at Lavington Plantation on the 12<sup>th</sup>. [PJP]

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

In all, almost 1400 records were received from right across the county, demonstrating the widespread status of the species even though, during the BBS, it was seen in only 32 of the 135 1-km squares surveyed, virtually the same result as in 2008 (33/136). During the first winter period the highest counts were of 12 at West Dean Woods on 7 Jan, 16 at Pett Level on 19 Jan and 11 at Little Horsted (Uckfield) on 7 Feb.

There were reports of confirmed breeding at 20 sites, mostly involving the observation of juveniles with adults. There were 78 reports of probable breeding involving observations of pairs or permanent territories. The highest counts during the summer months were 11 at Tyes Cross (Sharphorne) on 27 Jun and nine at Warnham LNR on the 13<sup>th</sup>.

Between 18 Apr and 1 Dec, ringers at Cissbury North Scarp handled 35 birds in 31 sessions of which 30 were new. Similarly, ringers at Strivens Reed Bed (Steyning) handled 18 new birds in 39 sessions between 18 Jul and 7 Nov.

During the second winter period the species was seen in some 198 localities. The highest count in October was of nine at Owlbeech Woods (Horsham) on the 29<sup>th</sup>. In November there were three records of 10 or more with a maximum of 15 at Pulborough Brooks on the 15<sup>th</sup> and, in December, seven records of 10 or more with a maximum of 18 at Bewl Water on the 25<sup>th</sup>. [PJP]

**Hawfinch***Coccothraustes coccothraustes*

*Scarce breeding resident and very scarce passage migrant. Red listed species of high conservation concern.*

There were 44 day-sightings of this species from some 13 localities. Statistically, 52% of sightings were from the first winter period, 77% from the first half of the year, 22% for November (one) and December (nine) and 40% were of single birds. Overall, 68% of sightings came from only two sites: West Dean Woods (48%) and Arundel Park (20%). At the former locality, sightings between 1 and 13 Jan only included a maximum of at least seven on the 4<sup>th</sup> but there were then only two records of single birds in February and one of one in March. At Arundel Park, sightings between 16 Feb and 11 Mar included a maximum count of 12 on 25 Feb. The highest counts elsewhere were of only two birds: at Kingley Vale on 29 Jan and Brede High Woods on 20 Mar; there were no records of this species at these sites in any other months. Other sites where single birds were sighted on single days during only the first four months of the year were Pulborough Brooks, Burgess Hill (three dates in January), Tyes Cross (Sharpthorne), Broad Oak, Darwell Woods, Bexhill High Woods, Sedlescombe, Hastings CP and, in November, Tillingham Woods.

The only reports suggesting breeding were at West Dean Woods and Brede High Woods where pairs were seen in suitable nesting habitat.

As one of the more interesting breeding birds of Sussex and a red listed species, it is a pity that there were so few records. All sightings should be reported with, if possible, a six figure grid reference, especially if territorial behaviour or evidence of breeding is observed. [DJB]



*Snow Bunting, East Head, November 2009 (Jacob Everitt)*

**Snow Bunting***Plectrophenax nivalis*

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

Once again, there were very few records of this lovely bird with only seven being noted (assuming the December birds were different individuals). The only reports were for the second winter period with the majority, as usual, from the east of the county. The first record was a singleton at Hastings CP on 17 Oct and the next was one at Rye Hbr on 2 Nov. A probable adult winter male spent a week in the west at East Head (West Wittering) from 10-16 Nov. Back in the east, two were noted at the Midrips on 14 Dec and two were at Bulverhythe (St Leonards) on the 18<sup>th</sup>. There were no records from inland sites, unlike recent years.

The totals for 2008 and 2009 of only seven birds were the lowest since 1994, when only two were recorded, and compares with the average for the 15 years since 1994 of 23 with a peak of 60 in 2005, as shown in the following table. [JAH]

Year	95	96	97	98	99	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09
Total	23	45	23	17	25	16	12	13	38	28	60	24	12	7	7



*Lapland Bunting, Pagham North Wall, November 2009 (Dave Sadler)*

**Lapland Bunting***Calcarius lapponicus*

*Very scarce passage migrant and winter visitor.*

A very confiding individual was present on the North Wall (Pagham Hbr) from 30 Oct-4 Nov (TJE *et al.*). It remained faithful to a small area of the North Wall, despite regularly being disturbed by walkers. As a result it was enjoyed by many and was widely photographed. It is only

the seventh record since the beginning of 2000, a significant decline from the 38 recorded in the 1990s. During this 20 year period arrivals have been in September (three, from 18<sup>th</sup>), October (13), November (five), December (ten), January (nine) and February (five, to 20<sup>th</sup>). [RJF]

## **Yellowhammer**

*Emberiza citrinella*

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

Yellowhammers were recorded in 441 tetrads during the year. During the first winter period, during Atlas TTV counts, a total of 413 Yellowhammers was noted in 50 tetrads, an average of 8.26 per occupied tetrad. Thirteen tetrads held ten or more with 45 at Petworth on 15 Jan, 30 at Malling Down (Lewes) on 29 Jan and 30 at Broadhurst (Burwash) on 20 Jan. Throughout this period, food was provided for finches and buntings at Beeding Hill and, in the Beeding area, a flock regularly held over 40 birds, with 60 at Golding Barn on 6 Mar. The last large flock in this area, at Beeding Hill, held 50 on 16 Mar. Away from Beeding, there were double figure flocks at 23 sites in January but only six in February and two in March.

The first song reported was at St Leonard's Forest (Colgate) on 27 Jan. Breeding was confirmed in 24 tetrads and probable in a further 153. During the BBS, a total of 147 was counted in 58 of the 135 1-km squares surveyed, a slight increase on last year. The highest counts were seven at Upper Beeding and Burwash and eight at Barcombe. Estimated counts of breeding pairs found by the annual Wealden Heaths Breeding Birds Survey (with 2008's figure where available in brackets) included 44 (53) pairs in 22 (24) 1-km squares, the highest numbers being five at West Heath Common (West Harting) and at Lavington Common. Elsewhere, seven (ten) pairs were recorded at Pagham Hbr, 14 in 665 ha in the western Selsey Peninsula, 17 (45) on the Norfolk Estate on the eastern bank of the R Arun, seven (eight) at Brighton Wild Park, and 12 at Bewl Water. Breeding Yellowhammers were present throughout Ashdown Forest with seven singing males each at Gills Lap, Camp Hill and Millbrook. In the breeding season Atlas TTV surveys, only eight tetrads held ten or more Yellowhammers, the highest count being 17 at Newmarket Hill (Falmer). This breeding season information seems to indicate a further decline in the species.

In the autumn, the first flock noted was 20 at Findon on 31 Aug. In October, there were five double-figure counts with the largest being 42 which went to roost at Lodge Hill Fm (West Dean) on the 23<sup>rd</sup>. During the second winter period, the species was seen at some 100 localities. There were some 17 double-figure counts of which the highest, in November, were of 48 at Round Hill (Hangleton) on the 6<sup>th</sup> and 70 at Copsale on the 26<sup>th</sup> and, in December, 28 at Constantia Manor (Isfield) on the 7<sup>th</sup> and 20 at Marlpost Wood (Southwater) on the 11<sup>th</sup>. Aside from a flock of 20 at Newenden only 17 Yellowhammers were reported from six sites in the county east of Ashdown Forest during this period. [ACG]

## **Rustic Bunting**

*Emberiza rustica*

*Very rare vagrant.*

**2008:** A juvenile female was trapped at Pett Level on 12 Nov (RBRG). It was the first county record since 2002 and only the fifth in total. Previous records were at West Hove GC on 10-11 May 2002, Littlehampton West Beach from 30 Oct-1 Nov 1991, Beachy Head from 8-12 Oct 1983 and collected near Roedean on 23 Oct 1867 (the first British record). [RJF]



**Little Bunting***Emberiza pusilla**Rare vagrant.*

One was present at Old Lodge (Ashdown Forest) on at least 12-13 Apr (CWM *et al.*) while a juvenile was trapped at Pett Level on 28 Oct (RBRG). These are the first records since 2005, the only other year with more than one occurrence. Five have been recorded in the county since the beginning of 2000, four during the 1990s but just four before then including the first for Britain in 1864. Four have been trapped at Pett, while no other location accounts for more than one record. Occurrences have been in January (to March 1994), March (and April 1996), April, September (20th, 1998), October (five) and November (three, to 17th). There is also an undated autumn record of a bird netted in 1906 and kept in an aviary for some years, even being exhibited at the Crystal Palace. [RJF]

**Reed Bunting***Emberiza schoeniclus**Fairly common resident, passage migrant and winter visitor. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern.*

In the first winter period, the largest flocks were at Pett Level, where 150 were found on the first day of the year rising to 200 on 8 Jan but falling to 40 by 6 Feb and 14 on 25 Mar. Good numbers were also seen at various sites in Ashdown Forest during the first six weeks of the year, with 50 at the Old Airstrip on 2 Jan, while two days later similar sized flocks were at Gills Lap and at Old Lodge Reserve. At least 70 were at Wren's Warren on 4 Feb and 60 at Wych Cross the following day. Thereafter, the only double-figure flock was 30 at the Old Airstrip on 11 Feb. Other sizeable flocks were 60 at the confluence of the R Ouse and Glynde Reach on 10 Jan, with smaller flocks in this area until 14 Mar when 40 were on stubble at Rodmell Brooks. At Strivens Reed Bed (Steyning), Steyning RG trapped 34 on 21 Feb. In the west of the county, 25 were at West Wittering on 3 Jan and, at Pagham Hbr, flocks were noted on several occasions with a maximum of 40 on 26 Feb. Inland, 20 were seen at Arundel WWT on 14 Jan, 16 were at Coates Common (Fittleworth) two days later, 14 were feeding in molinia grass at Iping Common on 14 Feb and 15 were at Coldwaltham SF three days later. At The Burgh (Burpham), the highest number during this period was 22 on 4 Jan. Other than those mentioned above at Ashdown Forest and Pett Level there were no double figure counts east of the R Adur, but Reed Buntings, often in association with other buntings, were present in ones and twos at many sites across the whole county.

Song was first noted on 26 Jan at Tortington (Arundel). During the breeding season, records of Reed Buntings were received from c.200 sites scattered throughout the county. Breeding was confirmed in 15 tetrads and probable in 44. During the BBS, a total of 37 was counted in 13 of the 135 1-km squares surveyed (compared with 33 in 12 squares in 2008). At Rye Hbr 52 territories were mapped. Elsewhere significant counts were of 20 pairs at Pagham Hbr, ten pairs at Glynde Level and 30 birds at Broad Rife (Selsey) on 17 Apr and again on 8 Jul. No counts were received from Arundel WWT, Pulborough Brooks or Amberley Wild Brooks.

In the autumn, reports of Reed Buntings were somewhat fewer than usual. Aside from Ashdown Forest, reports, mainly of small numbers, were received from c.50 sites; a flock of 50 at Pett Level on 28 Sep was the most notable although 20s were noted at Hastings CP on 13 Oct and Chesworth Fm (Horsham) on 18 Oct. During the second winter period, the species was seen at some 84 localities with maximum counts, in November, of 50 again at Pett Level on the 21<sup>st</sup> and, in December, 100 there on the 18<sup>th</sup> (half the number seen in the previous winter) and, at Wrens Warren (Ashdown), a feeding flock on the 22<sup>nd</sup> involved at least 80 birds. [ACG]

**Corn Bunting***Emberiza calandra*

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

Over 250 records were received from 79 tetrads (90 tetrads in 2008). In the first winter period, by far the largest flocks were on stubble in the Ouse Valley, between the confluence of the Ouse and Glynde Reach and Rodmell, where a flock of 90 on 6 Jan, accompanied by smaller numbers of Yellowhammers and Reed Buntings, rose to 160 on 27 Feb and was last noted on 3 Apr when 25 were present. Other double figure flocks in this period were 25 at Patcham (Brighton) on the first day of the year, 12 at The Burgh (Burpham) on 4 Jan, with smaller numbers throughout the period, 28 at Mile Oak (Portslade) on 11 Jan, 40 at Steyning Round Hill on 22 Feb, 60 at Beeding Hill on 6 Mar, where grain was provided, with smaller flocks in the vicinity on seven other dates. Smaller numbers occurred around Thorney Island with a maximum of eight at Pilsley Sands on 13 Jan and four were at Paghham Hbr on 27 Jan. The last seen in this area was a male singing at Thorney Island on 31 Mar. East of Lewes, the only reports were of one at Beachy Head on 20 Mar, three at Rye Hbr on 3 Jan and two there on 28 Feb.

The first song was noted on 26 Jan at Clayton windmills. During the BBS, a total of 16 was counted in six of the 135 1-km squares surveyed (compared with eight in four squares the previous year). Breeding was confirmed in six tetrads and probable in 14 more and occurred in three discrete areas:

(a) A very small population survives on the coastal plain and around Chichester in the west. Individual birds were reported from eight sites around the western harbours with four singing in 663 ha at Bracklesham Bay on 1 May. A count of eight at Oving on 16 Jun was welcome confirmation that this population survives and single birds were found at traditional sites near Funtington, Lavant and Westerton.

(b) The bulk of the breeding records come from the Downs east of the R Arun with a particular concentration between the R Arun and the R Adur. On the Norfolk Estate, on the east side of the R Arun between Wepham and Rackham, a systematic count found 41 singing males compared with 54 in the same area the previous year. The highest count was of 23 in a tetrad centred on The Burgh. In a separate count on 2 Jun ten were found in six 1-km squares at The Burgh. There were many reports from the Downs between Lancing and Steyning with a maximum count of 12 at Steyning Bowl on 14 May. East of the R Adur, reports were received from over 20 sites with 15 on 3 May at Thundersbarrow Hill (Shoreham), ten at Picker's Hill (Balsdean) on 8 Jun, eight at Well Bottom (Tarring Neville) on the previous day and 16, including juveniles, on 9 Jul at Glynde near the site of the major wintering flock.

(c) A small number breed on the coastal plain in the east. Reports were received from nine sites with a maximum of four singing males at Wickham Manor (Winchelsea) on 29 Jun, three at Rye Hbr on 17 Jun and four at East Guldeford Level on 15 Jun.

After the breeding season, double figure flocks were recorded at eight sites, the largest being 44 at Rye Hbr on 29 Sep and 50 at Thorney Island on 7 Oct. The largest flock on the Downs was 17 at Westmeston on 31 Aug although smaller numbers were reported to the end of the year.  
[ACG]



## ESCAPES and FERAL BIRDS

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All records of BOU Category D species, of apparently feral individuals of other species and of probable or certain escapes from captivity, but not those clearly in captivity, will be welcomed by the Hon. Recorder for this annual feature. Notes on age/sex, plumage, behaviour, and, where known, status, will be of particular interest. Such records should be submitted in the normal way.

The following escaped or feral birds, other than those Category C species in the main list, were recorded in the county in 2009 (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 reminded to include the age, sex and where appropriate colour morph of individuals when submitting records.*** Birds that cannot be ascribed to a species or group of species are excluded. Systematic order, nomenclature and taxonomy follow 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 and Davis J 1993. *Finches & Sparrows: an Identification Guide*. Helm.

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Juniper T and Parr M 1998. *Parrots: A Guide to the Parrots of the World*. Pica Press.

Madge S and Burn H 1988. *Wildfowl: an Identification Guide to the Ducks, Geese and Swans of the World*. Helm.

Vriends MM 1988. *The MacDonald Encyclopaedia of Cage and Aviary Birds*. MacDonald Orbis.

### Helmeted Guineafowl

*Numida meleagris*

*Common resident throughout much of Africa. Kept domestically elsewhere.*

Up to 15 were seen throughout the year in the Edburton area while three were recorded at Chilgrove on 21 Apr and two during a BTO Atlas Survey at Bathurst Fm (Warbleton) on 18 Jun. On 8 Jul five were seen at Great Noven Fm (Chailey) while five were flushed from the edge of Ashdown Forest at Duddleswell on 21 Nov.

### Golden Pheasant

*Chrysolophus pictus*

*Very scarce introduced resident.*

Three records were received from three sites: at Hurst Green an immature male was seen on 23 Mar, at Glyndebourne one was present on 13 Jun and at Durfold (Warnham) a female was on a

lawn on 26 Oct. Records continue to come from scattered sites across the county with no evidence of a breeding population becoming established. [RTP]

### **Lady Amherst's Pheasant**

### *Chrysolophus amherstiae*

*A rare introduced, but not established, resident or escape from captivity. Breeds in mountain forests of SW East Asia. Introduced to Britain in the 1900s; a few small feral populations may survive very locally in S England where they live in woods and thickets with rich, dense understorey.*

Quite surprisingly, there were two records for this species, the first since 1998 and only the 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> records since 1982 inclusive. One was seen and photographed at Anchor Bottom (near the Upper Beeding Cement Works) on 7 May, hiding in a small hawthorn bush. Another, a male, was seen at The Bostal (Steyning) on the 11<sup>th</sup> where the report stated 'for the past two days we have been feeding seeds to a cock bird'. As these sites are only some 2-3 km apart the possibility exists that they were the same bird. [JAH]

### **Green Pheasant**

### *Phasianus versicolor*

*Endemic resident in Japan although absent from Hokkaido. It is the national bird of Japan, a symbol of masculine weight and prowess, maternal love and care and a prophet of earthquakes!*

A male was seen at Arundel WWT on 30 Dec. This is the first time this species has been recorded in the county as an escape this decade.

### **Common Peafowl**

### *Pavo cristatus*

*Wild birds are restricted to the Indian subcontinent. A traditional (and spectacular) favourite in ornamental gardens.*

One seen at Hempstead (Uckfield) on 30 May is the only record received. This is the fourth year running that the species has been recorded from this site.

### **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: Eight to eleven pairs bred in UK during 2003-05 (Holling et al. 2007).*

**2008:** The reference in SxBR 61:216 to two birds at Stapleash Fm on 10 Jan has been deleted as the birds were in Surrey; the Surrey observer had used the incorrect OSGR.

**2009:** The individual present at Pulborough Brooks in December 2008 (SxBR 61:216) remained until 2 Mar, being seen at nearby Greatham Bridge on 11 Jan. Presumably the same bird was seen at Waltham Brooks in Jun and at Pulborough Brooks on 13 Jul, 24 Aug and 16 Nov. Away from the Arun Valley four were seen at West Ashling on 13 Jan, a pair at Benbow Pond (Cowdray) on 26 Apr, a pair at Lodsworth on 21 Jul and one at Birdham (Chichester Hbr) on single dates in Mar, Jun, Sep and Oct. Breeding was recorded in the county in 2000-03 and 2005- 06.

**Swan Goose***Anser cygnoides*

*Rare in eastern Asia. The ancient ancestor of the farmyard goose. Wild birds are still 'domesticated' in its natural range.*

An adult was present on the Lewes and Iford Brooks from 11 Oct to 20 Dec.

**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 wander on occasions. One to three pairs bred in UK during 2003-05 (Holling et al. 2007).*

In the first half of the year singles were seen at Pulborough Brooks on 14 Feb, in the Chichester 'area' on 1 Mar and at Scotney Court GP on 14 Jun. One was recorded at Barcombe Res on 16 Sep with presumably the same at Arlington on 27 Sep and in the Cuckmere Valley during 15-18 Oct. One at Broadwater (Eastbourne) on 19 Dec might have been the same individual.

**Snow Goose***Anser caerulescens*

*Breeds arctic North America, winters southern USA and Mexico. Presumed vagrants occur in UK during most winters but are greatly outnumbered by escapes. Eight pairs bred in the UK in 2005, including two in Hampshire (Holling et al. 2007).*

**1999:** The only occurrence in Sussex considered at all likely to have been of wild origin (Scotney Court GP Feb-Mar 1999) has been reviewed by SOSRC and is no longer considered acceptable; the species has been removed from the county list.

**2009:** A flock of 24 was seen at Scotney Court GP on 24 Feb comprising 19 white and five blue morphs. A flock of 27 at Nook Meadows (Rye Hbr) on 6 Mar presumably involved most of the same, but only included four dark morphs. Two, presumably white morphs, were present at Pulborough Brooks from 30 Apr-23 May while two at Hurston Warren (Parham) on 4 May were probably the same. At the end of the year eight blue morphs were present with Barnacle Geese at Scotney Court GP.

**Lesser Canada Goose***Branta hutchinsii*

*Breeds in Alaska and winters in California. Lesser Canada Goose B. hutchinsii includes the subpecies hutchinsii, leucopareia, minima and taverner. It is currently not on the British List, no vagrant 'Canada Goose' having, as yet, been assigned to subspecific level. Any recorded in the county are likely to be escapes from captivity.*

One was seen at Chichester GP on 6 Feb and was, presumably, the one which has been reported regularly in West Sussex in recent years (*SxBR 61:217*) and considered to be a Cackling Goose, *B. h. minima*. [AH]

**Emperor Goose***Anser canagicus*

*Breeding mainly confined to Alaska, winters Aleutian Islands. Present in many wildfowl collections. One or two pairs bred in UK during 2003-05 (Holling et al. 2007).*

Singles were recorded at Winchelsea on 12 Jan, Barcombe Res on 1 Feb, Scotney Court GP on 20 Feb and Pulborough Brooks on 19 Dec. With only two previous records in the last five years it is perhaps likely that the Winchelsea and Scotney sightings related to the same individual.

**Ruddy Shelduck***Tadorna ferruginea*

*Breeds from Turkey across central Asia, generally wintering further south. There are isolated populations in North Africa. Controversially, no officially acceptable British records since 1940 but seems certain that some late summer influxes originate from E. Europe (British Birds 95:398-99).*

A male flew in and joined resident birds on the remaining unfrozen area of Upper Lake in Petworth Park on 6 Jan, and one (unsexed) was at Burton MP on 11 Oct. [AT]

**South African Shelduck***Tadorna cana*

*Common resident in South Africa and Namibia.*

In January one was recorded at Pulborough Brooks on 19<sup>th</sup> and, presumably the same, at Arundel WWT on 29<sup>th</sup>. This may have been the individual recorded, perhaps as more than one species, in Nov 2008 (*SxBR* 61:218).

**Muscovy Duck***Cairina moschata*

*Locally common resident in forest lakes of Central and South America. Widespread in its domesticated form. Five or six pairs bred in Cambridgeshire in 2003 and 2004 but none were reported in 2005 (Holling et al. 2007).*

The individual present intermittently at Widewater (Lancing) since 2006 was present on 16 Jan and 21 Mar. Three were recorded on an Atlas Survey on Eastbourne GC on 16 Feb with two there on 11 May and 23 Jun and three at nearby Hampden Lakes during 20 Sep-22 Nov and one there on 20 Dec. Elsewhere two were seen at Battle Abbey on 16 Feb and 23 Apr, one at Bodiam Castle on 17 Feb and one at Ewhurst Green on that date and also 23 Jun.

**Wood Duck***Aix sponsa*

*Breeds N USA, winters S USA. Common in wildfowl collections. Not recorded in the UK as a vagrant although some individuals in the south west of the country might conceivably be of wild origin. Two escaped pairs bred in UK in 2002 (Ogilvie et al. 2004).*

Several records were received for what appears to have been one male in the Arun Valley through the year, which was not a bird from the Arundel WWT collection. It was first seen on 3 Feb at Arundel WWT and nearby Offham; then again at Arundel WWT on 19 Apr; at Ford further down the valley the next day and, finally, at Pulborough Brooks on 1 Dec. [JAH]

**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 recorded at Arundel WWT on three dates during 24 May-21 Jun. This is the first to be recorded in the county since 2003 although escapes at this site are likely to be overlooked as most observers would not be able to differentiate them from individuals in the collection.

**Chiloe Wigeon***Anas sibilatrix*

*Common resident in southern South America. Commonly kept in wildfowl collections.*

An adult male was seen with Mallards on Drayton GP (Chichester) on 29 Sep. This species was present in this area in 2004-05 but there has only been one record (of two at Pett Level) since.

**Marbled Teal***Marmaronetta angustirostris*

*Rare resident with a patchy distribution from S Europe and NW Africa to India. Declining across most of its range and considered vulnerable by ICUN. Not officially on the British List despite some strong contenders.*

A single bird, seen and photographed at Widewater (Lancing) for one day only, 28 Apr (JC), was presumably an escape from someone's wildfowl collection.

**Australian Shoveler***Anas rhynchos*

*Local and dispersive resident in Southern Australia and widespread in New Zealand.*

A male was recorded at Brooklands (Worthing) on 22 Dec. This is the first time this attractive species has been recorded in the county as an escape this decade.

**Marabou Stork***Leptoptilos crumeniferus*

*Common across much of sub-Saharan Africa, south to the Tropic of Capricorn.*

One was seen at Ansty (Cuckfield) on 16 Sep while it, or another, was photographed flying over Rye at some time during the year. The Ansty bird was seen at the water treatment works and was reported in the *Evening Argus*. It must have been a very impressive sight at both locations. This is the first time this decade that this species has been recorded in the county.

**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 seen at North Cocking on 18 Jun was presumably the individual seen at the same location and at a similar time in 2008 (*SxBR 61:219*).

**Golden Eagle***Aquila chrysaetos*

*Mainly resident in Europe, North Africa, northern and central Asia and Northern North America. Closest breeding population to Sussex is in the Lake District.*

The adult recorded in the Bexhill area in 2008 (*SxBR 61: 219*) was seen at Ashburnham Place on 22 Mar.

**Lanner Falcon***Falco biarmicus*

*Mainly resident in Southeast Europe, Africa and west Asia. All British records are considered to relate to escapes from captivity or released falconers' birds.*

One at Michelgrove (Patching) on 27 Dec was the first to be recorded in the county since a possible in 2006. Prior to that there were records in every year during 2001-05 although some might have related to falconer's hybrids.

**Blue and Yellow Macaw***Ara ararauna*

*Locally common, but declining, in less disturbed lowlands of tropical South America. Considered to be very affectionate and highly intelligent as well as looking spectacular; this species can learn to talk exceptionally well.*

One flew over Keynor Fm (Sidlesham) calling loudly on 31 Aug. This is the first time this species has been recorded in the county as an escape this decade. Unless recaptured, it would have been an expensive loss!

**Tucuman Parrot***Amazonia tucumana*

*Uncommon resident in montane forests of NW Argentina. Also known as Alder Parrot.*

The individual recorded in Angmering Park Estate at the end of 2008 (*SxBR 61:220*) was seen again on 11 Jan. Although it would be used to freezing weather in its native range it was considered to be taking advantage of nearby bird feeders.

**Blue-fronted Parrot***Amazonia aestiva*

*Generally common resident in interior lowland central South America.*

One was recorded at Fairlight on 6 and 27 Jul. This is the first time this species has been recorded in the county as an escape this decade. That an Orange-winged Parrot was seen in this general area between these dates (see below) might be more than coincidental?

**Orange-winged Parrot***Amazonia amazonica*

*Widespread and locally common in the lowlands of northern South America.*

One was recorded in Hastings CP on 21 Jul and another seen in Southwick on 1 Dec. The latter is most likely to have been the individual recorded in Southwick in March 2008 (*SxBR 61:220*) while the former occurred between two records of Blue-fronted Parrot in the same area (see above).



**Yellow-billed Cardinal***Paroaria capitata*

*Common South American resident in wetter areas from E Bolivia and adjacent Brazil to N Argentina. Considered to be one of the most suitable birds for a community aviary as it is peaceful and a good breeder.*

In April adults were recorded in Ditchling, Hove and Cowfold on 16<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> respectively with one at Bracklesham Bay on 12 Jul. All records could relate to the same, highly mobile, individual but it seems unlikely that it would have been detected so frequently in such a short period as the April records suggest. The escape of a consignment or a mass breakout from an aviary might provide a more likely explanation for those records. This is the first time this species has been recorded in the county as an escape this decade. It is also the only passerine escape to be recorded this year.

**Descriptive Species Considered Not Proven**

In addition to the records detailed in the Systematic List, a number of records were submitted to either SOSRC or BBRC which the relevant Committee considered to be “Not Proven”. These are summarised in the table below:

Both SOSRC and BBRC have the responsibility to be certain that, on the basis of the description supplied, the bird could not have been any other species. For the vast majority of the records listed below, the description did not eliminate the possibility of other species. It is interesting to note that nearly 50 per cent of the records related to just three raptor species.

If any of these birds were seen by other observers, SOSRC would be very happy to consider further submissions to help substantiate the original sightings. Unless these are received by mid-2011, the records will not be entered onto the Society’s database and will be lost to the county avifauna. [Nick Paul, Recorder]

Species	Location	Date	No.	Committee
Whooper Swan	Felpham	24/01/09	5	SOSRC
Black Brant	Church Norton (Pagham Hbr)	12/12/09	1	SOSRC
Sooty Shearwater	Birling Gap (Beachy Head)	02/09/09	6	SOSRC
Great White Egret	Pagham Hbr (North Wall)	03/04/09	1	SOSRC
Great White Egret	Shinewater CP (Eastbourne)	06/10/09	1	SOSRC
Honey Buzzard	Pulborough Brooks	28/04/09	1	SOSRC
Honey Buzzard	Cissbury Ring	30/05/09	1	SOSRC
Honey Buzzard	Marsh Fm (Pagham)	08/09/09	4	SOSRC
Honey Buzzard	Mount Caburn (Lewes)	23/07/09	1	SOSRC
Honey Buzzard	Patcham (Brighton)	09/08/09	1	SOSRC
Honey Buzzard	Ambersham	12/08/09	1	SOSRC
Honey Buzzard	Pulborough Brooks	11/08/09	1	SOSRC
Honey Buzzard	Arundel WWT	19/05/09	1	SOSRC
Honey Buzzard	Ferring Rife	31/07/09	1	SOSRC
Honey Buzzard	Pagham Hbr	06/09/09	1	SOSRC
Black Kite	Willingdon Levels	31/05/09	1	SOSRC
Black Kite	Pagham Hbr	19/04/09	1	SOSRC
Black Kite	Lewes	10/05/09	1	SOSRC
Goshawk	Undisclosed location	09/11/09	1	SOSRC
Goshawk	Plumpton	18/04/09	1	SOSRC
Goshawk	Worthing	18/03/09	1	SOSRC
Goshawk	Warnham LNR	31/03/09	1	SOSRC
Goshawk	Owlbeech Woods (Horsham)	12/08/09	1	SOSRC
Rough-legged Buzzard	Ditchling	29/04/09	1	SOSRC
Rough-legged Buzzard	East Hill (Hastings)	09/11/09	1	SOSRC
Common Crane	Lewes GC	10/08/09	1	SOSRC
Scandinavian Herring Gull	Newhaven West Beach	09/01/09	1	SOSRC
Caspian Gull	Barcombe Res	08/03/09	1	SOSRC
Caspian Gull	Thorney Channel	19/09/09	1	SOSRC
Caspian Gull	Warnham LNR	03/02/09	1	SOSRC
Iceland Gull	Goring Beach	03/04/09	1	SOSRC
Roseate Tern	Selsey Bill	26/07/09	1	SOSRC
Alpine Swift	Adversane	15/05/09	1	SOSRC
Scandinavian Rock Pipit	Exceat (Cuckmere)	22/03/09	1	SOSRC
Icterine Warbler	Shooter's Bottom (Beachy Head)	19/09/09	1	SOSRC
Red-breasted Flycatcher	Selsey Bill	29/10/09	1	SOSRC
Golden Oriole	Polegate	03/05/09	1	SOSRC
Woodchat Shrike	Ansty	26/09/09	1	SOSRC
Nutcracker	Ardingly	21/05/09	1	BBRC
Mealy Redpoll	Crouch Fm (Burton MP)	08/02/09	3	SOSRC
Common Rosefinch	Pett Level	09/09/09	1	SOSRC
Clirl Bunting	Hangleton	11/08/09	1	SOSRC

## ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE DATES OF SUMMER VISITORS, 2009

	First recorded date			Last recorded date		
	2009	Prior to 2009	10-yr average ( $\pm$ SD in days)	2009	Prior to 2009	10-yr average ( $\pm$ SD in days)
Garganey	11Mar	02 Feb	03 Mar ( $\pm$ 15)	26 Aug	13 Dec	02 Oct ( $\pm$ 18)
Quail	23 May	08 Feb	15 May ( $\pm$ 14)	27 Sep	31 Oct	16 Sep ( $\pm$ 36)
Osprey	16 Mar	07 Mar	24 Mar ( $\pm$ 9)	26 Oct	09 Dec	26 Oct ( $\pm$ 12)
Hobby	12 Apr	21 Mar	05 Apr ( $\pm$ 7)	15 Oct	09 Nov	22 Oct ( $\pm$ 15)
Little Ringed Plover	16 Mar	06 Mar	17 Mar ( $\pm$ 5)	24 Sep	08 Oct	24 Sep ( $\pm$ 10)
Wood Sandpiper	13 May	10 Apr	02 May ( $\pm$ 23)	01 Oct	16 Nov	27 Sep ( $\pm$ 17)
Pomarine Skua	18 Apr	10 Mar	24 Apr ( $\pm$ 16)	06 Oct	31 Dec	29 Sep ( $\pm$ 87)
Roseate Tern	13 May	17 Apr	04 May ( $\pm$ 16)	- <sup>1</sup>	30 Sep	10 Aug ( $\pm$ 31)
Common Tern	20 Mar	17 Mar	27 Mar ( $\pm$ 6)	07 Oct	26 Nov	28 Oct ( $\pm$ 11)
Arctic Tern	15 Apr	02 Apr	11 Apr ( $\pm$ 5)	09 Oct	23 Nov	30 Oct ( $\pm$ 13)
Common/Arctic Tern	04 Apr	10 Mar	01 Apr ( $\pm$ 12)	12 Oct	31 Dec	25 Oct ( $\pm$ 15)
Little Tern	10 Apr	02 Apr	09 Apr ( $\pm$ 4)	16 Sep	04 Nov	27 Sep ( $\pm$ 15)
Black Tern	24 Apr	02 Apr	16 Apr ( $\pm$ 6)	16 Sep	21 Nov	11 Oct ( $\pm$ 14)
Turtle Dove	29 Mar	08 Mar	09 Apr ( $\pm$ 14)	29 Sep	18 Dec	04 Oct ( $\pm$ 12)
Cuckoo	03 Apr	15 Mar	04 Apr ( $\pm$ 5)	12 Sep	11 Nov	25 Sep ( $\pm$ 16)
Nightjar	09 May	08 Apr	01 May ( $\pm$ 7)	31 Aug	05 Nov	23 Sep ( $\pm$ 11)
Swift	13 Apr	07 Apr	13 Apr ( $\pm$ 5)	19 Sep	24 Nov	16 Oct ( $\pm$ 20)
Wryneck	29 Apr	09 Mar	17 Apr ( $\pm$ 15)	25 Sep	02 Nov	02 Oct ( $\pm$ 8)
Sand Martin	27 Feb <sup>2</sup>	04 Mar	11 Mar ( $\pm$ 6)	07 Oct	05 Dec	21 Oct ( $\pm$ 15)
Swallow	16 Mar	04 Feb	10 Mar ( $\pm$ 14)	13 Dec	28 Dec	25 Nov ( $\pm$ 11)
House Martin	18 Mar	01 Feb	14 Mar ( $\pm$ 14)	23 Nov	26 Nov	12 Nov ( $\pm$ 9)
Tree Pipit	31 Mar	17 Mar	29 Mar ( $\pm$ 3)	18 Oct	09 Nov	14 Oct ( $\pm$ 9)
Yellow Wagtail	05 Apr	10 Mar	24 Mar ( $\pm$ 7)	03 Nov	23 Nov	28 Oct ( $\pm$ 11)
Nightingale	06 Apr	21 Mar	04 Apr ( $\pm$ 6)	18 Sep	19 Oct	12 Sep ( $\pm$ 11)
Redstart	03 Apr	13 Mar	28 Mar ( $\pm$ 7)	27 Oct	11 Dec	29 Oct ( $\pm$ 18)
Whinchat	12 Apr	18 Feb	05 Apr ( $\pm$ 18)	25 Oct	02 Dec	03 Nov ( $\pm$ 9)
Wheatear	28 Feb	13 Feb	02 Mar ( $\pm$ 8)	05 Nov	19 Dec	10 Nov ( $\pm$ 9)
Ring Ouzel	05 Apr	02 Feb	25 Mar ( $\pm$ 6)	07 Nov	26 Dec	14 Nov ( $\pm$ 6)
Grasshopper Warbler	04 Apr	02 Apr	11 Apr ( $\pm$ 6)	12 Oct	01 Nov	17 Oct ( $\pm$ 8)
Sedge Warbler	02 Apr	23 Mar	29 Mar ( $\pm$ 4)	28 Oct	29 Oct	12 Oct ( $\pm$ 12)
Reed Warbler	06 Apr	04 Apr	08 Apr ( $\pm$ 3)	01 Dec <sup>3</sup>	18 Nov	31 Oct ( $\pm$ 9)
Garden Warbler	05 Apr	28 Mar	03 Apr ( $\pm$ 5)	19 Oct	16 Nov	13 Oct ( $\pm$ 9)
Lesser Whitethroat	12Apr <sup>4</sup>	04 Apr	12 Apr ( $\pm$ 6)	01 Oct	21 Nov	12 Oct ( $\pm$ 11)
Whitethroat	29 Mar	19 Mar	01 Apr ( $\pm$ 5)	26 Oct	17 Dec	21 Oct ( $\pm$ 15)
Wood Warbler	22 Apr	07 Apr	19 Apr ( $\pm$ 8)	26 Sep	07 Oct	07 Sep ( $\pm$ 15)
Willow Warbler	21 Mar	04 Mar	16 Mar ( $\pm$ 7)	27 Oct	26 Dec	27 Oct ( $\pm$ 12)
Spotted Flycatcher	16 Apr	08 Apr	27 Apr ( $\pm$ 7)	02 Nov	18 Nov	13 Oct ( $\pm$ 7)
Pied Flycatcher	12 Apr	01 Apr	09 Apr ( $\pm$ 5)	23 Sep	01 Nov	01 Oct ( $\pm$ 7)

<sup>1</sup>no records after 16 Jun; <sup>2</sup>earliest recorded date; <sup>3</sup>latest recorded date; <sup>4</sup>excludes wintering bird in Hove

## DEPARTURE AND ARRIVAL DATES OF WINTER VISITORS, 2009

	Last recorded date			First recorded date		
	2009	Prior to 2009	10-yr average (± SD in days)	2009	Prior to 2009	10-yr average (± SD in days)
<b>Bewick's Swan</b>	16 Mar	26 Apr	05 Mar (± 9)	17 Nov	28 Nov	14 Nov (± 13)
<b>White-fronted Goose</b>	28 Feb	17 Apr	24 Mar (± 28)	05 Dec	12 Sep	10 Oct (± 46)
<b>Long-tailed Duck</b>	24 Apr	14 Jun	14 May (± 23)	19 Nov	23 Aug	26 Oct (± 12)
<b>Velvet Scoter</b>	20 May	15 Jun	11 May (± 11)	11 Nov	12 Aug	15 Oct (± 19)
<b>Goldeneye</b>	07 Apr	23 May	20 Apr (± 16)	23 Aug	06 Aug	06 Oct (± 21)
<b>Smew</b>	24 Feb	24 Apr	09 Mar (± 11)	12 Dec	03 Nov	02 Dec (± 10)
<b>Goosander</b>	22 Feb	22 May	06 Apr (± 28)	07 Nov	12 Sep	07 Nov (± 20)
<b>Black-throated Diver</b>	12 May	21 Jun	26 May (± 12)	13 Oct	03 Aug	21 Oct (± 23)
<b>Great Northern Diver</b>	20 May	21 Jun	25 May (± 11)	03 Oct	16 Sep	20 Oct (± 23)
<b>Red-necked Grebe</b>	22 Mar	19 Jun	18 Apr (± 19)	14 Sep	18 Aug	16 Sep (± 19)
<b>Hen Harrier</b>	05 Jun	19 Jun	12 May (± 16)	16 Aug <sup>1</sup>	04 Aug	01 Sep (± 20)
<b>Purple Sandpiper</b>	03 May	26 May	15 May (± 6)	26 Aug	01 Jul	29 Jul (± 26)
<b>Jack Snipe</b>	12 Apr	19 May	24 Apr (± 18)	17 Sep	24 Aug	21 Sep (± 16)
<b>Water Pipit</b>	29 Mar	28 May	01 Apr (± 23)	30 Oct	01 Sep	27 Oct (± 8)
<b>Fieldfare</b>	18 May	05 Jun	24 Apr (± 9)	10 Oct <sup>t</sup>	22 Sep	28 Sep (± 12)
<b>Redwing</b>	15 Apr	26 May	15 Apr (± 11)	24 Sep	06 Aug	27 Sep (± 6)
<b>Great Grey Shrike</b>	30 Mar	14 May	04 Apr (± 19)	24 Oct	26 Sep	16 Oct (± 8)
<b>Brambling</b>	19 Apr	12 May	23 Apr (± 7)	20 Sep	13 Sep	29 Sep (± 8)

<sup>1</sup>excludes July observations

### 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 Sandpipers, which regularly return to their winter grounds in July. Any 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 quoted is unusual and is calculated from the 10 years prior to the current one. The standard deviation gives an indication of the reliability of the average (64% of values fall within one standard deviation). For example, a standard deviation of ±7 means that 64% of the dates fall within 7 days of that average.

## SUMMARY OF HEATHLAND BREEDING BIRD COUNTS

### Thames Basin and Wealden Heaths Breeding Bird Survey 2009, West Sussex

	AC	BD	CC	CL	HC	IC	LC	LS	SC	WC	WD	WH
Hobby	-	1	-	-	-	-	1	1	-	-	-	-
Woodcock	-	-	1	-	-	-	1	-	1	1	1	1
Stock Dove	-	-	2	1	-	-	-	-	1	-	3	1
Turtle Dove	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Nightjar	3	2	5	1	-	6	5	1	2	2	2	1
Green Woodpecker	4	-	5	2	2	2	1	-	2	5	3	2
Great Sp. Woodpecker	3	-	3	1	3	3	1	-	4	4	5	3
Wood Lark	2	4	5	4	-	5	2	2	1	2	3	-
Sky Lark	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-
Tree Pipit	5	7	2	-	-	3	2	3	-	4	1	-
Meadow Pipit	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Common Redstart	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-
Stonechat	10	1	-	-	-	6	3	-	-	4	2	-
Dartford Warbler	12	-	1	-	-	13	2	-	1	-	-	-
Common Whitethroat	4	-	5	-	-	1	1	-	1	15	2	1
Siskin	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Linnet	7	3	4	-	-	12	2	-	1	6	3	2
Lesser Redpoll	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Common Crossbill	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Yellowhammer	3	-	5	2	1	6	5	-	3	12	2	5
Reed Bunting	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

Figures relate to pairs or territories. The small hyphen (-) indicates that no territories were identified; (ns) indicates that no survey was made for these species.

#### Key to sites:

- AC Ambersham & Heyshott Commons
- BD Blackdown (Fernhurst)
- CC Chapel Common (Liphook)
- CL Coates Common & Lords Piece (Fittleworth)
- HC Hesworth Common
- IC Iping Common
- LC Lavington & Duncton Commons & Lavington Plantation
- LS Linchmere & Stanley Commons
- SC Stedham Common
- WC Woolbeding Common
- WD Weavers Down (Liss)
- WH West Heath Common

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NB: For an explanation of the superscripts, see the footnote below the table.

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KS Arthur	MF Beard <sup>AT</sup>	P. Bradshaw <sup>A</sup>	B. Champion <sup>B</sup>
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MJ Marchant <sup>H</sup>	T. Morgan	RA Pask	
R. Marchant <sup>T</sup>	G. Morley <sup>W</sup>	J. Passmore	TK Rackstraw <sup>A</sup>
N. Markwick <sup>A</sup>	R. Morris <sup>AW</sup>	JAS Patterson	B. Rainbow <sup>X</sup>
C. Marrable <sup>X</sup>	P. Morrison <sup>A</sup>	PN Paul	I. Ralphs <sup>A</sup>
R. Marshall <sup>T</sup>	BM Mortlock <sup>T</sup>	A. Pearce <sup>W</sup>	NM Ratcliffe <sup>T</sup>
A. Martin <sup>A</sup>	MF Mullen <sup>AB</sup>	R. Peck <sup>T</sup>	ND Rawlings <sup>T</sup>
AJ Martin <sup>AB</sup>	MJ Mullis <sup>A</sup>	J. Pegram	S. Rayburn <sup>A</sup>
B. Martin <sup>T</sup>	ST Munday <sup>A</sup>	CJ Pennells <sup>AB</sup>	EM Raynor
D. Martin <sup>W</sup>	K. Murphy <sup>AB</sup>	RF Penticost <sup>AB</sup>	PJ Raynor
J. Martin <sup>A</sup>	D. Mutters <sup>A</sup>	A. Pepper <sup>T</sup>	M. Read
J. Martin <sup>AB</sup>		RT Pepper <sup>T</sup>	M. Reader
M. Martin <sup>AB</sup>	B. Neal <sup>A</sup>	TH Peregrine <sup>T</sup>	C. Reay <sup>A</sup>
DD Martin-Jenk <sup>A</sup>	M. Neatherway <sup>A</sup>	A. Perrett <sup>W</sup>	C. Reddick <sup>A</sup>
JM Maskell <sup>T</sup>	PJ Neatherway	A. Perry <sup>AE</sup>	SG Reeds <sup>AB</sup>
SP Maskell <sup>A</sup>	AM Nevard <sup>A</sup>	CB Peverett <sup>T</sup>	C. Reeve
D. Mason	DA Newman <sup>T</sup>	MJ Phillips <sup>AW</sup>	R. Reeves
MJ Mason <sup>A</sup>	RC Newman <sup>AT</sup>	SM Phillips <sup>A</sup>	R. Regan <sup>X</sup>
PH Massini <sup>A</sup>	DK Newnham	D. Pidgeon	S. Reivinson <sup>AT</sup>
W. Masters <sup>T</sup>	JA Newnham <sup>ABHTW</sup>	L. Pierce <sup>A</sup>	T. Reynolds <sup>A</sup>
JJ McCaig <sup>A</sup>	P. Newton <sup>W</sup>	A. Piggott <sup>W</sup>	Rye Bay Ringing Group
SFH McCullagh <sup>ATW</sup>	RC Nixon <sup>T</sup>	A. Pigott	GD Rhodda <sup>AH</sup>
C. Mcelhinney <sup>A</sup>	JL Nobbs <sup>ABE</sup>	T. Pitt	R. Richards
ACO McGrath <sup>A</sup>	K. Noble <sup>AT</sup>	PJ Plant <sup>AB</sup>	JE Richardson <sup>AT</sup>
PAF McKenzie <sup>LAT</sup>	A. Norbury <sup>T</sup>	R. Platt <sup>T</sup>	L. Richardson <sup>BH</sup>
V. Mclean <sup>T</sup>	RK Norman <sup>ATW</sup>	D. Pledge <sup>T</sup>	N. Richardson
DF McNair <sup>ABT</sup>	C. Northwood	I. Plumton <sup>X</sup>	G. Riches <sup>T</sup>
P. Mears <sup>T</sup>	A. Nottage <sup>AT</sup>	AH Podmore <sup>A</sup>	E. Rirsch <sup>X</sup>
P. Meiners <sup>B</sup>		CR Poole <sup>AT</sup>	G. Roberts
CW Melgar	G. Osborne <sup>A</sup>	G. Pooley <sup>T</sup>	GCM Roberts <sup>H</sup>
CA Melhuish <sup>A</sup>	RA Oswald <sup>A</sup>	NJN Pope	H. Roberts <sup>W</sup>
D. Melville <sup>A</sup>	D. Overy <sup>T</sup>	KR Postones <sup>T</sup>	M. Roberts
R. Menhenett <sup>W</sup>	J. Owen <sup>X</sup>	DA Potter <sup>T</sup>	MD Roberts <sup>T</sup>
M. Merriman <sup>T</sup>	M. Owen <sup>B</sup>	J. Potter	PA Robinson <sup>A</sup>
B. Metcalfe	RA Owen	GR Potts	PJ Robinson <sup>A</sup>
K. Meyer <sup>T</sup>	RC Owen	I. Potts	R. Robinson <sup>B</sup>
B. Michie <sup>X</sup>		R. Powell <sup>W</sup>	S. Robinson <sup>W</sup>
B. Middleton <sup>AB</sup>	S. Pagett <sup>W</sup>	L. Prevost	BM Rogers <sup>E</sup>
A. Millar <sup>T</sup>	PJ Papps	R. Price <sup>X</sup>	DP Rogers <sup>AB</sup>
AM Miller <sup>T</sup>	A. Parfitt <sup>AWX</sup>	C. Prince	R. Rolfe <sup>T</sup>

PP Roper <sup>X</sup>	DJ Smith	SR Taylor <sup>BTW</sup>	MD Walker <sup>T</sup>
C. Round <sup>T</sup>	KW Smith <sup>A</sup>	CR Tazzyman	LA Walther <sup>AT</sup>
H. Rouse	M. Smith <sup>T</sup>	S. Teale <sup>X</sup>	J. Ward
E. Rowsell <sup>AW</sup>	P. Smith <sup>T</sup>	BP Theakston <sup>T</sup>	M. Ward <sup>A</sup>
K. Roy <sup>A</sup>	PA Smith <sup>AW</sup>	A. Thomas <sup>A</sup>	R. Warden
I. Ruffles <sup>A</sup>	S. Smith <sup>W</sup>	A. Thomas <sup>B</sup>	HM Warne <sup>T</sup>
A. Rumble	AC Smithen <sup>AB</sup>	B. Thomas <sup>A</sup>	N. Warne <sup>B</sup>
SJR Rumsey	D. Sneller	M. Thomas	RF Warren <sup>AT</sup>
MJ Russell	MA Snelling <sup>ABT</sup>	S. Thomas	D. Washington
ND Rutherford <sup>AB</sup>	TG Snow <sup>AB</sup>	T. Thomas <sup>T</sup>	KP Watcham <sup>A</sup>
N. Rutter <sup>B</sup>	E. Soden <sup>A</sup>	PS Thompson	T. Waters <sup>A</sup>
PJ Ryder <sup>T</sup>	P. Solly	JE Tilbury <sup>B</sup>	AB Watson <sup>H</sup>
	S. Solly	K. Tilbury <sup>T</sup>	AE Watson
D. Sadler	Sparrows Green Group <sup>X</sup>	PA Tinning <sup>X</sup>	RF Watson <sup>A</sup>
I. Sandell	M. Speers <sup>X</sup>	PC Tinning <sup>X</sup>	R. Webb <sup>T</sup>
RF Sanderson	P. Spiers <sup>W</sup>	R. Tofts	PJ Webster <sup>A</sup>
J. Scammell	T. Spiller	M. Tomlins <sup>W</sup>	DJ Wedd <sup>AB</sup>
W. Scott	I. Standivan <sup>HW</sup>	MP Toms <sup>T</sup>	J. Wedd <sup>B</sup>
M. Scott-ham <sup>ABH</sup>	M. Stapleton	S. Trenergy <sup>T</sup>	M. Welcome <sup>W</sup>
TJ Scragg <sup>T</sup>	JC Steedman	CE Trollope <sup>AT</sup>	PJ Wells <sup>A</sup>
T. Seabrook <sup>ABW</sup>	JM Steedman	D. Trott <sup>A</sup>	R. Wells <sup>X</sup>
J. Searle <sup>B</sup>	MJ Stenning <sup>B</sup>	JE Trowell <sup>W</sup>	P. Welton
R. Self	A. Stephens <sup>X</sup>	WH Truckle <sup>AT</sup>	AJ Wende
RJ Senior	L. Stevens	M. Tucker	T. Wenham
MV Sennitt	M. Stevens	RG Tucker <sup>T</sup>	DR West <sup>ABT</sup>
M. Shaft <sup>AH</sup>	PC Stevens <sup>W</sup>	L. Tullet <sup>X</sup>	JD Weston <sup>W</sup>
RJ Shanks <sup>BT</sup>	RA Stevens	A. Tullet <sup>X</sup>	R. Westwater
P. Sharp <sup>T</sup>	DR Stoddard <sup>A</sup>	R. Turley	K. Whitaker <sup>T</sup>
J. Sharpe <sup>W</sup>	P. Stokes <sup>B</sup>	M. Turner <sup>ABHW</sup>	MJ Whitaker <sup>B</sup>
JP Shaughnesse	PJ Strangeman <sup>AB</sup>	PC Turner <sup>A</sup>	AD Whitcomb
D. Shaw <sup>T</sup>	R. Street <sup>T</sup>	P. Turney	IJ Whitcomb
M. Shaw	J. Streeter <sup>T</sup>	P. Twine <sup>E</sup>	PJ Whitcomb <sup>AT</sup>
MD Shaw <sup>ATW</sup>	C. Summers <sup>T</sup>	WM Twitchett <sup>T</sup>	C. White <sup>T</sup>
CR Sawyer	C. Sutton	D. Tyler <sup>T</sup>	M. White
DR Shepherd	P. Sutton <sup>T</sup>		CA Whiteman <sup>T</sup>
MJ Silk	S. Sutton <sup>H</sup>	ST Underdown <sup>W</sup>	AM Whitman
Y. Simmonds	O. Sweeney <sup>A</sup>	J. Underwood	JH Whitman
A. Simpson <sup>WX</sup>	T. Sweetland <sup>A</sup>	ED Urquhart <sup>W</sup>	S. Whittaker <sup>A</sup>
IM Simpson <sup>HW</sup>	F. Swift <sup>T</sup>		H. Whittall <sup>B</sup>
SP Simpson <sup>AT</sup>	J. Syms	B. Van Cleve <sup>X</sup>	M. Whittle <sup>T</sup>
C. Sims <sup>A</sup>		H. Vaughan <sup>A</sup>	JA Wichall <sup>A</sup>
PD Sinclair <sup>T</sup>	WIE Tagg <sup>T</sup>	T. Vaughan <sup>T</sup>	D. Wilkinson <sup>A</sup>
A. Skeates <sup>X</sup>	B. Taylor	C. Vince <sup>W</sup>	EM Wilkinson <sup>A</sup>
A. Skerl <sup>TW</sup>	D. Taylor	C. Vine <sup>AW</sup>	JD Willett <sup>T</sup>
AJ Skinner <sup>AB</sup>	DR Taylor <sup>T</sup>	GJ Vine <sup>T</sup>	DC Williams <sup>X</sup>
MB Skirrow <sup>T</sup>	DW Taylor <sup>A</sup>		E. Williams <sup>X</sup>
E. Slade <sup>X</sup>	KP Taylor <sup>A</sup>	B. Wadge <sup>X</sup>	P. Williams <sup>A</sup>
DI Smith	L. Taylor <sup>X</sup>	D. Walker <sup>W</sup>	R. Williamson <sup>W</sup>

RLC Williamson <sup>W</sup>	JS Winder <sup>T</sup>	SA Woolfries <sup>A</sup>	M. Wright <sup>T</sup>
KB Wills <sup>AW</sup>	HC Wingfield-Hayes <sup>W</sup>	I. Woolsey <sup>A</sup>	SJ Wright <sup>A</sup>
G. Wilson <sup>T</sup>	LF Winter <sup>T</sup>	S. Wootton	WWT Arundel
IJ Wilson <sup>A</sup>	S. Wise <sup>A</sup>	JA Worrall <sup>AB</sup>	L. Wyness
PJ Wilson <sup>W</sup>	S. Wood <sup>T</sup>	JM Worthington <sup>A</sup>	
TJ Wilson	V. Wood <sup>B</sup>	CMV Wright <sup>AB</sup>	BJ Yates <sup>WX</sup>
IJ Wilton <sup>T</sup>	CW Woodburn <sup>W</sup>	J. Wright <sup>W</sup>	M. Yates <sup>X</sup>
D. Wiltshire <sup>T</sup>	I. Woodburn <sup>W</sup>	KJ Wright <sup>W</sup>	S. Younger <sup>W</sup>
I. Wiltshire <sup>AB</sup>	C. Woodward <sup>ABW</sup>		

The superscripts in the above table indicate the particular survey(s) in which contributors participated, as follows:

- A Bird Atlas 2007-11
- B Breeding Bird Survey (BBS)
- E Thames Basin and Wealden Heaths Breeding Bird Survey
- H Heronry Census
- T Contributors via *BirdTrack*
- W Wetland Bird Survey (WeBS)
- X Contributors via Sussex Biodiversity Records Centre

## ASSISTANCE TO RECORDER

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The Recorder is especially grateful to Dr JA Newnham and the following team of helpers for coding and inputting the records onto the computer or providing computerised records: J Atkinson, S Bayley, C Bentley, Mrs VP Bentley, CJR Barfield, Ms J Chattaway, BR Clay, CB Collins, JR Cowser, DE Crawley, L Curson, RDM Edgar, RJ Fairbank, BF Forbes, B Fowkes, MG Freeman, BR Gilmore, Ms H Gordon, JS Gowers, Mrs P Green, AC Gutteridge, RS Hoad, JA Hobson, CE Hope, A House, T Howard-Jones, DH Howey, P Hughes, AM Hutson, RA Ives, P James, P Johnson, JC Kelsall, Rex Knight, Richard Knight, IM Lang, S Linington, M Mallalieu, CW Melgar, O Mitchell, Mrs BM Mortlock, PJ Papps, A Parker, RT Pepper, A Perry, GCM Roberts, Ms H Rouse, E Rousell, MV Sennitt, Mrs IM Simpson, DI Smith, I Standivan, JC Steedman, P Stevens, Dr AB Watson, Mrs AJ Wende, IJ Whitcomb, PJ Whitcomb, JH Whitman, TJ Wilson and BJ Yates.

## SURVEYS

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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.

***Bird Atlas 2007-11:*** This national BTO survey to map Britain and Ireland's birds is organised in Sussex by Dr Helen Crabtree, 3 Myrtle Cottages, Ardingly Road, Cuckfield, West Sussex, RH17 5HD, and Richard Cowser, Beaver's Brook, The Thatchway, Angmering, West Sussex, BN16 4HJ. The 302 contributors to this survey in 2008 are indicated by <sup>A</sup> in the above table.

***Breeding Bird Survey (BBS):*** This national BTO annual breeding survey, based on selected 1-km squares, is organised in Sussex by Dr Helen Crabtree, 3 Myrtle Cottages, Ardingly Road,

Cuckfield, West Sussex, RH17 5HD. Thanks are due to the 111 observers involved who are indicated by <sup>B</sup> in the above table.

**Thames Basin and Wealden Heaths Breeding Bird Survey:** This continuing survey of heaths and heath woodlands (see table on page 220) 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, GU28 0HR. Thanks are due to the nine observers involved who are indicated by <sup>E</sup> in the above table.

**Heronry Census:** This long-standing BTO census is organised in Sussex by Dr AB Watson, 83 Buckingham Road, Shoreham-by-sea, West Sussex, BN43 5UD. Counts of known heronries are given in the systematic list. Thanks are due to the 21 contributors who are indicated by <sup>H</sup> in the above table.

**Wetland Bird Survey (WeBS):** Monthly counts were carried out for this BTO/WWT/RSPB/JNCC survey, organised in Sussex by R Bown, 49 Long Beach View, Eastbourne, East Sussex, BN23 5NB. Coordinating the counts in large areas has been undertaken by local reserve wardens as shown below. Thanks are due to these and the 139 counters who are indicated by <sup>W</sup> in the above table.

**Co-ordination of Spring Seawatching Records:** The annual co-ordination of these records for the Society is carried out by Dr JA Newnham, 61 Grand Avenue, Worthing, West Sussex, BN11 5BA.

**Cormorant Roost Counts:** Counts were carried out monthly from September to March at Chichester GP and South Stoke, West Sussex, by R Knight for the Cormorant Research Group.

## SUMMARIES OF OBSERVATIONS

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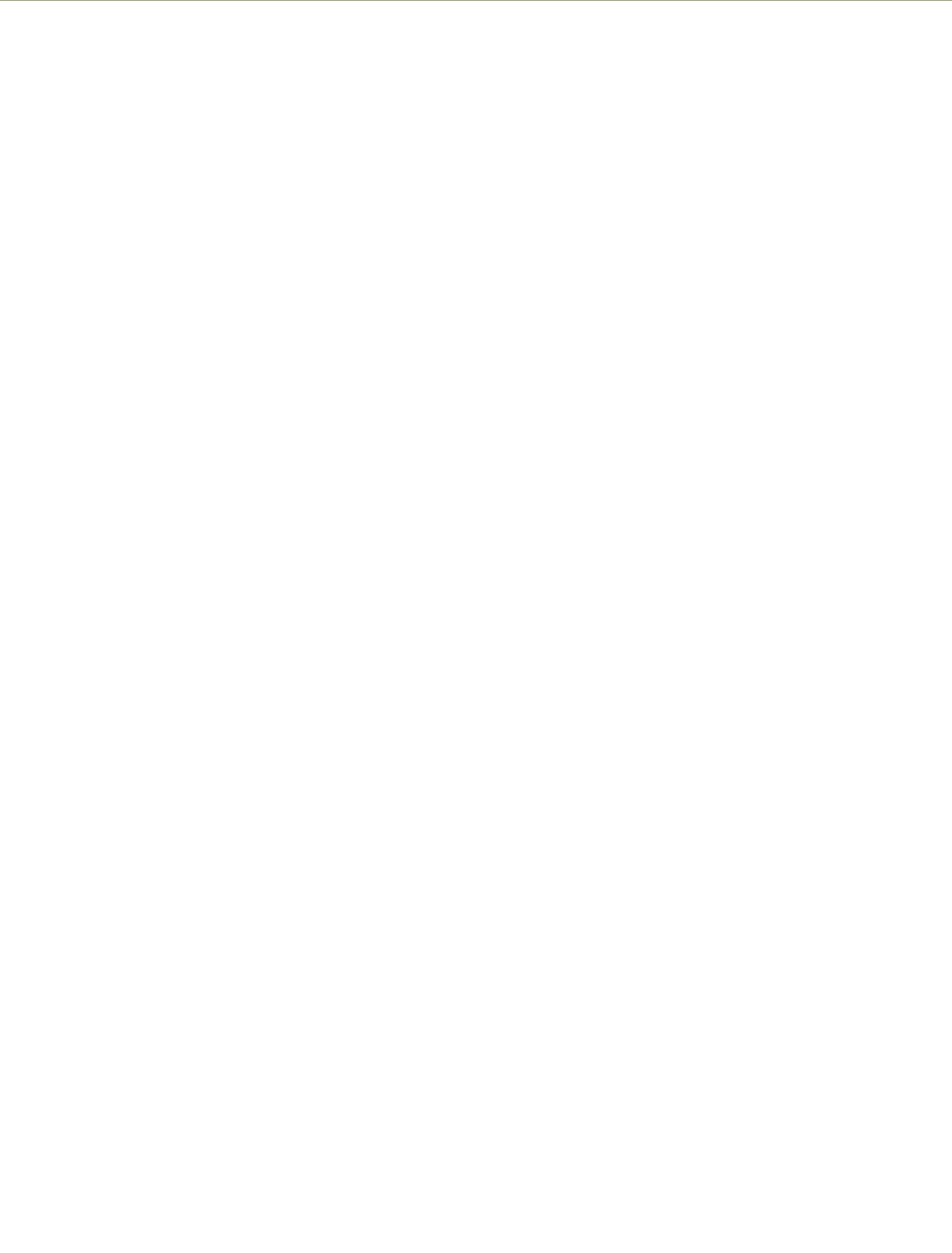
We are grateful for summaries of detailed observations at Chichester Harbour from E. Rowsell; Thorney and Pilsey Islands from CB and Mrs MA Collins; Bracklesham Bay and Lewes Brooks RSPB reserves from A. Parker; Selsey Bill from J Atkinson; Pagham Harbour from IM Lang; Arundel WWT from P Stevens; Norfolk Estate from GR Potts; Pulborough Brooks and the Arun Valley from P Hughes; Worthing from Dr JA Newnham; Shoreham District O.S. from CE Hope; Horsham District Council reserves from S Bayley; Weir Wood Reservoir from Mrs BM Mortlock; Ashdown Forest from P Johnson; Telscombe Cliffs from DH Howey; Splash Point (Seaford) from BR Gilmore; Beachy Head from RDM Edgar; Bewl Water from MG Freeman; Pannel Valley NR from Rye Bay Ringing Group; and Rye Harbour from Dr BJ Yates. We also thank the Sussex Biodiversity Records Centre for providing ornithological records from 75 observers (marked <sup>X</sup> in the above table) and Birdguides for providing their Sussex records. The on-line recording of the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) surveys provided a plethora of records; the 243 Sussex contributors to BirdTrack are marked with a <sup>T</sup> in the above table. Thanks are due to the BTO for the county BirdTrack records, as well as county records for the Atlas 2007-11, the Breeding Bird Survey and the Wetland Bird Survey.

## RINGING

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Thanks are due to RDM Edgar and Dr SE McKenzie for maintaining detailed records of ringing in the county and to all ringers who contributed data.





## The Sussex Ringing Report for 2009

*Robert Edgar and Sarah McKenzie*

32 Hartfield Road, Seaford, East Sussex BN25 4PW

### Introduction

The total number of birds ringed in Sussex was 73,191. This was an increase of 34% on the 54,488 ringed in 2008. The highest total was in 1990 when 73,402 birds were ringed. (N.B. *All numbers, including those in tables, have been adjusted to reflect birds ringed in previous years, but only recently notified to the authors*). Reports were received from 23 individual active ringers or groups (Table 1), which was one less than last year. The Rye Bay Ringing Group (RBRG) ringed 51,927 birds, which was 71% of the Sussex total, two percent more than in 2008. One hundred and twelve species were ringed in the county in 2009 compared to 108 in 2008.

**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.*

Ringing source	Number ringed		
	Adults	Nestlings	Totals
<b>Individuals</b>			
K. Arthur	0	6	6
W. Attridge and S. Bayley	4214	309	4523
A.M. Davis	8	52	60
J.A.G. Dunlop	1440	4	1444
R.D.M. Edgar	1	0	1
J. Forss	1	23	24
C. Hamilton	484	0	484
D. King	587	3	590
M. Lanaway	1106	156	1262
R. Lanaway	1002	778	1780
D.M. Love	266	113	379
D. Madgin	135	29	164
A. Martin	112	25	137
J.A. Newnham	786	0	786
G.C.M. Roberts	50	24	74
R. Sanderson	1451	75	1526
C. Shawyer	7	43	50
K.S. Smith	99	0	99
A.B. Watson	119	435	554
<b>Groups</b>			
Beachy Head Ringing Station	3583	54	3637
Cuckmere Ringing Group	536	0	536
Rye Bay Ringing Group	51,364	563	51,927
Steyning Ringing Group	3142	6	3148
<b>County total</b>	<b>70,493</b>	<b>2698</b>	<b>73,191</b>

Provisional national figures for 2009 are available from the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) at [http://www.bto.org/ringing/ringinfo/recovery\\_summaries.htm](http://www.bto.org/ringing/ringinfo/recovery_summaries.htm). Table 2 compares national and Sussex ringing effort for the five years from 2005 to 2009. More birds are ringed in Sussex than in any other county (with Norfolk second at just under 50,000).

**Table 2.** Comparison of national and Sussex ringing effort.

	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
<b>National totals</b>					
All birds	873,581	853,681	786,070	835,326	890,473
Adults	700,140	674,211	617,682	673,480	724,390
Nestlings	173,441	179,470	168,388	161,846	166,083
Species	262	251	250	258	265
<b>Sussex totals</b>					
All birds	58,746	54,661	51,708	54,488	73,191
Adults	54,946	51,587	48,589	51,782	70,493
Nestlings	3800	3074	3119	2706	2698
Species	125	109	117	108	112

County rarities ringed were one Water Pipit, one Bluethroat, one Aquatic Warbler, one Barred Warbler, one Pallas' Warbler, five Penduline Tits, one Common Redpoll and one Little Bunting, all at Pett Level; one Melodious Warbler at Beachy Head; and two Yellow-browed Warblers, one being at Beachy Head and the other at Steyning. Three Savi's Warblers and three Marsh Warblers were ringed at undisclosed locations. In addition, a Rustic Bunting was ringed at Pett Level in 2008 (the record was accepted subsequent to the 2008 Ringing Report). Setting the Sussex records in context, two Water Pipits, 16 Bluethroats, three Savi's, four Aquatic, 18 Marsh, seven Melodious, 15 Barred, two Pallas' and 51 Yellow-browed Warblers, five Penduline Tits, 96 Common Redpolls and four Little Buntings were ringed in Britain and Ireland in 2009. Two Rustic Buntings were ringed in Britain and Ireland in 2008. Although no new species were ringed in the county in 2009, the Rustic Bunting ringed in 2008 was new for the county.

The total number of species ringed in Sussex since 1979 is 205. Unusual birds ringed in 2009 include one Mandarin Duck (nine ringed previously), one Pochard (12 ringed previously) and four Quail (nine ringed previously). The Water Pipit ringed in 2009 was the fifteenth ringed in the county, the Bluethroat the sixteenth, the Savi's Warblers the sixteenth to eighteenth, the Melodious Warbler the seventh, the Barred Warbler the fourteenth, the Pallas' Warbler the third, the Penduline Tits the thirteenth to seventeenth, the Common Redpoll the ninth and the Little Bunting the seventh ringed in the county.

### Ringing totals

Table 3 lists the 20 most regularly trapped species during 2009 in descending order of magnitude compared with similar data from 2008 and includes the totals for RBRG to demonstrate the considerable contribution this group makes to Sussex ringing.

The 20 species listed in Table 3 account for 90% of all birds ringed in Sussex during 2009 compared to 87% of birds ringed in 2008. The first nine species are the same as last year with the order little changed. Goldfinch has moved down from tenth to twelfth and House Martin has moved up two places from eleventh to ninth. Meadow Pipit, Goldcrest and Siskin have been

replaced by Reed Bunting, Grasshopper Warbler and Chaffinch. The first ten represent 74% of all birds ringed (compared to 69% in 2008). RBRG ringed 71% of the county total, compared with 69% last year and 75% or more of eleven species in Table 3. Their highest proportions were nearly 100% of the Sand Martins, 99% of the Grasshopper and Sedge Warblers, 95% of the Reed Warblers and 93% of the House Martins. Although these figures demonstrate how important the contribution of RBRG is to Sussex ringing, it in no way belittles the significance of the work of the other ringers since for some species ringed RBRG contribute only a small proportion (or none). Of particular note is the RBRG achievement in ringing such a large number of the red-listed Grasshopper Warbler and Lesser Redpoll.

**Table 3.** *Sussex ringing totals for the 20 most ringed species in 2009. Birds of Conservation Concern 3 (Eaton et al. 2009): \*\*red-listed, \*amber-listed.*

	2008	2009			2008	2009	
	total	Total	RBRG		total	Total	RBRG
Blackcap	6468	11085	8267	Common Whitethroat*	1323	2185	1710
Sedge Warbler	6004	8172	8109	Goldfinch	1558	1479	187
Common Chiffchaff	4409	6767	4964	Lesser Redpoll**	921	1337	995
Eurasian Reed Warbler	4659	6761	6399	Robin	998	1117	535
Blue Tit	3160	4801	922	Reed Bunting*	636	1008	873
Barn Swallow*	4151	4374	3328	Grasshopper Warbler**	516	915	905
Sand Martin*	3336	3518	3502	Garden Warbler	662	912	754
Willow Warbler*	1960	3149	2619	Blackbird	930	894	374
House Martin*	1452	3121	2910	Greenfinch	896	890	175
Great Tit	1624	2300	476	Chaffinch	502	745	242

In the last report the increase in the number of Blackcaps was noted with 2008 given as the best year since county ringing records have been kept. This year the number of Blackcaps ringed has increased by more than 70% over the 2008 figure. This seems to reflect particularly good breeding conditions for this species. An increase in 17 of the 20 species in Table 3 suggests a generally very successful breeding season and this is particularly notable in the summer migrants which are 11 of those 17 species.

Sussex ringed the largest number for 19 species in Britain and Ireland. The county was second for the number of five species ringed, third for two, fourth for six and fifth for six species ringed. This demonstrates the importance of the Sussex ringing effort. (Detailed figures are obtainable from the BTO website given earlier.) Although notable totals were achieved for many species it is discouraging to note that only one Turtle Dove was ringed (indeed only 15 were ringed in Britain and Ireland), two Mistle Thrushes, no Willow Tits (for the third year running), six Tree Sparrows and no Corn Buntings were ringed in Sussex.

## Nestlings

The 2,698 nestlings ringed in 2009 is a slight increase on the 2,549 ringed in 2008. Hopefully this is a start of a reversal of the recent trend in declines of nestling ringing described in the last report (Edgar and McKenzie 2009), although the success of the breeding season inevitably makes a difference to the number of nestlings ringed. Four percent of all birds ringed in Sussex in 2009 were nestlings.

Fourteen species had 40% or more of their total ringed as nestlings (Table 4), compared with 16 in 2008 although some of these consisted of very few individuals. ‘Honourable mention’ should, perhaps, be made of Common Starling which had 39% of its total ringed as nestlings. Eight of the 14 species were of conservation concern, as is Common Starling (Eaton *et al.* 2009).

**Table 4.** Nestlings ringed in Sussex during 2009, where they number more than 40% of the total ringed. Birds of Conservation Concern 3 (Eaton *et al.* 2009): \*\*red-listed, \*amber-listed.

Species	Total ringed	Total nestlings	% nestlings	Species	Total ringed	Total nestlings	% nestlings
Black-headed Gull*	35	35	100	Barn Owl*	228	201	88
Grey Heron	10	10	100	Common Kestrel*	49	43	88
Common Tern*	6	6	100	Tawny Owl	12	10	83
Northern Lapwing**	4	4	100	Little Owl	6	5	83
Lesser Black-backed Gull	2	2	100	Peregrine Falcon	10	7	70
Common Buzzard	1	1	100	Stock Dove*	63	37	58
Herring Gull**	46	45	98	Grey Wagtail*	16	9	56

The Lesser Black-backed Gull chicks are the first to have been ringed in Sussex (by RBRG) and only 77 adults of this species have been ringed here. Particular mention should be made of the 12 nestling Cetti’s Warblers (ringed by RBRG), the 10 Grey Herons (by W. Attridge and S. Bayley), the 43 Kestrels (16 by R. Lanaway and 13 by Dr. A.B. Watson and his team) and the 201 Barn Swallows (by R. Lanaway who also ringed no less than 106 nestling Common Chiffchaffs, the highest number ringed in the county). On the debit side once again no Mistle Thrush, Cuckoo, Woodlark, Tree Pipit, Spotted Flycatcher or Tree Sparrow nestlings were ringed and there were only four Northern Lapwings and six Marsh Tits (compared with 32 last year). Some species nests require ringers with a specialist interest to find them (e.g. Woodlark and Tree Pipit) but others such as Northern Lapwing and Spotted Flycatcher are clearly becoming scarcer nesters, as are Mistle Thrushes.

## Recoveries

A selection of the more interesting recoveries is presented below. As usual there have been many reports of colour-marked birds, demonstrating how non-ringers can contribute to our knowledge of bird movements.

A **Mute Swan** ringed on 7 July 1997 at Crowthorne (Berkshire), as a first year, had its ring read at Warnham LNR in 2006, 2007, 2008 and 2009 being 12 years old in the latter year. The site faithfulness of Mute Swans is often assumed but can only be demonstrated through marking. Twelve years old is not a particularly special age for this species which can live for over 27 years (BTO undated).

Not many ducks are ringed in Sussex (31 Mallard, one Common Pochard and five Tufted Ducks in 2009) so recoveries are infrequent. A **Eurasian Teal** ringed at Icklesham as an adult female on 14 November 2005 was killed on 19 May 2009 at Novisl, Pinezhskiy (Arkhangelsk, Russia). This is just short of 3000 km ENE.

**Gannets** are regularly seen on the Sussex coast and an indication of their origin is shown by two birds found in Sussex but ringed as nestlings in the Channel Islands. The first, ringed at Ortac (Alderney) on 14 June 2003 was found dead at East Beach, Selsey on 24 July 2008. The

second, ringed at Les Etac (also Alderney) on 29 June 1991 was found dead at Pevensy Bay on 7 February 2009.

A nestling **Cormorant** ringed on Puffin Island, Anglesey, Wales on 26 June 2005 was shot at Bewl Water on 19 January 2009. This certainly demonstrates that inland Cormorants in Sussex are not necessarily of local origin.

In the 2007 report details were given of our first recovery of a satellite-tagged Sussex nestling **Honey-buzzard** found dead in northern France. Now a nestling ringed in this county on 2 August 2007 was reported as ‘freshly dead (trapped)’ in Sefovi Antobia (Juaboso, Ghana) on about 10 May 2009, a distance of 4787 km away. Apparently at least some sub-adult (but not all) birds probably remain in Africa for one or more seasons before returning, so this bird remaining in Africa may not be unusual (Wernham *et al.* 2002).

Sightings of **Red Kites** are becoming a regular feature and most may be assumed to come from the Chilterns or more locally. Not so, as a female chick ringed on 17 June 2007 at Culbokie (Black Isle, Highland, Scotland) had its colour-marks read on 6 January 2008 at Singleton. This bird had moved 778 km.

A spectacular record is of a **Montagu’s Harrier** ringed in the nest at Reiderland (Pays-Bas, France) on 30 July 2007 and seen on Thorney Island on 3 June 2009. It was a male and its wing tags were read. The bird roosted on the island overnight and at 0815 the following morning it flew high south.

Worryingly a **Kestrel** ringed on 30 July 2009 near Seaford and found dead at Exceat 28 days later “looked as if it had been shot”. Also found dead (having hit a building at Elsted on 15 October 2008, so less concerning) was a bird ringed in the nest on 6 July 2008 at Fagersanna (Tibro, Skaraborg, Sweden) which travelled 1287 km. There have been a number of recoveries of ringed Kestrels from Fennoscandia and recovered in southeast England, particularly first year birds (Wernham *et al.* 2002).

In the last report details were given of a male **Peregrine** that had been colour-ringed as a chick on Chichester Cathedral on 23 May 2007 and was recorded on a Roman Catholic Church in central Cambridge on 19 and 27 November 2008. This bird was found freshly dead having hit wires on 10 May 2009 at Longstanton (Cambridgeshire).

A first-year **Water Rail**, ringed at Icklesham on 27 August 2006, was found dead there on 5 February 2009. Not surprisingly recoveries of Water Rails are infrequent and very few have been resighted or recaptured alive. Our Water Rails are mainly resident but those breeding to the north and east of Britain are mainly migratory (Wernham *et al.* 2002).

A **Common Coot** ringed at Icklesham on 3 November 2004 and shot at Fleet Abbotsbury (Dorset) on 14 January 2009 may have come from much further east in Europe to winter in the south or southwest. There seems to be a movement of this species along the south Baltic, North Sea and French coasts to winter in Britain (Wernham *et al.* 2002).

An **Avocet** which was ringed at Icklesham on 1 July 2004 as a chick was found dead at Rye Harbour on 24 April 2009, four years and 297 days later. This is not particularly old, as the British and Irish record is 16 years old (BTO undated) and the European nearly 28 years (Staaav and Fransson 2008), but it is the oldest Sussex bird and shows great site fidelity.

A number of long-lived **Black-headed Gulls** were reported. Two ringed at Sompting refuse tip, both as adults, on 12 February 1986 were still alive in 2009. The first was sighted at Beddington (Greater London) on 12 January 2009; the second caught at Warnham LNR on 8 February 2009, the latter being just under 23 years from the date of ringing.



Amongst the many colour-ringed **Mediterranean Gulls** recorded at Rye Harbour and Icklesham this year were five from Belgium, two from France and one from Germany, as well as two from Hungary. The oldest bird was just under nine years old.

**Common Gulls** are rarely reported in Sussex as ringing recoveries, so it is interesting to have two reports. A chick ringed on 17 July 2007 at Sprogø (Korsør, Denmark) had its colour ring read at Shoreham-by-Sea on 15 April 2008. Another ringed in Rautalampi (Kuopio, Finland) on 1 May 1995 was found dead at Rye Harbour on 10 June 2009 having moved 2040 km. Ringing recoveries have shown that Common Gulls wintering in Britain and Ireland originate particularly from Norway, Sweden, Finland, Denmark, the Baltic States and western Russia. What is strange is that this bird was found here in the breeding season since fidelity to breeding (and presumably natal) sites is thought to be high (Wernham *et al.* 2002).

A **Common Tern** ringed as a chick at Icklesham on 22 June 2001 was found dead there on 28 July 2008 after seven years and 36 days. Even older, and still alive, a chick ringed at Chichester Gravel Pits on 8 July 1997 was recorded at Brownsea Island (Poole Harbour, Dorset) on 25 May 2009 at just short of 12 years old. This is a very long-lived species, the oldest British bird being 33 years old (BTO undated), so these records are not that unusual.

An excellent record for **Guillemot** is of one ringed as a chick at Ceann Ousdale (nr Helmsdale, Highland, Scotland) on 16 June 1998 and found dead at Brighton on 19 January 2009 at an age of 10 years and 217 days. This is another very long-lived species and has a British record of 31 years and nine months (BTO undated) and a European record of 42 years and 11 months (Staaav and Fransson 2008) – and that one was still alive!

A welcome **Barn Owl** recovery (particularly because it was still alive) is of a chick ringed at Chilgrove on 2 July 1998 and found at the same site and sexed as a male on 27 August 2009 at eleven years old. Another chick, ringed at Pett on 8 July 2003 has been recorded in each breeding season since.

An exceptional report is of a **European Nightjar** ringed at Icklesham on 15 September 1999 which was caught by a ringer at Warren Wood (Suffolk) on 29 July 2008. Not surprisingly, any recovery of a ringed European Nightjar is of interest, but for one to be ringed on migration and then caught at a breeding site is very special.

Very many **Sand Martins** ringed in Sussex are re-caught elsewhere. Of some interest is that five birds, all ringed during the 2009 breeding season at Applegarthtown (Lockerbie, Dumfries and Galloway, Scotland), were caught at Icklesham in July and August (two of them on the 31 August). The earliest had been ringed as a chick on 28 May and was already in Sussex on 20 July.

A first year **Barn Swallow** is of interest, ringed on Lundy Island (Devon) on 27 September 2009 and caught at Icklesham 3 days later, a distance of 374 km.

Many British ringed **Meadow Pipits** are recovered in Spain (Wernham *et al.* 2002). An example is one ringed (as a first year male) at Icklesham on 29 September 2007 and found dead at Hernani (Guipuzcoa, in northern Spain) on 17 January 2009, a distance of 871 km.

Despite what many people think **Wrens** do move and sometimes considerable distances. An example is one ringed at Woodvale Airfield (nr Formby, Merseyside) on 27 June 2008 which was caught at Icklesham on 4 November 2009. It had moved a distance of 390 km.

The **Dunnoek** is another species not normally considered as migratory. One ringed on 8 April 2008 at Borgsweer (Groningen, Netherlands) was found dead at Kingston on 22 November 2008. It is only the second Dunnoek from the Netherlands to have been found in Britain.

Of great interest is a **Fieldfare** ringed on 19 December 2007 at Ockford Farm, Northiam and re-caught there on 13 December 2009. This species is not normally considered site faithful between winters. One ringed at the same site on 11 December 2007 was found dead at Ilmarinen (Turku-Pori, Finland) on 25 July 2009 having travelled 1719 km.

A **Song Thrush** ringed on 16 October 2009 at Icklesham was killed at Tafalla (Navarra, Spain) on 28 November 2009, a distance of 949 km. It is likely that this was a continental race (*philomelos*) bird on passage through the county. A bird originally ringed at Steyning on 21 August 2005 as a juvenile (and therefore of the British race *clarkei*) was caught again at the same site in 2007 and 2008 and found dead 1 km away on 18 March 2009. A bird with a longer life was ringed as an adult at Cissbury Ring in 2003, and caught again on 2 May 2009, so was at least seven years old.

As with the Fieldfares, **Redwings** are not normally considered site faithful between winters. One ringed at Ockford Farm, Northiam on 6 January 2009 was re-caught there on 20 December 2009.

Two **Cetti's Warblers** ringed in northern France (on 27 August and 21 September 2008), the second and third recovered in Britain from that country, were caught six days apart at Icklesham on 8 and 14 October 2008, respectively. Also of interest, one ringed on 9 September 2006 at Filsham was re-caught at Chalton (Bedfordshire) on 27 April 2008 and one ringed at Titchfield Haven (Fareham, Hampshire) on 25 October 2008 was re-caught at Icklesham on 6 September 2009. The first and last two birds were females, the second unsexed.

For the second year running we have a recovery of a **Grasshopper Warbler**. A first-year bird ringed at Icklesham on 13 September 2009 was re-caught six days later at Orfordness (Suffolk) 145 km NNE. The direction would seem counter-intuitive.

Another **Sedge Warbler** has been reported at its wintering grounds: ringed on 8 September 2008 and caught by ringers on 25 January 2009 in Parc National do Djoudj (Senegal), 4311 km to the south.

There have been some very interesting **Reed Warbler** recoveries. A first-year bird ringed at Icklesham on 22 August 2008 was caught at Sandwich Bay (Kent) on 31 August 2008 and then, strangely, at Cadborough, Rye on 17 September 2008. There seems no obvious explanation for this movement. An adult ringed at the same site on 27 August 2007 on southward migration was re-caught, no doubt on or near its breeding grounds, on 16 June 2009 at Segersjo (Orebro, in southern central Sweden). An example of rapid movement is of a first-year bird ringed at Foxhall (nr Ipswich, Suffolk) on 21 August 2009 and caught the next day at Icklesham, 132 km SSW.

Cissbury has had three nice re-captures of **Blackcaps** with one, ringed on the Isle of Wight in 2006, re-caught in 2007 and in 2009. A second ringed as a juvenile in 2006 was re-caught in 2007, not seen in 2008, and caught again in 2009. A third bird ringed as a juvenile in 2005 was seen once each succeeding year including 2009 (so four years old).

A **Garden Warbler** ringed at Icklesham on 28 July 2003 was re-caught at Pentney (Norfolk) on 13 July 2009, so was just short of six years old. Although a good age it still has some way to go to beat 'Granny' Garden Warbler of Cissbury Ring at 9 years old.

A rapid **Chiffchaff** movement is demonstrated by one ringed at Waterhay (Ashton Keynes, Wiltshire) on 28 September 2008 and re-caught at Icklesham the following day, having travelled 198 km overnight.

Two **Bearded Tits**, both ringed on 31 July 2009 at Cleve Marshes (Seasalter, Kent), clearly travelled together, as they were both re-caught at Icklesham on 10 October 2009.

A rapid **Chaffinch** movement is shown by a first-year bird ringed at Cissbury Ring on 2 October 2008 having moved east to Icklesham the following day. Birds at Ockford Farm, Northiam seem to survive well, with one ringed on 30 December 2003 and re-caught on 16 December 2009, so being just short of six years old. In addition another was re-caught aged just over five years old, as were four birds over four years old.

An adult male **Goldfinch**, ringed at East Grinstead on 13 October 2008, that unfortunately hit a window at Portpatrick (Stranraer, Dumfries and Galloway, Scotland) on 24 April 2009, was presumably returning to its breeding area. Another male ringed at Hardham on 17 March 2006 also hit a window on 3 April 2008, but survived, at Llandanwg (Gwynedd, Wales.)

Some **Siskins** that winter in Sussex seem to summer in Scotland, as evidenced by four ringed at East Grinstead. One ringed on 5 February 2006 was re-caught at Glen Aldie House (nr Tain, Highland Region). The second ringed on 2 February 2008 was found at the Sound of Ulva (Isle of Mull, Inner Hebrides, Argyll and Bute) on 21 June 2009. The third ringed on 7 March 2009 was found dead at Loch Eck (Stratclyde, Argyll and Bute) on 29 April 2009. The fourth ringed on 3 March 2006 was caught at Inverarnie (Highland Region) on 15 June 2009. Another ringed at Steyning on 21 February 2009 was caught on 12 April 2009 at Bin Forest (Grampian Region, Aberdeenshire), while one ringed at Hardham on 13 February 2008 was caught at the same site on 10 May 2009. Further afield, a male Siskin wintering in East Grinstead, and ringed on 19 February 2008, was caught by a ringer in Krom (Vestby, Akershus, southern Norway) on 16 April 2009, having travelled 1161 km.

The scientific names of avian species quoted in this paper can be found in the Systematic List.

### Acknowledgements

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## Breeding birds in ten West Sussex woodlands

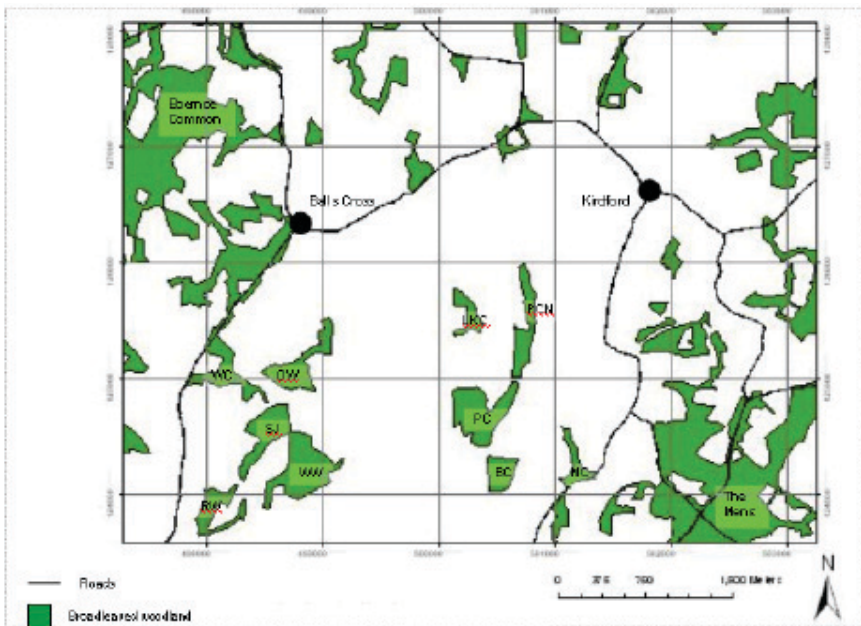
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### Introduction

As part of a recent D.Phil. research project on woodland fragmentation at the University of Sussex, a breeding bird survey was carried out in 10 broadleaved woods that lie between Ebernoe Common and The Mens in West Sussex (Figure 1). The survey was undertaken with the help of volunteers from the Sussex Ornithological Society during the breeding seasons of 2004 and 2005.

The aim was not only to gather data from previously unsurveyed woods, but also to understand the overall quality of each wood, as indicated by other taxa associated with woodland, plus dead wood habitat (Fuller 1995). Botanical data were collected and an assessment of the volume of fallen dead wood (FDW) was made. The former gives an indication of the ancient woodland status of each wood, the latter, an indication of past and present management.



**Figure 1.** Survey woods. Key to wood names in order of increasing size: LKC, Lime Kiln Copse; MC, Marshall's Copse; BC, Bennyfold Copse; RW, Rushout Wood; PCN, Petsalls Copse North; SJ, Steadman's Journey; OW, Old Wood; WC, Witley Copse; PC, Petsalls Copse; WW, Wilderness Wood. © Crown Copyright/database right 2007. An Ordnance Survey/EDINA supplied service.

## Methods

*Breeding bird* surveys were based on point counts (Bibby *et al.* 2003), in which an observer stands at a single point (or a number of points) and counts all birds seen and heard within different distance bands from the observer: 0-25 m, 25-50 m and over 50 m. A maximum of ten points were randomly selected in each wood, being a minimum of 100 m apart and 50 m in from the edge. The sizes and shapes of the woods varied, resulting in different numbers of points per wood (Table 1). Each point (a tree) was marked by luminescent orange tape. Three visits were made to each wood: end March/early April, late April, and mid-May, in both 2004 and 2005. Each survey started one hour after dawn and finished by 11.00 hours.

**Table 1.** Area (ha) and number of points per wood.

Woodland name	Area (ha)	No. of points
Lime Kiln Copse	4.51	5
Marshall's Copse	4.57	6
Bennyfold Copse	6.00	8
Rushout Wood	6.87	7
Petsalls Copse North	8.48	7
Steadmans Journey	8.50	8
Old Wood	8.72	7
Witley Copse	10.20	7
Petsalls Copse	17.33	10
Wilderness Wood	20.46	10

*Botanical* surveys were undertaken at each bird survey point in each wood, adapting the method described by Kirby (1988). A 4 x 4-m quadrat was laid out along a random compass bearing, 25 m away from the bird survey point to avoid canopy shading. Species presence and abundance were recorded, but for brevity, the latter data are not used in this paper.

*Fallen dead wood* (FDW) was surveyed (Kirby *et al.* 1998) making use of the bird survey points in each wood. A 25-m rope was laid out from the base of each point (tree) along a randomly selected compass bearing and the numbers of logs in different diameter classes were recorded where they intersected the transect line. The volume of fallen dead wood per hectare was then calculated for each wood, using the formula in Kirby *et al.* (1998).

## Results: birds

To interpret the breeding bird survey results, reference was made to Fuller *et al.* (2001), who compared the habitat preference for woodland or hedgerows of 30 species (Table 2). Ten species showed strong association with woodland, seven were strongly associated with hedgerows, while eight showed a moderate preference for hedgerows and five showed a moderate preference for woodland.

Forty-two species were recorded during the current survey, of which 25 showed habitat preference for woodland or hedgerow (Table 3). Nine species were strongly associated with woodland, nine showed moderate preference for woodland, three were strongly associated with hedgerows and four showed a moderate preference for hedgerows.

As the focus of this research was on woodland, subsequent analysis concentrated on those species showing a strong woodland preference. Table 4 shows the number of species per wood in each category.

**Table 2.** Woodland and hedgerow habitat preferences of 30 species. After Fuller et al. (2001), for illustration only: no values should be attributed to the points.

Species	Hedgerow	←increasing preference→		Woodland
Yellowhammer	*			
Linnet	*			
Goldfinch	*			
Whitethroat	*			
Greenfinch	*			
Duncock	*			
Lesser Whitethroat	*			
Chaffinch		*		
Blackbird		*		
Mistle Thrush		*		
Stock Dove		*		
Blue Tit		*		
Robin		*		
Great Tit		*		
Wren		*		
Long-tailed Tit		*		
Song Thrush		*		
Bullfinch		*		
Willow Warbler		*		
Garden Warbler		*		
Blackcap			*	
Chiffchaff			*	
Great Spotted Woodpecker			*	
Nuthatch			*	
Coal Tit			*	
Treecreeper			*	
Spotted Flycatcher			*	
Goldcrest			*	
Marsh Tit			*	
Tawny Owl			*	

To compare differences between woods, the mean number of individuals (of species strongly associated with woodland) recorded on all six visits was calculated. An index was produced scoring the woods based on highest mean number of woodland species, where 10 is highest and 1 is lowest (Table 5).

Three species (Great Spotted Woodpecker, Goldcrest and Coal Tit) were recorded in all ten woods. Species found in nine out of ten woods were Blackcap, Chiffchaff and Nuthatch, while Treecreeper occurred in eight out of ten woods. Marsh Tit occurred in seven woods and Tawny Owl in five. Not surprisingly, there was a clear correlation between the number of species and woodland area.



**Table 3.** Species recorded in the survey: SW, strong woodland (bold); W, woodland; SH, strong hedgerow; H, hedgerow; O, other species which were not considered by Fuller et al. (2001).

Mandarin Duck	O	Duncock	SH	Blue Tit	W
Common Pheasant	O	Robin	W	Great Tit	H
Sparrowhawk	O	Common Nightingale	O	<b>Coal Tit</b>	<b>SW</b>
Common Buzzard	O	Blackbird	W	<b>Marsh Tit</b>	<b>SW</b>
Common Kestrel	O	Song Thrush	W	<b>Nuthatch</b>	<b>SW</b>
Stock Dove	H	Mistle Thrush	H	<b>Eurasian Treecreeper</b>	<b>SW</b>
Woodpigeon	O	<b>Blackcap</b>	<b>SW</b>	Jay	O
Turtle Dove	O	Garden Warbler	W	Magpie	O
<b>Tawny Owl</b>	<b>SW</b>	Common Whitethroat	SH	Jackdaw	O
Common Kingfisher	O	Wood Warbler	O	Carion Crow	O
Green Woodpecker	O	<b>Common Chiffchaff</b>	<b>SW</b>	Chaffinch	H
<b>Great Spotted Woodpecker</b>	<b>SW</b>	Willow Warbler	W	Greenfinch	SH
Tree Pipit	O	<b>Goldcrest</b>	<b>SW</b>	Goldfinch	SH
Wren	W	Long-tailed Tit	W	Bullfinch	W

**Table 4.** Bird species per wood, grouped by strength of habitat preference.

Woodland name	Habitat preference				
	Woodland (strong)	Woodland (moderate)	Hedgerow (strong)	Hedgerow (moderate)	Other
Lime Kiln Copse	8	6	2	5	7
Marshall's Copse	8	5	2	4	8
Bennyfold Copse	9	6	1	5	9
Rushout Wood	7	6	2	4	4
Petsalls Copse North	9	6	2	4	6
Steadman's Journey	9	6	3	5	6
Old Wood	9	5	2	4	8
Witley Copse	8	7	2	4	9
Petsalls Copse	9	5	1	5	10
Wilderness Wood	9	4	1	5	11

**Table 5.** Woods scored by mean number of woodland species.

Woodland name	Area (ha)	Mean number	Score
Petsalls Copse	17.33	19	10
Wilderness Wood	20.46	17.8	8.5
Petsalls Copse North	8.48	17.8	8.5
Old Wood	8.72	15.2	7
Witley Copse	10.2	14	5.5
Steadmans Journey	8.5	14	5.5
Bennyfold Copse	6	13	4
Lime Kiln Copse	4.51	10.3	3
Rushout Wood	6.87	9.7	2
Marshall's Copse	4.57	8.5	1

## Results: plants

Eighty-five species, including tree seedlings, were recorded. Analysis concentrated on Ancient Woodland Indicator (AWI) species (Kirby and Goldberg 2003), of which there were 21. These are species strongly associated with woods that are considered ancient (at least 400 years old). Table 6 shows the number of AWI species per wood and the score.

**Table 6.** Woods scored by number of AWI species.

Woodland name	Area (ha)	No. of AWI species	Score
Wilderness Wood	20.46	12	10
Petsalls Copse	17.33	11	8.5
Marshall's Copse	4.57	11	8.5
Witley Copse	10.2	10	6.5
Steadmans Journey	8.5	10	6.5
Old Wood	8.72	9	5
Petsalls Copse North	8.48	8	3.5
Bennyfold Copse	6	8	3.5
Lime Kiln Copse	4.51	7	2
Rushout Wood	6.87	6	1

Two AWI species (Wood Anemone *Anemone nemorosa* and Bluebell *Hyacinthoides non-scripta*) occurred in all ten woods, the grass Wood Millet (*Milium effusum*) was found in nine and Primrose (*Primula vulgaris*) was recorded in eight. The remaining species were less frequently encountered. There is a relationship between the number of AWI species and woodland area, albeit weaker than that for birds.

## Results: fallen dead wood

The volume of FDW varied considerably across the ten woods, from 12.95 m<sup>3</sup> ha<sup>-1</sup> in Petsalls Copse North, to 62.29 m<sup>3</sup> ha<sup>-1</sup> in Wilderness Wood (Table 7).

**Table 7.** Woods scored by volume of fallen dead wood (FDW) per hectare (10 highest, 1 lowest).

Woodland name	Area (ha)	Volume FDW (M <sup>3</sup> ha <sup>-1</sup> )	Score
Wilderness Wood	20.46	62.29	10
Steadmans Journey	8.5	50.23	9
Witley Copse	10.2	40.35	8
Lime Kiln Copse	4.51	32.19	7
Bennyfold Copse	6	31.55	6
Marshall's Copse	4.57	29.57	5
Petsalls Copse	17.33	25.72	4
Old Wood	8.72	29.27	3
Rushout Wood	6.87	17.76	2
Petsalls Copse North	8.48	12.95	1

There was no significant relationship between volume of FDW and woodland area, although the largest wood (Wilderness Wood) had the greatest volume of FDW. This wood was managed

for pheasants as well as timber and there seemed to be less intervention in terms of ‘tidying’ the wood. Kirby *et al.* (1998) produced provisional benchmarks for dead wood in British forests: low, < 20 m<sup>3</sup> ha<sup>-1</sup>; medium, 20–40 m<sup>3</sup> ha<sup>-1</sup>; and high, >50 m<sup>3</sup> ha<sup>-1</sup>. Petsalls Copse North and Rushout Wood were classed as ‘low,’ five woods as ‘medium’ and three woods (Wilderness Wood, Steadman’s Journey and Witley Copse) fell into the ‘high’ category.

Dead wood supports a huge variety of wood-boring invertebrates and a large number of fungi. About 20% of Britain’s invertebrates depend on dead wood for survival, so woods that fall into this ‘high’ category are very important for their conservation and for that of insect-eating birds (Kirby *et al.* 1998).

## Discussion

The three surveys provided an assessment of the relative quality of each wood and the scores from all three surveys were added together (Table 8).

**Table 8.** Combined scores for birds, plants and fallen dead wood (FDW) in order of increasing woodland size.

Woodland name	Area (ha)	Bird score	Plant score	FDW score	Total score
Lime Kiln Copse	4.51	3	2	7	12
Marshall’s Copse	4.57	1	8.5	5	14.5
Bennyfold Copse	6.0	4	3.5	6	13.5
Rushout Wood	6.87	2	1	2	5
Petsalls Copse North	8.48	8.5	3.5	1	13
Steadmans Journey	8.5	5.5	6.5	9	21
Old Wood	8.72	7	5	3	15
Witley Copse	10.2	5.5	6.5	8	20
Petsalls Copse	17.33	10	8.5	4	22.5
Wilderness Wood	20.46	8.5	10	10	28.5

Surprisingly, the direct relationship between wood quality and area was not as clear cut as expected, as evidenced by the overall ranking in Table 9.

**Table 9.** Overall rank of woodlands (1 is the ‘best’).

Woodland name	Area (ha)	Total score	Overall rank
Wilderness Wood	20.46	28.5	1
Petsalls Copse	17.33	22.5	2
Steadmans Journey	8.5	21	3
Witley Copse	10.2	20	4
Old Wood	8.72	15	5
Marshall’s Copse	4.57	14.5	6
Bennyfold Copse	6.0	13.5	7
Petsalls Copse North	8.48	13	8
Lime Kiln Copse	4.51	12	9
Rushout Wood	6.87	5	10

Wilderness Wood (the largest) was ranked first and Petsalls Copse (second largest) was ranked second, confirming the relationship between overall quality and woodland area. Marshall's Copse, however, although the second smallest, was ranked sixth due to its high plant score. It is possible that this wood was once much larger, supporting a diverse range of species and many of these have survived, due to lack of disturbance of the woodland soil. Combining data from different surveys helps to identify overall quality of a wood and so influence future conservation management.

The scientific names of avian species quoted in this paper can be found in the Systematic List.

### Acknowledgements

The author is greatly indebted to volunteer surveyors Tony Cook, Robert Edgar, Paul Forsdick, Jim Lee, Leonard Manns and Alice Parfitt, plus Alan Perry (then SOS Surveys and Projects Officer) for recommending them. The author would also like to thank Mr Anthony Dickinson (Land Agent for the Leconsfield Estate) for granting access to the land for the surveys.

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## The first recorded King Eider in Sussex

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*Dr Tony Cocks*

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An early morning walk on Sunday 11 January 2009 with a change in wind direction thawing frost, Cliff Dean noticed from the sea wall just west of Pett Pools a bird close inshore flapping its wings and showing a black belly. Discounting a badly oiled Common Guillemot (*Uria aalge*), through binoculars the bird was identified as an eider with subtle boreal washes and a very large orange beak. Closer observation noted the beautiful soft subtle blue-grey on the crown and warm orange-pink on the breast, and the unmistakable prominent large orange beak. The duck was identified as a drake King Eider (*Somateria spectabilis*). Another observer, Stuart Pemberton, was driving along the road, stopped and climbed over the sea wall to corroborate as the first witness to the sighting.

By now the drake was swimming out to sea into larger waves and surface-diving, becoming lost among hundreds of grebes and dozens of divers also offshore. Dr Barry Yates arrived soon after 10.00 hr and although the drake was distant but still recognisable managed to digiscope the drake disappearing into a low sun. Before mid-day, John Trowell and Pete Rouse spent several hours searching in vain for the eider and returned after lunch to manage a successful sighting. The word soon spread and many people managed to see the new addition to the Sussex List that Sunday.

Despite a great deal of searching the next sighting was not until Tuesday 13 January off Rye Harbour and subsequently on Saturday 17 January at mid-day back to the west at Cliff End very close inshore and drifting slowly east with the tide. Pursued by a growing band of admirers it reached Winchelsea Beach by 15.00 hr drifting east and further offshore. On Sunday 18 January at 14.00 hr the drake was seen further east offshore at Camber Sands and by 16.00 hr at Jury's Gap still drifting east into Kent waters.

The King Eider was thought to stay in the Rye Bay area until at least Sunday 15 February enabling Martin Casemore to photograph the drake.

In Britain, the King Eider is a rare but accidental regular winter visitor chiefly around the coast of Scotland and Ireland but also the east coast of England. It is a daytime feeder particularly on molluscs, crustaceans and echinoderms by surface-diving with partially opened wings often in deep water. The feeding habit forces birds in the winter months to move away from frozen seas to find open water.

The European population winters along ice-free coasts of the White Sea, northern Norway and Iceland. The Pacific population winters in the Bering Sea.

Winter records for the King Eider in Great Britain are 68 individuals recorded before 31 December 1949, 137 individuals recorded between 1 January 1950 and 31 December 2007, and, six individuals recorded from 1 January to 31 December 2008.

## Curlew and Whimbrel in Rye Bay 1970-2009

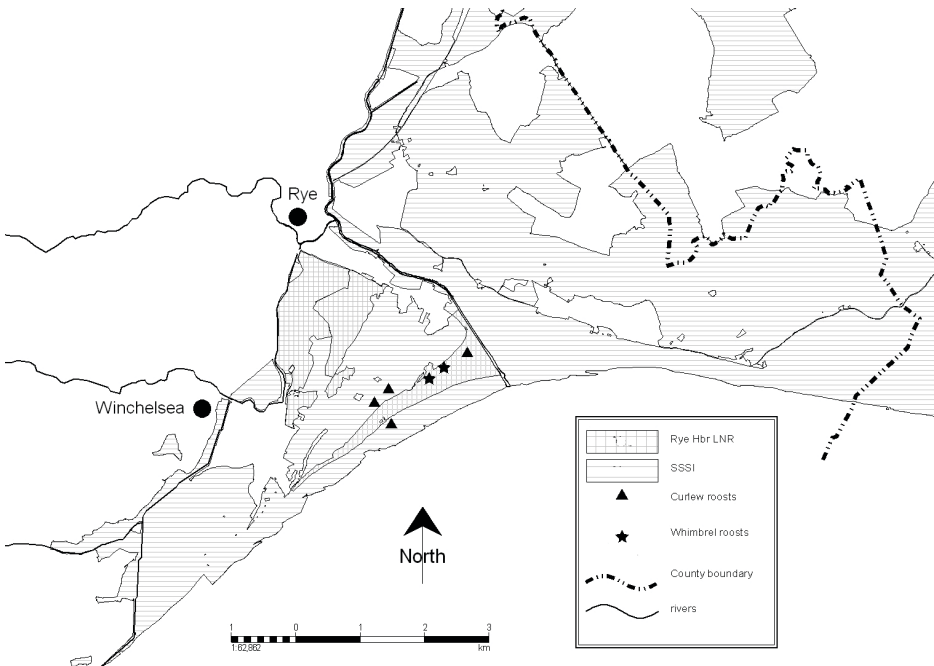
*Dr Barry Yates*

Rye Harbour Nature Reserve, East Sussex, TN36 4LU

### Introduction

Curlew *Numenius arquata* and Whimbrel *N. phaeopus* are large and closely related wading birds that spend part of their year in the coastal habitats around Rye in East Sussex. In 1970 the Rye Harbour Nature Reserve was established within an SSSI and this has provided a safe nocturnal roosting site for both species and regular roost counts are made by the reserve staff. This report presents the available information and provides some detail on how these birds utilise and share the available habitat.

In Rye Bay the Curlew is common from late June to the end of March, feeding by day on the grasslands and to a lesser extent the intertidal habitats, including saltmarsh. The Whimbrel utilises a similar habitat, but is only common from late April until mid-May and then again in July and August. Both species roost within the protected areas of Rye Harbour Nature Reserve, but Whimbrel use a traditional well-defined spring nocturnal roost, whereas the Curlew nocturnal roosts are dispersed around many man-made pools, and also the intertidal sand when this is available. The smaller number of autumn Whimbrel often roost among the Curlew.



**Figure 1.** Location map of Rye Harbour Nature Reserve showing wader roosts.





**Figure 2.** Aerial view of Rye Harbour Nature Reserve showing wader roosts. Curlew: triangle (x4); and Whimbrel: star (x2).

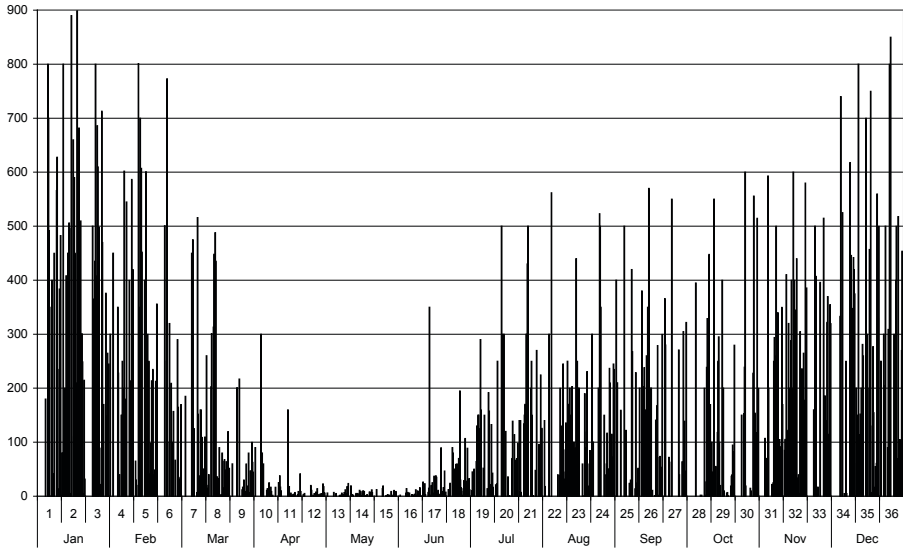
### The counts

These two species are not counted well by the daytime monthly WeBS counts because the birds are widely dispersed along the coast and grazing marsh of Rye Bay. The best counts are made at dusk and dawn when the birds come together to roost. This account is largely based on the counts from the nature reserve's files, plus some from the Sussex Bird Reports. The coverage of the area before 1977 was poor because the wardening of the reserve was not year round and the Whimbrel nocturnal roost was not recognised until 1982. The counts have been organised into 36 "ten day periods" for each of the 40 years, ignoring that the third period of any month may be 8-11 days. In Figures 3 and 4 below each ten day period has up to 40 vertical bars, each representing the peak count within the period, starting with 1970 on the left.

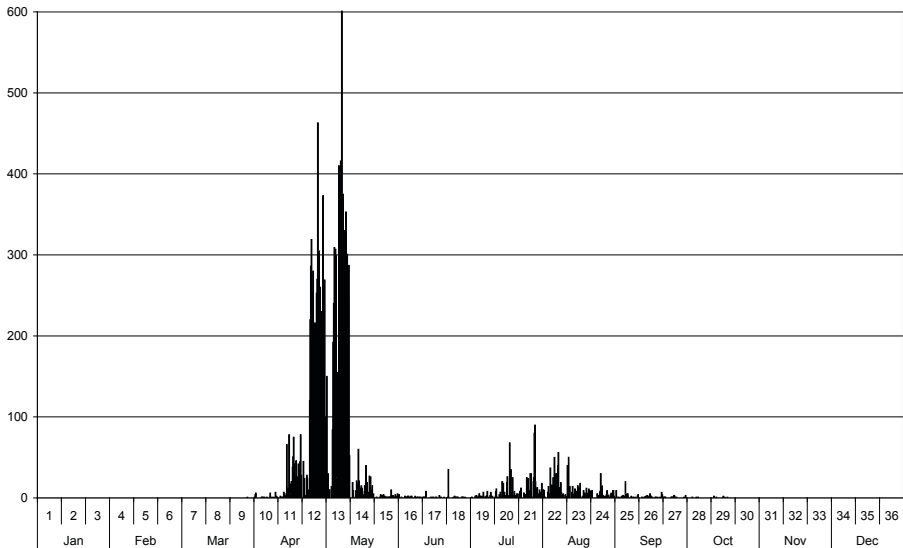
### Discussion

**Curlew** is amber-listed and a species of European Concern, because of the recent breeding population decline. The UK winter population is estimated at 147,000 individuals in 1994-99 (BTO website).

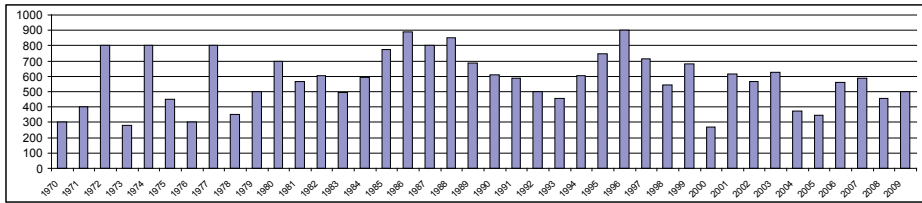
Curlew are utilising Rye Bay as a non-breeding area and almost vacate it during April and May. During the day Curlew disperse over a wide area, but the main concentration is on the grassland at Pett Level. The BTO Migration Atlas shows that Curlew ringed in Britain and Ireland during the non-breeding season breed in north-west Europe, i.e. they undertake a short migration (Bainbridge 2002).



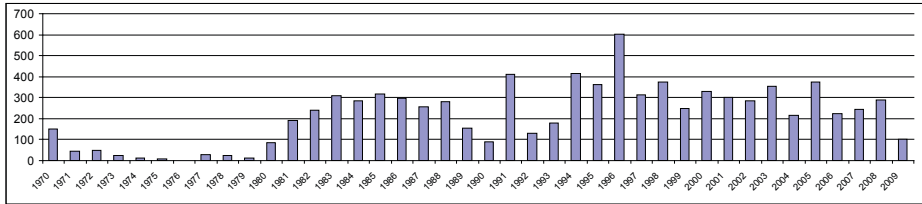
**Figure 3.** Curlew counts in Rye Bay 1970-2009 arranged by ten-day periods.



**Figure 4.** Whimbrel counts in Rye Bay 1970-2009 arranged by ten-day periods.



**Figure 5.** Curlew annual peak counts in Rye Bay 1970-2009.



**Figure 6.** Whimbrel annual peak counts in Rye Bay 1970-2009.

The Dungeness and Rye Bay Curlew numbers do not feature in the top 25 sites in Great Britain, whereas Chichester Harbour was ranked 15<sup>th</sup> in the table of 5-year mean annual peak counts 2004-09 with 1762 (Calbrade *et al.* 2010). The maximum count of Curlew in Sussex in 2009 was 1986 (Sussex Bird Report 2009).

**Whimbrel** is a red-listed species because of a recent breeding population decline (1981-2007). The UK breeding population was 530 pairs in 1989-92 and the passage population 3000 (BTO website).

**Table 1.** Sites with mean peak counts of 100 or more Whimbrel in Great Britain (Calbrade *et al.* 2010).

	Mean Annual Peak Count 2004-09
Barnacre Reservoir and Grizedale Lea	429
The Wash	316
Brockholes Quarry	239
<b>Dungeness and Rye Bay</b>	<b>229</b>
Severn Estuary	171
North Norfolk Coast	149
Burry Inlet	129
Morecambe Bay	115
Chichester Harbour	109

Whimbrel are utilising Rye Bay as a refuelling stop on a very long migration. During the day they disperse over a wide area, with favourite areas being the grasslands of Pett Level, Rye Harbour Nature Reserve and the Brede Valley, but the majority of birds counted at the nocturnal roost are never accounted for during the day.

Satellite tagging studies have shown that Whimbrel migrating through England in spring are destined for Iceland and then winter along the coast of West Africa ([www.whimbrel.info](http://www.whimbrel.info)). It is estimated that as many as 0.8 to 1.1 million Whimbrel pass through Western Europe each autumn and spring. However, very few major staging areas have been located so it is likely that many birds migrate to West Africa in single non-stop flights (Delany *et al.* 2009). During 2008/09, Whimbrel were recorded at 144 sites across the UK, including five in Northern Ireland. Typically, numbers peaked in spring, with a monthly maximum of 1551 noted in May. Spring passage of Whimbrel has a more westerly distribution than autumn passage (Grant 2002).

### Rye Bay

The large numbers of Curlew and Whimbrel recorded at Rye Harbour Nature Reserve depend on the undisturbed roosting areas. Both species have benefitted from the extensive and very expensive permanent electric fencing at Rye Harbour Nature Reserve that was designed to protect ground nesting birds from fox and badger, and also people and their dogs. This fencing was started in 1977 to protect breeding Little Terns and extended over the next 10 years to offer protection to more than thirty species of ground nesting bird. This fencing was replaced with an improved design in 2003 and 2004, and now protects 108 ha. It has only recently become apparent that this fencing is also providing protection to several other roosting wading birds, including Oystercatcher, Lapwing, Redshank and Ringed Plover, and since the 2003 improvements, large numbers of Golden Plover.

The roosting Curlew and Whimbrel (and Golden Plover) depend on a much larger area of suitable feeding habitat in the wider landscape. The dominance of invertebrate rich pasture in the Rye Bay area is key to the value of this area to these wading birds, so future agricultural trends will be important for them. Suitable grazing land should be maintained within the 9137-ha Dungeness, Romney Marsh and Rye Bay SSSI. Both species also utilise saltmarsh for feeding and the recent small scale creation and, starting in September 2010, the large scale re-creation of significant areas of this habitat at Rye Harbour will benefit these and other wading birds.

These two similar species feed in similar habitats and have similar diets, so there will be some inter-specific competition. From the ten-day period graphs above (Figures 3 and 4) it appears as if their presence in Rye Bay is partitioning a shared resource. The very low number of Curlew in Rye Bay during April and May makes it an ideal refuelling stop for Whimbrel on their very long migration.

The roosts of these two species provide wildlife spectacles that add to the appeal of this area for visitors, but sadly most birdwatchers do not visit at the best times of day – dawn and dusk.

Scientific names of avian species quoted in this paper can be found in the Systematic List

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## **Breeding Bird Survey (BBS) population trends in Sussex 1994-2009**

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### **Introduction**

The Breeding Bird Survey (BBS) is the main national scheme for monitoring population changes of common and widespread breeding birds. BBS population trends for the UK are produced by the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) each year, and the results are widely used by government and non-governmental organisations to set conservation priorities. Population trends are also produced by the BTO each year for specific countries, regions and habitats within the UK. A large expansion in the number of squares covered by the BBS in Sussex since 2005 has led to it now being possible to calculate reliable population trends for common breeding species in Sussex, enabling the Sussex Ornithological Society to fulfil one of its most important objectives, that of monitoring the status of breeding birds in the county. Population trends for Sussex for the period 1994 to 2009 inclusive are presented here.

### **BBS methodology and aims**

The BBS was introduced in 1994 and is organised by the BTO, being jointly funded by the BTO, the Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC) and the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB). The survey uses a line transect method in randomly-selected 1-km squares. Each BBS observer is assigned one or more 1-km squares, and makes two early-morning visits to each of their squares during each breeding season, to count all the birds seen and heard along two 1-km transects approximately 500 m apart. Transects are divided into 200-m sections, making a total of ten 200-m sections per square. Visits are scheduled so that the first is in the early part of the breeding season (April to mid-May) and the second at least four weeks later (mid-May to the end of June). Birds are recorded in one of three distance bands, to enable detectability to be assessed and species density calculated. Birds in flight are also recorded. Habitat is recorded using a simple coding system. More information about the methods used is available at [www.bto.org/bbs](http://www.bto.org/bbs).

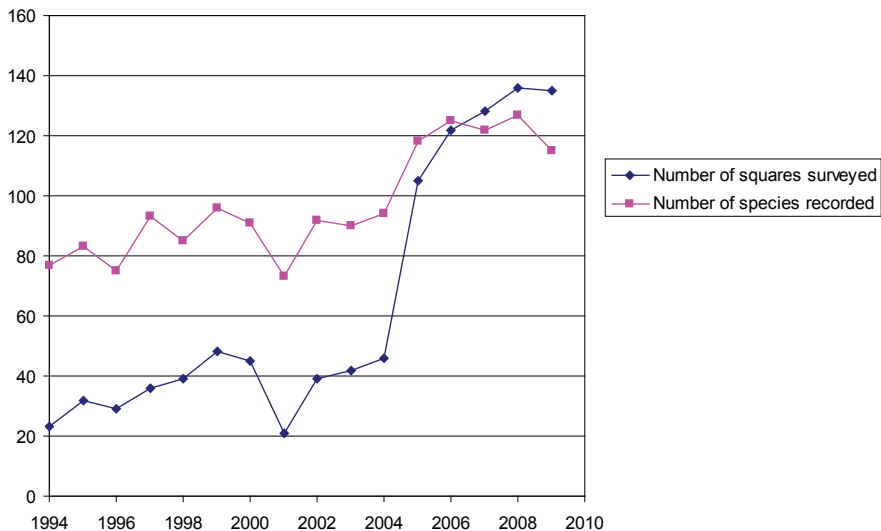
In order for the BBS data to be used as unbiased indicators of bird populations, the survey sites must be randomly distributed. The random selection of BBS squares is carried out by the BTO using an established strategy, and as far as possible the squares must be allocated to volunteer observers in the order in which they are generated. The aim is for as many as possible of the same 1-km squares to be surveyed every year, ideally by the same observers.

### **How population trends are calculated**

The total numbers of adult birds of each species detected in each 1-km square (summed over all distance categories and transect sections) are calculated for each year, and these data are used to calculate population changes using standard statistical methods. The calculations take the maximum of the two counts (early and late) as the annual measure of relative abundance. The maximum was chosen as a simple means of simultaneously reflecting the abundance of residents and early migrants, which tend to be most easily detected on the first visit, and later migrants, which tend to be most abundant during the second visit. All squares that have been surveyed in at least two years are included in the analyses.

### BBS coverage in Sussex

Figure 1 shows the numbers of BBS squares that have been surveyed in Sussex since the beginning of the scheme in 1994. From 1994 to 2004 the number of squares surveyed was low (with a maximum of 48 squares surveyed in 1999), and although the data obtained through BBS monitoring in Sussex was an adequate contribution to the national BBS dataset, it was not sufficient to allow any kind of population analysis within Sussex. In 2005 the BBS was significantly expanded in Sussex to allow calculation of county population trends for the commoner breeding species (Crabtree 2006). This expansion was brought about by a large increase in the number of randomly-selected sites, and a corresponding large increase in the number of observers involved. An average of 125 squares have been surveyed every year during the period 2005-2009 inclusive, and it is highly likely that this level of coverage will be maintained or that the level will increase in coming years. Note the reduced number of surveys carried out in 2001 due to Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD) restrictions.



**Figure 1.** The numbers of BBS squares surveyed, and the numbers of species recorded, in Sussex during the period 1994-2009. Note the reduced number of surveys carried out in 2001 due to Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD) restrictions, and the large expansion of the survey in Sussex in 2005.

### Calculation of trends in Sussex

At a national level, for a typical species to be monitored adequately that species needs to have a mean sample size (the average number of squares in which it has been recorded) of at least 40 BBS squares over the period for which the trend is calculated. It is the absolute size of the sample that is important, and not its relation to the total area surveyed (Greenwood 1996). For county trends, monitoring is considered adequate if a species has a mean sample size of at least 30 squares over the period for which the trend is calculated. This is because in a smaller and more geographically uniform area, there will be less variation due to habitat differences, and reliable



monitoring is possible with a smaller sample size. With an average of 125 squares surveyed in Sussex during the period 2005-2009 inclusive, approximately 40 species are now routinely recorded in at least 30 squares. However, because in general it is better to use as much data as possible in estimating trends, population trends for Sussex are calculated for the entire period since 1994. Mean sample sizes over this period are obviously very much reduced by the low BBS coverage in Sussex during the period 1994-2004 inclusive, so that only 32 species have mean sample sizes of at least 30 squares during the entire period 1994-2009 inclusive. This means that there is now sufficient data to calculate Sussex population trends for 32 species over the period 1994-2009. If the current level of survey coverage is maintained, the average number of squares in which each species has been recorded since 1994 will increase each year, so that the number of species for which population trends can be calculated will increase each year. Data from all squares that have been surveyed in at least two years are used in the trend calculations.

Population trends are calculated using a method developed by the BTO for county-level analyses, and report percentage changes in populations over the entire period since the beginning of the survey (1994-2009), as well as the most recent inter-year differences (2008-2009). Percentage changes since 1994, along with upper and lower 95% confidence limits, can be plotted each year to produce trend graphs. The percentage changes are usually presented on these graphs as indices, relative to an arbitrary index of 1.0 at the beginning of the survey in 1994. No indices are plotted for 2001, because data from the small number of squares surveyed during the FMD restrictions are likely to be unrepresentative and perhaps biased towards urban habitats.

The large increase in 2005 in the number of BBS squares surveyed in Sussex could be considered to introduce bias into the population trend calculations for the period 1994-2009. In fact, because the increase in coverage was due to a large increase in the number of randomly-selected sites, there is no reason to suspect bias. One problem is that some species were only found in a few squares before 2005, and hence trends will be heavily influenced by results from those sites (DG Noble *pers. comm.*).

National population trends published for 1994-2009 (Risely *et al.* 2010) are calculated using smoothed data, a process that involves truncation of end points, so that long-term national trends are labelled 1995-2008. Trends calculated for Sussex are unsmoothed, as are all trends for 2008-2009.

### **Sussex population trends 1994-2009**

Sussex population trends for the period 1994-2009, for the 32 species with mean sample sizes of at least 30 squares, are presented in Table 1. Also presented are population trends for the period 2008-2009, which give an indication of very recent changes. Those trends that are considered statistically significant are indicated by asterisks.

Of the 32 species for which trends are reported, six have declined significantly and 14 have increased significantly since the start of the survey. Trends are reported for five red-listed species (Eaton *et al.* 2009), of which two, Starling (-53%) and Yellowhammer (-62%), have decreased significantly since the start of the survey. The trend for Starling is identical to that reported for the South East England Government Office Region (see map in Risely *et al.* 2010), but the Sussex trend for Yellowhammer compares unfavourably with a decline of only 27% for the South East Region (Risely *et al.* 2010). One red-listed species, Song Thrush (35%), has increased significantly in Sussex since the start of the survey (compared with a decline of 3% for the South East Region). Trends are also reported for five amber-listed species (Eaton *et al.* 2009), of which three have increased significantly since the start of the survey.

**Table 1.** Sussex population trends during 1994-2009 and 2008-2009. Trends are percentage changes, and statistically significant changes are marked with an asterisk (\*). UCL, upper 95% confidence limit; LCL, lower 95% confidence limit for the 1994-2009 trend. The sample size is the mean number of squares per year in which each species was recorded during 1994-2009. Red-listed and amber-listed species of conservation concern (Eaton et al. 2009) are shown in the relevant colours.

Species	Change 1994-2009 (%)	UCL	LCL	Change 2008-2009 (%)	Sample size
Mallard	527*	932	280	71	36
Pheasant	21	48	-1	-2	52
Woodpigeon	32*	51	15	-2	66
Collared Dove	87*	129	53	56*	42
Green Woodpecker	-5	31	-31	12	46
Great Spotted Woodpecker	315*	537	171	46	42
Skylark	-28	0	-48	-29	38
Swallow	729*	961	548	496*	44
Pied Wagtail	10	52	-20	36	31
Wren	-34*	-24	-44	-15	63
Duncock	-14	4	-29	1	57
Robin	8	29	-10	-4	64
Blackbird	62*	82	44	36*	66
Song Thrush	35*	61	13	7	60
Blackcap	13	48	-14	28	50
Whitethroat	290*	499	154	50	38
Chiffchaff	-12	17	-34	-3	55
Long-tailed Tit	-1	43	-32	52	31
Blue Tit	26*	52	5	12	65
Great Tit	23*	47	3	-1	62
Nuthatch	4	57	-32	33	30
Jay	-74*	-59	-83	-63*	31
Magpie	-18	8	-38	-16	59
Jackdaw	70*	126	28	16	50
Rook	158*	215	111	34	36
Carrion Crow	136*	214	76	-10	64
Starling	-53*	-32	-68	-10	52
House Sparrow	-12	6	-27	-18	50
Chaffinch	-36*	-26	-44	-3	65
Greenfinch	-26*	-6	-42	-44*	54
Goldfinch	236*	343	155	43	38
Yellowhammer	-62*	-45	-73	52	32

The largest percentage change since the start of the survey is shown by Swallow (729%), but this large increase is almost entirely due to a massive increase in the last year (2008-2009), which was not recorded nationally or regionally (Risely *et al.* 2010). This apparent increase in Sussex may not reflect changes in numbers of breeding pairs in the county, but may be due to the presence

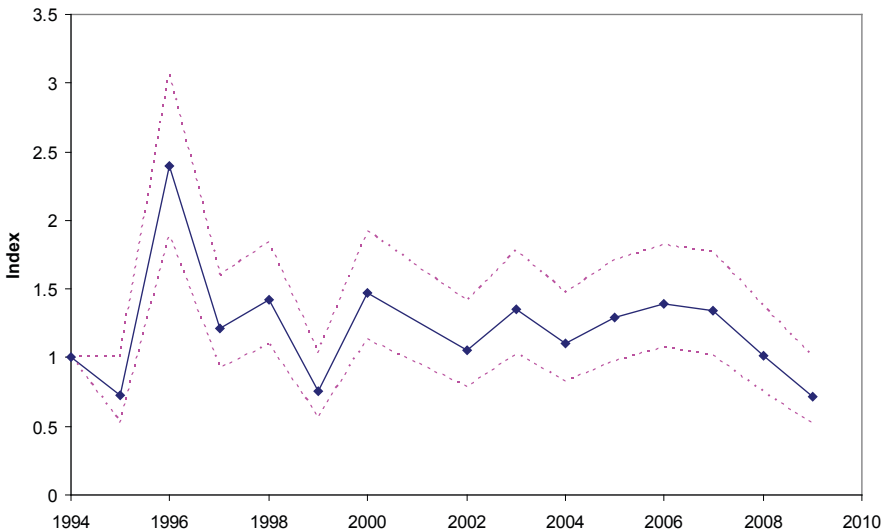
of large numbers of birds at a few sites. This species shows an increase of only 21% since the start of the survey for the South East Region (Risely *et al.* 2010).

Population trends are reported here for the 32 species with mean sample sizes of at least 30 squares during the period 1994-2009. A further five species (Cuckoo, Mistle Thrush, Moorhen, Goldcrest and Linnet) were all recorded in an average of at least 25 squares over the survey period, and it is likely that it will be possible to report population trends for these species in the near future. Herring Gull has also been recorded in an average of at least 25 squares over the survey period, but population trends are not generally reported for gulls because of the large proportion of records that are of non-breeding individuals.

### Trend graphs 1994-2009

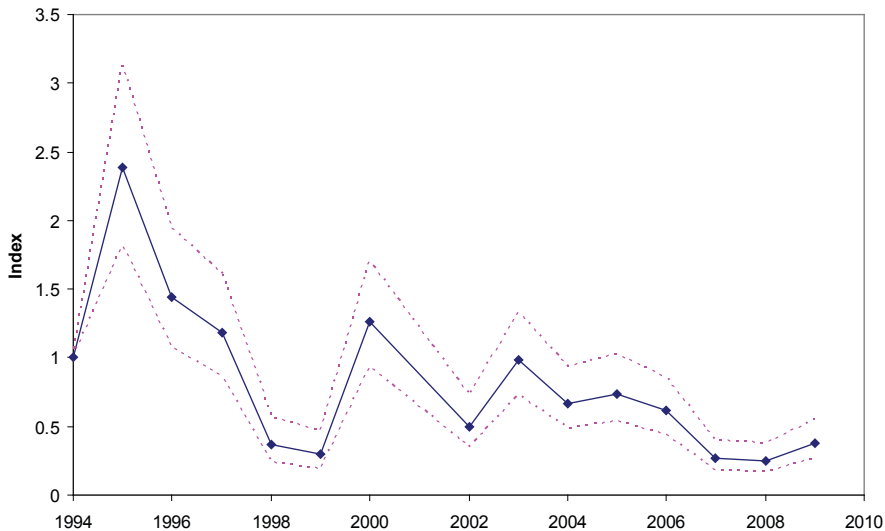
Sussex trend graphs are plotted using the percentage changes each year since the start of the survey in 1994, presented as indices relative to an arbitrary index of 1.0 in 1994. The upper and lower 95% confidence limits for each year are also plotted as indices in the same way. The resulting graphs incorporating 2009 data give good visual indications of the changing fortunes of breeding birds over the period 1994-2009. Trend graphs for Sussex for a selection of species showing interesting trend features are given below.

Figure 2 shows the trend graph for 1994-2009 for Skylark, a red-listed species exhibiting a 28% decline in Sussex since 1994, compared with a decrease of 23% in the South East Region and a decrease of 11% in the UK (Risely *et al.* 2010). With a clear downward trend visible in the graph, this species is obviously seriously threatened in Sussex, although it is hoped that farmland conservation schemes, particularly within the South Downs National Park, will help to reverse these downward trends.



**Figure 2.** Population trend graph for Skylark in Sussex during the period 1994-2009. Solid line, population index relative to an arbitrary index of 1.0 in 1994; dashed lines, upper and lower 95% confidence limits.

Figure 3 shows the trend graph for 1994-2009 for Yellowhammer, a red-listed species exhibiting a 62% decline in Sussex since 1994, compared with a decrease of 27% in the South East Region and a decrease of 16% in the UK (Risely *et al.* 2010). This species increased in Sussex by 52% between 2008 and 2009. It will be several years before it will be clear whether this increase is part of a longer-term upward population trend, perhaps caused by farmland conservation schemes, or whether the removal of the set-aside provision will result in further declines.

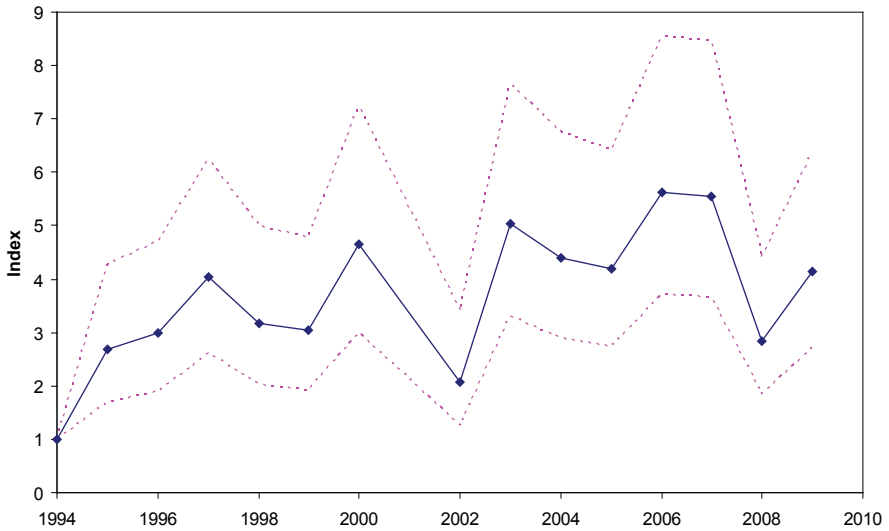


**Figure 3.** Population trend graph for Yellowhammer in Sussex during the period 1994-2009. Solid line, population index relative to an arbitrary index of 1.0 in 1994; dashed lines, upper and lower 95% confidence limits.

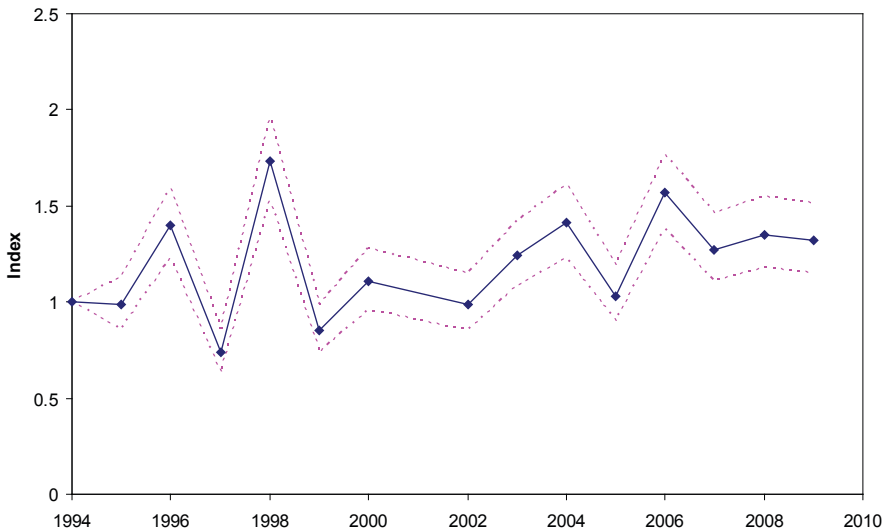
Figure 4 shows the trend graph for 1994-2009 for Great Spotted Woodpecker, a species which is not currently of conservation concern and which shows a 315% increase in Sussex since 1994, compared with an increase of 102% in the South East Region and an increase of 129% in the UK (Risely *et al.* 2010). This trend graph shows large fluctuations, within the clear upward trend. These fluctuations are to be expected for a species that is typically found in low absolute numbers in any given square.

Figure 5 shows the trend graph for 1994-2009 for Woodpigeon, a species which is not currently of conservation concern and which shows a 32% increase in Sussex since 1994, compared with an increase of 37% in the South East Region and an increase of 43% in the UK (Risely *et al.* 2010). Anecdotally this species is often reported to have increased rapidly in numbers in recent years, but this trend graph demonstrates that the population increase has been relatively modest since 1994.

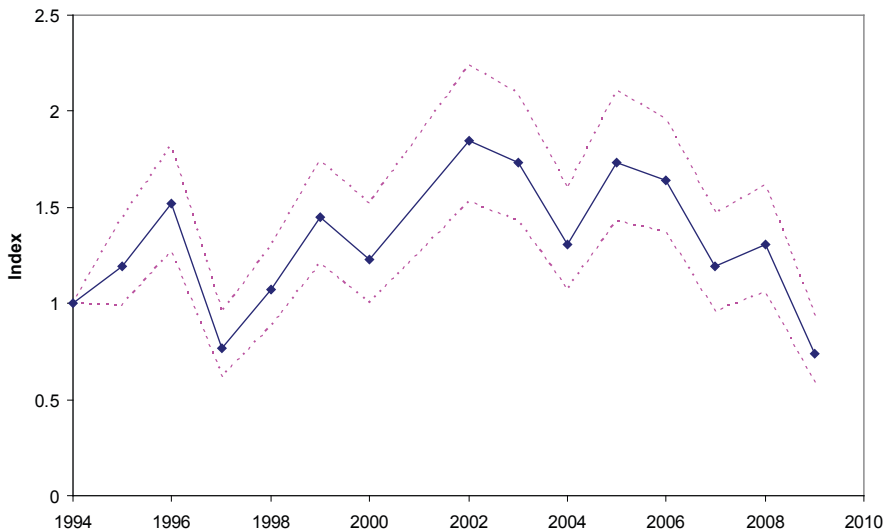
Figure 6 shows the trend graph for 1994-2009 for Greenfinch, a species which is not currently of conservation concern but which shows a 26% decline in Sussex since 1994, compared with a 10% decline in the South East Region and an increase of 12% in the UK (Risely *et al.* 2010). Significantly, this species shows a sharp 44% decline in Sussex between 2008 and 2009, and a 13% decline nationally over the same period, which is possibly due to the effects of trichomoniasis or other infections.



**Figure 4.** Population trend graph for Great Spotted Woodpecker in Sussex during the period 1994-2009. Solid line, population index relative to an arbitrary index of 1.0 in 1994; dashed lines, upper and lower 95% confidence limits.



**Figure 5.** Population trend graph for Woodpigeon in Sussex during the period 1994-2009. Solid line, population index relative to an arbitrary index of 1.0 in 1994; dashed lines, upper and lower 95% confidence limits.



**Figure 6.** Population trend graph for Greenfinch in Sussex during the period 1994-2009. Solid line, population index relative to an arbitrary index of 1.0 in 1994; dashed lines, upper and lower 95% confidence limits.

## Conclusions

Population trends for common breeding birds in Sussex during the period 1994-2009, derived from the results of the Breeding Bird Survey, have been presented here for the first time, along with trend graphs showing population changes for five selected species during the period 1994-2009. Population trends will continue to be calculated every year, and these population trends and the accompanying trend graphs for increasing numbers of species will be published regularly by the Sussex Ornithological Society. In order for these population trends to continue to give reliable indications of the fortunes of breeding birds in Sussex, survey coverage needs to be maintained or increased, and new volunteers are welcomed and should contact the author.

## Acknowledgements

Many thanks are due to all of the observers who take part in the BBS in Sussex, and all those who have taken part in the past, as well as to landowners and farmers who kindly allow volunteers to carry out BBS surveys on their land. Sincere thanks are due to Kate Risely, Anna Renwick and David Noble at the BTO for calculating and providing the population trends and indices for Sussex, and for much information and advice, and to Dr John Newnham and Dr Colin Brooks for helpful comments.

The scientific names of avian species mentioned in this paper can be found in the Systematic List.

**References and further reading**

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## UNUSUAL RECORDS

All records of the unusual species listed below are required to be considered by the Records Committee and it may be assumed that those published in the Annual Bird Report have been fully authenticated. Such records should be submitted on (or in the same format as) the special forms available from the Recorder or the SOS website and should be emailed to the Recorder (postal submissions are also accepted). Reports of national rarities as defined by the *British Birds Rarities Committee* should be submitted to the Recorder (not direct to *BBRC*) either in the same format as above, or on forms available from the Secretary of the *BBRC*.

Photographic submissions will be accepted only when they are accompanied by full details of the sighting (location, time, observers, etc as on the first page of the SOS record form) and the identification can be assessed by the relevant Committee on the details supplied. All records submitted in whatever format may require additional details to be supplied by the observer to the Recorder and/or the Committee.

The following are the unusual species in Sussex (as at 1<sup>st</sup> January 2010) for which descriptions are required:

Whooper Swan	Temminck's Stint	Icterine Warbler
Bean Goose (both races)	White-rumped Sandpiper	Melodious Warbler
Pink-footed Goose	Pectoral Sandpiper	Barred Warbler
American Wigeon	Buff-breasted Sandpiper	Subalpine Warbler
Green-winged Teal	Grey Phalarope	Greenish Warbler
Ring-necked Duck	Red-necked Phalarope	Pallas's Warbler
Ferruginous Duck	Pomarine Skua (except in spring)	Yellow-browed Warbler
Surf Scoter	Long-tailed Skua	Radde's Warbler
All pheasants (except Common)	Sabine's Gull	Dusky Warbler
White-billed Diver	Ring-billed Gull	Red-breasted Flycatcher
Great Northern Diver (ex. Selsey)	Caspian Gull	Willow Tit
All shearwaters (except Manx)	Iceland Gull	Crested Tit
All petrels (except Fulmar)	Glaucous Gull	Golden Oriole
Cattle Egret	White-winged Black Tern	Red-backed Shrike
Great White Egret	Roseate Tern	Woodchat Shrike
Purple Heron	Black Guillemot	Chough
White Stork	Little Auk	Hooded Crow
Honey-buzzard	Puffin	Rosy Starling
Black Kite	Alpine Swift	Serim
White-tailed Eagle	European Bee-eater	Twite
Montagu's Harrier	Short-toed Lark	Common (ex-Mealy) Redpoll
Goshawk	Shore Lark	Arctic Redpoll
Rough-legged Buzzard	Red-rumped Swallow	Parrot Crossbill
Red-footed Falcon	Richard's Pipit	Common Rosefinch
Spotted Crake	Tawny Pipit	Capland Bunting
Corn Crake	Red-throated Pipit	Cirl Bunting
Common Crane	Water Pipit	Ortolan Bunting
Stone-curlew	Dipper	Rustic Bunting
Kentish Plover	Bluethroat	Little Bunting
Dotterel	Aquatic Warbler	
American Golden Plover	Marsh Warbler	

In addition, descriptions are required for **all** races other than the normally occurring one including: Black Brant, Baltic Gull, *argentatus* Herring Gull (exc. Rye Bay area) Kumlien's Iceland Gull, Scandinavian Rock Pipit, Yellow Wagtail (except 'Blue-headed') and 'Continental' *ater* Coal Tit but excluding Pale-bellied Brent Goose, *intermedius* Lesser Black-backed Gull, White Wagtail and Greenland Wheatear. Descriptions are also required for **any** species seen on a date outside the range of historic first and last dates for migrants as published yearly in the SOS Bird Report and on the SOS website.

It also 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, Red-necked Grebe (inland records), Black-necked Grebe, 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.

Registered Charity 256936

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## THE SUSSEX ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY

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### Who are we and what do we do?

The Society was formed in 1962 to promote the recording, study, conservation and enjoyment of birds in Sussex.

We encourage our members to keep records of birds seen in Sussex, and to submit these to our County 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 birdwatchers, 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)

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## GAZETTEER

Alexandra Park, Hastings	TQ8010	Charleston Reedbed	TQ5100	Henfield Levels	TQ1914	Northport Pit, Rye	TQ9319	Sidesham Ferry & Fields	SZ8596
Amberley Wild Brooks	TQ0314	Chelwood Vachery	TQ4330	Hollies, Ashdown	TQ4528	Old Airstrip, Ashdown	TQ4231	Sampling 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
Aquidram Manor Farm	SU8301	Church Norton	SZ8795	Horseshoe Plantation	TV5695	Pagham Lagoon	SZ8896	Splash Point, Seaford	TV4898
Ardingly Reservoir	TQ3229	Cisbury Ring	TQ1408	Hotham Park, Bognor	SZ9399	Panell Sewer	TQ8715	St Leonards Forest	TQ2231
Arlington Reservoir	TQ5307	Clipping	TQ0001	Hurstpierpoint	TQ2716	Parham Estate	TQ0614	Stakes Island	SU7801
Arundel Park	TQ0108	Cobnor Point & Farm	SU7902	Ifield Mill Pond	TQ2436	Partridge Green	TQ1919	Starsted 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	Peworth Park	SU9721	Steele Farm Billingshurst	TQ0624
Atherton	TQ0000	Cuckmere Haven	TV5197	Kingley Vale NNR	SU8110	Pevensey Bay	TQ6603	Swanbourne Lake	TQ0107
Bacombe Reservoir	TQ3704	Darwell Reservoir	TQ7121	Kneppmill Pond	TQ1521	Pevensey Bridge Level	TQ6504	The Goat, Ashdown	TQ4032
Baileean	TQ4314	East Guldeford Level	TQ9421	Lancing Clump	TQ1806	Pevensey Levels	TQ6605	The Merns	TQ0223
Beauly Head	TV5895	East Head	SZ7698	Langney Point	TQ6401	Pilsey Island & Sands	SU7600	The Severals	SZ8794
Bells Tout	TV5695	Ebnoe Common	SU9726	Levington Common	SU8418	Pippingford Park	TQ4430	Thorney Deepes	SU7503
Bewl Water	TQ6733	Elms Farm, Icklesham	TQ8815	Lewes Brooks	TQ4207	Portfield Gravel Pit	SU8805	Thorney Island	SU7602
Billinghurst	TQ0825	Eridge Park	TQ8635	Littlehampton G.C.	TQ0101	Powdermill Reservoir	TQ7919	Tilgate Park	TQ2734
Brifing Gap	TV5596	Fairlight	TQ8611	Long/Narrow Pits, Rye	TQ8217	Pulborough Brooks	TQ0516	Union Canal, E.Guldeford	TQ8322
Bluebell Railway	TQ4023	Fishbourne Channel	SU8303	Lullington Heath	TQ5401	Rackham Woods	TQ0414	Upper Adur Levels	TQ9311
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	Marine Wood	TQ8712	Rye Harbour LNR	TQ9216	Waltham Brooks	TQ0215
Brighton Wild Park	TQ3207	Friston Forest	TV 5499	Marsh Farm, Yapton	SU9804	Scorey Court Gravel Pits	TR0119	Warmham L.N.R. & M.P.	TQ1732
Broadwater, Worthing	TQ1404	Gills Lap, Ashdown	TQ4603	Maynards Green	TQ5818	Seaford Head	TV4997	Weir Wood Reservoir	TQ3834
Broomhill Level	TQ1703	Glynde Levels	TQ4632	Mill Hill, Shoreham	TQ2107	Selsey Bill	SZ8592	West Beach Littlehampton	TQ0201
Buchan Park	TQ9818	Glyne Gap, Bexhill	TQ7607	Millbrook, Ashdown	TQ4428	Selsey West Fields	SZ8394	Westlean Woods	SU8515
Burton Mill Pond	TQ2434	Goring Gap	TQ1001	New Sails Farm	TQ2004	Seven Sisters Country Pk	TV5197	Whitbread Hollow	TV4996
Camp Hill, Ashdown	SU9617	Gossops Green	TQ2535	Newhaven Harbour	TV4499	Sheepote Valley	TQ3404	Widewater, Lancing	TQ2004
Castle Water & Farm	TQ9118	Greenwood Clump	TQ4731	Newhaven Tide Mills	TQ4500	Shillingale Lake	SU9631	Willington	TQ8602
Cattleston Farm	TQ1020	Halsey's Farm	SZ8697	Nook Meadows, Rye	TQ9217	Shooters Bottom	TV5795	Woods Mill	TQ2113
Chalvey Common	TQ3821	Harbour Farm, Rye	TQ9317	Normans Bay	TQ6805	Shoreham Airport	TQ2005	Woodbeding Common	SU8625
				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.*

# Index

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## Species in Systematic List

Euring numbers in bold type.

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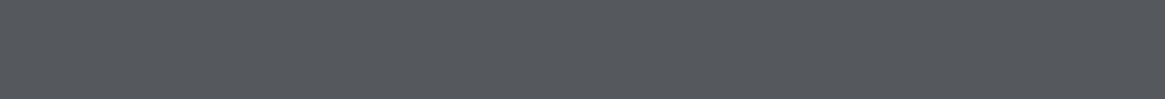
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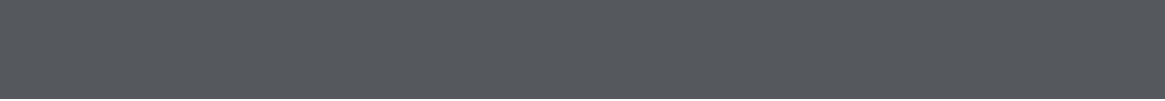
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